

Czech Sculpture in the Late 19th and Early 20th Centuries and Its Attitude Towards Vienna

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Abstract

During the course of the 19th century, Czech society underwent an intensive process of national revival and emancipation from Vienna. This, of course, was also projected onto the field of visual arts: For a long time, under the influence of Czech nationalists, surveys of developments in the arts field did not include German-speaking artists from the Czech lands, such as the brothers Max and Franz Metzner or Hugo Lederer. Contacts between both individuals and institutions and Vienna thus became extremely complicated, and after 1900 they were generally considered undesirable by Czech nationalists. In 1902, the Mánes Fine Arts Association, which can take much of the credit for promoting modern art in the Czech milieu at that time, organized an exhibition in Prague of the

works of Auguste Rodin, whose artistic style fundamentally influenced Czech sculpture in the first decade of the 20th century and disrupted the monopoly enjoyed until then by Josef Václav Myslbek. In contrast to Myslbek's conventional equestrian monument to St Wenceslas, two other national monuments in Prague, the statues of Jan Hus (by Ladislav Šaloun) and of František Palacký (by Stanislav Sucharda) reflect the fascination with Rodinesque pathos at that time. The politically motivated suppression of contacts between the Czech milieu and Vienna and German-speaking countries on the one hand, and the support for intensive communication with Paris on the other, contributed to the progressive tendencies in Czech art before the First World War and to its exceptional plurality of styles.

Introduction

[1] During the course of the 19th century, Czech society underwent an intensive process of national revival and emancipation from Vienna, culminating in the 1890s in ever louder demands for equal rights and the renewal of Czech statehood.¹ This challenging social development was naturally reflected in the visual arts of that time, which were initially influenced by local patriotism, and then from the mid-19th century by a systematic growth in nationalism. The conditions and the social context of Czech art likewise underwent a fundamental transformation. At the start of the 19th century the Czech lands were an artistic backwater with a stagnating Academy of painting founded on the initiative of the Society of Patriotic Friends of Art (with the field of sculpture dominated by traditional family workshops). By the year 1900, however, the industrially developed Czech lands had become the richest region of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, which was fully reflected in the progressive development and ambition of the Czech artistic milieu of the time. A contributing factor to the overall increase in quality of Czech sculpture produced at this time was the establishment of specialist schools, especially the Stone-Carving School in Hořice in Eastern Bohemia (1884) – the centre of a region where stone was quarried for use in sculpture.² The importance of this institution within the Monarchy extended far beyond the Czech borders. A new School of Decorative Arts (*Uměleckoprůmyslová škola*) was founded in Prague in 1885,³ and the reorganisation of the Art Academy in Prague in 1896⁴ included the establishment of its own special school of sculpture, the direction of which was entrusted to the leading figure in Czech sculpture circles in the second half of the 19th century, Josef Václav Myslbek.⁵

The Mánes Association

[2] At the same period, however, the young generation rose up in revolt against the prevailing Academicism and the omnipresent patriotic pathos. It is significant that this radical uprising did not take place within an official institution, but in the setting of the private Mánes Fine Arts Association (*Spolek výtvarných umělců Mánes*). Founded by Czech artists and intellectuals in

¹ Czech loyalty to the monarchy was fundamentally weakened by the Austro-Hungarian Compromise (1867) which ignored Czech resp. Bohemian constitutional requirements: Michael Borovička et al., *Velké dějiny zemí Koruny české XIIIb. 1890–1918*, Prague 2013; Milan Hlavačka et al., *České země v 19. století: Proměny společnosti v moderní době*, Prague 2014.

² Alois Jilemnický, *Kámen jako událost. Kulturně historický a společenský obraz první české školy sochařů a kameníků za sto let její existence (1884–1984)*, Prague 1984.

³ Jan Simota and Zdeněk Kostka, eds., *Sto let práce Uměleckoprůmyslové školy a Vysoké školy uměleckoprůmyslové v Praze. 1885–1985*, Prague 1985; Martina Pachmanová and Markéta Pražanová, eds., *Vysoká škola Uměleckoprůmyslová v Praze / Academy of Arts, Architecture and Design in Prague. 1885–2005*, Prague 2005.

⁴ Jiří Kotalík, ed., *Almanach Akademie výtvarných umění v Praze. K 180. výročí založení (1799–1979)*, Prague 1979.

⁵ Vojtěch Volavka, *J. V. Myslbek*, Prague 1942; Taťána Petrasová and Rostislav Švácha, eds., *Art in the Czech Lands 800–2000*, Prague 2017, 712–713.

Munich in 1887, for a long time the Association had the character of a debating society. Its name indicated that the young artists saw themselves as the followers of the central personality of mid-19th-century Czech painting, Josef Mánes, who was widely celebrated and regarded as a tragic figure.⁶ In the second half of the 1890s the activities of the Mánes Association became increasingly intensive and systematic.⁷ 1896 saw the first issue of the periodical *Volné směry* [*Free Trends*] – the first Czech journal dedicated exclusively to modern art.⁸ Two years later the Mánes Association started holding exhibitions. Its ambition in doing so, in addition to presenting works created by members of the Association, was to introduce a new form of installation, contrasting with the Salon conventions that had prevailed up until then. In order to present the key figures of modern European art to the Czech public, the Mánes Association – following the example of other European Secession societies⁹ – had its own exhibition hall built in the Kinský Gardens below Petřín Hill. The first event to be held there was a ground-breaking exhibition of 157 works by Auguste Rodin in 1902 (Fig. 1) – the first retrospective exhibition of this famous artist to be staged outside France.¹⁰

⁶ Pavla Machalíková, "Josef Mánes a 'národní klasika'", in: Petrasová and Švácha, *Art in the Czech Lands*, 700; Naděžda Blažíčková Horová, *Malířská rodina Mánesů*, Prague 2002.

⁷ Anna Masaryková, "Výstavy cizích umělců v Praze a mezinárodní orientace SVU Mánesa", in: *Acta Universitatis Carolinae, Philosophica et historica* 3-4 (1992), 183-188; Lenka Bydžovská, *Spolek výtvarných umělců Mánes v letech 1887–1907*, Prague 1990.

⁸ Roman Prahel and Lenka Bydžovská, *Freie Richtungen: Die Zeitschrift der Prager Secession und Moderne*, Prague 1993.

⁹ Elizabeth Clegg, *Art, Design and Architecture in Central Europe, 1890–1920*, New Haven/London 2006; Stefania Krzysztofowicz-Kozakowska and Piotr Mizia, "'Sztuka', 'Wiener Secession', 'Mánes'. The Central European Art Triangle", in: *Artibus et Historiae* 27 (2006), no. 53, 217-259.

¹⁰ Petr Wittlich, "Rodin in Prague", in: *Neklidná figura. Expresse v českém sochařství 1880–1914 / The Restless Figure. Expression in Czech Sculpture 1880–1914*, eds. Sandra Baborovská and Petr Wittlich, Prague 2016, 123-125.



1 Auguste Rodin, *Balzac Monument*, 1897. National Gallery Prague (photograph © National Gallery Prague)

[3] Among the many exhibitions which followed, the most important ones featured works by the Norwegian painter Edvard Munch (1905) and the French sculptor Antoine Bourdelle (1909).¹¹ Gradually, nearly all the leading Czech artists became members of the Mánes Fine Arts Association, and, thanks to the remarkable activity of the Association, Czech art in the early 20th century very quickly came to reflect the latest trends and forms of European Modernism. Within the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, the Czech artistic milieu thus became particularly progressive, and in addition it was extremely pluralist in terms of expression.¹² This exceptional situation was made possible not least by the fact that the influence of the key official institution (the Prague Academy of Fine Arts, constituted in 1896) on the whole chain of events was extremely marginal, especially in its early stages. Nevertheless, at the beginning of the 20th century some of the artists with a modern orientation (members of the Mánes Fine Arts Association) became teachers at the Academy.¹³ In spite of this, the School of Decorative Arts remained the more progressive art school in Prague.

The 19th century

[4] From the late 19th century onwards, criteria deformed by the nationalism of the time led to the permanent elimination or marginalisation of German-speaking artists working in the Czech lands in overviews and accepted interpretations of Czech art in the National Revival era. Among

¹¹ Helena Štaubová, *Bourdelle a jeho žáci. Giacometti. Richier. Gutfreund*, Prague 1998, 13-15; Petr Wittlich, "E. A. Bourdelle a jeho výstava r. 1909 v Praze", in: *Neklidná figura*, eds. Babarovská and Wittlich, 174.

¹² Petrasová and Švácha, *Art in the Czech Lands*, 725-780.

¹³ Antonín Slavíček (1899), Max Švabinský (1910), Jan Preisler (1913), Stanislav Sucharda (1915), Jan Štursa (1916).

the artists who suffered this fate were two of the most significant sculptors in the Czech lands in the first half of the 19th century, the brothers Joseph Max (1804–1855) and Emanuel Max (1810–1901).¹⁴ Both brothers studied at the Prague Academy under the painter Joseph Bergler. Emanuel went on to study sculpture at the Academy of Fine Arts (*Akademie der bildenden Künste*) in Vienna under Johann Nepomuk Schaller and Joseph Kässmann, and subsequently spent ten years in Rome, where he developed close links to Nazarene art. The two brothers worked together on some commissions. Their most important works include the memorial to Emperor Franz II/I in Prague (1845–1850), the memorial to Marshal Radetzky (Fig. 2) in Prague's Lesser Town (1850–1858), and some of the new sculptural groups on Charles Bridge.¹⁵



2 Emanuel Max, *Radetzky Monument*, Prague, postcard (around 1900). Private collection (photograph © Martin Krummholz)

Emanuel Max made several sculptures for the Arsenal in Vienna, as did Thomas Seidan (1830–1890), who also contributed to the sculptural decoration of the Parliament there.

[5] Because of their reputation at that time, the German metropolises of Dresden and, in particular, Munich attracted artists from the Czech lands (including workshops outside Prague) virtually throughout the 19th century.¹⁶ The list of leading Czech sculptors who trained in

¹⁴ All personal data taken from: Prokop Toman, *Nový slovník československých výtvarných umělců*, Ostrava 1993; Adam Hnojil, *Josef Max. Sochařství pozdního neoklasicismu v Čechách*, Prague 2008, 21-23.

¹⁵ While the equestrian statue of Emperor Franz was replaced in its original position in the architecture of a neo-Gothic monument in 2006, the monument to Radetzky, which had also been removed in 1918, has not been restored to its original place.

¹⁶ Taťána Petrasová and Roman Prahel, eds., *Mnichov–Praha. Výtvarné umění mezi tradicí a modernou / München–Prag. Kunst zwischen Tradition und Moderne*, Prague 2012. Lists of students of the Munich Academy: <https://matrikel.adbk.de/matrikel> (accessed 15 May 2020).

Munich – at first under Ludwig Schwanthaler (1802–1848) and later under Max Widmann (1812–1895) – starts with Myslbek's future teacher Václav Levý (1820–1870), who also spent several years in Rome; he later contributed to the decoration of the *Votivkirche* in Vienna.¹⁷ A similar path was followed by a pupil of Emanuel Max, Ludvík Šimek (1837–1886), who worked on sculptures in the Arsenal and the *Kunsthistorisches Museum* in the Habsburg metropolis. Among others who studied at the Munich Academy were Josef Strachovský (1850–1913) and Bohuslav Schnirch (1845–1901); the latter also trained in Vienna, where he contributed to the sculptural decoration of the Parliament.

[6] Among those Czech artists who settled in the imperial metropolis were František Melnický (1822–1876), who studied in Vienna and later ran his own sculpture workshop there, and also Antonín Wildt (1830–1883). As a result of the above-mentioned improvement in art schools in the Czech lands, Vienna became less attractive for Czech sculptors, in spite of the fact that the construction boom there continued to provide plenty of opportunities to earn a living. To complete the picture we should mention three artists trained in Prague who also made their mark in the Czech setting in the second half of the 19th century. They were Bernard Otto Seeling (1850–1895), Antonín Popp (1850–1915), who trained as a sculptor and medallist in the workshop of his father, Schwanthaler's pupil Arnošt Popp, and finally Josef Mauder (1854–1920), who studied only for a short time at the School of Arts and Crafts (*Kunstgewerbeschule*) in Vienna, and who later executed works of architectural sculpture in several German cities.

[7] The situation with regard to sculpture was different in Brno, which was traditionally oriented towards Vienna because of the short distance to the metropolis on the Danube. For example, early works by Anton Dominik Fernkorn (1813–1878) were to be seen in Brno, and the artist worked very closely at the time with the foundry of the Salm family near Blansko.¹⁸ In the field of architectural sculpture, Hans Gasser (1817–1868) made a name for himself in Brno.¹⁹ A prominent figure on the sculpture scene in Brno at the end of the 19th century was the graduate from the Viennese Academy of Fine Arts Antonín Břenek (1848–1908), who had assisted Zumbusch in his work on the monuments of Maria Theresia and Beethoven. He later made his mark with his work throughout the Monarchy. Another native of Brno and a graduate of the School of Arts and Crafts in Vienna, Karel Wollek (1862–1939) – who among other projects worked on the decoration of the *Reichstag* in Berlin – eventually settled in Vienna in 1894.²⁰

¹⁷ Taťána Petrasová and Helena Lorenzová, "Sochařství romantického historismu. Čechy 1840–1860", in: *Dějiny českého výtvarného umění III/1. 1780/1890*, eds. Taťána Petrasová and Helena Lorenzová, Prague 2001, 282-305.

¹⁸ Bruno Maria Wikingen, *Anton Dominik von Fernkorn, der Bildhauer und Erzgießer*, Diss., Universität Wien, Wien 1936, e.g. The St. George group for the Montenuovo Palace in Vienna was cast in Blansko 1853. There is no recent study on Fernkorn. Jindřich Čeladín et al., *Po stopách blanenské umělecké litiny*, Blansko 2019.

¹⁹ Arnulf Rohsmann, *Der Bildhauer H. Gasser*, Ausst.kat., Klagenfurt 1985; Jitka Sedlářová, "Sochařství romantického historismu. Morava 1840–1860", in: *Dějiny českého výtvarného umění*, eds. Petrasová and Lorenzová, 29-30.

²⁰ Jaroslav Kačer, "Sochařství historismu: Obnovená vazba sochařství a architektury", in: *Dějiny českého výtvarného umění*, eds. Petrasová and Lorenzová, 280-282.

Between Myslbek and Rodin

[8] The most prominent figure on the Czech sculpture scene in the last three decades of the 19th century was Josef Václav Myslbek (1848–1922).²¹ He was head of a special department for figural sculpture at the School of Decorative Arts in Prague (from 1885) and later at the Academy (from 1896), where most members of the younger generation of sculptors received their training.²² However, many of them had difficulty coming to terms with Myslbek's authoritative nature and abrasive manner of communication. Despite this his exceptional talent and undoubted qualities gave him a dominant status and gained him the respect of society as a whole. Myslbek's characteristic style (Fig. 3), which left its mark on the work of his pupils, especially at the very end of the 19th century, is usually referred to as *monumental realism*.²³



3 Josef Václav Myslbek, *Music*, 1907/1912. National Gallery Prague (photograph © National Gallery Prague)

It was not until around the year 1900 that Myslbek's monopoly position in the Czech sculpture scene was weakened – and temporarily even eliminated – by a wave of enthusiasm for the work of the French disruptor of the rules of the Academies, Auguste Rodin. Young Czech sculptors fell under the influence of Rodin thanks to the aforementioned activities of the Mánes Association, especially the 1902 exhibition.²⁴ This oscillation between Myslbek and Rodin is an apt and

²¹ See note 5.

²² Petr Wittlich, *Sculpture of the Czech Art Nouveau*, Prague 2001.

²³ Petr Wittlich, "The Restless Figure", in: *Neklidná figura*, eds. Baborovská and Wittlich, 14.

²⁴ Petr Wittlich, "Rodin in Prague", in: *Neklidná figura*, eds. Baborovská and Wittlich, 123-125.

generally accepted description of the situation of Czech sculpture at the transition from the 19th to the 20th century.²⁵

The Czechs and Vienna

[9] However, at around the same time, the 1890s, relations between the emancipated Czechs and Vienna came to a head, and this was also reflected in the communication between artists or artistic associations in Prague and Vienna, which until then had been problem-free. A clear example of this can be found in the numerous complications faced by Myslbek's pupil Stanislav Sucharda (1866–1916),²⁶ who was the president of the Mánes Fine Arts Association for many years during the period under discussion. From Sucharda's diaries and correspondence we know that he followed with great attention the work of most of the leading European sculptors, regardless of their nationality. He repeatedly expressed his appreciation for monuments created by Germans and Austrians, and for the work of a number of such medallists. Being bound by patriotic loyalty, however, he was unable to express his positive judgements publicly. Significantly, in this way he noted of Franz Metzner: "A great sculptor – a pity that it cannot be said out loud in our country."²⁷

[10] For the same reasons, Sucharda's professional relationships with the Viennese milieu became extremely complicated, since maintaining these ties could be seen by the radicalised Czech patriots as "a betrayal of national interests". It was therefore necessary to ignore all appeals and offers of cooperation. In May 1907, when Sucharda was sent application forms from Vienna to join the Association of Austrian Sculptors (*Künstlerverband Österreichischer Bildhauer*), he was summoned to appear before the Czech National Council, which had been formed in 1903 with the aim of "ensuring the cooperation of all officials in our nation, and in particular of Czech political parties, in all important questions relating to the common interests of the Czech nation".²⁸ The Council, represented by the delegate Karel Baxa,²⁹ made it clear to Sucharda that

It is not possible to recommend Czech societies, as voluntary associations, to amalgamate with the centralist societies in Vienna. We are opposed to imperial unions of this type [...]. It is recommended, above all, to establish a central organisation of Czech artists and to reach an understanding with Slav artists.

²⁵ See note 22.

²⁶ Wittlich, *Sculpture of the Czech Art Nouveau*, 182-215; Martin Krummholz, *Stanislav Sucharda (1866–1916)*, Nová Paka 2006; Martin Krummholz, "Stanislav Sucharda", in: *Österreichisches Biographisches Lexikon 1815–1950*, vol. 63, Vienna 2012, 26-27. Martin Krummholz, *Stanislav Sucharda 1866–1916: Tvůrčí proces / The Creative Process*, exh. cat., Prague 2020.

²⁷ Archive of the Stanislav Sucharda Museum Foundation, Prague, correspondence drafts.

²⁸ Archive of the Stanislav Sucharda Museum Foundation, Prague, correspondence drafts, newspaper clippings, correspondence duplicates.

²⁹ Karel Baxa (1862–1938), an important Czech lawyer and politician, was mayor of Prague between 1919 and 1938. Filip Štetina, *JUDr. Karel Baxa – zapomenutý politik*, unpublished thesis, Faculty of Philosophy, Charles University, Prague, 2007.

A rival organisation of the Mánes Association, the *Jednota umělců výtvarných*, accused Sucharda in the pages of the newspaper *Národní listy* that he, "the creator of the monument to Palacký [...] wanted to bring Czech sculptors under the umbrella of Vienna".³⁰ Similarly, the mere fact that in 1912 Sucharda even replied to an appeal from the *Hagenbund* Association in Vienna (which was on friendly terms with the Mánes Association) relating to membership in the newly founded Union of Austrian Artists (*Bund österreichischer Künstler*), led to a number of newspaper articles denouncing him.

[11] On the other hand, the hostile attitude of Vienna towards the uncontrollable emancipation of the Czech nation was a well-known fact, which frequently obliged individuals to tread carefully. Thus for example, Sucharda's friend and the author of the poetical inscriptions on his commemorative plaques, the poet Jaroslav Hilbert, refused to give his first name (which was clearly Slav-sounding) in the competition for the commemorative plaque to Schiller in 1905. A year earlier, and for the same reason, Sucharda himself entered a competition of the Viennese *Gesellschaft zur Förderung der österreichischen Medaillenkunst und Kleinplastik* under the neutral-sounding name of his brother-in-law Josef Groh.³¹ He did in fact win the competition, and later created several other commemorative plaques for the same society (Fig. 4).³²



4 Stanislav Sucharda, *Ten Years Anniversary plaque* of the *Gesellschaft zur Förderung der österreichischen Medaillenkunst und Kleinplastik*, 1912. Private collection (photograph © Prokop Paul)

³⁰ Archive of the Stanislav Sucharda Museum Foundation, Prague, newspaper clippings, *Národní listy*, 1st August 1908, Zasláno [Letters to the editor].

³¹ It was the plaque *Jaro (Spring)*, 1904; Archive of the Stanislav Sucharda Museum Foundation, Prague, correspondence drafts.

³² *Přástky (Spinning)*, 1904, and the *Ten Years Anniversary plaque*, 1912.

[12] The heightened tension between Vienna, which was attempting to suppress Czech ambitions, and Prague also repeatedly manifested itself in disputes about filling vacant academic and official positions, with the key criterion being the nationality or degree of loyalty of the applicant. The ministry in Vienna repeatedly preferred artists who were loyal to the Monarchy, and often very conservative. A well-known example of this was the refusal (on two occasions) to appoint Jože Plečnik as a professor at the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna, in spite of the fact that he had been proposed *primo unico loco* by the body of professors there.³³ In Prague the nationality of applicants was also a frequent cause of controversy and protests. Displays of opposition could result in the expulsion of protesting students and reprimands for teaching staff who supported them, as happened in 1900 with the appointment of Rudolf Ottenfeld. The prominent Czech patron of the arts, the architect Josef Hlávka, died in March 1908 while he was working on a paper opposing the establishment of a German branch of the Prague Academy, which the Ministry of Culture and Education was trying to push through at the time.

[13] Disputes between Czech- and German-speaking colleagues or between conservative and modern artists also broke out in the Fine Arts Department of the Czech Academy, from which Sucharda and Švabinský resigned in 1909 in protest against the award of the annual prize to the conservative František Ženíšek rather than to Jan Preisler.³⁴ An equally tense atmosphere prevailed in the board of trustees of the Modern Gallery, which had separate German and Czech sections, each of which decided on the purchase of artworks. Sucharda was a member of the Czech section for many years, and he persistently campaigned for objectivity and an appropriate representation of differing artistic opinions.³⁵

National monuments

[14] Czech monumental sculpture reached its peak with three national monuments created in Prague at the beginning of the 20th century – significantly later than similar memorials in other European countries. The works in question were statues of St Wenceslas, Jan Hus, and František Palacký. While the Provincial Assembly of Bohemia had the first one made, the other two were commissioned by the City of Prague.³⁶ Although the design by Bohuslav Schnirch was the most successful in the final competition for the St Wenceslas monument, the project was eventually entrusted to Myslbek, who had influential backers on his side. However, it is also possible that Schnirch's overly obvious orientation towards the Munich sculpture scene disqualified him. While Myslbek's statue of St Wenceslas was fully in keeping with the traditional concept of monuments, the other two national monuments in Prague were unique in their conception. Their final appearance differed considerably from the original designs submitted for the competitions in 1900 and 1901. The Hus monument was the work of Ladislav Šaloun (1870–1946), who trained

³³ Damjan Prelovšek, *Josip Plečnik. Život a dílo*, Prague 2002, 117; Andreas Gottsmann, *Staatskultur oder Kulturstaat*, Wien/Köln/Weimar 2017, 80.

³⁴ Archive of the Stanislav Sucharda Museum Foundation, Prague, correspondence duplicates.

³⁵ Archive of the Stanislav Sucharda Museum Foundation, Prague.

³⁶ Kateřina Kuthanová and Hana Svatošová, eds., *Metamorfózy politiky. Pražské pomníky 19. století*, Prague 2013.

under Bohuslav Schnirch and Tomáš Seidan, and who was the only leading sculptor of his generation to successfully avoid Myslbek's dictates. Šaloun's not particularly progressive oeuvre remained permanently in the thrall of Art Nouveau symbolism.³⁷ However, the final version of his Hus monument, just like Sucharda's statue of František Palacký,³⁸ strongly reflects the style of Auguste Rodin, the principles of which – appropriate for smaller, more intimate subjects – are here monumentalised and transposed for the purpose of monuments to national history.³⁹ Both these "restless" Prague monuments, whose concept is anomalous in the context of Europe as a whole, are characterised by a dynamic composition, the exalted nature of most of the figures, and the Impressionistic texture of the surfaces (Fig. 5).



5 Stanislav Sucharda, design for the *František Palacký Monument*, 1901. Private collection (photograph © Martin Krummholz)

Furthermore, in both cases the city of Prague clearly formulated in advance a categorical condition for any form of participation in their creation: the "Czech nationality" of all those involved.

[15] The relatively lengthy time that elapsed before the completion of the Prague monuments of Hus (1900–1915) and Palacký (1901–1912) was the cause of the generally negative reaction that followed soon after they were unveiled.⁴⁰ For at the end of the first decade of the 20th century

³⁷ Petr Wittlich, "Ladislav Šaloun", in: *Šaloun. Dotek osudu. The Touch of the Fate*, eds. Adriana Primusová et al., Kutná Hora 2018, 18-29.

³⁸ Martin Krummholz, "František Palacký im Prager Pantheon und auf dem Platz", in: *Wiener Jahrbuch für Kunstgeschichte* 63/64 (2017), 467-480.

³⁹ Martin Krummholz, "Monuments to Czech History in a Central European Context", in: *Šaloun. Dotek osudu*, eds. Primusová et al., 48-68.

⁴⁰ Both the Jan Hus and Palacký monuments are dedicated not only to a celebrated personality, they also depict an entire historical epoch (Hussitism, Czech National Revival). In both cases, the chosen location (Old Town Square, Palacký Square) was then questioned as unsuitable. The extremely intense evolution of artistic trends at the beginning of the 20th century naturally led to a turning away from these monumental colossi conceived in the spirit of the Art Nouveau symbolism around 1900. Their pathos was hardly

Czech modern sculpture underwent a development of unprecedented intensity.⁴¹ As early as 1905/1906, Rodin's emotion and expression began to give way to a new idealisation characterised by carefully thought-out material structure, solid shapes, and smooth bulks. The pioneer of this new sculptural approach in the Czech milieu was Jan Štursa (1880–1925). During a period spent working in Berlin (1898/1899), he had the opportunity to become acquainted with modern German and French sculpture, which was often exhibited there at that time.⁴² In spite of the evident pre-eminence of Aristide Maillol, whose works inspired Štursa (Fig. 6), the role of principal apostle of this new, abstract, and synthetic approach in the Czech lands was played by Antoine Bourdelle, a retrospective exhibition of whose works was staged by the Mánes Fine Arts Association in 1909.⁴³



6 Jan Štursa, *Sulamit Rahu*, 1910/1911. National Gallery Prague (photograph © National Gallery Prague)

Under his influence, neoclassically or archaically stylised figures were soon to be found not only among Štursa's works, but also in the oeuvre of Josef Mařatka (1874–1937), Otakar Španiel (1881–1955), and Bohumil Kafka (1878–1942).⁴⁴ Incidentally, when Otto Gutfreund left Prague for

compatible with modernist opinions of the second decade of the 20th century. Moreover, the dynamic, non-statuary composition has been repeatedly described as a nonsense – a denial of the nature of a monument.

⁴¹ See note 23.

⁴² Petr Wittlich, *Jan Štursa*, Prague 2008, 21; Jiří Mašin and Tibor Honty, *Jan Štursa 1880–1925*, Prague 1981, 55-57.

⁴³ See note 11.

⁴⁴ Anna Masaryková, *Josef Mařatka*, Prague 1958; Václav Vilém Štech, *Otakar Španiel*, Prague 1954; Petr Wittlich, *Bohumil Kafka (1878–1942). Příběh sochaře*, Prague 2014.

Paris in late 1909, he was still full of enthusiasm for the Bourdelle exhibition; a year later, he was to return to Prague bringing with him the inspiration for his subsequent remarkable Cubist experiments (Fig. 7).⁴⁵



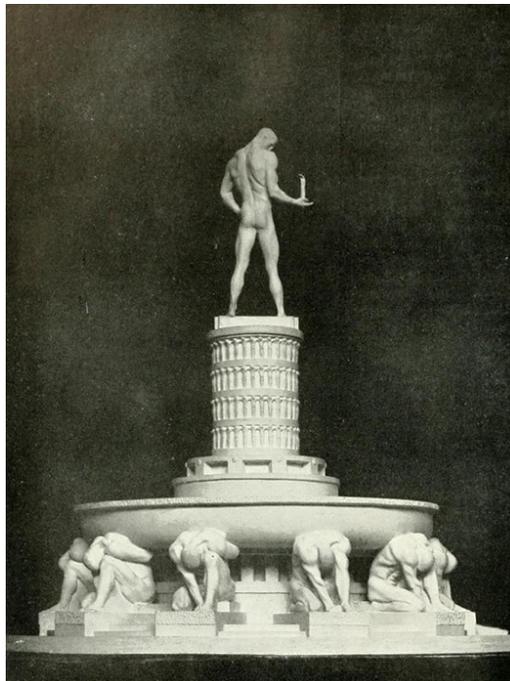
7 Otto Gutfreund, *Don Quijote*, 1911/1912. National Gallery Prague (photograph © National Gallery Prague)

The outcasts

[16] This list of leading sculptors from the vigorous early 20th century would not be complete, however, if we overlooked the most important German-speaking artists in the Czech lands. They included two of Myslbek's pupils, Alois Rieber (1876–1944) and Karl Wilfert Jr (1879–1932), who shared the fate of all German-speakers, being marginalised for many years by the art-theoretical discourse and its selection based on nationality. The most absurd aspect of the situation was that the same thing applied to the most successful of all artists in the Czech lands of their generation, Franz Metzner (1870–1919) and Hugo Lederer (1873–1940). Metzner, who was born in Všeruby in Western Bohemia, originally trained as a stonemason and did not have any kind of academic education. After leading an itinerant life for five years he settled in Berlin in 1895, and worked there as a model designer in the Royal Porcelain Factory. He soon established himself as the most talented German-speaking artist from the Czech lands and one of the most prominent sculptors of the *Vienna Secession*. His works were heavily represented at the 20th exhibition of the *Vienna Secession* (1904) and the Jubilee Exhibition (1908). From 1903 to 1906 he was a professor at the School of Arts and Crafts (*Kunstgewerbeschule*) in Vienna. He then returned to Berlin and worked on many commissions for monuments in various places in Germany, the most important being the sculptural decoration of the *Völkerschlachtdenkmal* in Leipzig (1907–1913).⁴⁶ The exceptional position of Metzner among German-speaking artists in the Czech lands was confirmed when the

⁴⁵ Štaubová, *Bourdelle a jeho žáci*, 37-41; Petrasová and Švácha, *Art in the Czech Lands*, 767-769.

association *Verein Deutsch-Böhmischer Künstler in Böhmen* was renamed *Metznerbund* soon after the artist's death (1920).⁴⁷ Although Metzner also created many works in Prague and in North Bohemian towns (Teplice, Liberec, Jablonec), most of them were destroyed in the period after the Second World War (Fig. 8).



8 Franz Metzner, *Liberec Fountain* design, 1905/1906, period photo. Private collection (photograph © Martin Krummholz)

[17] Hugo Lederer, a native of Znojmo, studied briefly in Dresden, and in 1895 he settled in Berlin, where he became professor of sculpture at the Academy there in 1919. His most outstanding early works were the *Fencer Fountain* in Wroclaw (1901–1904), and in particular the monumental *Bismarck Memorial* in Hamburg (1902–1906). He was also responsible for numerous statues and fountains in Berlin and in many other parts of Germany.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Maria Pötzl-Malikova, *Franz Metzner. Ein Bildhauer der Jahrhundertwende in Berlin – Wien – Prag – Leipzig*, Munich 1977; Jan Mohr, *Franz Metzner. Socha a architektura mezi secesí a monumentem / Skulptur und Architektur zwischen Jugendstil und Monument*, Liberec 2006; Jan Mohr, "Franz Metzner. Tvorba z let 1896–1919", in: *Sochy dnů všedních i nevšedních*, eds. Bohunka Krámská and Jan Mohr, Liberec 2010, 101-191 (summary in German, 179-191).

⁴⁷ Anna Habánová, *Dějiny uměleckého spolku Metznerbund 1920–1945/ Die Geschichte des Kunstvereins Metznerbund 1920–1945*, Liberec 2016, 139.

⁴⁸ Libor Šturc, "Der Bildhauer Hugo Lederer und sein Werk", in: *Aachen und Prag – Krönungstädte Europas. Beiträge des Kulturvereins Aachen-Prag*, vol. 3: 2006–2010, ed. Vera Blažek, Prague 2010, 54-64.

Conclusion

[18] A brief survey of the situation of Bohemian sculpture in the late 19th and early 20th centuries makes it clear how much the output of the time and the fortunes of individual artists were influenced by the changing political situation. The issue of nationality came to play a greater and greater role – whether the artists themselves set much store by it or not. The nationality of artists set clear limits to their output, and meant that they were not offered or could not accept certain commissions, and could not enter certain competitions. As a consequence, it even influenced whether or not they found a place in the canonised art-historical view of the period that was accepted almost to the end of the 20th century. So far as quality and stylistic orientation were concerned, the leading Bohemian sculptors in the mid-19th-century looked mainly towards Munich, Vienna, and Rome. The last three decades of the century were dominated by the prominent personality of Josef Václav Myslbek, whose pupils included most of the leading Bohemian sculptors of the following generations. The last decade of the 19th century then saw a revolt by young artists associated in the Mánes Fine Arts Association, who strongly rejected the existing nationalist sentiment and conservative forms of expression, in contrast to which they supported individualism and internationalism. The consequence of this successful movement was the unparalleled intensive progress and plurality of modern artistic styles in the Bohemian milieu between 1890 and 1914. Two "restless" national monuments (to František Palacký and Jan Hus) – commissioned by Prague City Council, which by then was following a deliberately pro-Czech policy – eloquently illustrate the politically motivated departure of Czech modern art from the "German" milieu. The nationalist diktat around the year 1900 practically excluded the possibility of cooperation between established Czech artists with Vienna; such activity was even seen as "a betrayal of the nation". At that time, the only Bohemian artists who maintained contacts with the capital of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy were mainly stone sculptors or artists of German nationality, who were gradually systematically edged out and marginalised by the Czech milieu.

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