



## NATIONAL ART HISTORIES: WHOSE “BEAUTIFUL STYLE”?

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In the past, academic communities of perhaps every European nation-state made individual attempts to write “national histories of art.” For Czech- and German-speaking art historians one of the most prestigious periods for such an aim was between ca. 1380 and 1420—the time of the so-called “Beautiful Style.”<sup>1</sup> A controversy about the centre and place of the origin, dating, and attribution of Beautiful Style sculpture arose between Czech- and German-speaking academic communities: Was it Prague, Vienna or Salzburg? When did the autonomous artistic production originate? To whom does this art belong?

From as early as the 1920s, various ideas started to form different conceptions of the Beautiful Style that showed the therapeutic potential medieval art had for each nation’s art history, especially during the war period.<sup>2</sup> After 1945, these stereotypes did not lose their efficacy; on the contrary, they were strengthened by institutionally supported conservatism, skepticism towards new methodological streams, and perceived necessity from adverse

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<sup>1</sup> The background of the origin of the term “Beautiful Style” lies in the history of the discipline, see Milena Bartlová, *Poctivé Obrazy* (Honest Images) (Prague: Argo, 2001), 113 (hereafter Bartlová, *Obrazy*). In the German tradition, the term “Weicher Stil” is used (with several exceptions, such as in Kunsthalle Köln, *Die Parler und der Schöne Stil 1350–1400: Europäische Kunst unter den Luxemburgern: ein Handbuch zur Ausstellung des Schnütgen-Museums in der Kunsthalle Köln*. 5 vols, ed. Anton Legner (Cologne: Museen der Stadt Köln, 1978) (hereafter Köln, *Die Parler*). Even though I will deal with contributions coming from both Czech and German language environments, it is more convenient to use a unified terminology. That is why I will use the term “Beautiful Style” (hereafter without quotation marks), keeping in mind that it belongs to the Czech tradition, which does not always correlate with the German one.

<sup>2</sup> For an overview of the extensive literature concerning Beautiful Style sculpture from the point of view of different countries, compare: Karl-Heinz Clasen, *Der Meister der Schönen Madonnen. Herkunft, Entfaltung und Umkreis* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1974) (hereafter: Clasen, *Meister*); Günter Brucher, *Geschichte der Bildenden Kunst in Österreich*, 2 – *Gotik*, (Munich: Prestel, 2000) (hereafter: Brucher, *Geschichte*); Albert Kotal, “Gotické sochařství” (Gothic Sculpture), in *Dějiny českého výtvarného umění 1/1* (History of Czech Fine Arts 1/1), ed. Rudolf Chadraba, Jiří Dvorský (Prague: Academia, 1984), 216–283; Jaromír Homolka, *Studie k počátkům umění krásného slohu v Čechách* (Study on the Beginnings of the Beautiful Style in Bohemia), *Acta Universitatis Carolinae, Philosophica et Historica*, Monographia 55 (Prague: Karlova Univerzita, 1974).



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social and political circumstances. I chose several scholars, each a representative of a different conception, in order to show in concrete cases how these versions of art history concerning this period were written, mainly in the postwar period up to the 1970s, and how personal experience and the social as well as the academic environment influenced the scholar's view of medieval art.<sup>3</sup>

### **Beautiful Style Sculpture: Between Science, Patriotism and Nationalism**

In 1991, a conference was held at the Art History Seminar in Brno on the occasion of the fifteenth anniversary of the death of former professor Albert Kutal (1904–1976). The submissions delivered by his students, colleagues, and followers, published later in the *Bulletin of the Moravian Gallery*,<sup>4</sup> sound as if they intended to present Kutal's work as truly patriotic, fighting, especially against German-language authors, for the achievements of Bohemian medieval art. Kutal, a Czech art historian, created a model of the integrated evolution of medieval art in the Czech region beginning in the second quarter of the fourteenth century, considering the Beautiful Style its peak phase; this was most clearly shown in his book *Bohemian Gothic Sculpture 1350–1450*, published in 1962.<sup>5</sup> Kutal organized the sculpture of this period internally and arranged it chronologically, using comparison with paintings where sculptural “evolutionary links” were not available. Even today, Kutal's work is presented in encyclopedic entries as “a pillar of Czech medieval studies in art history.”<sup>6</sup> Still, his concept of

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<sup>3</sup> This article is partially based on my MA thesis “National Art Histories: Czech, Austrian and German Conceptions of the Beautiful Style Sculpture,” (Central European University, 2004), and partially on further research of the same topic, focused on Albert Kutal, at the Faculty of Arts of the Masaryk University in Brno.

<sup>4</sup> Bohumil Samek, Helena Knozová et alii, “Profesor Albert Kutal – osobnost, dílo, život...” (Professor Albert Kutal—personality, work, life...), *Bulletin Moravské Galerie* 48 (1992): 3–13. In the post-1989 era, Czech art historians dedicated yet another conference to A. Kutal in 2004 (see Milena Bartlová, “Albert Kutal zum 100. Geburtstag,” *Kunstchronik* 9/10 (2004): 448–449).

<sup>5</sup> Albert Kutal, *České gotické sochařství 1350–1450* (Bohemian Gothic Sculpture 1350–1450) (Prague: Státní nakladatelství krásné literatury a umění, 1962) (hereafter Kutal, *Sochařství 1350–1450*).

<sup>6</sup> Milena Bartlová, “Albert Kutal,” in *Nová encyklopedie českého výtvarného umění* (New Encyclopedia of Czech Art), ed. Anděla Horová (Prague: Academia, 1995), 427. Great interest has been shown in the elaboration of Kutal's methodology (see Ján Bakoš, “Umeleckohistorické stanovisko Alberta Kutala” (Albert Kutal's Methodological Position), in *Štyri trasy metodológie dejín umenia* (Four Routes of Art Historical Methodology) (Bratislava: Veda, 2000), 69–107) (hereafter Bakoš, *Kutal*), as well as in his



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the Beautiful Style clearly demonstrates that during his whole scholarly career he was influenced by dealing with the opinions of his German colleagues and their views on Bohemian medieval art.

For example, his review<sup>7</sup> of a book by Karl Heinz Clasen, a German art historian, about “the Master of the beautiful Madonnas”<sup>8</sup> had the character of almost a personal disagreement between the two scholars. Clasen formulated his conception into a proposition that the “beautiful Madonnas” were sculpted by a single master who had come from the west (the Franco-Flemish region) and traveled through the Rhineland, Prussia, and Silesia to Bohemia, leaving numerous pieces of art and followers behind. In this way Clasen personified into his one-master-theory a widespread notion of so-called “West-Ost Gefälle”—an artistic influence spreading from Western to Eastern Europe—which Czech art history never relished and sought to disprove.

One of Kutal’s main points against Clasen was his search for patterns of motifs in the West when they were supposed to have existed in Bohemia even earlier. In Clasen’s postulate, “[Ein] Meister ... der als wandernder Künstler vom Westen Deutschlands nach dem Osten kam, um dort in verschiedenen Ländern tätig zu sein,”<sup>9</sup> a pan-Germanic view of the regions that were supposed to have contributed to the art of the German Empire was expressed unequivocally. As both authors were quite close in their evaluation of the artworks, Kutal lacked a methodological means to disprove the theory of artistic influences spreading eastwards from the west. Both authors based artistic development mainly on the evolution of form.

Today it might seem immaterial whether Clasen considered the “beautiful Madonnas” to be the work of a single genius or if Kutal thought there were two such personalities (tagged as Master of the Krumlov/Krumau Madonna and Master of the Toruň/Thorn Madonna). The main points of the “Beautiful Style controversy” were precisely the origin, attribution, and dating of the pieces of art. Kutal’s, as well as Clasen’s, postulates were formulations of long-held

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importance for Czech art history (see Jiří Kroupa, “Sedmdesát let dějin umění v Brně” (Seventy Years of Art History in Brno), in *Almanach 1927–1997*, ed. Jiří Kroupa, Lubomír Slavíček (Brno: Masarykova univerzita, 1997), 5–27.

<sup>7</sup> Albert Kutal, “Ein Neues Buch über die Skulptur des Schönen Stils,” *Umění* 23 (1975): 544–567.

<sup>8</sup> Clasen, *Meister*.

<sup>9</sup> Clasen, *Meister*, VII.



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opinions.<sup>10</sup> In the introduction to his book, Clasen wrote that he had finished his research before World War II, which prevented him from publishing its results earlier. Nevertheless, his opinions were already known in the academic community of Czechoslovakia; Clasen had presented them in a lecture held in Prague in October 1958, invited by the Academy of Science. On this occasion he met leading personalities among Czech art historians, such as Jan Květ and Jaroslav Pešina. Viktor Kotrba, Kotal's disciple, was also exceptionally helpful in the organization of his journey and he later summarized Clasen's opinions in *Umění* magazine.<sup>11</sup> Surprisingly, Clasen did not meet Albert Kotal on this occasion although they shared a common interest in art of the same period.<sup>12</sup>

Kotal's battlefields were not only the German origin of the Beautiful Style sculpture or its labeling as German. His review<sup>13</sup> of Dieter Großmann's article "Die Schöne Madonna von Krumau und Österreich"<sup>14</sup> was perhaps the most severe as well as humorously ironic reaction. Großmann's work set the origin of Beautiful Style sculpture into the artistic production and tradition of Salzburg, today in Austria. The German Federal Home Office supported Clasen's book and a prestigious Austrian magazine (*Österreichische Zeitschrift für Kunst und Denkmalpflege*) published Großmann's article, thus giving them the air of official opinion. Kotal considered Großmann's postulates radical, especially because the Czech contribution to Beautiful Style sculpture was simply omitted from his

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<sup>10</sup> Clasen published his theses for the first time in 1939: Karl Heinz Clasen, *Die mittelalterliche Bildbauerkunst im Deutschordensland Preussen* (Berlin: Deutscher Verein für Kunstwissenschaft, 1939).

<sup>11</sup> Viktor Kotrba, "Zpráva o přednášce profesory Dr. K. H. Clasena" (Report on the lecture by Dr. K. H. Clasen), *Umění* 7 (1959): 79.

<sup>12</sup> Because Clasen (1893–1979) spent a part of his life in the Eastern Germany, he was able to visit numerous artistic monuments otherwise unreachable for Western scholars. In 1930, Clasen became a professor at the University of Königsberg, together with Wilhelm Worringer. In 1940, he moved to the University of Rostock and after World War II, in 1949, he obtained a scholarly position in Greifswald in Eastern Germany. Clasen was also one of the first members of the German Academy in the GDR (1951). (Lee Sorensen, "Karl-Heinz Clasen," in *A Biographical Dictionary of Historians, Museum Directors and Scholars of Art* (Duke University Libraries, 2003). <http://www.lib.duke.edu/lilly/artlibry/dah/clasenk.htm> (accessed 20 January 2004).

<sup>13</sup> Albert Kotal, "Tři příspěvky k dějinám české gotické plastiky" (Three Contributions to the History of the Bohemian Gothic Sculpture), *Umění* 10 (1962): 106–109 (hereafter Kotal, *Tři příspěvky*).

<sup>14</sup> Dieter Großmann, "Die Schöne Madonna von Krumau und Österreich", *Österreichische Zeitschrift für Kunst und Denkmalpflege* 14 (1960): 103–114 (hereafter Großmann, *Krumau*).



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conception.<sup>15</sup> Großmann documented this point well when he deduced the ethnic origin of art from the localization of some of the sculptures in the Southern Bohemian region, which he considered Czech-German – politically belonging to the Czech lands but having German settlement until 1945. He obtained this finding from a publication with the symptomatic title *Atlas zur Geschichte der deutschen Ostsiedlung*.<sup>16</sup>

While Kutal communicated with Clasen by means of scholarly publications and reviews, Großmann was his personal acquaintance and they kept up an extensive correspondence.<sup>17</sup> They informed each other about their books, sent each other offprints and photographs of artworks (especially at the time when Großmann worked in the *Bildarchiv* in Marburg). Kutal’s review of Großmann’s article, however, in a journal that published articles and reviews in German as well as Czech, was mentioned in none of their letters. Its ironic form and use of the Czech language strongly imply that it was meant for the Czech audience. The language barrier was a considerable impediment in the communication between Czech and foreign scholarly communities, so it is quite easy to distinguish whom the authors intended to address. While the Czech review of Großmann’s book was an ironically meant personal comment, the reaction to Clasen’s book, written in German, was a part of a long-lasting personal controversy made public.

At least three generations of art historians sought to clarify the questions of the Beautiful Style concerning form, evolution, and the ethnic, national or geographic origin of certain pieces of art. As demonstrated in the examples of Clasen, Großmann, and Kutal, it took the form of an argument between three parties: Czech, German, and Austrian (and partially Hungarian).<sup>18</sup> Only a year after Kutal’s review of Clasen’s book another reaction to the same work by Robert Suckale was published. This shows a completely different type of

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<sup>15</sup> Kutal, *Trři příspěvky*, 108.

<sup>16</sup> Wilfried Krallert, *Atlas zur Geschichte der deutschen Ostsiedlung* (Bielefeld: Velhagen und Klasing, 1958).

<sup>17</sup> Part of this correspondence is kept in the Archive of the Faculty of Arts of the Masaryk University in Brno, file B 30 *Albert Kutal* (hereafter B 30 FF MU) (II/C/30), part in the Archive of the Germanisches Nationalmuseum Nürnberg, file ZR ABK 3634, *Nachlass Dieter Großmann* (hereafter ZR ABK 3634 GNM) (23), ranging from 1961 to 1970.

<sup>18</sup> The discussion about the artistic role of Hungary in this period arose especially with the findings of sculptural fragments from Buda; for the latest summary with bibliography see András Végh, “Gotische Statuen aus dem Königspalast in Buda,” in *Hans Multscher. Bildbauer der Spätgotik in Ulm*, ed. Brigitte Reinhardt (Ulm: Süddeutsche Verlagsgesellschaft, 1997), 71–86.



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criticism, not inquiring into nationalist preconceptions but interested rather in the method of approach to artistic material. Suckale preferred not to study this problem from the point of view of dating and attribution but rather in relation to the theology, religiosity or liturgical function of the time, as he demonstrated in his article about the Madonna from Šternberk (Sternberg), published in the *Die Parler und der Schöne Stil* catalogue.<sup>19</sup> This review, published a mere year later than the review by Kutal, represents completely different methodological principles as well as an opposing opinion that:

...man kann nicht immer sicher sein, dass sich individuell-handschriftliche Züge durchsetzen. Deshalb sind Künstleroeuvres dieser Epoche, wenn sie nur auf Stilkritik fußen, im hohen Masse spekulativ, so sehr, dass man zu fragen hat, ob nicht die darauf verwandte große Energie besser für die Lösung anderer Probleme eingesetzt würde.<sup>20</sup>

Nevertheless, the methodological twist, as outlined above, did not take place in the Czech, German or Austrian medieval studies in art history concerned with the Beautiful Style sculpture in the 1970s. Many of the conclusions of that time were taken for granted and similar problems were still being solved.

### **The Beautiful Style in the Czech–German Dialogue**

In 1964, the idea was born to hold a great representative exhibition of Bohemian medieval art and Albert Kutal had a fundamental role in its preparation. The show was at first scheduled for 1965 and was supposed to take place in the Vladislav Hall in Prague castle. The next year, in 1966, Albert Kutal wrote to his friend and colleague Robert Didier that the preparatory commission had set to work, a list of exhibits had been prepared, the authors of the catalogue appointed and so on, and he saw the financial support as the only problem. “Mais je suis plein d’espérance,” he concluded.<sup>21</sup> One year later, Kutal wrote to the same addressee that the exhibition had been postponed until 1967 because “it was not possible to finish the restoration work in such a short term.”<sup>22</sup> After that it was put off “for sure” to the dates of 15 August to 15

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<sup>19</sup> Robert Suckale, “Die Sternberger Schöne Madonna”, in Köln, *Die Parler V*, 117–122.

<sup>20</sup> Robert Suckale, “Review of C. H. Clasen, *Der Meister der Schönen Madonnen. Herkunft, Entfaltung und Umkreis*,” *Kunstchronik* 29 (1976): 247.

<sup>21</sup> Kutal to Didier, B 30 FF MU (C/18), 22. 10. 1966.

<sup>22</sup> Kutal to Didier, B 30 FF MU (C/18), without precise dating, in 1967.



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October 1968, by which time its doom was politically sealed.<sup>23</sup> Nothing but a catalogue, co-authored by the most important Czech historians of medieval art,<sup>24</sup> resulted from the great preparations. The twists and turns of this project illustrate well how social and political restrictions influenced presentation of art history research and at the same time what an impact such limited presentations had on scholarly work.

The main impulse of the Prague project was declared to be a reaction to the exhibition *Europäische Kunst um 1400*, which had taken place in 1962 in the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna. This exhibition was one among a number of similar activities supported by the Council of Europe every year after 1955.<sup>25</sup> The Czech exhibition was supposed to react deliberately to the Viennese one, especially because not a single sculpture from Czechoslovakia made it to Vienna. Therefore, in the preliminary outline of the Prague exhibition Kutal wrote that the Czech project should follow two principal objectives: firstly, it should complete the image that the scholarly public would have seen of the situation in art around 1400 and add its “Eastern” parallels (or more precisely, parallels from the Eastern Bloc) during the Viennese exhibition. And secondly,

Unlike the conception of the exposition in Vienna that accentuated the international character of production and culture around 1400, it should point out the local and international character of the Bohemian production. ... The artistic material we have gathered would be a strong argument in the discussion about the character and importance of Bohemian art around 1400.<sup>26</sup>

According to Kutal, despite the fact that the Beautiful Style was supposed to be nothing but a variant of the International Style, it had a specific position within this period, and considering its expression and genesis it was “indeed Bohemian.”<sup>27</sup> Kutal supported this argument with two of the basic principles of his work: formal analysis of the art object and observation of concrete

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<sup>23</sup> I refer here to the occupation of Czechoslovakia by the USSR in August 1968.

<sup>24</sup> Jaroslav Pešina, František Kavka et alii, *České umění gotické 1350–1420* (Bohemian Gothic Art) (Praha: Academia, 1970).

<sup>25</sup> *Europäische Kunst um 1400* in Vienna was the eighth exhibition in a row (the former ones had taken place in Brussels, Amsterdam, Rome, Munich, London, Paris, and Barcelona) that had presented subjects assumed to prove the connection among European countries, e.g. humanism, mannerism, rococo etc.

<sup>26</sup> B 30 FF MU (II/F/1), Kutal’s preliminary outline of the exhibition of Bohemian art around 1400.

<sup>27</sup> B 30 FF MU (III/b/A/6), from Kutal’s university lecture “Bohemian sculpture at the end of the 14th century and its international links” (without dating).



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evolutionary similarities. On this basis Kutal created lines of evolution, where each work of art had its own firm place. Due to the causality of the lines of evolution he was even able to ascribe sculptural material situated outside Bohemian borders to the framework of Bohemian sculpture (which was the case of the Madonnas from Altenmarkt and Linz in Austria). When Kutal applied the principle of concrete evolutionary-genetic connection, and thus the description of Beautiful Style genesis became his main goal, he determined not only its formal but also its territorial sources.

In Kutal's opinion the form was at the same time an expression of spiritual streams within the society, ideas embodied in the material that were based on man's perception of the world. This view of the evolution of medieval art consisted of the interaction between two diverse stylistic streams: the Mediterranean, based on the observation of reality (spatial forms), and the Northern stream, based on abstraction (linear forms).<sup>28</sup> This way, according to Kutal, art oscillated between spirituality expressed in abstraction and an inclination to the "organic feeling" conveyed in realistic forms. These streams were supposed to be identifiable with man's relation to the world and reality and, importantly, they were inherent in human psychology reflected in artworks. It is easily deducible that both Kutal's conceptions (formal analysis and conception of two polar streams) originated from the methodological basis of the Vienna School of art history.<sup>29</sup>

Kutal, however, added one more stream to the bi-polar model that, according to him, arose in the middle of the fourteenth century and was defined by the relation to space. Non-spatiality, in terms of geometric definition, was supposed to be characteristic of all Bohemian art. Precisely in this way, in the period of the Beautiful Style, "the shapes of objects separated from their surroundings and space acquired a non-optical, symbolic character."<sup>30</sup> Kutal

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<sup>28</sup> Kutal, *Sochařství 1350–1450*, 9. See also Bakoš, *Kutal*, 71.

<sup>29</sup> Bakoš, *Kutal*, 74–75. The origin of this perception goes back to Max Dvořák (1874–1921), and further even to Alois Riegl (1858–1905), both important representatives of the Vienna school. It was mediated to Kutal by Vincenc Kramář who himself studied in Vienna. Kramář was, together with Eugen Dostál, Kutal's mentor and after 1919 the director of the institution that later became the National Gallery in Prague (in 1949).

<sup>30</sup> Kutal, *Sochařství 1350–1450*, 73. A similar way of thinking about the role of space can be found by Otto Pächt. Nevertheless, Kutal applied its understanding following Kramář, who declared one of the specific features of the Beautiful Style to be the unreal character of space (see Jaromír Homolka, "K problematice české plastiky 1350–1450" (On the Problematic of Bohemian Sculpture 1350–1450), *Umění* 11 (1963): 444, note 81. It was yet another Czech art historian, Václav Mencl (1905–1978), who designated this feature as a Bohemian specific.



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assumed Bohemian art to have played the leading role in European art, firstly because it was able to unite these two antagonistic poles in its unique way and secondly, because it “neglected” the construction of optical space.

Also, the characteristics like refinement and emotionality were supposed to fit into this concept. All those aspects were supposed to combine into the Beautiful Style and that is why it was assumed to have been one of the most important and most characteristic periods of Bohemian medieval art. Kotal added that there had to be a reason for these specifics: “deeper roots in the national psychology of that time.”<sup>31</sup> At this point he adhered implicitly to Birnbaum’s concept of “the law of transgression.”<sup>32</sup> Kotal assumed, together with Birnbaum, that each nation had its own unique creative potential and was able to express it in certain historical periods: “The nation overtakes the leadership at the moment when a style comes to the period that corresponds to its mental skills.”<sup>33</sup>

As Kotal was one of the main organizers of the Czech “exhibition 1968” project, there was a tendency to point out the national character of Bohemian medieval art. In contrast, the explicit objective of the *Europäische Kunst um 1400* exhibition in Vienna was “to demonstrate the cultural unity of Europe in its most valuable manifestations, i.e. in its artistic creations ... and to make the great public conscious of this unity.”<sup>34</sup> The subject of the exhibition was proposed by Vinzenz Oberhammer, at that time director of the Kunsthistorisches Museum; although originally a presentation of modern European art of the second half of the twentieth century had been planned, Oberhammer put through medieval art around 1400. As he declared in a radio interview, the reason was that this period could be termed “eines der europäischsten.”<sup>35</sup> At the same time, Vienna was thought to be a particularly suitable place for such a

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<sup>31</sup> Kotal, *Sochařství 1350–1450*, 73.

<sup>32</sup> Vojtěch Birnbaum (1877–1934) was one of the most prominent figures of Czech pre-war art history. His concept of the law of transgression was published in Vojtěch Birnbaum, “Doplňk k vývojovým zákonům?” (An addition to the evolutionary laws?), in *Vývojové zákonitosti v umění* (Evolutionary laws in art), ed. Ivo Hlobil (Prague: Odeon, 1987, first published 1932), 47–50.

<sup>33</sup> Albert Kotal, “Problém slovanství v českém umění” (The problem of Slavism in Czech art), in *Slovanství v českém národním životě* (Slavism in Czech national life), ed. Josef Macůrek (Brno: Rovnost, 1947), 166.

<sup>34</sup> Archiv des Kunsthistorisches Museums Wien, file V 160, *Europäische Kunst um 1400* (hereafter V 160 KHM) (Protokoll 39), press release.

<sup>35</sup> V 160 KHM (without numbering), document for broadcasting.



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presentation due to its relations to this art: “[da] Österreich in die Entwicklung dieses Stiles große Bedeutung gehabt hatte.”<sup>36</sup>

A strong group of art historians who had returned from emigration in the postwar period appeared on the list of preparatory commission participants of the exposition and its catalogue. Among them were, for example, Otto Benesch,<sup>37</sup> Otto Demus,<sup>38</sup> and Otto Pächt,<sup>39</sup> who was appointed to write the introductory article to the catalogue (instead of Erwin Panofsky, as had been formerly intended).<sup>40</sup>

In Otto Pächt’s work one can find many concepts similar to those of Kutal; their methodological principles were close.<sup>41</sup> Nevertheless, Pächt, surely influenced by the proclaimed aim of the exposition, contributed to the view that the art around 1400 was seen more as a pan-European phenomenon. In this sense he used the term “Gesamteuropäische Kunstsprache” in the opening article of the catalogue, where his essential thesis appeared to be that the creative potential in art around 1400 arose from the junction of different national cultures. According to Pächt, none of the centers—Prague, Paris, Cologne or Milan—could be proclaimed the place of origin of this style: “Zu dieser Zeit hat kein Land die Führerrolle allein innegehabt, keinem einzelnen Ort gebührt der Vorrang.”<sup>42</sup>

Nevertheless, one vital premise was present at the base of Pächt’s method; he again assumed that it was possible to define individual cultures by means of psychological constants. In the structure of an artwork, he was looking for basic elements such as the relation of a figure and its background or the relation of form and space. From these ways of representation, he abstracted two main streams, Northern and Italian. Even though he perceived artistic evolution in its complicated scope as a fusion of elements from different European domains

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<sup>36</sup> V 160 KHM (Protokoll 17).

<sup>37</sup> O. Benesch (1896–1964) became a director of Albertina when he returned from emigration after the end of World War II.

<sup>38</sup> O. Demus (1902–1990) accepted a position as the president of the Bundesdenkmalamt in Vienna.

<sup>39</sup> O. Pächt (1902–1988) returned to the Kunsthistorisches Institut at the university in Vienna, where he had been an assistant to K. M. Swoboda before World War II.

<sup>40</sup> V 160 KHM (Protokoll 33).

<sup>41</sup> For Pächt’s biography and methodology, see Martina Sitt, “Otto Pächt: Am Anfang war das Auge”, in *Kunsthistoriker in Eigener Sache*, ed. Martina Sitt (Berlin: Reimer, 1990), 25–61.

<sup>42</sup> Otto Pächt, “Die Gotik der Zeit um 1400 als Gesamteuropäische Kunstsprache”, in *Europäische Kunst um 1400. Ausstellung unter den Auspizien des Europarates*, ed. Otto Pächt (Vienna: Kunsthistorisches Museum Wien, 1962), 53 (hereafter Pächt, *Gotik*).



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(delimited as Italy and the territory north of the Alps), he considered only characteristics inherent to these two regions, e.g. the Italian sense for realistic depiction (“Verräumlichung der Dingwelt, Veranschaulichung der Körperlichkeit”) and abstraction in the northern art (“Erschliessung des Freiraumes, des Unkörperlichen”).<sup>43</sup> Both streams were supposed to have influenced each other; on the one hand, the rhythmic and dynamic northern character influenced Italian art, which afterwards had to change its original static way of dealing with space. On the other hand, northern art had to adapt from two-dimensional to three-dimensional space. The Beautiful Style was supposed to have originated from this fusion.

According to Pächt’s interpretation, this new style was Northern or, using different terminology, German, which also included artistic production from Bohemia and Austria. Pächt was sure that the form of the Beautiful Style canon was possible only in German sculpture where the new linearity was merged with the Italian sense of spatiality. German art might have lost its characteristic expression around 1400, but that applied to only its more delicate and lyric version. New types of lyric and sensual Madonnas or Pietàs of German provenance may have succeeded beyond the frontiers of their origin, especially back in Italy, because they were made according to the principles of Italian art. Italy embraced this production because it drew on Italian prototypes. This was what Pächt called a typical “dialogue among nations.” The more aesthetic (and less formal) the aim was, the more it was European: “Und so ließe sich vielleicht sagen, dass in dem Masse, als diese Zielsetzung eine ästhetische war, sie eine europäische zu werden vermochte.”<sup>44</sup>

However, the final exhibition of the artworks and their cataloguing was carried out in a different, far more “traditional,” way. The artworks from Austria were in the most prominent place, followed by the German collection, and then by art from other European countries.<sup>45</sup> The preparatory commission considered the question of arranging possible loans of artwork from Czechoslovakia several times. Otto Benesch, especially, interceded for them and on this occasion he pointed out: “Es ist grundsätzlich daran gedacht, Leihgaben von der Č.S.S.R. zu erbitten. ...soll bezüglich Böhmens nicht nur der Einflusskreis gezeigt werden, das Zentrum jedoch nicht.”<sup>46</sup> However, the Czech group (particularly the politically involved) did not show any interest in presenting its

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<sup>43</sup> Pächt, *Gotik*, 60.

<sup>44</sup> Pächt, *Gotik*, 65.

<sup>45</sup> Belgium, the Netherlands, England, France, Italy, Sweden, and one item each from Spain and Switzerland.

<sup>46</sup> V 160 KHM (Protokoll 3).



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pieces of art in the Viennese exhibition. Even Kutal had difficulties obtaining permission to leave Czechoslovakia in order to visit it and until the last moment it was uncertain whether he would be able to see it.<sup>47</sup> Finally, he succeeded and later he was even given the opportunity to present his views on the Czech contribution to the Beautiful Style.<sup>48</sup> However, Kutal was never allowed to hang “his” exhibition of Bohemian medieval art, although, as he pointed out in the exhibition outline, employing the official rhetoric, it would have been “without doubt a politically important act, also because it would show the international public how the People’s democratic states appreciate their cultural history.”<sup>49</sup> As earlier in Vienna, the Czechs gained support of an international organization and the exhibition was supposed to be “added to the cycle of UNESCO cultural events and supported by this organization.”<sup>50</sup> The opposition of the two conceptions of the Beautiful Style, Western art history versus the “Eastern Bloc” concept, was clearly reflected in the list of participating countries. Works of art from Yugoslavia, Hungary, the USSR, the German Democratic Republic (so-called “East Germany”), Poland, and Romania were supposed to be included, but not only because of difficult communication with the Western states. In fact, no official cooperation with the countries “on the other side of the border” was envisaged (Kutal’s effort to borrow the Madonna from Altenmarkt came later, but he always regarded it as Bohemian). In a manner of speaking, the “Eastern Bloc” conception of the Beautiful Style was born.

Meanwhile two other exhibitions concerning the Beautiful Style took place in Salzburg, both arranged according to iconographic themes. The first one concerned Madonna sculptures (*Schöne Madonnen 1350–1450*) in 1965,<sup>51</sup> the second, pietàs (*Stabat mater, Maria unter dem Kreuz in der Kunst um 1400*) in 1970, i.e. after final failure of the Czech project).<sup>52</sup> The ambitions of the preparatory

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<sup>47</sup> Kutal sent two urgent demands for travel permission, even to the Ministry of Culture of ČSSR. B 30 FF MU (II/B/4), 16. 7. 1962.

<sup>48</sup> B 30 FF MU (III/b/B/16), *Sculpture of the Beautiful Style*, (Graz and Vienna, 1964); (III/b/B/17); *Bohemian art of the 1480s* (Vienna, 1965); (III/b/B/18), *Beautiful Pietàs* (Vienna, 1965).

<sup>49</sup> B 30 FF MU (III/F/1), Kutal’s preliminary outline of the exhibition of Bohemian art around 1400.

<sup>50</sup> Archive of the National Gallery in Prague, file 821/67, 12. 2. 1967.

<sup>51</sup> Dieter Großmann, *Schöne Madonnen 1350–1450*, ed. Johannes Neuhardt (Salzburg: Salzburger Domkapitel, 1965).

<sup>52</sup> Dieter Großmann, *Stabat Mater. Maria unter dem Kreuz in der Kunst um 1400*, ed. Dieter Großmann (Salzburg: Salzburger Domkapitel, 1970).



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team were not small, as can be seen in the declaration of one of the organizers; Sebastian Achorner stated: “Wir hoffen, dass im Zusammenhang mit dieser Ausstellung etliche wissenschaftliche Frage gelöst werden können.”<sup>53</sup> Despite material analyses of artworks that were expected to bring decisive results, the exhibition was a breakthrough and memorable due to a large number of visitors, which led directly to an attempt to repeat its success five years later.<sup>54</sup>

Johannes Neuhardt, the head organizer, also invited Dieter Großmann to cooperate. Thus, he was given an exceptional opportunity to present his conception of the Salzburg–Viennese origin of Beautiful Style sculpture, which he had published at the beginning of the 1960s (in an article dealing with the Austrian origin of the Krumlov Madonna).<sup>55</sup>

The first exhibition was not focused exclusively on the close group of Beautiful Style sculptures; the lower limit of 1350 was not chosen accidentally. The intention was to present the continuity of artistic development in Austria in the time frame beginning in mid-century and culminating in the Beautiful Style. Großmann shared the specific conception of Austrian medieval sculpture formulated by Franz Kieslinger and Karl Ginhart,<sup>56</sup> which took into account its special “psychological setting.” Despite assumed changes of the outer formal character during the time, qualities like “liebliche Anmut, Feinheit und Liebenswürdigkeit” generally and “höchste Steigerung der Eigentümlichkeiten des Weichen Stiles – Lieblichkeit, Fülle und Weichheit” in the Beautiful Style were supposed to remain inherent.

Großmann thought Salzburg was an autonomous artistic region, above all because of its political and ecclesiastical independence. This artistic autonomy was assumed to have appeared at the end of the fourteenth century, especially in the group of “Madonnas on the Lion” (characterized again by formal refinement). These Madonnas were supposed to have come originally from the “deutschen Osten” (Silesia, in the debated period a part of Bohemian Crown lands) and to be directly related to Austrian examples. Großmann eliminated the

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<sup>53</sup> Achorner to Kutal, B 30 FF MU (II/C/1), 19. 7. 1965.

<sup>54</sup> “Die 75 000 Besucher waren für eine Ausstellung dieser Art damals recht viel; fünf Jahre später, bei der “Stabat Mater,” wurden sie nicht erreicht, obwohl der Diözesankonservator [J. Neuhardt] in seiner Verzweiflung noch mit nachträglich erstellten Plakaten “Madonnenausstellung” selbst an der Autobahn warb.” Großmann to Meier, ZR ABK 3634 GNM (55), 29. 1. 1987.

<sup>55</sup> Großmann, *Krumau*.

<sup>56</sup> Franz Kieslinger, *Zur Geschichte der Gotischen Plastik in Österreich* (Vienna: Krystall Verlag, 1923); Karl Ginhart, “Die Gotische Plastik in Wien,” in *Geschichte der bildenden Kunst in Wien 2: Gotik*, ed. R. K. Donin (Vienna: Verein für Geschichte der Stadt Wien, 1955), 1–81.



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mediating role of Bohemia. By analogy with the importance of the Madonnas on the Lion, Großmann emphasized the importance of local Beautiful Style pieces.

Großmann acquired a special interest in Silesian medieval art at the beginning of his activities in the J. G. Herder Institute in Marburg (1963). This institute supported above all studies in the history and monuments of Eastern Europe, particularly Poland. Großmann even had to learn Polish and Czech to be able to focus on the “Silesian question”<sup>57</sup> in medieval art: “Meine Tätigkeit im Herder-Institut schlägt sich erst jetzt erstmals in etwas bemerkenswerterem Ausmaß gedruckt nieder, nämlich in einem etwa 80-seitigen Bericht über das Schicksal der Kunstdenkmäler in Niederschlesien seit 1945.”<sup>58</sup> The construction of a direct relation between Austrian and Silesian art also appeared in his article about the Wrocław Madonna.<sup>59</sup>

It is remarkable how Großmann reconsidered his understanding of the initiative role of Bohemia in the Beautiful Style. In his article from 1960 he completely excluded Bohemia from its hub, incorporated the Krumlov Madonna into the development of Austrian sculptural production and proclaimed it an import from Salzburg: “Salzburg und damit Österreich ist die Heimat der Krumauer Madonna.”<sup>60</sup> Five years later he watered down his language and admitted the existence of a Bohemian contribution, especially in terms of painting and partially in Parlerian sculpture. Probably he was influenced in this respect by his extensive contacts with Czech art historians, primarily Kotal.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Großmann to Kotal, B 30 FF MU (C/30), 11. 1. 1964.

<sup>58</sup> Großmann to Kotal, B 30 FF MU (C/30), 28. 2. 1967.

<sup>59</sup> Dieter Großmann, “Die Breslauer Schöne Madonna und ihr Typus in Westdeutschland“, *Städte Jahrbuch* 6 (1977): 231–264. For the question of the early dating of the Wrocław Madonna from the church of St. Elizabeth by Austrian art historians, see Milena Bartlová, *Mistr Týnské kalvárie* (The Master of the Týn Calvary) (Prague: Academia, 2004), 67–68.

<sup>60</sup> Großmann, *Krumau*, 114.

<sup>61</sup> Both art historians visited each other several times in the 1960s and 1970s. Großmann had a special relation to Czech art history, where for him Kotal was one of the most important names. Großmann considered Kotal’s results in the field of Gothic sculpture very important. He tried intensively to have his book from 1962 (Kotal, *České gotické sochařství 1350–1450*) published in German, so as to make it available to the foreign public (in the end it was published as Albert Kotal, *Gotische Kunst in Böhmen* [Prague: Artia, 1971]). Großmann’s inclination to Czech (and Polish) art history was perhaps also influenced by the weak approval of his work in the German environment, especially because he was not allowed to proceed in his academic career. Despite this, he took a teaching position at the University of Marburg in 1979. Thus, his first important project



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If he remained consistent in his opinion on the primacy of Austrian art from two centers, Vienna and Salzburg, at this time he derived it particularly from the actual geographical distribution of preserved pieces. Yet, by doing that, he rather problematically merged once-independent regions under the term “Austrian medieval art” in one artistic-territorial unit derived from modern political borders of the twentieth century.

Despite the fact that the reaction to Großmann’s theses, presented at both exhibitions and further in their catalogues, was mainly critical, Kutal did not underestimate them and thought it fundamental to comment on them on several occasions.<sup>62</sup> At the same time, he could not express any other opinion than a flat refusal of Großmann’s conception of the Beautiful Style sculpture. This dispute over their common material remained heated during the time of their contact; *per contra*, it was because of personal contacts that some artworks could be lent from Prague to the Salzburg exhibition, such as the Madonna from the National Gallery. It was not easy, though, and for some time it seemed that this Madonna from Hallstatt (as she was named by Großmann; Kutal always wrote about the “Prague variant of the Krumlov Madonna”) would not be loaned by the Czech side. Großmann was well aware of the trickiness of the whole situation, as he commented in a letter to J. Neuhardt:

Sie [Krofta<sup>63</sup> und Kutal] möchten ja nun doch einmal, dass a) die Krumauer Madonna nicht österreichisch sondern böhmisch sei, und b) dass die Gruppe um Hallstatt/Bad Aussee davon abhinge und nicht vorherginge [Großmann himself did not consider these artworks to be copies, but models for the Krumlov Madonna]. Professor Kutal ist nicht so kleinlich, uns wegen einer solchen Frage keine Unterstützung zu gewähren, aber von Dr. Krofta weiß ich nicht, ob er auch so denkt, und will es nicht gerade in diesem Augenblick ausprobieren.<sup>64</sup>

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was the exhibition in Salzburg, where he was invited by Austrian scholars, and at the end he had the possibility of taking part in the scholarly collegium at the *Die Parler und der Schöne Stil* exhibition in Cologne in 1978.

<sup>62</sup> Albert Kutal, “K problému krásných madon” (On the problem of Beautiful Madonnas), *Umění* 5 (1966): 433–458; idem, “Výstava Stabat Mater v Salcburku” (The Stabat Mater exposition in Salzburg), *Umění* 19 (1971): 402–421.

<sup>63</sup> Jan Krofta, director of the National Gallery in Prague, 1960–1967.

<sup>64</sup> Großmann to Neuhardt, Konsistorialarchiv Salzburg, Domassstellungen 19/72, *Ausstellung 1965 “Schöne Madonnen.”* (Korrespondenz A–J), 24. 02. 1965. Yet in the 1990s it was to be shown that questions about the origin of artworks of the Beautiful Style did not lose their importance and remained a controversial issue. In 1995 the National



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### The Logic of Evolution and the “Krumlov Madonna Case”

The Krumlov Madonna, a high-quality artwork, generally became a favorite substitute element where different conceptions of particular authors clashed. The results of such work were bound to differ due to the methods applied.

Retrospectively, it often seems that the development of a historical situation is relatively well known. For art history that focused on formal evolution, this development was often also foreseeable, for it not only started from a known situation, but it also headed towards a supposed goal. Thus, this idea included the predictability of future development. It is interesting how the artworks assumed to have been at the beginning or the end of the development were defined, and how each artwork was assigned a position as the framework of development was being constructed.

At the same time, the effort to grant different regions creative potential, meaning the ability to give the style new impulses, was introduced into the concept of artistic development. One of the important criteria was reflected in the fact that the modern idea of “progress” as a positive value in the development of style was often projected onto medieval art.<sup>65</sup> This was expressed in the appreciation for artworks that involved new creative elements and were not “only” repeating or copying “earlier” elements.

The Krumlov Madonna statue was discovered in Krumlov in southern Bohemia before World War I and taken to the Kunsthistorisches Museum in

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Gallery in Prague acquired a statue of a saint holding a book that seemed to have been lost since the 1920s and that had been published earlier by Großmann (Kunsthalle, *Die Parler*, 141). According to his son, Dr. Ulrich Großmann (personal interview in Nürnberg, 29. 1. 2005), he was then very disillusioned by the fact that this piece of art was presented in Prague as Bohemian “without further argumentation” (see the catalogue Jiří Fajt et alii, *Světice s knihou* [Saint Virgin Holding a Book] [Prague: Národní Galerie, 1996], hereafter Fajt, *Světice*). His opinion was that its provenance could have been from Vienna, Salzburg or Prague and that none of these places could be clearly ascertainable. If he inclined to the line Salzburg–Vienna in the 1960s, later he saw this question more openly and refused straightforward definitions.

<sup>65</sup> See Milena Bartlová, “Madona z dominikánského kláštera v Plzni. Problém vývojového a kvalitativního hodnocení” (The Madonna from the Dominican Cloister in Plzeň. The problem of estimating quality and evolution), in *Gotika v západních Čechách, Sborník příspěvků z mezinárodního vědeckého sympozia* (Gothic in Western Bohemia. International Conference Proceedings, Summary Volume), ed. Jiří Fajt, Hana Laštovková, Tatjana Štenberová (Prague: Národní galerie, 1998), 48–49.



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Vienna.<sup>66</sup> Because of its highly esteemed artistic quality, different authors tried to incorporate it into the artistic development of different countries, applying the presumed “inner logic of evolution.” The logic of evolution was driven by the idea of a style being subject to the laws of natural evolution that gradually passes through the stages of origin, peak, and decline. In this way, an artistic style behaved as a natural phenomenon.<sup>67</sup> While combining criteria like quality and progress, it was important to search for and find (or appropriate) artworks that fitted into the phases of development and proved this inner logic. Moreover, when an inherent quality was discovered in one region, it was supposed to imply the existence of artworks with the same qualities. Therefore, it happened that artworks with this supposed quality discovered in different regions were included into one style-geographical unit.

This “home tradition,” based on the continuity of artistic development in one territory and the legitimacy of its origins, was a basic element of many concepts of Beautiful Style sculpture. The “Viennese postulate” and its two main representatives, F. Kieslinger and K. Ginhart (and nowadays Lothar Schultes)<sup>68</sup> assumed that the Krumlov Madonna had a legitimate predecessor in Vienna and that it belonged to the production of the Herzogswerkstatt (the workshop of the Viennese court). This was supposed to prove that it could not have originated in Bohemia. The presumed predecessors were, for example, the Madonna from the chapel of St. Eligius or the Madonna from the Museum der Stadt Wien (originally from the southern tower of St. Stephan’s cathedral), the Dienstbotenmadonna or the Madonna from the Minoritenkirche, especially because of their “specific refinement and gracefulness.”

Dieter Großmann, who handled types of the Beautiful Madonnas as closed units, grouped individual pieces of art around one prototype, either known or assumed, and searched for its copies. From this perspective the Madonna from Altenmarkt in the Salzburg region was seen as the oldest prototype or “a reflection of a lost prototype.” For Großmann, the next step in the development was the Madonna from Hallstatt near Salzburg (today in the National Gallery in Prague). He derived the Krumlov Madonna from this statue and declared it an export from Salzburg. Moreover, he supported his statement with quantitative evidence of statues from the Salzburg region.

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<sup>66</sup> First published by Richard Ernst, “Die Krumauer Madonna der k. k. Staatsgalerie,” *Jahrbuch des Kunsthistorischen Instituts der K. K. Zentralkommission für Denkmalspflege* 11 (1917): 109–131.

<sup>67</sup> For a critique of such an understanding of “style” see Bartlová, *Obrazy*, 28–29.

<sup>68</sup> For Kieslinger and Ginhart, see note 57. For Schultes, see his catalogue entries in Brucher, *Geschichte*.



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Albert Kutal did not doubt the Bohemian origin of the Krumlov Madonna, which he considered embedded in Bohemian sculpture as a result of the fusion of its predecessors—the Madonna from the Old Town Hall in Prague (a Parlerian sculpture) and the Madonna from Žebrák (a Bohemian wooden sculpture). Because the Madonna from Altenmarkt had a substantial position in Kutal's evolutionary line, he used the same argumentation as previously mentioned authors to assess its origin in Bohemian production. He derived it from the Třeboň (Wittingau) Altarpiece in southern Bohemia and supported its Bohemian origin by its relation to the Madonnas from Plzeň (Pilsen) and Krumlov, mainly with the help of a detailed stylistic analysis.

The highly esteemed quality of the Madonna from Krumlov often served as a value criterion for dating not only the sculpture itself, but also other related works. Several subordinate procedures were derived from the evolutionary concept of the style. It often happened that the quality of an artwork was confused with its dating, depending on how the direction of the development was arranged. General hypotheses based on long-term observations were transferred into a general conformity to a law, afterwards applicable to concrete chronological relations between particular artworks. According to this concept, when comparing two concrete artworks, it was possible to decide to what extent they contained certain characteristics and to place them on a time axis. If the starting points were set differently, the correspondence of dating was almost impossible; on the contrary, that could easily lead to conflicting opinions. In the case of the Madonna from Krumlov, the dating changed over a range of 30 years among different authors.<sup>69</sup>

The difference in the dating of related pieces caused by differences in setting the evolutionary lines was similarly radical, for example, in the cases of the Madonna from Plzeň and the Madonna from Altenmarkt. When the Krumlov Madonna was considered to represent the peak of development in the framework of the Viennese Herzogswerkstatt (as Kieslinger and Ginhart believed), other statues could only be its imitations. That was why the Madonnas from Plzeň and Altenmarkt could only be considered younger (around 1410). For Großmann, the criterion for dating was the level of quality ("Qualitätstufe") together with the style of the period ("Zeitstil"). Großmann derived the Krumlov Madonna from the Madonna from Altenmarkt (1393)<sup>70</sup> by means of

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<sup>69</sup> It ranged from the 1380s to the 1390s for Pečírka, was dated to 1390 by Kieslinger and Ginhart, before 1400 by Kutal, and to the 1410s by Großmann.

<sup>70</sup> The date was identified according to an indulgence formulary by Archbishop Ubaldin from 1393. For the facsimile see J. Neuhardt, "Die Schöne Madonna," in *Altenmarkt*,



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an evolutionary line from realism, fullness, and spatiality towards mannerism. Großmann placed the Madonna from Plzeň into the next evolutionary phase, the beginning of the fifteenth century. Kutal demonstrated a reversed chronological development leading from a higher level of liveliness and realism to their diminishing, from the Madonna from Altenmarkt (1393) through Plzeň (1390s) towards the Krumlov piece (before 1400).<sup>71</sup>

### Conclusion

The effort to prove the autonomy of Beautiful Style sculpture and its independence of the art of other countries, or possibly to prove its leading role, was a substantial task for the participants in this discussion. It was an important component in forming a national identity by finding its traditions and roots in the past, constant and unique qualities in ancient art. This situation did not occur in a historic vacuum, but it was conditioned from the beginning by the necessity to define “us against the others.” The aim was to ascribe innovative or high quality pieces to one’s own artistic production, and at the same time to find the earliest possible origin of its artistic autonomy. This was not to be dependent on “mediating influences,” and in the best case was meant to have a centrifugal effect on other artistic territories.

The various methods that were used to reach these objectives sometimes changed with time or with the social situation, but most often there was a fluctuation of methods across time and place. It is possible to assume that approaches that served to define the national character of art were widespread or even sought after. Even though some authors tried to corroborate them by means of “more scholarly” methods and others were based on racial or national prejudices, I argue that they did not differ. In fact, they were based on the same stereotypes, and these stereotypes were even conceived as part of a truly scholarly approach. Their persistence was caused by unwillingness in the discipline itself to correct these ideas, their institutional support, and the academic careers of the scholars discussed above who were active at least until the 1970s. Despite the intense reciprocal contacts among Czech, German, and Austrian art historians that blunted former sharp-pointed formulations, conceptions of the Beautiful Style sculpture did not get rid of the fouling of the old national interpretations, often until the present time.

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*“Mutterpfarre” im Ennspongau, Ortschronik Altenmarkt im Pongau 2,* ed. Matthias Rainer (Altenmarkt: Marktgemeinde, 1996), 49.

<sup>71</sup> Recently, the Madonna from Plzeň was dated to “before 1384” by Jiří Fajt (Fajt, *Světice*, 27).



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Rhetorical questions may be posed: Are nationality, ethnicity, geographic or political division still present in art history? Is something like a Bohemian (Czech), Austrian or German character of art still an important or interesting concept or does the reader of the texts reviewed get caught up in a discussion that might seem unimportant or even ridiculous? After all, the authors were employing very similar methodological principles and their arguments were left without a chance of success. On the one hand, it is ahistorical to connect medieval art with the modern concept of a nation, to create borders of art where borders of modern states are or to project the contemporary image of an independent creative artist onto the practices of medieval artists' workshops. This widespread tendency towards aprioristic conceptions, especially concerning the assignment of artistic material to homogenous artistic regions—according to nationality or ethnicity or according to state or ecclesiastical geography—and their construction mainly on the basis of stylistic evolution, has already received well-deserved criticism. On the other hand, it seems to be a problem that while deconstructing the traditional national (art) histories and exposing them as “mythologies,” the singular histories, individual “memories” are in danger of being melted into this whole; these, I believe, should not disappear.