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Editorial Board

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Editorial:

Counter-Narratives of East Central Europe

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Editorial: Counter-Narratives of East Central Europe

When this journal was launched, it was stated that it would be focused on the period from 1800 to the present. No sooner was that stated than the journal broke its own rule, by including a round-table discussion 'Globalizing Early Modern Central and Eastern European Art,' which addresses the issues related to the historiography of art in east central Europe *before* 1800. However, we felt that the calibre of the discussion, and the importance of the issues it raised, made its inclusion in *Art East Central* a logical decision. The discussion led by Robyn Radway, Tomasz Grusiecki and their colleagues explores themes and debates that are of relevance to scholars of central and eastern European art with interests in *any* period, including the place of the region in art historical scholarship. The emphasis on globalization in the discussion highlights an important shift in the historiography of central and eastern Europe. Where its parameters were so often defined in relation to neighbouring regions and states in Europe, such as Italy, Germany, France, Scandinavia and the Ottoman Empire, this self-limiting framework has increasingly come to be seen as untenable. Whether in relation to the last two centuries or to the early modern period, it is now clear that the states and peoples of central and eastern Europe were entwined in a wider global network of cultures.

The American sociologist and economic historian Immanuel Wallerstein (1930–2019) coined the notion of the 'world system' in the 1970s, and he dated its inception to the development of capitalism in the 16th century.[1] Since then, the idea of a world system has been intertwined with that of colonialism for, as Walter Mignolo has argued, the European colonial venture and the Renaissance and Enlightenment were simply different sides of the same coin.[2] Central and eastern Europe were entangled in this process, and not merely as 'colonial subjects' of the great imperial powers of Germany, Tsarist Russia and Austria-Hungary.[3] For a growing body of research has also examined the way that Poles, Hungarians, Czechs, Slovaks and Romanians, for example, acted as agents of empire and purveyors of imperial attitudes towards the colonised world for much of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.[4] The round table discussion led by Radway and Grusiecki extends this interest further back in time. It also undertakes an important task, namely, in centering its discussion on art. For while social histories and studies of visual culture in central and eastern Europe have become more

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1) Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Modern World-system I: Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of the European World-economy in the Sixteenth Century*, New York and London: Academic Press, 1974.

2) Walter Mignolo, *The Darker Side of Western Modernity: Global Futures, Decolonial Options*, Durham NC: Duke University Press, 2011.

3) A particularly suggestive project on Austria-Hungary explored the extent to which Habsburg rule over non-German speaking subjects assumed a colonial character. See Johannes Feichtinger, Ursula Prutsch and Moritz Csáky, eds, *Habsburg Postcolonial: Machtstrukturen und kollektives Gedächtnis*, Vienna: Studien Verlag, 2003.

4) See, for example, Walter Sauer, ed., *K. u. k. colonial: Habsburgermonarchie und europäische Herrschaft in Afrika*, Vienna: Boehlau, 2007; Robert Born, ed., *Orientalismen in Ostmitteleuropa: Diskurse, Akteure und Disziplinen vom 19. Jahrhundert bis zum Zweiten Weltkrieg*, Bielefeld: Transcript, 2014; Filip Herza, Imaginace jinakosti: *Pražské přehlídky lidských kuriozit v 19. a 20. Století*, Prague: Scriptorium, 2021; Piotr Puchalski, *Poland in a Colonial World Order: Adjustments and Aspirations 1918–1939*, London: Routledge, 2022; Dagnosław Demski and Dominika Czarnecka, *Staged Otherness; Ethnic Shows in Central and Eastern Europe, 1850–1939*, Budapest: CEU Press, 2022.

prominent, art historians of the region have yet to engage in a consistent and deep way with globalization and its implications. Hopefully the discussion in the round table published will act as a catalyst for further work specifically in the history of art.

The focus on globalization puts into question what has often been a dominant frame of inquiry into the art of central and eastern Europe: the nation state. Cosmin Minea undertakes a parallel questioning of this frame in his article on Ion Mincu. Often seen as the originator of the modern Romanian style of architecture, and consequently turned into a mythical figure for many Romanians, Mincu was, it turns out, not as nationally-minded an architect as many have assumed. He was interested in the architectural heritage of Romania, but he was not a nationalist ideologue (in contrast to his contemporaries, such as the Hungarian architect Ödön Lechner). The historic architecture to be found in Romania provided Mincu with a resource of ideas and solutions, and for this reason he explored its potential for his own creative practice. However, Minea demonstrates, it was only subsequent generations of architects and writers who re-interpreted this as inspired by the idea of the Romanian nation as an imagined community. Minea's article brings to attention the extent to which an architect's identity and reputation is shaped by their subsequent reception and can often be used to serve ideological agendas with which the architect themselves may have had limited sympathy. In addition, the discussion reminds us of the importance of 'national indifference,' a term first used by scholars of Bohemia under the Habsburg Empire, but applicable elsewhere, including, in this case, Romania.[5]

This issue of *Art East Central* contains two collections of translations of historic primary source material, a practice that the journal will continue in future issues. The first is a group of four essays by the Hungarian architectural critic Virgil Bierbauer (1893–1956). Bierbauer falls into that category of individual whose activities are known about and recognised as significant, but with the details being vague. He was a prominent voice of modernist architectural criticism in the 1920s and 1930s in Hungary, and as editor of the journal *Tér és Forma* (Space and Form) he played a crucial role as an advocate of the international modern movement. Yet what he actually argued for is almost entirely unknown. The reason for this is fairly straightforward: the fact that he wrote almost exclusively in Hungarian. As with so many other languages of central and eastern Europe, the number of international scholars of modernist culture who are conversant in Hungarian is vanishingly small. Moreover, even in Hungary, very few have engaged seriously with his work. He has tended to be eclipsed by the writings of the designers and artists around Lajos Kassák, who undoubtedly benefitted from having spent a period in exile outside of Hungary. Familiarity with critical debate and thought on the part of Hungarian authors beyond the narrow confines of Kassák and his group is thus highly limited. Publication of this group of texts by Bierbauer is thus the first step in what will be a larger project of bringing the ideas of writers to a wider readership.

The second collection of translated texts is of an entirely different character, for they have been included here primarily for their documentary function. They consist of reviews and commentaries on exhibitions of art and design by women in interwar Austria. The activities of women designers and artists in Austria have only recently become a topic of extended

5)   Tara Zahra, 'Imagined Noncommunities: National Indifference as a Category of Analysis,' *Slavic Review* 69.1, 2010, 93–119.

inquiry, and this group of texts is a contribution to that larger project. Yet, as the introduction by Christian Drobe points out, it highlights the multi-facetted nature of that project. For there has been understandable focus on women as figures of dissent, challenging inherited norms and stereotypes and championing the idea of the 'new woman.' Two recent exhibitions in Vienna on women artists and on women designers in the Wiener Werkstätte have adopted this approach.[6] In Brno, too, the Moravian Gallery staged an exhibition on the idea of the 'civilized woman,' in reference to an earlier exhibition of 1929 that celebrated women's emancipation.[7]

In part, the collected texts further this theme, for they highlight the critical fortunes of women artists; they reveal efforts by women critics to articulate a specific aesthetic agenda that was at variance with the values of those of the male-dominated Viennese art world. Yet they also show that far from being contested, or indeed assuming a contestatory position, the work of women artists was often lauded and respected by their male peers. Women could also pursue successful careers as designers, which involved more than just being holders of a consolation prize after having been excluded from the masculine domain of architecture. Women designers were able to formulate their own social and aesthetic approaches, which often overlapped with debates between architects. As Drobe points out, even if Adolf Loos dismissed decoration as 'feminine,' discussion over its role played a serious part in thinking about how architectural and architectural space might engage meaningfully with their users. Finally, even if the 'new woman' has been at the centre of attention, the texts here demonstrate that discussion of gender and identity in the arts was far broader, and that the figure of femininity took on forms that, sometimes, contradicted ideals of female emancipation. We may dismiss some of them as retrograde – the Elida Prize offers a good example of this – but it is important nevertheless to examine them critically, above all, because they provide an insight into the landscape that women artists and designers had to negotiate. In this respect, all the texts contained in this issue of *Art East Central* offer different kinds of counter-narratives. They suggest, too, that rigorous inquiry should be alert to the unexpected challenges the complex terrain of art and its history can present.

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6)   Sabine Fellner and Stella Rollig, eds, *City of Women: Female Artists in Vienna from 1900 to 1938*, Vienna: Belvedere, 2019; Christoph Thun-Hohenstein, Anne-Karin Rossberg and Elisabeth Schmuttermeier, eds, *Women Artists of the Wiener Werkstätte*, Basel: Birkhäuser, 2021.

7)   Martina Pachmannová, ed., *Civilizovaná žena: Ideál i paradox prvorepublikové vizuální kultury*, Prague: UMPRUM, 2021.

articles

Globalizing Early Modern Central and Eastern European Art: A Discussion Forum

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Abstract

The following **roundtable** is the result of a conversation between six scholars who met in the summer of 2021 to share their views on the challenges and opportunities associated with tracing and popularizing central and eastern Europe's global and transcultural histories with a focus on early modern art and material culture. The topics addressed include the long tradition of studying art from a global perspective in the region, groups of objects ripe for reinterpretation, preferred methodologies, and the unique contributions scholars of the region are poised to make to the global turn.

Keywords

Globalizing Early Modern Central and Eastern European Art: A Discussion Forum

Robyn Radway et al.

Introduction

In recent years, global approaches to the study of art and material culture have gained momentum, particularly in Anglo-American academia. An increasing number of scholars of central and eastern Europe are embracing this newly expanded purview by integrating comparative and transcultural methods into their research and teaching. The new approach is nonetheless still awaiting wider recognition from the incipient field of central and eastern European Art History, particularly for histories of the early modern period. Elsewhere, the global turn led to new transgeographical perspectives which have begun to challenge the once-dominant national paradigm in various art-historical traditions. The question remains, however, how to meaningfully include central and eastern Europe in the discipline's ongoing explorations of cultural heterogeneity and global circulations of artefacts, and—more importantly—whether other scholars have anything new to learn about these processes from the study of the region. Of equal concern are the repercussions of this transcultural inquiry into central and eastern Europe's past on the region's more recent history, often read through the prism of modern ethno-nationalism and cultural uniformity.

To probe the ways historians of early modern central and eastern European art might productively engage with the global turn and increase the visibility of the region's diverse material and visual cultures in the English-language academe, a group of pioneers of this emerging field, **Robert Born** (BKGE Oldenburg), **Tomasz Grusiecki** (Boise State University), **Suzanna Ivanič** (University of Kent), **Ruth Sargent Noyes** (National Museum of Denmark), **Olenka Pevny** (University of Cambridge), and **Robyn Radway** (Central European University), met on 23 July 2021 to share their views on the challenges and opportunities associated with tracing and popularizing central and eastern Europe's global and transcultural histories. What follows is an edited version of this conversation. The questions were posed, recorded, and redacted by Grusiecki and Radway.

QUESTION 1:

There is a sense that historians of Western European maritime empires fit in more naturally with the global turn given the increased movement of people, goods, and capital within the trans-Atlantic and trans-Pacific colonial frameworks. Since central and eastern Europe did not participate in early modern capitalism on equal terms with these supra-continental polities, what can be done to secure the region's inclusion in the global narratives in the future? How have historians of the region's art incorporated it in global narratives in the past?

[R. BORN] Linking global concerns in historical and art-historical studies predominantly with Western European maritime powers is a relatively recent development. What needs pointing out is, on the one hand, the distinctive ethno-confessional mosaic that had evolved over the centuries in central and eastern Europe, and, on the other hand, the long-standing tradition of addressing the diverse artistic legacies in the region. Georg Vasold has recently foregrounded the role of Austria-Hungary around the middle of the nineteenth century in opening up the discipline to non-European impulses, pointing to, among others, the 1837 study *Aus dem Tagebuch eines in Grossbritannien reisenden Ungarns* (From the Diary of a Hungarian Travelling in Britain) published in Pest by Ferenc Pulszky (1814-1897), who was probably the first scholar to use the term *Weltkunst* (World Art).[1] In addition to the terminological novelty of his study, Pulszky also criticized the notion of canon established by Johann Joachim Winckelmann (1717-1768), and addressed the unresolved historical relationship between European and Asian art. In the imperial capital Vienna, prominent figures such as Franz Wickhoff (1853-1909) and Alois Riegl (1858-1905), were asking similar questions, particularly concerning entanglements between European and Asian art.[2] Riegl spoke of a 'Hellenistic-Roman world art', which he saw as the result of a permanent exchange between the Orient and the Occident.[3] In the studies written in the wake of the 1891 Vienna exhibition of 'Oriental carpets', Riegl became a pioneer in the study of the rugs preserved in Transylvanian churches, which rank among the most important examples of luxury objects from Anatolia fully integrated into early modern European culture.[4]

Josef Strzygowski (1862-1941), deemed the 'Attila of Art History' by his rivals, was a particularly divisive figure, who nonetheless remains important for the global study of art. Although between 1909 and 1933 he held the first Chair in Art History at the University of Vienna, Julius von Schlosser who chaired the second Art History department consequently pushed him to the margins of the Vienna School of Art History. Strzygowski's anti-Semitic and strongly

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1) See Georg Vasold, 'Pulszky, Böhm und Eitelberger. Die Anfänge der Weltkunstforschung in Wien um 1840,' in Eva Kernbauer et al., eds, *Rudolf Eitelberger von Edelberg: Netzwerker der Kunstwelt*. Vienna: Böhlau, 2019, 137–53, here 143–9.

2) Franz Wickhoff, 'Über die historische Einheit der gesamten Kunstentwicklung,' in Max Dvořák, ed, *Die Schriften Franz Wickhoffs*, II, Berlin: Meyer & Jessen, 1913, 81–91. See also Craig Clunas, 'The Art of Global Comparisons,' in Maxine Berg, ed., *Writing the History of the Global: Challenges for the 21st Century*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013, 165–76, here 167–8.

3) Alois Riegl, *Stilfragen: Grundlegung zu einer Geschichte der Ornamentik*, Berlin: Georg Siemens, 1893, 18; Vasold, 'Pulszky, Böhm und Eitelberger,' 139–40.

4) Alois Riegl, *Altorientalische Teppiche*, Leipzig: T.O. Weigel, 1891; Ágnes Ziegler and Frank-Thomas Ziegler, *Gott zu Ehren und der löblichen Zunft zur Zierde und Gebrauch: Die osmanischen Teppiche der Schwarzen Kirche*, Kronstadt: Foton, 2019.

polemicizing texts, and especially his endorsement of National Socialism in his later work, eventually prompted a *damnatio memoriae* that lasted for several decades. Against the background of recent criticism of the Eurocentric perspective of the discipline, proposals however have repeatedly been made for a new reading of his work, first and foremost of the *Krisis der Geisteswissenschaft* (Crisis of the Humanities). In it, inspired by comparative linguistics, he outlined the agenda for a global history of art, which was meant to materialize with the establishment of a research institute somewhere in Central Europe, with branches in Tehran and Beijing.[5] While it remained an unfulfilled idea, Strzygowski's Viennese students played an important role in the development of art history in central and eastern Europe, as well as the promotion of Persian, Armenian, Turkish, and Indian art.[6] In this respect, the 'discovery' of our region and its formative role in shaping art history is thus also part of the discovery of the discipline's global legacy.

[T. GRUSIECKI] Strzygowski's reprehensible politics aside, I agree that we often fail to celebrate scholars from the region who pioneered transcultural narratives. A Polish example can illustrate the point. Although it is sometimes seen as a methodological laggard when compared to North America and Western Europe, it is important to emphasize that in many ways the historiography of Polish art had been shaped by interest in transcultural narratives long before the global turn gained momentum in Anglo-American art history. Thus it is admittedly somewhat misleading to claim to 'introduce' early modern Poland to this discourse, for already in the 1900s Polish scholars were considering the effects of the region's proximity to the Ottoman Empire and its consequences for local self-perceptions.[7] The most notable contributions have been those by the historian of art and culture Tadeusz Mańkowski (1878–1956) who was among the first to study the impact of Ottoman and Persian costume, textiles, and metalwork on sixteenth– and seventeenth-century Polish ways of life. He claimed, for example, that Old Poland

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5) Josef Strzygowski, *Die Krisis der Geisteswissenschaften vorgeführt am Beispiele der Forschung über bildende Kunst. Ein grundsätzlicher Rahmenversuch*, Vienna: Schroll, 1923. Cf. Ulrich Pfisterer, 'Origins and principles of world art history: 1900 (and 2000),' in Kitty Zijlmans and Wilfried van Damme, eds, *World Art Studies: Exploring Concepts and Approaches*, Amsterdam: Valiz, 2008, 69–89, here 80–2; Joachim Rees, 'Vergleichende Verfahren – verfahrene Vergleiche. Kunstgeschichte als komparative Kunstwissenschaft – eine Problemskizze,' *Kritische Berichte*, 40: 2, 2012, 32–47, here 37–8.

6) Ivan Foletti and Francesco Lovino, eds, *Orient oder Rom? History and Reception of a Historiographical Myth (1901-1970)*, Rome: Viella, 2018; Piotr Otto Scholz and Magdalena Anna Długosz, eds, *Von Biala nach Wien. Josef Strzygowski und die Kunstwissenschaften: Akten der internationalen wissenschaftlichen Konferenzen zum 150. Geburtstag von Josef Strzygowski in Bielsko-Biała, 29.-31. März 2012*, Vienna: European University Press, 2015; Nenad Makuljević, 'The political reception of the Vienna School: Josef Strzygowski and Serbian Art History,' *Journal of Art Historiography* 8, 2013; Oya Pancaroğlu, 'Formalism and the Academic Foundation of Turkish Art in the Early Twentieth Century,' *Muqarnas* 24, 2007, 67–78; Georg Vasold, 'The Revaluation of Art History: an Unfinished Project by Josef Strzygowski and his School,' in Pauline Bachmann et al., eds, *Art/Histories in Transcultural Dynamics,* Leiden: Fink, 2017, 119–38; Kris Manjapra, *Age of Entanglement: German and Indian Intellectuals across Empire*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2014, 239–46; Julia Orell, 'Early East Asian Art History in Vienna and its Trajectories: Josef Strzygowski, Karl With, and Alfred Salmony,' *Journal of Art Historiography*, 13, 2015, n.p.; Karl Johns, 'The Long Shadow of Emmy Wellesz: with a Translation of her "Buddhist Art in Bactria and Gandhāra",' *Journal of Art Historiography* 19, 2018, n.p.; Jo Ziebritzki, *Stella Kramrisch: Kunsthistorikerin zwischen Europa und Indien. Ein Beitrag zur Depatriarchalisierung der Kunstgeschichte*, Marburg: Büchner-Verlag, 2021.

7) Władysław Łoziński, *Patrycjat i mieszczaństwo lwowskie w XVI i XVII wieku*, Lviv: Księgarnia H. Altenberga, 1902; Beata Biedrońska-Słota, 'The History of Polish Studies on Islamic Art and the History of the Artistic Relations between Poland and the Islamic Countries,' in Jerzy Malinowski, ed., *History of Art: History in Central, Eastern, and South-Eastern Europe*, I, Toruń: Society of Modern Art, 2012, 273–80.

(and the wider Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in general) 'became the territory where East and West met, where their cultural and artistic influences came into touch and intermingled very often creating new, mediate forms of an interesting and peculiar kind'.[8] He went as far as to assert that Poles 'looked to the East as the cradle of their nation.'[9] Such transcultural approach *avant la lettre* is often neglected from reflection on central and eastern European art history, giving the false impression of the region's unfettered attachment to nationalist scholarship.

[R. BORN] Even nationalist scholarship may be seen through a transcultural lens, most notably in Hungary. Several private as well as government-sponsored expeditions departed towards Central Asia from that country. Among the state-sponsored projects was a survey of the history of art published by the Hungarian Ministry of Education. Its second volume featured an extensive chapter on Islamic art written by Max (Miksa) Herz Bey (1856-1919), a Hungarian-born architect serving as director of the Arab Museum in Cairo and chief architect of the Commission for the Preservation of Monuments of Arab Art, in which role he became a key protagonist in the creation of a Mamluk revivalist style.[10] Another important state-led initiative was the short-lived Hungarian Research Institute in Constantinople, where between 1916 and 1918 studies were conducted on Byzantine-Hungarian and Ottoman-Hungarian relations.[11] The Institute also published several important contributions by both Hungarian and foreign scholars, including Heinrich Glück's (1889-1930) examinations of Turkish art. All this may be seen as global art history *avant la lettre*.

[R. RADWAY] The second half of the twentieth century was, in many ways, a century of forgetting. Many traditions that existed before Communism became inaccessible for international scholars. This includes the innovative products of local historiography and the objects of analysis themselves. The 1990s were an era of rediscovery for those intrepid enough to tackle the linguistic variety and nationalist scholarship to search for ideas and artworks. This process of 'rediscovery' is ongoing. Of course, local scholars were often keenly aware of the potential of their traditions to disrupt broader narratives on Renaissance art, but they did not always have the means or the vocabularies to do so.

[R. BORN] An interesting facet of the process of rediscovery mentioned by Robyn is the work by scholars from central and eastern Europe produced between 1945 and 1989. Certainly, the official internationalism of the Communist regimes in the region led to scholarship which may be seen as less Eurocentric as that of the Western world.[12] The region's scholars were also active participants in the congresses organized by the International Committee of the History of Art

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8) Tadeusz Mańkowski, 'Influence of Islamic Art in Poland,' *Ars Islamica*, 2:1, 1935, 92–117, here 93.

9) Tadeusz Mańkowski, *Genealogia sarmatyzmu*, Warsaw: Towarzystwo Wydawnicze Łuk, 1947, 97.

10) Miksa Herz Bey, 'Az iszlám művészete,' Zsolt Beöthy, ed., *A művészetek története a legrégibb időktől a XIX. század végéig*, II, Budapest: Lampel R., 1907, 108–262.

11) Gábor Tóth, 'Az első külföldi magyar tudományos intézet,' *Századok*, 129: 1-6, 1995, 1380–94.

12) Antje Kempe, Marina Dmitrieva and Beáta Hock, eds, *Universal – International – Global. Art Historiographies of Socialist Eastern Europe*, Vienna: Böhlau, 2022 (in press).

(CIHA).[13] Here I would like to draw attention to the activities of Lajos Vayer (1913–2001) and Jan Białostocki (1921–1988), both of whom held leading positions in the CIHA from the late 1960s onward. At the congress in Budapest in 1969, chaired by Vayer, the discussion focused on the critical reassessment of Western art and culture and its alleged centrality, including vis-à-vis regions such as (East) Central Europe, which was taken into consideration for the first time as an independent artistic region.[14] Białostocki's role was critical in this regard, particularly following the publication of his *Art of the Renaissance in Eastern Europe* (1976).[15] Equally important were Białostocki's contributions to the congresses in Bologna (1979) and Washington, DC (1986).[16] In his Washington lecture, 'Some Values of Artistic Periphery', drawing on George Kubler's work on Latin America, Białostocki emphasized the innovative potential of central and eastern Europe by situating it in a wider global perspective.[17]

[O. PEVNY] While I agree that a transgeographical interest already informs the historiography of early modern central and eastern European art historical studies, I take issue with the phrasing of the posed question. I do not see the global turn in early modern studies as confined to European imperial expansionism. The early modern growth of extended trade, commerce, and exchange between European empires and their colonies is only one aspect of study in the global turn of historical studies. For me, an art historian of Eastern Europe, the global turn is first and foremost a call to look at the early modern world from a perspective that problematizes the imposition of hard boundaries, and especially modern national boundaries, on pre-modern culture. Exposing the relativism of such dichotomies as 'centre' and 'periphery' or 'inclusion' and 'exclusion', the global turn beckons a levelling of the playing field in cultural and historical studies. It compels us to reckon with the historical presence of visual culture beyond the framework of canonical centres and ancillary peripheries; to recognize that the monuments of Cracow are not just pale imitations of those in Rome, and that monuments of L'viv are not just feeble replicas of those in Cracow. It holds that the primary significance of visual sources is contextually determined, and that difference is not inevitably a marker of value. In deconstructing the dichotomy of centre and periphery, the global turn moves beyond identifying directional transmissions of influence to the study of the connectivity and fissures of networks that result in endless cultural discourses and contingent interaction which habitually produce new situational identities and landscapes.

Central and eastern Europe already are an integral part of the global narrative and there is no need to frame our research in accordance with the imperatives of trans-Atlantic of trans-Pa-

13)   Jennifer Cooke, 'CIHA as the Subject of Art Theory: The Methodological Discourse in the International Congresses of Art History from Post-War Years to the 2000s,' *RIHA Journal*, 0199, 2018, n. p.

14)   Cf. Robert Born, 'Commentary on the English translation of Lajos Vayer's *Allgemeine Entwicklung und regionale Entwicklungen in der Kunstgeschichte – Situation des Problems in Mitteleuropa*,' in Kempe, Dmitrieva and Hock, eds, *Universal – International – Global* (in press).

15)   Jan Białostocki, *The Art of the Renaissance in Eastern Europe: Hungary, Bohemia, Poland*, London: Phaidon, 1976.

16)   Jan Białostocki, 'A comparative history of world art, is it possible?' in Lajos Vayer, ed, *Problemi di metodo*, 207–16. See also Jan Bakoš, 'Jan Białostocki and Center-Periphery Problem,' in Magdalena Wróblewska, ed, *Białostocki. Materiały z Seminarium Metodologicznego Stowarzyszenia Historyków Sztuku 'Jan Białostocki – między tradycja a inovacja,'* Warsaw: Stowarzyszenie Historyków Sztuki, 2009, 63–75.

17)   Jan Białostocki, 'Some Values of Artistic Periphery,' in Irvin Lavin, ed, *World Art. Themes of Unity in Diversity. Acts of the XXVIth International Congress of the History of Art, Washington D.C. 1986*, I, University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1989, 49–54.

cific powers. In his preface to *The Location of Culture*, Homi Bhabha suggests that globalisation begins at home, and that the global progress of a nation can be evaluated by its dealing with 'the difference within' – 'the rights and representations of minorities in the regional domain'.[18] The cultural hegemonies of central and eastern Europe, the fluctuating perspectives on who and/or what constitutes a nation, social degree, confession, military unit, and who and/or what is excluded, are salient topics to the understanding of the processes of globalisation.

[T. GRUSIECKI] The point that globalisation begins at home is well supported by historical evidence from the region, and this certainly includes Olenka's and my own subfield, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. The merchants and nobility of this vast polity were not living in an isolated outpost, off the map; they in fact participated actively in the increasingly global economic system of early modernity, even if only from the edges.[19] Danzig (Gdańsk), the largest city in the eastern Baltic and an important seaport serving both Prussia and the Polish interior, was particularly well placed to benefit from early global capitalism, as a point of entry for American, African, and Asian goods arriving in the region via Amsterdam.[20] Research on the implications of Dutch colonial trade for Polish-Lithuanian identities and lifestyles is still in its early stages, and we need a clearer picture of this impact before reaching any conclusions about Poland-Lithuania's association with Dutch colonial networks.[21] But certainly to claim that early modern central and eastern Europe was detached from European expansion and colonialism is becoming increasingly untenable.[22] We, of course, know a great deal more about the Commonwealth's ties with the Ottoman Empire as garments of silk, weapons, and carpets flowing into the region from this direction have been studied for over a century.[23] Of other possible routes, links with Muscovy, Crimea, and Persia, but also the operations of Armenian, Jewish, Greek, and Italian diasporas have been methodically examined, and some of this research is available in English.[24] Persian textiles, Ottoman metalwork, Muscovite

18)   Homi Bhabha, 'Preface to the Routledge Classics Edition: Looking Back, Moving Forward: Notes on Vernacular Cosmopolitanism,' *The Location of Culture*, New York: Routledge, 1994, xv.

19)   Witold Kula, *An Economic Theory of the Feudal System: Towards a Model of the Polish Economy, 1500-1800*, London: NLB, 1976; Darius Žiemelis, *Feudalism or Peripheral Capitalism?: Socio-Economic History of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in the 16th to 18th Centuries*, Saarbrücken: Lambert Academic Publishing, 2011.

20)   Teresa Grzybkowska, *Artyści i patrycjusze Gdańska*, Warsaw: Wydawnictwo DiG, 1996.

21)   See J.G. van Dillen, *Mensen en achtergronden: Studies uitgegeven ter gelegenheid van de tachtigste jaardag van de schrijver*, Groningen: Wolters, 1964, 470–71; Milja van Tielhof, *The 'Mother of All Trades': The Baltic Grain Trade in Amsterdam From the Late 16th to the Early 19th Century*, Leiden: Brill, 2002, 4.

22)   See Dariusz Kołodziejczyk, 'The Export of Silver Coin Through the Polish-Ottoman Border and the Problem of the Balance of Trade,' *Turcica*, 28, 1996, 105–16.

23)   Konstancya Stępowska, 'Polskie dywany wełniane,' *Sprawozdania Komisyi do Badania Historyi Sztuki w Polsce*, 8: 3/4, 1912, 352–71.

24)   Tadeusz Mańkowski, 'Some Documents from Polish Sources Relating to Carpet Making in the Time of Shāh Abbās I,' Arthur Upham Pope, ed., *A Survey of Persian Art*, VI, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1938, 2431–36; Francis W. Carter, *Trade and Urban Development in Poland: An Economic Geography of Cracow, from Its Origins to 1795*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006; Dariusz Kołodziejczyk, *The Crimean Khanate and Poland-Lithuania: International Diplomacy on the European Periphery (15th-18th Century)*, Leiden: Brill, 2011; Wojciech Tygielski, *Italians in Early Modern Poland: The Lost Opportunity for Modernization?*, Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2015; Michał Kopczyński and Wojciech Tygielski, eds, *Under a Common Sky: Ethnic Groups of the Commonwealth of Poland and Lithuania*, New York: PIASA Books, 2017; Alexandr Osipian, 'Between Mercantilism, Oriental Luxury, and the Ottoman Threat: Discourses on the Armenian Diaspora in the Early Modern Kingdom of Poland,' *Acta Poloniae Historica*, 116, 2017, 171–207.

pelts, and other Eurasian commodities were used enthusiastically by the inhabitants of Po-land-Lithuania, becoming part and parcel of their daily lives.[25]

What emerges from this picture is the level of cultural entanglement comparable in scope to the processes taking place in Western European metropoles and their colonies. But while mainstream 'global' art history is programmed to pay attention to colonial, and increasingly also to Eastern Mediterranean cultural exchanges, Poland-Lithuania opens up another direction of inquiry: art objects and cultural forms arriving in Europe from places as remote as Siberia and Persia, but via the continental routes cutting through Muscovy and the Ottoman Empire, often with a heavy presence of networks ran by the minorities inhabiting the Common-wealth. Embedded in noncolonial, though often similarly exploitative contexts (i.e. serfdom, Black Sea slavery, the nobility's dominance over other social groups), the region is necessary to fully understand early modern globalism. By bringing forth new case studies, previously unknown sources, and otherwise ignored regional perspectives, we will not only make our own burgeoning field more visible, but—in doing so—might also be building a powerful platform from which to shape the future of art history as a whole.

[S. IVANIČ] As Ulrike Strasser notes for Germany, without the obvious imperial routes into global history, the historian of central and eastern Europe needs to look for 'new entry points'.[26] I would argue that art and, more broadly, material and visual culture provide a rich seam of evidence for the global character of this non-maritime region. Objects and images clearly attest to its flows and connections in the early modern period such as the existence of items like a lapis lazuli rosary made for Rudolf II in Prague (*c.* 1600) or a collection of rings set with turquoise, emerald and ruby in the seventeenth-century inventory of a burgher. While Robert J. W. Evans and Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann have explored these currents, there is still work to do to raise awareness and further examine these connections in both the fields of art history and history.[27] The green shoots of a much-needed refurbishment of Bohemian history as an exciting and connected region is most evident in two stunning exhibition catalogues from the past twenty-five years that showcase the material culture of Prague: Eliška Fučíková's *Rudolf II and Prague: The Court and the City* (1997) and Olga Fejtová's *Barokní Praha—Barokní Čechie 1620–1740* (2004).

A material approach can counteract the nationalization of Czech history in the twentieth century, constructing a 'national' history around myths, language, and indigenous heroes.[28] This 'nationalization' of history has arguably served to isolate the territory from greater relevance beyond its borders and had a chilling effect. From the perspective of Anglophone stud-

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25) Zdzisław Żygulski Jr., 'The Impact of the Orient on the Culture of Old Poland,' in Jan K. Ostrowski, ed., *Land of the Winged Horsemen: Art in Poland, 1572-1764,* New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999, 69–79; Dirk Uffelmann, 'Importierte Dinge und imaginierte Identität: Osmanische "Sarmatica" im Polen der Aufklärung,' *Zeitschrift für Ostmitteleuropa-Forschung,* 65: 2, 2016, 193–214.

26) Renate Dürr, Ronnie Hsia, Carina Johnson, Ulrike Strasser and Merry Wiesner-Hanks, 'Globalizing Early Modern German History,' *German History,* 31: 3, 2013, 366–82.

27) See especially: Robert J. W. Evans, *Rudolf II and His World: A Study in Intellectual History, 1576–1612,* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973; Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann, *Court, Cloister & City: The Art and Culture of Central Europe 1450–1800,* London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1995.

28) Compare work on Ukrainian nationalized history: Georgiy Kasianov, ' "Nationalized" History: Past Continuous, Present Perfect, Future...' Georgiy Kasianov and Philipp Ther, eds, *A Laboratory of Transnational History: Ukraine and Recent Ukrainian Historiography,* Budapest: Central European University Press, 2009, 7–23.

ies, at least, research on central and eastern Europe tends to be siloed off as 'special interest'. An examination of material culture can help revitalize central and eastern Europe's connections, but it is also important for historians of the region to find ways to make their work speak to broader audiences. In a recent forum of articles on 'Global Prague: Renaissance and Reformation Crossroads' (*Austrian History Yearbook*, Vol. 52, 2021), the contributing scholars see themselves not just as scholars of 'Rudolfine Studies' or historians of Prague, but as historians of religion, material culture, music, art and Jewish culture. We need to talk about the region's connections, but we also need to connect our research with scholars beyond the region.

[R. BORN] A recent, and in my view very successful attempt to venture out beyond the region is the study of diplomatic exchanges between the Habsburg Empire, Poland-Lithuania, the Muscovite Empire, the Ottoman tributary states (Transylvania, Wallachia, and Moldavia), and the Sublime Porte.[29] Another example is the already-mentioned study of transimperial groups, such as the Jews, Greeks, or Armenians.[30] Sometimes there were overlaps between these groups, as in the case of the Karaim – also called Crimean Karaites. These were followers of a Jewish movement that accepted only the canon of the Hebrew Bible (Torah) as the supreme authority of law. The Karaim, like the Armenians living in Crimea, used Kipchak, the lingua franca of the Golden Horde. The Armeno-Kipchak language also assumed an important function in communication within the network of Armenian trading communities that stretched from Poland-Lithuania to the Indian subcontinent. The luxury goods (silks, carpets, and weapons) imported by Armenian merchants from the Persian Safavid Empire and the Ottoman Empire, as well as the textiles and military equipment produced in their factories and workshops in the south-eastern regions of Poland-Lithuania, fostered a material culture that combined West Asian and local components. It should also be noted that the largest legally protected Muslim population in Christian Europe, the Lipka Tatars, lived since the late Middle Ages in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. They were loyal subjects of the Grand Dukes while retaining connections with the Arabian Peninsula through pilgrimage.[31]

Moving on to other transcultural topics, the region was home to some of the earliest European networks of specialists in Oriental languages. The principality of Transylvania, which was an Ottoman tributary state, promoted the training of its own interpreters as early as the seventeenth century. In the second half of the eighteenth century, Poland established

29) Derya Ocak, *Gift and Purpose: Diplomatic Gift Exchange between the Ottomans and Transylvania during the Reign of István Báthory (1571–1576)*, Master's thesis, Central European University Budapest, 2016; Robyn Radway, *Vernacular Diplomacy in Central Europe: Statesmen and Soldiers Between the Habsburg and Ottoman Empires, 1543–1593*, PhD Dissertation, Princeton University, 2017, http://arks.princeton.edu/ark:/88435/dsp01m900nx07q; Gábor Kármán, 'Transylvanian Envoys at Buda: Provinces and Tributaries in Ottoman International Society,' in Tracey A. Sowerby and Jan Hennings, eds, *Practices of Diplomacy in the Early Modern World c. 1410–1800*, London: Routledge, 2017, 44–64; Michał Wasiucionek, *The Ottomans and Eastern Europe: Borders and Political Patronage in the Early Modern World*, London: I.B. Tauris, 2020; Hedda Reindl-Kiel, 'Breads for the Followers, Silver Vessels for the Lord: The System of Distribution and Redistribution in the Ottoman Empire (16th-18th Centuries),' *The Ottoman Studies Journal*, 17, 2013, 93–104.

30) Sushil Chaudhury and Kéram Kévonian, eds, *Les Arméniens dans le commerce asiatique au début de l'ère moderne / Armenians in Asian Trade in The Early Modern Era*, Paris: Maison des sciences de l'homme, 2008; Waldemar Deluga *Art of the Armenian Diaspora: Proceedings of the Conference, Zamość, 2010*. Warsaw: Polish Society of Oriental Art, 2011.

31) Michael Połczyński, 'Seljuks on the Baltic: Polish-Lithuanian Muslim Pilgrims in the Court of Ottoman Sultan Süleyman I,' *Journal of Early Modern History* 19: 5, 2015, 409-37; Paul K. Žygas, 'The Muslim Tartars of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and their Architectural Heritage,' *Centropa* 8:2, 2008, 124-33.

a language school for its diplomats in Istanbul.[32] The specialists from central and eastern Europe working in this environment played an important role in the 'translation of the Turk' (Peter Burke's term), that is, in the transfer of concepts and images of the Ottoman Empire to various European publics. A telling example is the Moldavian prince Demetrius Cantemir (1673-1723), who between 1687 and 1710 spent most of his time in Constantinople. Based on his knowledge of Oriental languages and Ottoman history that he acquired there, he later published a history of the Ottoman Empire, which received much attention in Western Europe. In the wake of his coup against the Ottomans and the subsequent exile in the Russian Empire, he prepared translations from Arabic, Persian, and Turkish for Tsar Peter the Great, and even suggested the establishment of the first printing press with Arabic type in Russia.[33] A somewhat opposite development can be seen in the case of Ibrahim Müteferrika. A Calvinist born in the Transylvanian town of Kolozsvár (Germ. Klausenburg, today Cluj-Napoca in Romania), he emigrated to the Ottoman Empire at the beginning of the eighteenth century, where he converted to Islam and founded the first Turkish printing press with Arabic type.[34]

[R. S. NOYES] Moving north to the Baltic Sea takes us to another integrated and culturally heterogeneous cultural space, with diverse communities interconnected by trade, imperial expansion, immigration, and religion.[35] Numerous examples show how these dynamics can be excavated from distinct genres of textual, visual, and material early modern source materials. Take, for instance, Tuscan Grand Duke Cosimo III de' Medici's coronation portrait (c. 1670, Fig. 1), showing him enrobed in regalia marked by over seventy dangling black-tipped ermine tails. The presence of ermine in this portrayal is telling as, together with sable, it was intrinsically linked to the history of Western European relations with the Baltic, fuelled for centuries by trade in furs.[36]

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32) Gábor Kármán, 'Translation at the Seventeenth-Century Transylvanian Embassy in Constantinople,' Robert Born, and Andreas Puth, eds, *Osmanischer Orient und Ostmitteleuropa: Perzeptionen und Interaktionen in den Grenzzonen zwischen dem 16. und 18. Jahrhundert*, Stuttgart: Steiner, 2014, 253–77; Tadeusz Majda, 'L'École polonaise des langues orientales d'Istanbul au XVIIIe siécle,' in Frédéric Hitzel, ed., *Istanbul et les langues orientales*, Paris: L'Harmattan, 1997, 123–8.

33) Michiel Leezenberg, 'The Oriental Origins of Orientalism. The Case of Dimitrie Cantemir,' in Rens Bod, Jaap Maat and Thijs Weststeijn, eds, *The Making of the Humanities*, II, Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2012, 243–63.

34) Maurits H. van den Boogert, 'The Sultan's Answer to the Medici Press? Ibrahim Müteferrika's printing House in Istanbul,' in Alastair Hamilton and Bart Westerweel, eds, *The Republic of Letters and the Levant*, Leiden: Brill 2005, 265–92.

35) See recent studies including Krista Kodres and Merike Kurisoo, eds, *Art and the Church: Religious Art and Architecture in the Baltic Region in the 13th-18th Centuries*, Tallinn: Eesti Kunstiakadeemia, 2008; Michael North, *The Baltic: A History*, trans. Kenneth Kronenberg, Cambridge , MA: Harvard University Press, 2015; Carsten Selch Jensen, ed, *Saints and Sainthood Around the Baltic Sea: Identity, Literacy, and Communication in the Middle Ages*, Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2018; Nils Holger Petersen et al., eds, *Ora Pro Nobis: Space, Place and the Practice of Saints' Cults in Medieval and Early-Modern Scandinavia and Beyond*, Copenhagen: National Museum of Denmark, 2019; Kristoffer Neville, *The Art and Culture of Scandinavian Central Europe, 1550–1720*, University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2019; Krista Kodres, Merike Kurisoo, and Ulrike Nürnberger, eds, *Indifferent Things? Objects and Images in Post-Reformation Churches in the Baltic Sea Region*, Petersberg: Imhof, 2020; Anu Mänd and Marek Tamm, eds, *Making Livonia: Actors and Networks in the Medieval and Early Modern Baltic Sea Region*, Milton: Taylor and Francis, 2020.

36) Janet Martin, *Treasure of the Land of Darkness: The Fur Trade and Its Significance for Medieval Russia*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986.

Figure 1: Baldassare Franceschini, Portrait of Cosimo III de' Medici. Oil on canvas, post 1670.
Source: Royal Castle in Warsaw, Poland. Photo: Public domain.

Ermine should also be understood in the context of contemporary exchanges between Cosimo and scions of the Polish-Lithuanian Pac family, who dominated politics in the Lithuanian Grand Duchy and during the 1670s dispatched from Vilnius to Florence gifts including live sables and ermine, other animal pelts, a 'Turkish' slave boy, and amber *devotionalia*.[37] This Italo-Baltic exchange, in turn, should be viewed against the background in Cosimo's portrait depicting the so-called *Quattro Mori* (Four Moors) monument in the Tuscan slave and trading port of Livorno, where the Medici maintained thousands of mainly Muslim prisoners of war to power their galleys, and imported critical supplies of Baltic grain from primarily Poland-Lithuania.[38] Thus the Pac gifts of furs and human *spolia* gestured to Tuscany's direct connection to and even dependence on the Baltic, and to early modern Italy's culture of slavery, which was closely associated with Eastern Europe and Eurasia as a source of captives sold as slaves in Italy.[39] It also reified to propagandistic ends what both the Tuscan and Lithuanian grand duchies perceived as a common Muslim threat.[40] The amber entangled notions of Baltic maritime provenience, and the substance's supposed origins in the Italian Po river valley of ancient Etruria, invented locus of the Medici and Pac dynasties.[41] This creates a different narrative than the conventional pushing of the region to the margins of history. For much of the Baltic this region enters the (Western) written historical record as a colonial territory of the mediaeval crusades, which, among other things, consolidated the rise of a once pagan Lithuania into the ranks of a power to be reckoned with, and entangled the histories of Latvian and Estonian peoples with that of the Germans.[42] Thus the region's inclusion in the annals of Western history was concurrent to a movement to conquer it for Catholicism; dynamics repeated, from a different perspective, during the modern period of Soviet invasion and occupation.[43] This speaks to a broader long-term 'othering' of the area, which has served all different kinds of political, sociopolitical and cultural agendas, both interior and exterior.[44] I sometimes resist capitulating to calling it 'Central and Eastern' or something that looks like a qualification of Europe because it feels like surrendering to those mechanisms of othering, tacitly acknowledging their validity, while also contradicting the Baltic states' self-determination to re-join Europe following the restoration of their independence in 1991.

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37)   On this exchange see the essay: Ruth Sargent Noyes, ' "The Polar Winds Have Driven Me to the Conquest of the Treasure in the Form of the Much-Desired Relic" (Re)moving Relics and Performing Gift Exchange between Early Modern Tuscany and Lithuania,' in Gustavs Strenga and Lars Kjar, eds, *Gifts and Materiality: Gifts as Objects in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, London: Bloomsbury, forthcoming.

38)   For the monument and Livorno in this period see Mark Rosen, 'Pietro Tacca's Quattro Mori and the Conditions of Slavery in Early Seicento Tuscany,' *The Art Bulletin*, 97: 1, 2015, 34–57.

39)   Monica Boni and Robert Delort, 'Des esclaves toscans, du milieu du XIVe au milieu du XVe siècle,' *Mélanges de l'Ecole française de Rome*, 112: 2, 2000, 1057–77; Sally McKee, 'Domestic Slavery in Renaissance Italy,' *Slavery & Abolition*, 29: 3, 2008, 305–26.

40)   Ariel Salzmann, 'Migrants in Chains: On the Enslavement of Muslims in Renaissance and Enlightenment Europe,' *Religions*, 4: 3, 2013, 391–411.

41)   Tomasz Grusiecki, 'Foreign as Native: Baltic Amber in Florence, *World Art*, 7: 1, 2017, 3–36.

42)   See e.g. Marek Tamm et al., eds, *Crusading and Chronicle Writing on the Medieval Baltic Frontier: a Companion to the Chronicle of Henry of Livonia*, Farnham: Ashgate, 2011.

43)   Alan Murray, ed, *Crusade and Conversion on the Baltic Frontier 1150–1500*, London: Routledge, 2001.

44)   The classic study remains Larry Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe. The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994.

[R. BORN] Adding to Ruth's point, several recent studies position central and eastern Europe within the framework of colonial history. They have addressed the long-known practice of enslaving various groups from the region in the Middle Ages and in the early modern period. Involved in this infamous business, alongside the Italian maritime republics of Genoa and Venice, were the Mamluk rulers of Egypt and, in their succession, the Ottomans.[45] The last phase in this trafficking is now in the focus of some of the projects conducted at the Bonn Centre for Dependency and Slavery Studies.[46] It seems to me that an engagement with central and eastern Europe also provides interesting conclusions for a number of developments that have so far largely been viewed through the lens of a West-East dichotomy, not least with reference to issues that have surfaced within the context of postcolonial studies.

[T. GRUSIECKI] As the global turn in art history emerged mainly in the context of the Anglo-American academe, it is not surprising that the geographical areas most typically represented (if not overrepresented) in the ongoing attempts to 'globalize' the discipline are those with an existing research and training infrastructure, often institutionally embedded in the world's leading universities, including the Ivies, Oxbridge, and the like. This means an increasing prominence of Latin America, the Atlantic World, the Indo-Pacific, the Eastern Mediterranean, and China, but only insofar as they are connected to Italy, Iberia, France, the Low Countries, Germany, and England, the polities conventionally studied by North American and Western European art historians. On a political level, the recent demands to diversify curricula made by, among others, students of Latin American descent, and the growing awareness of structural inequalities, including anti-Black racism, chauvinism towards Asian communities, and Islamophobia, all contribute to a gradually increasing inclusion of new areas in mainstream art history. In this respect, the global turn is a welcome development with a potential to open up and broaden the core of the discipline through contestations, stirrings, and deconstructions of preconceived concepts and theories.

In this context, the omission of central and eastern Europe from the list of global turn's beneficiaries may be explained by the dearth of institutional opportunities to study Slavic, Baltic, and Finno-Ugric languages in the West (particularly after the collapse of the Soviet Union), and the relative collective demobilization of central and eastern European diasporas (particularly in North America). There is nothing ominous about the region's exclusion from dominant art-historical narratives; note a similar leaving out of Scandinavia and Ireland. But whatever the reasons for its exclusion from the art-historical mainstream, the result is a shortage of English-language, French-language, and to a lesser extent also German-language publications on the region, causing a lack of critical mass for promoting and popularizing the still largely unknown art and culture of central and eastern Europe in the Euro-American academe. We must come up with actionable solutions to this conundrum so that the exclusion of the region from art-historical narratives does not become a self-fulfilling prophecy.

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45)   Hannah Barker, *That Most Precious Merchandise: The Mediterranean Trade in Black Sea Slaves, 1260–1500*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2019.

46)   Bonn Centre for Dependency and Slavery Studies, University of Bonn: https://www.dependency.uni-bonn.de/en (last accessed 15 June 2022).

[O. PEVNY] It is true that the global turn as it is represented in Western cultural-historical studies responds to the concerns and agendas of Anglo-American academe. It often seems that central and eastern European nations fall wayside in the context of current global priorities; their prolonged association with Soviet realities and their relative economic and military weakness complicate the conception of a united Europe. Moreover, while most Central European states now find themselves within the European Union, Eastern European nations, such as those within which my primary interest falls, Ukraine and Belarus, are concurrently trying to assert their national identities and respond to demands that would earn them a seat in the supra-national European Union. We must always keep in mind that globalization is not experienced equally; those who live in some of the lands we study, still very much find themselves to be side-lined in global discourses. The parameters of our engagement with the global turn in the study of the early modern central and eastern Europe must consider the current realities of the lands we study.

I agree with Robert and others, that we must be true to our sources and avoid appropriating methodologies and approaches simply to achieve recognition for our fields within the broader parameters of contemporary art historical scholarship. This does not mean that we should remain wayside of current scholarly trends, but rather that we should engage with them fittingly and selectively. I would also like to point out that while we are gathered here to speak specifically about the integration of central and eastern European material into the Anglo-American and European academic discourse, we all acknowledge that one of the ways to achieve this is by construing our research in terms of ideas and subjects that transgress political and regional boundaries. The question of what can be done to make materials and sources on central and eastern Europe accessible to a broader scholarly audience, is another matter. Here, I believe, our field is at a bit of a disadvantage in comparison to Western European studies. As Robyn has pointed out, this is not just an issue of the languages in which materials are written, but the fact that until thirty years ago, the existence of the Soviet Union prevented free academic exchange in central and eastern Europe. I think we will see a steady increase in the incorporation of Central and East European cultural production in global art historical studies. Our aim must be to produce the type of research that speaks across borders and to publish this research in journals, periodicals, and with presses that engage in scholarship that recognizes visual culture as an inter-contingent force that endlessly and indefinitely reverberates throughout the globe.

[R. RADWAY] One of the most important things historians of the region can do is take imperial claims of representational status seriously, even if this means going against nationally-oriented historiographical traditions. Empires were not just oppressive forces seeking to politically dominate and economically exploit regions from the outside. Empires were also embraced by those individuals who chose to display a measure of loyalty to its institutions or the dynasty leading it. This allowed empire to transform from an external force into an internal opportunity. Empire created channels for people and objects to circulate beyond their immediate environments, thereby branching out beyond local and regional networks. This resulted in interactions with individuals, ideas, and objects on an unprecedentedly trans-regional and occasionally global scale. For central and eastern Europe, this means dealing seriously with

both the Habsburg and the Ottoman imperial projects as well as accounting for other dynastic activities that occasionally resulted in situations resembling imperial formations. Individual patterns of loyalty and patronage were often wrought by imperial infrastructures, thereby challenging received narratives centred on nation states.

Dariusz Kołodziejczyk published a provocative essay in 2013 in which he challenged historians to think about Habsburg, Polish, Venetian, and Muscovite history as part of Ottoman history rather than set in perpetual opposition against it. Of course, none of these places were real 'vassals', but they all engaged in different practices that led to a 'nuanced political mosaic' in which the Ottomans played an important role.[47] For art historians, it can be useful to take this nuance and use it to help explore the visual vocabularies and practices usually chalked up to 'influence'. Something more complicated was going on than just a passive reception and adoption of beautiful Anatolian carpets and İznik tiles. For similar reasons, I also take issue with the term East-Central Europe, which has often been used to refer to the non-German-speaking lands of the Habsburg monarchy, Hungary, and Poland-Lithuania. Although geographically admissible, the term implies that the Habsburg dynasty and the Holy Roman Empire are somehow separable from the histories of the various small and large polities that stretched across the region. Do we need to forget that the Habsburgs were the Kings of Hungary and Bohemia, and even serious contenders for the Polish crown on several occasions? Why set aside imperial narratives in favour of national ones? Are we supposed to ignore all the German-speaking artists and patrons working in Bohemia, Silesia, Poland-Lithuania, Transylvania, and Hungary? Even if a place was never integrated politically, legally, or culturally into an empire, nearly all central and eastern Europe had some imperial entanglements which allowed for the movement of people and objects. Examining what made these entanglements possible allows us to better understand the objects commissioned and consumed in the region. This makes central and eastern Europe a fascinating place to test out how local and global dynamics played out in the first age of globalization.

QUESTION 2:

What is our unique contribution to the global turn in art history? Can we produce scholarship that is of interest to a wider constituency of early modernists, including Latin Americanists, Ottomanists, and Africanists? Can we pose new questions, introduce unseen objects, or introduce different archives? How can art-historical study of central and eastern Europe interrogate and modify claims to Global Art History?

[T. GRUSIECKI] Our strength lies in the untapped potential of central and eastern European archival and visual sources in asking new questions and providing new answers for the character and scope of early modern globalisation. While the Americas, Asia, and increasingly Africa feature widely in Europe's 'global' art histories, central and eastern Europe is virtually left out from these considerations. The region, however, offers a wide variety of documented examples

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47) Dariusz Kołodziejczyk, 'What Is inside and What Is Outside? Tributary States in Ottoman Politics,' in Gábor Kármán and Lovro Kunčević, eds, *The European Tributary States of the Ottoman Empire in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, Leiden: Brill, 2013, 421–32.

of transculturation that defy expectations and plant the seeds for making Europe's history more inclusive and diverse. By transculturation, I mean processes of merging and converging cultures, first defined by Fernando Ortiz, resulting in transformative changes which alter societies as they adopt foreign cultural forms into their way of life.[48] To give an example from my own research, the otherwise heterogeneous inhabitants of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (created in 1569) embraced visual images and objects of material culture, including maps, illustrated histories, costume, portraits, and carpets, as they found themselves in the midst of searching for convincing stories of their shared place in the world. Yet, while these artefacts acted as signifiers of cultural distinctiveness, they were often appropriated from abroad, particularly the Ottoman Empire, thus challenging the notion of culture as a coherent and self-contained realm.[49] What was considered foreign or exotic to begin with gradually became local, or even native. This assimilation of foreign things into local tradition brings to the fore the often-overlooked extrinsic aspect of nativism, using Poland-Lithuania as a useful methodological laboratory for challenging the theories of nations' cultural distinctiveness.

What is particularly relevant here is that central and eastern Europeans often appropriated transcultural forms into their local tradition in a way that we normally associate with the processes of hybridity or *métissage*, more familiar in the colonial context but not so much in Europe itself. The study of central and eastern Europe could thus bring about a renewed interest in European transculturation and its implications for European cultures, rewriting the history of Europe as a less Eurocentric enterprise. To fully appreciate that Europe is not an autonomous civilisation, but that is has been co-shaped by other cultures and traditions, is particularly urgent in the era of populism and ethno-nationalism ushered by Donald Trump, Boris Johnson, Marine Le Pen, Jarosław Kaczyński, Viktor Orbán, and other wannabe autocrats. On a more pragmatic point, a provincialized Europe is a realm where the antinomies of East vs West, maritime vs contiguous, colonial vs national, exotic vs native no longer seem relevant as analytical tools, therefore affording a more prominent place for central and eastern Europe in a potentially coeval and decentred art history.

[R. BORN] For me, the region's major contribution is its corpus of unexplored case studies. Ottoman robes of honour (hil'at) preserved in monasteries in Greece, Romania, and the Holy Land are an example of such rich sources.[50] They were ritually bestowed upon diplomats and princes from the tributary states, who often donated them to Orthodox monasteries, thus blending in Byzantine symbolism with Ottoman sense of luxury in the external presentation of Orthodox dignitaries. Further study of these objects may offer a better contextualisation of the integration of Ottoman and Persian luxury goods into the representational culture of elites in central and eastern Europe, a process which is currently subsumed under the label of

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48)   Fernando Ortiz, *Cuban Counterpoint, Tobacco and Sugar*, Durham: Duke University Press, 1995, 32–3.

49)   See, for example, Tomasz Grusiecki, 'Doublethink: Polish Carpets in Transcultural Contexts,' *The Art Bulletin*, 104.3: 29-54.

50)   Nikolaos Vryzidis, 'Towards a History of the Greek Hil'at. An Interweaving of Byzantine and Ottoman Traditions,' *Convivium*, 4, 2017, 176–91, and 'Ottoman Textiles and Greek Clerical Vestments. Prolegomena on a Neglected Aspect of Ecclesiastical Material Culture,' *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies*, 42: 1, 2018, 92–114; Robert Born, 'The Ottoman Tributaries Transylvania, Walachia and Moldavia. Reflections on the Mobility of Objects and Networks of Actors,' *Diyâr* 2:1, 2021, 27–58.

'Ottomanisation'.[51] A possible perspective is presented by the cross-cultural clothing practices outlined by Finbarr Barry Flood for the Indian subcontinent in the Middle Ages,[52] which has recently been utilised in the study of the Caucasus as well.[53] Such an approach provides an alternative to the 'Byzance après Byzance' concept coined by Nicolae Iorga, which still dominates research on the principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia. Here's hoping that new methods and approaches will contribute to a more nuanced discussion of phenomena and concepts such as the Turqueries or the different manifestation of Orientalism.

[S. IVANIČ] I agree that our biggest pull factor may be the heterogeneity of historical central and eastern Europe. It is a region filled with many ethnicities, cultures, and languages. In the early modern period, it was at the intersection of empires: neighbouring Habsburg lands to the west and the Ottoman Empire and Russia to the east. Borders within it were continually shifting. Land-locked between these powerful entities, it was in constant flux: an ever-changing borderland between 'East' and 'West'. Viewing its diverse communities in relation to their neighbours not only allows us to draw comparisons with other supra-regions (the Atlantic, the Pacific or the Mediterranean), but also shows how connections and entanglements (with imperial and other entities) work in a region that is surrounded by land rather than sea and that was not the subject of conquest in the same way as other territories in the period. As a vast borderland, it also holds challenges. Scholars must deal with 'modern' borders and categories that run starkly counter to the lives of our historical subjects. The men and women of early modern central and eastern Europe belonged to communities that stretched far and wide, connected as much through religious and professional affinity – as musicians, Catholics, Jews, or scientists – as by geography.[54] Working on this region demands working across many national borders, speaking multiple languages, and working with numerous archives.

Here, I would also like to present a further point about the exceptional ability of research on central and eastern Europe to advance studies of global early modern history. Working with decorative arts –objects often belonging to men and women of lesser means, and without identifiable lines of provenance – presents a further challenge. It starts with a very simple problem. The researcher looking for relevant objects in museums to study the region's connections is confronted with an obstacle. Artefacts are often labelled generically as 'Central European', which obfuscates the vastly complex cultural landscape that this category encompasses. Objects from central and eastern Europe are the product of skills, materials and techniques that are integrally linked with other European places. They also share a long history of Christian influence in iconography. This makes determining their provenance and production

51)   Adam Jasieński, 'A Savage Magnificence: Ottomanizing Fashion and the Politics of Display in Early Modern East-Central Europe,' *Muqarnas*, 31, 2014, 173–205; Tomasz Grusiecki, 'Uprooting Origins: Polish Lithuanian Art and the Challenge of Pluralism,' in Beáta Hock and Anu Allas, eds, G*lobalizing East European Art Histories. Past and Present,* London: Routledge, 2018, 25–38.

52)   Flood, Finbarr Barry, *Objects of Translation: Material Culture and Medieval "Hindu-Muslim" Encounter,* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009, 63–87.

53)   Erik Thunø, 'Cross-Cultural Dressing: the Medieval South Caucasus and Art History,' in Erik Thunø and Ivan Foletti, eds, *The Medieval South Caucasus. Artistic Cultures of Albania, Armenia and Georgia,* Brno-Lausanne: Brepols, 2016, 145–159.

54)   Suzanna Ivanič, Anna Parker, Ivana Horáček, Erika Supria Honisch, Howard Louthan, 'Global Prague: Renaissance and Reformation Crossroads,' *Austrian History Yearbook*, Special Issue, 52, 2021, 13-16.

problematic. It is a mammoth task to unravel where these objects really come from. With museum curators and through scientific analysis, we need to develop a more nuanced understanding of these objects in collections – where they were produced, traded, and owned or used and what materials they contained. Once we have a better understanding of these 'Central European' objects, we can start to use them to piece the early modern world back together in a more nuanced way. A current project, 'Connected Central European Worlds, 1500-1700' (AHRC Networking AH/V00848X/1) seeks to begin examining these themes with researchers and curators from Europe and North America.[55] It will show the potential for scientific analysis of objects to broaden our understanding of how art and craft connected people across the globe in this period and has implications for new methodologies for global art history.

[R. S. NOYES] To paraphrase a recent 2021 RSA panel précis on globalizing early modern art history, by shifting central and eastern European art from an add-on to a heuristic, our expanding horizons of scholarship can contribute to challenging conventional perceptions about the broader early modern world. We can do so by contravening persistently anachronistic teleologies and revealing marginalized ecologies and economies of artistic production. A few potential vectors come to mind that might also enable scholars more generally to address challenges following the global turn in histories of art (e.g. the role of place-based research and relationships to sources, explaining change and preserving historical hierarchies, rethinking notions of canonicity and overcoming comparative approaches that perpetuate a paradigm where different cultures appear as parallel but separate fields of inquiry).[56] These include tethering inquiry to spatially oriented materials, bodies and objects; accounting for manifold aspects of exchanges through contextualized object biographies; subjecting written and material sources to thick description to preserve asymmetries; and adopting layered approaches to re-situating material things as liminal nodes composed of diverse accretions to avoid parallelisms.

They might also contribute to pivoting from recent approaches in global object and material studies that tend towards problematically capacious surveys of different object types, which tend to preserve disciplinary divisions, yield scattered results, and foster programmatic agendas. Instead, they might be conducive to developing a microhistorical equilibrium that balances close analysis of source materials across multiple, interconnected contexts against the holistic study of discrete object classes, which furnish a microcosmic lens through which to inflect broader questions that range across periods, places, and modes of history.[57] The hope is to develop adaptable methodological models. Thus while focusing on the movements of things and persons with special attention to interconnecting, in my case, the Italian peninsula and the Baltic littoral, my hope is that research results will encourage extra-European perspectives to de-Westernize the discourse and further connect isolated regional histories—keeping in

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55) *Connected Central European Worlds 1500-1700,* https://research.kent.ac.uk/emcentraleu/

56) For an overview of some of these challenges, see John-Paul A. Ghobrial, ed., 'Global History and Microhistory,' special issue of *Past & Present*, 242:14, 2019.

57) For studies along these methodological lines, though not focused on the region in question here, see Leah R. Clark, *Collecting Art in the Italian Renaissance Court: Objects and Exchanges,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018; Anna Grasskamp, *Objects in Frames: Displaying Foreign Collectibles in Early Modern China and Europe,* Berlin: Dietrich Reimer Verlag, 2019.

mind that attending to central and eastern Europe itself constitutes an effort to de-Westernize (another point to address in the next questions).[58]

[O. PEVNY] The study of central and eastern Europe certainly has a contribution to make to the global turn in Art History. To begin with, it offers the opportunity of mitigating the emphasis of global studies from maritime empires to polities experiencing processes of 'internal globalization'. Moreover, it speaks to the ambiguity of the concept of 'Europe'. It draws attention to fluctuating borders, to the diversity and movements of people, to the emergence and adaptation of groups identities, and to the struggle for democratic representation of minoritarian groups. In the case of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, a multi-ethnic and multi-confessional polity co-governed by the nobility, the lay and ecclesiastical lords, and an elected monarch, equal rights and privileges were extended to all members of the noble estate, religious toleration was guaranteed to the nobility and free persons, and broad autonomy offered to the regions. Yet, not everyone was equal. For one, serfs were under the jurisdiction of their masters, and Polonization and the spread of Catholicism encroached on the traditions, languages, and faiths of minoritarian ethnic and religious groups. Such groups not only exhibited a continuous and fluid reconstitution of their identity in response to changing imperatives, but sought to impact the social, legal, and political parameters of the Commonwealth's governance. The gains and shortcoming experienced by the Commonwealth and its multi-ethnic and multi-confessional population certainly offer lessons on global citizenship that resonate with contemporary anxieties arising between cultures and nations, as well as nations and supra-national bodies (such as the EU). Moreover, the visual culture of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, and especially that of Ruthenian lands, remains largely understudied. The gathering of empirical evidence (both photographic and archival documentation) and the creation of databases of visual culture that would make these visual sources part of the broader art historical discourse certainly has good prospects as a long-term international grant project. Such work would undoubtedly raise the profile of early modern visual culture of central and eastern Europe, which at present is overshadowed by the looming and often unproblematized categories of 'European art' and 'Russian art'.

I cannot see a better way forward than to continue diligently investigating central and eastern Europe, while engaging in current approaches and methodologies that can offer new perspectives on the material we study. Understanding the early modern cultural landscapes of central and eastern Europe can deepen our understanding of the commonalities and tensions underlying current processes of globalization, most notably the political conservatism of Poland and Hungary, Ukraine's turn towards Europe, and Russia's revanchist violation of Ukraine's sovereignty in 2014 and 2022. The parameters of the global turn in our research need to be broad enough to engage scholars of different global regions and specific enough to maintain local relevance. I can think of many possible topics of research that are commensurate with the global turn when it comes to the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, for example: hybrid sites of meaning and multicultural landscapes, graphic landscapes of multilingual society, local rites and ecclesiastical universalism, confessionalization, architecture of

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58)   See e.g. the recent co-authored study: Ruth Sargent Noyes et al., ' "Baltic Catacombs." Translating *Corpisanti* Catacomb Relic Sculptures between Rome, Polish Livonia, and the Lithuanian Grand Duchy circa 1750-1800,' *Open Research Europe*, 1: 18, 2021, https://doi.org/10.12688/openreseurope.13259.1 (last accessed 15 June 2021).

multi-confessionalism, ethnic and religious violence, multicultural urban coexistence, republican values and local traditions, cultural homogenization and heterogenization, internal migration and quasi-colonialism, diaspora communities, myths of origin, national and regional identities, memory and identity, information management, intellectual currents, educational trends, ideologies of patriotism, and the politics of representation.

[R. RADWAY] I agree. Thanks in large part to the imperial archives that cover the region, it is uniquely well documented, preserving evidence of how objects were created, used, and moved across time. These archives require a scholar to have paleographic training and the learning curve is steep, but the results can be remarkable. Using such sources allows us to play with local and regional entanglements to weave new narratives about objects, their owners, and their makers in a global early modern world. I could imagine a fascinating article about a German-speaking Jewish merchant in Ottoman Buda (Budin) who lived in a Renaissance house designed by Florentine architects and used blue-and-white Chinese porcelain to serve a meal during a visit from a Bohemian nobleman on his way to Constantinople with his large retinue of Netherlandish, Tyrolian, and Silesian courtiers. This would tell an important story about the place of the local in the global and the centrality of this region in uniting these worlds on a day-to-day basis. The sources for such narratives are all extant but they are difficult to pull together, and the leap required to weave such a narrative – to unite disparate traces to tell a clean narrative – may require us to investigate how other regions in global art history piece together documentation and found objects.[59] Of course, we don't need Chinese porcelain to be global. Or do we?

We also have a contribution to art history as a discipline that goes beyond just the early modern period. Central and eastern European art challenges the term 'hybridity', still a dominant concept in much recent scholarship. Hybridity suggests that two discrete and authentic things (styles, objects, people) meet and blend into something new. To treat something as a hybrid is to imply that original pure forms could and did exist.[60] The art of this region offers a series of ideal case-studies to highlight this fiction. Notions of stylistic purity were the product of the nineteenth and twentieth-century art historians whose political aims have recently become the subject of study.[61] The stories told by objects themselves involve complicated processes of appropriation, adoption, and blending of elements over centuries.

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59) Tünde F. Komori, 'Prestige Object or Coffee Cup? Problems of Identifying and Dating Chinese Porcelain Unearthed in Buda,' *Annual of Medieval Studies at CEU*, 23, 2017, 108–22.

60) Carolyn Dean and D. Leibsohn, 'Hybridity and Its Discontents: Considering Visual Culture in Colonial Spanish America,' *Colonial Latin American Review*, 12, 2003, 5–35.

61) Suzanne Marchand, 'The View from Land: Austrian Art Historians and the Interpretation of Croatian Art,' in Alina Alexandra Payne, ed., *Dalmatia and the Mediterranean: Portable Archeology and the Poetics of Influence*, Leiden: Brill, 2013, 19–58; Matthew Rampley, *Vienna School of Art History: Empire and the Politics of Scholarship, 1847-1918*, University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2013.

QUESTION 3:

What are some of the potential challenges of engaging in global historical approaches to central and eastern European Art?

[O. PEVNY] The investigation of questions that cut across national boundaries has the benefit of being able to mitigate the dominance of themes underlining national distinctiveness that continue to overshadow scholarship on early modern central and eastern European culture. In terms of teaching, providing a broader global perspective on cultural development in central and eastern Europe can only work to help students appreciate the relevance and importance of the material they are studying. I am concerned, however, that such coverage might subject central and eastern European visual culture to an imported evaluative framework. Rather than provide an opportunity for students to focus on imperatives and developments key to the region, it could result in an emphasis on exceptional cases of cultural production that reflect concurrent global priorities, which nonetheless had restricted resonance in central and eastern Europe. In the case of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth much is left to do in terms of addressing internal differences of ethnicity, religion, language, and culture. The Commonwealth was divided not just into Crown of the Polish Kingdom and the Grand Dutchy of Lithuania, but into numerous historical regions (such as Ruthenia, Prussia, and Livonia), as well as into voievodships, starostwa, and cities, each with their own issues and concerns. In 1795 with the final partition, the various corners of the Commonwealth became parts of distinct modern entities, and the Commonwealth's inheritance often has been interpreted in the context of these later political developments. Within the Russian Empire and later the Soviet Union, the Commonwealth inheritance of Ruthenian lands remained largely unexplored; it is currently a quickly growing field of study in central and eastern Europe. Nevertheless, empirical data must still be gathered before broader interpretive work of visual sources is undertaken.

[S. IVANIČ] I think we have as much right to lay claim to 'the global' as others, but it would be wise to heed two warnings. First, it is appealing to write a history of exotic and sparkly things belonging to the wealthy inhabitants of these regions. But – as a scathing review of Lisa Jardine's Worldly Goods by Lauro Martines pointed out – about 97% of the population did not have the means to engage in the consumption of fabulous Renaissance exotica.[62] Was this really a global world for them? Beverly Lemire has recently shown how global connections did permeate all levels of society in early modern Europe, but we must still be wary about the history we are doing.[63] Is it just a history of the wealthy in society, and is it just urban? Second, we must note Dan Hicks' recent challenge to the academic terms used in global histories that gloss over violent events; 'cultural biography' and 'entanglement' sound conveniently positive for the victors who often end up writing histories.[64] What did the experience of globalization

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62)   Lauro Martines 'Review: The Renaissance and the Birth of Consumer Society Reviewed Works: Wealth and the Demand for Art in Italy: 1300-1600 by Richard A. Goldthwaite; Worldly Goods: A New History of the Renaissance by Lisa Jardine,' *Renaissance Quarterly,* 51: 1, 1998, 193–203.

63)   Beverly Lemire, *Global Trade and the Transformation of Consumer Cultures. The Material World Remade, c. 1500-1820,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018.

64)   Dan Hicks, *The Brutish Museums: The Benin Bronzes, Colonial Violence and Cultural* Restitution, London: Pluto Press, 2020, esp. 25–28.

mean for people on all sides? What about conflict and violence? If we talk of mixing and giving, what about of taking and erasure? Does Hicks' warning apply outside of colonial contexts and even within Europe? Transferred to a non-colonial or intra-colonial space, how does this work? Central and eastern Europe was certainly not a tension-free area. Laura Lisy-Wagner has written about the Habani, German-speaking Anabaptists living in Moravia who were expelled in the 1620s and settled in Upper Hungary (today Slovakia).[65] Habaner ceramics fused Islamic designs with Italian maiolica into a vernacular style lauded for its unique qualities. Yet is there also a story to tell of persecution? These were resilient communities producing beautiful artwork, but they did so in the face of adversity.

[R. S. NOYES] I agree, this global history rooted in violence is already basically there. The etymology of the word for slave (schiavo) in Italian is central to the Pac-Medici case study. Schiavo also gives you Slav, so there is an intrinsic association between violence and a certain imagined and vaguely-defined area of Europe. This issue speaks to what I call the 'triple-threat' of the absence, destruction, and/or dispersal of the archive when it comes to researching our field—a research challenge but also another area where we can contribute to the global turn in Art History. To cite but one example from my own recent work on the Paces, the centuries-long history of violent conflict in Lithuania means that little remains of the family's impressive collection of rare relics of the Florentine saint Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi (with whom they claimed common parentage), gifted from Medici grand dukes within lavish reliquary containers manufactured in the same Medicean Galleria that turned Baltic amber into medicinal remedies. Relevant archival materials for studying the Paces were dispersed between Italy, Poland, Lithuania, and Latvia, with relevant artworks, objects, and monuments in Lithuania, Belarus, Ukraine, Latvia, Russia, Italy, and Poland, and many more documents and collections lost or destroyed, all predominantly due to violent conflicts and geopolitical realignments of the twentieth century.

Thus a portion (sometimes sizeable) of the visual, architectural and material cultural archives and histories of central and eastern Europe currently exists beyond the visible or the intelligible, and what does survive presents challenges of access and interpretation (more on the latter in response to the next question). This triple-threat represents an issue similarly faced by specialists researching the pre-Columbian Americas, plantation economies (to name but a few), colonial contexts, and more broadly speaking 'contact zones', to use Mary Louise Pratt's term, by which she means 'social spaces where cultures meet, clash and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power, such as colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths.'[66] This evinces common methodological ground wherein we might make some contributions—and of course draw much benefit for our own particular field of inquiry. I also often find myself consulting different textual and two-dimensional media (e.g. drawings or photographs) to reconstruct now-lost monuments, objects and artworks, and their respective spatial environments. Recourse to Pac-Medici correspondence and Medici inventories in the state archive in Florence, for instance, discloses the existence of not only the

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65)   Laura Lisy-Wagner, *Islam, Christianity, and the Making of Czech Identity, 1453–1683*, Farnham: Ashgate, 2013.

66)   Mary Louise Pratt, 'Arts of the Contact Zone,' *Profession*, 1991, 33–40, and *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, New York: Routledge, 1992.

gift of the 'Turkish' slave and amber from the Paces, but also live polar bears, Turkish stallions and Samogitian ponies, as well as reciprocal gifts from Cosimo including medicines from the grand-ducal *Galleria*, Neapolitan horses, and parmesan cheese. Such methods and approaches can shed glancing light on broader issues taken up increasingly in recent scholarship taking up the question of the history of collecting and display, as well as the ephemeral arts, both burgeoning areas in early modern art history.

[R. RADWAY] The potential roadblocks are manifold, including a dearth of new research, unprocessed and unpublished excavation materials laying in boxes, a limited number of internationally recognizable artefacts to work from (elsewhere called 'masterpieces'), and a complicated twenty-first century political landscape. We have a lot of groundwork ahead of us. Also, to underscore Suzanna's point, we need to remain cautious with our focus on the jet-setting elites of history whose cosmopolitanism mirrors our own twenty-first-century globalized reality.

The very idea of global art history has faced criticism recently. What does 'global' mean in the early modern period anyway? Is it about materials? Methodology? Politics? Parity? Equal representation? Are we just speaking about pre-national, transregional comparative studies? A recent panel at the annual meeting of the Renaissance Society of America asked these very questions. The discussion revolved around the idea that the global turn was a tool to empower art from underrepresented geographies, allowing it to enter the conversation on more equal footing. It was suggested that soon we might not need to justify the study of 'other' geographies by calling it global and will be able to just simply study them for their own sake. We cannot afford to ignore the global turn, however. Nor would we accurately represent the objects and materials we study if we fail to examine their global contexts. But we also need to strike a delicate balance attuned to the political and social contexts we study.

QUESTION 4:

A wide array of approaches could be employed to explore the region's past, including entangled history (Michael Werner and Bénedicte Zimmermann); cultural transfer (Michel Espagne and Michael Werner); connected histories (Sanjay Subramanyam); *Transfergeschichte* (Matthias Middell); history of globalisation (Sebastian Conrad); circulations (Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann). Do any of these do justice to central and eastern Europe's historical complexities? What specific methods do you find useful in your work

[T. GRUSIECKI] Global art history as it is practised today has been devised mostly with Western European empires and their colonies in mind. Central and eastern Europeanists must be mindful of this methodological framework and work towards its expansion. We will only come across as relevant to a wider community of early modernists if we dare to ask new questions that emerge from the specific contexts of central and eastern European transcultural experiences; otherwise, we risk appearing a peripheral offshoot of Western European story of global encounters. What is relevant about the region is not that methods could be applied to study its history, but rather that its underexplored archives and collections can lead to the development of new methods of analysis, especially as new art objects and cultural forms are brought to the fore.

It is then particularly embarrassing that (at least to my knowledge) only three methodological interventions came from the study of our region, 'horizontal art histories', 'close others' (both terms coined by Piotr Piotrowski), and 'epistemic privilege' (Beáta Hock's term), all of which were applied to the study of modern art.[67] A 'horizontal art history' is an approach that is polyphonic, multidimensional, and free of geographical hierarchies; 'close other' describes an intermediate epistemic position between attributed difference and acknowledged resemblance; and 'epistemic privilege' is an inversion of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's idea of 'epistemic violence', which implies that scholars of central and eastern Europe are by definition more 'global' in their approach to art history than most Western Europeanists because—as opposed to the latter—they need to acquire a working knowledge of traditions and cultures other than their own in order to participate in art-historical discourse. The analytical strength of these terms owes much to their embeddedness in local concerns and lived experiences, in a similar way that concepts such as 'hybridity', 'transculturation', and 'provincializing Europe' were originally specific to the contexts of Latin America and India, even though they are now part of mainstream Art History's analytical language. Some of these terms, like 'hybridity' are highly contested. Notably, Homi Bhabha's notion of hybridity as an empowering tool is different from Carolyn Dean and Dana Leibsohn's who see it as a model of cultural transmission that reifies cultural differences.[68] While I favour Dean and Leibsohn's approach in my own work, I do not find it fitting to take their side here, but rather to point out that the reason why different scholars find either the former or the latter definition convincing is because they both arose from a specific local context and are thus not simply theoretical in nature but highly applicable in real life.

[S. IVANIČ] I prefer to call what I do 'connected history', as proposed by Sanjay Subrahmanyam, because investigating regional links are as important to the story as the global.[69] The connected and entangled nature of life for early modern men and women is made plain when studying inventories from seventeenth-century Prague. Place names from far and wide crop up attesting to the migration of a large number of residents for marriage, trade or the avoidance of persecution, such as Kúndrat Šteffanaúr, a court clockmaker from the Swiss Confederation who moved to Prague to work for the Holy Roman Emperor, Rudolf II, married a Czech woman named Lidmila, and continued to work for Catholic noble clients in Prague until his death in 1635.[70] Numerous languages and variant spellings in the inventories attest to linguistic fluidity and the lack of linguistic barriers. And the objects that burghers owned – like a coconut shell cup or coral beads – attest to the vast trade networks of the early modern world. The experience of the archive quickly disavows the scholar of notions of nation or even of the existence of distinctive cultures.

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67)   Piotr Piotrowski, 'On the Spatial Turn, or Horizontal Art History,' *Umění*, 56, 2008, 378–83; Piotr Piotrowski, 'East European Art Peripheries Facing Post-Colonial Theory,' *nonsite.org*, 12, 12 August 2014, https://nonsite.org/article/east-european-art-peripheries-facing-post-colonial-theory; Beáta Hock, 'Introduction,' in Beáta Hock and Anu Allas, eds, *Globalizing East European Art Histories: Past and Present*, New York: Routledge, 2018, 1–22.

68)   Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*; Dean and Leibsohn, 'Hybridity.'

69)   Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *Explorations in Connected History: From the Tagus to the Ganges*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004; Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *Connected History: Essays and Arguments*, New York: Verso, 2022.

70)   Ivanič, *Cosmos,* 131–52.

[R. RADWAY] I have a tattered copy of Homi Bhabha's *The Location of Culture* on my shelf that I often turn to for inspiration. While my approach to it has evolved over time, I am deeply motivated by the notion that in-between spaces carry 'the burden of the meaning of culture'.[71] It is our job to discover this meaning and relay it in powerful ways. I am a fan of using a combination of entangled history and circulations, but I do not find them specific enough. What is so fascinating about central and eastern Europe is that globalizing elements go much deeper, from the palaces of nobility down to the disposable prints for sale by the hawker who passes through a rural village once every fortnight. A focus on entangled histories alone runs the risk of following around a group of well-documented elites. In current art-historical writing, circulations generally occur in centre-periphery relationships and rely on notions of 'influence'. In my view, neither methodology considers the full range of options available for patrons and artists to choose from. It is imperative to think about the motivating factors behind appropriation, transformation, reactions, distortions, modifications, emulations, resistance, subversion, parody, simplification, exaggeration, etc. We are often looking at layered histories in which multiple historical traditions overlap, existing simultaneously in the visual toolboxes of artists and artisans.

[R. S. NOYES] I find a productive approach to be that of proceeding according to practices and principles that draw together aspects of global microhistory, object– and material-centric inquiry, and histoire croisée or Verflechtungsgeschichte (entangled history).[72] I think it is worth recalling in regard to the latter that since places like Prussia, Lithuania, and Livonia entered Western conceptual geography and historical consciousness in the course of papal-mandated Baltic medieval crusades, the region was thereafter largely perceived by the West through a colonial and neocolonial lens.[73] As Larry Wolff notes in his classic study, eighteenth-century discourse analogized Poland-Lithuania and Russia to the 'barbaric' climes of Africa and the Americas, theorizing racial and ethnic parallels between the inhabitants of these spheres.[74] Scholarship have shown this discourse can be traced back through the preceding centuries.[75] Thus there are historical bases for marshalling the postcolonial associations of histoire croisée to bring to bear on our material.

Entangled history, coupled with a focus on 'following the object' (or material) as it moves across and between specific contexts, couples an attention to mutual processes of exchange with that to the various forms and modes of agency of all involved (including human and non-human actors) in these exchange processes.[76] This multi-faceted research, I think, can

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71) Bhabha, *Location of Culture*, 56.

72) Leah R. Clark, 'Framing Transcultural Objects: New Approaches to Collecting in the Early Modern World,' *Oxford Art Journal*, 43, 2020, 476–9.

73) Domenico Caccamo, 'Le Indie d'Europa: Polonia, Ucraina, Russia nella letteratura di viaggio e di esplorazione,' *Roma, Venezia e l'Europa Centro-Orientale: Ricerche sulla prima età moderna*, Milan: Franco Angeli, 2010, 352–64; Stefan Donecker, 'Est Vera India Septemtrio: Re-imagining the Baltic in the Age of Discovery,' in Linda Kaljundi and Tuomas Lehtonen, eds, *Re-forming Texts, Music, and Church Art in the Early Modern North*, Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2016, 393–419.

74) Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe*.

75) See, for example, Dolly Jørgensen and Virginia Langum, eds, *Visions of North in Premodern Europe*, Turnhout: Brepols, 2018.

76) Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory*, Oxford: Oxford University Press,

be more conducive to overcoming outdated interpretive scaffolds traditionally used to describe a one-sided or over-simplified account of, for example, Western European expansion. As a scholar who first trained as an Italianist engaged with issues of centre-periphery, who then came progressively to address and incorporate in my scholarship objects, artworks, agents, and histories from the present-day Baltic region in conversation with Italian realms, I also shy away from de-coupling early modern central and eastern Europe and its arts from Western European counterparts. Rather, I would tend to tether East and West by means of transregional, microhistorical case studies that retrace the diverse trajectories and entanglements—spatial, temporal, symbolic, discursive, etc.—of particular objects and materials, such as fur and amber, as intercultural actants and frames, thresholds and/or barriers that variously mediated and essentially shaped and structured meaning making and socio-cultural relations and perceptions.[77] One could also undertake these approaches with specific motifs or forms, for example.

[R. BORN] New impulses might be provided not only by considerations on the social and cultural life of things and Bruno Latour's Actor-Network-Theory (ANT), but also by the concept of 'object itineraries', first discussed by anthropologists and archaeologists.[78] This approach, developed in distinction to the biologically influenced approach of 'object biographies', proves to be particularly suitable for the analysis of the 'flows' of people, objects, and ideas. These aspects formed an important part of the agenda of the Transottomanica Priority Programme funded by the German Research Foundation (DFG), focusing on the moment of movement and dynamics between Eastern Europe, the Ottoman Empire, the Middle East, and Central Asia.[79] Some of the recently published reconstructions of 'object itineraries' from an art historical perspective include case studies on Persia, the Ottoman Empire, and Poland-Lithuania.[80]

2005. See also Latour, 'The Berlin key or how to do words with things,' in *Matter, Materiality, and Modern Culture*, ed. Paul Graves-Brown, New York: Routledge, 2000, 10–21, especially 19. For a recent paradigmatic case study connecting Italy to the wider world see Leah R. Clark, 'Objets croisés: Albarelli as Vessels of Mediation Within and Beyond the Spezieria,' *Études Épistémè*, 36, 2019, https://doi.org/10.4000/episteme.6292. For the Baltic milieu see Kodres, et. al, *Indifferent Things?*; Mänd and Tamm, *Making Livonia*.

77) See Rūstis Kamuntavičius and Ruth Sargent Noyes, 'Lugano lake artists in the northernmost heart of eighteenth-century Catholic baroque art,' *Review of Institute of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania*, 1, 2021, 25-44. See also Sargent Noyes, 'Count Michał Jan Borch as Patron and Collector: Art between Italy and the Inflanty Voivodeship in the Age of Partition,' *Baltic Journal of Art History*, 21, 2021, 9–70; '*Translatio reliquiae* and *translatio imperii* between Italy and North-eastern Europe in the Age of Partition (c. 1750-1800): the Case of the Plater in Polish Livonia,' in Anna Ancāne, ed., *The Migration of Artists and Architects in Central and Northern Europe 1560–1900*, Riga: Art Academy of Latvia, forthcoming; Sargent Noyes and Rūstis Kamuntavičius, '(Re)moving Relics and Migrating Architecture between Italy and Polish Livonia in the Long Counter-Reformation: the Case of the Paracca,' in Sarah Lynch, ed., *Interpreting Italians Abroad: The Migration of Ticinese Architects across Europe in the Early Modern Era*, Milan: Officina Libraria, forthcoming.

78) Arjun Appadurai, 'Introduction. Commodities and Politics of Value,' in Appadurai, ed., *The Social Life of Things. Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986, 3–63; Latour, *Reassembling the Social*; Hans Peter Hahn and Hadas Weiss, 'Biographies, travels and itineraries of things,' in Hans Peter Hahn and Hadas Weiss, eds, *Mobility, Meaning and the Transformations of Things: Shifting Contexts of Material Culture Through Time and Space*, Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2013, 1–14, here 7–10; Rosemary A. Joyce and Susan D. Gillespie, 'Making Things out of Objects that Move,' in Rosemary A. Joyce and Susan D. Gillespie, eds, *Things in Motion. Object Itineraries in Anthropological Practice*, Santa Fe: School for Advanced Research, 2015, 3-20.

79) https://www.transottomanica.de/ (accessed 15 June 2022). See Arkadiusz Christoph Blaszczyk, Robert Born and Florian Riedler 'Introduction. Movable Objects,' in Blaszczyk, Born and Riedler, eds, *Transottoman Matters. Objects Moving through Time, Space, and Meaning*, Göttingen: Vanderhoeck & Ruprecht, 2021, 9–26.

80) Daniela Bleichmar and Meredith Martin, eds, *Objects in Motion in the Early Modern World*, Oxford: Wiley, 2015; Sussan Babaie and Melanie Gibson, eds, *The Mercantile Effect. Art and Exchange in the Islamicate World during the 17th

Special mention should also be made of the concept of 'portability' proposed by Alina Payne, whose focus is on mobility and its consequences. Unlike the 'object itineraries', this approach also considers material and cultural transformations of objects as they moved from one place to another. Former Ottoman tributary states in East-Central Europe, Transylvania, Moldavia and Wallachia, together with the bordering regions, were the focus of the seminar 'From Riverbed to Seashore. Art on the Move in Eastern Europe and the Mediterranean in the Early Modern Period', which was held in 2014-2015 as part of the Getty Foundation's 'Connecting Art Histories' initiative. Here, riverways were particularly appreciated as links between geographic regions and cultures, as well as vehicles for people, things, and ideas.[81]

As for Larry Wolff's *Inventing Eastern Europe*, it must be pointed out that the book has been criticized for the omission of voices from the region. Derogatory ideas about this part of the world predate the eighteenth century and are also to be found in non-Western European sources, albeit without the use of the phrase 'Eastern Europe'. Even during the Enlightenment, the East-West division emphasized by Wolff is mentioned rather sporadically in textual documents, calling to question his influential theory of 'demi-Orientalism'.[82]

[O. PEVNY] All methods offer their own insights; the material under investigation should determine the appropriateness of both methodology and terminology. In my research, the global turn offers the potential of looking at central and eastern Europe from new perspectives and of asking questions that focus on ethnic, religious, and social minoritarian groups. In the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, works of visual culture produced by these groups attest to the on-going processes of cultural revisioning that marked their search for recognition, representation, and alliances.

[T. GRUSIECKI] An ideal scholar of Poland-Lithuania would need to read Polish, German, Low German, Latin, Hebrew, Lithuanian, Latvian, Old Slavonic, Ruthenian, Ukrainian, and Belarusian to conduct research in the archives and have full access to the secondary literature on the art and culture of this vast polity. I doubt it is physically possible for a single scholar to achieve proficiency in all these languages. This complex linguistic landscape does point, however, to the problem of untranslatability of much of the scholarship that exists on Polish-Lithuanian art, not in the sense of impossibility to translate it but rather never being able to stop translating the scholarship produced in the many different (modern) national contexts of Poland-Lithuania's successor states, let alone producing a mutually acceptable scholarly synthesis.[83] What on the surface might appear as a disadvantage may become an epistemic privilege, though, by turning Poland-Lithuania into a model of dialogic scholarship that stresses different kinds of

and 18th Centuries, London: Gingko Library, 2017; Elisabeth A. Fraser, ed., *The Mobility of People and Things in the Early Modern Mediterranean. The Art of Travel*, New York-London: Routledge, 2019.

81)   Alina Payne, 'The Portability of Art: Prolegomena to Art and Architecture on the Move,' in Diana Sorensen, ed., *Territories & Trajectories: Cultures in Circulation*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2018, 91–109.

82)   See Alex Drace-Francis, 'A Provincial Imperialist and a Curious Account of Wallachia: Ignaz von Born,' *European History Quarterly*, 36: 1, 2006, 61–89, here 61–2; Csaba Dupcsik, 'Postcolonial Studies and the Inventing of Eastern Europe,' *East Central Europe*, 26, 1999, 1–14; Ezequiel Adamovsky, 'Euro-Orientalism and the Making of the Concept of Eastern Europe in France, 1810-1880,' *Journal of Modern History* 77: 3, 2005, 591–628, here 592–5.

83)   For the concept of untranslatability, see Alessandra Russo, *The Untranslatable Image: A Mestizo History of the Arts in New Spain*, trans. Susan Emanuel, Joe R. and Teresa Lozano Long, Austin: University of Texas Press, 2014.

historical experience and the need to mediate its meaning in a modern context. New forms of scholarly activity may better suit this approach than the conventional single-author publication model; this includes co-authored pieces, collaborative research projects, and published roundtables, to name just a few.

[R. BORN] Language competence is indeed one of the greatest challenges when dealing with art in East-Central or South-Eastern Europe. From my experience teaching in Germany, it is mostly students who have a family connection to this region and thus have the appropriate language skills, as well as students from the region itself, who drive research in the field of art history of central and eastern Europe. Regarding research on global art history, I have found that even regionally produced studies published in languages with a wide circulation (German, Italian, French) are often not taken up, especially in monographs published in the United States and Great Britain.

[S. IVANIČ] Three particularly notable scholars in the Anglophone world have mastered the many languages needed to do wide-ranging histories of the Habsburgs and East-Central Europe: Robert J. W. Evans, Thomas DaCosta Kaufman, and Paul Crossley. In the context of today's pressures of tenure, publication, administration, and teaching, coupled with lack of funding for skills acquisition, we can hardly expect young scholars to achieve the same vast skill sets. To work rigorously across the many physical, intellectual, and linguistic borders that our research requires, we – as a group – need to bring together teams of individuals in research projects and networks to cover a range of skills and learn from each other with support. To improve the field, we also need to engage more readily with those in heritage, museums, and collections. This is an exciting moment for historians of central and eastern Europe when networks are becoming easier to form through online platforms and – a generation on from the fall of the Iron Curtain – there is a new energy among scholars keen to work together. We are at an exciting juncture for this broadening out and refreshing of scholarship.

[R. RADWAY] We are expected to be superhuman. Digital tools and collaboration are our saving graces. For secondary literature, machine learning and translation software have come incredibly far, and it might be time to start normalizing its cautious use for tangential languages in a person's subfield. It can be incredibly useful for identifying important work that appears in surprising places. If we signal to students that these linguistic hurdles can be overcome without dedicating thirty years to language acquisition first, it might encourage more of them to take up early modern topics in the region. We might also want to maintain a running list of 'low-lying fruit' or low-linguistic-investment topics for students to engage with that could draw them in.

[R. S. NOYES] While to be an art historian also makes one something of a de facto polymath, I think, I tend to agree that those focused on central and eastern Europe face a particularly kaleidoscopic linguistic ecosystem. That the Pac archives I mentioned above, for instance, are scattered throughout multiple countries today is mirrored to an extent by the fact that the relevant documents are in Polish, Latin, and Italian, reflecting the reality that the region's

multilingualism itself has a long history.[84] I think the beginnings of an answer to the challenge of not only undertaking our own current research but also training future generations of scholars might be found in separate but interrelated currents particular to Euro-American cultural and socio-political dynamics that are presently evolving in real time. These have to do with the incremental EU integration, already ongoing for about two decades, of East-Central and Western Europe (with the latter I'd include Scandinavia-Nordics). Especially since the fall of the Soviet Union (though also before) and the regaining of, for example, Estonian, Latvian, and Lithuanian independence more than three decades ago, art historians and cultural theorists in each of the Baltic countries have grappled with delineating the contours of their respective national histories of art, architecture and material culture, and publishing on these subjects in their respective languages.[85] Such projects are vital, while also unavoidably engendering some degree of insularism.[86] Part of my scholarly strategy these days is collaboration with scholars from historically under-represented territories. The idea is to join forces as we internationalize decades of important work in local art-historical traditions previously carried out within isolated nationalist parameters imposed by totalitarian regimes. Dissemination of this scholarship in Anglophone journals and volumes brings the opportunity to embed and incorporate it within broader transregional and methodological frameworks.

Thanks to growing initiatives on the national, regional, and international level to further integrate Europe, there are increasing resources and impetus to support collaboration with central and eastern European scholars. I have prepared research grant applications in cooperation with a team of specialists from the Baltics, combining diverse linguistic expertise to form a kind of conglomerate 'superscholar'. I have also started co-authoring articles with researchers who may have complimentary linguistic toolkits and/or access to source materials in the field. An example of this is as an ongoing project involving research on a specific genre of relic-sculptures manufactured in eighteenth-century Rome and exported to today's Belarus, Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland, for which I recently coordinated a team of PhDs and postdocs from these countries in writing a joint article.[87] The question of generational change points to another important aspect, which is the emergence of rising generations of students and future scholars from central and eastern European countries who may already have a grounding in

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84) See, for example, Catherine Gibson, 'The Polish Livonian Legacy in Latgalia: Slavic Ethnolects at the Confluence of the Baltic and Slavic Dialectal Continua,' in Tomasz Kamusella, Motoki Nomachi, and Catherine Gibson, eds, *The Palgrave Handbook of Slavic Languages, Identities and Borders*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016, 57–80.

85) See essays in Katrin Kivimaa, ed., 'The Geographies of Art History in the Baltic Region,' Special Issue of *Kunstiteaduslikke Uurimusi / Studies on Art and Architecture*, 19: 3-4, 2010.

86) There are, however, important exceptions: in Lithuania, for example, with its strong tradition of Roman Catholicism, there is a bi-directional vein of scholarship investigating historical connections with Italy, e.g. Riccardo Casimiro Lewanski, ed., *La via dell'Ambra. Dal Baltico All'Alma Mater. Atti Del Convegno Italico-Baltico*, Bologna: Università degli Studi, 1994; Aušra Baniulytė, 'Italai XVI–XVII a. Lietuvos Didžiosios Kunigaikštystės kasdieniame gyvenime,' in Auksuolė Čepaitienė, ed., *Lietuvos etnologija / Lithuanian Ethnology*, Vilnius: Lithuanian Institute of History, 2005, 75–96; Piero Bugiani, 'From Innocent III to Today—Italian Interest in the Baltic,' *Journal of Baltic Studies*, 38: 2, 2007, 255–62; Aušra Baniulytė, 'Italian Intrigue in the Baltics: Myth, Faith, and Politics in the Age of the Baroque,' *Journal of Early Modern History*, 16, 2012, 23–52; Daiva Mitrulevičiūtė, ed, *Lietuva-Italija: šimtmečių ryšiai*, Vilnius: Išleido Nacionalinis muziejus Lietuvos Didžiosios Kunigaikštystės valdovų rūmai, 2016; Giovanni Matteo Guidetti, 'Firenze e Lituania. Un rapporto antico, un legame ritrovato,' in *Firenze tra Rinascimento e Barocco. Dalle Collezioni d'Arte della Fondazione Cassa di Risparmio di Firenze e di Banca CR Firenze SpA*, Vilnius: Fondazione CR Firenze, 2018, https://www.fondazionecrfirenze.it/la-collezione-di-fondazione-cr-firenze-in-mostra-a-vilnius/ (accessed 31 August 2021).

87) Ruth Sargent Noyes et al., '"Baltic catacombs."'

several languages, together with a mastery of English that earlier generations could not attain. I think we might be looking eastward in recruiting both present collaborators and future scholars.

[O. PEVNY] Art history is an interdisciplinary field that requires competency in several languages, and the multi-ethnic, multi-lingual, multi-confessional and multi-cultural communities that formed central and eastern Europe further contribute to the lingual diversity required to competently investigate the visual culture of this part of the world. While mastery of all the necessary skills can be off-putting for young scholars beginning in the field and for faculty members burdened by teaching and administrative duties, these concerns can be addressed in various ways. Collaborative research, the creation of reading groups, funding for language training and/or the translation of sources, and development of translation technologies, number among the ways such difficulties can be addressed. This said, I believe there is an immediate need in our field to publish engaging English language survey texts as well as anthologies of translated primary sources that can be used for the teaching of introductory university courses in the visual culture of central and eastern Europe. The availability of such resources would allow students to develop an interest in the field before having to confront the demanding list of recommended foreign languages. Another way of addressing the language barriers is to create courses that combine components of Art History and Area Studies and that offer classes introducing a given language in conjunction with art history lectures – in other words, move to a model of team-taught courses that are cross-disciplinary. To make these courses interesting to future generation of students, they must engage with current theories and methodologies, as well as cover topics of current interests (for example, gender studies and ecology). Immersion in the cultural context of central and eastern Europe also is a good way to nurture the curiosity of students and encourage their further study of the region. Year-abroad programmes or short-term study visits to relevant countries or regions for the on-site study of monuments of visual culture or of language should be encouraged.

[S. IVANIČ] I agree with Olenka's point about labelling the region. The issue of fluidity and nuance is so important to understanding the vast area which we are dealing with, but – on the other hand – the complexity of this issue can be problematic for communicating with broader audiences. One does not want to be labelled merely as a regional historian. Is it perhaps wiser for us to avoid geographical categories altogether and just become, for example, historians of religion, society or art?

[R. RADWAY] Exactly. How do you sell yourself? I often find it easier to just say I work on early modern Europe because it is true. The centre of my early modern Europe is Vienna, Prague, Buda, and Constantinople. We do not need to qualify Europe any more than a person studying French, English, or Italian Renaissance needs to qualify their use of the term 'Europe'. Maybe this obfuscates my focus on eastern and central Europe. You cannot grow a field if you do not name it. But perhaps my approach is a subversive way of expanding the field, by teaching and writing about it unselfconsciously.

Natural borders are extremely important for defining regions and connecting them across political borders. I think it is equally important to examine historical political borders as they were at the time an object was created. National historiography and national approaches to these topics have often obscured the historical reality of the imperial borderlands that criss-crossed the region. Sometimes it is impossible to use accurate political terms for the period that the objects were created because an editor has flagged it with 'nobody knows what that means'. I am in favour of owning empire, even where it does not necessarily exist on a real political and legal level because I see it in the way that it functions in the archival documentation of patronage networks, in the way that objects are created. I am willing to reference the Holy Roman Empire or a Habsburg empire with a lowercase 'e', because the collection of territories ruled by the Habsburgs was not a real 'empire' in the legal sense. One can argue similarly with Transylvania and the Ottoman Empire. In embracing the explanatory power of empire and imperial formations, we can enter different and more broad historiographical debates.

[R. S. NOYES] I like to call what you are describing 'aspirational empire'. How might we reconsider the supposed primacy of Italy in the history of art, for instance, in relation to the self-fashioning of cosmopolitan patrons and collectors like the Paces, who discursively harnessed the idea of Italy not as fixed entity but malleable concept that could be arbitrated, legitimated, and transformed to stake a strategic position as a north-easternmost Roman Catholic stronghold? These kinds of transregional microhistories productively problematize conventional understandings of cultural dynamics between ostensibly far-flung regions of Europe specifically, and perceived centres and their purported peripheries more generally. The Medici-Pac exchange should be mapped against the decline of the Medicean Grand Duchy, as Tuscany was increasingly outpaced on the global stage, and against the broader reliance of Florence and its rulers over the longue durée upon the Baltic as an important source of artistic, political, economic, and cultural capital.[88]

That there is a whole subfield of apologetic scholarship which researches and contextualizes how and why the Grand Duchy of Tuscany under the Medici failed to become more than an aspirational global empire underscores the strong scholarly tradition of writing about such 'failed' imperial ambitions in the West, something still largely lacking for the region under discussion here.[89] In the case of the Pac family, they clearly were trying to project a notional intercultural Italo-Lithuanian empire that resonated with the neologism *Litalinia* eliding the toponyms *Lituania* (Lithuania) and *Italia* (Italy), a term coined by the first papal nuncio to Poland-Lithuania Zaccaria Ferreri (1479-1524), who proposed that the Grand Duchy be called *Litaliania* rather than *Lituania*, as the name ultimately derived from *l'Italia*, and the Lithuanian nobility descended directly from Italian parentage.[90] They constructed parallel genealogical

88)   For these questions see the forthcoming essay: Ruth Sargent Noyes, ' "To see at least in an image the semblance of a Friend…." Representing the family of Pacowie (Pacai) between baroque Tuscany and Lithuania,' Special Issue of *Kauno istorijos metraštis*, 2022, forthcoming.

89)   See, for example, Lia Markey, *Imagining the Americas in Medici Florence,* University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2016.

90)   Zaccaria Ferreri, *Vita Beati Casimiri Confessoris: ex serenissimis Poloni[a]e regibus & magnis … Zacharia Ferrerio Vicentino pontifice Gardien[se]: in Polonia[m] & Lituania[m],* [Cracow: Iohannes Haller], 1521, n.p. On Ferreri see Eckehart Stöve, 'FERRERI, Zaccaria,' in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, 46, 1996, https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/zaccaria-ferreri_(Dizionario-Biografico)/ (accessed 30 August 2021). For Ferreri's theorizing on connections between

myths of Roman and Florentine origins, on one hand cultivating ethnogenesis mythologizing the Lithuanian aristocracy's Roman origins in the Po river valley of Etruria (also the invented *locus* of Medicean power), and holding that during the reign of Nero the patrician Palemon and five hundred Roman nobles fled north, eventually settling in the Baltic.[91] The Paces also grounded a specific *Litalinian* pedigree linking their family to the Pazzi, the powerful Tuscan bankers and erstwhile Medici rivals, claiming that after the Pazzi's exile from Florence in the wake of a failed anti-Medici coup in 1478, some banished members settled in Lithuania—a claim reinforced by the onomastic coincidence of the family names *Pac* (pronounced 'Pats') and *Pazzi* (pronounced 'Pats-tsi').[92] The Paces' Italianization was so successful that seventeenth-century papal and Medicean court propaganda vaunted the Paces as the 'Pazzi in Lithuania,' positioning the family as north-easternmost guardians of the Roman Church and even successors to antique Roman *imperium*.[93]

QUESTION 6:

Does the field of early modern central and eastern European art history exist both within and outside the region? How can we ensure its continuing growth on an institutional level?

[O. PEVNY] The field exists outside of central and eastern Europe, but the main research hubs are located within the nations states of this region. Perhaps this is how it should be. Nevertheless, the underrepresentation of central and eastern European studies in Western European, British, and North American institutions is noteworthy, especially in the aftermath of the fall of the Iron Curtain and of the Soviet Union. At the University of Cambridge, Slavonic culture is studied with the Slavonic section of the Faculty of Modern and Medieval Languages and Linguistics. In addition to offering papers (courses) on Russian language, literature and culture, the Slavonic section offers an introductory paper on Polish history, culture and language, and a parallel paper on Ukrainian history, culture, and language. There is another paper that covers Ukrainian film and one on Early Rus' culture. The teaching of these papers is made possible by special endowments. A programme of public events that brings to Cambridge specialists in Polish and Ukrainian Studies enriches the paper offerings. The equal weight ascribed to Polish, Ukrainian and Russian papers in the pursuit of the undergraduate degree in Slavonic Studies ensures enrolment in the Ukrainian and Polish papers; the popularity of the papers is boosted by good teaching and extensive public programming. Political revolutions in Ukraine, the rise of conservatism in Poland, and the imperial ambitions of the Putin regime also pop-

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Italy and Lithuania, see Pietro U. Dini, *Prelude to Baltic Linguistics: Earliest Theories about Baltic Languages (16th century)*, Leiden: Brill, 2014, 164-66.

91)   On Pac self-fashioning see Anna Sylwia Czyż, *Fundacje artystyczne rodziny Paców. Stefana, Krzysztofa Zygmunta i Mikołaja Stefana: 'Lillium bonae spei at antiquitate consectarum,'* Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Naukowe UKSW, 2016.

92)   For these genealogies see Aušra Baniulytė, 'Pacai ar Pazzi? Nauja Palemono legendos versija LDK raštijoje,' in Aušra Jurgutienė and Sigitas Narbutas, eds, *Istorijos Rašymo Horizontai, Senoji Lietuvos literatūra* 18, Vilnius: Lietuvių literatūros ir tautosakos institutas, 2005, 140-66. See also Joanna Orzeł, 'From imagination to political reality? The Grand Duchy of Lithuania as a successor of Rome in the early modern historiography (15th–18th centuries),' *Open Political Science*, 1, 2019, 170–81.

93)   Aušra Baniulytė, 'The Pazzi Family in Lithuania: Myth and Politics in the European Court Society of the Early Modern Age,' *Medium aevum quotidianum*, 58, 2009, 41-57.

ularize the Ukrainian and Polish papers. In the future, I think it will be private endowments as well as funding and resources made available by institutions of relevant nation states or supra-national unions that will make the study of central and eastern Europe possible in Western European and North American institutions. The popularity of such programmes will be contingent upon their ability to re-envision narratives of local history in step with changing global concerns.

[R. RADWAY] As someone trained in North America, first as an art historian and then as a historian, I would say a stand-alone field did not exist in the 2000s and 2010s when I was a student. There were just a handful of departments training Ph.D. students in early modern central and eastern European art. While coursework in these places often included Eastern Europe, few Ph.D. students had any interest or the necessary linguistic skills to pursue projects and eventually careers that covered the region broadly. This may partly have to do with the tendency towards increased specialization and, curiously, an increased focus on global art history in those same departments. Regrettably, art history in general seems to be shrinking everywhere. Still, I think in order to expand the field and place it firmly on the map, we need to publish in prominent venues where we are forced to speak to broad audiences beyond our subfield. This will require us to downplay the linguistic peculiarities of the region. Something as simple as using fewer complicated proper names in foreign languages both in teaching and in writing can make what we do more accessible. I also think we need to take more leadership roles in learned societies and journal editorial boards. By taking a seat at the table we increase our visibility and take part in decision-making processes.

[T. GRUSIECKI] In North America, I don't see early modern central and eastern European art as a separate field. Tenured and tenure-track scholars who study the region are few and far between, and fewer still work at research-intensive universities where they could train graduate students who would continue building the field. In North America, I don't think our issue is the survival of the field; here the issue is the non-existence of the field and the lack of impetus to organise, collaborate, and support each other. US-based learned societies are either dominated by modernists (SHERA and HGSCEA), Germanists (HGSCEA), Russianists (SHERA), or political and literary historians (ESSA), reflecting the low numbers of the early modernists among art historians who work on the region.[94] I don't think establishing another society or a journal is an answer to this conundrum, but we certainly need to stay motivated to continue having stimulating conversations among ourselves, both formal and informal, written and spoken. Ultimately, the goal is to increase the quantity and status of scholarship on the region, to have more junior scholars serve in faculty positions, and to convince others that our scholarship matters beyond the narrow constricts of area studies.

[S. IVANIČ] One way to ensure its growth as a field is to engage with the now sizeable populations of central and eastern Europeans in Western Europe and North America. In 2019, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) recorded that there were approximately 1.9 million 'Central

94)   Society of Historians of Eastern European, Eurasian, and Russian Art and Architecture (SHERA), http://shera-art. org; Historians of German, Scandinavian, and Central European Art (HGSCEA), http://hgscea.org; Early Slavic Studies Association (ESSA), https://earlyslavicstudies.org.

Europeans', broadly defined, living in the UK (ONS Population of the UK by country of birth and nationality). In the USA, 36% of European immigrants living in the country in 2016 came from Central European regions (migrationpolicy.org), equating to 1.7 million people. Yet despite large numbers of Central European immigrants to the UK after 2004, central and eastern European history is under-represented in the school curriculum. A generation of students with roots in Central Europe find that the focus on Tudors and Stuarts in early modern history does not speak to them. As these students approach university age, it is our job to introduce them to histories that are engaging and to show them the great potential for studying central and eastern Europe. There is a wealth of untapped knowledge here in their underused language skills and local understanding.

Finally, we have an important social and political responsibility. National histories are still central to modern politics of central and eastern Europe. However, to understand its longer history is to understand its place – geographical and historical – in a far more fluid world before the emergence of the nineteenth-century nation-state. Taking a global approach can help make sense of its connectedness and its geographical role in human history. The ability of ordinary people to live everyday lives that crossed borders and were linked by things other than nation – religion, family, trade, and professions – and to migrate and learn new languages, to fit in or not, was (and is) vast. By telling these stories and remaking the history of central and eastern Europe as one of connectedness, we can play a role in broadening an understanding of identity; and to show how migration and cultural effervescence are a part of central and eastern Europe's history and ancestry.

[R. BORN] The situation in Germany is different. (West) Berlin professors trained students in central and eastern European topics, including – prior to 1989 – Hellmut Lorenz (b. 1942) at the Freie Universität, and – from 1990 – Robert Suckale (1943-2020) at the Technische Universität. Both were connected with colleagues from the region, including informal associations such as the 'Arbeitskreis deutscher und polnischer Kunsthistoriker und Denkmalpflege' (Working Group of German and Polish Art Historians and Monuments Preservationists), which was founded in 1988.

In the eastern part of the city, Hubert Faensen (1928-2019), an expert on the Balkans and the Caucasus, taught at the Humboldt University from 1982 to 1992 on various topics of Eastern Christian and Old Russian art. In 1995, the Chair of Eastern European Art History was established at the Humboldt University in Berlin. Its first holder, Adam S. Labuda (b. 1946) focused his teaching and research on medieval and early modern art, the role of art in the processes of nation-building, and the history of the discipline in East-Central Europe. These research areas were maintained in 2009–2013 by the interim chairholders Milena Bartlová, Katarzyna Murawska-Muthesius, Piotr Piotrowski (1952-2015), and Robert Born, while being thematically expanded to include the art of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (Murawska-Muthesius and Piotrowski), as well as Byzantium, the Ottoman Empire, and Southeastern Europe (Born). Michaela Marek augmented this spectrum as the new chair from 2013 until her untimely passing in 2018 with new areas of focus, such as urban planning, art and architecture in the Soviet Union, and art historiography between 1945 and 1989.[95] An

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95) http://www.kunstgeschichte.hu-berlin.de/institut/lehrstuehle/lehrstuhl-fuer-kunstgeschichte-osteuropas/

'International Forum for Doctoral Candidates in East European Art History,' has been held annually under her aegis since 2014. Many of the issues tackled by Marek were pursued between 2018 and 2020 by Katja Bernhardt who continued the 'International Forum'. It would be desirable that for the sake of institutional continuity the chair at Humboldt University be reappointed.

Research institutes focused on East-Central and South-Eastern Europe also offer critical infrastructure. These are the Northeast Institute (IKGN e. V.) in Lüneburg, which is affiliated with the University of Hamburg; the Leibniz Institute for East and Southeast European Studies (IOS) in Regensburg; the Herder Institute for Historical Research on East Central Europe – Institute of the Leibniz Association in Marburg; the German Historical Institute (DHI) in Warsaw; and the Leibniz Institute for the History and Culture of Eastern Europe (GWZO) in Leipzig. The GWZO has been supporting research on the art and culture in the area between the Baltic and the Adriatic and the Black Sea from Late Antiquity to the present since 1995, resulting in several monographs, anthologies, and exhibition catalogues. An additional platform for the presentation of new research in the field is the *Handbuch zur Kunstgeschichte Ostmitteleuropas* (Handbook on the History of Art in East-Central Europe). In nine volumes, it aims to present the development of the region's art from Late Antiquity to the present.[96]

[S. IVANIČ] The AHRC project, *Connected Central European Worlds, 1500–1700* maintains a continually updated list of research centres, institutions, and learned societies dedicated to the advancement of knowledge about early modern central and eastern European art and culture.[97] This allows for a snapshot of the field as it is today.

[R. S. NOYES] I find the theoretical and methodological approaches sketched out here to be productive for several reasons. First, they help to foreclose on the (unintentional) marginalization, isolation, and exoticizing of central and eastern European art that can sometimes result from focusing solely on the subject as an insular field, without reference to its broader horizons and multifarious connections with the wider world.[98] Grand Duke Cosimo III's ermine robe, for example, only reveals its resonances when framed against the centuries-long Baltic fur trade, historical European fashions, and discourse associated with the prophylactic and fertility-giving powers of the mustelids from which it was made.[99] This in turn unfolds a reading of the portrait that attributes to the work otherwise lacking complexity and agency. Second, they appeal to a broader (and predominantly Anglophone) audience of art historians and scholars of early modern historical studies who will likely be familiar with, say, the Houses of Medici and Habsburg-Lorraine specifically, and Italian arts more generally, and thus permit the opening of new interpretive horizons for a wider swath of scholars, who might

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96) https://www.leibniz-gwzo.de/de/forschung/wissenstransfer-und-vernetzung/wissen-teilen/publizieren/handbuch-kunst

97) https://research.kent.ac.uk/emcentraleu/resources/

98) Along these lines see Tomasz Grusiecki, 'Going Global? An Attempt to Challenge the Peripheral Position of Early Modern Polish–Lithuanian Painting in the Historiography of Art,' *The Polish Review*, 57, 2012, 3–26; Beáta Hock and Anu Allas, eds, *Globalizing East European Art Histories: Past and Present*, New York: Routledge, 2018.

99) Tawny Sherrill, 'Fleas, Furs, and Fashions: Zibellini as Luxury Accessories of the Renaissance,' in Robin Netherton and Gale R. Owen-Crocker, eds, *Medieval Clothing and Textiles*, Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2006, 2, 121-50.

see in a new light both the relevance of central and eastern European art histories and the contingency of certain conventional art-historical teleologies.

I think central and eastern Europe's perceived peripherality is and will be gradually changing. Certain entrenched 'lanes' change more slowly—the traditional separation within many art history departments, for example, of faculty working on early modern Southern or Western Europe (usually Italy), Northern Europe (typically Germany/Netherlands), and the Iberian world (which might include Spain proper as well as its colonies). In American academe, the progressive streamlining and de-westernizing of the humanities has accelerated since the post-2008 cuts to departments' budgets. Many universities have conducted searches for 'early modernists' (without stipulations of conventional geographic divisions) or 'global early modernists' who can explicitly engage with transregional questions. While this reflects the broader depopulating of art history faculty (thus necessitating new hires with an ever-wider range of expertise), such a trend could mean more opportunities for faculty working on some of these topics. From the European perspective, the scholarly capacity to set central and eastern European art into conversation with the rest of Europe and the wider world might prove strategically fruitful. I think there is a particular currency now, in the sense that the EU wants to tell a certain story of an interconnected and globalized Europe to itself about itself for a range of social, political, ideological, and economic reasons, and this directly impacts what kinds of research gets funding. Thus, I think now is a potentially propitious moment for scholarship that undertakes to globalize central and eastern Europe, at least within the European intellectual context.

[T. GRUSIECKI] Returning to the main question 'what can historians of the region's art do to secure its inclusion in the global narratives', it seems that we need to tackle three interconnected issues as we attempt to insert central and eastern Europe into the discipline's mainstream accounts: (1) the lack of institutional scaffold for the study of the region in North America and Western Europe, and therefore fewer students to take up the mantle when we retire; (2) the dearth of publications available in major research languages, particularly in English; and (3) the methodological untranslatability of much research produced on the region, leading to its invisibility in the Anglo-American academe. The solution to this multifaceted issue thus must be multidirectional in scope. Rather than working on a single fix, we will do better if we simultaneously (1) make our research more marketable so that we can attract and train a new generation of students who will get jobs, ensuring the field's survival; (2) collaborate with other scholars, both in and outside the region with the aim of expanding readership for our work; and (3) work towards a larger methodological commensurability of scholarly work on the region, particularly that produced in central and eastern Europe itself.

Getting any faculty position in early modern art history these days resembles the chances of winning at roulette, but this underscores still more our professional duty to build critical mass for central and eastern European art so that other art historians take the region seriously. Of utmost importance is the expansion of our readership beyond the field. In this pursuit, we need to find better opportunities to connect with other scholars of the region, including those who reside in central and eastern Europe. Most importantly, we need to think how to link our research to present-day concerns, such as migration, cultural heterogeneity, climate change, populism, nationalism, economic globalisation (and soon possibly de-globalisation), to ask new questions and offer new perspectives on the wider field of early modern Art History. This

is not an easy task, but the future of our field is at stake. The point of this forum was precisely to trigger a conversation, to bring attention to the cause, to rally other scholars of the region, and to show them that there is a community out there. We can only hope that our colleagues elsewhere pick up this conversation where we left it off.

Postscript in a time of war

Taking place in summer 2021, this discussion reflected thoughts in a time of pandemic, when the interconnections in life and culture had been sorely missing for a year and a half. That phase had made the historical importance of the interconnected nature of cultures more clear than ever. Relating these ideas onto a region whose histories had been carved up by national interests in the modern period seemed like a necessary corrective. Yet, Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 reveals that our wish to 'globalize', connect, and trace the transcultural links in this region must be done cautiously. It cannot be allowed to gloss over what is local and specific. Russia's invasion of Ukraine, based in large part on claims to its history—as a 'brother', rightful inheritor and protector of these lands—reveals a long and insidious campaign to erase Ukrainian history, heritage, and identity. This kind of action has happened many times in these so-called 'bloodlands' between 'the East' and 'the West'.[100] The erasure of national sovereignty in the name of 'brotherhood' leads to genocide. Voices from Ukraine have long called for a decolonized view of its history, free of a Russian imperial lens, a sentiment powerfully expressed in Olenka Pevny's inaugural lecture for a 2022 series on Ukrainian history and heritage, and Olesya Khromeychuk's recent address to the BASEES conference.[101] How can a decolonized view of the region, then, sit alongside wishes to understand the deep links across it? These are not mutually exclusive approaches. Ukrainians do not want to write Russia out of their histories, but to be once again free to write histories that are based on primary sources and scholarly research, and that can celebrate the generative potential of partnerships, crossings and encounters in an area continually in contact with peoples and cultures to the south, north, east and west; to correct the numerous volumes of histories that are ideologically motivated, invent monuments where they are not there, or falsely consign Kyivan Rus' to the roots of Russia alone. What happens in Ukraine is a warning to us all. Now is a fresh opportunity, when the world is watching, to write and re-write histories of central and eastern Europe that acknowledge links, convergences, and transcultural dialogues without laying claim to them: to write a decolonized but transcultural history that finds beauty and richness in complexity and shuns the binaries.

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100) Timothy Snyder, *Bloodlands: Europe Between Hitler and Stalin*, New York: Basic Books, 2010.

101) Olenka Z. Pevny (University of Cambridge), 'Lacunae of Art History and Kyiv's Visual Culture,' Inaugural Lecture 22 April 2022, Dumbarton Oaks, https://www.doaks.org/research/byzantine/scholarly-activities/kyivan-rus-to-modern-ukraine-home; and Olesya Khromeychuck (Ukrainian Institute London), 'Where is Ukraine on the mental map of the academic community?' Keynote Lecture, British Association of Slavonic and East European Studies (BASEES) Conference, 8 April 2022, https://youtu.be/CJthJb1tK0Y.

Beyond National Style:
The Innovative Thinking and Designs
of the Architect Ion Mincu (1852–1912)

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Abstract

This article offers a critical reading of the works and thinking of the celebrated Romanian architect Ion Mincu (1852–1912) in relation to the broader cultural and political context of the new nation-state. It investigates the literature on him up until the present day to trace the formation of his image as 'creator' of the Romanian (also known as Neo-Romanian or National) architectural style before presenting Mincu's range of artistic interests, innovative ideas and designs. Even if famous in Romania, Mincu is little-known for an English-language audience and partly to blame is precisely his fame as national architect which has made him a central figure only in histories of Romanian art and architecture. However, the article shows that Mincu harboured a diverse range of artistic ideas and interests, not all related to Romanian national ideology. His understanding of the relation between local building traditions and contemporary architecture was multi-faceted and driven by attempts to reconcile ideas about artistic progress and modernity with those about traditions and cultural identity. Therefore, the article move beyond the connection between his work and ideas about national identity in order to discern his many artistic concerns and his complex relation to the Romanian architectural heritage.

Keywords

Beyond National Style: The Innovative Thinking and Designs of the Architect Ion Mincu (1852–1912)[1]

Cosmin Minea

Introduction

In a ground-breaking article, quoted over and over again in attempts to overcome the marginal status of central and eastern European art, Piotr Piotrowski noted:

> The problem of national or ethnic art historical narratives seems very characteristic of the arts outside the centre. On the one hand, we have the national art histories of particular countries, on the other the international art history. (…) on the one hand, we have artists with an international status, (…) while on the other hand, there are artists who remain specifically national (…). This reveals tensions of a geographical kind: on the one hand, there are Paris and later New York as international centres of culture, on the other, regional capitals placed in national contexts, such as Belgrade, Copenhagen, Oslo, Prague, Vilnius.[2]

Piotrowski described a problem omnipresent for historians of modern art outside the globally-recognised artistic centres: its detrimental association with national art histories. Even if the idea of national art has been a source of pride for smaller nations, it has also indirectly led to their marginalisation. The career of the nineteenth-century Romanian architect Ion Mincu (1852–1912) is one of the best illustrations of this. He is recognised as a highly innovative artist in Romania and revered as 'the father' of modern Romanian architecture, but outside the country he is seen as another architect of the 'national styles' of central and eastern Europe. This latter focus reflects a wider phenomenon. In the 1990s, when there was a rapid growth in scholarship on the region, a primary concern was examination and critique of national ideologies. It was an emphasis that would also shape analysis of modern architecture in central and eastern Europe.[3]

2)   Piotr Piotrowski, 'Toward a Horizontal History of the European Avant-Garde,' in Sascha Bru, ed., *Europa! Europa? The Avant-Garde, Modernism and the Fate of a Continent*, Berlin: De Gruyter, 2009, 56.

3)   Bratislav Pantelić, 'Nationalism and Architecture: The Creation of a National Style in Serbian Architecture and Its Political Implications,' *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, 56: 1 1997, 16–41; Carmen Popescu, 'Un patrimoine de l'identité : l'architecture à l'écoute des nationalismes,' *Études balkaniques*, 12 2005, 135–71; Ada Hajdu, 'The Search for National Architectural Styles in Serbia, Romania, and Bulgaria from the Mid-Nineteenth Century to World War I,' in Roumen Daskalov et al., eds, *Entangled Histories of the Balkans. Volume Four: Concepts, Approaches, and Self-)Representations*, Leiden: Brill, 2017, 394–439; David Crowley, *National Style and Nation-State: Design in Poland from the Vernacular Revival to the International Style*, Manchester University Press, 1992.

In maybe the most geographically comprehensive and extensive surveys of art nouveau in Europe, Mincu and Romania are completely ignored.[4] Examples from eastern Europe are few and usually limited to the better-known cases of Finland and Hungary.[5] Therefore, a tight relation between a national ideology and a particular architect or architectural movement seemed to have functioned as barrier against their wider international recognition, and for a number of reasons. First, there is the view that national styles developed according to the same principles and thus there is generally the same story to be told, no matter if it is located in Hungary, Poland, Serbia, Romania and Bulgaria. Second, to speak about 'national style' and not 'art nouveau' indirectly means to diminish the artistic value of the former and emphasize rather its ideological rationale, therefore confirming the value hierarchy described by Piotrowski. As Carmen Popescu has also remarked, concepts such as national school, national geniuses or national style, are a reason for the unequal relations between the allegedly 'young' cultures of central and eastern Europe and the 'mature' ones of western Europe.[6]

But Mincu also suffers from another type of marginalisation. In Romania, studies have mostly analysed his career as part of the long-lived National Romanian or Neo-Romanian architectural style. As a result, just a limited part of his oeuvre – those works that exemplified the national style – tends to be included in historical analyses, and even when they are discussed, it is generally in the context of wider surveys of many other architects and buildings.[7] Significantly, and despite his supposed importance, no monograph or extensive studies about Mincu have been published in any language since the 1970s.[8]

It is the aim of the present article to offer a reading of Mincu's work away from the traditional scholarly emphasis on the development of the Neo-Romanian style, and without the exclusive focus on his connection to Romanian national ideology that has marked so much writing on him until now. This is not only to change the methodological paradigm but also out of recognition that other perspectives are also appropriate for understanding his works and career. For the creations of Mincu broke with established architectural norms and managed to create for the first time in modern Romania an original artistic language. Active in the decades before and after 1900, he had the same preoccupations as many other artists and architects of his time, and he also managed to reconcile contrary ideas about tradition, identity, modernism, artists and architecture in a distinctive way.

Mincu had a keen interest in local Romanian artistic heritage, but that interest bore similarities to more widely-shared ideas associated with art nouveau, such as: opposition to established architectural styles; preference for unusual or non-European architecture (such as

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4)   Jeremy Howard, *Art Nouveau: International and National Styles in Europe,* Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996; Paul Greenhalgh, ed., *Art Nouveau 1890–1914,* London: V&A Publications, 2000.

5)   Jean Lahor, *Art Nouveau* London: Grange Books, 2007; Klaus-Jürgen Sembach, *Art Nouveau,* Köln: Taschen, 2002; Gabriele Sterner, *Art Nouveau: An Art of Transition-From Individualism to Mass Society,* New York: Barron's, 1982.

6)   Carmen Popescu, 'Cultures majeures, cultures mineures. Quelques réflexions sur la (géo)politisation du folklore dans l'entre-deux-guerres,' in *Spicilegium. Studii și articole în onoarea Prof. Corina Popa,* Bucharest: UNArte, 2015.

7)   Maria Camelia Ene, *Stilul național în artele vizuale. Artele decorative,* Bucharest: Noi Media Print, 2013; Ruxandra Nemteanu, *Vila in stil neoromanesc. Expresia cautarilor unui model autohton in locuinta individuala urbana,* Bucharest: Simetria, 2014; Ada Ștefanuț (Hajdu), *Arhitectură și Proiect National Stilul Național Românesc,* Bucharest: Noi Media Print, 2010.

8)   Mihail Caffé, *Ion Mincu,* Bucharest: Meridiane, 1970. Just an album of his drawings has been more recently published Elena Olariu, Ioana Maria Petrescu and Andreea Pop, *Repertoriul desenelor de arhitectură – Ioan Mincu,* Bucharest: Muzeul Național de Artă al României, 2015.

Arab, Venetian or Romanian architectural monuments); interest in the design of interiors and furnishing; the use of non-conventional materials in architecture such as ceramics, stained glass and wood; an interest in dialogue between architectural design and the vernacular building traditions, climate or geography of a place; and a general desire to create new forms, interpret and manipulate the past, all as an expression of the individual creativity.

Far from being limited to the national context, Mincu was part of the cosmopolitan artistic society of late nineteenth-century Romania, among well-travelled and well-connected individuals, fluent in French and Romanian at the very least, who spent a considerable amount of time in cities such as Paris, Vienna or Berlin. Geographical distances, which have come to be interpreted as establishing distance in style or value, were in fact not as significant. As the Romanian-based French architect, André Lecomte du Noüy, noted in 1890: 'Anyone can board a wagon-lit in Paris and alight in Bucharest as if they had not travelled at all.'[9]

At the same time though, Mincu cannot easily be categorised as an 'art nouveau' architect, simply because the Romanian context was palpably different from that in, for example, Brussels, Paris or Glasgow. Romania was not an industrialised nation, it did not have historic institutions of learning with well-established artistic norms such as the classical canon, and almost all artists or architects were part of the rich, land-owning elite. Mincu himself came from a boyar's family and held important state functions such as university professor and member of the Romanian Parliament between 1895 and 1899. Therefore, in contrast to peers such as Victor Horta or William Morris, the architecture of Mincu was not driven by some critical stance towards the market economy or industrialisation. Furthermore, the romantic ideal of a return to medieval craftmanship, folk art and to an unspoiled rural landscape, that characterised art in many European nations, had little appeal in a largely rural country, where wild natural environments and century-old ways of life were lived realities, even for city dwellers. This explains why Mincu, in contrast to many contemporaries, had little to do with folk art revival of the 1890s, but instead referenced in his creations predominantly courtly or ecclesiastic architecture of the past.

In order to flesh out these ideas, this article addresses a number of themes, starting with the process whereby he became known as the creator of a national style *after* his death. It then examines Mincu's interest in cultivating a personal creative language that was distinct from prevailing trends in Romania or elsewhere and that included a connection to the architectural heritage of Romania. Finally, it considers his unconventional way of restoring and reinterpreting the historical monuments of Romania. On the whole, the present study attempts to analyse the little-known, albeit highly original, architectural creations of Mincu without relying on the pre-defined and overused hierarchy based on the dichotomy of national (eastern European) and international (western European) architectures.

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9) 'Letter from Lecomte du Noüy to Revoil,' March 20, 1890, 12:1, MXXXI, *Lecomte du Noüy Archive, Manuscript Cabinet, Romanian Academy Library*, Bucharest.

The making of a national icon: Ion Mincu as founder of the national Romanian architectural style

1912, the year of Mincu's death, marked also the completion of his final building design, the long-envisaged museum of religious art and architecture in Bucharest. Mincu noted that the architecture of the museum was inspired by the monument standing next to it, the Stavropoleos church of the early eighteenth century, which he had himself also restored. The museum was conceived as a modern cloister for the church, with three distinct parts: an L-shaped two-storey building, a bell-tower of equal height and a covered walkway surrounding the inner courtyard **(Figure 1).** The only obvious references to the architecture of the church is in a row of trefoil arcades along the walkway, supported by stone pillars with sculpted capitals displaying a richly-decorated polychrome ceramic freeze under the extended cornice. The trefoil arcades are copied after those of the entrance porch of the church, as is the red-tiled roof that is in itself a new addition by Mincu during the restoration of the church.

Despite the reference to an Orthodox monument, it has been noted that the courtyard shows similarities to the cloisters of Catholic monasteries; one recent analysis has even suggested monastic cloisters from Spain and Italy as a direct source of inspiration.[10] Mincu added other references to European architecture outside of Romania, such as classical ornaments above the first floor windows of the main building and a projecting wooden cornice, which evoke Italianate villas. Mincu also alternated a frieze of ceramic tiles in shades of green on the exterior façade, with one of coloured wood installed under the cornice on the interior façade. In essence, the building is a highly eclectic design that shows the architect experimenting with multiple artistic sources, with motifs referencing the Orthodox heritage of Romania combined with references to other buildings and practices, placed in an original context, namely a building that is neither a museum nor a proper monastic cloister.

This design has been largely ignored in studies about the architect and one reason could be that it does not fit into the established paradigm of Mincu the creator of the national style. The building has hardly any resemblance to his more famous creations; it mixes references to western European traditions with those to Romanian architecture, and ends up being a highly eclectic design precisely at the moment when some began to praise the architect as creator of a new (national) style. Indeed, Mincu's designs are diverse and vary from building to building, escaping established artistic categories and, more importantly, contradicting scholars who saw his creations as working towards defining a single unified style. He did not use the architectural heritage of Romania in a programmatic way, in the manner of architects that followed him such as Grigore Cerchez (1850–1927) or Toma Socolescu (1883–1960). Rather, he used it in an instrumental fashion, as a set of resources for his own thinking and creative practice.

The historical heritage and artistic developments of modern Romania remain little-known internationally, but the idea of the 'National Style' has received considerable attention, with one book and several articles dedicated to this phenomenon, all which see Mincu as the

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10)   Irina Băldescu, 'Restaurarea Din Pragul Secolului XX. Materie şi Imagine între Conervare şi Retuşuri. Restaurarea de La Stavropoleos şi Contextul Cultural,' *Stavropoleos Monastery Archive*, 2002, Bucharest, unpublished manuscript, 1–20, 17.

Figure 1: Ion Mincu, Stavropoleos monastery after the restoration, 1904–1907 / courtyard of the monastery, Bucharest, 1912.
Source: Fusion-of-horizons, Flickr; Luca Volpi (Goldmund100).

Figure 2: Grigore Cerchez, Institute of Architecture, Bucharest, 1921–1927.
Source: Ștefan Trăsnea, http://merg.in/bucuresti

founder of the style.[11] Buildings described as being in the 'National Style' or 'Neo-Romanian' tend to be those from the first three decades of the twientieth century that interpret or copy a variety of architectural forms specific to monuments from the time of the reign of the Wallachian Prince Constantin Brâncoveanu (1688–1714), a heritage that will be described in more detail later in the article. The style was mostly used for private villas, although the most well-known examples are prominent public buildings, such as the Institute of Architecture in Bucharest (1921–1927) by Grigore Cerchez (**Figure 2**). The central elements of the building include a raised watchtower (known in Romanian as a 'foișor'), a multitude of rich stone-sculpted decorations, open balconies with sculpted capitals, rows of trefoiled or round arches, an extended roof that covers a richly-ornamented cornice, massive stone or brick structures.

Mincu was, admittedly, the first to reinterpret the Brâncovenesc heritage in modern Romania, but the key moments in the development of what has been called, since Communist times, the 'Neo-Romanian' style are, curiously, not related to its supposed founder at all. Scholars agree

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11) Carmen Popescu, *Le style national roumain: construire une nation à travers l'architecture, 1881–1945*, Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2004; Shona Kallestrup, 'Romanian "National Style" and the 1906 Bucharest Jubilee Exhibition,' *Journal of Design History*, 15: 3, 2002, 147–62; Hajdu, 'The Search.' Carmen Popescu, 'Digging Out the Past to Build Up the Future: Romanian Architecture in the Balkan Context 1859–1906,' in Gábor Klaniczay and Patrick J. Geary, eds, *Manufacturing Middle Ages: Entangled History of Medievalism in Nineteenth-Century Europe*, Leiden: Brill, 2013, 189–216. The only English-language survey of the arts in Romania in the modern period is Shona Kallestrup, *Art and Design in Romania 1866–1927: Local and International Aspects of the Search for National Expression*, Boulder, Colorado: Eastern European Monographs / Columbia University Press, 2006. On the Romanian architectural heritage, the most complete survey of Byzantine architecture in the English language only analyses Romanian monuments on four pages: Cyril Mango, *Byzantine Architecture*, History of World Architecture, London: Faber/Electa, 1986, 168–72.

that the style became widespread after the Romanian General Exhibition of 1906 and peaked in popularity after 1918 with the formation of Greater Romania and the acquisition of Transylvania, Bukovina and Bessarabia.[12] But Mincu's career was almost over by 1906. He was not involved in the 1906 exhibition, commonly regarded as the first public moment of celebration of 'Romanian' architecture, and he was also not involved in the earlier struggles to form a school of architecture and a journal for the promotion of Romanian architects. *Analele arhitecturei* (Architectural Annals), the first architectural journal in Romania, that was founded in 1890, did not feature any of the architectural designs by Mincu and only once furniture design.[13]

Why, then, is he considered the creator of the National style and the country's 'national architect'? As the following shows, his image was essentially constructed after his death, by his friends and former students, for reasons also related to the politics of art. While the importance of Romanian architectural heritage for Mincu's practice is beyond doubt, his coming to fame as national architect relates to the promotion of the idea of Romanian architecture in the nationalist-fuelled climate of the early twentieth-century.

There are a few suggestions that Mincu was recognised as creator of a new style before the First World War. In 1912 an issue of the literary journal *Flacăra* ('The Flame') was dedicated to the promotion of Romanian art and several articles praised Mincu as the creator of the Romanian architectural style.[14] But the main reason for this sudden outburst of tributes was that the architect was gravely ill and his entourage was keen to praise his career while he was still alive. Mincu indeed died just a few months afterwards, provoking a renewed series of articles and obituaries celebrating his personality and architectural designs.[15] Mincu himself referred to a connection with Romanian heritage in the same year. His much – quoted brief remark, which he delivered on the occasion of his final birthday, and even carved on the cross on his grave, was taken as testament for the creation of a national style: 'I looked and searched alone for small churches, old houses and other similar things that for most seemed insignificant. But I believed something special could be created out of them. They were like the healthy roots of a fallen tree.'[16] On that occasion, Mincu was surely responding to those who conferred upon him the label of creator of the Romanian style but at the same time preached the importance of creative interpretations of the architecture of the past.

A number of Mincu's friends and former students, such as Ion Socolescu (1856–1924) and Ion D. Traianescu (1875–1964), continued to write about the architect after his death and, especially after 1918, turned him into a symbol and justification of their own practice as architects promoting the national style, responding to the broader nationalist turn that

12) Kallestrup, 'Romanian "National Style"'; Popescu, *Le style national*; Ştefanuţ (Hajdu), *Arhitectură*.

13) Ion Socolescu, 'Mobilierul Catedralei de la Constanţa,' *Analele arhitecturei,* 5–6, 1892.

14) Ermil Pangrati, 'Cea mai de seamă operă a lui Ion Mincu,' *Flacăra*, 51, 6 October, 1912, 403; Alexandru Ţigara–Samurcaş, 'Mincu si Arhitectura Naţională,' *Flacăra*, 51, 6 October 1912, 404–05; Ion Socolescu, 'Pentru opera lui Mincu,' *Flacăra*, 51, 6 October, 1912, 405.

15) Ermil Pangrati, 'Discurs la înmormântarea arhitectului Ion Mincu,' *Dimineața*, 29 December 1912; 'Artistul I. Mincu,' *Românul*, 222, 1912, no author, no date, http://arhivaionmincu.blogspot.com/2017/01/sarbatorirea-lui-mincu-1912.html (accessed 10 September 2020).

16) *Românul*, 2:222, 9 October 1912, no author, no page numbering. http://arhivaionmincu.blogspot.com/2017/01/sarbatorirea-lui-mincu-1912.html (accessed 10 September 2020). See also Simion Vasilescu, *Arhitectul Ioan Mincu*, written probably around 1942 (the author mentions that he wrote it some 30 years after the death of Mincu), Bucharest, Library of the Romanian Academy, Manuscripts Collections, A932, fol. 71; Nicolae Petraşcu, *Ioan Mincu*, Bucharest: Cultura Naţională, 1928, 98–99.

characterised interwar Romania. They gradually developed an almost cult-like veneration for the architect, evident in the founding of the 'Ion Mincu Circle' and the performance of solemn religious ceremony at his grave on the tenth anniversary of his death. [17]

The discovery of Mincu in the second decade of the 20th century was connected to a broader turn towards native values and national culture in Romanian society. Around 1900 several cultural journals, such as *Literatură și artă română* (Romanian Literature and Art), *Ileana* and *Semănătorul* (The Sower), championed Romania's folk and religious heritage against what they saw as undesirable foreign influences.[18] The historian Nicolae Iorga (1871–1940) was perhaps the most influential promoter of nationalistic Romanian values in the first half of the twentieth century. He rose to fame with a radical discourse against European, especially French, culture that according to Iorga, 'humiliates and subjugates us, tears our people apart.'[19] The distance from the generation that ruled Romania in its first decades of independence in the later nineteenth century could not have been greater. Just one example suffices to illustrate this. In a famous cultural manifesto of 1868, Titu Maiorescu (1840–1917), founder of the *Junimea* (Youth) society, contrasted Western nations, or, in his words, 'the light from the fountains of knowledge from France and Germany,' with the native culture of Romania, what he called *barbarie orientală* (Oriental barbarity).[20]

In contrast, Iorga argued for the value of the entire history of Romanian culture. As part of this broader project and likely influenced by Mincu's growing circle of followers, he sought to rehabilitate 'Brâncovenesc' art and architecture as significant for national history and identity, contributing to the popularity of the national style.[21] This growing national movement was only helped by political developments. In 1913 Romania acquired the region of Southern Dobruja following the Second Balkan War and, in 1918, it gained Transylvania from Hungary following the defeat of the Habsburg Empire in the First World War. These were new territories that the government sought to visually mark as 'Romanian' by erecting of public monuments, Orthodox churches and buildings in the new 'Romanian' style.

In this context, Mincu's friends and followers had only to gain from praising Mincu as the creator of the 'Romanian' style. Indeed, they tied their career to the idea of this style and used Mincu as their spiritual father and starting point for a new architectural movement. Followers such as I. D Trajanescu (1875–1964) or Toma Socolescu became known as architects of the Romanian style, held important institutional positions and gained lucrative state commissions.[22] Mincu was thus treated both as the creator and as a key moment in a nascent

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17)   Ermil Pangrati, 'O vorbă bună' *Artele Frumoase*, 3–4, 1922, 2–3; I.D. Traianescu, 'Un pelerinagiu,' *Artele Frumoase*, 3–4, 1922, 35–38.

18)   Shona Kallestrup, *Art and Design in Romania*, 87–88.

19)   Nicolae Iorga, 'O Rugaminte,' *Epoca,* March 12, 1906. See also Nicolae Iorga, *Lupta Pentru Limba Românească,* Bucharest: Minerva 1906.

20)   Titu Maiorescu, 'În contra direcției de astăzi în cultura română,' *Convorbiri Literare,* 1868. URL: https://ro.wikisource.org/wiki/in_contra_direcției_de_astăzi_în_cultura_română (accessed 22.06.2019)

21)   Nicolae Iorga, *Cultura romînă supt Fanarioți. Conferință ținută la Ateneul romîn în ziua de 8 Februar 1898*, Bucuresci, 1898. See as well Cosmin Minea, 'From Byzantine to Brâncovenesc. The Periodization of Romanian Art in the Second Half of the Nineteenth Century,' in Shona Kallestrup et al., eds, *Periodization in the Art Historiographies of Central and Eastern Europe*, Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2022, 48–67.

22)   See the website *Restauratori romani: arhitectul Ion D. Trajanescu*, https://trajanescu.patrimoniu.ro and https://arhivadearhitectura.ro/arhitecti/victor-stefanescu/

narrative for the history of modern Romanian architecture, for which many were searching for a point of origin.

The writer Nicolae Petrașcu (1859–1944) provides another good example of how professional involvement in promoting a Romanian national narative also influenced the way Mincu was presented. Petrașcu was an active figure in conservative circles, member of the Junimea Society and founder of the previously mentioned nationalist literary journal *Literatură și artă română*. He also specialised in writing romanticised monographs of what are today canonical figures in the history of Romanian literature and arts: the poet Mihai Eminescu (1850–1889), writer Vasile Alecsandri (1821–1890) or the painter Nicolae Grigorescu (1838–1907), among others.[23] He therefore dedicated his life to define and promote national artistic icons for Romania and Mincu was part of this career objective.

Petrașcu wrote the first monograph on Mincu's career that serves as a good example of the sentimental and romanticised view of his life and work, one which came to be dominant in the interwar period. Published in 1928, the book portrayed the architect as a lonely, misunderstood genius, guided only by his patriotism and interest in old Romanian art. From the very beginning the author referred to Mincu as a semi-divine character, with 'a Christ-like face, something of the features and solemnity of Michelangelo, a steady walk and delicate hands and feet.'[24] In spite of its obvious subjectivism, the book became the main source for Mincu's career ever since. Further reinforcing the aura of genius around him, the Society of Romanian Architects celebrated the 50th anniversary of its foundation in 1941 with a special issue of their journal *Arhitectura* dedicated to Mincu and the Romanian architectural style.[25] It was followed by two further unpublished monographs glorifying the architect in 1942 and 1958.[26]

Mincu remained a topical theme in Communist Romania, too. Mihail Caffé, a professor at the now evocatively renamed Ion Mincu Institute of Architecture (formerly the School of Architecture) wrote two books about Mincu in which he saw his works as separated from the later development of the national style, that was perceived by the broader scholarly community as a symbol of the oppressive capitalist system. To rescue Mincu from this anti-bourgeoise approach, which was obviously in line also with the official discourse of the Communist regime, Caffé argued that, unlike those who followed him, Mincu's creations did not promote the courtly or ecclesiastical 'bourgeois' architecture of the past, but rather the 'folk culture' and 'progressist traditions of national art.'[27] Caffé saw as directly inspired from folk architecture elements such as the open porch or *verandă*, the wooden posts, the steep-pitched roof or polychrome decorations, elements that are in fact also typical for boyar mansions, ecclesiastic architecture or princely palaces.

23) Nicolae Petrașcu, *Mihail Eminescu. Studiu Critic*, Bucharest: I.V. Socecu, 1892; Nicolae Petrașcu *Vasile Alecsandri. Studiu Critic*, Bucharest: I.V. Socecu, 1894; Nicolae Petrașcu, *Pictorul Grigorescu*, Bucharest: Joseph Göbl, 1895; Nicolae Petrașcu, *Ioan Georgescu*, Bucharest: 'Bucovina' I. E. Torouțiu, 1931.

24) Petrașcu, *Ioan Mincu*, 1.

25) *Arhitectura*, 1, January-March, 1941.

26) Simon Vasilescu, *Arhitectul Ion Mincu*, manuscript, no date, Library of the Romanian Academy, Bucharest. Toma Socolescu, *Ion Mincu. Monografie, 1852 – 1912*, 1958, Manuscript, no reference number, Library of the Ion Mincu University of Architecture and Urbanism. The last manuscript was recently published as Toma Socolescu, *Ion Mincu Arhitect 1851–1912*, Bucharest: Editura Academiei Române, 2019.

27) Mihail Caffé, *Arhitectul Ion Mincu* Bucharest: Editura Științifică, 1960, 120. A new, shorter version, was published ten years afterwards as Caffé, *Ion Mincu*, Bucharest: Meridiane, 1970.

Even if Caffé offered just some general visual similarities as proofs for the folk sources of inspiration of Mincu, the idea of a close relation between Mincu and peasant architecture became very popular, especially in the midst of a turn towards national and folk culture in Communist Romania. Caffé's first book was published in 1960, two years after the Soviet army left Romania, an event which marked the start of the process of desovietisation, during which the country gradually implemented more independent internal and external policies and turned to an inward search for national specificity.[28] Nationalism in Communist Romania reached its peak in the 1980s during the final decade of the Ceaușescu regime, when, as in the case of Mincu, even writers known for their far-right, conservative views, where turned into promoters of Socialism. For example, the national poet Mihai Eminescu (1850–89) was detached from nineteenth-century romantic literature and turned by one author into a radical Socialist and even a revisionist of Marxism;[29] Iorga, too, was rehabilitated and turned into an anti-fascist, due to his conflict with the 1930s fascist organisation the Iron Guard.[30]

Around the time of Caffé's writings, the term 'neoromânesc' (Neoromanian) emerged to describe the early 20th century architectural movement inspired by the historical heritage of the country. However, in the Communist period it was used in a negative way, to mark the distance between a real, authentic 'Romanian architecture' and a forced, bourgeois appropriation of the style. For example, Caffé refers to Mincu's creations as 'arhitectură românească' and opposed them to the subsequent 'Neoromanian movement' that was the 'expression of a narrow nationalism marked by a 'monumental architecture' and 'false, arrogant and decadent decorations.'[31] The term 'Neoromanian' only began to be used with positive connotations after 1990, but since the ground-breaking publication of 2004 by Carmen Popescu on Romanian architecture, it has been replaced by what the author termed the 'Romanian National Style' in architecture.[32] The new term stresses the ideological motivation behind the style and also points to the modern creation of the idea of 'Romanian' architecture.

Popescu wrote a comprehensive account of the origins and evolution of the style, of which Mincu was seen as 'the father.'[33] Her study was as much a work of cultural analysis of national ideology in Romania as it was one of architectural history, that included very diverse architectural expressions, such as the movement of Mincu's followers, modernism, neo-Byzantine churches and cathedrals, fascist-inspired state buildings. The book understands Mincu as part of a broader political and cultural context but also represents a return to the interwar image of the architect, as creator and father of the Neo-Romanian or National Romanian style. The next significant moment in the historiography of Romanian art was the publication, in 2007, of Shona Kallestrup's *Art and Design in Romania, 1866–1927,* an extensive account of the development of all visual arts in modern Romania, in which Mincu was once

28) Lucian Boia, *Istorie și mit în conștiința românească,* Bucharest: Humanitas, 2011, 126.

29) Katherine Verdery, *National Ideology under Socialism: Identity and Cultural Politics in Ceaușescu's Romania,* University of California Press, 1991, 157–61.

30) Boia, *Istorie și mit,* 131–32.

31) Mihail Caffé, *Arhitectul Ion Mincu,* 219.

32) Popescu, *Le style national.*

33) Carmen Popescu analysed Mincu in the subchapter, 'Le père: Ion Mincu' in Popescu, *Le style national,* 51–63 and also on 97–99 and 109–112.

more recognised as planting 'the seeds of this new style.'[34] This view of Mincu as the founder of a new 'national' style and the strong connection between his works and Romanian national ideology was further reinforced by more recent studies in Romania that advanced the same basic idea.[35]

This brief account of the scholarship on Mincu reveals that his image as national architect, together with the concept of a Romanian style, were defined mostly after the architect's death, by his students and friends. The reasons for his popularity were partly related to the innovative way he made use of historic Romanian monuments as a reservoir of ideas, and partly, too, they were related to the political context and career trajectory of those who wrote about him in the decades following his death. All were promoters of a new Romanian architectural style in a political climate in which assertion of national identity was an important ideological imperative. As the next section will show, however, Mincu's thinking went beyond the connection to national ideology alone, and touched upon issues of artistic creativity and use of sources, the function of a building and its relation to the geographical place.

The architect as rebel: personal creativity above rules and established styles

Mincu managed to effect considerable changes to the way architecture was practiced in Romania and to how architects viewed themselves, in a time when this work was traditionally carried out by masons or at best by architects who copied Western European buildings and motifs. Mincu in contrast, preached and practiced the study of diverse sources and nonconformity to the established traditions. He distinguished himself in his student days by being the first ever Romanian architect to complete the full cycle of studies and obtain a diploma at the Parisian École des Beaux Arts (1877–83). This was an impressive feat, considering the fierce competition for admission,[36] the limited number of graduates; the status of *architecte diplômé* being achieved by another Romanian, Ion Berindey (1871–1928), fourteen years later. After his studies, Mincu undertook a state-funded one-year study trip across Southern Europe, where he began to develop a unique set of interests in architecture outside the classical canon even if such study trips were normally intended precisely for the study of the classical heritage (as with the eighteenth century grand tours). However, Mincu was mostly interested in examples of architecture outside of this classical canon. He praised, for example, the Byzantine architecture of Italy, in Venice or Ravenna, the Romanesque and Arab architecture of Spain, in Toledo, Sevilla, Zaragoza or Madrid, and the Ottoman and Byzantine architecture of Istanbul.[37]

He admired these monuments because they departed from the established canon of classical art and architecture or because, as Mincu confessed, they 'broke the most common-sense

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34) Kallestrup, *Art and Design in Romania*, 74.

35) Ştefanuţ (Hajdu), *Arhitectură*; Nemţeanu, *Vila*; Olariu, Petrescu and Pop, *Repertoriul*. See as well the commemorations marking one hundred years since Mincu's death, organised by some well-established architects in Romania. Andreea Pop, 'Morminte ale arhitecţilor în Cimitirul Bellu,' *Muzeul Municipiului Bucureşti*, 20, 364–93, 371.

36) Alexander Griffin, *The Rise of Academic Architectural Education: The Origins and Enduring Influence of the Académie d'Architecture*, Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2019, 155, 159.

37) Petraşcu, *Ioan Mincu,* 4–5, 66–81.

rules.'[38] He later wrote that for him 'true architects are the ones that are capable of innovation, of conceiving new forms, of bringing to life particular and original works.'[39] and a former student remembered that 'He did not believe in canons, rules or schemes. Style was for him not something given but a specific architecture at a particular moment.'[40] He also argued in clear terms for an architecture that breaks with established norms, when he defended his proposal to restore Stavropoleos church in Bucharest:

> I admire the altered Byzantine style of Stavropoleos church in the same way that I admire the beautiful Roman monuments emancipated from the influence of the *pure Greek* style, or the Greek monuments that moved away from the *pure Egyptian* style. […] Precisely because it is not made in 'pure Byzantine style the church represents for us a very precious 'archetype.' From the pure Byzantine style, it evolved into the heterogenous style, as named by Mr. Samurcaș, and that I call 'Romanian style.'[41]

Perhaps the best illustration of Mincu's desire to innovate and depart from established styles is the sheer diversity of his works. They prove his desire to experiment with various forms and sources of inspiration. Many of them can be categorised as 'eclectic,' because of the wide range of sources used. The Alexandru Robescu House in Bucharest (1889) was a commission for a building in 'Florentine style.'[42] Mincu responded by creating an asymmetrical structure, with two wings almost entirely detached from each other; with prominent neoclassical window-frames surmounted by amphoras; and topped by a wooden, rusticated roof with projecting cornice in the manner of Italianate mansions (**Figure 3**). The Administrative Palace in Galaţi (1905) could have been an opportunity for Mincu to put into practice an earlier unrealised project for the Bucharest City Hall but he ended up referencing Venetian-style trilobed arcades, neo-classical window frames, a French Beaux-Arts cornice and roof, a richly-ornate central fronton, all in a symmetrical construction **(Figure 4)**. The Commerce Bank of Craiova (designed in 1906, finalized in 1916 by Constantin Iotzu) has a rich and even more eclectic exterior with sculpted small towers, stone balconies, rows of round arcades, richly-sculpted corniche, large first-floor windows and the same type of raised Beaux-Arts roof. The central element of Petraşcu House (1906–1907) is the protruding first-floor balcony, a reference perhaps to the Ottoman mansions in the Balkan Peninsula **(Figure 5)**. The exterior decorations are toned-down but noticeable are the same type of Venetian-inspired window-frames on the first floor. A particular set of designs are those that can broadly be seen as neo-Byzantine such as the Funerary Chapels at Bellu Cemetery, the Church in Valea Călugărească or the restoration of Stavropoleos Monastery, to which the article will come back in its final part **(Figure 6)**.

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38) Petraşcu, *Ioan Mincu,* 4–5, 72–73.

39) Ion Mincu, 'Concursul Camerei de Comerț din București. Palatul Bursei,,' *Literatură şi artă română: Idei, simţire, formă,* 11, 1907, 304–07, 306.

40) Spiridon Cegăneanu, 'Ion Mincu (1851–1912),' *Arhitectura,* 1, 1941, 28–35, 29.

41) Ion Mincu, 'Cronică Artistică – Stavropoleos (Răspuns d-Lui Tzigara-Samurcaş),' *Epoca,* 83, March 25, 1904) 282–84; See also Ada Hajdu, 'Arhitectul Ion Mincu în context local şi regional' in Ada Hajdu, Irina Cărăbaş Cosmin Minea and Vlad Bedros, eds, *Ion Mincu. O Perspectivă Regionalistă şi o Abordare a Inserţiei Locale.* Premiul Ion Mincu, Manuscript, Bucharest, 2014, 7–48, 24, 67.

42) Oana Marinache, 'Case bucureştene uitate din creaţia arh. Ion Mincu,' *Adevarul,* December 28, 2012, http://adevarul.ro/news/bucuresti/case-bucurestene-uitatedin-creatia-arh-ion-mincu-1_50de00a4596d72009147d7db/index.html (accessed 12 July 2020).

Figure 3: Ion Mincu, Robescu House, Bucharest, 1889.
Source: Oana Marinache, 'Case bucureştene uitate din creaţia arh.
Ion Mincu' *Adevarul*, 28 December 2012.

What is remarkable about all the examples above is the absence of clear references to Romanian heritage, for which Mincu is mostly known. Those writing about Mincu have focused instead on three buildings that will be described in more details later on: Lahovari House (1886), the Central School for Girls (1888–1890) and Romanian Restaurant (1888), all in Bucharest **(Figures 7, 8, 9)**. Together with the Robescu House in Galaţi (1896), these are the only buildings displaying elements that were later seen as creating the 'Romanian style namely trefoil arches, coloured ceramic decorations on the façade, an open, front-facing balcony, wooden columns and a steep-pitched roof.

The teachings of Mincu, as professor at the School of Architecture in Bucharest, further reveal his interest in original creations and explain to a good extent his later fame. Many of his students later remembered how they were allowed a great degree of freedom and given time to develop their own personality.[43] Mincu was mostly interested in new, innovative designs and urged them not to copy architectural motifs.[44] He departed from the classical canon by focusing on monuments that were the easiest to study live, in other words, the heritage of former Wallachia. Mincu also went beyond canonical architectural monuments in his classes, in order to study furniture, folk woodcarvings, roadside crosses, religious objects.[45] He indeed

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43) Trajanescu, 'Fresca,' 110.

44) Ion D. Trajanescu, 'Cuvântare,' *Arhitectura*, 4, 1925, 19–21, 20.

45) Cegăneanu, 'Ion Mincu,' 30. Trajanescu, 'Fresca înaintaşilor noştri,' *Arhitectura*, 1, 1941, 107–112, 110.

Figure 4: Ion Mincu, Administrative Palace, Galați, 1905.
Source: Baditastefan.

Figure 5: Ion Mincu, Petrașcu House, Bucharest, 1906–1907.
Source: Joe Mabel.

Figure 6: Ion Mincu, Georgiev Chapel, Bellu Cemetery, Bucharest, 1902–1907.
Source: Alexandra Hegedus.

Cosmin Minea ⓐ Beyond National Style: The Innovative Thinking and Designs of the Architect Ion Mincu (1852–1912)

Figure 7: Ion Mincu, Lahovari House, Bucharest, 1886. Front façade / detail with the front porch.
Source: Ionuț Tudose.

(65)

Figure 8: Ion Mincu, Central School for Girls, Bucharest, 1890. Inner courtyard.
Source: Claudiu Nh / Alexandru Dolea.

proved to be particularly innovative in the domain of decoration, for as many of his buildings consist of rather unremarkable general shapes but with intricate and innovative exterior decorations.

Further evidence of his eclectic approach and of his interest in the creative mixing of sources and styles is his own house in Bucharest, a long-time work of interior design (1890–1914). There, Mincu combined Romanian and Turkish carpets with wooden Orthodox icons, stained glass, mirrors with Arab decorations, Ottoman sofas, medieval wooden panelling and neoclassical marble columns.[46] His house is also indicative of the cultural orientation of the Romanian bourgeoisie at the time, perfectly attuned to the latest European professional trends but also influenced by a more traditional Oriental culture in their daily and domestic life.

The Importance of building types and their function

Mincu might appear so far to have been more an artist and interior designer than an architect, given his interest in shapes, colours and creative ornament rather than in building and their structures. This was nevertheless only partly the case, for he was also alert to the significance of the function of a building and was aware that many institutions or businesses required

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46) Petraşcu, *Ioan Mincu*, 22–23. Raluca Zaharia, 'Amenajări interioare istorice 03— Neoromânescul,' *Medium*, 16 July 2016, https://medium.com/@raluca.zaharia/amenaj%C4%83ri-interioare-istorice-03-neorom%C3%A2nescul-c5e6266451a (accessed 3 June 2020).

**Figure 9: Ion Mincu, Romanian Restaurant, 1888. Elevation for the Romanian Pavilion
at the 1889 Paris World Fair / front façade / side façade with the first-floor balcony.**
Source: National Arts Museum of Romania, Bucharest.

a certain *type* of architecture. On one occasion he openly criticised the proposed designs for a new Palace of the Stock Exchange in Bucharest because they did not respect the established type of building:

> Whoever knows what a stock exchange is, will recall the countless examples from the past: the old Roman basilicas, the medieval stock exchange edifices, the Loggia dei Lanzi of Florence, the Loggia dei Mercanti of Genoa, the London Stock Exchange, or modern ones such as the stock exchange of Bordeaux. (…) these examples are enough to guide the skilful expert in the design and practical distribution of interior rooms as well as in the aesthetic characterization of the exterior which should allow the reading of its purpose and destination without any written instructions.[47]

47)   Ion Mincu, 'Concursul Camerei de Comerț din București. Palatul Bursei,' *Literatură și artă română: Idei, simțire, formă*, 11, 1907, 304–07, 306–07.

When he was himself in charge of designing plans for institutions, he began by studying established European models and typologies. Before designing the Bank of Commerce in Craiova in 1906, for example, Mincu went to Berlin to study different types of banks; his project for the Bucharest City Hall was inspired by the Hôtel de Ville in Paris and Pavia Cathedral, according to a former student.[48]

As such, Mincu's thinking was aligned with European architectural norms of the time. The most influential architectural surveys and manuals of the nineteenth century, in particular those used in France, where Mincu had been trained, classified buildings according to their *types* and not the *style* as the term is understood today.[49] One of the most popular treatises of architecture surveying building types was that of Mincu's former professor, Julien Guadet.[50] The very notion of architectural style was to a great extent connected to the type and function of a building (e.g. style of a city hall or of a bank) besides its association to a geographical territory, as Mincu's followers later preached.

Mincu himself explained the design of one of his most admired works, the Central School for Girls in Bucharest, with reference to the specific function of the building. His design, that included polychrome ceramic decorations on the façade, special characters derived from old Slavonic, and an inner courtyard with an exterior corridor with arches that resembled a monastery cloister, has been praised as one of the most accomplished examples of the new Romanian style **(Figure 8)**. But when Mincu presented his plans to the Ministry of Religion and Public Instruction, he mostly referred to the purpose of the building:

> This gallery, necessary for establishing a covered way of communication between different parts of the school, was more decorated. I gave it an appearance as joyful and pleasant as possible in order to render less dull the life of schoolgirls, otherwise doomed to spend the happiest years of their life as if in a prison. What inspired me to arrange the courtyard in such a way was the model of our old convents. They are almost always in regions with a harsher climate than the capital, and their inhabitants are mostly elderly and as sensitive to the climate as the schoolgirls.[51]

Mincu's account also touches upon the subject of gender and how girls were considered more sensitive, in this case to the climate, but also subject to the stricter educational system that girls experienced. They were confined to study, sleep and eat in the same building, with little outside social interaction, hence for the architecture to be 'as joyful and pleasant as possible.'

The design of Mincu was initially rejected by the Council for Public Works who disliked precisely Mincu's innovations, that would soon be highly praised. The Council considered that 'the portico of the inner courtyard is conceived in a style neither in harmony with the main

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48)   Mincu, 'Concursul Camerei,' 306. Vasilescu, *Arhitectul Ion Mincu*, Library of the Romanian Academy, Bucharest, fol. 93.

49)   Such as Léonce Reynaud, *Traité d'architecture*, Paris: 1860–63 and P. Planat, *Encyclopédie de l'Architecture et de la Construction*, six volumes, Paris: 1888–95. See details in Nikolaus Pevsner, *History of Building Types*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979, 6.

50)   Julien Guadet, *Elements et theorie de l'architecture*, Paris: Libraire de la construction modern, 1902–04.

51)   National Historical Archives, Bucharest, Fond Ministry of Religion and Public Instruction, Dossier 840/1891, File 58–63, published in Oana Marinache, 'Școala Centrală de Fete, etapa 1892,' *Arhiva Ion Mincu,* January 18, 2017, http://arhivaionmincu.blogspot.com/2017/01/scoala-centrala-de-fete-etapa-1892.html (accessed 11 September 2020).

façade neither with the secondary ones. (…) a better portico could be one seen at similar modern constructuins.'[52] This official reaction testifies to the very conservative nature of public institutions in Romania, a context in which Mincu's designs are all the more remarkable. The Council rejected his proposed designs just because the addition of some unusual decorations, even if the building respected the general structure of a school (square-shape, inner-courtyard, classrooms communicating via corridors, etc.) and the decorations conformed to the rules of symmetry dictated by the principles of classical architecture.

An architecture connected to place: regionalism and identity

What brings Mincu closest to the idea of a Romanian style in architecture is his belief that the design of a building should correspond to the traditions, climate and geography of a place. In the journal of his friend Petrașcu, dedicated to the promotion of Romanian art, he levelled strong criticism against the indiscriminate copying of other architectural styles:

> In newly built towns such as Sinaia, where we could have continued a tradition and designed an original architecture to express our habits, climate and needs, we compiled a bizarre gathering of badly made copies from the architecture of all countries and all climates that looks downright ridiculous: so called *maison de plaisance* from around Paris, with Flemish houses, miniature Gothic castle and villas from Southern Italy.[53]

His thinking was undoubtedly informed by Eugène Viollet-le-Duc, whom Mincu had read ever since he was a student in Paris, and who had defended the idea of an architecture in harmony to the specificity of a place in very similar terms:

> In architecture we dream of shapes that seem attractive, before we know if they are suitable for construction or for a need. (…) The respectable bourgeois follow their fantasies and desire houses in the shape of an Italian Villa or an English cottage without knowing if they will be comfortable in them. This is why you see Italian villas in the North of France and Swiss chalets at Nice.[54]

Even earlier, the British architect Augustus Pugin expressed, in a very similar wording, his disapproval of designs simply copied from other cultures or countries: 'We have Swiss cottages in a flat country; Italian villas in the coldest situations; a Turkish Kremlin for a royal residence.'[55] While it has often been seen in relation to architecture in central and eastern

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52) 'Jurnal 340/15/27 sept. 1887 al Consiliului Lucrărilor Publice' in Nicolae Lascu, *Fragment din comunicarea prezentată la simpozionul 'Ion Mincu 150 ani,'* Romanian Architects Order, no date, https://www.oar-bucuresti.ro/buletin_oar/ordinul04 (accessed 10 September 2020).

53) Ion Mincu, 'Școalele noastre de arte frumoase,' *Literatură și artă română: Idei, simțire, formă*, 1, 1896, 218–24, 219–20.

54) Eugène Viollet-le-Duc, *Comment on construit une maison* (Histoire d'une maison), Paris: J. Hetzel, 1887, 188–90. See also Eugène Viollet-le-Duc 'Dixieme Entretiens: Sur L'architecture au Dix-Neuvieme Siècle. Sur la method' in Ayla Lepine, Matt Lodder and Rosalind Mckever, eds, *Entretiens sur l'architecture*, 2 vols, Paris: A. Morel et C, 1863, 449–91.

55) A.W.N. Pugin, *Contrasts*, Salisbury, 1836, 301 in Alyson Wharton, 'Armenian Architects and 'Other' Revivalism,' in Ayla Lepine et al., eds, *Revival, Memories, Identities, Utopias*, London: Courtauld Books Online, 2015, 152.

Europe, the project of creating collective artistic and cultural identities characterised the whole continent and at regional as well as national level. Peter Clericuzio, for example, has noted how, at the turn of the century, architects in Nancy affirmed their city identity through their works as an alternative to the Paris-dominated art world and similar processes happened also in places such as Glasgow, Darmstadt or Barcelona.[56]

In Romania, the archeologist Alexandru Odobescu was among the first to mention the possibility of creating a Romanian style in architecture in 1872.[57] More than a decade later, the General Iacob Lahovary (1846–1907), war hero of the Romanian Independence War of 1877–78, decided to express his patriotic feelings through the architecture of his house. For this he turned to Mincu, not coincidentally one of the few ethnic Romanian architects active in Bucharest, whom he asked in 1884 for an expansion of his house 'in a Romanian style.'[58] Indicative that the idea of this style was an absolute novelty in the country, Mincu was put in difficulty by the request and admitted that he was forced to experiment:

> When General Lahovari asked me to design his house in Romanian style, I had only a vague idea about the sources since I just came into the country. I drew inspiration from just a few monasteries that I knew, some mountain houses and some photographs (…). I used polychromy, which is in the nature of the Romanian people and I used ceramic tiles because of their durability and beauty. I believed my creation gave a Romanian atmosphere.[59]

His design was experimental but also bold, seen by Kallestrup as combining vernacular architecture with the refined decorations of Romanian Orthodox churches.[60] Mincu added to the simple construction a large, raised open balcony, with wooden pillars, trefoil arches, a decorative ceramic freeze and a wooden roof with a projecting cornice **(Figure 7)**. A few years later he used the same elements for the Central School for Girls, as I described above, and also for maybe his most celebrated work, the 'Bufetul de la Șosea' restaurant in Bucharest or what should have initially been a Romanian restaurant for the Paris World Fair of 1889.

Universal exhibitions were events that fuelled the search for national architectural styles in all independent states because the organisers sent out instructions to the participating countries asking that their pavilions and other constructions to be in the national style.[61] When Mincu received from the Government the commission for a Romanian restaurant at the Fair, he probably felt more at ease. In this case he had full freedom to exercise his creativity, experiment and mix a variety of motifs that could be understood as 'Romanian.'

56) Peter Clericuzio, 'Art Nouveau and Bank Architecture in Nancy: Negotiating the Re-Emergence of a French Regional Identity,' *Architectural History*, 63, 2020, 219–256, 221. Klaus-Jürgen Sembach, *Art Nouveau*, Cologne: Taschen, 2002, 34–35.

57) Alexandru Odobescu, 'Artele din România, în periodul preistoric. Conferinţă rostită la Ateneul român, la 17 decembrie 1872,' în *Opere complete*, vol III, Bucureşti, 1908, 168, 172–73.

58) Spiridon Cegăneanu, 'Ion Mincu (1851–1912),' *Arhitectura*, 1, 1941, 31.

59) Cegăneanu, 'Ion Mincu,' 31.

60) Kallestrup, *Art and Design in Romania*, 75.

61) Cosmin Minea, 'Roma Musicians, Folk Art and Traditional Food from Romania at the Paris World Fairs of 1889 and 1900,' in Joep Leerssen and Eric Storm, eds, *World Fairs and the Global Moulding of National Identities. International Exhibitions as Cultural Platforms 1851–1958*, Leiden: Brill, 2021, 148.

These included the previously employed trefoil arches, coloured ceramics and Slavonic fonts, the open balcony, wooden pillars, wooden roof and the prominent rounded window of the basement **(Figure 9)**. A defining feature of this building, which in the end was built not for the World Fair (the organisers preferring a simplified alternative), but as a permanent restaurant in Bucharest, is its asymmetrical design marked by the exterior covered staircase. On this occasion, Mincu clearly referenced the architecture of historical monuments in Romania. The exterior staircase leading to the first-floor terrace (or foișor in Romanian) is similar to that of Hurezi Monastery (1693), the rows of trefoil arches recalls Mogoșoaia Palace (1702) while the ceramic freeze is similar to the exterior freeze of Stavropoleos Monastery (1724) (**Figures 10 and 1**). All these monuments were associated with the rule of the Wallachian Prince Constantin Brâncoveanu (r. 1688–1714) and with the architectural heritage of the period, which began to be seen by some Romanian architects as representative of the national heritage.[62]

The so-called Brâncovenesc heritage was appreciated because it was an original style that departed from the classical ideals of rationality and order with its rich decoration, strong colours, new or unconventional materials. As Sterner noted in the case of other architects of the period, Mincu attempted to revive an architectural identity based on a rational, artistic interest and not on a purely emotional engagement with the past.[63] Indeed, a passion for richly-ornated styles can be noticed at the time in the case of the revival of the French Rococo;)[64] of Baroque architecture as significant for an Austrian and later Czech identity;[65] or in the revival of the so-called Ottoman Renaissance.[66]

Shortly after the commission for a Romanian restaurant, Mincu received his first interior design order, for the interior furnishing of Constanța Cathedral. The religious edifice harboured a special national significance. It was the first Orthodox building in Northern Dobruja, a Muslim-majority region that had been acquired following the 1877–78 War of Independence. It therefore embodied the presence of Romanian Christian culture on the new lands.[67] The commission was therefore an occasion for designs directly referring to the Orthodox heritage of the country and, for Mincu personally, an opportunity to study this heritage and practice woodcarving. His designs, objects for religious service, wooden chairs and the wooden iconostasis, were inspired by older Orthodox motifs and reinforced the very special status of the monument that was at the heart of wider identity politics in the Romanian state.

Indeed, Mincu had been interested throughout his career in interior, object and furniture design, like other more famous art-nouveau architects. At the time or shortly after the

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62) More details in Minea, 'From Byzantine to Brâncovenesc.'

63) Sterner, *Art Nouveau*, 23–24.

64) Debora L. Silverman, *Art Nouveau in Fin-de-Siècle France,* California: University of California Press, 1992, 142–59; Paul Greenhalgh, 'Alternative Histories,' in Greenhalgh, ed., *Art Nouveau*, 41.

65) Matthew Rampley, *The Vienna School of Art History: Empire and the Politics of Scholarship, 1847–1918*, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2013, 96–108 especially 106–107.

66) Ahmet Ersoy, *Architecture and the Late Ottoman Historical Imaginary: Reconfiguring the Architectural Past in a Modernizing Empire*, Farnham: Ashgate, 2015, 151–52. See also Ahmet Ersoy, 'Architecture and the Search for Ottoman Origins in the Tanzimat Period,' *Muqarnas,* 24, Brill, 2007, 117–40.

67) See details of the integration process of Northern Dobrogea in Constantin Iordachi, 'Citizenship, Nation-and State-Building: The Integration of Northern Dobrogea into Romania, 1878–1913,' *The Carl Beck Papers in Russian & East European Studies*, 1607, 2002, 1–86.

Figure 10: Dionisie Tower, inside courtyard of Hurezi Monastery, 1693.
Source: *Centrul de promovare şi informare turistică Horezu.*

commission for Constanţa Cathedral, he became professor of wood carving at the School of Arts and Crafts in Bucharest, his first official position in Romania.[68] He was soon commissioned to draw the interior plans and furniture design for the Palace of Justice in Bucharest (1890–1895) and later the same type of neo-Orthodox furniture for Stavropoleos Monastery (1904–1908). Mincu involved his students in these commissions, insisting on the practice of detailed study of small objects of Orthodox heritage, such as roadside crosses, church furniture, or folk woodcarvings. Subsequently, his students even claimed that it was through the practice of studying and copying smaller decorative objects, that they learned Romania's architectural heritage.[69]

Even if Mincu promoted ideas of Romanian heritage in some of his designs, he was never an outspoken supporter of any new 'national' style. This was not the case in, for example, neighbouring Hungary, where Ödön Lechner, considered, like Mincu, the father of the national architectural style of his home country, declared that he had always 'pursued that ideal of creating a Hungarian national style' and even saw nationalism as necessary for the country to

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68) Petraşcu, 24.

69) Cegăneanu, 'Ion Mincu,' 30. Trajanescu, 'Fresca înaintaşilor noştri,' *Arhitectura*, 1, 1941, 107–112, 110.

compete on international markets.[70] One can look further afield and see parallels with Antoni Gaudí, too. He was a known critic of contemporary society, which he saw as morally corrupt, and found refuge in ideas of Catalan identity.[71] Like Lechner, Gaudí added overt national symbols, but in a manner never attempted by Mincu. In the Casa Batlló (1904–1906) and Park Güell (1900–1914) in Barcelona, for example, Gaudí made reference to the legend of Saint Jordi (Saint Georges), the patron-saint of Catalonia; at the Casa Vicens (1877–1883), he included the Margallo Palm, native Catalonian plant, as a decorative motif, and added the stripes of the Catalan flag at Palau Güell (1886–1888).

Of course, both Lechner and Gaudí showed an exuberant creativity, interpreting a wide variety of motifs in a highly idiosyncratic way. Like Mincu, they combined motifs and sources of inspiration widely shared in Europe at the time, even if they presented them as having specific national meanings, such as polychrome ceramic, glass tiles, wooden panels, decorative frames or pillars. Their designs are also on a much grander scale, testament, above all else, for the size of the Hungarian and Catalan economies as opposed to that of Romania, and size also paved the way for the use of a richer architectural vocabulary. Yet despite some superficial parallels, Mincu was much less driven by nationalist beliefs and values than these better known figures.

Restoring the past for the present: the Stavropoleos Monastery

Mincu's only restoration project, at Stavropoleos Monastery (1724) in Bucharest, throws a particularly clear light on the significance he gave to the architecture of the past and therefore merits a more detailed analysis. He was asked in 1897 to restore this small church that he already knew well, since he had been inspired by it for other designs, emulating its richly ornamented porch, trefoil arches and coloured frieze. After he studied it more carefully and discovered its bad state of repair, lack of foundations, substandard materials and the 'abhorrent surroundings' of massive and tall modern buildings in its immediate neighbourhood, he advance the radical proposition that the church be dismantled and reconstructed at another location in Bucharest.[72] The proposal was already surprising enough, especially for an architect who had begun to be associated with concern for national heritage and the preservation of historic monuments. But Mincu doubled down on his advice and also proposed that the relocated church be placed in the centre of a new museum of Romanian architectural heritage, that would be 'in the same architectural style' as the monastery.[73]

In fact, Mincu's plan show him to be much more concerned with *reshaping* the architectural heritage, promoting it according to the modern principles of a museum, than with an

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70) David Crowley, 'Budapest: International Metropolis and National Capital,' in Greenhalgh, ed., *Art Nouveau,* 347; Ákos Moravanszky, *Competing Visions: Aesthetic Invention and Social Imagination in Central European Architecture, 1867–1918,* Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1998, 18.

71) Ignasi de Solá-Morales, 'Barcelona: Spirituality and Modernity,' in Greenhalgh ed., *Art Nouveau,* 334–345, especially 336–341.

72) Report of January 5, 1900 in the Archive of the Ministry of Religion reproduced in Nedioglu, 'Stavropoleos,' *Buletinul Comisiunii Monumentelor Istorice,* 17, October-December, 1924, 147–168, especially 163.

73) Ibid., 163.

unintrusive restoration. He was not interested in keeping the religious function of the building or in preserving the monument intact but, rather, in transforming it into a centre for the study and promotion of modern Romanian art. When he was asked again to restore the monument, four years later, he restated that 'A simple preservation would not prevent the disappearance with time of many artistic elements. A perfect copy of the church should be built in another place, in order for the next generations of artists to have preserved a detailed example of the last phase of development reached by our domestic art.'[74] Indeed, his restoration proposal illustrates what Greenhalgh noted about much architecture of the time: 'History was not to be copied. It was there to be manipulated, reinterpreted and, where other models provided better solutions, rejected.'[75]

Mincu's restoration proposal also went against the thinking of many of his personal friends and supporters and it is therefore remarkable for its audacity. The Commission for Historical Monuments accused him of having no 'respect for the past,' while other Romanian architects also criticised earlier the way reconstruction of monuments did not respect national history.[76] But far from wishing to be provocative, Mincu was interested in the development of modern Romanian art based on innovation, creativity and reinterpretation of the past for present purposes rather than conserving the past for its own purpose.

Mincu eventually realised part of his plans. He did not demolish or move Stavropoleos church, but he restored it between 1904 and 1908, and afterwards built what was supposed to be a new museum for religious art next to it, the building described in the first part of this article.[77] The restoration works included replacement and repainting of the exterior decoration, the twenty four capitals, the middle frieze; the rebuilding of a new tower, after the one in the votive painting; the replacement of the roof and the restoration of the inside furnishing.[78] As one of his students remarked, Mincu did not look for historical accuracy but to highlight its aesthetic and artistic quality.[79] Mincu also noted earlier in his career that restorers should focus on visual aspects, copy and replace parts and they do not need 'vast knowledge of the architecture of that particular historical era.'[80] The heritage of the past was for him not an object of study, conservation or adulation but played a precise role, as aid and instrument for modern day architects.

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74) Ibid., 164. See also Ion Mincu, 'Cronică Artistică – Stavropoleos (Răspuns d-Lui Tzigara-Samurcaş),' *Epoca*, 83, March 25, 1904, 282–84.

75) Paul Greenhalgh, 'Alternative Histories,' 44.

76) More details in Cosmin Minea, 'The Monastery of Curtea de Argeş and Romanian Architectural Heritage in the Late 19th Century,' *Studies in History and Theory of Architecture*, 4, 2016, 181–201; Carmen Popescu, 'André Lecomte Du Nouÿ (1844–1914) et La Restauration Des Monuments Historiques En Roumanie,' *Bulletin de La Société de l'Histoire de l'Art Français Année 1998*, 1999, 287–308.

77) The idea of the museum was never fully accomplished. See more details in Cosmin Minea, 'Medieval Art, National Architectural Heritage and Museums in Late 19th Century Romania,' *Anastasis,* 8:1, 2021: 109–42.

78) Mincu's restoration report (16 June 1904) reproduced in Nedioglu, 'Stavropoleos,' 165.

79) Toma T. Socolescu, *Fresca arhitecţilor care au lucrat în România în epoca modernă: 1800–1925*, Bucharest: Caligraf Design, 2004, 108. Petraşcu also compared the restoration with the very radical late nineteenth-century one at Sant'Ambrogio in Milano. Petraşcu, *Ioan Mincu*, 90.
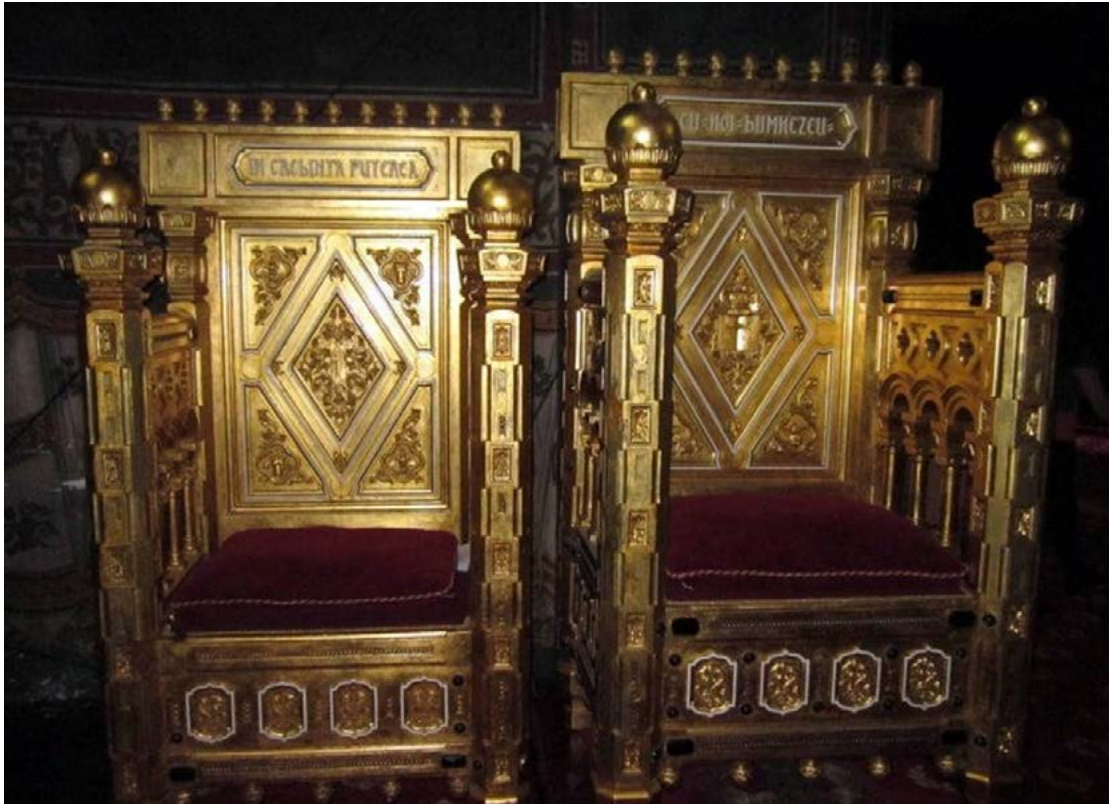
80) Mincu, 'Şcoalele Noastre,' 219.

Figure 11: Ion Mincu and his students, Royal Chairs, Constanța Cathedral, 1891–1892.
Source: povestidecalatorie.ro (accessed 10 March 2022).

Conclusions

Throughout his career, Mincu was interested in the architectural heritage of cultures outside the classical, European canon, such as Byzantine, Arab, Moresque, Ottoman, Romanian. The latter undoubtedly played a special role since the architect was active in Romania almost all his life and he believed architecture should also respond to the building traditions and geography of the place it is constructed. However, Mincu's interest in Romanian architectural heritage does not indicate that he was a 'creator' of the National Style, as the architect has been seen in most of the scholarly literature. As much as he instigated the development of a new architecture inspired by the national heritage, the very same ideas were dictated by patrons, such as general Lahovary and the World Fairs organisers, or have been retrospectively applied to his career by architects or scholars who needed a founding father as justification for their own work.

Mincu was indeed not interested in promoting an architecture out of patriotism or for ideological reasons but one that was at the same time original, appropriate for present needs and in connected to the present and past heritage of a place. This is why perhaps he did not settle with a preferred style and until the end of his career designed new forms, experimenting with a variety of sources. With the restoration of Stavropoleos Monastery and the building of

a new museum he demonstrated a way to reconcile modern architecture with tradition and with ideas about national art. He did not serve, unfortunately, as an example in this sense for his followers who used Mincu to promote an emphatic patriotism and an architecture aligned with the nationalist policies of the time.

Mincu's stance against the supremacy of the classical canon and his ideas about individual artistic creativity were outstanding in the Romanian context, a new nation-state, where all important new buildings were mostly copies of ones elsewhere in Europe and, in particular, France, from where the most important architects came. However, his attempts to change architectural practices are relevant beyond the context of Romania. In particular, his attempts to reconcile ideas of modernity with those about the past and traditions might prove instructive today, in times of resurgent nationalism and the contestation of globalisation. Paul Ricoeur's 1960s predicament, that inspired the theory of critical regionalism in architecture, was up to a point also the one of Ion Mincu: 'How to become modern and return to the sources? How to revive an old, dormant civilization and take part in universal civilization?'[81] Mincu answered with several designs that were highly original, in dialogue with broader European trends and at the same time responding to the needs to shape the cultural identity of the new Romanian nation.

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81)   Paul Ricoeur, 'Universal Civilization and National Cultures' (1961), in Paul Ricoeur, *History and Truth*, Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1965, 276–277. See also the idea expanded in Kenneth Frampton, 'Towards a Critical Regionalism. Six Points for an Architecture of Resistance,' *Critical Regionalism. Revisited, OASE*, 103, 2019, 11–22.

Four Essays on Modern Architecture

by Virgil Bierbauer (1893–1956)

Translated by Barbara Dudás

Abstract

Virgil Bierbauer is known as perhaps the foremost champion of international modernism in architecture writing in Hungary between the wars. He was editor of the journal *Tér és Forma* (Space and Form) in the 1920s and 1930, which he used as a platform for disseminating awareness of debates and practices in contemporary architecture not only in Hungary but elsewhere in Europe and North America. Yet his work is almost entirely unknown, primarily because he wrote only in Hungarian. This group of four essays by Bierbauer from *Tér és Forma* has been translated into English to address this deficit of awareness. The essays are representative of different ideas and positions he took from 1928, the earliest he wrote, to 1946, when the latest of the four was published. The translations are prefaced with an Introduction that puts Bierbauer's work into an historical and intellectual context, as well as outlining some of his key ideas about architecture.

Keywords

Four Essays on Modern Architecture[1]

by Virgil Bierbauer

Introduction

Matthew Rampley and Nóra Veszprémi

The four essays translated here into English were written by the architect and architectural critic and historian Virgil Bierbauer (1893–1956). They are taken from the architectural journal *Tér és Forma* (Space and Form), which he edited from 1928 to 1942.

In comparison with other Hungarian critics and intellectuals of his time such as Georg Lukács, Karl Mannheim or Károly Polányi, Bierbauer is little known outside of Hungary. There is a small body of commentary on his work, but it cannot compare with the large volume of research articles and monographs that have been published on his Hungarian contemporaries.[2] This is for a number of reasons. With the exception of his doctoral dissertation, written in German, all of his work was published in Hungarian, and none has been translated until now. Moreover, although his interests were wide and varied, he remained firmly anchored in Hungarian social and cultural life. Following the establishment of the authoritarian regime of Miklós Horthy in 1919, many modernist Hungarian artists and writers left Hungary and spent periods in exile abroad. This was to escape either the 'white terror,' the purging and persecution of leftists that accompanied his seizure of power, or the increasingly anti-Semitic stance (and alliance with Hitler) of the government in the 1930s. As a consequence, the thoughts and writings of Lukács, Mannheim and Polányi, to name but a few, were disseminated widely abroad. Some never returned to their homeland. Bierbauer, in contrast, remained in Hungary. In addition, even though he tried to carve out an intellectual position to underpin his support for modern architecture, as is evident from 'Architecture, the Art of Space,' the first of the four essays to be translated here, it did not resonate widely. In part this was because it could not be

mapped on to other recognisable positions circulating in the 1920s. In this respect, we might compare Bierbauer with the art historian Lajos Fülep (1885–1970), who was a major figure in Hungary, but who was likewise little known internationally and for similar reasons.[3]

Bierbauer: architect and critic

Before discussing the essays themselves, it is worth considering a few basic biographical details. Bierbauer, who started to use the Hungarianised surname Borbíró during the Second World War and used it exclusively afterwards, was born into a family of architects. His father, István Bierbauer (1861–1939), was architect and Director of Engineering at the Hungarian Royal Mail, while his maternal grandfather, Gyula Seefehlner (1847–1906) had been a bridge architect who had also published a number of books on the subject. Virgil Bierbauer enrolled at Munich Technical University in 1911, where he obtained his architectural diploma in 1915. He served in the army between 1915 and 1918. Besides architecture, he was also interested in art history, and he attended lectures in the subject at Ludwig Maximilian University in Munich by Fritz Burger and Heinrich Wölfflin, who had just published his famous book *Principles of Art History*.[4] In 1918, Bierbauer returned to study and in 1920 received his doctorate at the Technical University in Munich for a dissertation with the title: 'Bramante and the First Plans for Saint Peter's Basilica in Rome.' From 1918 to 1922 he worked for the National Ministerial Commission for Housing in Hungary. Subsequently, he launched his own private practice as an architect. In 1925 he partnered with Kálmán Reichl (1879–1926) and the two of them co-designed an extension to the Kelenföld power plant in Budapest. No further collaborations were possible due to Reichl's premature death the following year, but Bierbauer remained an active architect; he continued to work on the power plant until 1934, but his most significant design, perhaps, was the terminal building of Budaörs Airport (1936–37, together with László Králik), Hungary's second international airport.

Throughout his career, Bierbauer entertained an equal interest in the practice, theory and history of architecture. While designing his first buildings, he also researched and lectured on neo-classical architecture, an influence that could be easily traced in his designs, too. The fruit of this interest was a book-length study in 1948 *The Architecture of Hungarian Neo-classicism*.[5] However, even before this he had completed what was perhaps the first synoptic history of Hungarian architecture, from prehistoric times to the present.[6]

Despite his art historical training, his professional calling meant that from the mid-1920s he increasingly turned towards contemporary modernist architecture. This was partly prompted

3)   On Fülep in English see Ferenc Gosztonyi, 'The Early Reception of Cézanne in Hungary, 1906–10: Fülep and Popper,' in Judit Geskó, ed., *Cézanne and the Past: Tradition and Creativity*, Budapest: Museum of Fine Arts, 2012, 179–90; Paul Stirton, 'The Vienna School in Hungary: Antal, Wilde and Fülep,' *Journal of Art Historiography*, 8, 2013 n.p.; Nóra Veszprémi, 'Lajos Fülep: The task of Hungarian art history (1951),' *Journal of Art Historiography* 11, 2014, n.p; János Kelemen, 'Lukács and Fülep: Two Hungarian Critics of Benedetto Croce,' in Kelemen, *The Rationalism of Georg Lukács*, New York: Palgrave Pivot, 2014, 107–115.

4)   Heinrich Wölfflin, *Principles of Art History; The Problem of the Development of Style in Early Modern Art*, trans. J, Blower, Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2015. Originally published as *Kunstgeschichtliche Grundbegriffe: Das Problem der Stilentwicklung in der neueren Kunst*, Munich: Bruckmann, 1915.

5)   Virgil Bierbauer, *A magyar klasszicizmus építészete*, Budapest: Hungária, 1948.

6)   Virgil Bierbauer, *A magyar építészet története*, Budapest: Magyar Szemle Társaság, 1937.

by Reichl, who had introduced him to new trends in northern European brick architecture. Fritz Höger's Chile Haus in Hamburg (1922–24), which was widely discussed when it was built, made a particular impact on him. As Ágnes Anna Sebestyén has suggested, the numerous illustrated reports on it published in magazines also alerted him to the value of the strategic use of photography when writing on architecture, and it would inform his approach as editor of *Tér és Forma*.[7]

In 1927 Bierbauer undertook a study trip to the Netherlands and Germany, and subsequently discussed his experiences at the Monday evening lectures of the Hungarian Association of Engineers and Architects. Taking on a leading role in the latter association, he was also one of the organisers of its survey on constructing small dwellings in 1930. This, in turn, provided the impetus for the Napraforgó Street Experimental Housing Estate (1931) on the outskirts of Budapest, a project in which several Hungarian modernist architects, including Bierbauer himself, designed small-scale villas in a leafy suburb of Budapest to demonstrate that modernist architecture could be both affordable and meet middle-class aspirations.[8]

By the late 1920s Bierbauer was an important and well-respected member of the Hungarian architectural community; he was chosen to be one of the organisers of the XII International Architectural Congress – the congress of the Comité Permanent International des Architectes (CPIA), in Budapest in 1930 – where he was responsible for international relations. From the mid-1930s he was also associated with the Hungarian group of CIAM, Congrès Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne. His most important contribution to the promotion of modern architecture was not his work as a designer, however, but the periodical *Tér és Forma*. It was initially launched as a supplement to *Vállalkozók Lapja* (The Contractors' Gazette) in 1926, but in 1928 the publisher decided to set it up as an independent publication, and appointed Bierbauer and the architect János Komor as co-editors. Due to various disagreements with Bierbauer, Komor left the journal in 1931.

Bierbauer envisioned the periodical as a forum for presentation and discussion of a wide spectrum of modernist trends and as a vehicle for integrating Hungarian architecture into international networks. To achieve these goals, he solicited articles on contemporary architecture across Europe, but also in the USA, South America and Japan. He maintained a wide correspondence with colleagues around the world, including figures such as Le Corbusier, Walter Gropius, Alvar Aalto, Marcel Breuer, Giuseppe Terragni and Bohuslav Fuchs, and he used this international network to stay up to date about the newest ideas.[9] In keeping with the growing cultural and political links between Hungary and Italy from the late 1920s he paid particular attention to modern Italian architecture.[10]

Following his experience of the Chile Haus, he placed special emphasis on amply illustrating the articles with professional photographs and conceived of the visual layout of the pages as

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7)   Ágnes Anna Sebestyén provides a useful biographical overview in 'Media as Network: The Editor's Network as Reflected in the Journal *Tér és Forma* in Interwar Hungary,' 196.

8)   The history of the project and details of the individual houses are listed on the Napraforgó Street website: http://napraforgoutca.hu/?lang=en (accessed 9 December 2021).

9)   The network of *Tér és Forma* is analysed in detail by Ágnes Anna Sebestyén, 'Media as Network: The Editor's Network as Reflected in the Journal *Tér és Forma* in Interwar Hungary.'

10)   On the place of Italian architecture in *Tér és Forma* see Zsuzsana Ordasi, 'Architettura e architetti italiani nella stampa ungherese (1890–1945)' in Maria Luisa Neri, ed., *L'altra modernità nella cultura architettonica del XX Secolo: Dibattito internazionale e realtà locale*, Rome: Gangemi, 2011, 56–87.

an equally important means of conveying information.[11] Besides 'professional' architecture, Bierbauer also thought it important to study vernacular building, which could, in his view, help root modernist architecture in local needs and traditions. He dedicated a special issue of the journal to the subject in 1929.[12] It goes without saying, perhaps, that the main focus of the journal was, nevertheless, new Hungarian architecture, which was discussed as inseparable from international developments.

In its heyday, the yearly volumes of the journal consisted of 400–500 numbered pages, and it was perhaps the most important publication of its kind in Hungary.[13] From the mid-1930s, this number started to decrease; financial problems meant the number of articles on international architecture diminished and Bierbauer chose to prioritise coverage of Hungarian architects.[14] In 1942, he was drafted into the army and had to give up his editorship; the architect József Fischer (1901–95) took over from him until 1948, when the final issue of *Tér és Forma* was published. The ensuing Stalinist dictatorship did not favour the functional, simple modernism promoted by Bierbauer. In the short-lived period of democratic rule in Hungary after the war he worked for the Budapest Council of Public Works and even became State Secretary for Building Works in 1947, but after the 1949 Communist takeover he was no longer sought out for such public positions. As professor at the College of Fine Arts in Budapest, he still contributed to debates about architecture and submitted designs for city planning projects, but with little success. He died in 1956.

The range of modernist architectural trends showcased in *Tér és Forma* was rather broad, a feature made possible by Bierbauer's own moderate, middle-ground position. Rejecting the historicism of the nineteenth century, he argued that the style appropriate for a specific era must develop organically from the contemporary way of life. He articulated this view at greatest length in the latest (and longest) of the texts presented here: 'On Architectural Form Today,' which he opened with the unambiguous statement: 'The truest expression and reflection of the mentality of every age, of every human community, is the architecture it has created.'[15] However, it is a theme that runs through a number of the other articles.

In his own age, that way of life was modern and, consequently, buildings also had to be 'progressive' and 'modern.' In his usage – and consequently in the journal's – these terms did not refer to specific formal characteristics, but to a design's meeting functional needs in the twentieth century. His ideal building was a small-scale, comfortable family home close to modern amenities and the perks of city life, but at the same time also surrounded by trees; in short, the model realised at the Napraforgó Street Experimental Housing Estate. He admired the ingenuity of Le Corbusier but rejected his idea of the house as a 'machine for living in' and generally recoiled from modernist ideas that linked new architecture to the radical reorganization of society down to the private sphere.[16]

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11)   Sebestyén, 'Strategy and Agency in Architectural Photographs: Imaging Strategies that Shaped an Architectural Magazine in Interwar Hungary.'

12)   The issue in question was *Tér és Forma*, 2: 1, 1929.

13)   On the history of the journal see Sebestyén and Ritoók, 'Communicating "space and form": The History and Impact of the Journal *Tér és Forma* as the Hungarian Pipeline of Modernism.'

14)   Sebestyén and Ritoók, 'Communicating "space and form",' 22.

15)   Bierbauer, 'On Architecture Form Today,' trans. Barbara Dudás, *Art East Central*, 2, 2022, 101–111

16)   Le Corbusier, *Towards a New Architecture,* trans. F. Etchells, New York: Dover Publications, 1986, 107. Originally

Towards a theory of architecture: the essays in *Tér és Forma*

Bierbauer never lost interest in the history of architecture and often placed his theoretical observations into a historical perspective. This is evident from the first of the essays translated here, his programmatic essay in the launch issue of *Tér és Forma*: 'Architecture – The Art of Space,' which he begins with a general account of the history of architecture by expressing admiration for the Pantheon in Rome. While the Greek temples had placed a perfectly proportioned structure *in* space, he argues, the aim of the Pantheon was to compose space itself, and this subsequently became the guiding principle of European architecture.

This starting point informs Bierbauer's judgements about a range of architectural approaches. He not only rejects ornamental and decorative architecture, he also criticises Le Corbusier's approach to modern design which, instead of being based on the construction of space, he suggests, starts out from a standardised concept of the modern individual that has nothing to do with real life. Bierbauer's objection to this approach also betrays his deep humanistic concerns. Hence, he held, those historical periods that succeeded in developing their own style did so by developing space according to the needs and worldview of their time. It was this, a coherent worldview, that was necessary for the emergence of an architecture that can be considered as art. His concern with the values of coherence and the aesthetic value of architecture indicates that for all his advocacy of modernist architecture, Bierbauer's was not one of the more radical voices of the architectural establishment.

The emphasis on space makes clear the intellectual genealogy of Bierbauer's thinking: his teacher Heinrich Wölfflin. More than any other art historian, perhaps, Wölfflin was associated with formalist art history, in which the evolving depiction of space in painting or drawing, or manipulation of spatial experience in sculpture and architecture, provided the matrix by which their history could be mapped out. In the 1880s Wölfflin had tried to develop a psychology of architectural perception based on empathy theory, but by the time he published *Principles of Art History* this theoretical grounding had all but disappeared.[17] However, he retained the general idea that visual and spatial experience were not constants. He wrote of a 'history of vision,' and this can be clearly seen in Bierbauer's first essay, which mentions the different ways that Greek, Roman, medieval, Baroque and Rococo architecture worked with space. Wölfflin was notoriously antagonistic to the modern era. Fred Schwartz has suggested that his focus on 'style' as a formal principle governing a period or a culture emerged out of dismay at the accelerating pace of change of modern fashion and its tendency towards cultural fragmentation.[18] It is ironic, therefore, that Bierbauer uses a Wölfflinian notion of the history of space and its fashioning as the basis for his advocacy of modern architecture. The architectural idioms of the past, he suggests, shaped space in a manner that corresponded to the spatial experience of the time. The pertinence of modern architecture is that it does so for the present, and he adhered to this notion for the entirety of his career. 'On Architectural Form Today' tries to describe the

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published as *Vers une architecture*, Paris: Crès et Cie, 1923.

17)   Heinrich Wölfflin, 'Prolegomena to a Psychology of Architecture,' trans. Harry Francis Mallgrave and Eleftherios Ikonomou, in Mallgrave and Ikonomou, eds, *Empathy, Form and Space: Problems in German Aesthetics 1873–1893*, Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 1993, 149–87.

18)   Frederic Schwartz, 'Cathedrals and Shoes: Concepts of Style in Wölfflin and Adorno,' *New German Critique*, 76, 1999, 3–48.

specifically modern character of space, which consists of an erosion of clear boundaries, and a preference for asymmetrical, trapezoidal and curvilinear forms.

Again, it is not difficult to identify the Wölfflinian underpinning of this formulation. *Principles of Art History* had drawn the distinction between Renaissance and Baroque art and architecture on the basis of the formal oppositions between linear / painterly, closed / open, and clear / unclear formal configurations. As Wölfflin noted in the Introduction:

> in place of the perfect, the completed, [the Baroque] gives the restless, the becoming, in place of the limited, the conceivable, gives the limitless, the colossal. The idea of beautiful proportion vanishes, interest concentrates not on being, but on happening. The masses, heavy and thickset, come into movement.[19]

Bierbauer's discussion of the nature of space in modern architecture, emphasising its open-ended, irregular and asymmetrical character, replicates much of Wölfflin's description of Baroque space. The idea of a parallel between the Baroque and the modern was a developing theme in art criticism and history. It is improbable that Bierbauer was familiar with Walter Benjamin's study of German Baroque drama, which saw it as a precursor of various cultural practices in the present.[20] However, he may well have been a reader of the Viennese art historian Alois Riegl's lectures on Baroque architecture in Rome, which drew similar comparisons, and which were published in 1908.[21]

Although he was a modernist figurehead, he was driven by an Idealist vision of culture and embraced an entirely different set of values and beliefs from those of better-known contemporaries from Hungary such as László Moholy Nagy, Farkas Molnár or Lajos Kassák. When Bierbauer writes of the need for architecture to be rooted in 'reality' he does not have in mind the Marxist sense of material conditions that was so important for his avant-garde peers. Rather, it was the reality of a certain type of spatial orientation and experience.

Given that his programmatic article 'Architecture, the Art of Space' was in a periodical that aimed to connect Hungarian architecture to the international discourse, it was also necessary to reflect on the role of Hungarian culture in the development of modern architecture. This undoubtedly lies behind his comments on the terms for 'space' in different languages and his attempt to define the specifically Hungarian sense of space, which, he implies, derives from the embedded cultural memory of life on the plains – both in the Danube basin that the Magyars occupied in the ninth century CE and also during their presumptive extended period of inhabiting the steppes of southern Russia and central Asia. Bierbauer did not expand on this point here, although his history of Hungarian architecture commences with these distant origins. But then his interests lay elsewhere, in using the issue of space to advance his broader argument about remaining open to modernist architecture.

In the second text in our selection, Bierbauer refutes the arguments of opponents of modern architecture. His starting point is a review of an exhibition in the German language

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19) Wölfflin, *Principles of Art History*, 91–92.

20) Walter Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, translated by John Osborne, London: Verso, 1998.

21) Riegl, *Die Entstehung der Barockkunst in Rom: Vorlesungen aus 1901–1902*, ed. A. Burda and M. Dvořák, Vienna: Anton Schroll, 1908.

newspaper *Pester Lloyd* by the art critic Ödön Gerő (1863–1939), whom he characterises as a man of the nineteenth century.[22] Gerő (in German-language publications such as the *Pester Lloyd* newspaper his Hungarian first name was Germanized as Edmund) had been active as a journalist since the 1880s. Although Bierbauer was correct, to the extent that he had first come to prominence under the Habsburg Empire, Gerő was in fact a modernist in his own way: he wrote appreciatively about plein air, symbolist and art nouveau artists such as Pál Szinyei Merse, Károly Ferenczy and József Rippl Rónai, as well as about older artists of academic historicism, and he had even had some positive words about the avant-garde group *The Eight* (A Nyolcak), at a time when their reception in the mainstream press was mainly hostile. Originally an engineer by training, he did not, however, warm to the modernist architecture of the 1920s and 1930s and bemoaned the lack of beauty in its products. Bierbauer countered by stating that 'beautiful' styles had only emerged in the past because progress was not held back by naysayers who thought everything new was ugly. It was necessary to move on from the nineteenth century, which employed ideals of beautiful style from the past without considering whether these were appropriate for their function.

Yet Gerő was not some anachronistic old-school figure; the object of praise in the review that Bierbauer took exception to was an exhibition of drawings and photographs by the important interwar architect in Hungary, Gyula Wälder (1884–1944). Wälder was the foremost exponent of Hungarian interwar neo-Baroque. Although some of his designs were unapologetic forays into Baroque revivalism, by the 1930s, when Bierbauer was writing, he had developed a distinctive modernist neo-Baroque idiom.[23] His work from this period bears comparison with that of Lajos Kozma, one of the most successful interwar designers, who has already been discussed in this journal by Paul Stirton.[24]

What we therefore see in Bierbauer's critique is a dispute between two different visions of the future for architecture. Undoubtedly, Gerő's rhapsodic praise for Wälder is conservative and has very little in common with the ideas of Bierbauer. But then, Bierbauer's Idealist theory of architecture had little to do with the more progressive ideas about architecture of avant-garde figures in Hungary or in neighbouring Czechoslovakia, such as those of Karel Teige. In comparison with more radical voices, Bierbauer himself might have appeared to be rather too liberal and bourgeois. It is tempting to interpret the strength of his criticism of Gerő as motivated by fear of being seen as too much like him, and by a desire to mark out clear territory. Yet with his somewhat vague emphasis on space as the principal determinant of design, Bierbauer's essay was only half successful.

The third, short article is an interesting example of the reception of Soviet Communist architecture in Hungary before Communism became the state ideology. Here, the ever-polemical Bierbauer countered those who call modernist architecture 'Communist' or 'Bolshevik.' This was a common criticism, and not limited to Hungary. It is worth remembering that 14 years later in the United States, Alfred Barr had to deal with the same criticism.[25]

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22)   Edmund (Ödön) Gerő, 'Ungarisches Barock,' *Pester Lloyd*, 25 December 1934, 19–20.

23)   Szilvia Eszter Paár, 'Új stílus az 1930-as években–a modernizmus' in *Gyula Wälder*, Budapest: Holnap, 2020, 224–38.

24)   Paul Stirton, 'Faces of Modernism after Trianon: Károly Kós, Lajos Kozma and Neo-Baroque Design in Interwar Design in Hungary,' *Art East Central*, 1, 2021, 11–49.

25)   Alfred H. Barr Jr., 'Is Modern Art Communistic?' *New York Times*, 14 December 1952, 22.

Bierbauer's defence of modern architecture against its critics was couched in general terms, but there was also a specific case he may have had in mind. Some four years earlier exactly this accusation was levelled at one of the most notable buildings constructed in Hungary between the wars: the church of St. Anthony of Padua designed by the young architect Gyula Rimanóczy (1903–1958). Its functionalist design, presenting church goers as well as passers-by with a simple geometric structure of bare concrete, was a remarkable departure from church building traditions, but it was also an innovative design within architecture more generally. The church received a positive review in the pages of *Tér és Forma*, but it had also been highly controversial.[26] The design had initially been rejected by the city council, and even once approval was gained, voices were raised at the Catholic General Assembly that it constituted an intrusion of 'Soviet-style' architecture into church building, and Rimanóczy had had to undertake several revisions.[27] As a result, there were considerable delays before the project could even be started.

For progressive architects and critics, the affair was a reminder that there were still powerful voices ranged against the embrace of modern design. Given that the Catholic church was intimately intertwined with the government of Admiral Horthy, which had defined Hungary as a 'Christian' state, this was not merely a matter of the resistance of one conservative institution. Bierbauer did not share the leftist political ideals of many of his avant-garde peers, and so it must have seemed even more important for him to counter the charge that modern architecture was 'Communistic.'

Architecture and politics

The fourth article to be translated, 'On Architectural Form Today,' is the longest and perhaps most intriguing. Although it is divided into three sections, thematically, Bierbauer's essay consists of two halves: (1) modern architecture; (2) urbanism. His discussion of the first explores themes that reach back to his very first essay in the journal: the specifically modern use and deployment of space. Although he does not discuss specific building designs, he fleshes out his broad claims as to the specifically modern use of space, discussing generic issues, such as the arrangement of furniture in the modern interior (everything is aligned with the walls, he argues, to maximise the available space), the configuration of space (in place of uniform room dimensions, he argues, modern designers prefer irregular spaces). However, it is in his discussion of urbanism that he introduces new elements and where he is most at odds with his contemporaries. For the essay criticises the planning of cities into grids and linear street patterns, the effect of which is, he suggests, claustrophobic, enclosing individuals in entirely artificial environments. Instead, modern planners try to create open, expansive spaces, with an emphasis on irregular roads, as if, he argues, they were trying to recreate the rambling character of medieval towns.

It is difficult to determine what examples he had in mind when talking of modern urban planning. Certainly, the values he promoted seemed to have very little in common with what

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26) Tibor Brestyánszky, 'A pasaréti új templom,' *Tér és Forma*, 7: 12, 1934, 345–9.

27) Anon, 'Szovjetstílusú-e az új pasaréti ferences templom terve?' *Az Est*, 14 October 1933, 12.

are commonly regarded as key modernist conceptions of urban planning: Le Corbusier's *ville contemporaine* (1922) and the *ville radieuse* (1930). These, with their emphasis on strict geometries, rational zonal organisation, seemed the very antithesis of Bierbauer's ideal of the city. Indeed, his description of the pleasures of the unexpected and the picturesque, has more in common with the thinking of the Austrian Camillo Sitte, whose *City Planning According to Artistic Principles* (1889) criticised the grand boulevards of the Ringstrasse in Vienna, advocating instead the use of small squares, irregular spaces and streets.[28] Sitte's book was enormously popular in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, but many, including Le Corbusier, rejected it, and it could hardly have been seen as 'modern' in 1946, when Bierbauer wrote his essay.

Bierbauer's eccentric comments on what constitutes 'modern' urban planning are of less interest here, however, than his striking political pronouncements. For they go beyond his interventions into the issue of 'Stalinism' in modern architecture to give a hint as to his general political beliefs. It is worth recalling when the essay was written. It was published in the brief period between March 1945, when the fascist Arrow Cross Party government of Ferenc Szálasi was expelled from Hungary, and June 1947, when the Communist Party became the largest political party, paving the way for the creation of the Hungarian People's Republic in 1949. It is in this context that Bierbauer mounts a fierce attack on the way in which architecture in the past had served as an instrument of domination and power, such as the masses being forced to parade along the grand avenues to show their support for dictatorial rule. The memory of the enforced mass parades of fascist rule was still fresh, and Bierbauer was clearly hoping that modern urban planning might devise forms of space that could resist such forms of oppression. We can detect a personal disavowal here, too, for on several occasions Bierbauer had himself been the author of essays that showed gushing praise for the architectural ambitions of Mussolini, projects that had precisely that function of enabling the orchestration of the masses in furtherance of fascist rule.[29] This was part of a wider policy on the part of the Hungarian government from the late 1920s; seeking an ally in its quest to revise the national borders determined in the peace negotiations after the First World War, it developed political and cultural ties with Italy. It was a cruel and tragic irony, therefore, that only four years after Bierbauer articulated his sentiments here about the use of architecture in the service of dictatorship, another form of mass politics came to Hungary, involving the orchestration of coerced masses of populations in the streets of the cities.

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28) Camillo Sitte, *Der Städtebau nach seinen künstlerischen Grundsätzen*, Vienna: Carl Graeser, 1889.

29) Virgil Bierbauer, 'Az új olasz épitészetről,' *Esztetikai Szemle*, 1, 1935, 27–40. See, too, his appreciative essays in *Tér és Forma*: ' "La Esposizione italiana di architettura razionale",' *Tér és Forma*, 1: 1, 1928, 32–36; Carlo Enrico Rava, 'A "Gruppo 7" hetek csoportja,' *Tér és Forma* 2.6, 1929, 242–49; Alberto Sartoris, 'Az új építészet kezdetei Olaszországban,' *Tér és Forma*, 3: 3, 1930, 188–91; Virgil Bierbauer, 'A milanói V. nemzetközi iparművészeti kiállítás,' *Tér és Forma*, 6: 7–8, 1933, 197–219.

Conclusion

Taken together, Bierbauer's articles showcase the work of a critic trying to follow a path that avoided the various pitfalls that could beset debates about modernism and trying to establish an independent voice. The political climate in interwar Hungary was, admittedly, more conservative in its attitudes than other states in this period. Moreover, as the 1930s progressed and Hungary was drawn more and more into the orbit of Nazi Germany, the cultural environment became increasingly difficult for individuals such as Bierbauer to work in. Nevertheless, contrary to commonplace assumptions about the reactionary regime of Horthy, modernist culture was not entirely shut out. Bierbauer's essays, as well as *Tér és Forma* more generally, are a sign of that. At the same time, while Bierbauer was himself not a radical, the tone of his essays, as well as his Idealist and formalist claims indicate, too, what may have been the limits of modernist architectural discourse at the time.

Virgil Bierbauer

Architecture – the Art of Space

When I crossed the threshold of the Pantheon again a few weeks ago, after returning from the great Greek temples of Sicily, I quite clearly felt the significance of this space for European architecture: the Pantheon stands at one of the great turning points in the development of European architecture. While the Greek temple is the perfect embodiment of plastic building-form in space, so perfect that we almost feel nothing can come after this, the Pantheon is the perfect creation of space, a spatial composition formed by man that is the starting point of the last nearly two thousand years of European architecture, its very first perfected stage. The Pantheon is the first ever embodiment of the typically European, and Middle Eastern, idea that *architecture is the art of forming, shaping space*.

In the Hungarian language, the word *tér* [space] has a peculiar but characteristic double meaning. On the one hand, it means, in a philosophical and mathematical sense, three-dimensional space (*spatium* in Latin, *espace* in French, *spazio* in Italian, *Raum* in German) and, on the other hand, it means a large, open-spaced area or place surrounded by houses (*place* in French, *piazza* in Italian, *Platz* in German).

This seems to be a very characteristic symptom of the Hungarians: the Hungarian, who has been wandering on the plains and living on the steppe for thousands of years, uses the same word to name an area surrounded by houses, tents and carriages (*Platz*) and a completely enclosed and usually smaller interior, formed by man (*Raum*). For a Hungarian, accustomed to the endlessness of the plains, an area girdled with human constructions already leads to the feeling of being surrounded, the concrete opposed to the infinite, from which interior space, the space inside a room, only differs in quantity and magnitude, but not in quality.

And that is why the word *tér* primarily means three-dimensional space. Only in a figurative, secondary sense does it mean the more specific concept of a space surrounded by houses. Principally, it means the truest substance and material of our art!

The domed space of the Pantheon has reassured me repeatedly in the fundamentals of my architectural thinking, namely that *architecture is the art of shaping space*. And I feel that this thesis is much deeper than the theorem I have often heard, like something learnt at school, that 'music and poetry are *temporal* forms of art, as opposed to the fine arts, which are *spatial*.' Painting and sculpture are spatial, because their creations are situated *in space,* and can only be realized *in space* – while architecture *shapes space*. For the former, space is a *formal condition*, while for architecture space is the *material*. Painting depicts spatial relations and correlations, while architecture *shapes and creates* spatial relationships.
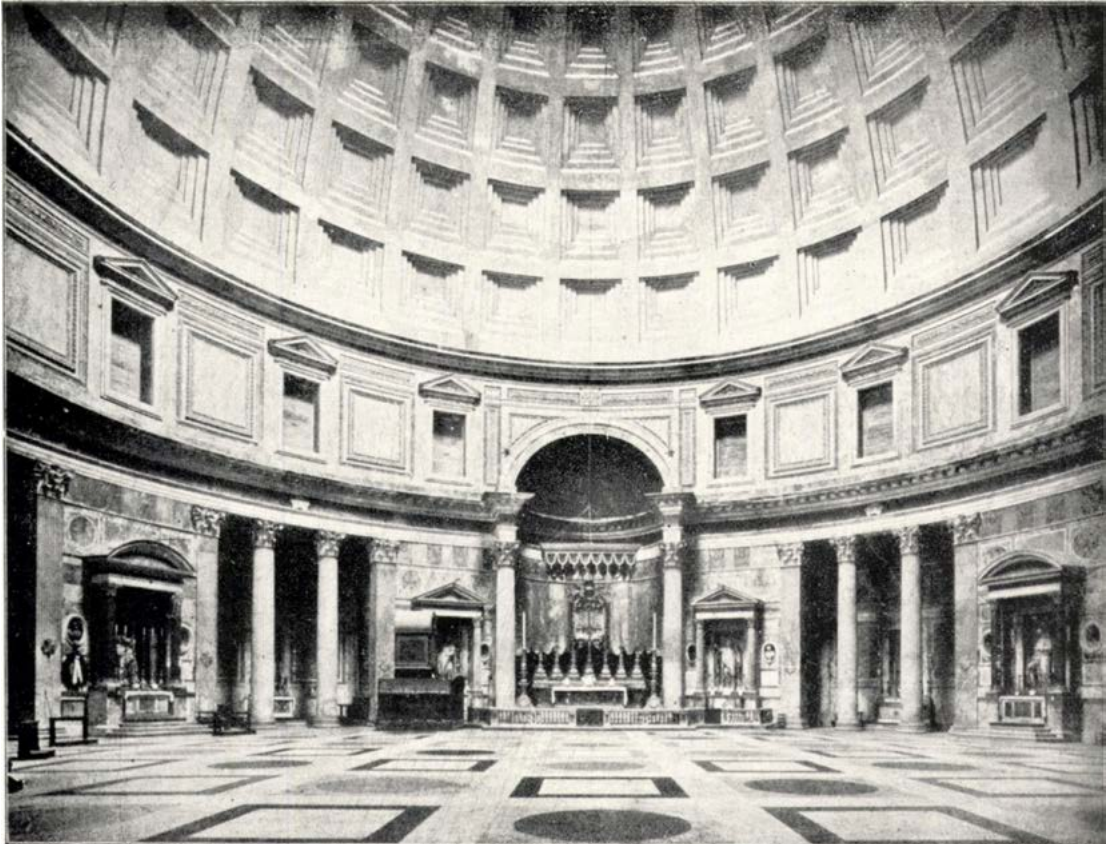
Figure 1: Pantheon, Rome (1ˢᵗ century CE).
Source: *Tér és Forma* 1: 1 (1928).

And this is the most fundamental fact of architecture, the creation of spaces! This view is supported by one of the definitions of Leibniz: 'Spatium est ordo rerum:' *Space is the order of things.*[30] What else would an architect be, if not an artist working tirelessly on arranging things in space?

Ever since the Pantheon, space has been at the heart of all monumental European spatial creation, despite the fact that the idea of space has undergone multiple changes over this period of time. Here in Rome, in the immediate vicinity of the Pantheon, a few street corners away, one can come across with the great variety of unforgettably beautiful architectural masterpieces: the Sant'Agnese, the Sant'Ignazio, the Il Gesù, which are descendants of a completely different conception of space. The space of the Pantheon is the most perfect, unattainable realization of an absolutely enclosed, finished space. Sant'Ignazio, on the other hand, is a creation of space that combines the wonderful coexistence of man-made space with an infinite, sunlit, universal space in an almost mystical setting.[31] Architecture can be the

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30)   Editor's note: This is a slight mistranslation of Leibniz's assertion that 'spatio est ordo coexistendi' (space is the order of co-existing things) from his 'Initia rerum mathematicarum metaphysica.' Translated as 'The Metaphysical Foundations of Mathematics' in Gottfried Leibniz, *Philosophical Papers and Letters*, ed., Leroy Loemker, London and New York: Springer, 1989, 666–74.

31)   Editor's note: the Sant' Ignazio referred to here is the church of St. Ignatius in Rome (1722) designed by Orazio Grassi.

most wonderful means of expressing one's worldview, perception of the world. But, however different the basic perception of expression might be, the medium of expression is the same in every period of time: space, the space formed by humans. And that is why architecture is first and foremost the art of space.

Naturally, the creative work of an architect, as with all artistic work, is immensely complex and therefore not only the messages are varied, but also the means of expression, although they always depend on the content to be expressed. The simplicity and monumentality of early Romanesque basilicas are closely related to the simplicity and determination of the world view of their creators, just as the richness of Baroque churches flows from the differentiation in colors and shades of the world view of the period. The faith of the architect of the Romanesque period, which is so perfectly expressed through his church, was his simple but strong castle, while the faith of the master living during the Counter-Reformation was polyphonic richness surrounding the world. Such variety of spiritual image, such diverse types of space to be created, required modulation and constant development of the means of expression, from one age to the next, from one artwork to another: constant change, enrichment or suppression in the orchestration of forms of space. This process manifests itself in changes in the means and methods of creating space. For the masters of the Romanesque period, even the most modest decoration was sufficient, the essential thing was to make the imagined, large and simple form of space appear as impressive as possible. It is also not uncommon to see architects break with rich decorative forms that have been used and developed before, as they could interfere with the clarity of expression. On the other hand, Baroque architects had to abandon the pure forms of Bramante and look for spatial forms that could blur the points of contact between man-made spatial forms and real space, as much as possible. From its beginning, the Renaissance was pushing forward to the ideal, pure form of the dome of the Pantheon. The architect of Sant'Ignazio made Pater [Andrea] Pozzo paint a fresco on the dome of the sanctuary that seeks to negate, as far as possible, the spherical form, the delimitation of the finite sphere, in order to replace it with a – deceptive – image of the infinite. These however only make the inner meaning of the space more colorful and richer – the essence of creation remains the same. The architect has considerable trouble shaping the design motifs, but all this is only a secondary effort, as in European architecture the creation of space always comes first. The Roman baths have been stripped of their stucco and marble coating by barbaric robbers over the centuries, the vaulted ceilings of monumental size and proportions are left bare, the Pantheon has been stripped of its former glory. Still, their grandiose architectural spatiality lives on today, even after the destruction of the decorative elements.

It is undeniable that the attention to detail, the decorative aspect of creating space, is very important. It would be difficult to dispense with the fluted lines of the pillars of a Gothic cathedral, the picturesque richness of the capitals of the columns, the graphic beauty and the unique originality of the elements that make up the space – without the fabulously complex richness of the exterior surface, the cathedrals would be poorer. But despite all this, the great, unforgettable impression we get when entering the dim space of a cathedral is not created by the inexhaustible multitude of these details, but by the elevation of believers to the grandiose deity they could express through space. They made space out of stone, just as God the Creator created a forest, wove space out of the sun's rays, out of soil, out of water…

There is hardly anything more characteristic of human life than its relation to space, than its place on the stage of life: in space. Here are some quickly projected, contrasting images: ... Pompeii... on the southeastern corner of the city, on a hillside, stood a temple in the Greek period of the city, looking at the great blue of the Gulf of Naples... the Romans built their temples in the narrow streets of the city, they withdrew from the radiance of this wonderfully beautiful part of the world, from under the blue sky the Gods were brought to the market: they were made guardians of law and trade, and on the site of the Greek temple they established a landfill...; in the Middle Ages the homes of the highest and most wealthy social class, the tiny, narrow rooms of the castles, the chambers shaded by dark, vaulted ceilings, with tiny iron-barred windows, upon which huge wooden panels are closed for most of the year... the great halls of the castle, high, vaulted halls, in which open fire burned, so it could remain bearable... And then slowly comes liberation, becoming more sophisticated, the search for the sun's says and light: in the North the magnificent castle of the German order of the knights, the Ordensburg, the Marienburg..., the Gothic loggias of Venice, looking over the sparkling life of the Canal Grande..., the dreamlike castles of the Loire Valley..., the columned courtyards of Urbino and Florence..., then come the loggias of the palaces of Rome and the endless halls, staircases and terraces of the Baroque palaces..., the splendour of Versailles and the hundreds that follow..., *every individual lives differently, seeks something else in the world,* expects and demands something different from earthly life, has a different world view and *view of space, the architect creates different spaces for different moments in life.* But these changes take place not only in connection with profane life; the transformation of the Christian church starts from the early Christian Basilica, from Latin brightness to the mysticism of the Gothic cathedrals, to the ideal forms of the central-plan church of the Renaissance, and from there on to the picturesque mysticism of the late Rococo church – this is the story of the deepest changes in the Christian church ... And architecture has recorded and expressed all these fundamental, metaphysical changes with such acuity that from its masterpieces we can read more clearly, we can have a more unbiased picture, than from philosophical, historical scriptures and records. The architect could not draw a picture other than one based in reality, for if he had not done so, his work would not have been needed by the period, the world whose real and transcendental needs he expressed and fulfilled.

But from this, something else can be deduced. Namely, that an age without a mature, steady, true and unified world view, a position in the cosmos, cannot create real architecture. In such cases, architecture can only satisfy raw material needs, this is the most it can achieve, but it cannot become art, it cannot be an instrument of the human soul.

And here we can trace an extremely interesting phenomenon. Suddenly the fact comes to light that architecture is taking revenge on those who commit violence against it... From the mendacious situation in which construction stands in the midst of society it follows that in such cases, not even the true and correct satisfaction of needs is possible, as the architect, in order to achieve the appearance of being artistic, hides his works under the veil of the art of foreign, distant ages. But for this stylistic endeavor to be crowned with some success, for the sake of the foreign, external forms, he is forced to step on the wrong paths. This is the tragicomedy of the nineteenth century, bedsits hidden behind palazzo façades.

And today's architecture? The art of space of our time? This is the most exciting question. What will it be like? Where do we need to go, what are the basic ideas that need to be realized in our own architecture?

It seems that the question should not be phrased this way, although it is precisely this phrasing that is extremely characteristic of our time. It is a question of the age of self-consciousness – we are trying to do everything consciously – which is a deeply unproductive position when it comes to art. History has shown that none of the great ages embarked on a conscious program of work in the field of art, and that the conscious intention to express something is perhaps only possible in the performing arts. (I wonder whether [Eleonora] Duse had this quality).[32]

Many volumes are currently being published that are intended to be programmatic dissertations on the architecture of our time. Even though these are mostly excellent, clear writings, it is surprising that their authors cannot stand their ground when it comes to design and implementation. Le Corbusier was the biggest disappointment at the Stuttgart exhibition.[33] After Taut's volume *Moderne Wohnung* [Modern Living] his own house was a surprise.[34] Because what really happened when he came up with the concept of the *Wohnmaschine* [machine for living]? These architects have, with excellent logic, constructed a type of person for themselves, for whom they could build a house (this is a typical symptom of wartime: when an architect cannot build, he thinks about what he *might* build…). They constructed the image of the modern individual. Their starting point seems to be that the modern individual works with machines, but essentially, in their worldview, the modern individual is a slave to machines. Fortunately, they are not correct, this is not the case yet, because we still have a life to live after serving the machines… (What matters on the radio is not the fact that the music is transmitted by a machine, but the piece of music we can hear.)

But, if the forerunners, the thinkers of the faculty of architecture were so mistaken, how can we, simple practicing architects, seek our own path, what should we aspire to? Is it not possible for us to walk the paths of the recent past, since we no longer believe in it and do not want to lie?

It seems to me that the great masters of European architecture, Greek architecture, the truly great Roman monuments: the Pantheon, the Thermae, can still provide answers for today's architect. They do not teach us to continue to copy their forms over and over again, but to learn how their creators arrived at their style. *Let us create an architecture that realizes our own needs, and spaces that meet our own requirements, with the truly great tools that are available to us today*.

It is the duty of the architect to get to know the requirements and possibilities of implementation in the most thorough way possible. The craft of the architect is in some way similar to that of a doctor. Just as a truly good and conscientious doctor determines the diagnosis first and foremost, so should the architect get to know, in the most humble way, the wishes and needs of the client and see them in space; the latter is what the client is not capable

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32)   Editor's note: Eleonorea Duse (1858–1924) was an Italian actress famed for her naturalism and immersion in whatever character she was playing.

33)   Editor's note: Bierbauer here means the exhibition in 1927 of the Weissenhof Estate in Stuttgart by the Deutscher Werkbund.

34)   Editor's note: this is a reference to Bruno Taut's text *Die Neue Wohnung: Die Frau als Schöpferin*, Leipzig: Klinkhardt und Biermann, 1924.

of. But, again, just as the doctor needs to know the right treatment, so the architect needs to know the methods of implementation too. He needs to reconcile them perfectly and he should find the right method for the problem: this is the plan.

In contrast, and going against this, the correct approach, some of the houses in the Stuttgart exhibition looked as if a doctor, half knowing their patient's illness, was choosing a cure that was, for some reason, particularly interesting and dear to him. It was as if a doctor, having wanted to undertake trepanning for a long time, had chosen this procedure to cure rheumatism. But if this so-called modern architecture is so arbitrary, so formal, why is it better than something from 30 years ago? Because this is what happened then, too, except that other, decorative, motifs were put on the façade of the building...

The road to style does not lead from broad generalizations or from theories, but from reality, via solutions provided a thousand times and ten thousand times for reality and the needs of life. Reconciling needs and methods is the way to work – not pointless literary philosophizing.

The aesthete reads these words bent out of shape. 'After all, architecture is a form of art, more than engineering. And that is why an architect cannot be satisfied with the engineer's way of only looking for practical considerations.' The aesthete is absolutely right! Architecture is art, and therefore burdened with tasks that go beyond expediency. It is not enough to find the necessary form, it is important to find the most expressive form, to get to form that speaks to the life of those who created, ordered the work of art, so we can hear what it has to say, even after they have both long gone. Humans not only live for practical, physical purposes, they have more abstract matters in his life, and the art of space is the most eloquent form of these.

It is these values that are at the heart of architecture today, as in every age. They used to say: 'a house should not only be practical but also beautiful...' We avoid this word these days, our reticence forbids us to use it. Who are those who cannot see the beauty in the most successful works of the great architects of today (it cannot be denied that these do exist)? Are they those who are blind to today's values, or those who can only see beauty if the creator and the client incessantly rhapsodise about beauty in speech and in writing?

There is a certain reticence that holds us back from formulating the concept of beauty and from invoking it constantly, and which hides the ways in which we, today's architects, are nevertheless searching for beauty. This reticence is one of the most welcome, most promising features of today's architecture. We grow serious, we turn to our work, we search for form – instead of extolling forms.

Virgil Bierbauer

The Critic and the New Architecture

Originally published as 'A kritikus és az új építészet,' *Tér és Forma*, 8: 2, 1935, 33–36.

Translated by Barbara Dudás. Editorial notes by Matthew Rampley.

Ödön Gerő is a man of great knowledge, a well-informed critic with a polished style, who has been writing for over a decade for one of the most important Hungarian dailies, *Pester Lloyd*, which is published in German and therefore provides news on Hungarian matters abroad. His world of thought is from the pre-war era, his taste in painting is Impressionism – in architecture his taste was formed at the table of the great Ödön Lechner. He practices a kind, old-fashioned, forgiving irony towards the new tendencies in painting, which is entertaining for an outsider, but for the serious, sincere-minded artist, who suffers the criticism, it is painful. Yet in this irony there is still a little warmth, a little love. This irony never denies that there is pure desire in the work being judged, for the most important thing according to Gerő is: desire, love for the beautiful, and he acknowledges this even if this beauty is, for Gerő, inaccessible and unattainable.

We have had the opportunity to experience Ödön Gerő's aversion to the new architectural aspirations several times already. We never commented on his statements because we knew very well that he could not be persuaded. According to him – as according to the circle of his friends and contemporaries – contemporary Hungarian architects and practitioners of the new architecture make a great mistake in not imitating Ödön Lechner in the most easily accessible aspects of his art, namely his decorations in the so-called Hungarian style. Gerő, and those who think like him, are not able to see that this method of decoration was an artistic feature of Lechner's time, the last manifestation of eclecticism – using national instead of historical ornamentation – when Lechner was the Hungarian manifestation of the world movement of Secession. Moreover, in this understanding, they have forgotten that Lechner's art was even more characterized by its return to materialism with the honest use of new materials – steel! I repeat, we did not consider it necessary to reject Gerő's censure until now, as it has mostly been an insurmountable difference between generations.

In the December 25th issue of *Pester Lloyd*, in his review of a historical architectural exhibition, Gerő launched a covert attack on the architectural direction represented in *Tér és Forma*.[35] We cannot leave this issue without saying a word, not because of the nature of the attack, but because of its tone and assumptions, because it is particularly insulting to all of those, who, with self-effacingly and at the cost of constantly renouncing earthly goods and the acknowledgement of the mighty, have been working on solving the architectural tasks of our time, for our time, as did those masters of the past who also struggled with the architectural expression of their own time. Amongst other things, Gerő wrote the following:

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35)   Editor's note: the article in question was a review of an exhibition of architectural drawings and photographs at the Technical Academy by the architect Gyula (Julius) Wälder. Ödön Gerő, 'Ungarisches Barock,' *Pester Lloyd*, 25 December 1934, 19–20.

Figure 2: Elemér Szőllősy, Apartment house on Pozsonyi Street, Budapest, 1935.
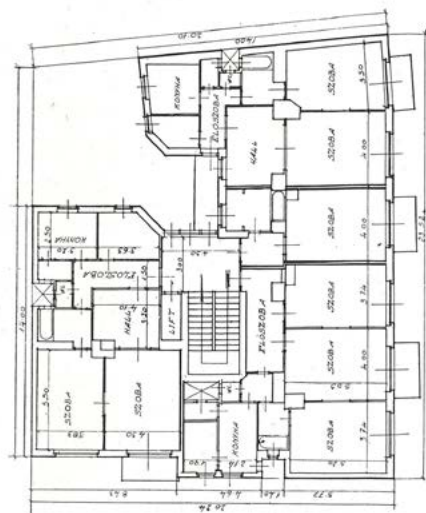Source: *Tér és Forma* 8: 2, 1935.

Figure 3: Elemér Szőllősy: Apartment house on Pozsonyi Street, Budapest, 1935.
Source: *Tér és Forma* 8: 2, 1935.

...in the buildings he surveyed, he found something else he did not want to keep silent about in front of his students: he recognized the joy of creating in buildings, the joy of former masters at work. These were men who knew nothing about mechanized work. In an era when everything became automated such documents act as reminders to self-awareness. They encourage us to recognize the artist's profession. How happy these masters were when they managed to create something beautiful! They were not afraid to give themselves up to their sense of beauty, they had a strong intention: to create something beautiful. Always the most beautiful available to them. And was it the feeling that created the intention, or vice versa? This question could be the subject of a doctoral dissertation, and answering it is not the artist's task ...'

Undoubtedly, in these finely polished sentences, Ödön Gerő contrasts the architectural beauties of a bygone era with the architecture of our own age, in which he, as critic, finds no beauty, and only sees mechanization and the age of automation, which he assumes were created by those who are incapable of rejoicing in beauty, who do not even want to create beauty, who are downright afraid of beauty and do not want it... And knowing Ödön Gerő's conception of the new architecture, there can be no doubt that these humiliated architects are in fact the cultivators and warriors of modern architecture. He just does not name them openly, because it is much safer to make a statement like this, and everyone understands very well who the great critic was thinking of anyway!

We do not want to argue with Ödön Gerő, nor do we want to convince him that today's architecture has the same and gradually refining ideal and desire of beauty that every great architecture had before it: the age of magnificent Greek architecture, the era of great puritanism of Romanesque art, the beginnings of Gothic art, the freshness and splendour of the early Renaissance, the representative glory of the Baroque, and the playfulness of the Rococo. The only difference is that the development, evolution and diffusion of these styles were not hindered by the auxiliary obstructors of history, waving red flags to warn against the new style that took the place of the old. Instead, together with the artists of their own decades, they celebrated the new beauties with which they had enriched the world. And the reason for this we would rather just imply than say: the commercialization of the whole world and, sadly, of all of life. Art has also become a commodity, it is sold for money, and certain of its trends are endangered by the emergence of something new, by 'supply and demand,' by wish that it be liked and understood by the general public. This sad phenomenon, the impoverishment, democratization of the present, the proletarianization of art, in the sense of Marxist doctrines, has created opposition to the new, modern, art that originates in our own lives, as we see in Gerő, the critic.

Those who are with us – architects and builders, who want the buildings of today – know very well what Gerő will never understand and will never feel, that today's architecture has its own special, expressive beauty, which is of course different than that of the past, because it originates from another life. But this beauty will never persuade its creators and those who appreciate it to say that the true, great values of the past do not exist. A few years ago, we saw the great temples of Paestum and Segesta, the huge basilicas of Rome and the abbey church of Ják back home, the cathedral of Chartres, the colonnades of Louvre, the baroque of Salzburg and Vienna, the great, most prestigious impressions of European architecture one after another, and they were just as profound an experience to us as the experiments characterizing
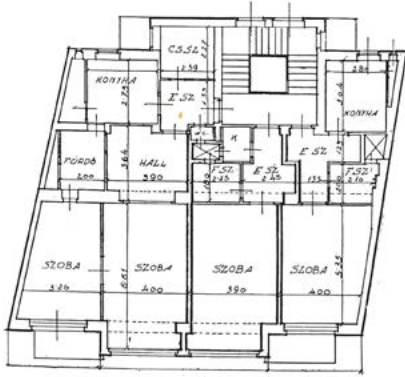
Figure 4: Elemér Szőllősy: Apartment house on Italian Avenue, Budapest, 1935.
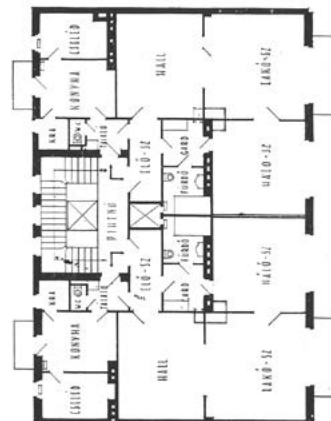Source: *Tér és Forma* 8: 2, 1935.

Figure 5: Miksa Politzer: Apartment house on Pozsonyi Street. Contractor: József Krischner, 1935.
Source: *Tér és Forma* 8: 2, 1935.

the architectural forms of our own time. For us, it was inconceivable to disparage and ridicule these great works on a the basis of some world view. Because our eyes and hearts are open to all kinds of manifestation of beauty from different periods of time. And it is this difference that gives us the right perspective on the theoretical starting point of Ödön Gerő's critical opinions. But to fully clarify the issue for ourselves and put it in the right light, we still wish to mention what it is that separates us from the century of Ödön Gerő (meaning the nineteenth century and its slow transition into the twentieth century) and its concept of art. Which is the order and hierarchy of values. In the eyes of nineteenth-century architecture there was only one ideal of beauty; or to be more precise, series of ideals of beauty: the varied forms of architecture from the past. It discovered, in various ways and times, its admiration for Greek, Roman, medieval, Renaissance and Baroque architecture. Whatever could be learned from these styles through sample books and virtuoso travelogues was made into an aesthetic ideal for decade after decade. The practical tasks were simply opportunities to 'realize' these stylistic ideals – regardless of how well the formal language of the fashionable ideal met the practical purpose of the building. The practical purposes, the requirements of those who would use the building were easily disregarded, such as their need for air and light, and the spatial requirements for movement within the building, just so they could satisfy their 'sense of and desire for beauty,' or as Gerő would say, 'they had the courage' to sacrifice the human functions of the building to this 'ideal of beauty'! We won't ask this time how much this ideal of beauty was related to that of the models of the past that are admired, or how much their true nature was understood. We do not, because we do not want to because we do not want to further weigh down the balance of the previous century. But it must be stated that in the hierarchy of things, priority was given to aesthetics, to assumed beauty.

Today it is different. We do things differently. How we rank and value the things that enliven and inspire us is different. We first take care of people, the goals of real life, we aim to satisfy them within the limits of possibility. And only when this has been done one hundred percent can the final polishing of forms begin, making them beautiful, finding the most expressive forms for their contents and purposes. Even though Gerő cannot see it, the ideal of beauty amongst those who cultivate the new architecture radiates from the inside, on the basis of the correct and appropriate solution. The concept is not some external layer added onto the inner core, it does not commit violence against the reality of the building that serves human needs. Pre-conceived beauty does not appear as some additional layer on top, it does not commit violence against the building that is real and serves human needs. For us the search for beauty is not a starting point, but the ultimate and integral perfection of the work, beauty is the triumph of the creator over difficulties they have overcome. If Gerő the critic sees automatism in this, perhaps he is right, but not in the sense with which he uses the term, but rather in the sense of the greatest creator, Nature, that has created the human organism at a cost that human reason can hardly imagine. The organism is a masterpiece, from a purely mechanical point of view, and the highest, ever-insurmountable point of earthly beauty since the miracle of Greek culture. However, nature did not force the beauty of the human organism onto that of any other organism; rather, by solving its purposes in the most perfect way, it was able to make it beautiful. And if we, the younger generation, not in age, but in spirit, set ourselves such goals, we can rightly reject the unspeakable attacks of Ödön Gerő.

Virgil Bierbauer

Stalinist Architecture

Originally published as 'Sztalini architektura,' *Tér és Forma,* 11: 6, 1938, 208.

Translated by Barbara Dudás. Editorial notes by Matthew Rampley.

Some misconceptions become immortal; once they are cast into the public sphere by someone, somewhere, they live for decades, they greet us from every direction, they are accepted as valid here in Hungary, as in Germany, or in France and down in Italy, in circles that believe in the slogans of daily newspapers, even though they tend to strongly deny it. One such slogan, which has flourished due to the most complete ignorance: 'Bolshevik architecture.' A battle cry, voiced by those who for various reasons oppose the great purification of today's architecture.

They have adhered to this slogan for decades and even the most serious facts cannot convince them that they are mistaken. Ten years ago, upon hearing about the newest direction of Dutch architecture they solemnly declared: 'Soviet architecture,' saying this about the architecture of Europe's most civilized country, oblivious as to the ridiculous nature of their claim. Later it was Le Corbusier's turn; by refraining from the facts, of course, they managed to ignore the fact that the Soviets had quite a poor opinion of Le Corbusier, whom they themselves labelled a bourgeois intellectual! The growing interest towards new architecture amongst the most eminent English architects was viewed with a heavy heart, and there was talk of a salon bolshevism that had even infiltrated England, for they were unaware how close the great objectivity of early nineteenth-century English architecture in pursuit of the standard was to the pursuits of the new puritanism. If they are shown works by the most advanced group of new Italian architects without any attributions of authorship, they easily fall into the entertaining mistake of, for example, declaring the fascist headquarters in Como a terrible example of 'Moscow architecture' …[36]

Their opinion really does not have any importance for us; nevertheless, for those who stress the clarity of their concepts, we present two Russian building plans taken from an endless series of images of a similar spirit in a Russian architectural magazine. This is how Stalin's Russia would like to build! With such plans, Russian architects flatter Stalin, who wants to play the role of Napoleon. This is all far from what practitioners of the new architecture call the architecture of our time.

On the other hand, how close this bombastic smugness is to what the old-conservative apostles of beauty amongst Europe's citizens, such as Ojetti in Italy, get enthusiastic about and sing praises to.[37] How beyond all human scale this architecture is, its purpose, it seems,

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36) Editor's note: the building in question is the Casa del Fascio (also known as the Palazzo Terragni) in Como, designed by Giuseppe Terragni (1904–43) and built between 1932 and 1936.

37) Editor's note: this is a reference to Ugo Ojetti (1871–1946) a conservative journalist and art critic. During the First World War he was given responsibility for overseeing the protection of monuments and artworks in war zones. A signatory to the 1925 Manifesto of Fascist Intellectuals, he remained an influential critic throughout the interwar period.
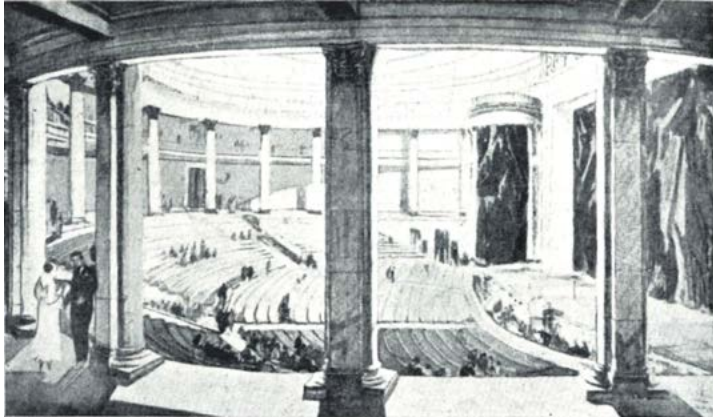
Figure 6: Unknown Soviet architectural design from 1937.
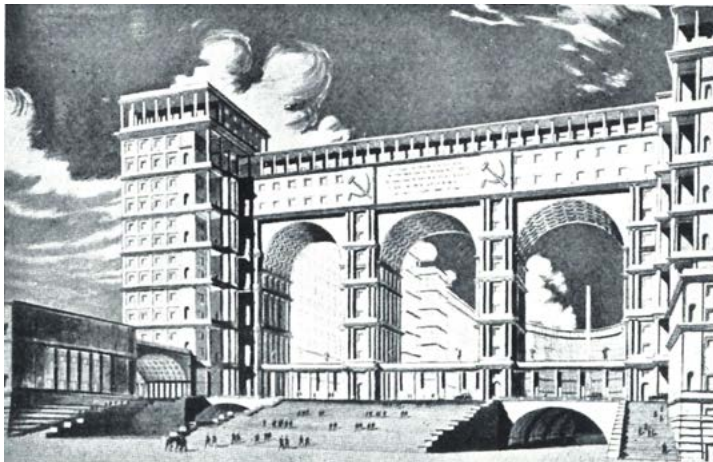Source: *Tér és Forma* 11: 6, 1938.

**Figure 7: Ivan Fomin, M. A. Minkus and Pavel Abrosimov, project design
for the People's Commissariat of Heavy Industry, Moscow, 1934.**
Source: *Tér és Forma* 11: 6, 1938.

being its immense size and ability to make the human seem as small and insignificant as possible, which is, of course, essentially the ultimate goal of Stalin's politics. On this basis one can clearly feel how different the classicism of the 'New architecture' is, where the measure of all architectural creations should be the human.

This all casts light on the nature of slogans such as 'Bolshevik architecture,' 'Soviet architecture,' 'Communist style'! What they do not like, what they hate without reason, what they hate out of ignorance, incompetence, or helplessness, is brought down to a common denominator. In principle, they are opposed to Communism, but they are also opposed to the new architecture, let's not ask why, so the two are identified with each other, both are considered equally bad and despicable. This is a mental phenomenon that should be researched by social psychology.

Virgil Bierbauer

On Architectural Form Today

The truest expression and reflection of the mentality of every age, of every human community, is the architecture it has created. It gives an unadulterated picture of the behavior and drive of the creators of architectural work – the developer and the architect – because architectural work that is not truly and purely connected to its developer and architect becomes sharply separated from its surroundings, becoming a traitor to its master, and to those who commissioned it, no matter if it is pointing back to the past, or to the future, or in the fact that it has become a reflection of the life of foreign lands.

Since this is how I see the innermost intellectual content of architecture, I ask what the renewed architecture of our time is, how it expresses our own lives. I have tried many times to raise awareness of what makes our architecture come to life, and now I have tried to put my findings in writing.

1.

Above all, it is possible to observe, as a constant and characteristic feature, the modern spatial effect, namely the fact that there is no aspiration to achieve the definite and precise delimitation of space. On the contrary, the boundaries between spaces are often 'blurred.' It is characteristic that one of the common ways to shape space is by creating continuity, I could even say confluence, between the adjacent spaces, in such a way that the dividing line between two spaces can hardly be determined. Think of the Renaissance, with its sharp and neat articulations expressing the separation of spaces, as its antithesis. Similarly, wall decorations were given clear outlines then, while today amoeba-like blobs are in vogue.

It is also characteristic that instead of strict, crystal-like regular spaces, spaces are given an oblique, trapezoidal, or sometimes even curvilinear layout. We almost look for sharp asymmetry that breaks the rectangular rational order of space, dissolving its static calmness. It is also typical that tectonic wall and ceiling surfaces are almost removed, often a grill is used in front of the wall and under the ceiling.

The completely transparent wall surfaces, the surfaces enclosed in transparent mirror glass serve to merge adjacent spaces, through which one can look into additional spaces, so we like to visually connect separate spatial effects positioned behind one another, so that they are perceived simultaneously.

As the influence of an adjacent space is incorporated into another that has been newly created, there is an aspiration for artificial space to embrace the infinity and richness of natural space.
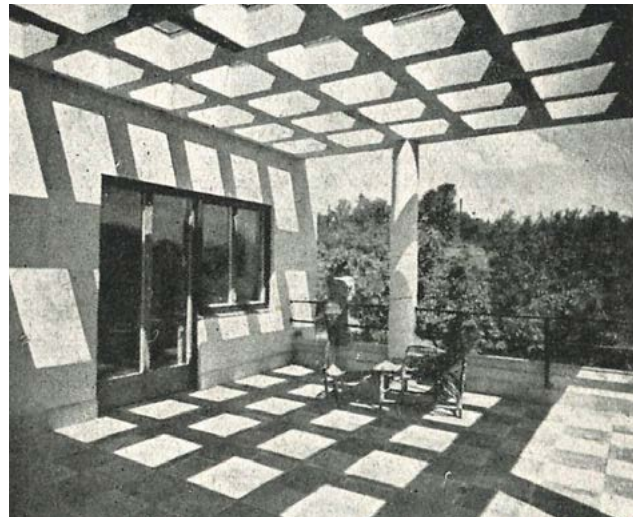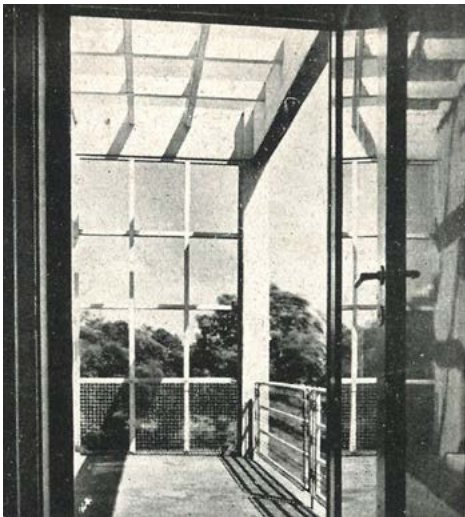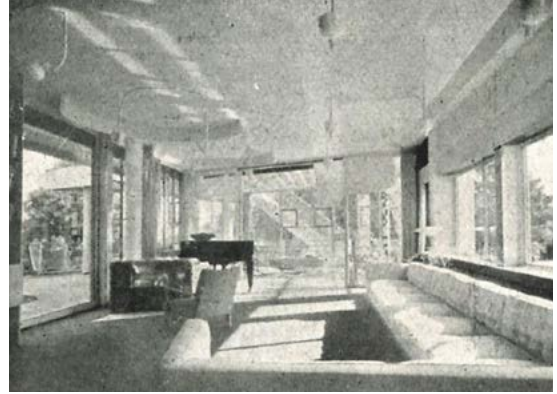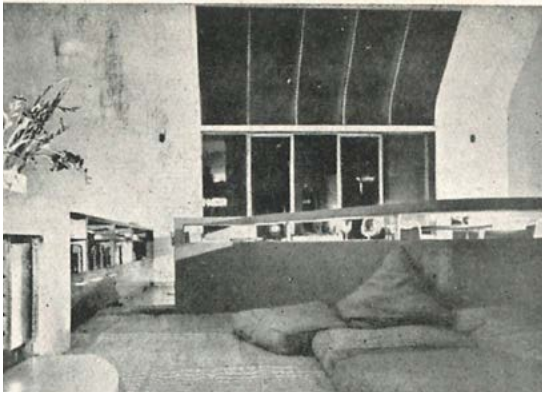
Figure 8: Max Haefeli, House Interior, Neubühl-Zurich Werkbund Estate, 1931.
Figure 9: Marcel Breuer, House Interior, Neubühl-Zurich Werkbund Estate, 1931.
Figure 10: Wells Coates, Apartment interior, Lawn Road Flats (Isokon Building), London, 1934.
Figure 11: Hans Scharoun, Interior of the Schminke Villa, Löbau, 1933.
Figure 12: Ernst Plieschke, House design, Werkbund Estate, Vienna, 1932.
Figure 13: József Fischer and Eszter Pécsi, Villa for Rózsi Walter, Budapest, 1936.
Source: *Tér és Forma* 19: 10, 1946.

That is the reason for the general use of large, very large, windows. It is also characteristic that the height of the window sills is so low so as to make it possible look outside and feast one's eyes on the greenery without interruption, even when sitting down in comfortable, low seating. The [importance of the] outer wall of the space is negated; consequently, the section of the wall that creates the sides of the window is very often left out, the window is stretched from wall to wall and up to the ceiling, which optically eliminates the outer wall as such. The corner pillar is replaced, giving the ceiling a floating effect. On the other hand, however, there is a frame at ceiling height above the parapet of our open terraces, and the supporting beam carries a grate, so a cut-out image of nature can be seen in the frame, and the blue sky appears even sharper when seen through the grate. The aim of this is partly to give this more or less open space an artificial character.

The structural elements are emphasized, but – let us be honest – we are far from doing it consistently, that is, to show all structures completely; we only show what we are willing to show, and with this, structure is made decorative, while elsewhere it remains hidden. We are only constructivists in a playful way, although one could be accused of inconsistency because of that; we playfully reach out to what our technique provides, because we are no longer slaves or addicted to structure, we wish to be, and can be, artistic masters of structural, we are beyond functionalism.

Obviously, it is related to this playfulness that although we do not consciously and consistently avoid symmetry – uniformity, as we might call it – we do not seek it persistently either, as was characteristic in the architecture of the past. At least, we definitely do not force it, as often happened in the past, even at the expense of functionality. It is possible to feel greater vivacity in asymmetry, in comparison with uniformity, which feels cold and rigid, and in most cases unjustifiably ceremonial. Thus, symmetry is avoided when spaces are formed and grouped, walls composed, door and window openings arranged, and furniture is set up.

In relation to this, a few words should be said about our characteristic endeavors when it comes to furnishing rooms; furniture is usually arranged in accordance with the walls and placed alongside them, not only cabinets, but seating furniture as well. It almost feels painful when furniture protrudes with a sharp angle into the space of the room: obviously the middle of the room should be left free. While in the past it was common for the dining table to be placed in the center of the room, with people needing to walk around the dining table and chairs all day long, today they are put in the corner, leaving the centre of the room open. Arranging a bed like a tongue stuck out in the middle of the room is also out of fashion; the bed placed against the wall is protected from the heat-absorbing effect of the wall by boarding or carpeting. However, this desire for spaciousness applies not only to bodily movement but also to the movements of our eyes. That is why furniture is often low-level so that one can see the top surface and comfortably put a book or a pot on it. Any furniture taller than a metre is placed – if possible – in a niche set into the wall, so that its higher, three-dimensional, body does not reach into the space of room. Lighting fixtures are also often used that hang as high as possible from the ceiling.

One last word about furniture: namely, about tubular furniture. It seems that the time has already passed when this was claimed to be used for its expediency. It is known very well that it is also relatively expensive. However, due to its very slender legs, the seating surface – at

least compared to the old, chunky-legged chairs – seems to float, the lower part of the chair is translucent and thus meets the general taste requirements of today. This transparency is only enhanced by the light from the chrome-plated pipes. Looking at the exterior of our buildings, specific facts can be observed. The new construction has begun by leaving out roofs and even the main cornice protecting the wall, because, it seems, the stereometric purity and crystalline character of the spatial masses of the building would be disrupted by a covered roof and even by the shaded zone under the cornice. When looking at the latest creations of today's architects, works by Swiss, Swedish, and American contemporaries, one can see that the dissolution of crystalline bodies is beginning to become commonplace. Those smaller or larger extensions of the building situated above the upper edge make the enclosed contours of the building as a whole more vivid and less rigid. The old, protruding, pitch-covered high roofs were left behind, as the body of the building should not be put under protection of a roof like some hat, but it should stand roofless with its head under the blue sky in the sun, blending into nature, just as the foliage of trees is not covered either by a spacious protective surface.

The main reason for this change in approach is perhaps that the previous relationship between humans and nature has also changed. Palladio's Villa Rotonda stood as an enclosed body with defined surfaces in the midst of nature, as an alien body not typical of nature: like an ordinary crystal, or a cut diamond, and there was no transition between the two. At that time, the building itself was an enclosed whole, a body distinct from or even standing in opposition to nature. The architect today, on the other hand – like a Japanese architect – aligns his architectural work with natural conditions. He aims to fit in with the smaller or larger, but characteristic shapes and curves of the given terrain, he strives to for a correspondence between them and the building, which often mirrors these elements. It gives space to a tree or a bush, it does not seek to make them disappear or cut them out, on the contrary, it takes their spatial value into account. (In principle, the same applies when the architect creates a natural environment himself, the garden of a house. When a tree or bush is planted it is marked as already existing, almost as if to say that it could have been, it would have been that way, except that the pre-existing bush had already been destroyed while the new one had not been planted yet, but that this is where it should be). The architect turns more and more modestly and humbly to the nature they long for and to which they hope to return, away from the theatricality of civilization. As soon as the architect becomes master of the technique they have created, they no longer wish to rule nature in an autocratic way.

Turning our attention to façade design in our time, we notice the same principles prevailing as mentioned previously. Above all, it is a well-known characteristic of our new houses and façades that they are completely smooth and plain. Three-dimensional articulations of previous architectural styles are avoided as strongly as possible – even at the expense of the durability of the façade! Nothing could be further from us than dividing and articulating our façades with horizontal and vertical elements, or using these to achieve symmetry, as it does not feel obligatory to arrange windows and doors evenly. The abstract, strict order of the old façades is avoided not only because it has been proved that such an axonometric order is detrimental to expediency, but also because this order, which can even be called a principle, contradicts our basic feelings, almost feels unnatural.

This may sound a little surprising since symmetry is one of the peculiarities of our cosmic world order: the cycle of the sun brings the strictest symmetry into our world: the place of sunrise and sunset is, spatially, strictly symmetrical to the direction of South and North. Along with the symmetry of the human and animal body, this is what teaches the architect to apply equivalence. On the other hand, the things of the world among which the house is placed: the forms of the landscape, vegetation, are never essentially symmetrical, they only became so in the French formal garden. As one of the most characteristic desires of our architecture is to integrate the house we have created into the natural environment, and as this was one of the characteristic architectural aspirations of our time, we had to break with symmetry as well.

This is the reason for the free order of the openings on our façades – because that also has an order! – the compositional principle of which is the dynamic balance of the surface instead of the equitable arrangement of the same surfaces. We often look for such layouts in which the rows of different smaller or larger, horizontal or vertical openings provide a compositional balance that, with its dynamic nature, can compete with pure equivalence. (We can notice in many architects today that they like to photograph the façade strictly from a parallel point of view, so that the dynamic façade can prevail without the disturbing effects of foreshortenings.)

Finally, it should be said that although the façades are plain, this does not mean that there is no interest in expressing three-dimensionality with shading. It is just that here we are not satisfied with the smaller, hand-width sculptural details of classical façades and their effects of light and shade. It is when playing with the surface of the façade that greater differences in depth are used, more practical protrusions, terraces reaching inwards more deeply, closed or open balconies projecting sharply from the wall, which take on life. It is also characteristic that the terraces signaling the less protruding levels are usually framed in the plane of the façade with a hanging board, so that the planes behind one another are emphasized more strongly.

2.

And now, let us see how this all manifests itself in the art of urban planning, especially in planning ideas and plans. We are looking at these because the realization of such plans requires the construction of a whole series of houses, and it's an opportunity that only arises in peaceful, healthy periods that that consistently hold to their ideas. We can thus usually talk only about the plans for cities, the plans for integrating certain buildings and blocks of buildings into the cityscape, and most of all about the relationship of buildings to the body of the city. Despite all this, we can still see the emergence of a definite idea and will to form.

When looking at modern urban plans, the first thing to notice is how large-scale their spatial vision is. These plans are mainly characterized by the spaciousness and width of the roads, because the lines of houses along the road – if we can even talk about lines of houses – are at an unprecedented distance from each other. This is usually justified by reasons of expediency, namely, they are desirable because of today's mechanized, fast traffic that requires high-security and transparency, and because of the amount of sunlight provided to the houses this way. This is undoubtedly true, but the road widths that can be observed in modern urban plans

are very often many times wider than is practically necessary for these reasons. Spaciousness is required, it becomes an emotional need. In Anglo-Saxon urban plans, where the houses are barely 6–7 meters high, the roads are 20 meters wide, or even wider – much of this width is, of course, an area of grass-covered ground shaded by rows of trees. It is also very common to widen roads into spacious areas, squares that are completely separated from traffic. Observing the relationship between houses and roads in today's urban plans, one can also notice other novel phenomena, ones that were unknown in the cities of the past and which stand in contrast with the habits and methods of urban planning in the past. First, one can notice that the houses are no longer standing 'tightly-closed' on any of the more prominent roads, avenues, i.e. they do not line up closely to the 'construction line' of the street, but are usually built at right angles to it, 'crosswise' – even if their siting is not the best this way; they form an angle of 30–60° with the street. The closed row of houses can in principle be considered eliminated, and only when there is a need for a row of small shops, workshops and offices can a one-and-a-half storey high section connect the houses located 'crosswise.' This means that urban planning has finally gone beyond the 'rue corridor,' the cleft-like street form, in which one walked between vertiginously high, closed walls, and could see nothing of the surrounding landscape, only through a narrow rift between the two rows of houses. In this new type of street one walks at the foot of the line of houses, the façades of which rhythmically follow one another, while in between the houses, green gardens and trees welcome the pedestrian. It is also very common that the perpendicular or angled lanes of the houses do not even reach the 'street line,' but that a green zone separates the edge of the sidewalk from the end of the houses: the street becomes a park-road with houses standing in spacious gardens on either side. So, while the streets were once narrow gorges, clefts with closed-walled houses on each side, in the new system, the city becomes transparent.

The next major finding is that street and route planning has given up the system of rigid, straight lines: the axis lines of the streets bend in very soft, very large radii. By no means does this mean that today's urban planning aims to mimic the 'picturesquely' winding streets of medieval towns. After all, their traffic-killer desultoriness is in stark contrast to today's traffic needs as well as taste, an architectural conception that seeks the possibility to see into the distance and strives for transparency. On today's curved roads, the large radius of curvature provides the overview necessary for traffic safety and speed, while roads lose the stern rigidity of long straight lines. This feature can be observed in our houses today too, but it is also a consequence of not leading the roads on a rigid axis towards a distant, large, artistically accentuated structure, as the Egyptians and Romans, or the Princesses of the Far East, the French Louis and Napoleons, or the political and economic dictators of various nations did. We refrain from this also because in the case of large public buildings mass symmetry is fading away and therefore adjustment of the road axis is also unnecessary. Large-scale monuments are no longer adjusted to the axis of the road, as those heading towards the monuments could potentially disturb the traffic.[38]

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38)   In relation to this, it should be mentioned that in *De Architectura Libri X*. 4. Chapter 6, one of the classic writers on architecture, L. B. Alberti of the fifteenth century, wrote the following about the main streets of the city: 'It is a proper thing for the city's main roads to twist like rivers, for that way they will seem longer and the city will seem more prestigious. But it will enhance the beauty and comfort of the city, in addition, those walking along the street will see different houses each step of the way.'

All this not only benefits road traffic, making it smoother, but also gives the cityscape a special charm, namely, when it is perceived in relation to time: moving along the wide-curved, spacious route, buildings are seen from new angles at every moment, just as in nature when looking at hills and mountains from a moving train and enjoying the flow of varied views.

Just like the interiors of buildings, multi-layered images play an increasingly important role in composing cityscapes and make us simultaneously see and discern buildings, making the cityscape transparent. Such implications are artistically far more powerful than then theatricality of rigid symmetry.

3.

This analysis of today's architectural features may seem a bit long-winded to an outsider – but it is not impossible, indeed, even very likely, that those who are directly concerned, i.e. architects, will still miss many details that have not been listed or mentioned. In the light of what has been said so far, one should answer to the question: how does the architectural form so described express the intellectual behavior of the architecture of our time and its patrons? Or, if you like, it still necessary to prove that those formal features really correspond to the life, intellectual contents, and desires of the present day.

It seems expedient to start from the fact that in our spatial works we strive primarily for spaciousness. It is characteristic that previously, in the most common types of flats, there were several, medium-sized square rooms, approximately the same size of 20–25 m², whereas today the type of floor plan considered appropriate consists of a larger room, which is more spacious in its form – and therefore usually not square – and several smaller ones, each suitable for withdrawing from company, rest or work for one person. If conditions allow for several larger rooms, then they are usually connected and interwoven, creating a space bigger than is required for basic physical movement. The space is also opened up by optical means: by transparent connections, or by the arrangement of furniture and above all, by large windows opening to the outside, to natural space, while trying to eliminate the side walls, in order to create a more spacious environment, as opposed to the enclosed character of older houses. The narrow, multi-storey, fully enclosed courtyards have completely been discarded, as they are claimed to be unhealthy, devoid of sunlight, and air. And also, I believe, because they make people feel anxious, mostly because those living together in these houses are overwhelmingly and uncomfortably close to one another. Therefore, the main aim is to separate individual apartments well enough – the apartments above and next to each other with sound-proofing; reducing the possibilities of peering inside houses, but at the same time, still allowing sunlight to enter.

It would be a fundamental mistake to believe that all this is an expression of hatred of humanity, of alienation from one another. On the contrary! It is rather about recognizing and at the same time compensating for the fact that the congestion caused by the rapid development of big cities – with a shortage of ground plots and profiteering – has fundamentally worsened the relationship between individuals. Today it is known, or at least felt, that within the family,
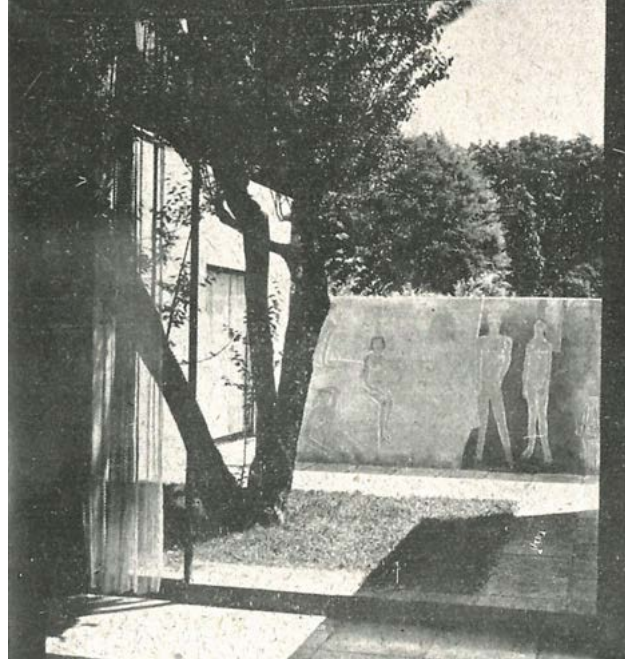
**Figure 14:** Albert Frey and A. Lawrence Kocher, Kocher-Samson Building, Palm Springs, 1935.
Figure 15: Luigi Figini and Gino Pollini, House of an Artist, Milan Architectural Triennale, 1933, erroneously credited by Bierbauer to Giuseppo Pagano.
Source: *Tér és Forma* 19: 10, 1946.

and especially in the wider social context, people need the ability to separate themselves from time to time should they decide and wish to, so that they can relax, or become sociable and join smaller or larger communities. Le Bon's famous work, the *Psychology of the Masses* sheds clear light on the mental afflictions of the mind of crowds.[39] But the sad experience of the last decade also makes us realize, that in addition to the crowdedness of barracks, marches, wagon, mental institutions, shelters, and the haunting memories of these, the inevitable crowdedness of today's life – such as queueing, waiting, crowded travel – can create spasmodic nerve reactions, evoking bad memories, resulting in constant conflict. But looking deep into human history, one would find the same phenomena everywhere: in the tens of thousands crowded in Roman circuses the joy of cruelty flared up, and in the narrow cities of the Middle Ages there was a shocking feeling of crowdedness almost indecipherable for us today. (At the same time, the cramped, dark, damp houses in the old parts of Florence clearly makes one understand the human horrors described in Dante's *Inferno*.) One of the explanations for the thirst for blood at the Place de Grève in Paris was again the thick crowd of people coming from old towns with narrow streets, when dictatorships caused mass hysteria of people rounded up for 'general assemblies,' evoking great conflagrations by the orgies of demagogic rhetoric, so the bloody steam of hatred soared from the crowded people.[40]

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39)   Editor's note: This is a reference to Gustave Le Bon, *Psychologie des Foules*, Paris: Alcan, 1895.

40)   Editor's note: the Place de Grève, now the Place de l'Hôtel-de-Ville, was the traditional site of public executions in both royal and revolutionary France.
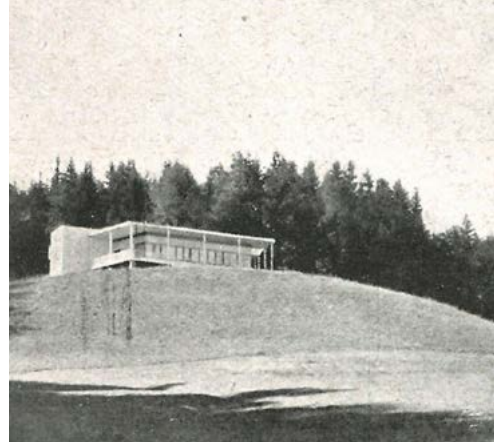
Figure 16: Richard Neutra, VDL Research House, Los Angeles, 1932.
Figure 17: Ernst Plischke, The Walter Gamerith House, Attersee, 1933–1934.
Source: *Tér és Forma* 19: 10, 1946.

These basic facts cannot be changed by the miracle of human kindness that often manifests itself in the midst of a crowd; moreover, this is exactly what proves the destructive nature of crowdedness. The point of such miracles is that those who have been able to preserve their humanity, with the power of their great compassion, strive to lift their neighbor out of the mud of hatred. This cannot be changed by the fact either that the simpler man – who lives in the worst districts, in the most densely populated houses – does not realize how cursed his life is, and the fact that it is very often difficult to pull him out of it. Such a person cannot know anything about the human happiness of a free, more spacious frame of life, yet, these individuals, the inhabitants of these houses still feel, subconsciously, the inhumanity of their destiny. This is expressed in those large groups who arduously go out of the city on Sunday for an excursion into nature – or, on a different level, in those simple city people wanting to have for themselves a house with a garden at all costs.

Basically, it can be argued, that only whoever is free, free from the agony of being in crowds, who can retire from the world or join others at will, who is able to freely move in their own home, can truly be human. An increasingly clear insight into this is reflected in the crowded features of our architecture. **The architecture of our time in general, and in its details, is a true protest against restrictions on human freedom.** And as such, it is one of the most characteristic manifestations of the will of mankind today, perhaps a more fundamental one than that for freedom of religion, freedom of opinion, and a free press; in any case, our desire, aspiration and will is at the same level as them.

Expressions of this unbound desire for freedom are also expressed in the aspirations of design at the level of urban planning. We widen the streets that are narrow like a cleft: so that our gaze is not limited by the walls rising high, so that we can see more from one perspective, our eyes can wander in between houses, into the gardens.

The road axis running straight to the infinity of the city feels constrained, as if we forced unnecessarily into the hardness of a line while, when following a curved line, and when the image of the environment changes every step of the way, such streets are filled with

surprises and visual adventure. We would not want to be forcibly led to a building classified as significant: we would rather come across it as a coincidence, meet with it as a sudden encounter.[41]

But the essential meaning of the great avenues, boulevards, the so-called 'axes,' have also been recognized, especially during the political tragedies of recent decades. We know very well that these roads were not only built to please the aesthetic, optical demands of the various great powers of the world. Liberal capitalism built such roads to flaunt its wealth. The emperors, kings and smaller princes of ancient times to express their power – while political 'party leaders' preferred them, because they could organize marches of 'unified' masses on them for their causes, where their power could be expressed and felt. These parades gave a promising picture of the masses of loyal servants of the power, who belonged to the lower ranks of the hierarchy, capable of all sorts of atrocities. It is understandable then, how one would keep distance from these types of axes expressing political power. But, one might ask: what do we need such roads for, why do we build them when we no longer wish to 'march two abreast,' when there is no one to march in front of, when we do not want to become those obligatory elements in marches, and we object that the true expression of the sense of human community would be to 'parade' under any kind of slogan.

Looking back from here, the dislike of strict symmetry, of literal equivalence on the façades of houses, and of the grouping of rooms, etc., which manifests itself everywhere, is understandable. Symmetry also feels against the desire for freedom, as the façade and the space that is formed in the spirit of strict, literal symmetry discomforts the optical experience, and the body or space thus formed seems unnaturally rigid and deprived of inner dynamics. We find that in this way there is a form of solemnity, even sacral expression, which in no way fits into our daily lives and therefore limits them. The applicability of symmetry thus becomes an exceptional possibility, and not the form of objects made for everyday life. But looking carefully at the often very solemn works of recent architecture, such as churches, one can see that in Switzerland, Sweden and Finland, not even churches are built with symmetrical façades facing the congregation; they are rather built to fit into the cityscape and the natural landscape, even dissolving symmetry in the interior, placing the strong, natural light effect on one side of the nave.

It is as if this is a very telling phenomenon, as if we were to see a behavioral symptom in it as well, and a strong expression of our worldview. Symmetry, as an art form – as many things point to this – was an ancient, magical form: symmetry in natural phenomena, in natural landscape is unknown, non-existent, it was created by man, in opposition to the unpredictable, the ever-changing phenomena of nature as the unchangeable, the manifestation of the human spirit and will.[42]

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41)   One of the great ideas for the reorganization of the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam was that visitors could get an unexpected glimpse at Rembrandt's *Night Watch* from a distance of ten metres, while previously it faced the entrance though the long axis of the great building. We have realized that the artistic impact of a building is far greater when it is in front of us at once, compared to when we are walking towards it for 15 minutes or longer.

42)   For those who are surprised by this, think of the technique of mass domination today, the celebrations of political powers that dazzle the masses and subordinate them, or think of the 'architectural scenery' of such events. In the political stages of Berlin and Nuremberg – but not only theirs – axial arrangement and symmetry was dominant. Here the goal was clear: the gazes of those standing in the crowd had to be focused almost hypnotically on the leader and the surroundings had to be aesthetically pleasing to those who were present.
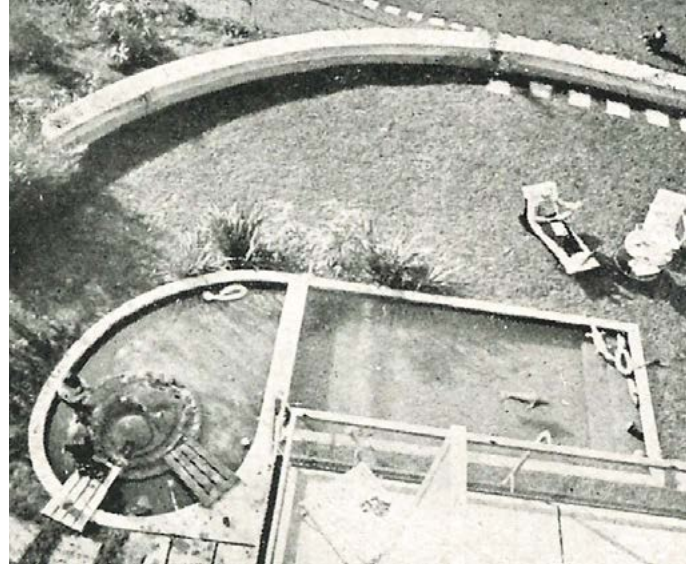
Figure 18: Max Haefeli, Housing block, Neubühl-Zurich Werkbund Estate, 1931.
Figure 19: Max Haefeli, House block garden, Neubühl-Zurich Werkbund Estate, 1931.
Source: *Tér és Forma* 19: 10, 1946.

All of this – we believe – stands far from the liberated individual, or the individual hoping to become liberated, who believes that they must fit into the framework of nature and therefore looks for this behavior in their works of art as well. This liberated individual seeks to fit into nature, as their technical and biological knowledge can make the most of the forces of nature for his survival. The individual today no longer dominates nature, but perhaps, in contrast to the somewhat arrogant conception of previous times, wishes to become one with nature, to connect with it in great harmony.

Thus, our architecture becomes an expression of the deepest essence of intellectual life forms. Thus, the effect of the power given by human technology is already beginning to be reflected in our architecture today.

Five Essays on Women's Art and Perception in Interwar Austria

by Hans Ankwicz-Kleehoven (1883–1962),
Wolfgang Born (1893–1949),
and Liane Zimbler (1892–1987)
Translated by Acer Lewis

Abstract

The essays translated in this collection are representative of debates and views about women in art in Austria in the 1920s and 1930s. The texts are reviews of exhibitions of work by women artists, as well as discussions of ideas of design and gender by women critics. They also include contemporary reviews of the so-called Elida Prize of 1928, for the 'Most Beautiful Female Portrait.' The texts are accompanied with an Introduction that puts them into context, considering evolving ideas of women as designers and as artists. The Introduction demonstrates that while the focus of most research on gender and culture in the interwar period has been on the rise of the idea of the 'New Woman,' there were other, more conservative ideas of female identity.

Keywords

Five Essays on Women's Art and Perception in Interwar Austria

Introduction

Christian Drobe

The appearance of the 'New Woman' belongs firmly to our understanding of the 1920s and highlights the expanding role of women in society that emerged between the wars. However, as recent debates have shown, the concept and its visual representation showed less the reality of women than a fictional, if not utopian, image of the future.[1] The concept was so influential that it narrowed a much richer body of conceptions and theories surrounding women and their perception. The texts collected here by Hans Ankwicz-Kleehoven (1883–1962), Wolfgang Born (1893–1949) and Liane Zimbler (1892–1987) participate in the process of diversifying women's viewpoints beyond the mere mention of the so-called 'New Woman', by looking at the achievements, chances, and problems of women's art in interwar Vienna. This selection is later accompanied by two texts on the so-called 'Elida' competition for the most beautiful Austrian woman's portrait, which the successful Czech cosmetics company Schicht organised in Austria in 1929. The innumerable entries of portraits of women by Austrian painters show a surprising cross-section of taste at the time, but also the re-assertion of a conservative image of women. All five texts provide a closer look at women's art and the perception of modern woman in interwar Austria, which has received increased attention in recent years but has so far been accessible only sporadically in English sources.[2] This has been addressed more in recent years, but the topic is usually overshadowed by the view of the 'New Woman' in the Weimar Republic and the metropolis of Berlin; however, in central Europe the idea took on a slightly different form that would benefit from a closer look.[3]

In keeping with its role as a new Secession or splinter group, *Wiener Frauenkunst* (Viennese Women's Art) the shortened name of the Association of Women Visual Artists and Artisans of Viennese Women's Art (Verband bildender Künstlerinnen und Kunsthandwerkerinnen Wiener Frauenkunst), exemplifies the opportunities and challenges of women artists faced in interwar Austria. Following disputes about artistic direction, several members left the Association of Women Artists of Austria (Vereinigung bildender Künstlerinnen Österreichs, VbKÖ) in 1926

1)   Rüdiger Graf, 'Anticipating the Future in the Present: "New Women" and Other Beings of the Future in Weimar Germany,' in *Central European History*, 42: 4, 2009, 647–673.

2)   Megan Brandow-Faller, *The Female Secession: Art and the Decorative at the Viennese Women's Academy*, University Park: Penn State University Press, 2020. Stella Rollig, ed., *Stadt der Frauen. Künstlerinnen in Wien 1900–1938*, Munich: Prestel, 2019. Julie Johnson, *The Memory Factory. The Forgotten Women Artists of Vienna 1900*, West Lafeyette, Purdue University Press, 2012. See, for English primary sources, focused on contemporary art: Bojana Pejic, ed., *Gender Check: A Reader: Art and Theory in Eastern Europe: Art and Gender in Eastern Europe Since the 1960s*, Cologne: Walther König, 2011.

3)   Marsha Meskimmon, ed., *We Weren't Modern Enough: Women Artists and the Limits of German Modernism*, London: Tauris, 1999 and Katharina von Ankum, ed., *Women in the Metropolis. Gender and Modernity in Weimar Culture*, Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1997.

and staged exhibitions that went beyond the claim of simply promoting 'women's art' and the artistic genres with which it had usually been associated. These exhibitions were organised by artists such as Helene Funke (1869–1957), Fanny Harflinger (1873–1954, the director of *Wiener Frauenkunst*), Stephanie Hollenstein (1886–1944) and Broncia Koller (1863–1934), as well as female members of other associations, including the Wiener Werkstätte, who often faced financial hardship at the time. This process of separation included the question of the supposedly typical role of women in the arts and crafts and design, as well as that of the nature of a specifically female creativity. The VbKÖ, founded in 1910, suddenly looked out of date. However, with the increasingly conservative climate of the early 1930s and the cultural policy of the authoritarian corporative state of 1934–38 led by Engelbert Dollfuß (1892–1934) and Kurt Schuschnigg (1897–1977), the development of the *Wiener Frauenkunst* group and of female artists in general noticeably came to a halt. The sexual politics of the Dollfuß regime, especially its endorsement of Catholic social theory about the traditional family, was perhaps most decisive within the various conservative currents.[4] At least, that's how it seems when one listens to voices in the press.

The first text here appeared in 1928 and concerns a review of the first exhibition of the *Wiener Frauenkunst* group, which was staged at the Austrian Museum for Art and Industry (now the Museum of Applied Art) in Vienna.[5] Most of the group's exhibitions took place in the museum, highlighting its openness towards contemporary design and applied arts. The art critic Hans Ankwicz-Kleehoven, who had close connections to the museum as well, uses this occasion to address the separation of the group from the older VbKÖ. Ankwicz-Kleehoven describes the position of women's art in Viennese art life and outlines the fiercely competitive atmosphere within its secessions. Despite the fact that many women artists had common goals, there were soon differences over questions of principle and financial concerns because of the rising competition between them. Ankwicz-Kleehoven was born in 1883 and studied art history in Vienna and Berlin from 1903 to 1906. In 1906 he received his doctorate in Vienna. His subsequent entry into the civil service led him to the post of librarian at the Austrian Museum of Art and Industry in 1925, which linked him more directly to *Wiener Frauenkunst* and their exhibitions in the museum. He was a tireless reporter on countless Viennese art exhibitions and galleries and an exponent of modernism.[6] Forced into retirement in 1939 because of his Jewish origins, he regained his position as a librarian at the Academy of Fine Arts after 1945. Between 1920 and 1938 he worked as an active reporter for art in the *Wiener Zeitung*, the newspaper in which the article translated here appeared. The *Wiener Zeitung*, founded as early as 1703, soon experienced a decline in importance as the official newspaper of the Austrian state after the First World War, but retained its influential *feuilleton*. From 1925 onwards, Ankwicz-Kleehoven edited a regular section on women's art exhibitions, which may testify to the public's general interest in the subject.

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4) Irene Bandhauer-Schöffmann, Hausfrauen und Mütter im Austrofaschismus. Gender, Klasse und Religion als Achsen der Ungleichheit, in *Österreichische Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft*, 27: 3, 2016, 44–70.

5) *Katalog der 1. Ausstellung der Wiener Frauenkunst, Österreichisches Museum für Kunst und Industrie: Mit Kollektionen aus Prag und London*, Vienna: Jahoda und Siegel, 1927.

6) See the entry on 'Hans Ankwicz-Kleehoven' in the *Lexikon zum Literatur– und Kulturbetrieb im Österreich der Zwischenkriegszeit*, Klagenfurt: Alpen-Adria University, 2014–18. Available online at: https://litkult1920er.aau.at/litkult-lexikon/ankwicz-kleehoven-hans/ (last accessed: 11 May 2022).

Ankwicz-Kleehoven notes that women have made great progress in the fields of theatre, music and literature.[7] It was only in the arts that they were not yet taken seriously and had no chance of joining a male-led artists' organisation, he argued, a problem which is today perceived as an important structural inequality in the arts of the interwar period in Austria.[8] Ankwicz-Kleehoven praises the progressive character and pioneering spirit of the new Secession, singling out works by well-known figures such as Helene Funke or Stephanie Hollenstein, but also mentioning work by women who are completely unknown today such as Emmi Goldschmid-Schur (1890–1939) or Lydia Schütt (1891–1961). The review is surprising in the large number of different artistic positions adopted by women artists it mentions, and reminds the contemporary reader that much work still needs to be done on exploring them. Ankwicz-Kleehoven describes Funke and Hollenstein in detail and then lists most of the lesser-known female artists in quick succession. In some places he gives a little more description, as, for instance, when he talks about Funke's 'firework of colours' or her 'pointillist spray.'[9] In keeping with the character of a short exhibition review in the daily press, there is no lengthy critical discussion – only short notes on the quality of the work and on whether the exhibition space is well designed; after describing some transitions to the decorative arts the article concludes by mentioning English prints and Czech women artists such as Božena Jelínková-Jirásková (1880–1951) or Pavla Rousová-Vicenová (1884–1939). In exhibitions (and their reviews) in Austria between the wars, the discussion often followed a specific sequence, from painting and fine arts to applied arts. Art from abroad was often only an afterthought, but the reference here to artists from outside of Austria is noteworthy and might have reflected the aspirations of *Wiener Frauenkunst*. By extending its reach to artists in neighbouring countries, in a manner similar to the Hagenbund, which had numerous connections to artists from the former territories of Austria-Hungary, the *Wiener Frauenkunst* group was showcasing its international solidarity and inclusivity, something they would have wanted to encourage in Viennese circles. Overall, Ankwicz-Kleehoven stresses in his review that Viennese women's art responded to the challenge of a new secession with a broad assortment of quality positions that 'unites all the fermenting, forward-pushing elements and leaves nothing to be desired in terms of modern mindedness.'[10] He did not raise the question as to whether these women artists were as important as their male counterparts, but rather, focused on which position they inherited within the field of women's art after parting ways with the older VbKÖ. As Sabine Plakolm-Forsthuber has pointed out, some critics saw the exhibition as an expression of the extreme left wing of women's art because of its modern approach and progressive attitudes.[11]

Political denigration was accompanied by sexual prejudice. The prominent Viennese art critic Arthur Roessler (1877–1955), himself once an outspoken supporter of Egon Schiele (1890–1918), criticised the expressive modern style of the paintings on display and stated that

7)   Ankwicz-Kleehoven, 'Viennese Women's Art,' 124–125.

8)   Only as extraordinary members, as with the Hagenbund for instance, see Johnson, *The Memory Factory*, 247.

9)   Ankwicz-Kleehoven, 'Viennese Women's Art.'

10) Ibid, XXX. See also Megan Brandow-Faller, *The Female Secession: Art and the Decorative at the Viennese Women's Academy*, University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 2020, 2.

11) Sabine Plakolm-Forsthuber, *Künstlerinnen in Österreich 1897–1938: Malerei, Plastik, Architektur*, Vienna: Picus-Verlag, 1994, 75.

women's art only gave birth, but was not truly creative.[12] With such statements, he disputed the value of women's art, and by means of such biological metaphors Roessler, along with other contemporaries repeatedly reduced women to their gender, regardless of any analysis of artistic merit. In comparison, Ankwicz-Kleehoven strove for an assessment that was as neutral as possible. It is against this background that one must view the comprehensive listing in his report.

The second text, by the art critic Wolfgang Born, touches on the question of a specifically female creativity, and it was related to a *Wiener Frauenkunst* exhibition in 1930.[13] The title of this, the third exhibition of the group, was *How Do Women See?* (Wie sieht die Frau?), chosen, presumably, so that the group could make its aspirations clear.[14] Before we come to Born's text, it is necessary to highlight the long history of the debate over female creativity, especially in the context of Vienna, where many prominent women artists such as Elena Luksch-Makovsky (1867–1967) or Teresa Feodorowna Ries (1874–1950) had resided since the turn of the century. The main issue for women artists, unsurprisingly, was that of legitimization and of how they could find the same recognition as their male peers. One concern was that if they achieved any success, it was often only seen in relation to their status as female artists, rather than as artists in general. As the art historian Erica Tietze-Conrat (1883–1958) noted in 1910, there was a danger in the growth of women's art organisations, since women artists by no means wanted to be isolated in them, as if art by women existed as 'something apart in a closed biotope.'[15] In other words, they wanted to avoid competing only with other women artists while being perceived as irrelevant to the wider art world.

Women artists emerged in the late nineteenth century out of the dilettantish world of bourgeois arts and crafts.[16] They quickly organised and professionalised themselves. This multi-layered development, which always involved struggles for recognition and legitimization, culminated in the founding of the aforementioned *Association of Women Artists of Austria* (VbKÖ) in 1910. The goal of the Association, led by the painter Olga Brand-Krieghammer (1867–1948), was the 'elevation of artistic and economic conditions.'[17] Its first major exhibition was *Art by Women* (Die Kunst der Frau, 1910), which started to establish a separate history of women's art. The exhibition showcased many historical works by women artists such as Angelika Kauffmann (1741–1807), Berthe Morisot (1841–1895), Elisabeth Vigée-Lebrun (1755–1842) and is perceived as a landmark achievement in initiating an artistic legacy from a female perspective.[18] However, that also raised the question as to whether there is a certain female creativity in general that distinguishes women artists from men and their art – not an easy question to answer and a problem that was taken up many times later. The period before the war is not dealt with in

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12) Arthur Roessler, 'Wiener Frauenkunst,' cited in Plakolm-Forsthuber *Künstlerinnen in Österreich*, 75.

13) *Wie sieht die Frau? Katalog der III. Ausstellung der Wiener Frauenkunst, Neue Burg, Terrassensäle, Wien*, Vienna: Verband Bildender Künstlerinnen Wiener Frauenkunst, 1930.

14) Brandow-Faller *The Female Secession*, 4.

15) Erica Tietze-Conrat, 'Die Kunst der Frau. Ein Nachwort zur Ausstellung in der Wiener Sezession,' in *Zeitschrift für bildende Kunst*, N.F. 6, 1910, 146–148.

16) Plakolm-Forsthuber *Künstlerinnen in Österreich*, 23–26. See also Rebecca Houze*, Textiles, Fashion, and Design Reform in Austria-Hungary before the First World War: Principles of Dress*, Farnham: Ashgate 2015.

17) Cited in Plakolm-Forsthuber, *Künstlerinnen in Österreich*, 65.

18) Julie Johnson, 'Schminke und Frauenkunst. Konstruktionen weiblicher Ästhetik um die Ausstellung "Die Kunst der Frau" 1910,' in Lisa Fischer, Emil Brix, eds, *Die Frauen der Wiener Moderne*, Munich: Oldenbourg 1997, 167–178.

our selection of primary sources, but in the late 1920s *Wiener Frauenkunst* tried to follow up on this long debate. It was thus the desire on the part of the *Wiener Frauenkunst* group to rephrase the question about female creativity that culminated in the exhibition *How Do Women See?* staged at the International Women's Congress in Vienna in 1930.

Before discussing the review itself it is worth considering both the author, Wolfgang Born, and the magazine, *Österreichische Kunst*, where it was published. Born in 1893 to a Jewish family in Breslau, he first studied fine arts in Munich and Paris from 1919 to 1923 before settling in Vienna in 1923. He worked there as a lecturer at the School for Adult Education (Volkshochschule), organised exhibitions and wrote for several art magazines. Between 1928 and 1931 he studied art history with Josef Strzygowski (1862–1941) and Oswald Menghin (1888–1973) at the University of Vienna and received his doctorate with a dissertation on northern Russian book illumination. He continued working in Germany but after the Nazis came to power, he lost many commissions and finally emigrated to the United States in 1937. There he taught at various New York colleges and also worked as a professor at Louisiana State University until the end of his life. He died in New York in 1949.

Österreichische Kunst was published between 1929 and 1938 as a monthly journal for fine and performing arts, architecture and arts and crafts. The articles, which were accompanied with high-quality illustrations, presented mostly Austrian artists such as Herbert Boeckl (1894–1966) or Clemens Holzmeister (1886–1983), but also granted broad space to current questions in art and exhibition reviews. With an established cast of art critics, the magazine, was eager to present contemporary art and recent developments. Born was a liberal art critic who was a proponent of decorative art and supporter of women's artists. At that time, decorative art did not only refer to design or arts and crafts per se, but more generally to the question of how many ornaments and decorations were desirable for modern art. This harkened back to debates about the overloaded styles of historicism in the nineteenth century, which flared up again and again and had often to do with questions of good taste and the state of modernisation in society. At first, the innovators tried to burn the bridges to the old art and condemned excessive decoration in art and architecture. The architect Adolf Loos (1870–1933) pioneered the fight against decoration and saw it as detrimental to the development of taste. Through his pamphlet 'Ornament and Crime,' originally delivered as a lecture in 1908, this attitude developed a life of its own and was taken up by many art critics and representatives of functionalist architecture.[19] In response, however, there were soon advocates of the decorative again. Born was one of them and therefore against 'cold' functionalism, which soon dominated the new pure architectural language. Yet, this also brought him into conflict with critics of the Wiener Werkstätte, Adolf Loos and Arthur Roessler. Both saw the products of the Wiener Werkstätte in the 1920s as one of many signs of a crisis in taste and design, which they originally associated with the misguided use of decoration. For them, one of the main reasons for the decline in the quality of design was the increasing influence of women designers in the workshop.[20] Since women were usually associated with arts and crafts, they were, as a gender, held to be naturally inclined towards the decorative. Debates over their role continued as

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19)   Alina Alexandra Payne, *From Ornament to Object: Genealogies of Architectural Modernism*, London and New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012.

20)   Anne-Katrin Rossberg, Elisabeth Schmuttermeier, Christoph Thun-Hohenstein, eds, *Die Frauen der Wiener Werkstätte / Women Artists of the Wiener Werkstätte*, Basel: Birkhäuser, 2020.

a major point of contention. Born and others defended the decorative as valid in art, and he defended women designers and artists.

Born notes that women predominate the field of decorative arts and crafts, but then goes on to acknowledge the high quality of the work in the exhibition. He particularly singles out the architect Liane Zimbler (1892–1987), who designed the exhibition and whom we will revisit as an author of another of our selected texts. Born's list reads like a who's who of women artists in Vienna. He mentions the multi-layered milieu of the time that included women painters, for him already 'classical' representatives of the Wiener Werkstätte such as Maria Strauß-Likarz (1893–1971), Mathilde Flögl (1893–1958), Erna Kopřiva (1894–1984), and the sisters Kitty Rix-Tichacek (1901–1951) and Felice 'Lizzie' Rix-Ueno (1894–1967), as well as graphic artists and designers who have only gradually been rediscovered in recent years. Only in a few places does he make critical comments. The fact that, at the end of his reflections, he cannot refrain from suggestively interpreting the answer to the question 'How do women see?' in terms of a traditional image of women, namely the depiction of a nursery as thematically suitable for their everyday life, shows that old stereotypes persisted even amongst supposedly liberal supporters. The art critic Walter Dessauer also spoke disparagingly of the art of the housewife, a striking illustration of the conservative sexist tone of the time.[21] Only a few critics were wholly appreciative or neutral.[22] Despite its problematic assumptions, Born's article, like again that of Ankwicz-Kleehoven, is useful for its relatively non-partisan view and its itemised discussion of individual women artists who are otherwise hardly known.

The third text, 'The Modern Apartment,' showcases Liane Zimbler's response to the question of a specifically female creativity. In 1926, in the magazine *Moderne Welt* ('Modern World'), she commented on the character of the design of the modern flat. We might read her observations in light of the fact that later she worked as an exhibition designer for *Wiener Frauenkunst*. Zimbler was born in Přerov (now in the Czech Republic) in 1892 and studied photography and graphic arts at the Graphische Lehr– und Versuchsanstalt (now the Higher Federal Institution for Graphic Education and Research) in Vienna from 1911 to 1913.[23] Later she transferred to the Vienna School of Applied Arts, where she increasingly attended architecture classes. She was a product of an institution that, under its director Alfred Roller, employed teachers such as Franz Čižek (1865–1946), Josef Frank (1885–1967) or Oskar Strnad (1879–1935). Many later female artists of the Wiener Werkstätte, the 'Kunstgewerbe-Weiber,' as many disparagingly called them, emerged from this environment, as did Margarete Schütte-Lihotzky (1897–2000), architect and inventor of the Frankfurt kitchen of 1926, usually regarded as the first modern fitted kitchen design. When Adolf Loos launched into his famous diatribe 'Vienna's woes' ('Wiener Weh') in 1927, by which he meant the woes of the Viennese art world and the Wiener Werkstätte in particular, he offended this young generation of female designers.[24] He was

21) Walter Dessauer, 'Die Schöne Wand,' *Neue Freie Presse*, 28 March 1933, 4.

22) Hans Ankwicz-Kleehoven, 'Frauenkunstausstellung "Die Schöne Wand",' *Wiener Zeitung*, 14 April 1933, 10.

23) Ursula Prokop, *Zum jüdischen Erbe in der Wiener Architektur. Der Beitrag jüdischer ArchitektInnen am Wiener Baugeschehen 1868–1938*, Vienna: Böhlau, 2016, 197–201.

24) The lecture took place in a lecture hall of Wiener Musikverein: Adolf Loos, 'Das Wiener Weh (Wiener Werkstätte). Eine Abrechnung! Mit Lichtbildern von der Pariser Ausstellung, 20 April 1927.' Published in Loos, *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. Adolf Opel, Vienna: lesethek Verlag, 2010, 665–74. See, too, Markus Kristan, ed., *Ich warne Sie vor Josef Hoffmann! Adolf Loos und die Wiener Werkstätte*, Vienna: Metroverlag, 2014, 53.

especially critical of their contribution to the International Exhibition of Decorative Arts held in Paris in 1925, which, he argued, gave a false representation of modern design from Austria. This criticism of women in applied arts must be taken into account when we view the activities of *Wiener Frauenkunst,* for its members often identified themselves with this role or showed solidarity towards women in Wiener Werkstätte. This negative commentary on women in design, even though they increasingly made up a majority in the profession, shows the persistence of attempts to marginalise them, but the growing presence of women designers also reveals that some, at least, were fulfilling their professional ambitions. This dichotomy was evident in Liane Zimbler's career, first as a graduate of the Vienna School of Applied Arts and, later, as a successful architect and interieur designer.

After the First World War, Zimbler began working for the Bamberger furniture factory and later for the Rosenberger design studio. She specialised in the design of one-room flats and studios, an expanding field for the middle-class. She thus coined the concept of 'better living,' by which she meant making comfortable living spaces even when room was restricted. Sensible spatial solutions could also have an emancipatory effect, as she represented one of the few modern Austrian designers who never fully submitted to the demands of functionalism, preferring, instead, 'Gemütlichkeit' (cosiness). This latter approach was championed by Josef Frank, who advanced a different reading of modern design that more strongly addressed human needs.[25] Zimbler also undertook a number of prestigious projects in Vienna; in 1922 she was commissioned to renovate the Ephrussi Bank, originally built between 1872 and 1873 by Theophil Hansen (1813–1891).[26] Through her work as a designer and her interest in questions of space she was appointed to undertake the interior designs for the 'Beautiful Wall' ('Schöne Wand') Exhibition, which was the final *Wiener Frauenkunst* exhibition, staged in 1933, once again at the Austrian Museum of Art and Industry.[27] She also began to deliver lectures on sociological and artistic aspects of living, some of which were also published.[28] In 1938 she became the first woman in Austria to be licensed as an architect, but in the same year she had to flee to the United States, where she continued to work as an interior designer and remained active in publishing. She died in Los Angeles in 1987.

Zimbler begins her article with a statement of principle. After decades of poor housing conditions (a major topic that drove the concern of the Social Democratic council of Vienna after the war with the ambitious 'Red Vienna' housing projects) now is the time, she contends, for balanced design. By 'balanced' she means a position that avoids either reverting to the overloaded interiors of the nineteenth century or embracing unadorned functionalism. She then informs the reader in detail about the most important details of good interior design, i.e., the latest trends and good taste. The examples of Zimbler and Margarete Schütte-Lihotzky, along with Friedl Dicker-Brandeis (1898–1944), another Vienna-based artist specialising

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25) Christopher Long, *Josef Frank: Life and Work,* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002.

26) See also Sabine Plakolm-Forsthuber, 'Loos remodeled: Zum Umbau der Wohnung Leopold Goldman durch die Architektin Liane Zimbler 1936,' in Elena Shapira, eds, *Design Dialogue: Jews, Culture and Viennese Modernism,* Vienna: Böhlau 2018, 263–280.

27) *Katalog der VI. Ausstellung der Wiener Frauenkunst veranstaltet mit der Genossenschaft der Maler,* Vienna: Österreichisches Museum für Kunst und Industrie, 1933.

28) See, for example, Liane Zimbler, 'Die elegante Frau und die bescheidene Wohnung,' *Österreichische Kunst,* 12, 1934, 15–17.

in design, show how women found an important professional field in interior design, that allowed them to re-channel the general artistic interest in colour and spatial effects of reform movements of the time such as that of the original Viennese Secession.[29] Being emancipated not only meant a tidy and orderly way of living but exploring and defining space on their own terms. Large exhibitions such as that staged in Stuttgart by the Werkbund in 1927, also played a major role in development of ideas of enhanced and more flexible living; Mies van der Rohe, organiser of the Werkbund exhibition, commissioned Lilly Reich (1885–1947), with whom he worked for over a decade, to design its central hall.[30] Zimbler improved the artistic level of interior design, but also regarded it as a field in which gender-specific spatial relations were negotiated. For her, good design meant that questions of practical living for women were not limited to the realm of the housewife; women had an important general contribution to make to concepts of design went far beyond this traditional categorization. All this becomes even more apparent in the context of the later exhibitions by *Wiener Frauenkunst*, which followed on from the discourse of improved design, living and spatial awareness. In 1929 they organised the exhibition 'The Image in Space' ('Das Bild im Raum') at the Austrian Museum for Art and Industry; it was not a conventional art exhibition but was, rather, a series of artistic arrangements presented in combination with interior design. Canvases and crafts appeared in designed living and working spaces and visitors saw how this organic unity expressed the purpose of the space. As librarian of the Museum, Hans Ankwicz-Kleehoven had given the exhibition a very positive review in the *Wiener Zeitung*.[31] The director of *Wiener Frauenkunst*, Fanny Harlfinger, formulated the aspiration that the pictorial decoration of a room should be combined with the furniture to form an organic unity.[32] We can see the 1929 exhibition of the *Wiener Frauenkunst*, in which the female artists designed several exemplary living spaces in the context of these developments, as their first publicly successful show. Many of the *Wiener Frauenkunst* artists took on the role of interior designers and designed furniture and complete interiors because it provided a source of income and was close to their training as artists. The exhibition attracted a positive response throughout and showed the great quality of the artists' association via its tasteful execution.[33] From this reflection on living or on spatial concepts, something like a speciality on the part of *Wiener Frauenkunst* developed. The group became more and more concerned with the pictoriality of spatial presentation and with spatial effects, a question that continued until the *The Beautiful Wall* exhibition. As Fanny Harlfinger explained, the aim was to lend the arrangements a pictorial quality that clearly showed their function.[34] While it may have continued to be understood as typical for women to design interiors, these theoretical issues outweighed a solely gendered reading. They wanted to go beyond mere questions of the housewife and their living conditions. Many members of

29) Sabine Plakolm-Forsthuber, *Moderne Raumkunst: Wiener Ausstellungsbauten von 1898 bis 1914*, Vienna: Picus-Verlag 1991.

30) Magdalena Droste, 'The Creative Pair. Lilly Reich and the Collaboration with Mies van der Rohe,' in Christina Budde, Mary Pepchinski, Peter Cachola Schmal, Wolfgang Voigt, eds, *Frau Architekt: Over 100 years of Women in Architecture*, Tübingen: Wasmuth, 2017, 104–111.

31) Plakolm-Forsthuber, *Künstlerinnen in Österreich*, 77.

32) Ibid, 76.

33) Karl Maria Grimme, 'Das Bild im Raum: Zur Ausstellung der „Wiener Frauenkunst" im Österreichischen Museum,' *Die Österreicherin*, 2: 4, 1929, 4–5.

34) Plakolm-Forsthuber, *Künstlerinnen in Österreich*, 76.

Viennese women's art understood modern living as a complex interplay of the fine and applied arts and Zimbler played a decisive role in this with her essay of 1926, even if she only describes the latest trends of living in greater detail. In this sense, however, the way of life had a greater influence on the image of women. A well-designed space should accommodate emancipated individuals and vice versa. This would naturally include the 'New Woman,' whose appearance profited from the modern living worlds of the 1920s.

The last two texts included here are reports on the Elida Prize competition for the most beautiful Austrian portrait of a woman, which was organised in 1929 by the Bohemian company Georg Schicht, based in Ustí nad Labem in north-western Bohemia. The name comes from a soap company originally based in Vienna that Schicht bought in 1916. The reviewers we encounter, Wolfgang Born (once more) and an author known only as H.S., could not be more different. While Born talks about the social situation of artists and the benefits of a well-funded competition, H.S. strongly criticises the quality of the competition. At second glance, however, Born's text provides some revealing observations about the image of women in the Austrian capital. Since a similar competition had also been held in Germany shortly before, the winner being the Berlin painter Willy Jaeckel (1888–1944), the Elida Prize inspired comparisons. Born refers to the so-called 'Sporting Girl,' an aspect of the wider concept of the 'New Woman' that failed to gain much traction in Vienna. Instead, other female stereotypes prevailed in Austria. It was often argued that the Elida Prize in Germany and Austria highlighted a distinctly conservative view of women, in which traditional types of women and the portrait format dominated, well outside the practices of the avant-garde of the time.[35] This conservatism can be attributed to popular taste, to which the advertising material of a cosmetics company at the time sought to come as close as possible. Charming, pretty, depictions of women adorned product packaging in an attempt to attract shoppers. This way, women were being served a commodified image of female beauty, as it became more and more a part of mass culture. The new female stars in the cinema or in dance revues of the 1920s complemented the new beauty industry and generated great interest, but also revealed the artificiality of their appearance. A crisis of portraiture and representation paralleled this process in high art. Traditional portrait painting no longer met the demands of the new age, especially in competition with photography.[36] In general, the question was whether it was still possible to find an accurate image of an individual in the fast-moving sphere of the metropolis. People disappeared into the masses; a leisure culture perceived as cultureless in the broader context of Americanisation.[37] It is symptomatic of the latter, perhaps, that there emerged during the interwar period an obsession with typologies, so that the new roles could be captured next to the typical worker or businessman. This was no different for women. Many saw the 'New Woman' as a barometer for the dawn of the new age. Whether it was the sexually ambiguous 'Garçonne,' the 'Sporting Girl' or the softer 'Gretchen' type, the typologies branched out quickly and her different images dominated the magazines.[38]

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35) Susanne Meyer-Büser, *Das schönste deutsche Frauenporträt: Tendenzen der Bildnismalerei in der Weimarer Republik*, Berlin: Reimer, 1994.

36) Ibid., 83–89.

37) Ibid., 92.

38) Lynne Frame, 'Gretchen, Girl, Garçonne? Weimar Science and Popular Culture in Search of the Ideal New Woman,' in Katharina von Ankum, ed., *Women in the Metropolis: Gender and Modernity in Weimar Culture*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997, 12–40.

Ever present in popular journals such as *Moderne Welt,* they demonstrated the latest fashions and served as role models for the new modern lifestyle. It was this slightly superficial typology that fixed women to certain characteristics and had little to do with reality. The fact that the Elida competition showed a more traditional image of women, a typical Viennese woman, may be seen as a backlash against this form of commodification. Yet, it also highlights the problems of emancipation, when a projected goal doesn't meet with the population's desire for traditional gender identities.[39]

H.S.'s text makes it clear that there is also a problem of artistic quality behind the portrayal of contemporary women. The winning picture, by Sergius Pauser (1896–1970), showed a 'Slavic type' that did not correspond to the expected image of a beautiful Austrian woman. The ultimate goal for many art critics was to link both worlds, i.e. to gain a true representation of a genuine Austrian woman, which the artist then would execute to a high artistic level. However, no one questioned why this version of a Viennese woman was the right one. And neither was the fact that better media had long been available in the form of photography and magazine illustrations. And so, to this day, the Elida Competition is regarded as a failed event that only confirmed the conservative taste of the time and failed to promote progressive art. This sense of a displaced representation of women became increasingly apparent in the early 1930s, and this changing atmosphere contributed to the inability of women artists in Vienna to gain widespread acceptance and success. The texts collected here give an impression of the opportunities, departures and limits of female artmaking and its perception in interwar Austria before 1934. With the German Anschluss in 1938, Nazi officials renamed the VbKÖ the Artists' Association of Viennese Women (Künstlerverband Wiener Frauen) and reintegrated *Wiener Frauenkunst* into it. Its exhibitions were then devoted to art that conformed to the Nazi system.

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39) Katharina von Ankum, 'Introduction,' in von Ankum, ed., *Women in the Metropolis,* 1–12.

Hans Ankwicz-Kleehoven

Viennese Women's Art

Originally published as 'Wiener Frauenkunst,' *Wiener Zeitung,* 1 January 1928, 7–8.

Translated by Acer Lewis.

While women have already succeeded in achieving complete equality with men in the areas of politics, economics and science, and there has long been no doubt about their equality with the opposite sex in the fields of theatre, music and literature, their achievements in the visual arts are still not taken seriously enough to be allowed to join the major artists' associations. This forces them to form their own organizations, whose main purpose is to mount exhibitions. One would think that the many difficulties faced by women artists would force them to unite, but this is not the case; they too, like their male colleagues, are in fierce competition with each other. Recently, a strong group has separated from the Association of Austrian Women Artists (Vereinigung bildender Künstlerinnen Österreichs) and has opened its first exhibition as the Association of Women Artists and Artisans (Vereinigung bildender Künstlerinnen und Kunsthandwerkerinnen) under the title of *Viennese Women's Art* (Wiener Frauenkunst) in the new building of the Austrian Museum.[40] In other words, a female 'Secession' that unites all the fermenting, forward-pushing elements and leaves nothing to be desired in terms of modern mindedness. Admittedly, one must sometimes 'take the good will for the deed' and forgive any technical deficiencies due to the ideal artistic vigour. But on the whole, thanks to the successful way it has been arranged, the impression of the exhibition is a very favorable one and the debut of the new association thus quite promising.

In Room I, Helene Funke has set off a veritable firework of colours in a collection of 30 oil paintings, watercolours, and drawings, whose pointillist spray pours in equal measure over figural compositions, portraits, and still lifes, condensing into larger areas only in the landscapes. One may call this somewhat intrusive technique affected, but in any case, it is personal and of the utmost liveliness, two qualities that are not all that common in women in particular. Vorarlberg's Stephanie Hollenstein, who displays southern landscapes and floral pieces in Room II, is much more concentrated and forceful in colour. She has shown admirable energy and indomitable drive in difficult personal circumstances, such as when, during the war, she enlisted as 'Soldier Stephan' in the Tyrolean Rifle Companies (Standschützen). These characteristics are demonstrated in the generosity and unity of her compositions, and in the certainty with which she brings an interesting section of nature onto the canvas. In rooms III, VI, VII, and VIII, Anni Schröder-Ehrenfest, Margarete Hamerschlag, Emma Schlagenhausen, Valerie Petter, Marianne Seeland, and Herta Strzygowski have exhibited more or less expressionistically-oriented graphics. In room IV, Christa Deuticke's 'Firehouse' and Sylvia Koller's portrait of an Englishwoman are remarkable. In the adjoining room (V), Broncia Koller's collection of excellent portraits and still lifes. Helene Taussig's colorful drawings

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40)   This is referring to the Austrian Museum of Industry and Design in Vienna (now the Museum of Applied Art).

testify to in-depth study of the Japanese. Louise Merkel-Romee is visibly under the influence of the Young French. Fanni Harlfinger (Room IX) has worked out an original scheme for her landscapes, which, however, does not deny its origins in the decorative arts.

Her village and townscapes, mostly painted on a dark background, do not fill the entire surface encompassed by the frame, but rather take up only the center of the image, leaving part of the background free all around, which now appears like a wide border and thus gives the whole the character of a cracked plate. Honest skill and the striving for an unadorned reproduction of nature speak from the works of Elfriede Miller-Hauenfels (Room X), who only emphasizes the expressive moment in her figural compositions to a greater extent – and even there without exaggeration. Room XI is shared by Emmi Goldschmid-Schur, Elisabeth Schima and Paula Ulrich, all of whom are represented with capable portraits, as well as Katharina Wallner, who has already achieved great virtuosity in the depiction of mighty mountain massifs, and the flower painter Grete Wilhelm, Lydia Schütt, whose dreamy Laxenburg park motifs strike an entirely new red in their planar stylization, and Gertrude Schwarz, whose whimsical Prater painting reveals not only unusual compositional talent but also a most peculiar sense of humor. Anna Lesznai's gouache paintings, inspired by colorful Hungarian folk art and often reminiscent of *Mandlbogen* (traditional Viennese cut-out sheets), then lead on to the decorative arts, which are probably quantitatively, but by no means qualitatively inferior to the works of 'free' art exhibited here.

In the passage to Room XII, which Hilde Jesser-Schmid has decorated with amusing murals, Fini Skarica-Ehrendorfer shows exquisite samples of applied artistic writing and Bettina Biedermann has furnished an entire showcase with tasteful fabrics and upholstery. Luise Spannring and Maria Cyrenius, both based in Salzburg, show ceramics and enamels as well as pretty graphics, and Dina Kuhn, now working in Neutitschein, has sent in a rich collection of her ceramic creations (Room XII a). Gabi Lagus-Möschl brings painted silk scarves, Elfriede Berbalk in association with Dorothea Tilgner gold and silver utensils, Hilde Jesser-Schmid a whole series of costume sketches, and Hilde Wagner-Ascher very distinctive embroidered bags, tulle doilies and masks. From the workshop of Susi Singer [in] Grünbach am Schneeberg come various charming ceramics; Fanni Harlfinger has contributed all kinds of colorful Christmas tree decorations and a small nativity scene, Herta Bucher beautifully shaped glazed clay vessels and figures. Finally, the textiles of Zoe Munteanu, the enamels of Mitzi Otten-Friedmann and Herta Jirasko, the handicrafts of Annie Weil-Kuhn and the lighting fixtures from the studio of Evelyne Raffay should be remembered, and it should be added that the exhibition is also enriched by a collection of excellent English prints and works by Czech women artists. Among them, besides the paintings of Božena Jelínková-Jirásková, Minka Podhajská, Božena Solarová and the woodcuts of Pavla Rousová-Vicenová, we were especially struck by the characterful sculptures of Karla Vobišová.

<div style="text-align: right">Dr. Hans Ankwicz-Kleehoven.</div>

Wolfgang Born

# The World of Women's Art

Originally published as: 'Weibliche Kunstwelt,' *Österreichische Kunst*, 8, 1930, 13–17.

Translated by Acer Lewis.

The third exhibition of the Viennese Women's Art Association Wiener Frauenkunst bears the title 'How Do Women See?' and thus sets itself a program that can be sure of general interest as it is implemented. The point of view was chosen from the beginning in such a way that the emphasis is on independent creation and not on the absorption of impressions, which thus allows the applied arts to be included in the event. This is all the more important because women, by design and tradition, are at home in the decorative and applied arts, and it is precisely here that they develop undisputed dominance. It is the [natural] course of modern progress that the path has led from domestic industry to the workshop and points from the small to the large. Thus, first of all, in full recognition of her achievements, mention should made of the architect Liane Zimbler, who adapted the inhospitable terrace hall of the Hofburg with fine taste. The strip along the window wall is very nicely furnished as a winter garden (designed by Paula Fürth) and provides an excellent setting for the sculpture placed there. The main piece, Eva, by Irma Rothstein, is a work of strong expression and pleasing unity of construction. The opposite corner of the hall is arranged as a rest room. Here Mrs. Zimbler worked in association with Maria Strauss-Likarz, from whom come the inlays of the furniture and wall panels executed in batik. The result of the collaboration is a winning unity. The charming figurative decoration is tactfully subordinated to the delicate mood of the whole. The ceramic parts (the fireplace in the arbor, the fountain basin in the garden) were created by Hertha Bucher. A sense for the possibilities of the material as well as ornamental invention characterize these pieces in equal measure.

The final narrow wall of the room is occupied by a stage intended for lectures and fashion-shows. It is made of orange curtains and, for all its simplicity, has a strong effect as a scenic frame. Along the whole length of the main wall there is a display case for arts and crafts. There are, in addition to the, to some extent, already classic circle of the Wiener Werkstätte with Maria Strauß-Likarz, Mathilde Flögl, Erna Kopřiva, and the sisters Kitty and Lizzi Rix, independent artists with creations of individuality and high quality. Above all, Emmy Zweybrück-Prohaska, who has successfully developed fabric patterns as her specialty, Herta Sladky, whose figurative embroideries are filled with young grace, Ena Rottenberg, by whom there are precious cut glasses to see, Hilde Wagner-Ascher, a creator of tasteful needlework and Susi Singer, a lively ceramicist. The names Ehrenhofer-Skarica (calligraphy), Berbalk (silverwork), Munteanu (fabrics), Otten-Friedmann (enamel) should not be omitted, so that the good work is mentioned in its entirety.

The graphic arts are represented by Anni Schroeder, with her strict style. Her woodcuts are consistently developed from material and technique and are very impressive in their
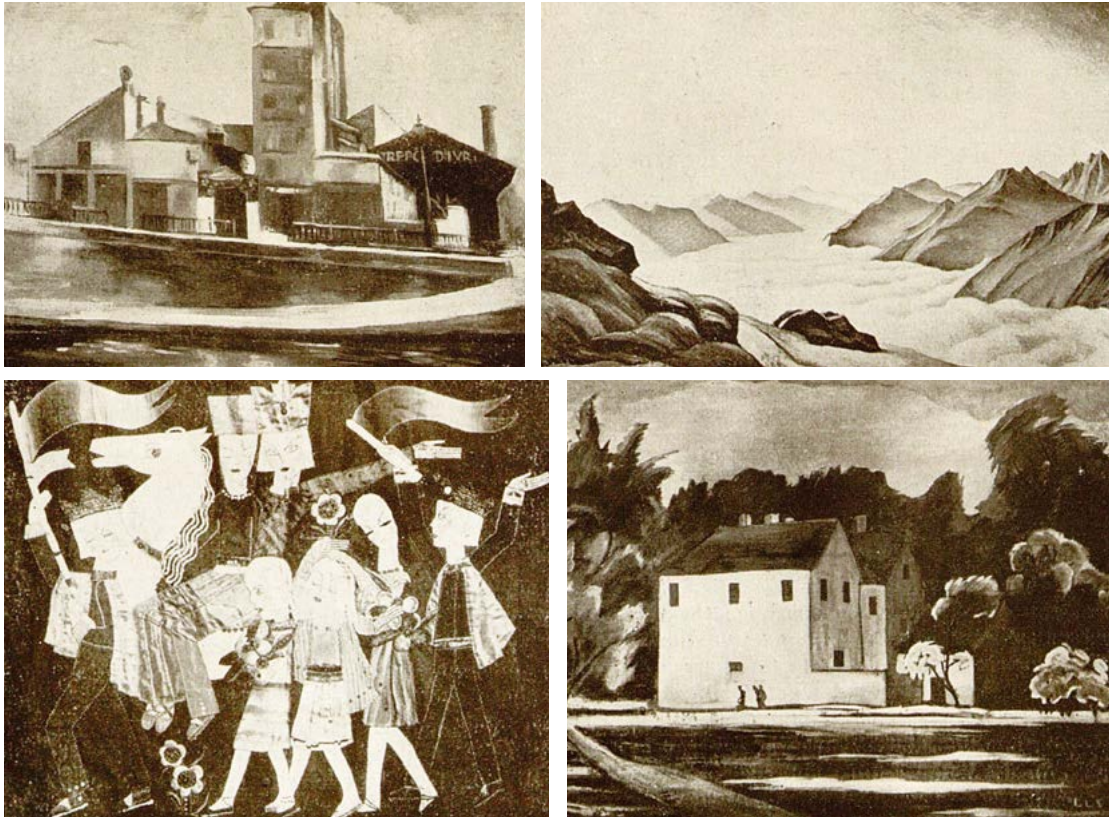
Figure 1: Works by Franziska Zach, Hertha Strzygowski, Herta Sladky and Lydia Schütt.
Source: 'Weibliche Kunstwelt,' *Österreichische Kunst,* 8, 1930, 14.

austere linear language. The *vernis-mou* ('soft-ground') etchings by Pepi Weixlgärtner, broad and generous, do gratifying justice to the plastic force of the subject (heads from Sudan). Marietta Lydis has absorbed the exoticism of Foujita from Paris and works it in a virtuoso manner into graphic paraphrases of the female body; she circumscribes her strangely gliding figures with refined outlines. The greatest imaginable contrast to her in spirit is the highly sensitive Sascha Kronburg, but in their means of expression they also have occasional connections. She, too, thinks in a linear manner. But what her delicate calligraphic pen creates is a pious, fairy-tale, world populated with images. It is also possible to see good pastels by Marianne Seeland and Elfriede Mayer, watercolours by Frieda Salvendy and Freidl Biegler. The terracottas and wood carvings by Hilde Leitich-Uray are interesting.

Among the oil paintings, Herta Strzygowski's landscapes stand out as a captivating attempt to construct the experience of the high mountains in freely composed images, roughly in the spirit of the German Romantic Caspar David Friedrich, but with modern means. Lydia Schütt sticks closer to nature in her deep-toned water and forest paintings. Elfriede Miller-Hauenfels uses strong color contrasts to solve problems of light, and Valerie Petter-Zeis deals with the brightness of the south by resorting to strong local colors.
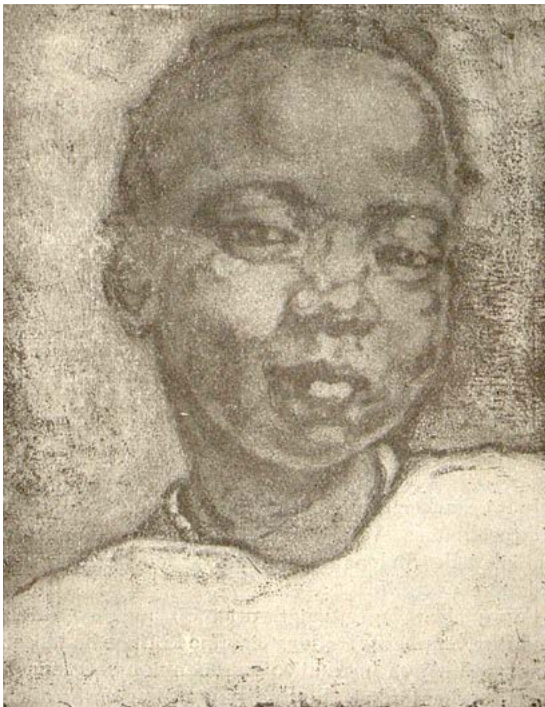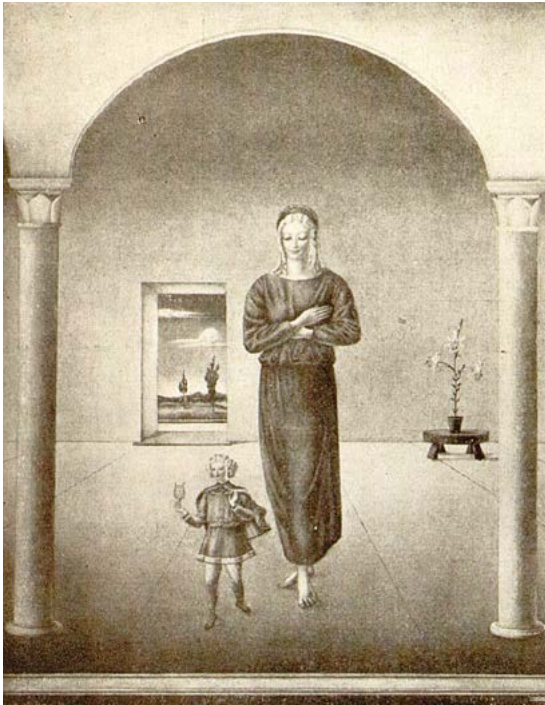
Figure 2: Works by Sascha Kronburg, Fanny Harflinger and Pepi Weixlgärtner.
Source: 'Weibliche Kunstwelt,' *Österreichische Kunst,* 8, 1930, 15.

Fanny Harlfinger shows original cut-out *vedute*, Stephanie Hollenstein a powerful Lake Constance landscape, Anna Lesznai folk scenes of convincing originality. Bettina Bauer's Parisian street paintings and her still-lifes of very ordinary things testify to an artistic will that is not easily satisfied. This young talent deserves attention, Franziska Zach brings works from her recent period of development in Paris, but at the same time she also brings earlier things. One can clearly see which path she is taking: having been brought up on Cubism, she seeks to gain a new disinhibition before nature. A graceful portrait of a girl above all shows the success of her logical and healthy approach.

Two decorative compositions stand out on their own: Erna Piffl's cartoon for a garden fresco and the large tempera painting Jungle by Gertrud Schwarz-Helberger. Both are documents of resolute personalities and solid proficiency -– in temperament, however, as different as one can imagine. Erna Piffl paints a solemnly striding group of women, Gertrud Schwarz unfolds a colourfully bubbling nursery fantasy. These two works illustrate the poles between which the art world of women lies spread out, and already contains a good part of the answer to the question of the exhibition program.

Liane Zimbler

The Modern Apartment

In the home of 30 years ago, the only thing that mattered was the appearance of the reception rooms; hygiene was totally neglected, and adjoining rooms were almost non-existent; it is said that in the best families it happened that the servants were made to sleep on table-beds in the kitchen. Today, the adjoining rooms and the utility rooms are fully entitled to stand alongside the living rooms and perhaps may give an even better picture of the cultural level of their inhabitants. It is no longer the guests but the housewife who has become the centre of the house, to which everything is adapted and subordinated, and the housewife refuses to be the slave of her home, of which she is now the appointed mistress.

Just as Paris has always been the source of inspiration in the field of fashion, so the English house has always remained the model of continental domestic culture.

A modern apartment is not necessarily that which many people imagine under this designation: Constructivist household goods, on bare walls some meagre expressionist paintings. It is true that modern interior design, in reaction against the rampant overgrowth of decor, has produced such excesses; the idea of the new apartment is not affected by it. It is good taste that will keep the golden mean between the overloaded splendour of the Makart period and the bare functional space.

The essence of the modern home is the great practicality in its overall design and craftsmanship. In Vienna in particular, the modern art movement has had a far-reaching educational effect under the artistic guidance of small tradesmen who have always been outstandingly skilled in their crafts.

How do these achievements affect the details?

In an effort to make the rooms appear larger, the walls are usually kept bright. In order to make better use of space in small rooms, cabinets are built when possible, gaining the space above the normal cabinet height as a storage place for rarely used things. Visually, a room with an overly large wardrobe looks smaller than the same room with an entire wall of cabinets. Also, in rooms with hardwood furnishings, especially in bedrooms, people like to make such closet walls from soft wood, which is light or painted.

The washstand has disappeared from the modern bedroom. One either uses the bathroom or builds the washing facility in a corresponding section of the closet wall, painted with oil inside.

Figure 3: Interior in a country house and an apartment living room.
Source: 'Die moderne Wohnung,' *Moderne Welt*, 7: 20, 1926, 24.

Figure 4: Woman's bedroom and boudoir.
Source: 'Die moderne Wohnung,' *Moderne Welt*, 7: 20, 1926, 25.

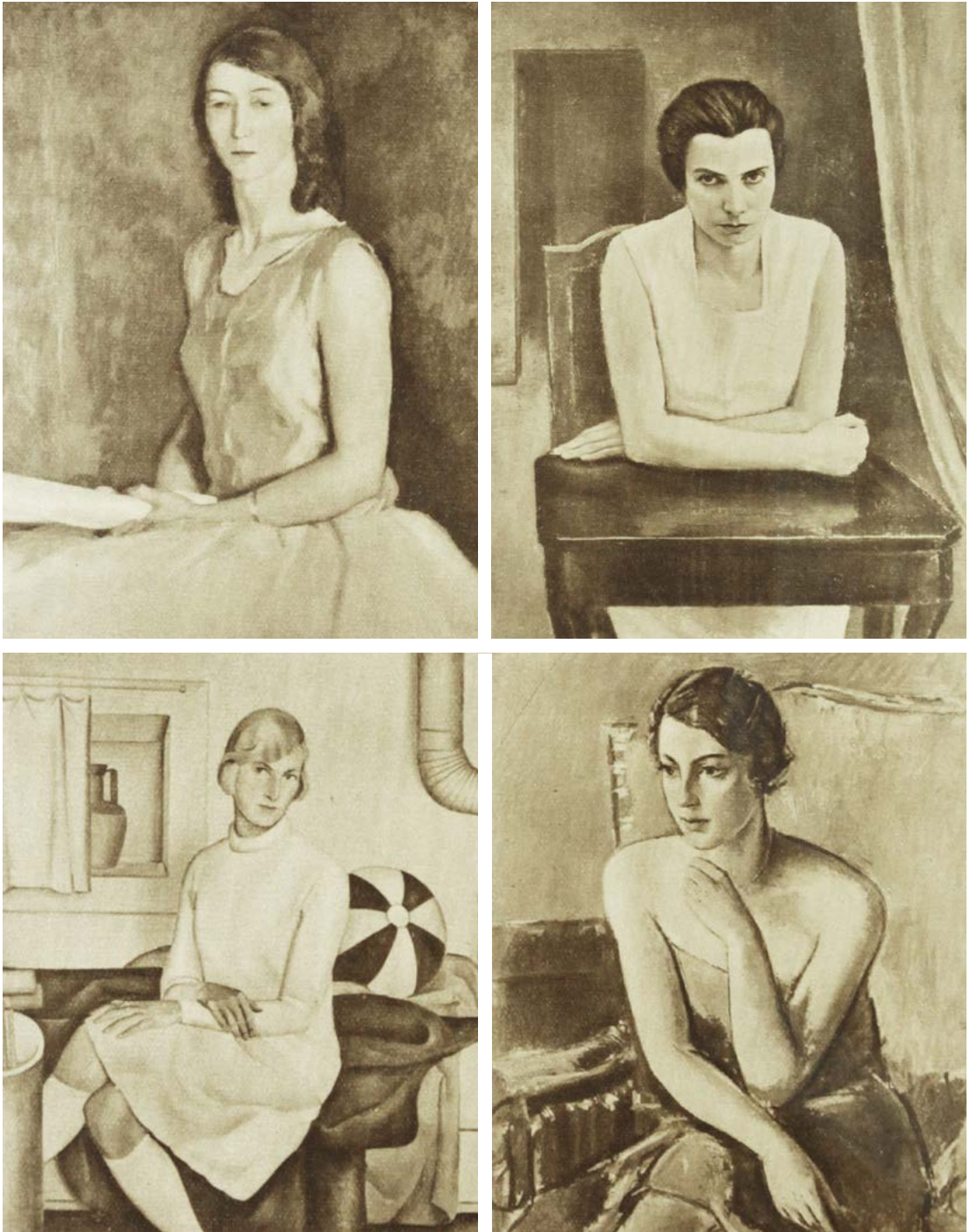**Wolfgang Born**

Who is the Most Beautiful Woman in the Country

Originally published as: 'Wer ist die schönste im ganzen Land? Zum Preisausschreiben für Frauen-portraits.' *Die Bühne,* 214, 1928, 48–49.

Translated by Acer Lewis

This time, the question of the fairy tale was not directed at the mirror nor asked by an evil queen. Instead, it was from an art-loving industrialist, Georg Schicht, to the painters of Germany and Austria, but not without providing solid finances to get the answer. In an epoch which has enough words for art, but little money, doubly commendable! The prize was divided: the sum put up for Germany was given to Willi Jaeckel; for Austria the award-winner was Sergius Pauser.

An exhibition of about thirty of the shortlisted works that were submitted to us is currently on view at the Künstlerhaus and provides a welcome opportunity to trace the thought process of the judges. There is no doubt that in Vienna a conception of the female was adopted that was as far as possible from the typical kind of sports girl one sees these days, and from the familiar style of presentation. In opposition to the internationally polished formula stands the personal and unique experience of a sensitive artist. The jury's verdict can be sure of the most general approval. The art reports of *Die Bühne* have emphatically pointed out the young painter's talent since he surfaced in the Secession.

It should not be forgotten that the decision was by no means easy. The paintings that, up to the last moment, stood in the close competition with each other, have been exhibited along with the main work for comparison. Among them is one by Anton Faistauer, and, as was to be expected, this is a work of sovereign skill and captivating charm. No one will be able to claim that his painting is inferior to that of his younger colleague. It can only have been that recognized mastery hardly needed any more confirmation. As Goethe says, a budding soul will always be grateful. A growing mind (according to Goethe) will always be grateful! Let us hope that this example of well-appointed patronage will be soon and abundantly imitated. It cannot be repeated often enough, seeing how tragic the situation of the artistic and creative individual is in an epoch that is cold and dismissive towards him. In these circumstances every material sacrifice for living and authentic art is an act of culture.

Figure 5: Paintings by Heinrich Krause, Sergius Pauser, Stefan Hlava and Anton Faistauer, submitted to the Elida Competition, illustrated in Wolfgang Born.
Source: 'Wer ist die Schönste im ganzen Land?' in *Die Bühne*, 214, 1928, 48.
The painting by Pauser was the competition winner.

H.S.

The Elida Prize Show

Originally published as: 'Die Elida-Preisschau,' in *Freiheit!* 14 December 1928, 6.

Translated by Acer Lewis

At the same time as the granting of the German Schicht Prize, the Elida Prize for the most beautiful Austrian portrait of a woman was awarded in Vienna. In Germany a racy, modern portrait of a woman by Willy Jaeckel emerged as the prize winner, but in Austria, tastelessness was the victor.

A tour of the Elida prize show, which opened yesterday at the Künstlerhaus in Vienna, shows with shocking clarity what Austrian artists consider beautiful.

There were two opinions about the purpose of the competition. One could define beautiful in a purely painterly sense: the sense of being artistically perfect. But one could also examine 'beautiful' from the point of view of pure female beauty. A union of both beauties would have been the ideal. An unattained ideal, which none of the 34 submitted pictures managed to satisfy.

There remains only the choice of one side or the other.

Instead, the judges chose a third way; one which would have been impossible according to aesthetic sensibilities, that is, if judgments had in fact been made according to any aesthetic sense. This tasteless winner was Sergius Pauser's portrait: a piece which although in technical terms may be certainly labelled a portrait, depicts an interesting woman and not a beauty. In the opinion of the jurors, Austrian beauty presents itself in the form of a bony-cheeked Slavic type in a house dress.

Did the jury consist entirely of senile old men, all of them already beyond any sense of women's beauty? Or was the verdict based on the fact that Sergius Pauser has recently become 'modern,' a salon darling of a social class that wants to appear interesting at any price, even for the sake of good taste?

Among the other 33 portraits that came away empty-handed in this prize competition, one finds some that would have been much closer to the beautiful Austrian than the portrait of the Slav that won the prize.

For example, the portrait painted by Friedrich Jadler, or the one that Alfred Gerstenbrand threw on the canvas with verve. Robert Streit has produced a portrait of a young Viennese girl, one of the most charming pictures seen in recent times. It does not depict a beautiful Austrian woman, just a Viennese 'süßes Mädel' type (sweet little girl), but at least it gives a sight to rejoice in. Erich A. Lamm brought a sports girl to the competition, which, if Felix Harta's portrait of a girl had not been there, would certainly have deserved the prize. Erhard A. Dier's racy Russian girl is beautiful, but also not in the sense demanded, and it is Igo Pötsch's painted woman who most nearly fulfils the idea of the beautiful Austrian woman.

But precisely the prize-winning portrait does not meet all expectations, and thus this 'Elida competition' can be dubbed the Award of the Impotent Negation of All Female Beauty. These words are not even the harshest judgement one may make.

The panel of judges included Ferd. Andri, Rud. Zacher, the poet Ginzkey, Hanns Kropff, Artur Rößler (who must have been appalled by the decision himself), Otto Schönthal and Fritz Silberbauer.

H.S.

reviews

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A Colourful Atlas of Artistic Practice

A Review of: Karoline Majewska-Güde, *Ewa Partum's Artistic Practice: An Atlas of Continuity in Different Locations,* Bielefeld: transcript, 2021. 336 pp. ISBN 978-3-8376-5524-7.

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A Colourful Atlas of Artistic Practice

Petra Lexová

This critical monograph on the Polish-born conceptual and feminist artist Ewa Partum (1946 –) written by the researcher, curator, and art critic Karolina Majewska-Güde, is an extensive exploration of Partum's practice. The book critically analyses and evaluates her writings as well her artworks and approaches her work in different contexts and the different conditions she worked under. Ewa Partum was a pioneer of feminist art in central Europe and also the leading female exponent of conceptual art. Majewska-Güde tries to articulate the historical alterity of her work in the various locations she worked, especially Poland and West Berlin, where she moved in 1982.

The sub-title of the book *An Atlas of Continuity in Different Locations* is appropriate, for this concept allows the author to concentrate on a non-linear account, in which she explores the connection between problems and themes from different periods: her years in Poland (1965–82), her stay in West Berlin (1982–89) and the period of her wider transnational activities (since 1989). The main issues in Partum's artistic practice are highlighted with chapters on 'Critical Engagement with Art Infrastructures,' where the author discusses Partum's curatorial practice, 'Conceptual Art,' and 'Feminist Identifications.' These main chapters are preceded at the beginning with a chapter on 'Existing Cartographies,' where Majewska-Güde focuses on the interpretative and historicising writings about the artist's practice and major themes of her work, including, especially, contemporary debate about Polish conceptualism.[1] The book's conclusion offers an overview of the contemporary global place of Partum's work and its institutionalised position. The concept of an Atlas provides a good insight into the main principles of her work when she intertwines the individual activities. The book also examines the close relation between Partum's feminism, conceptualism and curatorial practice in the Adres Gallery (Galeria Adres), and her private life.

The book is based on her extensive research into Ewa Partum's work and, more generally, into central and eastern European neo-avant-garde and performance art, and is informed by a concern with the history of transnational and feminist art practices. Majewska-Güde studied for her PhD dissertation at the Art and Visual History Department at Humboldt Universit, where she was initially supervised by Piotr Piotrowski and then, after his death, by Susanne von Falkenhausen. The book follows on from previous work by Majewska-Güdem which has also included exhibition projects. Amongst others, she curated an exhibition about the Adres Gallery (Galerie Studio in Warsaw, 2019) which was run by Partum in Łódź between 1972 and

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1)   See, for example, Luisa Nader, *Konceptualizm w PRL,* Warsaw: Wadawnictwo Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 2009; Łukasz Ronduda, *Sztuka polska lat 70. Awangarda,* Warsaw: Centrum Szuki Współczesnej Zamek Ujazdowski, 2009.

1977 as well as co-curating the exhibition *Techniques of Release* (Galleria Fotografii pf, Poznań 2015) with Dorota Walentynowicz , which presented photographic and video works by Polish neo-avant-garde artists.[2] Through meticulous attention to the materials in the artist's private archive and that of the Adres Gallery, Majewska-Güde reveals the importance of Partum's work during the period of state Socialism in Poland and in West Berlin.

In these circumstances it is understandable that she adopted critical 'horizontal' history as her methodological approach, based on Piotr Piotrowski's ground-breaking books and articles on this theme as well as new critical studies undertaken in the light of his ideas.[3] However, she states that 'Horizontal art history is understood here neither as a methodology to be applied nor as a rigid program to follow.' Instead, she tries to conceptualize horizontal art history as an 'operating system that must constantly be updated and further developed by the user: a conceptual tool that enables us to detect and expose silence and aporias within art-historical narratives.' It has to be said, however, that it was difficult to identify examples of these 'exposed silences' and 'aporias' in the book.

In keeping with Piotrowski's way of thinking, Majewska-Güde tries to demonstrate the ways in which Partum's work has qualities that are specific to central and eastern Europe, and to show how this specificity came to the fore. Hence, rather than looking for patterns and influences in Western feminism, she emphasises the specific nature of her feminist concerns which then have parallels with feminist production elsewhere. Piotrowski's ideas then become the author's most frequent reference point.

Engagement with art infrastructures

In contrast to Czechoslovakia, where the 1970s were a time of political restriction during the period of 'normalization' that followed the Prague Spring of 1968, politics and culture in Poland in the same years were characterized by a relative opening to the West. The beginning of the decade was a time when the number of artist-run art institutions rapidly increased, putting into place a new kind of artistic infrastructure. Majewska-Güde argues that the dominant model of the art gallery in 1960s as an 'art laboratory' or 'autonomous artistic sphere' was replaced by a type of institution that problematized its institutional entanglement.[4]

When Partum founded the Adres Gallery in 1972 in Łódź, the small gallery was next to the office of the Association of Polish Artists (Związek Polskich Artystów Plastyków or ZPAP). As Majewska-Güde points out, the neo-avant-garde artists and this small gallery aimed to exploit

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2) *Ewa Partum. My gallery is an idea*, Warsaw: Galeria Adres Archive, 2019; *Technique of Release*, Poznań: Galleria Fotografii, 2015.

3) Piotr Piotrowski, 'On the Spatial Turn, or Horizontal Art History,' trans. M. Wilczynski, *Umeni*, 56: 5, 2008, 378–83; *In the Shadow of Yalta. Art and the Avant-garde in Eastern Europe, 1945–1989*, London: Reaktion Books, 2009. See, too, Beáta Hock and Anu Allas, eds, *Globalizing East European Art Histories. Past and Present*, New York: Routledge, 2018; Ana Janevski, Roxana Marcoci and Ksenia Nouril, eds, *Art and Theory of Post-1989 Central and Eastern Europe. A Critical Anthology*, New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2018; Klara Kemp-Welch, *Networking the Bloc. Experimental Art in Eastern Europe 1968–1981*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2019.

4) Karolina Majewska-Güde, 'Ewa Partum as a Cultural Producer,' *Post. notes on art in a global context*, New York: MoMA, 2019. https://post.moma.org/ewa-partum-as-a-cultural-producer/ (accessed 15 October 2021. See, too, Marcin Lachowski, *Awangarda wobec omstytucji. O sposobych prezentacji sztuki w PRLu*, Lublin: Towarzystwo Naukowe Katolickiego Uniwersytetu Lubelskiego Jana Pawła II, 2006.

their institutional possibilities and initiate dialogue; Partum made a strategic step by placing the gallery near an official institution that would give her relative visibility and access to a professional audience. Connection to an official institution also increased the chances of obtaining occasional financial support.

The Adres Gallery was 'a place, a situation, an opportunity, an offer, for information, proposition, documentation, speculation, provocation and exposition,' Partum stated in a manifesto she wrote just before she opened it. [5] For Majewska-Güde the Adres Gallery was also a tool for creating an art network infrastructure, which helped Partum stay in contact with leading art theoreticians such as Andrzej Kostołowski in Poland, Lászlo Beke in Hungary, and Klaus Groh in West Germany. This was an interesting moment that had parallels in the Czech environment in the activities of Jiří Valoch, who worked as a curator of the House of Art in Brno. Like Partum, Valoch used his position as a curator to form an international network of contacts between conceptual artists. In both of them we can see the interplay of curatorial and artistic practice.

After closing the Gallery, Partum decided to move it to her mother's apartment on Rybia Street, and she supported the whole project out of her personal finances. Her statement: '*my gallery is my home*,' written by hand on a note still in the Partum Archive, is significant in its declaration of a new connection between her private and public life. As Majewska-Güde has pointed out elsewhere: 'Thus, with her new statement, Partum thematized and explored the relationship between art and the everyday, where the everyday was conceptualized as a mode of being rather than as a form of activity.' [6]

Continuity between Partum's conceptualism and feminism

Majewska-Güde also analyses the roots of Partum's feminism and how it relates to her conceptualism. It is not possible, she argues, to identify any specific moment when Partum first encountered or 'discovered' feminism for herself. Rather, she slowly absorbed and processed feminist ideas. A good illustration of this can be seen in the changing sense of *poem by ewa,* a work Partum first created in 1971 and has since been constantly re-making. [7]

In the beginning, the poems were part of her Active Poetry presented within individual performances. The *poem* consisted of taking individual letters of the alphabet, which she cut out of paper and scattered in non-artistic settings. Later, *poems* became isolated in the form of single sheets that combine imprints of the artist's lips with other forms of notation. Most often these were texts with feminist statements such as 'LOVE' or 'my touch is the touch of woman.' Majewska-Güde analyses two main principles in Partum's *poems* over the decades: repetition and the question of the 'subject' that speaks in each *poem*. Here she presented the genealogy of Partum's feminism. [8] She points out: 'Partum's identification as a feminist artist, perceived

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5) Partum published a gallery manifesto in 1971 that was republished in 1972 in *Notatnik Robotnika Sztuki / The Art Worker's Notebook*, a magazine published by the Galeria Elin in Elbląg.

6) Majakowska-Güde, 'Ewa Partum as a Cultural Producer.'

7) Ewa Partum artis continues to make them to 2020.

8) '(1) Thematizing it, (2) creating works or series of artworks that build upon the same organizing principle (poems by Ewa Active Poetry), and (3) repeating her own gestures or works by other authors (Active poetry),' 147.

as the extension of her conceptual practice toward reality [mean her everyday life experience as a woman], remained rare – not only in the context of Polish but also East-Central European art history.'[9]

In 1980, Partum made *Self-Identification*, a series of twelve self-portraits – photomontages and performance documentation – in which she placed images of her naked body into photographs of public spaces. The artwork is a visual statement both about women's position in Polish society and about her self-identification as an artist, in opposition to the traditional definition of woman's place as in the household. The series showed the naked Partum in public areas of Warsaw, walking in the crowd, casually posing beside national monuments and governmental buildings. Majewska-Güde seeks to show that Partum's effort visualized the impossibility of identifying with any existing normative female subject positions in Poland of that time. In her manifesto that accompanied the work, Partum speaks of 'the role model for a woman – a creation of the patriarchal society, functioning in the form of the norms of social life, which effectively handicap woman, with the semblance of respecting them.'[10]

The first time *Self-Identification* was exhibited in public, in 1980 in the Galeria Mała in Warsaw, it included a photomontage of Partum, naked, standing in front of the State Council and it was banned. However, the artist also executed a performance during the opening of the exhibition, during which she read out her feminist manifesto, which she wrote on the blackboard, and then left the gallery in order to walk naked through the public spaces of Warsaw. As Majewska-Güde pointed, Partum 'activated the body as a tool of social dissent available to everybody.'[11]

In addition to discussion of Partum's artworks, Majewska-Güde presents her unpublished notes from 1980 devoted to 'investigating the problem of the identification of women in society.'[12] As Majewska-Güde argues, the borders between private and public were porous in Partum's artwork, a view supported by the art critic Gislind Nabakowski, who has noted that in Partum the 'private becomes political and can be utilized to reveal a patriarchal rule in society, which brings her close to the Western artists dealing with issues of identity politics.'[13]

Between Socialist Poland and West Berlin

Throughout the book, we can see a process of articulating the thematic and semantic shifts that occurred in Partum's artistic practice in the different socio-political contexts of socialist Poland and West-Berlin. These become clear when she discusses the role of public space. In the chapter on 'The Space of the Political' Majewska-Güde focuses her analysis on two para-digmatic works realized in the public space: *The Legality of Space* (Poland, 1971) and *Private*

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9)   Ibid., 225.

10)   Ewa Partum, 'Self-Identification,' 1970/80 typescript in the Ewa Partum archive, in Majewska-Güde, 158.

11)   Ibid., 163.

12)   Ewa Partum, handwritten notes, undated, in the Ewa Partum archive.

13)   See Gislind Nabakowski, 'Apprehension and Masquerade: "Letter Millionaire" – Ewa Partum`s Path to Conceptual Poetry and Feminist Gender Theory,' in Angelika Stepken, ed., *Gedankenakt ist ein Kunstakt. Ewa Partum Retrospective 1965–2001*, Karlsruhe: Badischer Kunstverein, 2001, 129–139. Majewska-Güde, *Partum`s Artistic Practice*, 225.

Performance (West Berlin, 1985), 'in order to define a set of tactics employed by the artist in both locations.'

It is interesting to note Majewska-Güde's claim that Partum had more freedom as a woman in public space in Poland than if she had been a man, for she was less likely to be perceived by the authorities as potentially political, unlike her male colleagues. It was because of these circumstances that it was possible for her to undertake *The Legality of Space* (1971), a work in which she covered Freedom Square (Plac Wolności) in Łódź with a collection of traffic signs and information boards with an accompanying statement, even though the artwork 'problematized the hegemonic public sphere and indicated the possibilities of free artistic activities.'[14] In contrast to this stands *Private Performance* (1985) which the artist made in West Berlin. Partum continued with her interest in the problem of legality and the bureaucratic and administrative procedures of power, but in capitalist West Germany the issues were different from those in Socialist Poland. Majewska-Güde points out that the issue of legitimacy did not refer to the appropriation of the public space by the official regime but rather to the artist's new status as a non-citizen or political refugee. *Private Performance* explored Partum's body as a 'substitute for a public space, and its legality became not the subject of this work but an effort of it.'[15]

Partum's artistic practice after 1989

In contrast to many other publications on Partum, the book does not conclude with 1989, but, rather, goes on to discuss Partum in the reconfigured post-1989 art world and its new artistic infrastructures. It is a logical step that allows the author to show that Partum's work is not closed and that during the different decades, it reacted sensitively to the environment in which Partum created it.

We can see this transformation in Partum's feminism. Majewska-Güde shows changes in Partum's artistic strategies in her self-reflective performances in West Berlin. 'In these actions, Partum's focus moved away from social issues [like in Poland] towards conceptualizations of subject / object relations as found in performance art.' Subsequently, she points to the shift within Partum 's feminist practice after 1989, when Partum identify herself with contemporary global feminism.

Majewska-Güde demonstrated this shift in the delegated group performance *Pearls* (2006) performed at the Museo Vostell Malpardita in Spain. Partum there problematized the position of immigrant women cleaners. The performance consisted of cleaning the museum and kissing yellow fabric. Employers of the cleaners were present in the audience. As Majewska-Güde points out: 'Partum's *Pearls* is not about complicated cultural identities in the post-

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14) Ibid., 244. – The text of the statement: 'THE SITUATION OF A TOTAL PROHIBITON, the smaller the field of a manual action, the bigger the expansion of a space as a fact. Through the negation of any situation in the conceptual sphere. THE SMALLER THE FIELD FOR ANY GIVEN ACTION THE BIGGER THE POSSIBILITY FOR AN ENTIRELY FREE SPACE TO EMERGE. THE SPACE IS INVISIBLE, UNVEILED, DISINTERESTED, the disinterestedness of the space is its possibility, it is an artistic fact. Any action here is superfluous. https://post.moma.org/texts-by-conceptual-artists-from-eastern-europe-poland/4/ (accessed 22 June 2022).

15) Ibid., 253.

national world but rather about national infrastructures that still regulate poeple's everyday lives in different trans/national locations within a globalized world.'

Majewska-Güde also revives some of Partum's old artworks and performances and consider subsequent presentations, such as *The Legality of Space*, which was performed in a new site-specific version in 2006 in the Wyspa Institute of Art in Gdansk, where she recreated the work to set it in a new context. The artwork was also reinterpreted in a performance in 2012 on Liberty Square in Łódź. The action tried to activate the city dwellers and create 'an inclusive temporary public sphere achieved through social mobilization and the articulation of needs and dreams.' Majewska-Güde shows us that Eva Partum's work is still relevant. Her artistic practice continues to respond to and actively engage with the problems of contemporary feminism, the infrastructure of art, and the tension between public and private space.

Conclusion

Karolina Majewska-Güde does not aim to offer a final exhaustive re-evaluation of Ewa Partum's work. The book nevertheless offers a comprehensive insight into her art. It makes an essential contribution to understanding the 'rediscovered' personality of conceptual and feminist art of the second half of the twentieth century in Poland and central and eastern Europe. Majewska-Güde, at the same time, disturbs the prevailing male optic of research into conceptual art in this socio-political area. It shows how closed this circle of male artists was, who did not respect Ewa Partum's work at all. Nevertheless, the book convincingly shows that Ewa Partum's work had a unique position in the context of east-central Europe in its connection between feminism and conceptualism. It is also an important book in its view of the female conceptual artist in this context where conceptualism is primarily a male domain. The tracing of Partum's work over the three periods and different socio-cultural environments of socialist Poland, West Berlin and the post-1989 globalised world is perhaps the most interesting part of the book. It illustrates how much Partum's work has changed over time and also how relevant it remains.

Navigating Czech Art History after the Second World War

A Review of: Milena Bartlová, *Dějiny českých dějin umění 1945–1969* (The History of Czech Art History 1945–1969), Prague: UMPRUM, 2021. 552 pp. ISBN 978-80-88308-11-9

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Navigating Czech Art History after the Second World War

A Review of: Milena Bartlová, *Dějiny českých dějin umění 1945–1969* (The History of Czech Art History 1945–1969), Prague: UMPRUM, 2021. 552 pp. ISBN 978–80–88308–11–9.

Marta Filipová

How does one write the history of art history? And who is it that writes art history in different political, social and historic contexts, and the art history of what? These are some of the main questions posed by Milena Bartlová in a highly self-reflective book, *Dějiny českých dějin umění 1945–1969*. The reflection here does not only concern the scholarship in the field of art history in the given period, for it is also somewhat personal, as Bartlová explores the very environment she has come from, and which has formed her. She also revises some of her own previous findings and considerations on the state of the field. The book's focus is the discipline of art history in Czechoslovakia. Looking at a period which is framed by the end of the Second World War and the year 1969, when the hopes of the Prague Spring for a reform of the Communist regime were definitely halted, Bartlová delves into a time in the history of Czechoslovakia that can still hide various skeletons and cast shadows onto the present. Her attempt is therefore to write a sincere and open discussion of a period that saw the Communist takeover of power in 1948, the Stalinist repressions, the era of post-Stalinism in the late 1950s, and the political easing of the 1960s terminated by the 1968 occupation.

So far, literature that attempted a comprehensive look at the field in this period has been limited. Rudolf Chadraba's two-volume survey of Czech art history, published in 1987, does not provide much detailed analysis of the post-war period.[1] On the other hand, the considerably more exhaustive history of the art history department at Charles University by Biegel, Prahl and Bachtik (reviewed in the previous issue of *Art East Central*) offers very detailed insight into one aspect of academic art history, mostly leaving out the external circumstances.[2] Following the growing interest in the history of the field of the socialist realm, *Dějiny českých dějin umění 1945–1969* therefore brings much needed insight into the ways art history had to cope not only with a change of a political regime but also a new emphasis on comprehensible art encouraged from the Soviet Union.[3]

Bartlová explains her motivation to write this book in her introduction, which is a polemic directed at the anticipated future critic and sceptic. It reads like a targeted response to a discussion that has or will necessarily take place within the Czech (art) historical community. Looking back at a period that many lived through can still be a very sensitive issue. When the Czech historian Michal Pullmann and his colleague, Pavel Kolář, argued that during the so-

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1) Rudolf Chadraba, ed., *Kapitoly z českého dějepisu umění*, 2 vols, Prague: Odeon, 1987.

2) Richard Biegel, Roman Prahl, and Jakub Bachtík, eds, *Sto let Ústavu pro dějiny umění na Filozofické fakultě Univerzity Karlovy*, Prague, Charles University, 2020.

3) Krista Kodres, Kristina Jõekalda and Michaela Marek, *A Socialist Realist History? Writing Art History in the Post-War Decades*, Cologne: Böhlau, 2019.

called normalization of the 1970s and 80s, ordinary Czechoslovak citizens were, through their behaviour, to an extent complicit in retaining the Communist regime, the criticism from many sides was immense.[4] Pullmann was accused of condoning Communism and trivialising some of its non-democratic aspects. Yet, the authors asked several important, but uncomfortable, questions. How did the regime make its way into everyday life and the workplace, how did citizens negotiate it, and sometimes contribute to its perpetuation? This kind of questioning sees the people (factory workers, shop assistants, art historians) as those with agency, they were not a mindless body that can be manipulated at will by a handful of evil apparatchiks. Many made personal, admittedly hard, choices to work within the system and, inevitably, for the system.

Bartlová also puts people to the fore of her study. Art historians, mainly those working in academia, become actors within a specific academic network, which is an approach she uses here, informed mainly by Bruno Latour but also Benjamin Bratton, Michel Foucault, Rosi Braidotti, or Pierre Bourdieu. Individuals operate within the networks of institutions of education and work, negotiate power relations, are subjected to external events, and contribute to them. In Czechoslovakia their scholarship, seemingly apolitical, is thus inevitably framed by these systemic circumstances as well as by the forms of communication that are allowed within them. It was mainly access to information – whether to first– and second-hand artistic material or to publications and the dissemination of one's research – that put limits on the kind of research that could be conducted. The inability to travel abroad freely under Communism or communicate with peers thus led many to focus on predominantly local art works, a practice that has thrived until these days.

Communicating art history

The author explores these very issues in ten thematic chapters that cover topics like institutions, communication, or research methods. We learn who the key actors and sites that formed art history were, what approaches and subjects they chose and why, and under what political circumstances and power relations this was taking place. As the author argues, such an account cannot be written as a linear history and with this approach she deliberately creates a stack of layered infrastructures of art history. As a result, the chapters could be read independently as self-standing texts, although they sometimes repeat some basic information several times.

Throughout the book, the reader is introduced to the practices at various art historical institutions with Prague in the centre, the ways art historians were allowed to communicate because of the different political ruptures, the politicisation of academic knowledge and the potential resistance to the prescribed themes and forms of behaviour. In this context, Bartlová explores the ability of some art historians to reconcile the formalism that had survived from the times before WWII with the demands of the official Communist ideology after 1948 that favoured comprehensible socialist realism through applied methodologies and rhetoric.

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4) Michal Pullmann, Pavel Kolář, *Co byla normalizace?* Prague: Lidové noviny, 2017; Michal Pullmann, *Konec experimentu. Přestavba a pád komunismu v Československu*, Prague: Scriptorium, 2011.

Bartlová points out that some art historians adopted Aesopian language to formally conform to the discourse modelled by Soviet art history, while including hidden messages for specialised colleagues.

There were several ways of doing this, but a common practice for this ingenious exercise was to include an introduction firmly outlining allegiance to Marxism-Leninism. The remainder of the text, however, would then try to avoid any political conformity. There was, however, a more astute way using very carefully chosen wording that is best exemplified by lectures and texts by Vincenc Kramář (1877–1960). In the interwar period, this graduate of the Vienna School was a Prague-based art historian and collector of Cubism, which he tried to defend even after the Second World War. Kramář joined the Communist party in 1945 and a year later published a pamphlet on the relationship between the party and fine art.[5] While the official stance of the Communist regime was against formalism and any non-figurative representation, Kramář boldly defended Cubism and argued, for instance, that 'we cannot see mere formalism in every work of art that does not represent a social topic or a life of a person.'[6] Even Cubism was, in his view, capable of expressing political and social messages and could be revolutionary. And where Communist propaganda required art to be comprehensible and non-elitist, he claimed that 'paintings [were] not comprehensible or incomprehensible in themselves. [...] With a standard level of intelligence, one can understand anything,' especially through education, while the true meaning and message of art can be grasped only by those who have a sense of the life of lines, shapes, colours and light. Although Kramář was no longer one of the main actors that formulated art history as a discipline after the war, his rhetorical eloquence exemplifies the possible ways of responding to the official impositions on art and art history.

People in art history

The focus on individuals and their workings within the system allows Bartlová to read art historians as not solely driven by a concern with national identity, which had often been the case with studies of earlier periods. Saying that, these issues inevitably do appear now and then, and the two final chapters deal with the questions of the nation and identity, both internal and external. Yet in the context of the book as a whole, these themes appear marginal. There are historical reasons for that. The most significant 'others' for Czech art historians before the Second World War, German scholars based in Bohemia and Moravia, mostly disappeared from Czechoslovakia with the end of the conflict. They get some attention throughout the book but are not considered the key protagonists. Their post-war interactions with their Czech colleagues reveal how the discipline moved on to more cooperative exchanges despite the political divides after the Second World War. For instance, Karl Maria Swoboda (1889–1977), once a student of Max Dvořák and a professor at the German University in Prague and curator at several art institutions in Prague, played an important role in the interwar period. Swoboda was arrested following the liberation of Czechoslovakia in 1945, but two Czech art historians

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5)   Vincenc Kramář, *Kulturně politický program KSČ a výtvarné umění*, Prague: Svoboda, 1946.

6)   Kramář, *Kulturně politický program*, 18.

Antonín Matějček (1889–1950) and Zdeněk Wirth (1878–1961), pleaded for his release. Afterwards, Swoboda left for Vienna but from there he remained in touch with his former peers in Czechoslovakia. He helped, for example, the younger Czech art historian Jaromír Neumann (1924–2001) to uncover Dvořák's archival documents in Vienna in 1959.

Such pieces of information, when put together from the different chapters, reveal that Czech art historians were not as completely isolated from external relations and contacts as they are often assumed to have been under the strict Communist regime. Nevertheless, these are more exceptions than the rule; they show more the power of personal or professional friendship than a general desire to undermine the political system. After all, Neumann, who had been a student of Matějček, became one of the crucial and most crafty agents in Czech post-war art history and an ardent Communist. Together with Jaroslav Pešina (1912–1992) and Jiří Kotalík (1920–1996), he held some of the most important and influential positions that defined the subject: these three were the heads of the art history department in Prague (Pešina), the newly established Institute of Art History of the Academy of Sciences (Neumann), and of the Art Academy and the National Gallery (Kotalík).

Who were the individuals, agents and actors that formed the history of Czech art history in the period between 1945 and 1969? Bartlová fittingly calls them (not without a pinch of sarcasm) *the big men* of art history for their influence, charisma and, after all, gender. They were a small group of art historians in the most powerful positions, based in Prague. And even though Bartlová makes a concerted effort to provide a holistic picture of art history that included a number of female art historians, including Růžena Vacková (1901–82), Anežka Merhautová (1919–2015) and Hana Volavková (1904–85), it is clear that the whole period was indeed dominated by (the big) men. This is something to be acknowledged as having shaped art history as a discipline for decades and in some forms it continues until today. After all, Bartlová remains the only female professor of art history in the Czech Republic.

Locations for art history

From the examination of how art history was practised in the given period, it also becomes clear that the geographical centre of the art historical activities was Prague. While Bartlová discusses some locations outside of the capital, especially the art history department in Brno, it was the capital, Prague, with Charles University, the art historical institute of the Academy of Sciences, the National Gallery and other national institutions, that was key. With a focus on *Czech* art history, Slovakia is not covered here to any great extent, although it features as part of the political context.

The Czech focus also invites comparison with the previously mentioned anniversary book on the Department of Art History at Charles University. Bartlová's book covers the some of the same timespan. Where the compendium dwells on detailed description of the academic work, teaching and life of the different members of the department, supplementing the historic narrative with people's biographies, Bartlová's interest and contribution lie more in the broader circumstances, which locate the individuals concerned in specific networks. This, however, is at the expense of providing a sense of the interests of individual scholars, whose

names appear throughout the book as if they were familiar to all. As the book was published only in Czech, one can assume it is meant only for Czech readers. They may recognise prominent personalities like Matějček, Kotalík or Neumann, but there are still plenty whose work they may not be aware of. This was most probably the author's intention, to avoid delving into too much detail, but many readers would need to find out from other sources what the art historians in questions were actually interested in or what they published. *Dějiny českých dějin umění* nevertheless provides a fascinating study of a relatively short period but one, which many people, including art historians, had to learn to navigate. It considers art history as one of the humanities disciplines, with a primary interest in human beings as historical actors. Throughout the book, Bartlová argues that it is the human factor that was the essential contributor and active shaper of the field of art history, which was formed, on the one hand, by the discipline's traditions and conventions established before 1945 and, on the other hand, by the political circumstances and demands of the Communist regime. The latter contributed to the relative isolation Czech art historians found themselves in from the mid-1940s onwards, where any substantial exchanges between art historical thinking in Czechoslovakia and abroad at the time were limited, albeit not impossible. As another important rupture in 1968 caused new upheavals in the field, the second part of Bartlová's study, which has already been announced, and which covers subsequent decades that are all too close to the present, will certainly renew debate about *who* writes art history, on *whom*, and *how*.

Estonians, Germans and their Heritage

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Keywords

Estonians, Germans and their Heritage

A Review of: Kristina Jõekalda, *German Monuments in the Baltic Heimat? A Historiography of Heritage in the 'Long Nineteenth Century'* (Tallinn: Estonian Academy of Art, 2020). Paperback / PDF 365 pp. ISBN 978–9949–594–99–3 (print); ISBN 978–9916–619–00–1 (pdf)

Matthew Rampley

When, in 1902, as newly appointed General Conservator of the Austrian Central Commission for Research and the Preservation of Artistic and Historical Monuments, Alois Riegl entered the political minefield of cultural heritage, he found that one of his principal ideological adversaries was not one of the many advocates of nationalism in the Habsburg Empire but, rather, the Strasbourg-based art historian Georg Dehio. In his numerous writings on heritage conservation, Riegl argued that individual works of art and architecture might be meaningful to a variety of different communities; no single group had the right to monopolise the meanings of specific artefacts and structures.[1] For Dehio, in contrast, they should be understood as expressions of national identity. The object that became the focus of this position, Heidelberg castle, is less important, perhaps, than their general positions, with Dehio as representative of the newly confident German Reich and Riegl as the scholarly face of the multi-ethnic Danube monarchy.[2]

Dehio gave his name to the authoritative survey of topographical studies of Germany that, even now, form a standard point of reference. But the surprising fact about Dehio is that this powerful spokesman of turn of the century German nationalism was originally not an imperial German, but rather a Russian subject, for he had grown up in the Baltic port of Reval, now Tallinn, and he studied first at the University of Dorpat (now Tartu). Tallinn and Tartu are now in Estonia, and amidst the celebration of its regained independence in 1991 (Estonia came into existence in 1918 following the collapse of Russia and was then annexed by Stalin in 1940) it is often forgotten that Estonian culture was marked not only by the relation between Estonians and Russians, but also by that between Estonians and Germans. For, as in many other territories in central and eastern Europe, many of the towns of Estonia had been founded by German immigrants, and Germans formed the backbone of the urban mercantile and, later, professional classes, as well as the gentry on rural estates.

Germans had been present in Livonia (the territory covering present-day Estonia and Latvia) since the thirteenth century, first as conquerors in the Northern Crusade, and then as settlers and traders; both Tallinn and Tartu were members of the Hanseatic league. The history of the Germans on the Baltic littoral has been extensively studied, and many figures deemed to be

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1) See Alois Riegl, *Kunstwerk oder Denkmal? Alois Riegls Schriften zur Denkmalpflege,* Vienna: Böhlau, 1995.

2) Georg Dehio, *Was wird aus dem Heidelberger Schloß werden?* Strassburg: Trübner, 1901.

central to German culture and society having come from the Baltic regions.[3] They include, for example, the philosopher Nicolai Hartmann (1882–1950), the theologian Adolf von Harnack (1851–1930), the biologist Jacob von Uexküll (1864–1944), the Nobel Prize-winning chemist Wilhelm Ostwald (1853–1932) and the mathematician Georg Cantor (1845–1918).

Germans left their imprint across the cultures of Livonia, not least, linguistically. Finnish and Estonian are closely related languages, but Estonian is distinguished by the proportion of its lexicon that is of German origin, including the terms for art and painter: 'kunst' and 'maaler.' For a long time, German was the language of scientific and intellectual exchange. In 2000, for example, the first volume was published in Tallinn of a three-volume anthology of art historical texts in Estonia, covering the period from the late eighteenth century to 1918; the majority of the excerpts were originally written in German.[4]

It is the place of Germans in Estonia that is the subject of this book or, rather, the story of how the German-speaking inhabitants of modern-day Estonia developed a sense of local identity and artistic heritage during the nineteenth century, and how the art and architecture of the region developed into a field of study. In keeping with recent scholarship on the German diaspora across central and eastern Europe, a central claim of this book is that they identified themselves as 'Baltic Germans' rather than as members of the larger German nation. Hence their local identity as 'Baltic' Germans was the focus of communal identity-construction.[5]

Except for a long methodological introduction specially written for this English edition, the volume consists of articles that were previously published elsewhere, some of them originally in Estonian and translated into English for the first time here. They address topics such as: the rise of a sense of local identity through picturesque topographical illustrations; the emergence of a local art historical literature; evolving notions of Baltic and Baltic-German identity; ideas of local cultural heritage and the development of learned societies concerned with the promotion of local heritage; debates over the relation between Baltic German and Estonian heritage.

The essays offer an invaluable source of material on the role of the visual arts in the construction of an identity by a marginal group, and one can think of numerous parallels elsewhere. Jõekalda notes that the formation of a discourse on art and architectural history in Estonia (and the Baltic region more generally) can be fitted into a larger Europe-wide narrative with parallels elsewhere. The question of the relation between Estonian and German Baltic visual and material culture parallels the debate in late nineteenth-century Bohemia that focused on Czech and Bohemian German culture, or Transylvania, where it was the relation between Hungarian, German and Romanian culture that was the centre of interest. Like those examples, a hierarchy was posited in Estonia; high art was the domain of the Baltic Germans, whereas Estonians were restricted to vernacular and folk art. This created challenges for those seeking to write histories of Estonian art after independence in 1918, for it seemed

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3) See, for example, Gert von Pistohlkors, *Deutsche Geschichte im Osten Europas: Baltische Länder,* Munich: Siedler Verlag, 1994.

4) Juta Keevallik, Rein Loodus and Lehti Viiroja, eds, *Kunstikirjutus Eestis 1777 – 1863 / Kunstschreibung in Estland von 1777 bis 1863,* Tallinn: Academy of Sciences, 2000. The other two volumes cover the period 1864–1900 (published in 2004) and 1900–1918 (published in 2006).

5) See Krista O'Donnell, Renate Bridenthal, and Nancy Reagin, eds, *The Heimat Abroad: The Boundaries of Germanness*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005.

that the artistic and architectural heritage of their new state was mostly not 'theirs.' Yet in contrast to Bohemia and Transylvania, where heritage was pulled into toxic debates over national affiliation, the first generation of Estonian art historians writing around the turn of the century came to accept this complex situation and avoided engaging in pointless battles over whether specific works were 'German' or 'Estonian.' Indeed, Jõekalda notes, Estonian-speaking scholars neatly sidestepped the issue by distinguishing between 'Baltic' art of the period before 1918 and 'Estonian' art for the period after although, given that there were still many Germans living in the new state between the wars, this was not without its own flaws.

For researchers interested in the cultures of German communities and societies dispersed across Europe, this is a helpful guide to a subject that is often little known. It is a substantial text, but due to its origins in a set of separately published essays, there is considerable repetition of some basic ideas and historiographic points. This is unfortunate, because the book would undoubtedly have benefitted from more concrete detail. For example, the reader is left with little sense of which *specific* works of art and architecture served the construction of regional and national identities. A parallel example might illustrate the point. In Bohemia, St. Vitus cathedral in Prague and other monuments of its medieval past were the subject of furious debates over whether or not Bohemia was merely a German cultural territory or whether its distinctive culture was also the product of Czech creative endeavour. Architects such as Peter Parler, the Dientzenhofer dynasty or Jan Blažej Santini Aichel were likewise subject to competing claims over nationality. In contrast, Jõekalda discusses only one case in any detail, the twelfth-century church of St. Olaf in Tallinn. Hence, we have only a surface and rather general overview of how German writers described their artistic and architectural heritage. We learn that Baltic Germans identified Gothic architecture as a specific symbolic bearer of communal identity, but what were the monuments with which they identified or which they viewed as particularly significant? This absence of discussion is all the more regrettable since the book contains numerous illustrations of individual historic buildings that, we might presume, acquired significance as emblems of local history and identity.

Considerable space is devoted to Wilhelm Neumann (1849–1919), one of the most prolific and prominent authors of art historical studies of the Baltic region, but other authors seem somewhat anonymous marginal figures. The period in which Neumann and his contemporaries reached maturity was one of extraordinary intellectual ferment, in which established ideas of scientific art history were discarded and new ones advanced by the likes of Riegl, Heinrich Wölfflin and August Schmarsow, and it would be informative to learn how Neumann related to these new ideas. One contemporary author has suggested that Neumann, for all his status as the putative 'father of Baltic art history,' actually had a rather narrow approach.[6] Whether or not one agrees with this verdict, an interpretation of the significance of his work beyond that of consciousness-raising would have been welcome.

The essays allude to the wider social background – including useful discussion of the creation of societies that formed a crucial part of the infrastructure of enquiry – but they raised further questions one might have wished to be asked. For example, where did would-be scholars train? Given that art history was not taught at Dorpat / Tartu (although Dehio studied

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6) Stella Pelše, Creating the Discipline: Facts, Stories and Sources of Latvian Art History,' *Kunstiteaduslikke Uurimusi*, 19: 3–4, 2010, 26–41.

there), where did they go? This is not a matter of mere provision of extra information, since this may tell us how Baltic Germans identified themselves. Neumann studied at the University of Leipzig, but what about other historians? For much of the nineteenth century art history was taught as part of history degrees, and one presumes that this was how Dehio learned the subject. The University of Tartu was the main higher educational institution for Baltic Germans, drawing students from Riga as well as Tallinn and towns closer to hand. It would therefore be instructive to know what kind of an intellectual centre formed at the university in the nineteenth century. How did discourses of art and architecture relate to other disciplines, such as history and literary study? The essays in this book discuss the relation between art history and ethnography, which started out as an exoticising field of study reflecting the semi-colonial attitudes of Germans and then, in the early twentieth century, was appropriated by Estonians championing national vernacular culture. Otherwise, however, art history is presented here in an intellectual vacuum. Given that it was important for the crystallisation of Baltic German identity, what political discourses did it draw on and inform?

The example of Dehio also suggests that at least some Baltic Germans did indeed see themselves as part of the larger unitary 'Volk' and not merely members of a regional group. So how did Baltic German intellectuals position themselves in relation to that wider German-speaking world? It is striking that Dehio is hardly mentioned in this volume, presumably because he wrote little about the art and architecture of the Baltic regions. Yet this seems unduly narrow as an approach, for his increasingly nationalistic publications invite some form of commentary. Might we interpret them as a compensatory gesture to overcome a sense of being on the margins, of not being sufficiently German? Given that one of the most famous Baltic Germans was Alfred Rosenberg, the Nazi architect and ideologist, does this cast doubt on the claim that Baltic Germans were too conscious of their distinctiveness to feel part of the greater German nation?

The answer to this question lies outside the scope of these essays, and it would be unfair to criticise them for not addressing them, but there is nevertheless one curious omission: Russia. The Tsarist administration is hardly mentioned, which seems an odd oversight given the attempt by the author to set Baltic German intellectual life in some kind of social and historical context. Dorpat/Tartu university was originally founded in the 1620s as the Academia Gustaviana in what was then a Swedish province. It was closed down in 1710 when Sweden ceded Livonia to Russia as a result of the Great Northern War. It was founded again in 1802 by the German social elite under a new charter granted by Tsar Alexander I. For much of the nineteenth century it enjoyed a 'golden age' as one of the leading universities in the German-speaking world (and certainly in Russia) until, in the 1880s, a policy of russification led to the marginalization of German teaching and scholarship. How did this impact on art historical writing? To what extent did a literature focused on cultivating a distinctive identity encounter official opposition from the Tsarist regime? Or did it serve the purposes of that regime when scholars developed a distinctive regional identity that set them apart from German-speakers elsewhere? Austria-Hungary provides a useful parallel here, where the idea of a Ruthenian identity was encouraged as a way of disavowing similarities between Ukrainian speakers in Habsburg Galicia and those across the border in the Russian Empire. Did Baltic German historiography unwittingly play a comparable role? By not explicitly addressing this question,

this volume seems to have lost an opportunity for a discussion of wider scope, since it points towards the bigger issue of how Baltic Germans defined themselves not only in relation to Estonian but also to their political overlords.

Despite such caveats, this collection of essays should provide an important starting point for anyone interested not only in the historiography of art but also in the cultural and intellectual life of the Baltic region and of the Russian Empire. It will hopefully spur further enquiry into this fruitful topic.

Red Army Monuments in Poland from Creation to Destruction

A Review of: Dominika Czarnecka, *'Monuments in Gratitude' to the Red Army in Communist and Post-Communist Poland*, trans. Julita Mastalerz. Paris / Budapest: L'Harmattan, 2021. 724 pp. ISBN 978-2-343-22941-6.

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Red Army Monuments in Poland from Creation to Destruction[1]

Mischa Gabowitsch

Keeping track of Soviet war memorials

Monuments commemorating the Red Army's participation in WWII are almost certainly the most widespread type of war memorial on our planet. Built in a variety of shapes, sizes and materials, they were designed and erected by actors ranging from central leadership figures from Moscow to individual Soviet prisoners of war and foreign sculptors or local administrations. Such memorials are found from Manchuria to Norway and California to Israel, though most were built in or near the European theatres of war where Soviet soldiers fought and died: in the Western parts of the Soviet Union and in Central Europe. These monuments were built at different times, from the first wartime burial spot indicators to post-Soviet cenotaphs. They were erected in a range of different locations, from remote forests to military and civilian cemeteries to central urban squares. They have served a wide variety of different purposes, from grave markers to propaganda vehicles, with one and the same monument often being used in multiple and intertwined ways.

Somewhat counter-intuitively, given the totalitarian ambitions of its political system, and unlike several West European countries, the Soviet Union never had a single institution responsible for their design, construction and upkeep. Thus, no official central register of such monuments existed either within the Soviet Union or for any of its satellite states. Starting in the late Socialist period, agencies in a number of countries attempted to compile such registers for specific (usually preservationist, but sometimes patriotic) purposes. Since the collapse of the Soviet system, compiling catalogues and databases has been among the main genres of commemorative activity and scholarly engagement with Soviet war memorials, along with case studies of individual monuments, typically devoted to especially large and prominent specimens.[2]

2) For greater detail see Mischa Gabowitsch, 'What has happened to Soviet war memorials since 1989/91? An overview,' *Journal of Soviet and Post-Soviet Politics and Society* 2, 2021, 185–222, specifically the section 'Legal context, institutions, inventories' (p. 189–197).

Monuments large and small

Among the attempts to survey the entire landscape of (certain types of) Soviet war memorials, Dominika Czarnecka's voluminous book about monuments in gratitude to the Red Army in Poland stands out both in its scope and in the level of historical detail she lays out. Other compendia tend to proceed phenomenologically, starting from extant monuments in their present-day shape. Czarnecka relies on a plethora of Polish archival sources, in addition to published materials, to present a meticulous account of the construction and subsequent uses of the most prominent type of Red Army monument found in Poland—monuments erected in public locations, often in city squares, i.e. all those outside cemeteries. This wealth of material should suffice to earn her book a prominent place on the shelf of any serious student of Soviet war monuments anywhere, and publication of the English version will facilitate its dissemination well beyond readers of the Polish version, published in 2015 and soon out of print.[3]

In an almost 200-page appendix to her book, Czarnecka provides an expanded and updated version of a catalogue initially compiled by the Polish Council for the Protection of Struggle and Martyrdom Sites in 1988, with details about 476 gratitude monuments. This should make her book the first-stop reference for anyone interested in (the now largely removed) Soviet war monuments in Poland, complementing a 2003 Russian-language catalogue that focuses on cemeteries.[4] But it is the middle part of her work (chapter 2 to 4) that is a true treasure trove for anyone interested in the biographies of monuments and especially those looking for material for a transnational history of Soviet war memorials. In these three empirically dense chapters, Czarnecka surveys the construction and uses of the gratitude monuments, discusses attacks on those monuments, and chronicles eight selected commemorative sites from construction to removal.

Each of these chapters offers much interesting detail. Chapter two covers monument construction and its financing as well as the use of monuments for commemorative and political ceremonies. One of the most interesting aspects here concerns the relationship between the monuments' interconnected roles as burial site markers and sacralised symbolic spots. We know from case studies of Soviet war memorials in other countries (from the GDR via Hungary to the USSR itself) that the geography of burial and reburial often had a strategic aspect in staking the Red Army's, and more largely the Soviet Union's, symbolic claim to a central location. The Polish case is particularly instructive in that the many instances of removal and relocation in the post-socialist period were often accompanied by exhumations, which, as Czarnecka details, repeatedly revealed discrepancies between the claimed and verifiable number, identity, and even presence of bodies buried beneath the monuments. The sub-chapter about financing monument construction features interesting evidence of how supposedly grassroots fundraising was actually orchestrated from above, and money was siphoned off from more pressing reconstruction tasks. It does not, however, discuss how the

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3) Dominika Czarnecka, *Pomniki wdzięczności| Armii Czerwonej w Polsce Ludowej w i III Rzeczypospolitej*, Warsaw: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, 2015.

4) Makarov et al. *Katalog zakhoroneniy sovetskikh voinov, voennoplennykh i grazhdanskikh lits, pogibshikh v gody II mirovoy voyny i pogrebennykh na territorii Respubliki Pol'sha.* Warsaw / Moscow: Ministerstvo oborony Rossiyskoy Federatsii; Ministerstvo inostrannykh del Rossiyskoy Federatsii; Sovet okhrany pamyati bor'by i muchenichestva Respubliki Pol'sha, 2003.

money was spent: the actual production process, including the role of foundries, quarries, engineers, architects, juries and construction workers remains a black box. While a number of sculptors are listed, the precise conditions under which they worked and their motivations and relationships with their patrons are not discussed in detail.

Chapter three provides numerous examples of attacks on Soviet war monuments—from organised efforts to blow them up or, in one case, pull them down them using a tram, to lone individuals smearing them with paint or covering them with slogans. It also discusses how such attacks were linked to larger waves of social and political unrest, especially in 1956 and 1981, and shows both the types of punishments that were usually meted out before and after 1956 and the ways in which such incidents were covered up or condemned in the official press. This chapter is highly detailed in its descriptions of individual cases (often gleaned from official investigation records), making it a useful basis for comparison with similar attacks in e.g. East Germany, the Baltics, or Ukraine, which appear to have been less frequent and are at any rate less systematically documented in the literature.

Chapter four presents a more detailed history of eight selected gratitude monuments in places ranging from mid-sized towns such as Stargard Szczeciński and the former 'Little Moscow' of Legnica to Cracow and Warsaw. These more in-depth case studies occasionally go further than the overview in chapter two in mentioning the actors and mechanics of monument construction: in the case of Legnica, for example, a technical foundry and local residents commandeered to take part in building what was to become one of the most emblematic 'brotherhood' monuments; in the case of Koszalin, details about the various construction materials used. However, Czarnecka's main focus is on decision-making and on questions such as the symbolic significance of the urban spaces in which the monuments were erected. Each of the sub-chapters also includes a highly detailed account of post-socialist discussions about the monument's removal, relocation or modification. This primarily takes the form of lengthy quotes from the relevant debates in the press and especially in the city councils and lists of associations taking positions for or against removal. While that makes these sub-chapters somewhat difficult to read as a coherent narrative, it turns them into a useful reference for those interested in the detail of the debates in each of the cities examined, and a great collection of material for students of preservationist vs iconoclastic arguments in post-socialist contexts.

The fifth and final chapter of the book attempts to summarise what happened to gratitude monuments in post-socialist Poland. It charts efforts to destroy, remove or relocate Soviet war monuments after 1989 through numerous individual examples and statistical tables. It also traces the arguments of proponents and also opponents of removal. In this chapter even more than in the case studies, Czarnecka does try to represent both sides' perspectives but hardly attempts to hide her sympathy for those who advocated removal. She concludes with a brief discussion of some of the new monuments that have replaced the removed structures. This chapter reads very differently now from when the Polish version was originally published, given the PiS government's subsequent centralised (and, in international comparison, unprecedented) campaign to remove virtually all Soviet war monuments. Analytically it offers less purchase on the complexity of the topic than recent work by, for example, Ewa Ochman or Nancy Waldmann, and most notably fails to offer a discussion of the multi-faceted ways

in which contemporary Polish artists have engaged with surviving Soviet war monuments.[5] Nevertheless, like the other substantive chapters in the book, it offers a wealth of interesting source materials, such as numerous quotations from participants in debates on removal, including various Polish associations and official Russian representatives.

Communists vs the people?

All the rich empirical detail that Czarnecka presents in the main part of her book, however, is embedded in an analytical framework that is problematic in several respects.

The author often refers indiscriminately to 'the Soviet authorities' and 'the Communists', failing to distinguish in substantive and meaningful ways between such different actors as Polish Communist Party officials or state administrators, representatives of the Soviet party, and Soviet military leaders. At times her story reads like a battle between the oppressive forces of evil in the guise of Communism and their downtrodden yet often resistant victims—'the' or 'most' Poles. The problem with this approach is that it makes it difficult to distinguish between different types of actors and to identify the logic according to which each behaved, beyond the general desire to establish Russian / Communist dominance over Poland. While geopolitical and ideological motifs undoubtedly formed the overall framework for monument construction, its actual dynamic cannot be understood without reference to other aspects. Czarnecka could have looked at patronage networks linking sculptors and architects with party and military leaders. She could have tried to understand how exactly the army's (and individual units' or commanders') desire for self-glorification interacted with the agendas of propaganda and ideology departments. She could also have analysed local Communists' own agency, a topic that has increasingly been at the forefront of interest among historians of post-war central Europe even for the period before Stalin's death.[6] However, she doesn't do any of this. Like many historians of Soviet statuary before her, she succumbs to the temptation of using the passive voice throughout her narrative (monuments 'were erected'), thus neglecting to probe questions of agency and even possible conflict between different parts of the Communist 'regime'. Instead, she sometimes goes so far as to suggest that 'some actions of the Communist authorities seem irrational' (168), without even considering that the internal military rationality of self-commemoration might at times simply have been at odds with the broader Communist rationality of seeking local legitimacy.

This problem is exacerbated in the first chapter of the book, which takes up almost 80 pages yet hardly touches on monuments at all, instead offering a survey of the Soviet and Russian military presence in Poland in 1944–1993 (and reaching back to the Polish-Soviet war of 1920) that is supposed to make readers understand why 'most Poles' wanted Soviet

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5)   Ewa Ochman, 'Spaces of Nationhood and Contested Soviet War Monuments in Poland: The Warsaw Monument to the Brotherhood in Arms', in Berber Bevernage and Nico Wouters, eds, *The Palgrave Handbook of State-Sponsored History After 1945*, London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018, 477–93; Nancy Waldmann, 'Koniec przeobrażeń? Dekomunizacja przestrzeni publicznej w Polsce na Ziemiach Zachodnich i Północnych w latach 2016–2017 – wybrane przykłady', *Rocznik Ziem Zachodnich* 2, 2018, 714–766.

6)   For a good example, see Kateřina Čapková, Chad Bryant and Diana V. Dumitru, 'Undone from within: the downfall of Rudolf Slánský and Czechoslovak-Soviet dynamics under Stalinism,' forthcoming in the *Journal of Modern History*.

war memorials removed from public space in the post-socialist period. This chapter is written in the traditions of Polish national-conservative historiography and is reminiscent of the tone of historical writing in the 1990s. Poland's society appears here as socially and ethnically monolithic: social divisions or class conflicts are not mentioned at all, nor is the massive presence of Ukrainians, Belarusians or Jews in interwar Poland. Indeed, the word 'Jew' appears in the book only in a reference to Jewish women being raped by Soviet soldiers in 1920 and in cases of stones from Jewish cemeteries being used by 'Communists' when building their monuments. In a 700-plus page book related to war memory in Poland, the epicentre of the extermination of Europe's Jews, Czarnecka manages to dispense with even mentioning the words 'Holocaust,' 'Shoah,' or 'Auschwitz,' except for a comment about Russians killing four prisoners who had escaped from a death march, and occasional references to an unspecified 'Oświęcim State Museum.' She also fails to note the fact that it was the Red Army that liberated the worst extermination camp in human history. All of this is indicative of the ethno-national, 'good Poles vs evil Communists' approach in which the author embeds her priceless empirical material. The few passages that might add nuance to the image of the Red Army as no more than a barbaric occupying force are almost immediately taken back ('Red Army soldiers did put an end to the German terror, but committed crimes of their own,' p. 99). No mention is made of population groups in Poland, other than 'the Communists,' who might have had cause to welcome any aspect of the Soviet / Red Army presence in 1945 or, later, from indigenous or foreign concentration camp survivors to those who benefitted from the Communist land reforms, from early post-war intellectuals seduced by Communist ideals to the late Socialist descendants of settlers from Soviet-annexed Eastern Poland in the new western and northern territories. Instead, Czarnecka's narrative often mixes description, normative assessments and speculation, often substituting post-1989 evaluations for perspectives contemporary to the monuments' construction and using sweeping phrases such as 'in the eyes of the Polish people' or 'from the people's perspective' to make what may very well have been the majority attitude appear as the sole authentic and relevant point of view. When they suddenly crop up in some of the lengthy quotes from post-1989 opponents of monument removal, arguments that qualify the view of the Red Army as a force of evil are presented as if coming out of nowhere or from the deluded imaginations of Poles not firm enough in their historical knowledge.

Methods and sources

It would have been possible to offer a more nuanced and complex account without relativising Soviet crimes in Poland, and without distracting from the very real reasons why most Poles *did* see Red Army monuments as symbols of occupation. No serious historian can doubt the reality of Nazi-Soviet cooperation in dismembering and subjugating Poland in 1939, the murderous nature of Soviet rule in wartime and post-war Poland, or the fact that Poles in the regions incorporated into the Soviet Union were singled out for particularly harsh repressions. Nor can it be controversial to state that the Red Army was guilty of sexualised violence in its march through Poland or that, along with the NKVD, it became part of the repressive apparatus of Communist control as Poland's borders were redrawn and the country was set on

a path of integration into the Soviet bloc. Yet simply restating such facts is not tantamount to explaining the logics of action that led to them and that also resulted in the creation of war memorials. Polish and foreign historians alike have already produced much more complex analyses of Polish society.[7] Historians working in former Soviet republics have similarly shown how the reasons why different actors participated in Socialist monument construction could vary, well beyond ideology and coercion.[8] Conversely, motivations for resisting or attacking Soviet war monuments were no less variable, both in the satellite states and within the Soviet Union itself. Alcohol was often an important factor, and so was the use of Nazi symbols, often employed by young people in particular to shock society and the authorities. Yet Czarnecka goes to great lengths to stress that 'the consumption of alcohol before the deed was, at least in some cases, only a means of gathering the necessary courage and overcoming mental barriers' (p. 203). In the case of swastikas painted on monuments, she speculates that they may have been references to Soviet-Nazi cooperation in 1939–41 instead of simply acknowledging the provocative potential inherent in appropriating the symbols most actively vilified in socialist-era Polish (and Soviet) popular culture. A more complex analysis going beyond black-and-white narratives of oppression and resistance could have added much-needed nuance to Czarnecka's account of the gratitude monuments, and indeed reinforced our understanding of ideological and symbolic colonisation rather than justifying it.

In terms of source materials, the book's most glaring shortcoming is that—with the exception of two documents published in a Polish edition of NKVD reports to Stalin—it does not use any Russian sources about war monument construction in Poland, or about Socialist-era commemorative policies in general, be it archival documents, press reports or memoirs. This is surely one of the reasons why Czarnecka fails to distinguish clearly between the different kinds of Soviet actors involved in monument construction in Poland—regular soldiers, liberated prisoners of war, army engineers, commanders of Red Army units, military governors, propaganda officers and professional sculptors and architects. She does mention some of these different categories of actors in passing but does not attempt to discern the different logics behind their involvement—something that might have helped her account for the differences in shapes, symbolism and inscriptions between individual monuments, which she mentions but leaves largely unexplained.

For much the same reason, Czarnecka's representation of domestic Soviet commemoration is typically caricatural or simply false: thus she strangely claims that, inside the USSR, 'in 1948 any public mentions of war were prohibited' (p. 124).[9] This misrepresents the chronology and topography of monument construction within the Soviet Union, and generally disregards the numerous case studies of (and published archival sources on) Soviet war monuments in countries other than Poland that exist in Belarusian, Bulgarian, Czech, English, Estonian,

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7)   See, for example, Marcin Zaremba, *Wielka Trwoga. Polska 1944–1947: ludowa reakcja na kryzys*, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Znak; Instytut Studiów Politycznych Polskiej Akademii Nauk, 2012; Andrzej Leder, *Prześniona rewolucja. Ćwiczenie z logiki historycznej*, Warsaw : Wydawnictwo Krytyki Politycznej, 2014.

8)   See, for example, Sergei Kruk, 'Profit rather than Politics: the Production of Lenin Monuments in Soviet Latvia,' *Social Semiotics* 20: 3, 2010, 247–76.

9)   For a detailed discussion of this period see Mischa Gabowitsch, 'Victory Day before the cult: war commemoration in the USSR, 1945–1965' in David L. Hoffmann, ed., *The Memory of the Second World War in Soviet and Post-Soviet Russia*, London and New York: Routledge, 2021, 64–85.

German, Hungarian, Latvian, Ukrainian and, needless to say, Russian.[10] Of course her focus is on Poland, and it would be unfair to expect in-depth knowledge of monument construction and use in other countries, but even some superficial familiarity with that literature could have led her to nuance her assumptions about the similarities in how such monuments were constructed in different places. Thus, to mention a few examples, in Czechoslovakia and specifically the Czech lands, grassroots monuments expressing genuine gratitude to the Red Army for liberation from German occupation were indeed widespread in 1945–47 and not just a figment of Soviet propaganda.[11] In Bulgaria, the ubiquitous gratitude monuments for Russia's intervention against the Ottoman Empire in 1878 provided a very different kind of context for the erection of new memorials in and after 1945.[12] And in East Germany, the local Socialist Unity Party soon developed a particular zeal in commissioning Red Army memorials even after the Soviet administration had lost interest in supervising their construction.[13]

Having said that, there are, of course, also highly interesting parallels to be drawn in terms of monument construction between Poland and the other countries that had a Soviet military presence and, just as importantly, there were transnational connections that remain to be explored: like Helga Köpstein before her, Czarnecka mentions in passing the involvement of the Noack foundry from West Berlin in casting monuments to Red Army soldiers in Poland (p. 249); some of the sculptors she lists were also active in other socialist countries. Czarnecka's book offers plenty of material for such comparison and will therefore remain an important reference not only for the Polish case, but for the study of Soviet-style military commemoration in a broader international context.

Conclusion

The original version of Czarnecka's book was published by the state-affiliated Institute of National Remembrance not long before the onset of the 2017 wave of top-down monument removal in Poland. Thus, regardless of its scholarly merits, it can be read as an academic justification for that wave of government-ordered iconoclasm. Readers of the English translation will hopefully be more interested in the book's contribution to the research literature. Any serious study of Soviet war monuments needs to take into account the whole range of roles

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10)   To name just a few examples: János Pótó, *Az emlékeztetés helyei. Emlékművek és politika*, Budapest: Osiris, 2003, 126–139; Helga Köpstein, *Die sowjetischen Ehrenmale in Berlin*, Berlin: Rossi, 2006; V.I. Adamushko, *Uvekovechenie pamyati zashchitnikov Otechestva i zhertv voin v Belarusi, 1941–2008 gg.: dokumenty i materialy*, Minsk: Natsyianal'ny arkhiŭ Rėspubliki Belarus', 2008; Scott W. Palmer, 'How Memory was Made: the Construction of the Memorial to the Heroes of the Battle of Stalingrad,' *The Russian Review*, 68:3, 2009, 373–407; Jan Galandauer, Ivan Malý and Oldřich Kortus, *Národní pam´tník na Vítkově*, Prague: National Museum, 2012, 82–93; Birgit Viotti, *Nõukogude perioodil Teise maailmasõja mälestuseks rajatud memoriaalid ning nende roll Eesti kultuurmaastikul*, MA Thesis, Estonian University of Life Sciences, 2011; Nils Muižnieks and Vita Zelče, *Karojošā piemiņa: 16. marts un 9. Maijs*, Riga: Zinātne, 2011, 197–237.

11)   Martina Winkler, *Panzer in Prag: der fotografische Blick auf die Invasion von 1968*, Düsseldorf: C.W. Leske, 2018; Rachel Applebaum, *Empire of Friends: Soviet Power and Socialist Internationalism in Cold War Czechoslovakia*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2019.

12)   Nikolai Vukov, *Monuments Between Life and Death: Memory and Representation in Monuments of the Socialist Past in Bulgaria*, Ph.D Dissertation, Central European University Budapest, 2005.

13)   For examples and discussion of how this affected their post-socialist fortunes, see Leonie Beiersdorf, *Die doppelte Krise. Ostdeutsche Erinnerungszeichen nach 1989*, Berlin / Munich: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 2015.

that they play at different times and for different people, beyond their function as markers of geopolitical dominance. Czarnecka barely addresses this complexity, but the vast amount of material she compiled can help ask more complex questions about art, agency and local dynamics. Her spadework is already beginning to inform sophisticated studies of Soviet war memorials in Poland that place them in larger historical context and pay attention to the different actors involved in their construction, use, modification and removal.[14]

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14)   E.g. Szymon Piotr Kubiak, 'Gratitude. The Red Army Memorial in Szczecin: A Geographical, Topographical, and Biographical Perspective,' *Ikonotheka* 30, 2020, 89–112.

Beyond the Bauhaus

A Review of: Beate Störtkuhl and Rafał Makała, eds, Not Just Bauhaus. Networks of Modernity in Central Europe, Oldenbourg: De Gruyter, 2020.

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Julia Secklehner

Walter Gropius founded the Bauhaus in Weimar in 1919. Even though the school existed only in the Weimar Republic until 1933, its ideas and methods have since spread across the globe – not least due to the forced emigration many of its teachers and students had to endure because of Nazi persecution. In popular memory, the work of these emigres in places such as Nigeria, Palestine and the United States led to the birth of the 'Bauhaus style' as a synonym for international modernism in design and architecture. The flip side of this success is a reduced view of the Bauhaus as a technology-driven, rational, and functionalist venture, whose lasting influence has overshadowed similar, parallel developments elsewhere.

The centenary 'Bauhaus year' of 2019 spurred wide-ranging aims to reconsider and recontextualise the school and its legendary status. A notable example of this is Elizabeth Otto's book *Haunted Bauhaus,* which revealed the school's spiritual undercurrents and challenged the 'myth of rationalism' by showing that religious and queer identities had a significant stake in the work of Bauhaus students and masters alike.[1] With the same intention to dismantle longstanding aspects of the 'Bauhaus myth,' the edited volume *Not Just Bauhaus* offers another reconsideration of the school. It challenges the primary position usually given to the Bauhaus in creating modernist architecture in central Europe and shifts attention to the broader networks of architectural modernity in the region and its connections to other parts of the world.

Beyond the 'Bauhaus myth'

The publication resulted from a conference with the same title in Görlitz, Germany, and Wrocław, Poland, in the 'Bauhaus year' of 2019. Yet while the timing of the event and its name place *Not Just Bauhaus* in line with a comprehensive programme on the occasion of the centenary celebrations, the conference and the publication take quite a different direction.[2] Instead of focusing on the Bauhaus, they contextualise its prominent role as part of a network of modernity in central Europe and emphasise that the school's monolithic status ought to be recalibrated. Indeed, as the main point of departure in *Not Just Bauhaus,* editors Beate Stört-

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1) Elizabeth Otto, *Haunted Bauhaus. Occult Spirituality, Gender Fluidity, Queer Identities, and Radical Politics,* Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2019.

2) Bauhaus Dessau, 'Centenary Programme,' *Bauhaus Dessau online,* https://www.bauhaus-dessau.de/en/centenary-2019/centenary-programme.html .

kuhl and Rafał Makała emphasise the general importance given to constructions of modernity as part of the cultural politics in the imperial successor states in central and eastern Europe after 1918. From this point of view, their introduction suggests, the Bauhaus can be 'decentred' as a unique occurrence and reintegrated into a wider network of institutions with a similar outlook, which preceded and succeeded it. Schools that introduced progressive methods of art education, for example, included the Technical College Charlottenburg in Berlin, founded in 1879, as well as the Academy of Arts and Crafts in Breslau / Wrocław, founded in 1911.[3] Discussed in the volume by Stefanie Fink and Vladimír Šlapeta respectively, both of these institutions show that the reform and professionalisation of architectural education was part of wider modernisation processes in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, which the Bauhaus could draw on upon its founding in 1919.

One of the book's main tasks, in this light, is to reconsider the position of 'Bauhaus modernism' in central Europe, to juxtapose it with other aspects of architectural modernism in the region, and, not least, to show a kind of genealogy of which the Bauhaus was part. Rather than accepting the school's founding as a 'point zero' in this sense, the introduction of predecessors and contemporary institutions has a levelling effect, in which 'Bauhaus modernism' is inscribed in and historicised. In the volume, the lasting impact of Adolf Loos in Czechoslovakia, the important Hungarian architecture journal *Tér és forma* (1928–1948), and the importance of CIAM Ost as a springboard for international collaboration all represent further points within this network.

As varied as these contributions are, the introduction chooses a wide-angled point of view to encompass them. With reference to Bruno Latour's Actor-Network-Theory (ANT) and the concept of entangled history (*histoire croisée*), the editors build on a set of ideas that have, in recent years, become an established way of approaching the diversity of modern art and architecture in the region to foreground developments and relationships reaching across national borders.[4] The main issue they identify for choosing such an approach is that the 'greater region between Tallinn, Posen (Poznań) and Budapest' has remained a 'blindspot' in the history of architectural modernism written from 'western perspectives' (p. 9), which is not least owed to the predominance of the Bauhaus. Based on the strong geopolitical focus implicit in this statement, the introduction would have benefitted from an expanded discussion of the transnational perspectives of modern east central European architecture that the volume endorses, and the potential it has in order to revisit established perspectives. Instead, the primary focus lies on juxtaposing the Bauhaus, with its disproportional presence, and 'competing or alternative concepts of modern art.' While this serves as a good starting point, it remains open as to what the rescaling of the Bauhaus within a wider network of east central European modernism might add to debates on modernist architecture. The introduction gives an impressive overview of the different angles taken by the chosen contributions, yet their wider impact as a collected volume of texts, which indeed constructs its own 'network of modernity,' remains tentative.

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3) See Deborah Ascher Barnstone, 'Not the Bauhaus: The Breslau Academy of Art and Applied Arts,' *Journal of Architectural Education (1984-)* 62:1, 2008, 46–55.

4) Examples include Beáta Hock, Klara Kemp-Welch and Jonathan Owen, eds, *A Reader in East-Central-European Modernism 1918–1956,* London: Courtauld Institute, 2019; Marie Rakušanová et al, *Bohumil Kubišta a Evropa,* Prague: Karolinum, 2020.

Finding networks in diversity

The book is divided into four main sections: (1) Scholarly Entanglements; (2) Transnational Networks; (3) New States, New Architectures; (4) The Longue Durée of the Avant-garde. In their use of several keywords of recent (art) historical theory, such as 'entanglements,' 'transnationalism' and the 'longue durée,' the sections highlight the varying ties that the individual contributions have to wider contemporary thought, even though they are not consistently addressed within the texts themselves.[5] This loose engagement with the wider questions posed in the introduction and by the sub-sections points to one of the book's main disadvantages: the length of the individual chapters, which leaves only little room for detailed explanation, theoretical or otherwise. It is also notable that contributions are printed in either German or English without offering translation into the other language. This raises the question as to who the intended readers of the volume are. As English has widely replaced German as the *lingua franca* of art and architectural history, the higher number of German texts indeed leads one to assume that the publication is predominantly directed at German speakers. This, in turn, would have invited a closer introduction to the diverse historical circumstances in the countries covered in the – often very specific – case studies. Thus, while the idea of a bilingual publication per se is an important step taken in making research accessible to international readers, the inconsistent manner in which this is pursued means that this volume is not as inclusive as it may seem.

The longest section with six contributions: 'Schulische Verflechtungen / Scholarly Entanglements,' includes a detailed account of architectural training, an introduction to internationally lesser-known figures of Central European architectural modernism, such as Hans Scharoun (1893–1972) and Lubomír Šlapeta (1908–1983), as well as a critical reframing of the Bauhaus as a 'springboard to the world' (p. 120). While the latter closely relates to the volume's aim of positioning the Bauhaus as a facilitator of exchanges in a wider network, highlighting, for example, the work of Polish Bauhaus student Arieh Sharon (1900–1984) in the Middle East and in Africa, the other contributions in the section focus on locations and individuals outside the Bauhaus nexus. Implicitly, this underlines the editor's point in the introduction, that architectural modernism in central Europe had many different foundations because of its pivotal role in the cultural politics of imperial successor states. However, with the absence of a guiding thread linking the contributions, a distinct overarching argument is missing with many different case studies in its place.

Aside from the section focusing on architecture as a modernist practice that was complicit with new state ideologies ('New States, New Architectures'), it is not always easy to discern the broader narratives that the section headers suggest. Not least, this is due to the fact that beyond covering various topics and media in a diverse geographical area, the individual contributions take varying approaches to their chosen case studies, ranging from a comparative history of institutions (Panzert) and individual figures (Long, Wenzel) to printed media as networks (Binder, Sebestyén). There is also an impressive range of illustrations for each text, which gives visual evidence for the different approaches to modern architecture addressed. These range

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5)   Fernand Braudel and Immanuel Wallerstein, 'History and the Social Sciences: The Longue Durée,' *Review (Fernand Braudel Center)* 32:2, 2009, 171–203; Michael Werner and Bénédicte Zimmermann, 'Beyond Comparison. Histoire Croisée and the Challenge of Reflexivity', *History and Theory* 45:1, 2006, 30–50.

from interior compositions by Polish artists Katarzyna Kobro (1898–1951) and Władysław Strzemiński (1893–1951), to the building for the Lithuanian Ministry of Defense by Vytautas Landsbergis-Žemkalnis (1893–1993), and *Neues Bauen* designs by the Christoph and Umack company in Germany after 1945.

Notably, the role of the Bauhaus, which so prominently features in the book's title and leads one to expect some closer engagement with the school, appears to be of little to no significance in some of the contributions. While selected individual contributions do address this (Hock, Binder), the book overall thus runs danger of replicating the narrow image of the functionalist / rationalist Bauhaus in its attempts to challenge the school's predominance.

The post-conference volume as a limiting format

Just as in their broad engagement with theoretical concepts, the brevity of the texts suggests that this approach, too, is owed to the demands of the publication format. Rather than pinning the blame on individual contributions here, the volume's main shortcomings seem to stem from the book's format as a post-conference volume. As a standard procedure, the publication of presentations in an extended format is a common practice in central Europe. However, the wide range and the sheer number of contributors that are habitually involved in an international conference bring two main disadvantages with it.

The first is that the wide-ranging coverage of any given topic at a conference does not translate well into the structure of a book. Even when efforts are made to provide coherence, the diversity of conference papers rarely functions in the same way as an organised sequence of written texts. This, precisely, is illustrated in *Not Just Bauhaus:* while the inclusion of subsections divides contributions into themes, these resemble the broader format of conference panels, rather than selected essays that speak to each other as one might envisage from a collected volume.

Second, as a direct result of efforts to include many, if not all, conference presentations, the length of individual essays must be shorter than a standard academic essay. Thus, authors have only limited space to present their arguments, let alone forging connections to the wider framing of the publication. Especially when a volume covers a diverse geographic and linguistic region such as central Europe, this makes it difficult for readers to find coherence.

Conclusion

Regardless of the contributions that the authors make – in this case, an important re-examination of central European architecture and its networks – the publication format does not give contributions the space they deserve. The overall result is a wide selection of texts that focus broadly on the nexus of modern architecture in eastern and central Europe. While the publication no doubt has important things to say about this topic, considering, for example, the strong presence of other innovative art schools, the diversity it presents is positioned at the

expense of a unifying argument to emphasise the importance of looking beyond the Bauhaus.[6] In the end, the book's emphasis on the fact that it was 'not just' the Bauhaus that advanced modernism in the region's design and architecture schools seems diluted among the many different case studies. A bundling of diversity in this format rather shows that while the Bauhaus was indebted to pedagogical and artistic innovations happening across the region, its position as a hub – or a springboard – for a wider network of modernity was, indeed, exceptional.

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6)   A similar consideration of institutional similarities can be found in Simona Bérešová, Klára Prešnajderová, and Sonia de Puineuf. eds, *School as a Laboratory of Modern Life: On the Reform of Art Education in Central Europe (1900– 1945) / Škola ako laboratórium moderného života / Schule als Laboratorium des modernen Lebens*, Bratislava: Slovak Design Centre, 2020.

Archiving Performances as a Dissident Practice

A Review of: Corinna Kühn, *Medialisierte Körper. Performances und Aktionen der Neoavantgarden Ostmitteleuropas in den 1970er Jahren*, Cologne: Böhlau, 2020. 324 pp. ISBN 978-3-412-51422-8.

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Archiving Performances as a Dissident Practice

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How could one create progressive art under the difficult conditions of the socialist countries in east central Europe? In short, the artists in their precarious situation worked towards a possible post-socialist future or any other state, where their work would be able to be viewed. They captured their performances in photographs, video recordings and other forms of dissemination such as mail art to preserve them for posterity. Artists focused on mediation and a community of future spectators – as a subversive capsule within socialist societies. In the revised version of her dissertation, with which she extends her previous research on the Polish art scene, Corinna Kühn explores these possibilities of performance art behind the Iron Curtain. Her main argument is that without these forms of recording, no subversive art would have been possible. Focusing on one Czech artist, a Hungarian, a Romanian and two artists / groups from Poland, the publication succeeds in providing a well-composed and multi-layered picture of artistic practices in central Europe during the 1970s. Kühn's book rests on a complex theoretical framework that draws from figures such as Erving Goffmann, Erika Fischer-Lichte or recent ideas on praxeology.[1] For the field of art history, she mostly follows the frequently cited 'horizontal art history' of Piotr Piotrowski, who tried to place a balanced variant alongside the hierarchical art history of the 'West.'[2] By discussing the neo-avant-garde comparatively in the region, she also inherits many impulses from Klara Kemp-Welch's study of 'Antipolitics' and its halting take on dissidence.[3] Citation from literature can be one-sided at times though, and some newer publications are missing noticeably.[4] Nevertheless, through her broad theoretical framework and the comparative view on performance artists from different countries in Central Europe, Kühn develops a balanced view of the situation. This is particularly evident in her reflective approach to the diverse histories of the countries under socialism, which she later makes fruitful for the artists' individual exchanges, travels and working conditions.

The first chapter deals with the Hungarian performance artist Endre Tót (1937–) and his Czech counterpart Jiří Kovanda (1953–) and the many tentative gestures and acts of

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1) Erving Goffmann, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1959. Erika Fischer-Lichte, *Ästhetik des Performativen*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2004.

2) Piotr Piotrowski, 'On the Spatial Turn, or Horizontal Art History,' *Umění*, 56, 2008, 378–83; 'How to Write a History of Central-East European Art?,' *Third Text*, 23.1, 2009, 5–14.

3) Klara Kemp-Welch, *Antipolitics in Central European Art. Reticence as Dissidence under Post-Totalitarian Rule 1956–1989*, London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2014.

4) Missing for instance is Amy Bryzgel, *Performance art in Eastern Europe since 1960*, Manchester: Manchester University Press 2018.

hesitation in their performances. In line with her overall thesis, Kühn points out that they not only provided commentary on the social conditions under state socialism, but also serve as a reflection of communication with future audiences. Through photographs and other recordings of the performances, the 'medialised bodies' of both artists reach bigger audiences, who then could fully benefit from their subversive meaning. However, the audience had to wait (for less repressive times), as did Tót and Kovanda in their performances. Kovanda's performances in particular demonstrate acts of waiting. In the performance *Untitled: 3rd September 1977* (Bez nazvu: 3. září 1977) he stands the wrong way round on an escalator, facing workers and other commuters as they come out of the underground. There he tries to start a conversation with passers-by – mostly in vain. In this way, he shows how people behave in public, how they come back from work with a complete absence of camaraderie afterwards. The performance symbolises the impossibilities of establishing contacts in the Communist state of Czechoslovakia long after the Prague Spring, where people duck away in the face of repression, show no reaction or behave in an embarrassed or fearful manner.

None of the performances was unplanned. Kovanda always wrote every action down exactly beforehand, using a typewriter, and then stuck photos of the performances on them later. The photos mostly came from his friend Pavel Tuč and his style repeats the gesture of surveillance photos of the secret police. In the 1970 and 1980s, the period of so-called 'normalization,' there was a rather high level of surveillance in Prague. Kovanda deconstructed the techniques of state observation and recording. As Kühn elaborates further, the performances target a 'secondary audience' through this documentation practice.[5] The performance is not presented at an exhibition, for example, but only later, second hand, through the texts. Stylistically, these sheets looked like administrative documents or registries. They appeared as neutral as possible and documented the performances for later viewers. They were not aimed at a large number of spectators in the present, but were meant for generations to come.

Something similar can be said about Endre Tót and his performances *TÓTalJOYS*, which he often put under the motto *I am glad if...* (Örülök, ha..., 1971 –), which point out the restrictions in everyday life in Hungary with a good pinch of humour. This recalls the dark humour surrounding supposed dissidents, who seem to say something critical merely by chance, as in Milan Kundera's first novel *The Joke* (1967). The novel is about Ludvík, a student who sends his girlfriend Markéta a postcard with a scathing commentary on Communism because she has gone to a party training course rather than spend time with him. Kühn succeeds well in describing this humour in Tót's performances such as, for example, simply celebrating the freedom to walk a few steps or to look in a certain direction. He mostly documented these performances in photos. The simplicity of the actions refers humorously to the great loss of freedom under socialism. However, whether this adapts the subversive strategy of over-identification (as with the Neue Slowenische Kunst group in Slovenia, who famously adopted authoritarian imagery), as Kühn suggests, may at least be doubted.[6] It is not that the comparison is not illuminating in some examples, such as when Tót had himself photographed next to Lenin. Nevertheless, Tót didn't use references to Communism frequently, and there were no

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5) A term introduced by Claire Bishop, see Kühn, *Medialisierte Körper*, 105.

6) Ibid., 63.

disguises, uniforms or other mimicry, and a closer look at the individual examples would have been useful.

Overall, the reader finds a well-balanced chapter that addresses the relationship between private and public space under socialism and its dissolution. Where everything can potentially be the target of spying, performances can examine public space playfully, humorously and sensitively. They thematise formerly private matters like walking and waiting in the public sphere, which was only possible through careful documentation and preservation in various media for future audiences (of a free society). An important detail of Kühn's research is the observation that artists from Hungary and Czechoslovakia often moved to Poland because the art scene there was more open. Free artistic platforms existed in Warsaw, Łódź, Wrocław and Poznaň, which were used by many artists from central Europe, including Tót and Kovanda, partly via connections provided by friends in Prague such as the Czech performance artist Petr Štembera (1945–). These different degrees of freedom in central Europe also made the medial preservation of the performances seem sensible. There was always a way of distributing them somewhere, and Kühn highlights the importance of that artistic exchange and the possibility of a broader audience in the neighbouring countries.

The second chapter deals with the Polish artist Natalia LL (1937–) and the Romanian Ion Grigorescu (1945–). Again, these were performances in front of the camera to an unknown future audience. Natalia LL's *Consumer Art* (Sztuka konsumpcyjna, 1972) shows a woman slowly eating various foods, some of them sexually charged, including, prominently, a banana. The clip is striking for its subversive use of an actor who bears a strong resemblance to Natalia LL, thus pointing not only to the commodity character of these goods, but also to the interchangeable identity of the performer. She does not need to perform herself. Following the artist's own interpretation, however, the iconic section with the banana cannot be interpreted as a reference to Pop Art (as in the case of Andy Warhol, for example), since people in central Europe in the 1970s would have had a different relationship to consumer culture.[7] There were hardly any bananas available, despite the slowly improving consumer options in the socialist systems. Natalia LL's performance thus makes the viewers think of the longing for the rare commodities. Yet she also voices her doubts about Pop Art in the West. As Kühn carefully dissects: art exploring consumer culture took on a meaning of its own in central Europe. She also makes evident in this chapter how haunting performances are that work haptically with the body. Natalia LL's demonstrations open up important perspectives on works by the Polish artists' group KwieKulik, which are discussed in the last chapter. Their performance *Play on an Actress's Face* (Gra na twarzy aktorki, 1971) is not just about eating food, but about being at the mercy of somebody else. Random things are attached to Ewa Lemańska, the hired performer; her face becomes a medium on which unidentifiable hands paint with different colours or place lumps of clay, glue, tape, string, paper, tomato juice or rice. Even a cigarette stub is brought close to her mouth on a sharp-edged piece of glass. Since Lemańska was very popular at the time, the viewer felt directly involved in a 'public face.' Yet the artists raise the question of enforcing power and control on the most vital part of an individual.

The same applies when Ion Grigorescu shows himself washing his body in the performances Pyjama (*Pijamaua*, 1978) and Washing (*Lăutul*, 1976), where his own self is often the

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7) Ibid. 197.

last possibility of retreat. The fisheye lens used here creates the impression of constant surveillance, right down to the most private corner. Throughout the chapter, the reception of such performances is repeatedly at issue, the fact that the body gestures could never be seen live by spectators but only appeared later via the recordings. Despite the very revealing ideas, Kühn sometimes ignores important aspects, for example the divergence of sexuality and aesthetics in Grigorescu's performances *Body* (Corp, 1974) or *Masculine / Feminine* (masculin / feminin, 1976). Especially in the latter one, he recognisably plays with his corporeality, his façade, so to speak. He highlights similarities between the bodily appearance of the two sexes by employing unusual camera angles. These physiological observations appear in two rows of photographs in which the observer can follow the ambiguous play of gender through the artist's body. Surprisingly, in the second row of photos, he also compares his body with views of façades of buildings, possibly to point out that we are used to thinking in certain types or typologies. The theory-driven reading favoured by Kühn sometimes does not offer an interpretation of these nuances and therefore can sometimes fall a little short. For instance, Jacques Lacan's theory of the mirror stage, the idea that a child can recognize itself in the mirror from the age of about six months and therefore see itself as an object, is cited briefly and certainly has its purpose, especially for Grigorescu's use of projections, ghostly images and doubles in many other performances, as in *Superpositions* (original title in English, 1977–79) or *Boxing* (Box, 1977).[8] The reference to Rosalind Krauss's essay 'Video: the Aesthetics of Narcissism' also is meaningful, as it is a key contribution to the self-referentiality of video art, but the way it is implemented by Kühn often doesn't yield any additional interpretational value.[9] The artist does not just make subjective statements about himself, as the references to Lacan and Krauss suggest. The question why Grigorescu wanted to escape the standardised perception of his body during a certain era in Romania would deserve further attention, especially with a closer visual analysis of the works that alludes to art history and formal qualities. Potentially his aesthetic ideas address gender boundaries, or serve as a critical statement on traditional gender roles in socialist societies. Here, too, Kühn's look at Poland is important when she cites Vaclav Havel's essay *The Power of the Powerless* (Moc Bezmocných, 1978), which makes it clear that the Polish state under Edward Gierek no longer saw the need to propagate socialist realism.[10] Artists in Poland such as Natalia LL were able to adapt modern forms, for the international stage, while remaining politically neutral. The same openness did not apply, but Romanian artists like Grigorescu were also able to receive new trends in art through exhibitions and art magazines from outside the Iron Curtain.

The third and final chapter deals with the Polish artist couple KwieKulik, who address the concept of the artwork and collective modes of production, but also touch on archiving as an essential artistic process. One of the key concepts of the duo, consisting of Zofia Kulik (1947-) and Przemysław Kwiek (1945–), is the so-called 'Całostka,' the idea of a separated wholeness. They had received their inclination towards open forms of art (Forma Otwarta) from their teacher in Warsaw, the Polish architect and city planner Oskar Hansen (1922–2005). As Kühn

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8)   Élisabeth Roudinesco: 'The Mirror Stage: an Obliterated Archive,' in Jean-Michel Rabaté, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Lacan*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2003, 25–34.

9)   Rosalind Krauss, 'Video: The Aesthetics of Narcissism,' in *October*, Spring, 1976, 50–64.

10)   Kühn, Medialisierte Körper, 195.

conclusively shows, everything can remain a fragment in open art practices determined by 'Całostka.' Additions by other participants were possible or the complete reworking into other forms of media. This way, both artists understood it as a notation system for the manifold social circumstances of performance art. Under the auspices of the socialist state, documentation appeared as an interventionist form of communication, a performative statement, a collecting activity for a possible new canon. The artist duo KwieKulik also dealt with the praxeology of the Polish philosopher Tadeusz Kotarbińskis (1886–1981). Based on this, they founded informal networks and ran a private artist archive in their flat in Warsaw. This offered many artists in central Europe the opportunity to secure their ephemeral or merely banned art. Generally, in Poland in the 1970s, author's galleries outside the mainstream provided platforms for artists and intellectuals that were not in line with the Ministry of Arts and Culture or the already established art scene. By exhibiting and archiving together, new collectivist art forms emerged.

Apart from these collectivist initiatives, KwieKulik also worked as performance artists themselves. *Monument without Passport* (Pomnik bez paszportu, 1978), a work that fittingly graces the cover of the publication, shows a subversive commentary on state repression – that the artists apparently had triggered through their critical statements. When KwieKulik wanted to participate at the 'International Festival of the Arts' in Arnheim, Netherlands, the state refused them permission to leave the country. The artists then proposed a 'correspondence performance' with the participants on site via postcards, on which they promptly replied during an artistic demonstration. This triggered the actual performance by KwieKulik, which Kühn aptly analyses as a transformation of the typical sculptures of socialist realism. Both artists appear standing (and sitting) still like a sculptural group, calling for a protest against the measures. Zofia Kulik repeats the iconic revolutionary gesture of the raised fist, while her feet are stuck in cement. The quick exchange with other artists distinguished their practice and allowed for a continuous form of critic, so that their voices could not be silenced.

In her publication, Corinna Kühn vividly illustrates how central the recording and media processing of performance art was in central Europe. The interpretations of the selected artists from five different countries provide rich material and a balanced overview. Above all, it makes clear how precisely the artists planned their output and preserved it for later audiences. While this is true of all performance art, it seems to be strongly amplified under socialism. This was the only way to address a 'second audience.' Sometimes Kühn's interpretations switch too quickly to the dense theoretical framework and the analysis of the individual art pieces falls a little short. Future research could touch on the conjunctures of the later reception in exhibitions and archives. As she herself describes in her outlook, the field could also be extended to neighbouring countries in Eastern Europe or to other fields such as literature or music. Overall, this meritorious study provides many new insights into the history of performance art in central Europe and creates many new research perspectives between the individual regions.

The Great Book Theft

A Review of: Mária Árvai and Dániel Véri, *A nagy könyvlopás: Francia könyvkiállítás a vasfüggöny mögött / The Great Book Theft: French Book Exhibition behind the Iron Curtain*, Szentendre: Ferenczy Museum Center, 2020. pp. 200. ISBN 978-615-5860-16-4.

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On 24 October 1959 an exhibition of new French books opened at the Műcsarnok (Arts Hall) in Budapest. By the time the exhibition closed two weeks later, most of the books on display had been stolen by the visitors.

In the first instance, the above anecdote does not sound particularly significant, and certainly not an obvious subject for an exhibition in 2020. Yet, there is more to the story than meets the eye: it speaks of the great hunger for information in a country behind the Iron Curtain, the intricacies and contradictions of Cold War cultural diplomacy, the enduring reputation and influence of French art and culture in the mid-twentieth century, as well as the self-perceived cultural deficit of eastern Europe. The exhibition *The Great Book Theft* organised between 20 September 2019 and 1 March 2020 at the Ferenczy Museum Centre in Szentendre explored the event from these angles. The subject of the present review is the exhibition's catalogue, which presents the underlying research in the form of scholarly essays and oral history interviews.

By now, the reader has probably guessed that the culprits who stole books from the Műcsarnok were not hardened criminals, but Hungarian intellectuals eager to read and possess products of the French publishing industry that were otherwise out of their reach for political, as well as financial reasons. Some of them were students at the Art History Department of Eötvös Loránd University or at the College of Fine Arts, and it is this group that the exhibition and the catalogue have focused on. In 1959 Hungary had barely left behind its period of hardline Stalinism and was still reeling from the 1956 Revolution and the ensuing harsh retaliations. Those interested in modern art, especially modern art from western Europe or the USA, had few resources they could legally (or even semi-legally) access. One of the catalogue's main virtues is its meticulous reconstruction of this oppressive environment, mainly through the interviews conducted with a number of one-time students – now well-respected artists and art historians –, but also through archival research. The book begins with an annotated map that shows and introduces all the venues in inner-city Budapest where these young people could at least leaf through a limited range of publications on modern art: bookshops, libraries, foreign cultural institutes. Perhaps it would have been possible to make more of the spatiality of this little world: how did it fit into the fabric of the city? How did it relate to where the students lived? Nevertheless, even without such elaboration, this introduction provides the reader with an immediate, strong impression of the stifling atmosphere.

This almost immersive immediacy is crucial, because what first strikes the contemporary reader about this now sunken world is its difference. Indeed, it is tempting for the reviewer to

begin with melancholy musings on how difficult it is for us to understand this world today, when we have a vast, global knowledge base at our fingertips and the reproductions of most artworks we come across in our readings are just a Google away. Upon further thought, however, it is precisely this unnerving contrast that can help our understanding, because it makes the lack, the need, so blatant, so crystal clear. The catalogue provides a deep, thoughtful and nuanced examination of the different factors that created the situation of need in the 1950s, including not only the political constraints specific to the early post-war Communist era, but also the social and financial inequalities that are still with us, even if in different form. In the end, for all the historical difference of its subject, this catalogue is not a thrilling exploration of a strange and now exotic time, but a timely read about inequalities in information access, which can occur because of information scarcity, but also when valuable knowledge is buried under a deluge of fake or irrelevant news.

The exploration of the complexities and ambivalences of Cold War-era cultural politics, the myriad shades between resistance and collaboration, is currently one of the most fascinating and dynamically expanding research fields in eastern and central European art history and has been the subject of several important exhibitions and catalogues in Hungary in recent years.[1] The present catalogue contributes a new perspective through an unusual, yet fruitful topic. The first part consists of essays investigating the political and cultural background of the 1959 French book exhibition, which came into being when French and Hungarian authorities reached a fragile moment of cultural ceasefire after three years of ice-cold hostility following the Revolution in Hungary. It is probably no coincidence that the press conference for the exhibition was held on 23 October, the anniversary of the Revolution, and that it opened on the following day.

The studies in this catalogue illuminate the paradoxes of western-oriented Cold War Communist cultural diplomacy. On the one hand, such activities were seen as necessary, as they helped promote the Socialist cause and improve the external image of the country after the brutal repression of 1956. On the other hand, however, they threatened to help transmit subversive ideas to perceptive Hungarians. In their well-researched and thoughtful essays, the curators of the exhibition, Mária Árvai and Dániel Véri, examine the history of these interactions, with a special focus on Hungarian–French relations. In 'From Mrs. Rákosi's corsets to Honegger's Oratorio: Chapters from the History of French Cultural Diplomacy in Hungary', Árvai highlights the fraught situation of the Institut Français in Budapest, whose activities were sometimes allowed, sometimes banned. In the course of the 1950s multiple Hungarian employees of the Institut were arrested and imprisoned, and the French cultural attaché Guy Turbet-Delof (who had, admittedly, helped some Hungarian intellectuals escape to France after 1956) was under constant surveillance and threatened with expulsion. In this context, the 1959 book exhibition can be better understood as a sign of thawing political relations.

In 'Books Crossing the Iron Curtain: French, Hungarians and the CIA,' Véri investigates the book exhibitions held in the 1950s and early 1960s as an interaction from which both the 'Eastern' and 'Western' side sought to reap political returns. The French exhibition in Budapest was followed by a Hungarian book exhibition in Paris, which, however, caused a much smaller

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1) Christian Drobe reviewed two of these in the previous issue of our journal: 'Abstraction in Hungary,' *Art East Central* 1, 2021, 147–151.

stir in the French capital: while the exotic fruit of literature from the other side of the Iron Curtain had the potential to cause some *frisson*, the books were mostly in Hungarian, and hence inaccessible to the audience. The essay emphasises the not-so-altruistic reasons why western states disseminated their culture to the Eastern Bloc, including the CIA's oft-cited involvement in the promotion of abstract art. A lesser-known venture was the distribution of books to Eastern Bloc intellectuals by the CIA through intermediaries in western Europe. Between 1956 and 1991 this venture comprised almost ten million volumes. While obviously a weapon of soft power in the Cold War, this was – as the essays, as well as the interviews explain – an invaluable resource for those who wished to gain a broader view of global culture than the one afforded by resources accessible in Hungary. For instance, two of the most sought-after works disseminated this way were Herbert Read's books on modern painting and sculpture.

The essays explain the context and set the scene, but it is the interviews that truly fill the catalogue with life. While preparing the exhibition, the curators spoke to ten artists and art historians about their access to information on western modern art. The basis for selecting the interviewees was their involvement in *The Great Book Theft*, but they all also talk about other resources, their life strategies in the years around 1959, and the role the events and venues mentioned in the catalogue played in their lives. It is one thing to read, in the essays, that the Foreign Language Bookshop was an important venue for accessing literature about western art, and another to find out how the artist László Gyémánt was saving up money for almost a year to buy an album on Jackson Pollock, of which just one single copy was available, only to be disappointed by the American artist's drawings when he was finally able to peruse the book as a potential customer. As for the book theft itself: the significance of the book exhibition becomes tangible once the interviewees explain the irresistible allure of the beautifully produced French art books, which were otherwise completely inaccessible to them, in most cases even in libraries. Despite the high monetary value, they did not steal heaps of the books, just one or two they liked and needed. Many of them held on to these volumes through the decades afterwards and were now able to loan them to the exhibition. And even so, many of the interviews betray long-lasting embarrassment at the act of stealing – despite the not-so-secret fact that, in yet another act of shrewd cultural warfare, the French organisers had actually expected the books to be stolen and had not even arranged return transport.

Although the catalogue is bilingual (Hungarian–English), there are layers to these interviews that can only be appreciated by Hungarian readers familiar with the people in question: readers who belong to the community of Hungarian art historians. It is, for instance, poignant to read about the amount of effort that went into building up the collection of slides at the Art History Department, the collection that was still used to teach this reviewer and which has of course become obsolete in the age of PowerPoint. It is highly moving to find out that Ernő Marosi, the future influential Professor of Medieval Art who sadly passed away last year, stole a book on Romanesque art, hence standing out from among the other participants who mostly focused on much-coveted modern art. Indeed, some of the appeal of this catalogue certainly rests on the general appeal of stories about important people being young and unruly, and this can only be appreciated by those who understand the part these people played in the community. Although the English translation includes biographical footnotes about the interviewees and other people mentioned, these do not provide sufficient context to orientate an outsider. This

is not a serious flaw, as there is no easy solution to the problem: it would probably require a whole separate essay solely for non-Hungarian readers, which is not feasible within the scope of a bilingual catalogue. Still, it raises a general, often-occurring issue: English translations alone are in most cases not sufficiently informative for international readers, and a more complete transcultural translation would require the production of separate texts for this purpose – something that is in most cases impossible due to budgetary and staff constraints.

Nevertheless, while these accessibility problems might prevent non-Hungarian readers from fully appreciating certain aspects of the topic, they do not hinder the understanding of the core issues. Quite to the contrary: the catalogue offers much to ponder for non-Hungarian readers. It is of interest not only as an analysis of the cultural politics of the Cold War or of a section of everyday life under Communism, but also holds wider lessons about knowledge exchange and cultural power. There is, for instance, something uncomfortable about French cultural officials expecting Hungarian intellectuals to steal books at an exhibition. Yes, this is a story specific to a highly regulated, dictatorial environment where these books could not be disseminated in any other way. Yet, it is also a more general story about haves and have-nots; about cultural 'centres' and 'peripheries', if you will. In this respect, it is important that the catalogue highlights not just the political, but also the financial constraints these young students faced. Some books were there, in the bookshop, but still far out of reach.

Furthermore, through its careful examination of the effects of a closed society, closed borders, and restricted access to information on the lives and careers of art historians, the book also adds an important perspective to discussions about the internationalisation of art history and the inclusion of east European voices in global narratives. Questions such as why art historians in eastern Europe have tended to focus on the art of their own country and region are here answered through material facts. These are issues that resonate through the decades, in a country where eminent historian of avant-garde art Krisztina Passuth could still be reprimanded in the mid-1970s at her workplace, the Museum of Fine Arts, for taking lessons in the French language from a native-speaking French instructor employed at the Institut Français. These occurrences now almost seem absurd, but they inevitably influenced the directions Hungarian art historiography was able to take, and hence helped shape its existing tradition. As we come to terms with this fact, new questions emerge about how political pressures and financial disparities can still hinder access and create cultural imbalance, at a time when information flows much more freely than in the 1950s and 1960s. These are questions that all attempts at globalising art history will have to be able to face.

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