

Kris, E. (1933). Ein geisteskranker Bildhauer, *Imago*, Lps, 19, 384-411. (Presented at the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society, 24.11.1952; first published in 1932 as “Die Charakterköpfe des Franz Xaver Messerschmidt, Versuch einer historischen und psychologischen Deutung,” *Jahrbuch den kunsthistorischen Sammlungen in Wien*, 6.

Kris states he opposes the psychoanalytic method of pathography in this study because he doubts much of the biographical data on Messerschmidt. Nevertheless, he cites convincing passages from the Empress Maria Theresa and Friedrich Nicolai’s *Beschreibung einer Reise durch Deutschland und die Schweiz im Jahre 1781*, Band VI, which describes Messerschmidt’s psychosis characterized by paranoid thinking. Kris points out the 18th century interest in physiognomy in the work of Lavater, Lichtenberg, and Goethe but argues that Messerschmidt’s work is inconsistent with that tradition, since his work depicts the change in facial musculature in different situations and not affect. These studies are closer to the work of the 18th century English anatomist Parsons. According to Nicolai, the busts do not represent the use of any specific model but instead represent a mirage of Messerschmidt’s face. The grimacing faces of Messerschmidt’s busts represent a regression to use an artistic medium to ward off menacing apparitions in a magical way to heal himself (“Selbsteilung”) and readjust to reality.

Almost 100 busts were produced, of which twenty-nine are illustrated here.