

German-speaking exiles and the writing of Indian art history

Devika Singh

Introduction

This article focuses on German-speaking art historians who left Europe in the 1930s for India, a country of transit and destination that has so far been overlooked by most scholars of both Indian art and post-Weimar migration.¹ The leading position that exiles played in India as curators, museum directors, university professors and art critics from the 1930s to the 1960s is a little known aspect of art historiography that highlights significant transfers between Europe and India.² Participating in the

This article draws on papers given at the College Art Association annual conference (2013), King's College, London (2013) and the Centre of South Asian Studies, University of Cambridge (2014). The author is grateful to Geraldine Johnson, Kriti Kapila, the late Christopher Bayly, Partha Mitter and Finbarr Barry Flood for their help and comments. Part of the research for this article was conducted with the support of the Deutscher Akademischer Austausch Dienst (DAAD) and the author thanks Sebastian Conrad for hosting her at the Freie Universität Berlin.

¹ On art historians who migrated to the United States, see for instance Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann, 'American Voices. Remarks on the Earlier History of Art History in the United States and the Reception of Germanic Art Historians', *Journal of Art Historiography*, no. 2, June 2010. <https://arthistoriography.files.wordpress.com/2011/02/media_152488_en.pdf> (Accessed 3 September 2016). On the geographical displacement of the study of Islamic art from Europe to North America in the 1930s, see Moya Carey and Margaret S. Graves, 'Introduction: the historiography of Islamic art and architecture, 2012', *Journal of Art Historiography*, no. 6, June 2012. <<https://arthistoriography.files.wordpress.com/2012/05/introgravesandcarey2.pdf>> (Accessed 3 September 2016).

² With the exception of Ernst Cohn-Wiener, German-speaking art historians who went to India are not featured in the major publications on German-speaking exiles and exiled art historians. Cohn-Wiener is included in Ulrike Wendland, *Biographisches Handbuch Deutschsprachiger Kunsthistoriker im Exil: Leben und Werk der unter dem Nationalsozialismus verfolgten und vertriebenen Wissenschaftler*, Munich: K.G. Saur, 1999, vol. 1-2. But none of the figures discussed in this article have acquired the same status in *Exilforschung* as those who migrated to the United States and none features in Peter Betthausen, Peter H. Feist and Christiane Fork, eds, *Metzler Kunsthistoriker Lexikon: Zweihundert Porträts deutschsprachiger Autoren aus vier Jahrhunderten*, Stuttgart: Metzler, 1999. Similarly, the study of India's Jewish communities has paid little attention to European migrants of the 1930s, if only because the majority of them left India after the Second World War. On Jewish emigration to India, see

writing of Indian art history and influencing the appropriation of modernism in India, these émigrés advanced in crucial ways the practice and history of Indian art.

The article considers three leading figures who were driven out of Europe by Nazism for either individual or family reasons: the German art historians Ernst Cohn-Wiener and Hermann Goetz and the Austrian art critic Rudolf von Leyden. Their trajectories and writings are noteworthy both from the perspective of art historiography for their seminal writings and the urgency of the debates they conducted, and from the perspective of the social history of art, which has helped bring out the role of intermediaries in ascribing value to art. Taken together their different modes of writing influenced the place of Islamic art in India, the evolving definition and canon of Indian art and, finally, the reception of contemporary Indian art.

I argue that, though often neglected, these art historians played a pioneering role in Indian art history. As writers, educators and during their tenures at museums, they debated and promoted the study of Indian past and contemporary art and helped create a public for Indian art. The article pays attention to the selective processes at work in the practice of art history, as seen in the inclusions and exclusions in their writings and how these were influenced by previous art writing and the geopolitical context of the time. German-speaking art historians presented a new, revisionist take on Indian art history by ascribing equal importance to the different legacies of Indian art. They circumvented the impasse between, on the one hand, colonial writing on art and its relationship to the construction of knowledge and the control and domination of Indian society and, on the other hand, the emergence at the beginning of the twentieth century of so-called nationalist art historians who sought, in reaction to the colonial approach, to revalorise Indian art by insisting on the spiritual character of its ancient Hindu and Buddhist legacies.³ German-speaking exiles presented, instead, an inclusive take on Indian art that emphasised both its Hindu and Islamic legacies and would chime after 1947 with the unifying cultural agenda of the new nation state. In addition, in the 1940s, at a time when revivalism and academic painting still held traction, Goetz and von Leyden championed the modernist artists of their time. All three took stances on some of the most polemical issues of the history of Indian art.

Moreover, the case of Cohn-Wiener, Goetz and von Leyden is valuable from a number of perspectives. First, it highlights the exceedingly important role of exiles and expatriates in fostering global exchanges and transfers, despite significant limitations on the ground. Contrary to travellers who had the ability to interpret and translate knowledge from one context into another and to bring back home

Johannes H. Voigt, 'Indien', in Claus-Dieter Korhn, ed., *Handbuch der deutschsprachigen Emigration 1933-1945*, Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2008, 270-5, and Kenneth X. Robbins and Marvin Tokayer, eds, *Western Jews in India: From the Fifteenth Century to the Present*, Delhi: Manohar, 2013.

³ See Devika Singh, 'Indian Nationalist Art History and the Writing and Exhibiting of Mughal Art, 1910-1948', *Art History*, 36: 5, 2013, 1042-69.

newly acquired information, the exiles discussed in this article were dislocated from their homes and centres of learning and had little mobility within India during the war.

Second, I touch on the definition of artistic centres and follow the transition from a time when Indian princely states invited Europe's avant-garde artists and architects to the emergence of the metropolitan centre of Bombay as a home to some of India's most innovative artists. The article studies the role played in this process by foreign intermediaries, inviting comparisons with other extra-European art scenes where foreigners held similar positions.

Third, the case of German-speaking exiles in India sheds light on complex, global knowledge networks and asymmetries of power. The art historians discussed here fit into a different relationship than their colonial predecessors and colleagues. The intellectual circulations between India and Europe that they encouraged question the knowledge hierarchies of the British Empire and undermine the assumption that leading European intellectuals in India would necessarily be tied to the colonial state. Exiled from their home countries, German-speaking art historians did not come to India with the same logistical support and ideological make-up as British colonialists. The lives of German-speaking exiles were conditioned by British colonial parameters that allowed their presence in India, but expatriate art historians often struggled to learn English and had to retrain for sometimes entirely different fields of expertise. In addition, with the advent of the Second World War, German and Austrian passport-holders were arrested and interned as 'enemy aliens'.

At the same time, despite these difficulties, they benefitted from the privileged status conferred onto them in Indian princely states and after independence within the emerging Indian art world, including its national institutions, that were eager to make use of their expertise and legitimising potential. It is therefore impossible to neglect the different asymmetries of power that first drove émigrés art historians out of Europe as Jews or companions of Jews, but then granted them a privileged status in India as Europeans. At several levels, German-speaking exiles in India attest to a history that was both 'connected and unequal'.⁴

I. Ernst Cohn-Wiener: a Weimar scholar in the princely state of Baroda

Ernst Cohn-Wiener (1882-1941) is remembered as an expert in Islamic art and the author of the renowned book *Turan: Islamische Baukunst in Mittelasien* (1930) on the architecture of Turkistan. Yet his output ranged from a world history of art (*Die Entwicklungsgeschichte der Stile in der bildenden Kunst*, 1910), which ran into three

⁴ Jane Burbank and Fredrick Cooper, 'Un monde d'empires', in Patrick Boucheron and Nicolas Delalande, eds, *Pour une histoire-monde*, Paris : Presses Universitaire de France, 2013, 48. See also Sebastian Conrad, *What is global history?*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016, 54-5.

editions, to a history of Jewish art (*Die jüdische Kunst*, 1929). A particularly eloquent and popular public speaker,⁵ he received his doctoral thesis from the University of Heidelberg in 1907 and became a lecturer the following year at the Freie Hochschule in Berlin. In 1924 and 1925, he travelled to many sites in Turkistan, including Bukhara and Samarqand as well as many then lesser-known ones, to conduct research for his book on Turan. During two field trips he assembled a considerable number of high-quality photographs, many of which are reproduced in the final publication and became precious sources for the study of Islamic architecture.⁶ Despite the recognition he received for his book on Turan, as a 'non-Aryan', and a particularly suspect one who had conducted research in the Soviet Union, Cohn-Wiener was sacked from his post in 1933 and first migrated to Britain where he lectured at the School of African and Oriental Studies in London. A year later, he received an invitation, facilitated by the politician Herbert Samuel, to work in India for the princely ruler of Baroda as his art director. At a time when most German-Jewish intellectuals were still trying to remain in neighbouring European countries, Cohn-Wiener was thus making his way to India.

India is, indeed, rarely associated with Jewish exile. Though the number of Jewish refugees, roughly one thousand until the outbreak of the war,⁷ was less than in other countries, Bombay, the principal entry point to India—whose access was still facilitated by British colonial authorities in this period—remained one of the main port cities in Asia, together with Shanghai and Singapore, that welcomed Jews until the late 1930s. Inside the nationalist Congress Party, Jawarhalal Nehru, India's future Prime Minister, responded positively to the resettlement of Jews in India. The Party remained, however, divided on the issue of Jewish migration.⁸ Nehru was in favour of select migration (especially of engineers, medical doctors, etc.), while Gandhi, who promoted non-violent resistance to Adolf Hitler, was mainly opposed to it.⁹ In India, Jewish exiles received the support of the Indian Jewish Relief Association created by European exiles in 1934, as well as that of members of the Indian Jewish population, including the Sassoon family.¹⁰ Regular meeting places in Bombay comprised the Jewish Club financed by Alwyn Ezra, which attracted Baghdadi Jews and European Jews, while the newspapers *The Jewish Tribune* and *The Jewish Advocate* (the official organ of the Bombay Zionist Association) competed for readership. On the other side of the spectrum, Nazi supporters living in India in

⁵ Wendland, *Biographisches Handbuch*, vol. 1, 102.

⁶ Other photographs, in the case of monuments damaged by earthquakes, were lent to Cohn-Wiener by Friedrich Sarre. Ernst Cohn-Wiener, *Turan: Islamische Baukunst in Mittelasien*, Berlin: Ernst Wasmuth Verlag, 1930, 5.

⁷ Joan Roland, *The Jewish Communities of India: Identity in a Colonial Era*, New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1998, 178. By 1943, around two thousand Jewish exiles had settled in India. Roland, *The Jewish Communities of India*, 226.

⁸ Voigt, 'Indien'.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Roland, *The Jewish Communities of India*, 177.

the 1930s followed European politics through the lens of the Nazi periodical *Der Deutsche in Indien*, encouraged the creation of Hitler youth groups across India and got together for various celebrations.¹¹

The picture was very different in Baroda, a city that according to Cohn-Wiener counted only one other Jewish family beside his own.¹² Yet it was an unusually stimulating place in many other respects. The Maharaja of Baroda, Sayajirao Gaekwad III, belonged to a small number of rulers who promoted the adoption of European museum techniques and of modernist visual language in art and architecture in India during the interwar period. Others included the Maharaja of Indore, Yeshwant Rao Holkar II, who commissioned Eckart Muthesius, son of Hermann Muthesius, to build his modern palace Manik Bagh (1930-39). In addition, the princely state of Mysore, ruled in practice by its *diwan* or prime minister, Mirza Ismail, appointed in 1939 Otto Königsberger, a refugee who had first migrated from Germany to Egypt, who soon became the state's Government Architect.¹³

The Baroda Museum, unique for its collection of both Indian and European art, was founded 1887 and opened to the public in 1895. In the 1920s a new wing called the Picture Gallery dedicated to European painting was inaugurated. The paintings had been acquired in the early 1910s by Marion Harry Spielmann, former editor of the British journal *The Magazine of Art*, but had only been shipped to India after the end of the First World War.¹⁴ From his arrival in 1934, Cohn-Wiener was in charge of modernising the display of European and Indian art. In an autobiographical sketch written towards the end of the decade, he described his duties in the following terms: 'I became the head of a new department, which had to supervise the Art School, the Museum and the Picture Gallery. I brought the Art Institutes of the State [of Baroda] to a modern standard, and introduced lectures about Eastern art for teachers and for the High schools'.¹⁵

In addition to transmitting his knowledge and expertise, Cohn-Wiener also used his time in India to advance his own research. Germany had long been a prime mediator for the interpretation of Indian religions and languages. But by the 1930s, as Goetz remarked, German scholarship suffered, with some important exceptions, from having been cut off from scholarly advances abroad and from access to

¹¹ See, for example, Hilde Assmann 'Bund deutscher Maedel in Tatanagar', *Der Deutsche in Indien*, no. 23, March 1938, 9-11.

¹² The Wiener Library for the Study of the Holocaust and Genocide, London: 805/2/18.

¹³ On Otto Königsberger, see Rachel Lee, 'Constructing a Shared Vision: Otto Koenigsberger and Tata & Sons', *ABE Journal. European Architecture beyond Europe*, no. 2, 2003. <<https://abe.revues.org/356>> (Accessed 3 September 2016).

¹⁴ See Ernst Cohn-Wiener, *Catalogue of the European Pictures*, Baroda: Baroda State Press, 1935. For a history of the museum and of collecting in Baroda, see Hermann Goetz, *Baroda Museum and Picture Gallery: Handbook of the Collections*, Baroda, 1952; Julie Codell, 'Ironies of Mimicry: The Art Collecton of Sayaji Rao III Gaekwad, Maharaja of Baroda, and the Cultural Politics of Early Modern India', *Journal of the History of Collections*, 15: 1, 2003, 127-46.

¹⁵ The Wiener Library for the Study of the Holocaust and Genocide, London: 805/1/1.

research in India, first due to the First World War and then until 1924 because of post-war inflation.¹⁶ Moreover, the existence of visual documentation would also have had a strong impact. As has been remarked, the study of art has long amounted to the study of what has been photographed.¹⁷ This is even more so the case of the history of non-Western architectural history in Europe because of the obvious geographical remoteness of the sites—hence the value of the aforementioned illustrations in Cohn-Wiener's *Turan*.¹⁸ While in India, Cohn-Wiener dedicated time and effort to travelling across the country. This afforded him rare encounters not only with physical objects, but also with their original contexts. In his writing and lectures on Indian art, Cohn-Wiener departed from the assumptions of text-based analysis to pay attention to the material reality of his objects of study—a method he had already used when he travelled to remote areas of Turkistan.

In 1938 Cohn-Wiener lectured at the University of Bombay, including on the sites of Barhut, Sanchi, Amravati and Sarnath that he had recently visited and that were part of both colonial and nationalist canons of Indian art.¹⁹ In one of his lectures he stressed how much the question of Greek influences on Indian art—a subject of heated debate—had been given too much centrality in debates on Indian art.²⁰ Instead, he dwelled on matters of cross-cultural exchanges, including between India and Persia. His comments echoed the statement he had previously made in his book *Das Kunstgewerbe des Ostens*:

[T]he relative is always more important than the absolute. But it is more elusive, and as a consequence we have mainly focused on national art histories. This is why the migration of people appeared as a mere cause of cultural destruction. But it is only so if we judge it from the perspective of classical Antiquity, which is our most dangerous bias. In world history the migration of people has been as fertile as Hellenism.²¹

¹⁶ Hermann Goetz, 'Vorwort des Übersetzers', in Ananda Kentish Coomaraswamy, *Geschichte der Indischen und Indonesischen Kunst*, Leipzig: Karl W. Hiersemann, 1927, viii.

¹⁷ On this topic, see Geraldine Johnson, '(Un)richtige Aufnahme: Renaissance Sculpture and the Visual Historiography of Art History', *Art History*, 36: 1, 2013, 12-51.

¹⁸ For example, Stella Kramrisch completed her doctoral thesis on early Buddhist sculpture before ever having gone to India, partly thanks to having access to photographs belonging to the collector Victor Goloubew. Barbara Stoler Miller, 'Stella Kramrisch: A Biographical Essay', in *Exploring India's Sacred Art: Selected Writings of Stella Kramrisch*, Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 1983, 7.

¹⁹ See Ernst Cohn-Wiener, 'The Lady under the Tree', *Parnassus*, 11: 6, 1939, 24-9.

²⁰ 'Exchange of Art Ideas: Dr Cohn-Wiener on India's Influence', *The Times of India*, 17 November 1938, 12. Cohn-Wiener had already delivered lectures at the University of Bombay in 1935 and 1936.

²¹ 'Immer ist das Relative wichtiger, als das Absolute. Aber es ist schwerer fassbar, und so trieben wir meist nur Kunstgeschichten der Nationen. Deshalb erscheint die Völkerwanderung als blosser Kulturzerstörung. Sie ist es nur, wenn man vom klassischen Altertum aus urteilt, das unser gefährlichstes Vorurteil ist. Im Sinne der Weltgeschichte ist

In this text, Cohn-Wiener projected the debate about the 'barbarian invasions' and the decline or, alternatively, the reinvigoration of the classical world from 'the migration of people' onto world history, concluding on its positive impact. This debate was also, from a comparative perspective, particularly relevant for Indian art history.²²

Colonial histories of Indian art had in the nineteenth century imposed Greek and Roman classical art as standard points of comparison for the study of Indian art. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the classical comparison had divided archaeologists of India, such as Henry Hardy Cole and James Fergusson, from what Partha Mitter calls the 'transcendental' group, represented by Ernest Binfield Havell and Ananda Kentish Coomaraswamy who refused to use classical European art as a benchmark for the study of Indian art.²³ The influence of classical art, and more specifically of Greek stone sculpture, on Indian art had been at the centre of a famous dispute between the Bengali scholar Rajendralal Mitra and Fergusson.²⁴ In 1908 Coomaraswamy sought to do away definitely with the idea of the Greek origins of Gandhara art and with Vincent Smith's assertion that no 'proper' sculpture was created in India after 300 CE. Coomaraswamy thus affirmed that 'we may read anew the meaning of the Gandhara sculptures, and see in them, not the influence of Greek-Roman art on Indian art, but the influence of Indian art upon Greek-Roman [art]'.²⁵

Like both colonial and nationalist scholars, Cohn-Wiener defined what was 'Indian' as an expression of national culture and identity and inferred a complicity between the history of art and the history of ideas—an approach long fostered by art

die Völkerwanderung so schöpferisch, wie vorher der Hellenismus.' Ernst Cohn-Wiener, *Das Kunstgewerbe des Ostens: Ägypten, Vorderasien, Islam, China und Japan - Geschichte, Stile, Technik*, Berlin: Verlag für Kunstwissenschaft, 1923, 80. (Unless otherwise noted, all translations by the author.)

²² See Eric Michaud, *Les invasions barbares. Une généalogie de l'histoire de l'art*, Paris: Gallimard, 2015, 11.

²³ Partha Mitter, *Much Maligned Monsters: A History of European Reactions to Indian Art*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992, 255.

²⁴ Partha Mitter, *Art and Nationalism in Colonial India 1852-1922: Occidental Orientations*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994, 226; Andrew Sartori, 'Beyond Culture-Contact and Colonial Discourse: "Germanism" in Colonial Bengal', *Modern Intellectual History*, 4: 1, 2007, 81; and Upinder Singh, *The Discovery of Ancient India: Early Archaeologists and the Beginnings of Archaeology*, New Delhi: Permanent Black, 2004, 333-4. On the classical comparison and colonial narratives of progress and decline, see Javed Majeed, 'Comparativism and References to Rome in British Attitudes to India', in Catharine Edwards, ed., *Roman Presences: Perceptions of Rome in European Culture, 1789-1945*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999, 88-109.

²⁵ Smith's theory was strongly rebutted by Coomaraswamy in a famous lecture given at the Oriental Congress in Copenhagen in 1908, reprinted in Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, *Essays in National Idealism*, Colombo: Colombo Apothecaries, 1909, 94.

historians of the German-speaking world.²⁶ Yet his research differed both from colonial conventions and from writings on Indian nationalist art history. The geography Cohn-Wiener drew for Indian art, which connected India with other Asian contexts, was far removed from Coomaraswamy's diffusionist ideas that stressed India's influence on Southeast Asia, thereby turning his back on India's Islamic heritage. In contrast, Cohn-Wiener stressed India's relations to Persia. In addition, his first-hand knowledge of Islamic architecture of other Asian countries encouraged him to refine the analysis of Indian Islamic architecture. As he explained, 'to understand the Islamic art in India, the origins of the ornamental forms in the different Islamic countries have to be strictly examined: and commonplace words, such as "Saracenic art" should be strictly avoided'.²⁷

Though fascinated by the art he discovered in India, Cohn-Wiener suffered from intellectual isolation, a feeling commonly shared among exiles across the world, but enhanced in Cohn-Wiener's case by the peripheral location of Baroda—an enclave of artistic learning and collecting that did not yet belong in the late 1930s to a strong network of interdependent artistic and intellectual centres. As a measure of this, Cohn-Wiener for example lamented the absence of non-English language books in Baroda and, to begin with, of a scholarly library.²⁸ It is, however, the modest salary on which he lived, as well as his bad health, that seem to have prompted Cohn-Wiener to want to leave India and search for employment 'in a non-tropical country'.²⁹ It is in this context that one must read his correspondence from India with refugee organisations and potential sponsors in which he seems to have deliberately painted a bleaker portrait of his time at Baroda in order to build his case. From the perspective of refugee organisations, the point was obviously to rescue Jews in Europe, not to move unhappily settled Jews from one safe country to another. In one account, for example, Cohn-Wiener makes a great deal of Hindu-Muslim tensions as a potential threat for Jews, whereas in reality it is the meeting of his employer, the Maharaja of Baroda, with Adolf Hitler in 1936 that should have been noteworthy.³⁰

²⁶ On the notions of culture and identity in relation to the history and geography of art, see Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann, *Toward a Geography of Art*, Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2004.

²⁷ Ernst Cohn-Wiener, *Travelling Report for the Time of February-April 1936*, Baroda: Baroda State Press, 1937, 4.

²⁸ Letter to Maurice Laserson, 12 November 1936. The Wiener Library for the Study of the Holocaust and Genocide, London: 805/2/18

²⁹ Letter to Maurice Laserson, 24 February 1935. The Wiener Library for the Study of the Holocaust and Genocide, London: 805/2/10.

³⁰ It is unclear whether Cohn-Wiener knew about this meeting. If he had, it can be assumed that he would have made a great deal out of it when writing to refugee associations, rather than emphasising the threat of Hindu-Muslim tensions that did not affect Jews in a direct way. Generally speaking, India had no history of anti-Semitism, yet Jews feared the opinions of nationalist leader Subhas Chandra Bose who after condemning the violence of *Kristallnacht* formed the following year the pro-fascist All-India Forward Bloc. See Roland,

After much effort Cohn-Wiener finally managed in 1938 to attract the attention of the National Coordinating Committee for Aid to Refugees and Migrants Coming From Germany (later the National Refugee Service) and to migrate to the United States.³¹ After almost five years in India, Cohn-Wiener would thus end his career at the recently opened American Institute for Persian Art and Archaeology in New York where he worked with Arthur Upham Pope until his death in 1941.³²

II. Hermann Goetz: a pioneering art historian in India

Cohn-Wiener was first succeeded at Baroda by the Indian archaeologist Hirananda Shastri. In 1943 Hermann Goetz (1898-1978) was eventually hired by Sayajirao Gwaekad III's grandson, Pratap Singh Rao Gaekwad, who took over from him after his death in 1939—thereby refuting some of Cohn-Wiener's fears about the uncertain future of foreigners working for the princely state of Baroda.³³ Born in Karlsruhe, Goetz pursued his higher education in Munich and Berlin. An omnivorous scholar, he took classes in Indology (Sanskrit and Pali) as well as in the history of the Near East, receiving his doctorate in 1923 from the University of Munich with a thesis on court dress of the Mughal empire.³⁴ In his thesis, Goetz used the analysis of costume in Mughal painting to address chronological gaps in the study of Mughal art. From 1926, Goetz was an assistant at the Indian Department of the Museum für Völkerkunde in Berlin, until he accepted in 1931 the invitation of Jean-Philippe Vogel, former director of the Archaeological Survey of India, to join the newly founded Kern Institute in Leiden. Goetz's wife was the granddaughter of converted Jewish mathematician Lazarus Fuchs and in 1936 the couple decided to go to India on a travel grant from the Kern Institute and eventually settled there.

Like Cohn-Wiener, Goetz was concerned with grounding his writings in meticulous research that broke with textual conventions. From his early years in India, Goetz also took significant time out to study various architectural sites across India. Similarly, he delivered lectures, including at the University of Bombay, before taking on the curatorship and soon the directorship of the Baroda art museum in

The Jewish Communities of India, 225.

³¹ Letter from Maurice Laserson to Ernst Cohn-Wiener, 26 December 1938. The Wiener Library for the Study of the Holocaust and Genocide, London: 805/2/41.

³² On Arthur Upham Pope, see Yuka Kadoi, 'Arthur Upham Pope and his "research methods in Muhammadan art": Persian carpets', *Journal of Art Historiography*, no. 6, June 2012. <<https://arthistoriography.files.wordpress.com/2012/05/kadoi.pdf>> (Accessed 3 September 2016).

³³ Cohn-Wiener had commented on the nationalist climate of the 1930s in regard to the hiring of non-Indians. Letter to Maurice Laserson, 2 March 1937. The Wiener Library for the study of the Holocaust and Genocide, London: 805/2/24.

³⁴ His early publications on the subject include Hermann Goetz and Ernst Kuehnel, *Indische Buchmalerei aus dem Jahangir Album der Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin*, Berlin: Scarabaeus-Verlag, 1924.

1940. There, building on Cohn-Wiener's legacy, he further modernised the display of its collection of European Renaissance art as well as of Indian artworks and started the museum's *Bulletin*.³⁵

A prolific writer, Goetz opened new lines of enquiry for the history of Indian art. First indebted for his study of Mughal and Rajput painting to the work of Coomaraswamy, whose influential *History of Indian and Indonesian Art* he had translated into German in 1927, Goetz increasingly distanced himself from Coomaraswamy's emphasis on the spiritual aspect of Indian art. For instance, he departed from the strict separation Coomaraswamy had drawn between Rajput and Mughal painting. The two main threads that run through Goetz's writing are, first, a commitment to defining the historical evolution of Indian art and breaking from ahistorical interpretations and, second, a desire to stress the geographical connections between Indian art and other Asian legacies. Without any polemical intention, he affirmed very early on the necessity of emphasising historical developments and went against much that had been written before him on the topic. As he explained, 'for we forget too easily that the denial of historical changes and the apparent lack of interest in them is not an Indian phenomenon, but itself a conservative aspect of historical interpretation not only in India'.³⁶

In addition to his specialist publications, Goetz wrote ambitious surveys covering hundreds of years of Indian art,³⁷ culminating in his giving a Nehru Memorial Lecture in 1971 on the topic of 'World perspectives in Indian art'. In this lecture, as in his other writings, art, social and political histories are treated as complementary approaches. Already in the introduction to his book on the art of Bikaner, for example, he stated his concern with the:

...reconstruction of a historical background not of heroic romance but of the interrelations of power politics, less colourful perhaps, but dovetailed into the all-Indian picture and unrolling the vast panorama of the rise, flourishing, decline, collapse and rebirth of art and of the cultural interrelations between the past and the present, and between the Rajputs and their neighbours.³⁸

³⁵ On the history of the museum, see Codell, 'Ironies of Mimicry'.

³⁶ Hermann Goetz, 'Introductory remarks', in Hermann Kulke, ed., *Studies in the History, Religion and art of classical and mediaeval India*, 1974, 1. See also Goetz, *The World Perspective of Indian Art: Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Lecture*, New Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund, 1971.

³⁷ For example, see Hermann Goetz, *The Crisis of the Indian Civilization in the 18th and early 19th Centuries*, Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1938, and Goetz, *Geschichte Indiens*, Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1962.

³⁸ Hermann Goetz, *The Art and Architecture of Bikaner State*, Oxford: Bruno Cassirer, 1950, 11. This project seems to have been funded not by the Gaekwad of Bikaner but by the publishing house created by the renowned German-Jewish art dealer and publisher Bruno Cassirer, who had migrated to the United Kingdom and died there in 1941, and by his son-in-

This statement goes some way in explaining how he considered artistic developments to be part of wider social exchanges and sought to integrate new objects of study, such as the art of Bikaner, within a wider corpus of analysis.

Although Goetz is recognised for having engaged with the fastidious but crucial task of dating and classification,³⁹ Hermann Kulke states that Goetz's 'intention was to discover and expose cultural and intellectual movements which linked continents and peoples rather than discovering, for instance, yet another hitherto unknown architectural detail of early Gupta temples borrowed from provincial Roman architecture of Western Asia'.⁴⁰ Rejecting any simplistic notion of authenticity, what interested Goetz was not so much the fact of influence, but how extraneous forms and styles had been appropriated in India. Very much like Cohn-Wiener, he sought to break away from established terminologies and a periodisation that set Indian Hindu and Islamic art against each other. In his writings, he moved away from the tripartite reading of Indian history. This separated an ancient 'Hindu golden age' from the so-called Muslim period started in the thirteenth century and finally British colonial rule marked by enlightenment and progress—a separation that delineated not only chronological but also culturally and religiously circumscribed categories.

At the outbreak of the Second World War, German and Austrian passport holders living in British-ruled India were arrested and interned as 'enemy aliens'.⁴¹ The internment of Germans was not unprecedented—the same had happened across the British Empire during the First World War. And as previously noted, the German population present in India counted both Jewish exiles, who had been steadily arriving in India since 1933, as well as Nazi supporters caught in India at the outbreak of the war.

Goetz was interned twice during the Second World War for a period of three years in total,⁴² using his time at the camp in Purandar in the present state of Maharashtra to conduct research on the region's monuments and history.⁴³ Yet, contrary to other Germans, Goetz decided to stay in India after the war and held a

law George Hill (alias, Günther Hell). Letter from George Hill to Hermann Goetz, 10 January 1950, Nachlass 496 (Cassirer) 86, Berlin Staatsbibliothek.

³⁹ See the book review of Hermann Goetz, *Rajput Art and Architecture*, ed. Jyotindra Jain and Jutta Jain-Neubauer, Wiesbaden : Steiner, 1978, by Milo C. Beach in *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 40: 3, 1981, 632.

⁴⁰ Hermann Kulke, 'Life and work of Hermann Goetz', in Joachim Deppert, ed., *India and the West: Proceedings of a seminar dedicated to the memory of Hermann Goetz*, Delhi: Manohar, 1983, 14.

⁴¹ Though several German Jews managed to negotiate their early release, at the end of the war Indian camps still had about two thousand Germans, including many Jews who had not been able to secure employment in India. See Anil Bhatti and Johannes H. Voigt, eds, *Jewish Exile in India (1933-1945)*, Manohar, Delhi, 2005.

⁴² Kulke, 'Life and work of Hermann Goetz', 20.

⁴³ Hermann Goetz, 'Purandhar: Its Monuments and their History', *Annals of the Bhadakar Oriental Research Institute* (Poona), 30, 1950, part III-IV.

leading position in the post-independence art world. In that sense, he also differed from Austrian art historian Stella Kramrisch who left India in 1950 following the death of her husband. In contrast, Goetz stayed in India until the early 1970s. In 1951 he became honorary Professor of the History of Indian Art at the newly founded University of Baroda, and in 1953 he was appointed the first director of the National Gallery of Modern Art in Delhi that opened to the public the following year. Like the architect Königsberger, who after independence became director of housing for the government of India, Goetz transitioned from his position at Baroda to working for a national institution. There, at the National Gallery of Modern Art, 'the backbone of the collection', as Goetz put it, consisted of works by Amrita Sher-Gil that filled three rooms of the museum. In addition, the collection, which Goetz helped valorise, already included works by Jamini Roy, Avinash Chandra, K.C.S. Paniker and Mohan Samant.⁴⁴ Goetz returned to Germany for health reasons in 1955 only to return to India three years later when he was invited to set up the Fateh Singh Museum at Baroda.

The specialised knowledge of European art historians had been used to teach art history, build museums and organise exhibitions—this was true of Cohn-Wiener, of Goetz and of Kramrisch, who played a key role in inviting artists of the Bauhaus to participate in the Indian Society of Oriental Art's exhibition in Calcutta in 1922 and first taught European art at Rabindranath Tagore's Kala Bhavan in Shantiniketan.⁴⁵ After independence, the role of expatriate art historians in the growing Indian art world can be connected to the state's incentive to hire foreign experts. Yet art historians like Goetz or the American Grace Morley, the former director of the San Francisco Museum of Art who served as director of the National Museum in Delhi,⁴⁶ were overshadowed both by famous foreigners who were invited to work in India when they were already at the height of their careers (e.g.

⁴⁴ Hermann Goetz, 'The National Gallery of Modern Art', *Museum*, 9: 7, 1956, 12-14. See also Vidya Shivadas, 'Museumising Modern Art : National Gallery of Modern Art, the India case-study' in Saloni Mathur and Kavita Singh, eds, *No Touching, No Spitting, No Praying: The Museum in South Asia*, Delhi : Routledge, 2015, 157-60. On the Baroda museum, see Goetz, 'The Baroda Museum and Picture Gallery', *Museum*, 7: 1, 1954, 15-19.

⁴⁵ Kris Manjapra, 'Stella Kramrisch and the Bauhaus in Calcutta', in R. Kumar Siva, ed., *The Last Harvest: Paintings of Rabindranath Tagore*, Ahmedabad: Mapin, 2010, 34-40; Partha Mitter, 'Bauhaus in Kalkutta', in Annemarie Jaeggi, ed., *Bauhaus Global: Gesammelte Beiträge der Konferenz Bauhaus Global*, Berlin: Gebr. Mann Verlag, 2010, 149-58; and Kris Manjapra, *Age of Entanglement: German and Indian intellectuals across Empire*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2014. On the 1922 exhibition of the Indian Society of Oriental Art, see Regina Bittner, ed., *Das Bauhaus in Kalkutta. Eine Begegnung kosmopolischer Avantgarden*, Berlin: Hatje Cantz, 2013.

⁴⁶ Morley served as director of the National Museum from 1960 to 1966 after which she stayed in India as a permanent advisor on museums to the Government of India. On Morley, see the oral history interview dated 6 February-24 March 1982, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, and Kristina Kate Phillips, 'A museum for the nation: Publics and politics at the National Museum of India', PhD thesis, University of Minnesota, 2006. [L]
[SEP]

Le Corbusier or Roberto Rossellini) and by the Indian politicians and intellectuals they worked for (e.g. Jawaharlal Nehru or Humayun Kabir).⁴⁷ What is remarkable in the case of German-speaking art historians who stayed in India after independence in 1947 is the structural roles they played in India's growing art world.

After having fled Germany's racialised conception of nationalism, German-speaking expatriates like Goetz and Königsberger were now participating in India's nation-building effort, inviting a comparison with exiles to Turkey like Bruno Taut and Erich Auerbach who had contributed, with varying degrees of enthusiasm, to Atatürk's national project.⁴⁸ That being said, new state institutions were set up in India in the 1950s with the aim of promoting a composite picture of Indian art and culture and giving equal importance to the different facets of India's artistic heritage, while encouraging a more spiritual and simplified image abroad, for example, at the '5000 Years of Art from India' exhibition organised in Essen in 1959.⁴⁹ India's official secularism, inscribed from 1950 in the country's constitution, had created in the wake of the Partition of India and Pakistan the desire to ground art and culture in an inclusive conception of Indian identity.⁵⁰ In the eyes of its political leaders, art and education held the possibility of embodying and promoting the cultural cohesion of Indian culture. India's official art infrastructure was therefore created as much to nurture the country's artistic production as to consolidate India's post-independence rhetoric of national unity and integration through the channel of ambitious educational programmes, with initiatives ranging from the enormously popular 'Shankar's International Children Competition' to the New York Museum of Modern Art's Children's Art Carnival presentation in New

⁴⁷ On the prominent role of Indian politicians in post-independence intellectual circles, see Edward Shils, *The Intellectual between Tradition and Modernity: The Indian Situation*, The Hague: Mouton, 1961.

⁴⁸ Emily Apter, *Against World Literature: On the Politics of Untranslatability*, New York: Verso, 2013, 194. On German architects in Turkey, see Esra Akcan, *Architecture in Translation: Germany, Turkey and the Modern House*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2012.

⁴⁹ Initially titled 'Exhibition of Classical Indian Art', the show eventually included a very small contemporary art section housed at the Folkwang Museum and consisting of a painting by Satish Gujral and one by Surraya Tyabji. Here the accent was on continuity in Indian art. As Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan explained in the exhibition catalogue, 'there has been a continuity for nearly 5000 years in Indian art. If we look at its different phases from the relics of Mohenjodaro and Harappa to modern painting and sculpture, we are impressed by the unity of spirit'. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, letter dated 15 February 1959 reproduced in *5000 Years of Art from India*, Essen: Villa Hügel, 1959, 13. Goetz's catalogue essay also paints a much more spiritually-infused picture than his other writings. Generally speaking, a process of self-orientalisation can be witnessed in the many exhibitions of Indian art held abroad from the 1960s to the Festivals of India of the 1980s when culture was put at the service of India's diplomacy.

⁵⁰ See, for example, Humayun Kabir, 'Foreword', in *National Museum: An Introduction*, New Delhi: National Museum, 1960, 6.

Delhi.⁵¹

Moreover, German-speaking exiles understood that after independence they would not only have to refute any accusation of derivativeness for Indian ancient art, but also to support Indian modern art against conservative, academic or revivalist currents of the Indian art establishment. Goetz's appreciation of Indian modern art was mediated by his knowledge of past achievements and his belief that contemporary Indian art could match them. His hosting at Baroda the first exhibition of the Progressive Artists' Group in 1949 and his acquisition for the museum of Francis Newton Souza's painting *The Blue Lady*—at a time when the artist was still relatively unknown—are just some examples of the support he gave to Indian artists and, in the case of Souza, a divisive one at that.⁵²

III. Rudolf von Leyden: an Austrian art critic in Bombay

In comparison to Baroda, the port city of Bombay, where the greatest number of émigrés settled, had large and dynamic artistic, musical and film milieux that welcomed German-speaking exiles into their pre-existing networks. Composer Walter Kaufmann, for example, created with Zubin Mehta's father, Mehli Mehta, the Bombay Chamber Music Society,⁵³ while writer Willy Haas, founder of the leading Weimar periodical *Die literarische Welt*, worked in the 1930s for the Bombay cinema industry at Bhavnani Productions thanks to Kaufmann.⁵⁴ Bombay can, however, not easily be compared to centres of avant-garde exile, such as Barcelona during the First World War or New York and Los Angeles in the 1930s and early 1940s. Contrary to these cities, Bombay did not witness the wholesale transfer of one

⁵¹ 'Shankar's International Children Competition' was initiated in 1949 by cartoonist K. Shankar Pillai, editor of *Shankar's Weekly*. Open to children from around the world from 1950, the prizes of this painting and writing competition were regularly given out by Jawaharlal Nehru until 1963. See also the importance attributed to education in Rudolf von Leyden, 'Art in Independent India', *The Times of India*, 15 August 1949, 16, and von Leyden, 'Artists in the New Republic', *The Times of India*, 26 January 1950, 20.

⁵² In 1947 Souza had created the Bombay-based Progressive Artists Group, also championed by von Leyden, which included the painters M.F. Husain, Syed Haider Raza, Krishnaji Howlaji Ara, Sadanand Bakre and Hari Ambadas Gade. Goetz had also opened the exhibition of Souza at the Bombay Art Society in January 1948. See 'Local Engagements', *The Times of India*, 17 January 1948, 10.

⁵³ On Kaufmann, see Paul Helmer, *Growing with Canada: The Emigré Tradition in Canadian Music*, Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2009.

⁵⁴ See Willy Haas, *Die literarische Welt: Lebenserinnerungen*, Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1983, 205-206. On Haas, see also Christoph von Ungern-Sternberg, "Ein grosser Regisseur der Literatur": Willy Haas 1891-1973, Munich: edition text + kritik, 2007. Haas was a Czech passport holder and worked as a censor at the internment camp of Dehradun during the war. Unlike Goetz and von Leyden, Haas held pejorative views on Indian art. See Haas, 'Versuch über die Indische Kunst', *Merkur: Deutsche Zeitschrift für Europäisches Denken*, 5: 43, 1951, 864-72.

given group of artists and intellectuals from one location to another. Instead, migration occurred on an individual basis. This meant that professional reputations often had to be entirely rebuilt or reaffirmed in India, but it also offered the possibility of embracing new opportunities.

In the 1940s Bombay became a centre of innovative artistic production for Indian experimental artists. The Austrian Rudolf von Leyden (1908-1983), who was a geologist by training with little knowledge of Indian art before his arrival in India, played a determining role in its promotion. The son of a Jewish mother, von Leyden came in 1933 to Bombay. His brother Albert had already settled there and their parents would join them in 1939. Starting as a layout artist at *The Times of India*, von Leyden soon became the newspaper's art critic. He was also a contributing editor of the leading art review *MARG* from its inception in 1946 and served as an adviser for the acquisitions and art commissions of the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research (TIFR) that owned one of the most important collections of post-independence Indian art.⁵⁵ In addition, von Leyden, who also worked at the cotton-trading firm Volkart Brothers, sketched cartoons for *The Illustrated Weekly of India* under the pseudonym Denley.⁵⁶ In 1968 he would participate in the jury of the first 'Triennale India' exhibition, alongside Octavio Paz and Norman Reid. Though he left India that same year, he remained deeply committed to Indian artists.

His critical writing stresses, among other points, the growing role of the media in the promotional strategies of the emerging Bombay art world. Von Leyden, through his regular articles and reviews, became like Goetz a key promoter of the Progressive Artists Group. On a visit to India in the late 1970s after his return to Vienna in 1968, Leyden explained that 'when I wrote my reviews it was with a definite bias for the new talents, trying to give them the benefit of constructive criticism while I just reported other exhibitions'.⁵⁷ Von Leyden favoured experimental artists, for instance the painter K. H. Ara whom he supported in his writings and introduced to the dealer Kekoo Gandhi.

As an art critic, von Leyden's tone differed from that of Cohn-Wiener and Goetz. Von Leyden addressed a non-specialist public, as did Cohn-Wiener and Goetz in their lectures, but he sometimes adopted a perfunctory, at times harshly critical tone that was primarily directed towards Indian artists. He made judgments, approved of or rejected specific works, did not dwell much on the historical lineage to which artists belonged and felt deeply engaged with his readership. His concerns

⁵⁵ von Leyden was, for example, part of the committee that commissioned M. F. Husain to paint in 1962-63 a mural for the TIFR building. Mortimer Chatterjee and Tara Lal, *The TIFR Art Collection*, Mumbai: Tata Institute of Fundamental Research, 2010, 33. The TIFR building had been designed by Königsberger.

⁵⁶ Kekoo Gandhi, 'The Beginnings of the Art Movement', *Seminar*, no. 528. <<http://www.india-seminar.com/2003/528/528%20kekoo%20gandhy.htm>> (Accessed 3 September 2016).

⁵⁷ Quoted in Yashodhara Dalmia, *The Making of Modern Indian Art: The Progressives*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001, 62.

with the need to develop art patronage and to disengage from revivalism and the celebration of so-called traditional art forms were leitmotifs in his writing.⁵⁸ 'In all the arts, the problem is today the creation of a truly contemporary approach,' he wrote, insisting 'that any discrimination in favour of a so-called national traditional style would stifle rather than promote the development of good art in India.'⁵⁹

Von Leyden did not hesitate to take a stance on polemical issues and against censorship. 'When Amrita Sher-Gil burst in on the scene', he later remembered, 'there was a wave of protest. The Bombay Art Society presented her with an award in 1939... As a result most of the committee members resigned and Langhammer and I joined the committee'.⁶⁰ Fifteen years later, in 1954, von Leyden would testify on behalf of the painter Akbar Padamsee when the artist was put on trial for obscenity.⁶¹

At the time, publications such as the art magazine *MARG*, founded in 1946 by author Mulk Raj Anand and to which as noted above von Leyden was a contributing editor, as well as occasional foreign travelling exhibitions consisting mainly of reproductions, were the main channels for the dissemination of European modernism in Indian art circles. In this context, European exiles mediated between Indian artists and foreign art styles by presenting catalogues of foreign exhibitions to Indian artists and occasionally foreign artworks as well.⁶² 'Remember that in those days', wrote Gandhi, 'Indian artists had no means of going abroad or of following trends in Europe. Of course, there were magazines, but the unexpected arrival of all these Europeans—most of them Jews fleeing from Austria—really started the Progressive movement off'.⁶³

Von Leyden's friend and fellow Austrian expatriate Walter Langhammer (1905-77) came to India in 1938 after the death of his Jewish father-in-law. He became the art director of *The Times of India* and in 1938 chairman of the Bombay Art Society winning the gold medal at its 1939 competition with one of his paintings. At the beginning of the war after Langhammer's internment at Ahmednagar, von Leyden, who had previously obtained a British passport,⁶⁴ disseminated

⁵⁸ von Leyden, 'Art in Independent India', 16, and von Leyden, 'Artists in the New Republic', 20.

⁵⁹ von Leyden, 'Art in Independent India', 16.

⁶⁰ Yashodhara Dalmia, 'Rudi von Leyden remembers', *The Times of India*, 14 January 1979, 13.

⁶¹ Karin Zitzewitz, 'Exodus Westward: Padamsee, Raza and Souza in Europe', in Rakhee Balaram, Parul Dave Mukherji and Partha Mitter, eds, *20th-Century Indian Art*, (forthcoming), and Krishen Khanna, 'To Rudolf von Leyden: A Letter out of Season', in Anil Bhatti and Johannes Voigt, eds, *Jewish Exiles in India, 1933-1945*, Delhi: Manohar, 2005, 187. For von Leyden's stance against censorship, see also Rudolf von Leyden, 'Art in Independent India', 16.

⁶² Author interview with Krishen Khanna, Gurgaon, March 2011, and author interview with Kekoo Gandhi, Mumbai, April 2011.

⁶³ Gandhi, 'Beginnings'.

⁶⁴ Margit Franz, 'Transnationale und transkulturelle Ansätze in der Exilforschung am Beispiel der Erforschung einer kunstpolitischen Biographie von Walter Langhammer', in

Langhammer's anti-Nazi caricatures and convinced the British authorities to grant him an early release. Langhammer continued to exhibit after the war, yet it is not so much as a painter but, like von Leyden, as a promoter of modernism in India that Langhammer is remembered. Holding various functions in Bombay art societies, he organised weekly meetings at his flat on Bombay's Nepean Sea Road where he discussed developments in European art with Indian painters, introducing them to foreign art periodicals and catalogues. Similarly, the Austrian Emmanuel Schlesinger (1896-1968) was also crucial in exposing Indian artists to European developments. After his arrival in India, he set up the highly successful pharmaceutical company Indo-Pharma, which enabled him to collect many modern Indian artworks. An important collector already before his departure from Austria, Schlesinger had managed to bring with him significant artworks including, according to Gandhi, paintings by Oskar Kokoschka and Egon Schiele.⁶⁵

Von Leyden was particularly close to the painter Ara from the Progressive Artists Group whom he introduced to Gandhi, while Schlesinger developed an important friendship with the artist Mohan Samant. Likewise, Langhammer lent his studio to S. H. Raza and was instrumental in Raza and Akbar Padamsee's going to Paris in 1950. Von Leyden did not author the kind of foundational writings with which art historiography is usually concerned, yet he participated in a crucial way in the intellectual life of Bombay. While the impact of networks— what constitutes them to begin with (for instance, in terms of the frequency of contacts) and how exactly they influence artists' careers— can be difficult to gauge, von Leyden as well as Langhammer and Schlesinger have been consistently acknowledged by Indian artists, critics, dealers and collectors as determinant mediators of the early post-independence period.

Exiles who were driven out of Europe by Nazism influenced the global worldview of Indian artists by sharing their first-hand knowledge of European art with them. Indian artists had long been in dialogue with European art forms, but had not often had the opportunity at that time to visit Paris, London or Vienna. These artists belonged to social groups that were transformed by their interactions with Europeans but remained, at the same time, excluded from the networks of legitimisation, knowledge production and canon formation of the West.⁶⁶ In India, European exile happened at a particularly propitious moment of both nation

Franz et al., *Mapping Contemporary History: Zeitgeschichten im Diskurs*, Vienna: Böhlau, 2008, 251.

⁶⁵ Author interview with Kekoo Gandhi, Mumbai, April 2011. There is little reliable information available on Schlesinger. Yashodhara Dalmia writes that he arrived without his wife and later learnt that she had died in a concentration camp in Czechoslovakia. This was most likely Theresienstadt. See Dalmia, *The Making of Modern Indian Art*, 64.

⁶⁶ On this subject see Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000. For a parallel with literature, see Pascale Casanova, *La République mondiale des lettres*, Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1999.

building and turning towards Western art. Though important debates on the historical legacies of Indian art continued, by the 1950s artists were no longer concerned with formulating a so-called 'Indian' visual language, as had been the case in Bengal at the beginning of the century.⁶⁷ They sought instead to engage with foreign art trends. As the painter Krishen Khanna explained, 'at no stage did the whole business of nationalism come into it'; 'None of us wanted to be known as Indian painters...,[but we wanted to know] how do we measure up abroad? That was the big question that concerned us'.⁶⁸ Through their lives and their writings, the exiles discussed in this article partook of the global history of art and of art history, understood as a historical process bringing together a variety of competing centres of artistic creation and legitimation and the discourses that accompany this process.

Conclusion

The primary goal of this article has been to establish the key role played in the history of Indian art and art history by German-speaking exiles. These served as interpreters of Indian past and contemporary artistic production and became leading institution builders and scholars who re-oriented their fields of enquiry. Cohn-Wiener and Goetz belong to a group of art historians who laid the conceptual foundations of the discipline of Indian art history and helped formulate a nuanced interpretation of Indian art. They did so by writing histories of Indian art that contributed to the creation of a national school and identity, a model that had long structured European art history. While the art historians discussed in this article rejected racialist conceptions of the geography of art, the nation became an important political, historical and imaginary trope to understand artistic creation after decolonisation. Even before independence during the anti-colonial nationalist struggle, German-speaking exiled art historians already—and seemingly paradoxically—lead the development of a national, in this case composite, school of Indian art history that finds parallels in the writings of other exiled art historians, as seen for example in Nikolaus Pevsner's fascination with the 'Englishness' of English art.⁶⁹

In addition, the article has sought to inscribe the history of Indian art and art history into larger world processes that are often ignored or downplayed despite their significant impact. The cases of Cohn-Wiener, Goetz and von Leyden bring out new perspectives on the question of intellectual transfer and of centre-periphery relations. These examples encourage us to understand how much Indian art history was transformed not only by Indian decolonisation, but also by the world crises of the 1930s and 1940s—the rise of Nazism in Germany and Austria, the exile of many leading intellectuals and the Second World War which radically impacted the

⁶⁷ See Partha Mitter, *Art and Nationalism in Colonial India 1852-1922: Occidental Orientations*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.

⁶⁸ Author interview with Krishen Khanna, Gurgaon, March 2011.

⁶⁹ Nikolaus Pevsner, *The Englishness of English Art*, London: Architectural Press, 1956.

geography of traditional centres of learning and of artistic creation. While at first glance scholarly exile to India seems to have resembled that from Europe to the United States, the historical and memorial stakes were entirely different in India's postcolonial context. That is, in a country that remained plagued by the issues of derivativeness and influence in the arts and by the need to recover a long confiscated past.

Though the writings of German exiles would first seem to perpetuate a lineage of the history of Indian art written by foreigners, their writings cannot easily be defined only as that of outsiders. Whereas intellectual history often analyses the ways in which ideas coming from 'outside' were transformed and incorporated in India, Cohn-Wiener, Goetz and von Leyden developed or adapted their ideas in contact with the political and artistic agendas of Indian princely states, the Indian government and the Bombay art world, groups on whom the exiles' residency and employability in India also depended. Moreover, through their writings and the support they gave to contemporary Indian art, they not only helped reevaluate Indian creation and bring European currents to the attention of Indian artists, but also helped integrate Indian artistic practices within debates produced in Europe. Their contribution influenced in a crucial way the complex history of artistic dialogue and exchanges between India and Europe.

Devika Singh is an art historian, critic and curator based in Paris where she is a fellow at the Centre allemand d'histoire de l'art (Max Weber Foundation). She holds a PhD in art history from the University of Cambridge and was the Smuts Research Fellow at its Centre of South Asian Studies. Peer-reviewed articles have been published in *Art History*, *Modern Asian Studies* and *Third Text*. She is currently writing a book on art^[1] in post-independence India for Reaktion Books.

ds328@cam.ac.uk



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/)