

A third art history? The role of artistic practice in the shaping of the discipline

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This section – the first of a series of publications¹ – proposes to reflect on the role of artistic practice in the shaping of art history during the nineteenth century. The development of art history as a discipline has been variously associated with the emergence of a growing bourgeois public in search of cultural capital, the politics of national identity, and the needs of an expanding art market.² Still unexamined, however, remains the involvement of art practice, art training and of art practitioners themselves, in the study of the history of art and the disciplinary culture to which it gave rise. The focus on practice seeks to challenge a still dominant conception of art history –and of the humanities at large–, which sees it as a pure product of intellectual labour, free of any practical considerations. The institutional consolidation, and, to a degree the social relevance, of humanistic fields of knowledge rest upon such claims to autonomy and disinterestedness, grounded in Kant’s philosophical thought.³ Art history’s position in this framework has been famously vindicated in Erwin Panofsky’s ‘The History of Art as a Humanistic Discipline’ (1938). In defining the purpose and value of the humanities, Panofsky singled out two points: the humanities ‘are not practical’ and ‘they concern themselves with the past’.⁴ Seeking to reassess the validity of these assumptions, this research sets out to ask to what extent humanistic disciplines devoted to the study of artistic and cultural practices –like philology or art history– have also been rooted in an intent to inform artistic practice in the present. It aims to retrieve the persistence and implications of a formative motive that came

¹ The papers at this section were presented at the conference *Art History for Artists: Interactions Between Scholarly Discourse and Artistic Practice in the Nineteenth Century* which I organised at the Technische Universität in Berlin, July 7-9, 2016 (<https://arthistoryforartists.com/>). The rest of the conference contributions, along with new commissions, will appear in a collected volume dedicated to training in art history and aesthetics offered in institutions of art education from the mid-eighteenth to the first decades of the twentieth century in a broad, transcultural perspective.

² See indicatively, Elizabeth Mansfield, ed, *Art History and its Institutions: Foundations of a Discipline*, London and New York: Routledge, 2002 and *Making Art History: A Changing Discipline and its Institutions*, London and New York: Routledge, 2007; Regine Prange, *Die Geburt der Kunstgeschichte. Philosophische Ästhetik und empirische Wissenschaft*, Köln: Deubner, 2004.

³ Julian Hamann, *Die Bildung der Geisteswissenschaften. Zur Genese einer sozialen Konstruktion zwischen Diskurs und Feld*, Konstanz, München: UVK Verl.-Ges., 2014, 20.

⁴ Erwin Panofsky, ‘The history of art as a humanistic discipline’, in: Theodore Meyer Greene, ed, *The Meaning of the Humanities*, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1938, reprinted in Erwin Panofsky, *Meaning in the Visual Arts*, Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1955, 1-25.

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to be suppressed in the course of the establishment of art history as an independent field of study.

Any return to fundamental questions such as what art history is for, by whom and for whom it is produced, is bound to reveal a multiplicity of answers. I want to evoke here a strikingly obvious one, by looking at the covers of founding texts of the discipline in the middle of the century. For this analysis, I will focus mainly on the German case. In 1855, Anton Springer (1825-1891), largely regarded as the first full professor of modern art history in German academia, published his highly successful *Handbuch der Kunstgeschichte*, with the subtitle *zum Gebrauche für Künstler und Studierende und als Führer auf der Reise* (for the Use of Artists, Students and as a Tour Guide). Johannes Overbeck's (1826-1895) equally popular overview of the history of ancient Greek sculpture was titled *Geschichte der Griechischen Plastik für Künstler und Kunstfreunde* (History of Greek Sculpture for Artists and Art Lovers) (1857). Beyond the range of these explicitly pedagogical manuals, the same indication 'für Künstler und Kunstfreunde', which dates back to an older tradition of art historical writing,⁵ marked the cover of a monograph on the Renaissance sculptor Andrea Sansovino, a random example of art historical scholarship published as late as 1881.⁶ Reference to amateurs and travellers in such designations of art history's publics is not surprising. Hubert Locher has defined 'instruction in aesthetic judgement' as one of the 'traditional' aims of the discipline.⁷ Aesthetic education should be further understood both as a means of social distinction for the educated middle and upper classes and as a vehicle of shared cultural values, capable of forging 'imagined communities',⁸ be it on a regional, national or supra-national level – an aspect which highlights art history's role as a key institution in the context of nation-state or empire building.⁹ Before the public of art lovers though, before the concern for the formation of (a common) taste, the artists themselves were the first to be addressed by art historical publications.

Not only was this scholarship expressly directed at art practitioners, it was also fuelled by a keen interest in the art of the present, its quality and future orientations. The first general surveys of art or architectural history such as Franz Kugler's *Handbuch der Kunstgeschichte* (1842) or James Fergusson's *The Illustrated Handbook of Architecture* (1855), created coherent narratives out of an all-encompassing, pluricultural past, to converge to the present – that is, the present of

⁵ See for instance, Paul Friedrich Achat Nitsch, *Einleitung in das Studium der alten Kunstwerke für Künstler und Kunstliebhaber*, Leipzig: Heinsius, 1792.

⁶ Paul Schönfeld, *Andrea Sansovino und seine Schule, für Künstler und Kunstfreunde*, Stuttgart: Metzler, 1881.

⁷ Hubert Locher, 'The Art Historical Survey, Narratives and Picture Compendia', *Visual Studies*, 17:2, 2001, 174. For a more thorough discussion, see Hubert Locher, *Kunstgeschichte als historische Theorie der Kunst*, Munich: Finck, 2011, 26-45.

⁸ Reference is to Benedict Anderson's core concept of the study of nationalism in his *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, London and New York: Verso, 1989.

⁹ Regarding the later, see the seminal study by Matthew Rampley, 'Art history and the politics of empire: Rethinking the Vienna School', *The Art Bulletin*, 91: 4, December 2009, 446-462.

the author. They typically devoted a final section to contemporary artistic developments, reflecting, in a more or less optimistic or in a more or less prescriptive manner, on the possibilities of art's future.¹⁰ Moreover, throughout the century art historians devoted numerous studies entirely to the art of their own time and sought to provide artists with a new ethics and new ideals.¹¹ I am thinking here, for instance, of Anton Springer's, *Geschichte der bildenden Künste im neunzehnten Jahrhundert*, dated as early as 1858 and his seminal essay, 'Die Wege und Ziele der gegenwertigen Kunst' published in 1867¹² or, later on, Josef Strzygowski's (1862-1941) instrumental study, *Die bildende Kunst der Gegenwart* (1907). Most art historians were also actively engaged in art criticism, even though the relation between the two fields was becoming increasingly tense from the late nineteenth century.¹³

Roughly from the 1870s onwards, primarily in Germany, the engagement of art scholars with contemporary art was downplayed in the name of objective and unbiased scholarship detached from practical considerations, alongside the growing academic recognition of art history and its establishment in the universities.¹⁴ Nonetheless, the complex entanglement of scholarly discourse and contemporary art never really diminished even well after this date. This can be seen for instance in the ways contemporary artistic experimentations and tendencies provided art scholars with new perspectives for evaluating the art of the past. Impressionism inspired art historians such as Franz Wickhoff (1853-1909), Alois Riegl (1858-1905) and Heinrich Wölfflin (1864-1945) to look for specific aesthetic qualities in the art of the past, often resulting in the valorisation of hitherto neglected objects and territories, such as the art of late antiquity.¹⁵ Erwin Panofsky, an early cinema

¹⁰ See Dan Karholm, *Art of Illusion. The Representation of Art History in Nineteenth-Century Germany and Beyond*, Bern, New York: Lang, 2004, 56-58; 126-133; Hernik Karge, 'Projecting the future in German art historiography of the nineteenth century: Franz Kugler, Karl Schnaase, and Gottfried Semper', *Journal of Art Historiography*, 9, December 2013. On architectural surveys in particular, see, most recently, Petra Brouwer, 'The pioneering architectural history books of Fergusson, Kugler, and Lübke', *Getty Research Journal*, 10, 2018, 105-120.

¹¹ See in this regard, Pascal Griener, 'Idéologie "nationale" ou "science positive"?', *Revue de l'art*, 146: 4, 2004, 43-44; Locher, *Kunstgeschichte als historische Theorie*, 55-59.

¹² In his *Bildern aus der neueren Kunstgeschichte*, Bonn: Marcus, 1867, vol. 2, 317-377.

¹³ See indicatively the section 'Der Ort der Kunstkritik in der Kunstgeschichte', edited by Beate Söntgen, in *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte*, 78: 1, 2015, 9-83; on the tensions between art history and art criticism at the turn of the century, see in particular the article by Melanie Sachs, 'Die Gegenwart als zukünftige Vergangenheit: Zur Rechtfertigung des kunstkritischen Urteils in Geschichten der Kunst um 1900', 32-43.

¹⁴ Locher, *Kunstgeschichte als historische Theorie*, 45-55; Pascal Griener, 'Idéologie "nationale"'.
¹⁵ Julius von Schlosser, 'Die Wiener Schule der Kunstgeschichte', *Mitteilungen des österreichischen Institut für Geschichtsforschung* Ergänzungs-Band 13: 2, Innsbruck: Wagner; 1934, 177, 200; Edwin Lachnit, *Die Wiener Schule der Kunstgeschichte und die Kunst ihrer Zeit. Zum Verhältnis von Methode und Forschungsgegenstand am Beginn der Moderne*, Vienna, Cologne and Weimar: Böhlau, 2005, 37-38; Regina Prange, 'Kunstgeschichte aus dem Geist der Gegenwart? Wölfflin und die Avantgarde', in: Hans Aurenhammer and Regina Prange, eds, *Das Problem der Form: Interferenzen zwischen moderner Kunst und Kunstwissenschaft*, Berlin: Mann, 2016, 87-108.

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enthusiast, projected a gaze informed by filmmaking techniques onto the work of Albrecht Dürer and Leonardo da Vinci.¹⁶ This interplay is of course a two way process: Serge Eisenstein (1898-1941), to stay in the field of film, regarded Franz Wickhoff's theory on the methods of pictorial narration, based on his analysis of the *Wiener Genesis* (1895), as eye-opening for the understanding of his own cinematographic practice.¹⁷ Although this kind of affinities between artistic experimentations and the shaping of interpretative methodologies of art historians were being pointed out in as early as the 1930s, in the context of a self-reflective approach to the discipline's past and present orientations,¹⁸ their study has not been systematically pursued.¹⁹ Further research is needed in order to explore art history's little acknowledged ties to contemporary artistic production.

The mutual involvement between scholarly discourse and artistic practice was also validated at an institutional level. Since the late eighteenth century courses in art history, along with courses in history, archaeology, art theory and aesthetics, had been systematically incorporated into the curricula of art academies, schools of design, academies of architecture and polytechnics, often in the context of major institutional reforms. Spaces of art education were among the first institutional homes of art history, and played an important role in the shaping of the discipline well before the establishment of autonomous university chairs –a development largely overlooked in the history of art history, but also in the history of art education.²⁰ A major research question in this regard concerns the ways in which the institutional framework of art education and exposure to the problems of artistic practice affected the study of historical art. Did hands-on teaching of artists, architects or craftsmen generate different objects of study, concepts, methods and ultimately a different kind of scholarship from that produced in the universities and in museums? Could one speak of a *third* art history, alongside what Charles Haxthausen qualified as the 'two art histories' –art history at the university and the

¹⁶ Horst Bredekamp, 'A Neglected tradition? Art History as Bildwissenschaft', *Critical Inquiry*, 29, Spring 2003, 425-426.

¹⁷ Horst Bredekamp, 'A Neglected tradition?', 425.

¹⁸ See mainly Hans Tietze's *Lebendige Kunstwissenschaft. Zur Krise der Kunst und der Kunstgeschichte* (1925), Walter Passarge's *Philosophie der Kunstgeschichte in der Gegenwart* (1930) and Joseph Gartner's *Revision der Kunstgeschichte. Prolegomena zu einer Kunstgeschichte aus dem Geiste der Gegenwart* (1932), discussed by Hubert Locher, *Die Kunstgeschichte als historische Theorie*, 57-63.

¹⁹ An important recent contribution to the topic, studied mainly from the perspective of the German-speaking countries, is the volume co-edited by Hans Aurenhammer and Regina Prange, *Das Problem der Form: Interferenzen zwischen moderner Kunst und Kunstwissenschaft*, Berlin: Mann, 2016. For earlier attempts, see Norbert Schmitz's dissertation, *Kunst und Wissenschaft im Zeichen der Moderne: exemplarische Studien zum Verhältnis von klassischer Avantgarde und zeitgenössischer Kunstgeschichte in Deutschland* (Hölzel, Wölfflin, Kandinsky, Dvorák), Alfter: VDG, 1993; Lachnit, *Die Wiener Schule der Kunstgeschichte*; Kathryn Simpson, 'Viennese art, ugliness, and the Vienna school of art history: the vicissitudes of theory and practice', *Journal of Art Historiography*, 3, December 2010.

²⁰ On this aspect see Eleonora Vratskidou, 'Art history at the art school: Revisiting the institutional origins of the discipline based on the case of nineteenth-century Greece', *Journal of Art Historiography*, 13, December 2015.

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museum–, ascertaining the two core institutional structures upon which the history of the discipline has until now been plotted?²¹

Research into the realm of a *third* art history should, nonetheless, not be confined to the institutional framework of the art school, but encompass the multifarious ways in which art history has been conditioned by art practice. It should delve further into the contributions of art practitioners themselves in the shaping of art history, be it from within or from outside such formal contexts. It is significant that in the first attempts to trace the history of the discipline by university professors at the beginning of the twentieth century, the roots of art historical scholarship were embedded in the field of artistic practice. Julius von Schlosser (1866-1938), in his canonical essay on the history of the Vienna School, recognised as its first ancestor the practising artist, theoretician and collector Josef Daniel Böhm (1794-1865) and saw in the informal gatherings, lectures and discussions held in front of specific art objects of his collection the nucleus of what was to become one of art history's most vibrant intellectual traditions.²² Such artist-driven genealogies have yet to be better processed. It is also crucial to look for the reactions of the artists to the emergence of a community of professional specialists claiming control over art discourse, and the parallel or counter-discourses they elaborated. Still scarcely studied remain the reformulations of art historical canons, as well as contributions to art theory in art works, artists' writings and teachings, their reading practices or collecting activity.²³ It is necessary to reflect on the epistemological status of knowledge produced through these various engagements, and to analyse the ways in which they connect with or challenge scholarly approaches. Stephen Bann has shown the ways in which Paul Delaroche's large fresco in the Hémicycle of the École des Beaux-arts in Paris, which provides a visual account of the history of art as a conversation among artists of various schools across time, proved significant for Franz Kugler's and Jacob Burckhardt's take on art history.²⁴ Artists' attempts to visualise art history deserve utmost attention, both as

²¹ Charles W. Haxthausen, ed, *The Two Art Histories: The Museum and the University*, Williamstown (Mass.) and New Haven: Sterling and Francis Clark Art Institute, Yale University Press, 2002.

²² Schlosser, 'Die Wiener Schule', 145-148. See also Ernst Heidrich's (1880-1914) *Beiträge zur Geschichte und Methode der Kunstgeschichte* (1917). Heidrich's genealogy stretches back to Vasari's time and an art history produced by artists, for artists. Professor in Basel, Heidrich was among the first authors to reflect on the history of art history also in terms of involved actors and on the social implications of art historical discourse, rehearsing precisely the questions: what is art history for? By whom and for whom is it produced?

²³ See recently the contributions in the issue 'L'artiste-historien' of the journal *Histoire de l'art*, 79, 2017. See also, Petra Kuhlmann-Hodick, *Das Kunstgeschichtsbild: zur Darstellung von Kunstgeschichte und Kunsttheorie in der deutschen Kunst des 19. Jahrhunderts*, Frankfurt am Main: P. Lang, 1993, 2 vols.

²⁴ Stephen Bann, 'Pre-Histories of Art in Nineteenth-Century France: Around Paul Delaroche's *Hémicycle des Beaux-Arts*', in: Michael Zimmermann, ed, *The art historian: national traditions and institutional practices*, Williamstown (Mass.) and New Haven: Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, Yale University Press, 2003, 25-40. See also France Nerlich, 'Palette contre plume. Peindre l'histoire de l'art: le cas de Paul Delaroche et de Johann Friedrich Overbeck', *Histoire de l'art*, 79, 2017, 11-24 who extends the scope in the Franco-

alternative forms of historical knowledge and as contributions to historiographical thought, since they establish a dialogue with historians on the modes of historical representation and the very possibilities of the conceptualisation of history. Jacob Burckhardt, that fascinating producer of 'historical pictures',²⁵ anxious to overcome dominant historiographical models of his time, and historicism in particular, drew on pictorial devices, such as perspective or panorama, the immanent logic of which is at odds with the idea of narrative as a chronological succession of events.²⁶

Here as well, we need to problematise the divide between artist and scholar and pay particular attention to figures that combine artistic practice and scholarship: 'liminal figures' ('Grenzfiguren') such as the recently studied cases of the artist and art historian Albert von Zahn (1836-1873), initiator of the Holbein conference in Dresden in 1871, or the painter and professor of art history at the Munich Academy of Fine Arts, Fritz Burger (1877-1916).²⁷ In the introduction to his *Kleine Schriften und Studien zur Kunstgeschichte* (1853-54) — written in the form of a letter to his former student and collaborator Jacob Burckhardt —, Franz Kugler exulted in the richly illustrated edition, adorned by a multitude of engraved and mechanically reproduced drawings of monuments, images and motifs, that he himself had made during his studies and travels. He intriguingly acknowledged that his art-historical studies were 'in large part made less with the writing quill than the drawing pencil'.²⁸ The centrality he attributed to images in his scholarly practice²⁹ not only

German axis, looking also at Overbeck's, *Triumph der Religion in der Künste* (1841). The article summarizes the results of Nerlich's habilitation thesis on the two artworks, *Des esprits et des hommes: l'invention de l'histoire de l'art par Friedrich Overbeck et Paul Delaroche* (Université Panthéon-Sorbonne, 2014).

²⁵ As he observed in his posthumously published *Weltgeschichtliche Betrachtungen* (1905), 'the study of any other branch of knowledge may begin with origins, but not that of history. After all, our historical pictures [Bilder der Geschichte] are, for the most part, pure constructions', Jacob Burckhardt, *Force and Freedom: An Interpretation of History*, trans. J. H. Nichols, New York, 1943 (1st ed. 1905), 83.

²⁶ See in this regard, the analysis of Michael Anne Holly, 'Burckhardt and the Ideology of the Past', *History of Human Sciences*, 1: 1, May 1988, 47-73 and *Past looking: historical imagination and the rhetoric of the image*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996; Gottfried Boehm, 'La critique de l'historicisme par Jacob Burckhardt: genèse et validité', *Revue germanique internationale*, 2, 1994, also published in German, 'Genese und Geltung: Jacob Burckhardts Kritik des Historismus', in: Hans R. Guggisberg, ed, *Umgang mit Jacob Burckhardt*, 1997, 79-86; and Sabina Loriga, *Le Petit x. De la biographie à l'histoire*, Paris: Seuil, 2010, 185-210.

²⁷ Marcus Andrew Hurrting and Hans-Werner Schmidt, eds, *Albert von Zahn. Grenzgänger zwischen Kunst und Wissenschaft*, Leipzig: Museum der bildenden Künste Leipzig, 2016; Ulrich Pfisterer, ed, *Fritz Burger (1877-1916), eine neue Kunstgeschichte*, Passau: Dietmar Klinger Verlag, 2016.

²⁸ Franz Kugler, *Kleine Schriften und Studien zur Kunstgeschichte*, Stuttgart: Ebner und Seubert, 1853-54, vol. 1, v: 'Zum Theil sind meine kunsthistorische Studien, wie Du weisst, weniger mit der Schreibfeder als mit dem Zeichenstifte gemacht' (translation: Eric Garberson, 'Franz Kugler — Review of: Michel Espagne, Bénédicte Savoy, Céline Trautmann-Waller, Franz Theodor Kugler. Deutscher Kunsthistoriker und Berliner Dichter, Akademie Verlag, Berlin, 2010, *Journal of Art Historiography*, 5, December 2011, 2).

harks back to a time when drawing skills were an indispensable part of the art historian's competence,³⁰ but also suggests that the production of images in the course of scholarly engagement with them was the propelling force in the making of art history. Art history was as much a generation of images as it was a study of them.

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Based on selected cases, the papers assembled in this section study the entanglement between art practice and scholarship. They explore a variety of contexts in which interactions and synergies were fostered, including: a major art academy in the first half of the nineteenth century, the Roman Accademia di San Lucca in Rome (Racioppi); an artists' community, the Nazarenes in Rome, (Skwirblies); a school of applied arts and its journal (Oléron Evans); the alternative circuits of art education developed within anthroposophical circles, and more particularly around Rudolf Steiner (Spyros Petritakis); an exhibition and a conference –seminal public venues of connoisseurship and scholarship– that triggered the so-called Holbein dispute in 1871, marking a turning point in the disciplinary solidification of art history (Bader); and last but not least, the private laboratory of an art scholar, Aby Warburg (Hadjinicolaou).

The first two papers by Pierre Paolo Racioppi and Robert Skwirblies tackle the early nineteenth-century tensions around the production of discourse on art and its history between artists and scholars. Johann Passavant's early treatise *Ansichten über die bildenden Künste und Darstellung des Ganges derselben in Toscana* (1820), published during his conversion to painting, reflects the efforts towards self-historicisation and the use of history for the creation of a missing tradition for young German artists in Rome. Art scholar Carl Rumhors' critique of the licentious manner with which Passavant treated early Renaissance art is indicative of the way historians discredited artists' engagement with art history, affirming the scholarly study of past art as a pursuit *per se*, against its instrumental appropriations in the present. Defending himself, Passavant asserted the right to see history from the perspective of the present and 'in its relation to the present',³¹ subscribing to a

²⁹ Images are also praised in their capacity to 'supply what writing lacks in scientific accuracy and give more characteristic description of what words can only with difficulty transmit' ('sie müssen ersetzen was demselben [dem Geschriebenen] an wissenschaftliche Bestimmtheit abgeht; sie sollen auch zur mehr charakteristischen Angabe dessen, was überhaupt durch das Wort schwer vermittelt wird, dienen'), Kugler, *Kleine Schriften*, v.

³⁰ See Heinrich Dilly, 'Kunsthistorische Studien, "weniger mit der Schreibfeder als mit dem Zeichenstift gemacht". Franz Kuglers Zeichenkunst', in Michel Espagne, Bénédicte Savoy and Céline Trautmann-Waller eds, *Franz Theodor Kugler. Deutscher Kunsthistoriker und Berliner Dichter*, Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2010, 45-68; Eric Garberson, 'Art history in the university: Toelken – Hotho – Kugler', *Journal of Art Historiography*, 5, December 2011, 28, 69, 76-77. More broadly on the role of drawing lessons in the university, see Elke Schulze, *Nulla dies sine linea: universitärer Zeichenunterricht ; eine problemgeschichtliche Studie*, Stuttgart: Steiner, 2004.

³¹ Letter from Johann David Passavant to Carl Friedrich von Rumohr, 18 June 1821: 'daß Sie die Kunstrichtung jener Zeit zu sehr als einer jener Zeitgenossen betrachtet wissen wollen; während ich sie mehr zum Verhältniss der jetzigen Zeit beurtheilt habe', cited in Robert

historiographical ethos that would be singularly reinvented by scholars like Walter Benjamin a century later. On the other side of the equation, the painter Tommaso Minardi would in turn decry Rumohr or Luigi Lanzi, the most prominent scholars of Italian art at the time, as lacking in understanding of the 'secrets' of art practice. Racioppi's paper shows how Minardi imposed himself as a producer of theoretical discourse seeking to define the current orientations of Italian art within the academy, which proved to be a significant arena of both cohabitation and clash between artists and scholars.

Oléron Evans studies the close connection between art practice and art scholarship based on the case of the Strasburg school of applied arts, and its journal *Das Kunstgewerbe* founded in 1890. This publication was the outcome of a collaboration between artists and scholars, not in the usual *partage* between text and illustration that reserved the former for scholars and the latter for art practitioners. The journal functioned rather as a tribune for historical and theoretical discourse produced by art practitioners themselves, along with art historians. Delving into the journal's contents, Oléron Evans shows that reformulation of artistic training and practice goes hand in hand with a reformulation of the narratives of past art.

Spyros Petritakis explores the intriguing synergies woven around the lectures by the Goethe scholar Rudolph Steiner (1861-1925) at the turn of the nineteenth century. He reflects on Steiner's fascination with particular art works – some of which he himself commissioned – as perfect actualisations of his theoretical elaborations, including alternative timelines and periodizations of the history of mankind. At the same time, Steiner's assault against 'materialistic values, commercial ethos and scientific rationalism' undermined the academic doctrine of naturalistic representation. His own schematic drawings for the illustration of his lectures; the intellectual and sensory exercises he proposed to the young artists who attended them, aiming at transcending rational perceptions of reality; the concrete technical assignments such as the translation of the black and white nuances of Dürer's etching *Melancholia* into colour planes; all this contributed to pushing artistic practice beyond the limits of figurative art.

Coming from the perspective of *Bildwissenschaft*, Lena Bader proposes to expand the scope of the discussion, in order to reflect on the interplay of art historical scholarship not strictly with art practice but with image production at large. In this way, she thinks of art scholars and commentators as image makers themselves, as producers of images, in the process of their dealing with images. In the context of the Holbein controversy, she shrewdly brings into focus the actual handling of the disputed works, their multiple reproductions and publications, the manifold interventions in order to control their perception and viewing conditions. A deep acknowledgement of the successive handlings, negotiations, re-actualisations that images undergo in their multiple lives not only challenges the traditional divide between originals and copies, but has serious consequences regarding the understanding of what a work of art actually is, and of its complex

Skwirblyes, "'The simplicity of old times'" and a community of artists: the construction of history as an artistic objective in Johann David Passavant's early texts', *Journal of Art Historiography*, 13, December 2018, 4.

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temporalities, far beyond the unique spatio-temporal coordinates of its creation.³² Bader contends that the discipline itself was produced through a multiplication of images of existing works, through copying and reproducing, through restaging them and remodelling their constellations. In many ways, Aby Warburg's commission of a copy of Rembrandt's *Claudius Civilis*, in order to think about the motif ('the action') and less about the colours and lights of the work, as examined by Yannis Hadjinicolaou, is a marvellous illustration of this.

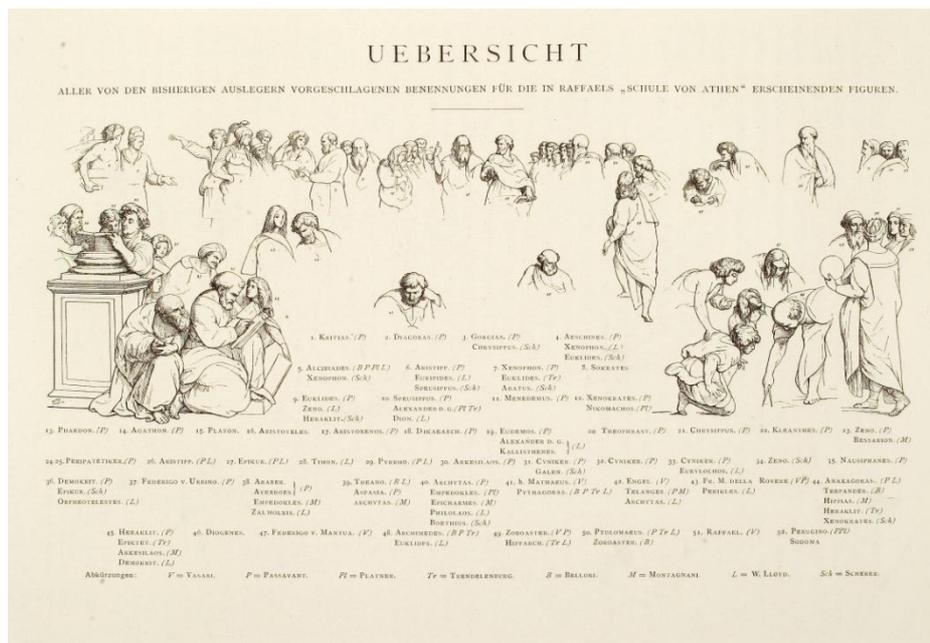


Figure 1 Schematic representation of Raphael's *School of Athens*, in: Anton Springer, 'Raffaels Schule von Athen', *Die graphischen Künste*, 5, 1883, 87.

In a broader sense, Warburg's life-size image atlas, and the constant manipulation of images it involved, is a revealing example of corporeal engagement in scholarly work, giving space to lived forms of visual experimentation and argumentation. In contrast to this opulence of bodily energy, even the frugality of Panofsky's alleged habit of wearing sunglasses while visiting museums and viewing originals, out of a mistrust of the coloured image,³³ still pertains to this very process of image making and sensorial renegotiation of artworks that informs their

³² See Panofsky, 'The history of art as a humanistic discipline', 7. For a critical discussion of Panofsky's understanding of historical time, see Georges Didi-Hubermann, 'Artistic survival: Panofsky vs. Warburg and the exorcism of impure time', *Common Knowledge*, 18: 1, April 2003, 50-78; more broadly on the problem of time in art history, see most recently Dan Karlholm and Keith Moxey, eds, *Time in the History of Art Temporality, Chronology and Anachrony*, London and New York: Routledge, 2018.

³³ Mentioned by Hadjinicolaou, who cites Monika Wagner, 'Kunstgeschichte in Schwarz-Weiß. Visuelle Argumente bei Panofsky und Warburg', in: Monika Wagner and Helmut Lethen, eds, *Schwarz-Weiß als Evidenz: 'With black and white you can keep more of a distance'*, Frankfurt am Main and New York: Campus Verlag, 2015, 139.

study. As Bader argues, iconic interpretation generates iconic practice and – I may add– embodiment, be it in the form of a reshaped copy that serves to reinforce or visually translate an argument, such as Anton Springer’s sketchy representation of Raphael’s *School of Athens* (fig. 1) accompanying his sumptuously illustrated essay on the work in 1883,³⁴ or be it simply in the urge to imitate with one’s own body a gesture or a posture, when trying to decipher the meaning of a history painting. In this case too, crucial epistemological issues are at stake: knowledge does not only come in the form of intellectual engagement, discourse and text, but activates bodily processes of iconic re-appropriation. In a sense, this understanding of an active re-appropriation of the objects of study recalls Panofsky’s notion of ‘re-creation’ in his discussion of the methodological specificities of the humanities with regard to the sciences:

The humanist, dealing as he does with human actions and creations, has to engage in a mental process of a synthetic and subjective character: he has mentally to re-enact the actions and to re-create the creations. It is in fact by this process that the real objects of the humanities come into being. [...] meaning can only be apprehended by re-producing, and thereby, quite literally, ‘realizing,’ the thoughts that are expressed in the books and the artistic conceptions that manifest themselves in the statues.³⁵

The difference, I argue, –and it is a huge one– is that the necessary ‘re-enactment’, the ‘intuitive aesthetic re-creation’ through which objects of art history ‘come into being’ and which Panofsky describes as an ‘inward experience’ of the art historian,³⁶ is not purely mental but also conditioned by bodily engagement and actual image making.

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In this final part of my introduction, I would like to return to one of the central questions of the research programme that I roughly sketched under the label of a ‘third art history’: did thinking art history from the perspective of artistic practice generate different kinds of approaches than those practised for instance in universities or in museums? Did it bring about different ways of narrating and ordering the past?

I will work with a selection of Greek and German examples related to the context of art training and argue two interrelated points. The first one is that adapting to the needs of artistic practice favoured discourses centred on form, materials and techniques. It paved the way to analytical rather than historical approaches, which valued taxonomical thinking and systematic classification over chronological ordering, construction of narratives and historical contextualisation. My second argument is that scholarly discourses produced by and destined for artists tended to rely on categories of ordering the past other than those of the

³⁴ Anton Springer, ‘Raffael’s *Schule von Athen*’, *Die graphischen Künste*, 5, 1883, 87. On the fragmentary character of this representation and its role in Springer’s analysis of the work, see Johannes Rössler, *Poetik der Kunstgeschichte. Anton Springer, Carl Justi und die ästhetische Konzeption der deutschen Kunstwissenschaft*, Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2009, 58.

³⁵ Panofsky, ‘The history of art as a humanistic discipline’, 14.

³⁶ Panofsky, ‘The history of art as a humanistic discipline’, 20.

nation, the race or the historical style, which were more or less dominant in the ways the discipline was practised in other institutional contexts.

As Heinrich Dilly has observed, university professors of art history, working within the larger disciplinary complex of philosophical faculties, considered their work, at least for some time, as part of the discipline of history.³⁷ Historical scholarship was throughout the nineteenth century bound by ideological and political agendas, as producing primordially nation or empire-centred narratives. Numerous studies have demonstrated the nationalist and racialist considerations that underpinned the formation of the discipline and its fundamental conceptual categories, such as the national school or the north/south divide, i.e. the opposition between German and Latin races.³⁸

Without denying the prevalence of such schemes, I would argue that alternative analytical models, other than the national or the racial, were possible in the nineteenth century and that scholarly discourses produced in relation to artistic training and practice, primarily destined to nurture artistic creativity, were more susceptible to accommodating them. One can assume that scholars at the art school were less bound to university norms, disciplinary protocols and their ideological implications, even though this difference should not be understood strictly in terms of an institutional divide between the art school and the university.

My first argument is based on the study of the Greek case. In a previous article, I demonstrated the diverging methodological agendas of the art school and the university, by comparing scholarship and teaching approaches to ancient art at the University of Athens, on the one hand, and the Athenian School of Arts, on the other, in the period between 1840 and 1860.³⁹ At the university of Athens, lectures presented the historical evolution of ancient Greek art, divided into five periods. The overall narrative structure was based on regional schools and individual artists, while a particular emphasis was put on the origins of Greek art. During that same period, lectures at the art school proposed a thorough examination of the various techniques in the branches of architecture, sculpture and drawing; of artistic materials and their qualities; of the types of buildings and their elements, along with

³⁷ Heinrich Dilly, *Kunstgeschichte als Institution. Studien zur Geschichte einer Disziplin*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1979, 171-172.

³⁸ See indicatively Michela Passini, *La fabrique de l'art national. Le nationalisme et les origines de l'histoire de l'art en France et en Allemagne (1870-1933)*, Paris: Éditions de la Maison des Sciences de l'homme, Centre allemand d'histoire de l'art, 2012; Eric Michaud, 'Barbarian Invasions and the Racialization of Art History', *October*, 139, Winter 2012, 59-76; Matthew Rampley, 'Art History and the Politics of Empire'; Robert Born, ed, *Die Kunsthistoriographien in Ostmitteleuropa und der nationale Diskurs*, Berlin: Mann, 2004; Dominique Jarrassé, 'Mythes raciaux et quête de scientificité dans la construction de l'histoire de l'art en France, 1840-1870', *Revue de l'art*, 146, 2004, 61-72; Hubert Locher, 'Stilgeschichte und die Frage der "nationalen Konstanten"', *Zeitschrift für Schweizerische Archäologie und Kunstgeschichte*, 53: 4, 1996, 285-293 and Locher, *Kunstgeschichte als historische Theorie*, 99-202; Lars Olof Larson, 'Nationalstil und Nationalismus in der Kunstgeschichte der zwanziger und dreissiger Jahre', in: Oskar Bätschmann and Lorenz Dittmann, ed, *Kategorien und Methoden der deutschen Kunstgeschichte, 1900-1930*, Stuttgart: Steiner, 1985, 169-184.

³⁹ Vratskidou, 'Art history in the art school'.

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an exhaustive iconographical analysis of the subjects of ancient art. All these elements were moulded into an active knowledge that the trainees, the first artists of modern Greece, were encouraged to apply in their work, in view of the national artistic revival promulgated by the directors of the school.

Most telling is that the professors teaching side by side in the two major educational institutions of the Greek capital were both drawing on the same source, namely Karl Otfried Müller's *Handbuch der Archaeologie der Kunst* (1830), but they were selecting from its contents in a most evocative way: Müller's historical approach in the first part of the manual informed teaching at the university, whereas the art school adopted his systematic approach, in the second part of the manual.

The manual, which proved instrumental for the nascent discipline of archaeology, was composed for Müller's own lectures at the University of Göttingen from 1821 to 1840 and was widely used within Germany. The scholar's ambition to condense the totality of archaeological knowledge of his time into a book that brought together a great variety of objects and perspectives – a historical, a technical and an iconographical approach, along with a geographical survey, not to mention the art theory section of his general introduction – all this rich material made the manual an ideal source for subsequent appropriations and selective readings. It is to be noted that, as in the Greek case, German university professors who drew on the manual generally retained the first historical part, while neglecting the systematic study of techniques, forms and iconography of ancient art.⁴⁰ This was precisely the material that proved crucial for teaching in the Athenian art school, where Müller's systematic section alongside his theoretical introduction were recast into a kind of practical art theory for artists.

In the period between 1840 and 1860, the same focus on the development of form, materials, and techniques, rather than on historical narratives and contextualisation, can also be observed in art institutions in Germany. Cases in point are the teaching approach of Karl Bötticher (1806-1889), whose career was mainly within institutions of art training in Berlin (Gewerbeschule, Akademie der Künste, Bauakademie), and who developed in this context his monumental treatise *Die Tektonik der Hellenen* (1844-1852), or the teaching and the theoretical work of the architect Gottfried Semper (1803-1879), who had lectured in Dresden, London and Zurich, always within institutions of art education. It is worth mentioning that Müller's handbook, and particularly his concept of 'tectonics', was influential for both Bötticher and Semper, even though their respective theoretical models were clearly more ambitious than Müller's systematic approach.⁴¹ What interested both

⁴⁰ Vratskidou, 'Art history at the art school', 57-59.

⁴¹ See Wolfgang Herrmann, *Gottfried Semper: In Search of Architecture*, Cambridge (MA) and London: MIT Press, 1984, 139-152; Kenneth Frampton, 'Bötticher, Semper and the tectonic: Core, form and art', in: Andrew Ballantyne, ed, *What is Architecture?*, London and New York: Routledge, 2002, 138-152; Rémi Labrusse, 'L'ornement à la conquête de soi: tectonique, métaphysique et anthropologie chez Karl Bötticher et Gottfried Semper', *Gradhiva: revue d'histoire et d'archives de l'anthropologie*, 25, 2017, 50-79. Semper had studied in Göttingen, but it seems that he had not enrolled for Müller's courses, which does not exclude the possibility of his having attended them, Mallgrave Harry Francis, *Gottfried Semper, Architect of the*

Bötticher and Semper was not simply a cumulative account of encyclopaedic outlook, but a primordially genetic insight: the objective was to reflect on the origins and evolution of the arts from both a historical and an anthropological perspective. In his early essay *Die Vier Elemente der Baukunst* (1851), Semper contended that all artistic activity of mankind could be traced back to four originary elements (or motifs) related to the organisation of social space, the domestic settlement in particular, as its primordial unit: the hearth, the vertical enclosure, the mound and the roof. According to his theory, the hearth, that is the fire around which people gathered, was the crux of all social institutions, while the other three elements, the mound, the roof, the vertical enclosure, arose in order to protect it on all sides.⁴² These four elements represented functional and at the same time symbolic acts, yielding formal development in the most varied configurations as regards materials, techniques and cultural contexts. For instance, the motif of enclosure found its first realisations in the primitive fence woven of branches and grass, which developed into elaborately decorated tapestries and then painted walls in tile, brick or stone.⁴³ For Semper, the whole history of art could be seen precisely as the evolution, the combinations and transfers across those four motifs throughout the history of humankind.

Semper's interest in originary motifs (*Urmotive*) has of course little to do with the Athenian university scholars' emphasis on the origins of Greek art. A thorny question for the scholars of the newly founded Greek state was indeed the alleged Egyptian or Oriental origins of ancient Greek art, a thesis that gained prominence in European scholarship in the late eighteenth century. Their concern was to establish a purely 'Greek' (that is, not Egyptian or Oriental) origin for Greek art, since any connection to the Orient evoked the Ottoman past, at a moment when the Greek state was striving to consolidate its European belonging. Acting as 'organic intellectuals' *avant la lettre*, Greek scholars sought to prove the *sui generis* and continuous artistic existence of a nation through time. Semper, on the contrary, was interested in the universal, anthropological validity of the four motifs, that is, the elementary functional-symbolic acts present in all human societies. Greek scholars strove to forge a national narrative purged from foreign elements or influences. Semper conversely called attention to transfers across material, technical procedures and cultures.

The same disinterest in national narratives and historical embeddedness in favour of approaches focused on techniques and form can be observed in the art history training offered at the polytechnic of Karlsruhe in the 1870s. The school was

Nineteenth Century, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1996, 13. On Semper's uses of Müller's ideas, see in particular: 150-151; See also, Sonja Hildebrand, 'Concepts of creation: historiography and design in Gottfried Semper', *Journal of Art Historiography*, 11, December 2014, 3-4.

⁴² Gottfried Semper, *Die Vier Elemente der Baukunst*, Braunschweig: Friedrich Vieweg, 1851, 54-56. For a detailed analysis, see, among others, Harry Mallgrave, *Gottfried Semper. Architect of the Nineteenth Century*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1996, 180-189 and Mari Hvattum, *Gottfried Semper and the Problem of Historicism*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004, 64-83.

⁴³ Semper, *Die Vier Elemente*, 56-57.

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among the first to establish full professorships for modern art history in Germany, well before the universities of the region.⁴⁴ Bruno Meyer (1840-1917), better known as one of the first advocates of the illustrated slide lecture,⁴⁵ was the second holder of the chair from 1874 to 1884. Addressing an audience of mainly architectural students, in his inaugural lecture in 1874, he tried to define what kind of art history would be most relevant for art practitioners.⁴⁶ He pleaded first for a history that showed students how the artists of the past –from ‘different times, nations, and art branches’⁴⁷– coped with the same sort of technical difficulties and creative impasses as those they themselves encountered in their own practice. He proposed, in other words, a history of artistic problems, and to this end he encouraged the study of sketches, drafts, unfinished or partly destroyed works, as traces of the creative process, allowing students to observe artworks in their making (*‘die Arbeit im Werden zu beobachten’*).⁴⁸ The emphasis was put on the artist’s trials and errors, on adopted solutions that often led away from or even betrayed the original conception.⁴⁹ Meyer proposed then a history that was attentive to intermediary and discarded products, and not solely to final results and successful endeavours; a history not only of the canonised samples of art making, but of the process of art making itself, in all its complexities. This understanding of art practice as an open-ended, inquiring activity with unforeseeable results, and often failures, counters the cult of the masterpiece and the canonising protocols of art history that were in place particularly at the museum. Meyer exalted the power of critical, objective study of past art (*‘vorurteilslose Kritik der älteren Kunstdenkmäler’*; *‘wissenschaftliche geschichtliche Betrachtung der Kunst’*) as a means to counter the unreflecting veneration of old

⁴⁴ Reinhard Rürup, ‘Friedrich Theodor Vischer und die Anfänge der Kunstgeschichte an der Technische Hochschule Karlsruhe’, *Zeitschrift für die Geschichte des Oberreihms*, 113, 1965, 415-427; Martin Papenbrock, ‘Der Lehrstuhl für Kunstgeschichte in Karlsruhe: Ein Rückblick’, in: Martin Papenbrock and Katharina Büttner, eds, *Kunst und Architektur in Karlsruhe. Festschrift für Norbert Schneider*, Karlsruhe: Universitätsverlag, 2006, 179-192. See also, Dilly, *Kunstgeschichte als Institution*, 55-57.

⁴⁵ Heinrich Dilly, ‘Die Bildwerfer. 121 Jahre kunstwissenschaftliche Dia-Projektion’, in: *Zwischen Markt und Museum: Beiträge der Tagung Präsentationsformen von Fotografie*, Göppingen: Museumsverband Baden-Württemberg, 1994, 40-44. Dilly explains why Bruno Meyer ‘failed’ to instigate the illustrated lecture, compared to Hermann Grimm the ‘successful’ initiator of this practice, that revolutionised art historical teaching and scholarship.

⁴⁶ Bruno Meyer, ‘Wie und was lernt der moderne Künstler durch die Geschichte der Kunst? Eine akademische Antrittsrede’, *Deutsche Warte: Umschau über das Leben und Schaffen der Gegenwart*, I: 6, 1874, 321-334. Such inaugural lessons, in which professors programmatically expose their teaching aims and methods, are precious sources for exploring the nature and scope of an art history for artists –more accurately, in order to understand what kind of art history art historians of the nineteenth century believed that artists needed. In the case of the Karlsruhe Polytechnic, such speeches from all the four chair holders during the nineteenth century have been preserved. Bruno Meyer’s speech is perhaps the most significant among them, yet is a hardly noticed text.

⁴⁷ Meyer, ‘Wie und was lernt der moderne Künstler’, 325.

⁴⁸ Meyer, ‘Wie und was lernt der moderne Künstler’, 326.

⁴⁹ Meyer, ‘Wie und was lernt der moderne Künstler’, 325-326.

masters that had grown into a hero cult (*der "Heroencultus", der Götzendienst der "Einzigsten" und "Unvergleichlichen"*). Scientific art historical inquiry permitted the student to put exceptional artists in context and understand the conditions under which their works were created – an insight that could have liberating effects for younger artists intimidated by the greatness of the past.⁵⁰

Reflecting on the relevance of art history for artists, Bruno Meyer talked above all of a history of the invention, circulation and constant transformation of artistic motifs. Avoiding any concrete definition of the concept, he qualified motifs as the raw material of art making, or, adopting a biological metaphor, as the basic cells of artistic organisms.⁵¹ Once an object was turned into a motif, Meyer suggested, it could be combined with others and reused in all kinds of new artworks, just as cells can, within certain processes, become part of different organisms. In their incessant 'migrations' (*'unablässig von Hand zu Hand wandern'*), motifs are not simply repeated but also further processed and refined. As Meyer observed, the density of production of motifs could vary from period to period: there are moments of extraordinary expansion of such iconic material, such as in the Dutch painting of the seventeenth century, even though it could also happen that particularly enduring motifs could become progressively worn out and no longer recognisable through their successive re-appropriations.⁵² His object would be then this 'inner history of the materials of the visual arts' (*'innere Geschichte der Stoffe in der bildenden Kunst'*), involving processes of refinement (*'Verfeinerung'*), deepening (*'Vertiefung'*), or even exhaustion of motifs. Adapting Semper's thought to a more painting-centred approach,⁵³ Meyer reconceptualised art history as the study of the invention, reuses and reconfigurations of artistic motifs.

For Meyer, this conception of art history was an answer to a very common artistic concern in the mid-century: namely, that the influx of empirical knowledge on past art functioned as a burden for artistic creativity. The reflective turn upon art and its past, tainted by the Hegelian announcement of the end of art, fuelled the

⁵⁰ Meyer, 'Wie und was lernt der moderne Künstler', 328-329: 'Die wissenschaftlich geschichtliche Betrachtung der Kunst nun zieht ohne Liebe und Hass nicht bloß das Vorleuchtende, sondern jedes Vorhandene in ihren Kreis, sucht es zu verstehen und in seinen rechten Zusammenhang zu setzen. Dabei finden sich ungesucht, aber überzeugend Voraussetzungen und Bedingungen für das Auftreten auch der unvergleichlichsten Künstler, für das Entstehen auch der allerherrlichsten Werken [...] Die ragenden Spitzen der Entwicklung treten so in den Fluss des geschichtlichen Werdens. Die mit dem Haupte in die Wolken ragen, werden erkannt als auf den Schultern vieler Vorgänger und Mitstrebenden [...] stehend: der Heroencultus ist durch die Geschichte zerstört. Die Befreiung von dem lähmenden Banne des Heroenkultus ist so zu sagen die innere Wiedergeburt des Künstlers'.

⁵¹ Meyer, 'Wie und was lernt der moderne Künstler', 330. Meyer conceded the difficulty of defining the concept of 'motif'. His analysis draws a lot on Semper's *Der Stil*, in which the word is omnipresent, again without being formally defined, and should be understood as a unit of content associated to a particular form.

⁵² Meyer, 'Wie und was lernt der moderne Künstler', 331.

⁵³ See his brief laudatory reference to Semper's 'practical' aesthetics at the end of his lecture, p. 333-334.

shared anxiety that the excessive accumulation of art was blocking the creation of new art.⁵⁴ Meyer described weak or insufficiently trained artists as being intimidated to such a degree by old art that their only wish was to 'have all the art galleries of the world burnt down overnight'⁵⁵ – an arresting anticipation of the iconoclastic cries of the avant-gardes. Art history conceived as the history of the invention and dynamic re-appropriation of recurring motifs functioned as a compensation for this anxiety, an anxiety for which, paradoxically, art history itself was in fact responsible. In tracing the continuous reinventions of the same motifs through time, art history delivers a promise that creation is still always possible and seeks to educate artists to produce art in ever new forms, into an infinite future.⁵⁶

Most interestingly, as Meyer pointed out, art history as the history of the invention and circulation of motifs was still entirely to be written.⁵⁷ The only preliminary example of such an approach that he could offer to his audience was a decade-old essay by his professor in Berlin, Ernst Guhl (1819-1862), on the representations of the Madonna by various Italian masters from the thirteenth to the seventeenth century.⁵⁸ It is interesting that Bruno Meyer does not refer to Anton Springer's pioneering iconographical studies, dated in the 1860s and 1870s,⁵⁹ although he does mention his essay 'Kunst während der französischen Revolution'

⁵⁴ On this tension, see e.g. James J. Sheehan, 'Past and Present', in *Museums in the German Art World*, Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2000, 84-97; Dan Karlholm, *Art of Illusion: The Representation of Art History in Nineteenth-Century Germany and Beyond*, Bern and New York: Lang, 2004, 126-133. The professor of the Polytechnic employed an intriguing and unusual metaphor in this regard: similarly to the young medical student, who, discovering the immense variety of existing diseases, tends to self-diagnose the most improbable symptoms, trainee artists fear that they manifest 'symptoms' of this or that old master and doubt their own artistic existence. Artistic styles of the past are treated like diseases that one could contract. Meyer, 'Wie und was lernt der moderne Künstler', 327.

⁵⁵ Meyer, 'Wie und was lernt der moderne Künstler', 327.

⁵⁶ Meyer, 'Wie und was lernt der moderne Künstler', 331: 'Das ist eine der kostbarsten Früchte, die der Künstler vor sich beim Studium der Kunstgeschichte einheimst, ist zu sehen dass die Zahl der Motive eine verhältnismäßig sehr beschränkte ist, dass die vorhandenen aber unablässig von Hand zu Hand wandern und dabei selbst verfeinert und zu feinerer künstlerischer Neugestaltung geeignet gemacht werden' (p. 331). Cf. Gottfried Semper, *Der Stil in den technischen und tektonischen Künsten oder praktische Ästhetik*, Frankfurt a.M.: Verlag für Kunst und Wissenschaft, 1860, vol. 1, vi.

⁵⁷ Meyer, 'Wie und was lernt der moderne Künstler', 331: 'Die Geschichte der Künste unter diesem Gesichtspunkte des Kreislaufes der Stoffe ist noch nicht geschrieben'.

⁵⁸ Ernst Guhl's literary output has not yet been fully documented or systematically examined. Meyer refers most probably to his published lecture, 'Die heilige Familie im Verlauf der italienischen Malerei', in: *Vorträge und Reden Kunsthistorischen Inhalts*, Berlin: J. Guttentag, 1863, 91-116. On Guhl's academic career and teaching, see Eric Garberson, 'Art history in the university II: Ernst Guhl', *Journal of Art Historiography*, 7, December 2012.

⁵⁹ On Springer and the significance of his iconographical work starting in the 1860s, see Johannes Rössler, *Poetik der Kunstgeschichte. Anton Springer, Carl Justi und die ästhetische Konzeption der deutschen Kunstwissenschaft*, Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2009, 51-69. See also Michel Espagne, *L'histoire de l'art comme transfert culturel. L'itinéraire de Anton Springer*, Paris: Belin, 2009.

(‘Art during the French Revolution’) included in the same collected volume *Bilder aus der neuen Kunstgeschichte* (1867). Anton Springer’s concern with the deciphering of the meaning of individual works of art (such as Raphael’s *Disputa* or his *School of Athens*) is quite different from Bruno Meyer’s interest in the reconfigurations of the same iconic units through time and, more broadly, the formal transformation of motifs. Although roughly sketched, his analysis can be inscribed in a morphological line of thought that goes back to Goethe’s idea of ‘*Gestaltung*’ and it was reinvested by Semper.⁶⁰

Meyer’s identification of the still unwritten history of motifs as a major gap in the normal scholarship of his day, mainly turned to an overall characterisation of styles and to the study of individual artists,⁶¹ shows precisely the heuristic relevance of rethinking art history from within the art school, that is, from a somewhat de-centred location within the academic field, compared to that of the university. The art school provides an angle from which one can look afresh at the problems and blind spots of research, from which the inception of new approaches may depart. It is highly evocative that almost 90 years later, Ernst Gombrich found himself in a similar position as Meyer when he was invited to deliver his ‘reflections on teaching art history in the art school’, at a conference of the National Council for Diplomas in Art and Design, organised by Nikolaus Pevsner in 1966.⁶² Gombrich, then director of the Warburg Institute and with three years of experience as a Slade professor (1961-1963, both at Cambridge and Oxford), put aside the traditional ‘history of styles which marches from Romanesque via Gothic to the Renaissance’, in order to plead for a social history of art that dealt with ‘what it was like to be an artist in the past’; that explored how artistic values were formed and, more broadly, how the modern system of art – ‘the idea of Art with a capital A’ – came to be: ‘It sounds easy and even trite, but if you tried to take this programme seriously you might soon find that the relevant information has hardly begun to be sifted and assessed.’⁶³ He further set out to trace the outline of what he qualified as a ‘still unwritten history of art in terms of objects’, which would investigate the complex transformations of artworks from their original uses and settings up to their entry into museum

⁶⁰ On this tradition, see recently Muriel van Vliet, ‘Gottfried Semper et la morphologie: transformations, culture et symbole’, *Gradhiva: revue d’histoire et d’archives de l’anthropologie*, 25, 2017, 152-177. See also the collected volume edited by Jonas Maatsch, *Morphologie Und Moderne: Goethes ‘Anschauliches Denken’ in den Geistes- Und Kulturwissenschaften Seit 1800*, Berlin: De Gruyter, 2014, and in particular the contribution by Johannes Grave, ‘“Beweglich und bildsam”. Morphologie als implizite Bildtheorie?’, 57-74.

⁶¹ See Kathryn Brush, *The Shaping of Art History: Wilhelm Vöge, Adolph Goldschmidt and the Study of Medieval Art*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996, 26-28.

⁶² Ernst H. Gombrich, ‘Reflections on teaching art history in art schools’, paper given 4th January, 1966, published in The Gombrich Archive, <https://gombricharchive.files.wordpress.com/2011/04/showdoc34.pdf>.

⁶³ Gombrich, ‘Reflections’, nonpaginated. Gombrich further observes: ‘If we asked such questions in a more concrete, matter of fact way, the golden haze would recede from the word patronage, and the William Morris or Ruskin atmosphere around the word the medieval craftsman who dedicated his skill to the church would be dispelled, not in order to debunk the past but to see it as it was.’

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collections and which would 'build up a more concrete picture of the history of art than the traditional account ever was'.⁶⁴ Rhetoric aside, and even though Gombrich's ambitious programme of an art history for artists was never put into practice, his reflection points to the art school as ripe with possibility for an alternative art history.⁶⁵

This leads me to my second argument: that of the art school more specifically as a place of alternative ways of ordering the art of the past, beyond the established frameworks of styles and national schools. Returning to the nineteenth century, I would like to take up Gottfried Semper's critique of classificatory principles applied to the presentation of artefacts and artworks at the Great Exhibition in London in 1851, which he saw as failing to produce comparisons and associations that could inspire artistic practice and kindle new art.⁶⁶ In his theoretical work, he crafted instead a very different analytical scheme for scrutinizing the totality of art and architectural history based on the four originary formative motifs (*vier Elemente*) that I described earlier. An important asset of his classificatory system lies in its stress on transverse categories and on arresting instances of transformation and change. Seminal in this respect is Semper's notion of *Stoffwechsel*,⁶⁷ which describes a process of technical and material transformation, in which motifs were gradually translated from one material to another, from one technical procedure to another, while retaining a traceable link to their primary meaning. He traces for instance the successive transformations of the motif of enclosure across techniques and materials, from the primitive fence made in branches and grass, to crude mats, which developed into tapestries hung against more durable backdrops, and further to actual walls in clay tile, brick or stone. Even the painted or sculptured decoration on the walls is a further development of the same principle – Semper speaks more particularly of *Bekleidung* (translated as dressing, clothing or coating), since, as he

⁶⁴ Gombrich, 'Reflections', nonpaginated. The emphasis on a 'history of objects' is interesting but remains within the broader field of inquiry into the social functions of images, that Gombrich described besides as Aby Warburg's core concern, alluding to his own position as director of the Warburg Institute: 'You may perhaps have been waiting by now, for the Director of the Warburg Institute to advocate the study of iconography for it is widely believed, alas, that this is what we are doing all day on Woburn Square. Obviously there are many instances when a cult object proclaiming the legend of a Saint or a marriage chest glorifying a story of marital faithfulness cannot be understood without reference to the text. But this is only one side to the larger question of the function of these works, and it was with the larger aspect of this function of these images within the life of those who commissioned them that Warburg was in reality concerned throughout his life'.

⁶⁵ In this regard, see also Beth Williamson's study on Michael Podro's teaching in Camberwell, in the 1960s, 'Art history at the art school: the critical historians of Camberwell', *Journal of Art Historiography*, 5, December 2011.

⁶⁶ See Gottfried Semper, *Wissenschaft, Industrie und Kunst*, Braunschweig: Friedrich Vieweg, 1852, 5-7. See also his critique on the three prevailing 'systems of classifications', the 'historical', the 'ethnographical', and the 'material', in Gottfried Semper, [Outline for a System of Comparative Style Theory], Lecture of November 11, 1853, Manuscript 122, ETH-Höggerberg, Institut für Geschichte und Theory der Architektur, Zurich, published in *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics*, 6, Fall 1983, 16.

⁶⁷ Semper, *Der Stil*, 233f.

explains, such decoration 'imitated the colourful embroideries [...] of the age-old carpet walls'.⁶⁸ According to this inventive association, the 'development of painting as an independent art' is rooted in the art of weaving.⁶⁹

In a text commissioned by Henri Cole in 1852, in view of the organisation of the chairs, curriculum and collections of the future complex of South Kensington, Semper developed his idea of an ideal museum encompassing all products of art and industry. He spoke of a 'Universal Collection, embracing the whole History of Civilization' and in measure to 'show how things were done in all times; how they are done at present in all the Countries of the Earth; and why they were done in one or the other Way, according to circumstances'.⁷⁰ All artefacts of the collection should be organised in four categories that derive again from Semper's originary motifs. Textile art corresponds to the motif of vertical enclosure and includes 'twisting, weaving and spinning, production of thin and pliable tissues'. 'Ceramic art' corresponds to the hearth and groups together artefacts produced by 'working out the forms in Soft plastic materials and hardening them afterwards'. Carpentry, associated with the element of the roof, is defined as the 'combination of bars into Systems of construction' and, finally, masonry originates in the motif of mounding and involves 'cutting of hard Materials into given forms and combining small hard pieces into objects of construction'.⁷¹ As becomes evident in Semper's annotations, these four categories are loosely defined. They bring together objects by their common elementary idea, but these may differ greatly in terms of material, techniques, style or cultural origin. Textile art, for instance, includes 'carpets, wall paintings, wall covers in wood, in metal plates, in terra cotta, stucco, and stone'.⁷²

The architect conceived the plan of his ideal collection in the form of a square, attributing each side to one of the four categories (fig. 2). As he observed though, 'most of production of Art and Industry wear a Mixed Character, and are related to more than one of the above given four families'.⁷³ Artefacts should thus be arranged according to their varying proximity to the four fundamental motifs (situated at the sides of the square), while the corners of the square function as the 'junction points' at which categories intersect. Mosaics, for instance, belong to textile art (side A of the square), since, according to Semper's principle of *Stoffwechsel*, they are imitations of textile work. At the same time, however, they are 'executed with a system of hard pieces, cut out of hard materials', and thus they also pertain to the

⁶⁸ Semper, *Die Vier Elemente*, 59, translated in English by Harry Francis Mallgrave and Wolfgang Herrmann, in *The Four Elements of Architecture and Other Writings*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010 (1989), 104. See also Semper, *Der Stil*, 217-231.

⁶⁹ This idea is expressed earlier in a lecture during his time in London, Semper, [Outline for a System of Comparative Style Theory], 21.

⁷⁰ Gottfried Semper, 'Practical Arts in Metals and Hard Materials' (1852), published in Peter Noever, ed, *Gottfried Semper. The Ideal Museum. Practical Art in Metals and Hard Materials*, Wien: Schlebrügge, 2007, 54-55. As well as the introductory texts by Harry Francis Mallgrave and Andrew Benjamin in this volume, on this manuscript see also Hvattum, *Gottfried Semper*, 185-188.

⁷¹ Semper, 'Practical Arts', 56.

⁷² Semper, 'Practical Arts', 56.

⁷³ Semper, 'Practical Arts', 57.

masonry (side C); they should therefore be placed at the corner E, that

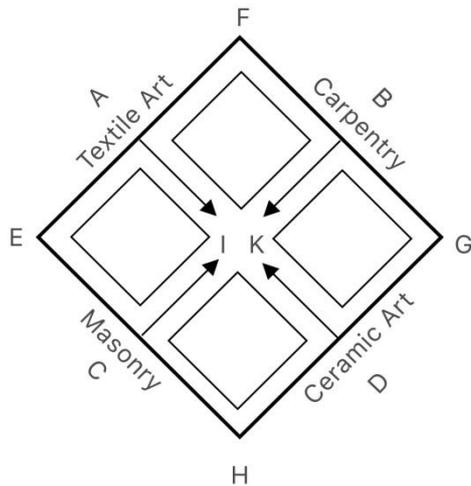


Figure 2 Transcription of Gottfried Semper's scheme, in: Semper, 'Practical Arts', 57.

is at the intersection of side A and C.⁷⁴ Liminal creations are then situated at the corners of the square, making them the most intellectually stimulating parts of the scheme. As Estelle Thibault observes, Semper's categories 'are defined less by their limits, than by their centres'⁷⁵ –the originary motifs– from which they expand outwards, unfolding into the most varied entanglements. His perfectly permeable categories stand far apart from the rigid framework of the national schools or historical styles. Semper invents a different system, a different taxonomy in view of ordering the art of past, one that brings forth transfers, crossings, and hybridities, reveals unexpected relationships and invites new associations. This intricate matrix offers the artist a tremendous playground for experimentation, for revisiting the original motifs through the prism of new materials and techniques, new social needs or modes of organisation. The logic of such an arrangement not only yields a creative engagement with materials; it also builds on a different conception of temporality, beyond linear, unidirectional time. As Semper proclaimed in another lecture of this period, 'a System of Classification, based upon principles which I have tried to indicate will include the history of art, but it will place things close together, which are very far from each other, by distance of time and space; for instance the Merovingian and Byzantine Style with the Style of industrial art with the Assyrians and the Greeks of the Heroic Age'.⁷⁶ This type of associations aimed at stimulating artistic imagination and maximising the possibilities of form shaping,⁷⁷

⁷⁴ Semper, 'Practical Arts', 57.

⁷⁵ Estelle Thibault, 'La science du style face au marché du monde. Les leçons de l'Exposition universelle de 1851', in: Gottfried Semper, *Science, industrie et art* (1852), trans. Emile Reiber, Gollion, CH: Infolio, 2012, 23.

⁷⁶ Semper, [Outline for a System of Comparative Style Theory], 16.

⁷⁷ This boost of artistic creativity was also linked to economic concerns, particularly regarding the products of applied arts. The promotion of artefacts in an increasingly international market was facilitated by an orientation towards styles and forms that were not strictly nationally or regionally conditioned. See Locher, *Kunstgeschichte als historische Theorie*, 306.

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something that traditional classifications according to chronology or national schools failed to do.

Similarly, a racial conception of style is of little use for the artist. The sculptor and theoretician Adolf Hildebrand (1847-1921), who taught for a time at the Munich Academy, defined in his seminal essay *Das Problem der Form in der bildenden Kunst* (1893), different ways of seeing that determine artistic activity (pe. Nahbild-Fernbild). He was never interested in interpreting these conceptual pairs of visual perception as products of different racial constitutions or psychologies, but this is what Alois Riegl did, when he adapted Hildebrand's categories (Nahbild-Fernbild as haptic-optic) in his *Spätromische Kunstindustrie* (1901). As Meyer Schapiro has pointed out, in Riegl's conception of stylistic development as a long-term evolutionary process from the haptic to the optic pole, and from objective to subjective outlook, 'each great phase corresponds to racial dispositions'.⁷⁸ For Hildebrand, the primary concern was that of form shaping, and in view of this process, different ways of seeing were equally valid in understanding the various modalities of artistic practice.

As Hildebrand's and, most importantly, Semper's approach demonstrate, the closer one stands to the study of artworks and to questions related to their fabrication, the more one is led to question and resist prefixed, often arbitrary categories such as the nation, the race or the stylistic period: categories that fail to instigate reflection on transtemporal and transcultural entanglements. Such reflection is perhaps the most valuable legacy of an art history produced by artists, for artists – a third art history.

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⁷⁸ Meyer Schapiro, 'Style', in: Alfred Louis Kroeber, ed, *Anthropology Today: An Encyclopedic Inventory*, Chicago: Chicago University Press, 302. See also Eric Michaud, 'Barbarian invasions and the racialization of art history', *October*, 139, Winter 2012, 73-74.