

Eva Skopalová

Charles University Prague

The Anachronistic Conception of History and its Impact on the “Story” of Czech Art

My PhD research is focused on the application of the contemporary anachronistic conception of history on Czech art. My research is based on the contemporary theory of anachronism introduced by Georges Didi-Huberman, and further developed by Alexander Nagel and Christopher S. Wood. Recently, I am turning towards *nomadology* as defined by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. I aim is to create my distinctive methodology of the anachronistic view of history applied to the Czech art in the dynamics of so-called Central Europe. The “great narrative” of Western (art) history was constructed slowly during the 19th century along with the Viennese School of Art History’s remarkable and constitutive contribution at the very beginning of the 20th century. Time considered a priori had a smooth flow which became the basis for a successive row of styles - roman, gothic, renaissance, baroque, etc. – and served to gather formally related artworks and events as a chain of consequences. Henceforth the West had a utopian view of art evolution to which every social group tried relating to with less or much effort. Jan Białostocki considered the same relationship regarding space as a relationship of “center and periphery”. He meant it to be a non-hierarchical, “horizontal” relationship. I would argue, that this relation exists also among historical narratives whose periphery might be considered as anachronic to the center, but not out of time itself.

The anachronistic view of time could be one of multiple methodological perspectives on history. In these terms, the work of art is a heterochronic phenomenon, just as our individual experience of present time, the “contemporary” (literally “with time” in Latin), is a composition of multiple times – but also it means a very dynamic and non-continuous space, where boundaries are only a social convention. That means we may distinguish several “layers” of time and space stacked in a work of art. I will present this view by a brief insight into the history of Czech art. For instance, I am working on the character of the Czech neo-Renaissance style and the role of a forgery in aim to fill up the blind spot on the timeline (in fact, the Italian Quattrocento and Cinquecento styles had no major influence in the Czech lands until reign of Rudolf II /if compared with Hungarian and German lands/.) In my paper, I would like to focus on the constitutive role of the forged *Dvůr Králové* and *Zelená Hora Manuscripts* (1817, 1818) created by Václav Hanka and Josef Linda. *The Manuscripts* use quasi-historical and quasi-mythological narratives which were the Czech counterpart to the otherwise missing Classical Antiquity (and therefore Renaissance) and German domination. In today’s vocabulary, we would call *The*

Manuscripts "post-truth", a belief repeated so often that it becomes true. In the first wave of enthusiasm, František Palacký based his version of antique Slav history on these documents. I aim to show how Palacký's conception of history used forgery in relation to the 'great narrative' of Western history and how henceforth *The Manuscripts* have become a constitutive element deeply embedded in Czech history. This, in turn, caused the *Renaissance* in the 19th century.

The nomadology as an anachronical approach to history also means the end of art history as we knew it, in fact, it is its extreme opposite. It is an art history without artistic periods, where style is only a conventional label that invites its deconstruction. Every -ism has to be strictly connected to a specific time and place, which means it loses its general validity. Finally, this view gives a new perspective on the old art-historical problem of "center and periphery". This is one of the reasons why I have chosen to study Czech art in particular.

Problems and questions:

- Could be a *nomadology* a way to understand complex historical problems?
- Where is the balance between original interpretation and art historical fantasy? Or, is the anachronistic perspective a visual metaphor?
- If we admit the heterogeneity of time, that also means that some periods in the linear view of time are dense and others sparse. How we can integrate this idea into the anachronistic conception?
- And finally, if we argue that the anachronistic conception of time is more accurate, what does it really mean for art history as such? What are the consequences?