

# Delineating the history of art literature by genre: Julius von Schlosser revisited\*

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*Die Kunstliteratur* (1924) is Julius von Schlosser's most compendious work. It has been translated and reprinted an impressive number of times and is sometimes used as a reference work even today.<sup>1</sup> *Die Kunstliteratur* can be regarded as a standard work in the best possible sense of the term: it gave a name to a central field in the discipline of art history. Remarkably, however, critical engagement with this standard work is still in its infancy.<sup>2</sup> There remains some uncertainty about Schlosser's motivations, the precedents he was following, and to what extent he distanced himself from them. These questions are relevant to the history of the discipline. More generally, it is important to critically examine Schlosser's approach in order to establish new models for the history of artistic discourse and indeed for the history of art history itself.<sup>3</sup>

The first part of this paper covers the genesis of *Die Kunstliteratur*: the decades that Schlosser spent researching textual sources. Its purpose is to understand his intellectual motivations, his models and the changes he made to them; to acknowledge the magnitude of his achievement but also to identify the limitations of his approach. The second part of the paper delineates an alternative

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<sup>1</sup> Julius Schlosser, *Die Kunstliteratur. Ein Handbuch zur Quellenkunde der neueren Kunstgeschichte*, Vienna: Schroll, 1924, 1967, 1985; Italian translation: *La Letteratura artistica. Manuale delle fonti della storia dell'arte moderna*, ed. emendata ed accresciuta dall'autore, aggiornata da O. Kurz, F. Rossi (trad.), Florence: La Nuova Italia, 1935, 1937, 1956, 1964, 1967, 1977, 1979, 1996, 1997, 2001; French translation: *La littérature artistique. Manuel des sources de l'histoire de l'art moderne*, J. Chavy (trad.), Paris: Flammarion, 1984, 1996.

<sup>2</sup> See primarily Hans H. Aurenhammer, 'Schlosser, Julius Ritter von', in *Neue Deutsche Biographie (NDB)* 23, Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 2007, 105–107; Michael Thimann, 'Julius von Schlosser (1866–1938)', in *Klassiker der Kunstgeschichte. Von Winckelmann bis Warburg*, ed. Ulrich Pfisterer, Munich: Beck, 2007, 194–213; Ricardo Di Mambro Santos, 'The Concentric Critique: Schlosser's *Kunstliteratur* and the Paradigm of Style in Croce and Vossler', in *Journal of Art Historiography* 1, 2009, RdMS/1; Ricardo De Mambro Santos, 'Words of Suspension: The Definition of "Written Sources" in Julius von Schlosser's *Kunstliteratur*', in *Journal of Art Historiography* 2, 2010, RdMS/1; Johannes Weiss, *Julius von Schlosser und "Die Kunstliteratur"*, Vienna (Masters thesis), 2012.

<sup>3</sup> For similar sentiments, see Thimann, 'Schlosser', 207.

approach to the history of modern art literature: it advocates organising the sources by literary genre rather than, as with Schlosser, by epoch.

### Schlosser's *Kunstliteratur* – precursors and origins

The *Festschrift* presented to Julius Schlosser (1866–1938) on his sixtieth birthday contains a systematic bibliography of his writings up to the year 1926, compiled by his student Hans Robert Hahnloser.<sup>4</sup> Although it does not yet include the mature work of the Viennese art historian, this bibliography provides a good overview of the range and preoccupations of his scholarly oeuvre. The first of five thematic sections in Hahnloser's bibliography is titled *Quellenkunde* (the study of sources). The length and priority accorded to this section shows the importance of *Quellenkunde* in Schlosser's scholarly work. Under this rubric, Hahnloser lists twenty titles between 1891 and the release of *Die Kunstliteratur* in 1924. Nearly all of them were printed as stand-alone publications. But what did Schlosser mean by *Quellenkunde* and *Kunstliteratur*? And what about them interested him?

There are only a handful of places where Schlosser explains his approach to *Quellenkunde*. The earliest is an article published in 1892 – in the supplement of the *Allgemeine Zeitung* rather than a scholarly journal. It was titled *Die Bedeutung der Quellen für die neuere Kunstgeschichte* (The significance of sources for post-classical art history).<sup>5</sup> Schlosser was only twenty-five at the time and had already submitted a printed habilitation thesis: *Schriftquellen zur Geschichte der karolingischen Kunst* (Written sources on the history of Carolingian art).<sup>6</sup> It is remarkable how confident, knowledgeable, critical and original Schlosser was even at this early stage in his career. His grasp of the history of artworks and written sources already extended well beyond the middle ages, which was virtually the only period on which he had published until then. Schlosser begins his article with the assertion that there are two groups of art historical sources: 'Unlike most other sciences, the sources on ancient and modern art history fall into two distinct groups: the monumental (i.e. artworks) and the literary.'<sup>7</sup> For Schlosser, both groups *together* form the basis of art historiography. If in doubt, he says, the artworks are more important than any extant text. As the main proponents of these parallel approaches to source-work, he cites two Italian academics: for monuments Giovanni Morelli (1816–1891) and for written sources Gaetano Milanesi (1813–1895). As Schlosser put it:

<sup>4</sup>Hans Robert Hahnloser, 'Bibliographie der bis zum 23. September 1926 erschienenen Schriften von Julius Schlosser' in *Festschrift für Julius Schlosser zum 60. Geburtstag*, eds. Arpad Weixlgärtner and Leo Planiscig, Vienna: Amalthea, 1927, 274–284.

<sup>5</sup>Julius von Schlosser, 'Die Bedeutung der Quellen für die neuere Kunstgeschichte', *Allgemeine Zeitung*, I: 19 September 1892, *Beilage*, 1–4; II: 20 September 1892, *Beilage*, 3–6. I am grateful to Friedrich Polleroß for bringing this article to my attention.

<sup>6</sup>Julius von Schlosser, *Schriftquellen zur Geschichte der karolingischen Kunst*, Vienna: Graeser, 1892.

<sup>7</sup>Schlosser, 'Bedeutung', I, 1: 'Im Gegensatz zu der Mehrzahl der übrigen Wissenschaften theilen sich die Quellen der alten wie der neueren Kunstgeschichte in zwei verschiedene Gruppen, in die monumentalen und die literarischen.'

Morelli has given us a delightful illustration of the incongruity between archival research and the results of modern morphology. Milanese, the worthy editor of Vasari, was unfortunate enough – this being Morelli's humorous expression – to have stumbled upon a document which stated that Fra Diamante, an insignificant assistant to Fra Filippo Lippi, was given the task of painting the Consecration of the Keys in the Vatican. Milanese then immediately re-attributed one of Perugino's finest works to the subordinate painter without seeing fit to compare it to any authenticated work by the same artist. I scarcely need mention the number of transgressions that have been printed – and not just in gallery catalogues – on the dubious basis of Vasari's authority. Hence it ought to be quite obvious that this sort of source is the secondary one. But nor should it be neglected. Convinced as he is that such sources are nevertheless of great value, relatively speaking, the present author has undertaken an anthology of written sources for one clearly defined field, namely the Carolingian period, much as Overbeck did for the art of classical antiquity.<sup>8</sup>

This comparison is revealing. It tells us who Schlosser looked to in his treatment of written sources; not Milanese, the director of the state archives in Florence, but archaeologist Johannes Overbeck (1826–1895). How did Overbeck's method differ from Milanese's? Milanese was arguably the most important editor of art historical source texts in nineteenth-century Italy. He was responsible for several comprehensive publications of archival holdings such as those at Orvieto cathedral,<sup>9</sup> publications of artists' letters, including those of Michelangelo,<sup>10</sup> and a new edition of Vasari's *Vite*, which served as a reference work well into the twentieth century.<sup>11</sup> Milanese transcribed and edited manuscripts and printed texts, usually in unabridged form, and wrote critical commentaries to accompany them. His approach to the preparation of art historical editions is comparable to and may have served as a model for the *Quellenschriften für Kunstgeschichte und Kunsttechnik des Mittelalters und der Neuzeit* (Source texts on the history and techniques of medieval

<sup>8</sup> Schlosser, 'Bedeutung', I, 3–4: 'Die [...] Inkongruenz archivalischer Forschung mit den Ergebnissen moderner Stilkritik hat Morelli [...] ergötzlich illustriert. Der verdienstvolle Herausgeber Vasari's, Milanese, hatte, wie sich Morelli humoristisch ausdrückt, das Unglück, auf ein Document zu stoßen, welches die Angaben enthielt, Fra Diamante, ein unbedeutender Gehilfe Fra Filippo Lippi's, habe den Auftrag bekommen, die Schlüsselweihe im Vatican zu malen. Sofort vindicirte er eines der schönsten Werke Perugino's jenem untergeordneten Maler, ohne eine Vergleichung mit dessen beglaubigten Werken für nöthig zu halten. Wie viel auf Vasari's Autorität hin, nicht bloß in Galeriekatalogen, gesündigt wurde, brauche ich wohl nur anzudeuten. Aus dem Gesagten tritt wohl die secundäre Stellung dieser Quellengattung deutlich hervor. Keineswegs darf sie aber vernachlässigt werden; in der Überzeugung ihres relativ immerhin sehr großen Werthes hat der Verfasser, ähnlich wie es Overbeck für die antike Kunst gethan [...] eine Sammlung der Schriftquellen für ein bestimmt umgrenztes Gebiet, die karolingische Zeit, unternommen.'

<sup>9</sup> Gaetano Milanese, *Documenti per la storia dell'arte senese*, 3 vols., Siena: O. Porri, 1854–56.

<sup>10</sup> Michelangelo, *Le lettere di Michelangelo Buonarroti*, ed. Gaetano Milanese, Florence: Le Monnier, 1875.

<sup>11</sup> The first edition Milanese worked on was Giorgio Vasari, *Le vite de' piu eccellenti pittori, scultori, e architetti*, Florence: Le Monnier, 1846–56.

and modern art). Initiated by Rudolf von Eitelberger and Albert Ilg, this series of source texts was conceived for a German-speaking readership and therefore usually included translations. It was in this series that Schlosser's *Schriftquellen zur Geschichte der karolingischen Kunst* were published. Michael Thimann, Johannes Weiss and Andreas Dobsław have all suggested that this central pillar of the early Viennese art history strongly influenced Schlosser's preoccupation with textual sources.<sup>12</sup>

In terms of goals and structure, however, most of Schlosser's publications are clearly very different from Milanese's editions and the other volumes in the *Quellenschriften* series. Rather than publishing entire individual texts, Schlosser set out to produce an overview of all the sources on the art of a specific period. In this he followed the Leipzig archaeologist Overbeck who, in 1868, published a compilation of *Antike Schriftquellen zur Geschichte der bildenden Kunst bei den Griechen* (Source texts from antiquity on the history of the art of the Greeks) – 'and of the Romans, who relied on Greek art'.<sup>13</sup> This anthology, which was structured chronologically, by epoch, was recently revitalised in the form of a digital database and remains a key reference work for classical archaeologists. As with Overbeck, in *Schriftquellen zur Geschichte der karolingischen Kunst* Schlosser cites passages of text in the original language, without translation. He divides the sources by artform (architecture, applied art, painting and sculpture), but also topographically, as if writing a history of Carolingian art. In this, too, Schlosser followed Overbeck.

Schlosser's newspaper article of 1892 is a manifesto for the fledgling discipline of art history. He emphasises an 'unexpected upsurge' in the 'long neglected study of monuments' and attributes this to 'technological progress' (lithography, photography and ease of travel).<sup>14</sup> He argues for the systematic development of art history on the twin pillars of monumental and literary sources. But he also makes it clear that the goal is far higher than a positivist compilation. The actual aim of art history is to gain insights into the nature of historical epochs. Schlosser writes about the 'parallelism in the development of early medieval art and

<sup>12</sup> Thimann, 'Schlosser'; Weiss, *Schlosser und „Die Kunstliteratur“* and especially Andreas Dobsław, *Die Wiener 'Quellenschriften' und ihr Herausgeber Rudolf Eitelberger von Edelberg. Kunstgeschichte und Quellenforschung im 19. Jahrhundert*, Berlin: Deutscher Kunstverlag 2009, 36–37. In fact, Schlosser's interest in textual sources can be traced back to the Institut für Österreichische Geschichtsforschung (Institute for Austrian Historical Research), where he studied from 1887 to 1889. For the role of this educational institute for archivists in the art historical curriculum, see Tanja Jenni and Raphael Rosenberg, 'Die Analyse der Objekte und das Studium der Quellen. Wiens Beitrag zur Etablierung einer universitären Kunstgeschichte', in *Reflexive Innensichten aus der Universität: Disziplinengeschichten zwischen Wissenschaft, Gesellschaft und Politik*, eds. Karl Fröschl, Gerd Müller, Thomas Olechowski and Brigitta Schmidt-Lauber, Vienna: Vienna University Press, 2015, 121–134.

<sup>13</sup> Johannes Overbeck, *Die antiken Schriftquellen zur Geschichte der bildenden Künste bei den Griechen*, Leipzig: Engelmann, 1868, v: 'und den von griechischer Kunst abhängigen Römern'.

<sup>14</sup> Schlosser, 'Bedeutung', I, 1: 'man [wandte] sich nunmehr mit verdoppeltem Eifer dem so lange vernachlässigten Studium der Denkmäler zu, das durch die großen Fortschritte auf technischem Gebiete, sowohl die Erfindung neuer Reproduktionsarten, wie des Steindruckes und später der Photographie [...], als auch durch die außerordentliche Erleichterung jeglichen Verkehrs eine ungeahnten Aufschwung erhielt.'

language<sup>15</sup> and links his view to the Latin phrase *ex ungue leonem*:<sup>16</sup> just as Phidias was able to infer the form of a lion from its claw, so too any source – whether text or monument – would express the character of its age. In those days, German-speaking art historians generally assumed that each historical epoch had a uniform character that was ultimately defined by its *zeitgeist*. For instance: a few years after Schlosser's article, Alois Riegl's *Spätromische Kunstindustrie* (Late Roman Art Industry, 1901) famously sought to identify the shared artistic impulse or common '*Kunstwollen*' behind the Arch of Constantine and the writings of Augustine.<sup>17</sup>

Although in 1892 Schlosser called for exploring parallelisms between monumental and literary sources, unlike Riegl this did not become his explicit research program. Instead, for more than three decades, Schlosser step by step systematically studied the history of art literature from the early middle ages until around 1800. The most important academic milestones after his dissertation on Carolingian sources were, in 1896, the *Quellenbuch zur Kunstgeschichte des abendländischen Mittelalters: Ausgewählte Texte des vierten bis fünfzehnten Jahrhunderts* (Sourcebook on the art history of the middle ages in the West: selected texts from the fourth to the fifteenth century); the editing and posthumous publication in 1908 of the *Vasaristudien* (Vasari studies) by his late friend Wolfgang Kallab; and *Ghibertis Denkwürdigkeiten* (Ghiberti's commentaries) in 1910 and 1912. During the war of 1914–1918, Schlosser spent most of his time at his desk. In quick succession, he compiled and published the ten separate parts of his *Materialien zur Quellenkunde der Kunstgeschichte* (Materials for the study of art historical sources): I. Middle ages (1914); II. Early Renaissance (1915); III. First half of the cinquecento: Leonardo's legacy – history and periegesis (1916); IV. Art theory of the first half of the cinquecento (1917); V. Vasari (1918); VI. The art literature of Mannerism (1919), VII. The historiography of the Baroque and Classicism (1920), VIII. Italian local literature (1920), IX. The art theory of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (1920), X. Index (and bibliography) and contents of all parts (1920).<sup>18</sup>

Running to a total of 640 pages, *Die Kunstliteratur* of 1924 amalgamated these ten parts into one comprehensive tome. The text remained largely unchanged. The main changes were to the bibliographies and the layout. Having delivered this

<sup>15</sup> Schlosser, 'Bedeutung', 1: 'Parallelismus frühmittelalterlicher Sprach- und Kunstentwicklung'.

<sup>16</sup> Schlosser, 'Bedeutung', 1. See also Schlosser, 'Bedeutung', 3: 'the sources are of essentially the same character in both areas' ('die Quellen tragen auf beiden Gebieten im wesentlichen denselben Charakter').

<sup>17</sup> For Schlosser's appraisal of Riegl's book, see Julius von Schlosser, 'Über einige geschichtliche Voraussetzungen der mittelalterlichen Kunstsprache', in Hermann Egger, *Festschrift zum 60. Geburtstag am 7. Dezember 1933*, Graz: Leykam 1933, esp. 13. For the symbol as method in art history, see Raphael Rosenberg, 'Das Symbol – ein problematisches Paradigma der deutschsprachigen Kunstgeschichte', in *Architektur im Museum 1977–2012*. Winfried Nerdinger, ed. Uwe Kiessler, Munich: Edition Detail, 2012.

<sup>18</sup> The titles in German: I. *Mittelalter* (1914), II. *Frührenaissance* (1915), III. *Erste Hälfte des Cinquecento. Leonardos Vermächtnis – Historik und Periegesis* (1916), IV. *Die Kunsttheorie der ersten Hälfte des Cinquecento* (1917), V. *Vasari* (1918), VI. *Die Kunstliteratur des Manierismus* (1919), VII. *Die Geschichtsschreibung des Barocks und Klassizismus* (1920), VIII. *Die italienische Ortsliteratur* (1920), IX. *Die Kunstlehre des 17. und 18. Jahrhunderts* (1920), X. *Register (zugleich Gesamtbibliographie) und Inhaltsübersicht zu sämtlichen Heften* (1920).

detailed survey of the field, Schlosser stepped back from art literature and focused on other research topics. He returned to the subject only once in 1929, in the essay *Ueber die ältere Kunsthistoriographie der Italiener* (On the early art historiography of the Italians),<sup>19</sup> a thirty-page summary which, unlike the standard work of 1924, is quite readable; in a sense, it is the distillate of a life of scholarship.

### **The achievements and limitations of *Die Kunstliteratur***

Julius von Schlosser laid the foundations for research on art literature and occupies a pre-eminent position in the field. Two aspects of his achievement in this area deserve in my eyes particular attention. The first is the sheer breadth of his research, the vast quantity of material he incorporated. Over the decades, the Viennese scholar analysed around eighteen hundred texts, most of them books. They are listed on the thirty pages of the index (and bibliography) of *Die Kunstliteratur*.<sup>20</sup> This amounts to about half the titles recorded in Leopoldo Cicognara's library catalogue, printed in 1821, which Schlosser cited as his most important source.<sup>21</sup> However, the description and historical classification of each text are far more detailed than in Cicognara's catalogue. Readers interested in these authors and texts find in the *Kunstliteratur* information that was otherwise not easily accessible – dates of birth and death, data on editions, details of books published at roughly the same time – along with Schlosser's subjective comments of variable length. These qualities established *Die Kunstliteratur* as a handbook that was read for nearly a century, though rarely from cover to cover. In the age of the internet, along with all other printed encyclopaedias, *Die Kunstliteratur* lost much of its value as a reference work. A task that is increasingly being taken over by Wikipedia. No new edition of Schlosser's book was published since 2001.<sup>22</sup>

Schlosser's second major achievement, which from the vantage point of the present seems to be the more enduring one, is to have delineated 'art literature' as a field of study. Schlosser's publications clearly showed that historical texts other than archival sources were also essential for understanding art history. He was the first to locate and compile the texts that shaped the spoken and written art discourse of the Middle Ages and of early modern Europe in particular.<sup>23</sup> We tend to take it for

<sup>19</sup> Julius von Schlosser, *Ueber die ältere Kunsthistoriographie der Italiener*, *Mitteilungen des österreichischen Instituts für Geschichtsforschung* 43, 1929, 46-76.

<sup>20</sup> Schlosser, *Die Kunstliteratur*, 611–640.

<sup>21</sup> Schlosser, *Die Kunstliteratur*, 4: 'But the principal work in this field is by a man who is renowned in our discipline, namely Count Leopoldo Cicognara [...]. It is the catalogue of his private library' ('Das Hauptwerk auf diesem Gebiete ruht aber von einem in unserer Wissenschaft namhaften Manne, dem Grafen Leopoldo Cicognara, [...]. Es ist der Katalog seiner Privatbibliothek'). It is noteworthy that Schlosser owned himself most of the Italian sources in his library (Julius von Schlosser, 'Ein Lebenskommentar', in *Die Kunstwissenschaft in Selbstdarstellungen*, ed. Johannes Jahn, Leipzig: Meiner, 1924, 94–134, esp. 105).

<sup>22</sup> See note 1 above. However, Karl Johns is preparing an English translation.

<sup>23</sup> For Schlosser's definition of a *Fachgebiet* (subject area), see De Mambro Santos, 'Words', 9–14. For the concept of art discourse see, e.g., Oskar Bätschmann, *Bild-Diskurs die Schwierigkeit des parler peinture*, Bern: Benteli, 1977. Michael Thimann, 'Bilddiskurse von Dürer bis Winckelmann. Eine Revision anlässlich der Edition von Harsdörffers Kunstverständigem

granted now, but the value of this achievement becomes clear when researching the history of East Asian art. China, Japan and Korea had their own specific forms of art writing, and in some cases these predate their European counterparts, but it is still difficult to learn who wrote what and when, because no-one has ever written a survey quite like Schlosser's *Kunstliteratur* for those sources.

According to a now famous adage of Heinrich Wölfflin's, 'Not everything is possible at all times.'<sup>24</sup> Wölfflin was concerned with the stylistic development of art; he believed that artists – *nolens volens* – are subject to the style of the age in which they live. Schlosser might have added that not everything can be written about art at all times; that writing about art, like art itself, is also subject to changes that can be identified and defined; and, moreover, that academic art historiography continues the discourse of earlier art literature and is likewise subject to change. Today, this insight is fundamental to all art historical research. We know that art history started researching and reflecting upon its own history earlier than most humanities, and that it still does so more extensively.<sup>25</sup> Schlosser wrote about the older sources of the art discourse. Arguably he thereby also promoted the general historicization of art historiography. The beginnings of an explicit disciplinary history coincide with Schlosser's *Materialien zur Quellenkunde* and *Die Kunstliteratur*: Ernst Heidrich's posthumous *Beiträge zur Geschichte und Methode der Kunstgeschichte* (Contributions on the history and method of art history, 1917) and Wilhelm Waetzoldt's two-volume work, *Deutsche Kunsthistoriker* (German art historians, 1921 and 1924).

However there is a paradox here: Schlosser was unaware that he had opened up a new and distinct field of research. From the early 1890s, he systematically collected and published art literature in anthologies and bibliographies with commentaries, but he never provided any clear delineation of the nature, size or limits of the field he was exploring, no grounds for the inclusion or omission of any given text. He first published a definition of his subject – and, as far as I can see, it is the only one he gave – in the 'Vorerinnerung' (preliminary remarks) to the first part of the *Materialien zur Quellenkunde* in 1914. In 1924, this was reprinted verbatim at the beginning of *Die Kunstliteratur*. The definition is somehow stilted, as if Schlosser was still struggling to define his aims, even in 1924:

The term 'Quellenkunde' also requires some qualification. By this I mean the secondary, indirect written sources and thus predominantly, in the broader historical sense, those literary artefacts that deal with art in its theoretical consciousness, its historic, aesthetic or technical aspects, whereas the

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Discurs von der edlen Mahlerey', in Michael Thimann & Claus Zittel, eds, Georg Philipp Harsdörffers 'Kunstverständige Discourse', Heidelberg: Manutius, 2010, 11-38, esp. 23 criticizes the reduction of art discourses to sources defined – since Schlosser – as art literature.

<sup>24</sup> Heinrich Wölfflin, *Principles of Art History: The Problem of the Development of Style in Early Modern Art*, trans. Jonathan Blower, Santa Monica: Getty Research Institute, 2015, 93; Heinrich Wölfflin, *Kunstgeschichtliche Grundbegriffe. Das Problem der Stilentwicklung in der neueren Kunst*, München: F. Bruckmann, 1915, 11: 'Nicht alles ist zu allen Zeiten möglich.'

<sup>25</sup> Christopher S. Wood, *A History of Art History*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019, 318-319.

impersonal artefacts, so to speak, the inscriptions, documents and inventories, fall to other disciplines and can only form an appendix here.<sup>26</sup>

This definition from 1914 corresponds to what Schlosser had been doing since the early 1890s. The focus on literary rather than archival texts was already implicit in the article of 1892 and in the indirect comparison between Milanese the archivist and Overbeck the archaeologist. Literary texts dominate the collection of Carolingian sources that Schlosser published in 1892. In the *Quellenbuch zur Kunstgeschichte des abendländischen Mittelalters* (1896), where Schlosser was no longer bound by any desire for completeness, there is an even stronger inclination towards literary texts. Schlosser rarely reflected on the nature of his field of research, nor was he particularly explicit in naming it. For the titles of his publications, he used various terms: *Schriftquellen* (written sources), *Quellenbuch* (sourcebook), *Quellenkritik* (criticism of sources) and *Quellenkunde* (study of sources). The compound noun *Kunsthliteratur* (art literature), an apt designation for his object of study, was first used by Schlosser in the eponymous book of 1924, and even that was subtitled *Ein Handbuch zur Quellenkunde der neueren Kunstgeschichte* (A handbook for the study of sources of post-classical art history).<sup>27</sup>

It was only shortly before the publication of his magnum opus that Schlosser realised he might have used the material to write a history of art literature. He explained that this had occurred to him too late and that he could not rewrite the book now. When *Die Kunsthliteratur* was printed in 1924, the most striking addition to the ten individually published parts of the *Materialien zur Quellenkunde* was its dedication to the literary historian Karl Vossler. This dedication is three pages long and serves as a preface; it was signed and dated in Vienna at Christmas 1922.<sup>28</sup> Here, Schlosser writes that he had become ‘increasingly preoccupied’ with the ‘theory and history of art historiography’.<sup>29</sup> However, this ‘would have involved a fundamental reworking’ of the book, and ‘for that I lack if not the time then certainly the conviction; I am not convinced that I have thought all these problems through to a point where I can regard them as having been brought to a conclusion. I am still in

<sup>26</sup> Schlosser, *Die Kunsthliteratur*, 1: ‘Auch der Begriff der Quellenkunde selbst bedarf einer Einschränkung; gemeint sind hier die sekundären, mittelbaren, schriftlichen Quellen, vorwiegend also im Sinne der historischen Gesamtdisziplin die literarischen Zeugnisse, die sich in theoretischem Bewußtsein mit der Kunst auseinandersetzen, nach ihrer historischen, ästhetischen oder technischen Seite hin, während die sozusagen unpersönlichen Zeugnisse, die Inschriften, Urkunden und Inventare, anderen Disziplinen zufallen und hier nur einen Anhang bilden können.’

<sup>27</sup> The German word ‘Kunsthliteratur’ was relatively common in the nineteenth century. For instance, the *Münchener Jahrbücher für bildende Kunst*, an annual art journal that began publication in 1838, included a reviews section under the rubric ‘Kunsthliteratur’. Schlosser occasionally uses the word in his *Materialien zur Quellenkunde*, parts of which were incorporated into *Die Kunsthliteratur* unchanged. The dedication to Karl Vossler (Schlosser, *Die Kunsthliteratur*, viii) seems to be the only place where the author suggests that he expects more of this than of ‘Quellenkunde’. The modified title is mentioned by De Mambro Santos, ‘Words’, 10f., although I think he overestimates its significance.

<sup>28</sup> Schlosser, *Die Kunsthliteratur*, vii–ix.

<sup>29</sup> Schlosser, *Die Kunsthliteratur*, viii: ‘und mich immer stärker beschäftigt, zu einer *Theorie und Geschichte der Kunstgeschichtschreibung*’ (Schlosser’s emphasis).



the midst of a crisis.<sup>30</sup> I take it that these words were more than just *captatio benevolentiae* and that there really was a biographical, psychological dimension to the crisis that Schlosser so openly mentions. It is reasonable to assume that the historical crisis – the devastating effects of war and the Spanish flu – also affected him. Having previously passed up the opportunity to move from the museum to the university, Schlosser had just decided to accept the offer. Hans Aurenhammer assumes that he did so to protect Viennese art history from the influence of Josef Strzygowski.<sup>31</sup> Personal and more existential reasons may also have played into his decision. While Schlosser's later reflections on *Stilgeschichte* versus *Sprachgeschichte* (the history of style versus the history of language) can be understood as a contribution to a *theory* of art historiography, it is remarkable that Schlosser's oeuvre after 1924, rich though it is, contains no attempt to write a *history* of art literature.<sup>32</sup>

Schlosser's intellectual biography elucidates the abovementioned paradox. He was not aware that he had laid the foundations for the history of art literature because he never set out to write a history of art literature. As he explained in his article of 1892, his aim was to investigate written sources *alongside* monumental sources, in order to better understand the character of historical epochs. He privileged literary texts over documents and inventories, because he thought these more likely to reveal the spirit of the age. This is why he always referred to the texts as sources and always organised them chronologically, geographically and often also by artform. However, this meant obscuring connections between texts that were directly linked, even if they had been written at different times and in different places. The inflexible linearity of organising texts chronologically through the ages makes *Die Kunstliteratur* a cumulative repository of densely compacted data.

<sup>30</sup> Schlosser, *Die Kunstliteratur*, ix: 'Ich hätte ihn nach alledem von Grund auf umarbeiten müssen und sollen; aber dazu fehlt mir, noch mehr als die Zeit, die Überzeugung, daß ich alle diese Probleme so weit durchgedacht hätte, daß sie für mich zu einem gewissen Abschluß gelangt wären; ich stehe noch immer in einer Krise.'

<sup>31</sup> Aurenhammer, 'Schlosser', 106.

<sup>32</sup> Schlosser's brief autobiography was published in the same year as *Die Kunstliteratur*, although it was clearly finished some time earlier, i.e. before Christmas 1922 (Schlosser, 'Lebenskommentar'). Pages 105–106 contain a similar passage of self-criticism relating to the *Materialien zur Quellenkunde der Kunstgeschichte* (1914–1920). Unlike the dedication to Karl Vossler, however, it still shows a glimmer of hope that a better form might be found for the book: 'And they really are "materials" – i.e. building blocks, not so much for the "study of sources" as for a history of early art theory and early art historiography, a history whose features have recently become increasingly clear to me thanks to Croce's influence, though they are still a long way from that, and I doubt whether the edition of the book which I have been planning for so long (and which some wish to see) will ever be able to assume such form.' ('Sie sind auch wirklich "Materialien", Bausteine, nicht so sehr zu einer "Quellenkunde", als zu einer Geschichte der älteren Kunsttheorie und Kunsthistoriographie, wie sie mir zuletzt durch Croces Einfluß in immer deutlicheren Zügen entgegentrat; aber von einer solchen sind sie noch weit entfernt, und ich zweifle, ob sie in der längst von mir geplanten (auch von manchen Seiten gewünschten) Buchausgabe diese Gestalt werden gewinnen können.'). When looking back on his own scholarly activity in 1934 Schlosser no longer mentions *Die Kunstliteratur* by name (Julius von Schlosser, *Die Wiener Schule der Kunstgeschichte. Rückblick auf ein Säkulum deutscher Gelehrtenarbeit in Österreich*, Innsbruck: Wagner, 1934, 201–209). I suspect he had laid the subject aside by this point.

Despite its usefulness as a reference work, the book as a whole is unreadable. Exasperated undergraduates used to refer to it as 'the telephone book' when preparing for their exams, and one can hardly blame them.<sup>33</sup>

Schlosser founded a new field of art history – the history of art literature. Two birth defects have long lingered. Firstly, by becoming a reference work, *Die Kunstliteratur* established a canon and canons lead to bias. Authors not mentioned in the book were overlooked. Italy became the focus of art literature, whereas many non-Italian sources are still forgotten.<sup>34</sup> Secondly, in terms of methodology, Schlosser did not provide a model for further research to build on. From a contemporary perspective, we rather find Schlosser's contemporary Albert Dresdner (1866–1934) as the author delivering a model for the history of art literature.<sup>35</sup> In 1915, with his history of art criticism, Dresdner took a diametrically opposed approach to Schlosser. Dresdner limited himself to writing the history of one genre. He demonstrated how and when art criticism had come about, how it had changed over the centuries, how its conventions, limitations, phraseology and *topoi* had emerged and developed. His book provides a pertinent overview on art criticism and a methodological example that has remained topical.

### A history of art literature by genre

In the introduction to his unannotated anthology of medieval sources of 1896, Schlosser enumerates the genres of classical and medieval art literature, possibly for the very first time.<sup>36</sup> However, as far as I can see, he never returned to the issue of genres, whereas other authors, like Dresdner, adopted this approach to study the history of art literature. Nonetheless, even today, there is no systematic history of European art literature by genre.<sup>37</sup> The following is an attempt to sketch the outlines of such a history. I suggest that in the early modern period, art literature developed around eight genres. Hence a history divided in eight chapters would cover the same texts that Schlosser lists in his *Kunstliteratur*. However, the sources would be discussed in a completely different order, one that highlights the relationships

<sup>33</sup> De Mambro Santos, 'Words', 1.

<sup>34</sup> In regard to German sources see Thimann, *Bilddiskurse*, esp. 20. Christian Michel and Stefan Germer, eds, *La naissance de la théorie de l'art en France 1645-1720 = Revue d'esthétique* 31/32, 1997 delivered a first major redemption for French sources.

<sup>35</sup> Albert Dresdner, *Die Kunstkritik. Ihre Geschichte und Theorie*, Munich: Bruckmann, 1915.

<sup>36</sup> Schlosser, *Quellenbuch*, vii–xxi. The following in particular: the titulus or inscription, prosaic ekphrases, poetic descriptions of artworks, fictional descriptions of artworks, inventories, monographs on significant buildings, periegetic or topographical literature, biographies and artist novels. Schlosser however lists in this book the sources chronologically, without considering the categories to which they might be assigned.

<sup>37</sup> There have been in the past decades several histories and or anthologies of art literature. They focused on different aspects and times, but not on the history of literary genres: Michael Podro, *The critical historians of art*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982; Larry E. Shiner, *The Invention of Art: A Cultural History*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001; Ulrich Pfisterer, *Die Kunstliteratur Der Italienischen Renaissance: Eine Geschichte in Quellen*, Stuttgart: Reclam, 2002; *Quellen zur Theorie und Geschichte der Kunstgeschichte: Eine kommentierte Anthologie*, eds. Hubert Locher et al., 4 vol., Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2007-2010.

between the texts.<sup>38</sup> For the sake of brevity and in order to avoid an unwieldy number of footnotes, I have shortened the authors' names and the titles of their publications. Full bibliographical data can be found in Schlosser's *Kunstliteratur*. I also restricted references to modern research.

### 1. *Treatises on the arts*

The decisive factor in the emergence of art literature in the early modern era was the desire to elevate the status of the arts. To do so, it was necessary to show that the arts had their own theoretical foundations. With his treatises on sculpture (c. 1434), painting (c. 1435) and architecture (c. 1442–1452), Leon Battista Alberti stands at the beginning of three strands of discourse that extend well into the twentieth century. Alberti did not consider these three artforms as a unity and wrote comparable texts on other arts such as horse husbandry. Similarly, later treatises either covered just one of the three arts or were organised into three discrete sections, as in Vasari's introductions to his *Vite*. Vasari and others sometimes spoke of the (three) *arti del disegno*, but there was no unified theory of the 'fine arts' (or even simply of 'art' in the current, emphatic sense of the word) until the emergence of philosophical aesthetics in the eighteenth century.<sup>39</sup> Until then, treatises on the arts were composed independently, and it is worth noting how self-contained and mutually divergent the discourses on architecture, sculpture and painting were.

#### 1.1 *Architectural theory*

European architectural treatises from the fifteenth to the eighteenth century constitute a remarkably homogeneous group inasmuch as they all derive from Vitruvius's *De Architectura* (c. 30 CE). The architectural theory of the modern era and thus the history of European architecture itself would doubtless have looked very different if this treatise had not survived. A characteristic feature of this genre ever since Serlio's *Fourth Book* of 1537 is the prominence of illustrations. In Vignola's *Regola* (1562), the most successful architectural treatise of early modern time, the text actually recedes completely. Serlio was also highly influential in shifting the focus of architectural theory to the columnar orders. The range of topics begins to broaden again only with Laugier's *Essai sur l'architecture* (1753).

Readers wanting to understand architectural theory from Schlosser's book are obliged to look through the pages of *Die Kunstliteratur* with several fingers in the index. They are unlikely to notice the extent to which each architectural treatise builds upon, elaborates or contradicts its predecessors. These connections only

<sup>38</sup> Schlosser's bibliographical references to the sources cited are here given with abbreviated titles and without the authors' forenames.

<sup>39</sup> See Paul Oskar Kristeller, 'The Modern System of the Arts: A Study in the History of Aesthetics', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 12:4, October 1951, 496–527 and 13:1, January 1952, 17–46; James I. Porter, 'Is Art Modern? Kristeller's "Modern System of the Arts" Reconsidered', *British Journal of Aesthetics*, 49:1, January 2009, 1–24. Restoro d'Arezzo had already grouped the three arts together as 'arti de li disegnatori' at the end of the thirteenth century, (Gerd Blum, *Giorgio Vasari. Der Erfinder der Renaissance*, Munich: Beck, 2011, 47).

become clear in the context of a systematic history of architectural theory, something that Krufft has provided in an exemplary manner.<sup>40</sup>

### 1.2 *Treatises on sculpture*

No treatise on sculpture has come down to us from classical antiquity. The sculptor Polykleitos probably wrote such a book, titled *Canon*, in the fifth century BCE. It is thought that it was mainly about the proportions of the human body. This vague notion was enough to steer modern theories of sculpture towards questions of human proportion. They are central to Alberti's *De statua* (c. 1434), Dürer's *Bücher von menschlicher Proportion* (1528) and Audran's *Proportions du Corps humain mesurées sur les plus belles figures de l'Antiquité* (1683).

The second thematic focus of treatises on sculpture concerns production. This includes degrees of plasticity (medals, relief, freestanding sculpture), materials, their characteristics, and the procedures and tools specific to them (e.g. part of Vasari's introduction to the *Vite* and Cellini's *Due trattati* of 1568), but also the number of viewpoints, a question originally linked to the genesis and quality of sculptures (e.g. Varchi's second *Lezione* of 1549 which, following initial comparisons of the arts by Alberti and Leonardo, ignited the paragone controversy and introduced themes that would remain relevant until the publication of Adolf von Hildebrand's *Problem der Form in der bildenden Kunst* in 1893). In general, the number and distribution of treatises on sculpture remain quite small in comparison to architecture or painting. The relatively high proportion of Latin treatises suggests that they were not written for practitioners. The gap between theory and practice was greater in the case of sculpture than for architecture or painting.<sup>41</sup>

### 1.3 *Treatises on painting*

Treatises on painting tend to cover a much wider range of topics than those on architecture or sculpture. The first in this category is Alberti's *Della pittura / De pictura* (c. 1435). Alberti consciously dismissed Pliny's pronouncements on painting (*Naturalis historia*, Book XXXV), along with the medieval instruction books on the subject (e.g. Cennini, *Il libro dell'arte*, c. 1400). *De pictura* laid the cornerstone of a novel and theoretically sophisticated genre that would persist for centuries. Subsequent treatises expanded upon aspects of Alberti's text and added topics of their own.

The first subject to be elaborated after Alberti was single point perspective (Piero della Francesca, *De prospectiva pingendi*, Ms. 1480; Dürer, *Underweysung der Messung*, 1525). Around the middle of the sixteenth century, Alberti's treatment of the elements of painting (*circumscriptio, compositio, luminum receptio*) was taken up and developed in Venice, where it became a way of addressing regional differences without having to resort to value judgements: Pino (*Dialogo di pittura*, 1548) divides painting into *invenzione, disegno* and *colorito*, citing the latter as strengths of Florentine and Venetian artists. Dolce (*Dialogo della Pittura intitolato l'Aretino*, 1557)

<sup>40</sup> Hanno-Walter Krufft, *Geschichte der Architekturtheorie*, Munich: Beck, 1986, engl.: *A History of Architectural Theory: From Vitruvius to the Present*, London: Zwemmer, 1994.

<sup>41</sup> Treatises on the various branches of the applied arts, starting with goldsmithery, could sensibly be added here.

refined Pino's arguments. Around 1500 Leonardo also took up several themes from Alberti's *Della pittura*. His student Melzi bound Leonardo's texts into a coherent treatise on painting, which was first published in Paris in 1651.

The sixteenth century saw the introduction of a new theme: what we now call iconography. Theorists sought to provide definitions of representational conventions that writers had seldom negotiated in the past; how to depict gods, saints and allegorical figures so as to preclude misunderstandings was a particularly contentious political issue for the Church during the Counter-Reformation (Cartari, *Imagini delli dei de gl'antichi*, 1556; Valeriano, *Hieroglyphica*, 1556; Ripa, *Iconologia* 1593 and, with illustrations, 1603).

Lomazzo was the first author to print a thematically comprehensive treatise on painting (*Trattato dell'arte de la Pittura*, 1584). His seven chapters (on proportion, movement, colour, light and shadow, perspective, praxis and iconography) ran to exactly seven hundred pages and elaborated on every subject that had ever been treated by theories of painting in the past. Lomazzo borrowed much from earlier treatises, but he also added many of his own ideas, as in his remarkable chapter on colour, the first systematic treatment of the effects of individual tones and colour compositions. Later overviews of the subject include those by de Piles (*Cours de peinture par principes*, 1708), Richardson (*Essay on the Theory of Painting*, 1715) and Dandré-Bardon (*Traité de Peinture*, 1765). Similarly comprehensive treatises on painting are very rare after the middle of the eighteenth century. By this point, the discourse had differentiated so much that it could only be continued in specialist areas, with treatises on the individual genres of painting<sup>42</sup> and on other aspects of painting, such as its constituent elements – line, colour and composition.<sup>43</sup>

#### 1.4 Dictionaries of art

In 1676 Félibien published three treatises in one volume – on architecture, sculpture and painting – and appended an alphabetically organised glossary of terminology drawn from all of them (*Des principes de l'architecture, de la sculpture, de la peinture, et des autres arts qui en dépendent avec un dictionnaire des termes propres à chacun de ces arts*, 1676). The three hundred pages of the appended *dictionnaire* can be regarded as the very first general theory of the visual arts. Yet, it remains a dictionary, just like

<sup>42</sup> The first systematic description of the genres of painting can be found in André Félibien's introduction to the *Conférences de l'Académie [...] pendant l'année 1667* (first edn 1668), which he edited. The volumes comprising the *Geschichte der klassischen Bildgattungen in Quellentexten und Kommentaren* (Source texts on the history of the classic genres of painting, with commentaries), published by the department of art history at the Freie Universität Berlin, provide an overview of the emergence of theory on the individual genres of painting. They are not intended as histories of discourses, nor are they histories of the genres of text. Instead they present broad, strictly chronological collections of texts, each of which relates to a specific group of objects: history paintings, portraits, landscapes, genre paintings, and still-lives; see *Historienmalerei*, eds. Thomas Gaehtgens and Uwe Fleckner, Berlin: Reimer, 1996; *Porträt*, eds. Rudolf Preimesberger and Karin Hellwig, Berlin: Reimer, 1999; *Landschaftsmalerei*, ed. Werner Busch, Berlin: Reimer, 1997; *Genremalerei*, ed. Barbara Gaehtgens, Berlin: Reimer, 2002; and *Stilleben*, eds. Eberhard König and Christiane Schön, Berlin: Reimer, 1996.

<sup>43</sup> Raphael Rosenberg, *Turner – Hugo – Moreau: Entdeckung der Abstraktion*, Munich: Hirmer, 2007, 17–53.

Baldinucci's *Vocabolario toscano dell'arte del disegno* (1681). Sulzer's *Allgemeine Theorie der schönen Künste* (from 1771) is also an alphabetically organised specialist dictionary, but in multiple volumes. This tradition would be perpetuated across the centuries until modern art encyclopaedias (Turner, *The Dictionary of Art*, 1996).

## 2. Artist biographies

The oldest surviving history of art was written by Pliny the Elder. The thirty-fifth book of his encyclopaedic *Naturalis historia* is embedded in a context of remarks on the use of pigments and minerals. Half of this volume (§§ 53–149) consists of brief biographies of some '405 celebrated cases of paintings and artists' – a chronological list of famous artists, their inventions and their major works, with numerous anecdotes. The overarching theme is the development of painting through the application of increasingly complex techniques. Pliny's text may explain why painters were held in such high regard among Florentine writers of the fourteenth century (Dante, Boccaccio, Petrarch, Villani). Florence also takes credit for the first post-classical history of art, Ghiberti's *Commentarii* (from 1450), which adhered closely to Pliny's model. The first detailed biography of an artist, the seventy or so pages of Manetti's *Vita di Filippo Brunelleschi* (c. 1480), was also written in Florence, arguably as a riposte to Ghiberti. These were the prototypes from which Vasari developed his *Vite* (1550 and 1568, first and second editions), the largest and most influential piece of early modern art literature.

Vasari created model biographies for both deceased and living artists while also writing the very first history of art organised by epoch.<sup>44</sup> Vasari's *Vite* set the benchmark for art historiography until the end of the seventeenth century. Writers from various countries subsequently extended this history by adding further artists (e.g. van Mander, *Het Schilder-Boeck*, 1604; Félibien, *Entretiens sur les vies et sur les ouvrages des excellens peintres*, 1666–85; Bellori, *Le vite de' pittori scultori et architetti moderni*, 1672). It was not until the eighteenth century that Vasari was downgraded to the status of a historical source. At that time, three new forms of artist biography emerged.

Firstly, *critical historical biographies*, in which demonstrable historical facts replaced anecdotes, and biographies were separated from lists of works. These would ultimately give rise to the modern, critical catalogue raisonné.<sup>45</sup>

Secondly, *alphabetical dictionaries of artists* such as Orlandi's *Abeceario pittorico* (first published 1704), which contained some four thousand correspondingly brief entries in a single volume. Far more detailed were the entries in Heineken's *Dictionnaire* (1778–90), which listed all engravings made by and after

<sup>44</sup> Vasari's three-part epochal structure was based largely on medieval salvation history. Schlosser remarks on this point in *Die Kunstliteratur*, 282, although it has only recently been considered in detail, by Gerd Blum, 'Provvidenza e progresso. La teologia della storia nelle "Vite" vasariane; con alcune considerazioni su periodizzazione e paginatura nella *Torrentiniana*', in *Le Vite del Vasari*, eds. Katja Burzer, Charles Davis, Sabine Feser and Alessandro Nova, Venice: Marsilio, 2010. It is remarkable that Vasari's tripartite schema for Italian Renaissance art has persisted largely intact until today.

<sup>45</sup> Antoinette Roesler-Friedenthal, 'Defining the Oeuvre, Shaping the Catalogue Raisonné', in *The Challenge of the Object: CIHA Congress Proceedings*, vol. 2, eds. Ulrich Großmann and Petra Krutisch, Nuremberg: Verlag des Germanischen Nationalmuseums, 2013, 723–727.

every artist included. This monumental project ran to just fourteen volumes, from 'A' to 'Diz' (Diziani). The challenges associated with keeping this sort of project under control are evident, even today, in light of the *Allgemeines Künstlerlexikon*. It was begun in 1983 and is now in the hands of its third publisher. At well over a hundred volumes, it is due to be completed in the next few years.

Thirdly, *literary, novelistic artist biographies* offer added entertainment value. Cellini's autobiography is an early example. Although written in the sixteenth century, it was first published in 1728. Artist novels became particularly popular in the nineteenth century and were also influential for academic art historiography (e.g. Hermann Grimm).<sup>46</sup> Artist films have successfully propagated this tradition until the present.

### 3. *Histories of art by artwork*

Vasari tells art history through the lives of the artists. In contrast, histories of art organised by artwork first began to appear in the eighteenth century. This paradigm shift occurred in fields which, lacking names and biographies, had not lent themselves to description by Vasari and his followers. The earliest histories of artworks were architectural histories.<sup>47</sup> In 1721 Fischer von Erlach published his *Entwurf einer historischen Architectur*, an atlas of prints in landscape format. It begins with antiquity: Book 1 covers Greece, as well as Egypt and Persia. Book 2 treats the Roman Empire but then ends with Stonehenge. The lack of Eurocentrism in this first history of artistic monuments is remarkable: Book 3 presents the 'buildings of the Arabs and the Turks along with [the] modern manner of building from Persia, Siam, China and Japan'. The remaining two books, 4 and 5, essentially served as a forum for the author's own designs, leaving a large gap where medieval, renaissance and baroque architecture should have been. That is to say, Fischer never aimed to produce an objective architectural history, much less a comprehensive one. Rather, diligently depicting the highlights of antique and exotic architecture served to create a flattering foil for the presentation of his own designs.

The first theoretically-based and diligently researched history of artworks was Winckelmann's *Geschichte der Kunst des Alterthums* (1764).<sup>48</sup> Later generations of scholars extended it into the subsequent centuries: Lanzi (*Storia pittorica della Italia dal risorgimento delle belle arti fin presso al fine del XVIII secolo*, 1795/96: Italian painting from the Renaissance up to the eighteenth century, organised into regional schools); Seroux d'Agincourt (*Histoire de l'art par les monumens: depuis sa décadence au IVe siècle jusqu'à son renouvellement au XVIe*, 1811–23: the entire middle ages and again the Renaissance, richly illustrated for the first time); and Cicognara (*Storia della scultura dal suo risorgimento in Italia sino al secolo di Napoleone*, 1813–18: Italian sculpture from the Renaissance to Canova). These and other publications were taken up by Kugler in the first universal history of art (*Handbuch der Kunstgeschichte*, 1842).

<sup>46</sup> Karin Hellwig, *Von der Vita zur Künstlerbiographie*, Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 2005.

<sup>47</sup> See also Félibien's incomplete and unpublished history of the royal palaces in France; Stefan Germer, *Kunst-Macht-Diskurs: Die intellektuelle Karriere des André Félibien im Frankreich von Louis XIV*, Munich: Fink, 1997, 298–321.

<sup>48</sup> See, in particular, Gabriele Bickendorf, *Die Historisierung der italienischen Kunstbetrachtung im 17. und 18. Jahrhundert*, Berlin: Mann, 1998.

#### 4. Monographs on specific works / descriptions of artworks

The oldest writings dedicated to *single* works of visual art were speeches and laudatory texts written to celebrate the construction or restoration of public buildings. Instances from ancient Greece are cited but lost; one of the oldest known examples is the speech of Paulus Silentiarius at the reconsecration of Hagia Sophia (563 CE). This kind of text is rare even in the early modern era, and existing examples are so disparate that it would be wrong to regard such writing as a genre in its own right prior to 1800.

The first printed monograph about a European artwork is Bocchi's *Eccellenza della statua del San Giorgio di Donatello* (1584). Remarkably, it was not published for the dedication, anniversary or restoration of Donatello's *Saint George* (1417). The hundred pages of text are vague; in fact, so vague that they could have been written about a different sculpture, for Bocchi had not yet acquired the skill of describing artworks. For a contemporary reader, this text is inconclusive: although a monograph about an artwork is more than a description of the piece, description is essential not only to explain the work, but also to relate any kind of discourses to it.

Descriptions of works of art were extremely rare until the middle of the sixteenth century, and it is only after 1600 that we find longer texts of this genre. I am aware of only two long descriptions written in the first half of the seventeenth century; both were stand-alone monographs, although neither was printed until long after it was written (Agucchi, *Descrittione della Venere dormiente di Annibale Carrazzi*, MS. 1602, published by Malvasia in 1678, and Carlo, *Descrittione della Cupola di S. Andrea della Valle*, MS. 1627). Carlo was the first author to divide his description into sections with separate headings. This technique was then used and perfected by Félibien after 1660 (e.g. *Les Reines de Perse*, 1663). His analytical descriptions provided the basis for the lectures at the French Academy in 1667.<sup>49</sup> Even in the second half of the seventeenth century, the number of descriptions remained limited, whereas the genre became popular after 1700.

There were two very different types of art descriptions in the eighteenth century.<sup>50</sup> Some authors followed Félibien's analytical approach and developed it further, for example by introducing geometrical terms and natural metaphors (perhaps for the first time in Winckelmann).<sup>51</sup> This type of text became increasingly prevalent after 1800, due to the development of illustrated art books (where descriptions no longer served as substitutes for the visual impact of an artwork and instead became supplementary) and due to the establishment of art history as an academic discipline. The second and more popular direction taken by descriptive texts in the eighteenth century was a new, enthusiastic form of expressive

<sup>49</sup> Raphael Rosenberg, 'Von der Ekphrasis zur wissenschaftlichen Bildbeschreibung. Vasari, Agucchi, Félibien, Burckhardt', *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte*, 58:3, January 1995, 297–318; Raphael Rosenberg, 'André Félibien et la description de tableaux. Naissance d'un genre et professionnalisation d'un discours', in *La naissance de la théorie de l'art en France 1645–1720 = Revue d'esthétique*, 31/32, eds. Christian Michel and Stefan Germer, 1997, 148–159.

<sup>50</sup> Oliver Kase, *Mit Worten sehen lernen. Bildbeschreibung im 18. Jahrhundert*, Petersberg: Imhof, 2010.

<sup>51</sup> Raphael Rosenberg, "'Une ligne horizontale interrompue par une ligne diagonale". De la géométrie dans la description d'œuvres d'art', in *La description de l'œuvre d'art. Du modèle classique aux variations contemporaines*, ed. Olivier Bonfait, Paris: Somogy, 2004, 55–74.



description as Goethe still practised in his description of Leonardo's *Last Supper* (1818).

##### 5. Poetry about artworks / literary art quotations

Descriptions attempt to capture works of art and the impressions they leave on the author. The text in this case is a means to an end. Moreover, works of art have often been subjects of literature – poems and prose texts. In this case, the visual artwork is a means to an end: the creation of a literary work. This type of texts belongs to different genres of literature. In the broader sense of the word, they can also be counted as art literature and are often used as sources by art historians. In German, the term '*Bildgedicht*' has become the standard designation for a poem about an individual work of art.<sup>52</sup> For prose, literary studies use the term 'art quotations'.<sup>53</sup>

##### 6. Topographical works

Pausanius's *Periegesis Hellados* (160–180 CE) is a systematic description of Greece that guides the reader along certain topographical routes. The author describes roads and landscapes, but significant portions of the book are also dedicated to monuments and rituals. Medieval guides for pilgrims often contained topographical lists of churches and relics (*Mirabilia Urbis Romae*). The first guide to artistic monuments was published in 1591 by Bocchi about Florence (*Le bellezze della citta di Fiorenza*). Two decades after writing about Donatello's *Saint George* he had learnt to describe artworks, hence the *bellezze* were a better model for later similar publications than his monograph on the *Saint George*. However, it took a long time for art guides to become popular. The second edition of Bocchi's *bellezze* did not appear until 1677, and comparable guides to the artistic monuments of other cities were only published much later. The number of travel guides focused on art only began to grow substantially with the rise of tourism for the middle classes (*Baedeker* since 1839).

Printed and unprinted travelogues are another form of topographical literature. They should be considered as art literature insofar as they often feature artistic monuments prominently. In the sixteenth century, and especially in the seventeenth and eighteenth century, many of them were written by young aristocrats on their grand tours.<sup>54</sup>

##### 7. Collection catalogues and exhibition catalogues

East Asian art collections were catalogued with woodcut reproductions at least since the twelfth century.<sup>55</sup> The oldest European catalogue is perhaps that of the armoury of Archduke Ferdinand II at Schloss Ambras (Notzing, *Armamentarium Heroicum*,

<sup>52</sup> See the standard work by Gisbert Kranz, *Das Bildgedicht. Theorie, Lexikon, Bibliographie*, 3 vols., Cologne and Vienna: Böhlau, 1981–87.

<sup>53</sup> See Konstanze Fliedl, Marina Rauchenbacher and Joanna Wolf, eds, *Handbuch der Kunstzitate Malerei, Skulptur, Fotografie in der deutschsprachigen Literatur der Moderne*, 2 vols., Berlin and Boston: de Gruyter, 2011 and the database at <http://www.univie.ac.at/bildzitat/start.html>.

<sup>54</sup> Ludwig Schudt, *Italienreisen im 17. und 18. Jahrhundert*, Vienna: Schroll, 1959.

<sup>55</sup> Yen-wen Cheng, *Tradition and Transformation: Cataloguing Chinese Art in the Middle and Late Imperial Eras*, Philadelphia (PhD), 2010.

1601–03). This catalogue focuses less on the objects than on the personages whose suits of armour were held in the collection. The *Galleria Giustiniana del Marchese Vincenzo Giustiniani* (1631) comes closer to our understanding of the catalogue of an art collection. It is a collection of folio engravings that represent just one part of the Roman collection that belonged to the marquis: his classical statuary. This two-volume work contains almost no text.

Over the course of the seventeenth century, catalogues of art collections began to focus on paintings. This shows the increasing importance of painting in the context of courtly representation. Teniers's catalogue of the collection of Archduke Leopold Wilhelm (*Theatrum Pictorium*, 1660) consists of full-page engravings and a very short introduction, much like Giustiniani's. In contrast, Félibien's *Tableaux du cabinet du roy* of 1677 is perhaps the first catalogue to feature a commentary, although it was left unfinished at just eighteen pages and forty engravings.<sup>56</sup>

These sumptuous oversize publications were printed in very short runs and were probably only intended as prestigious gifts.<sup>57</sup> This tally with the fact that access to art collections remained an exclusive privilege in the seventeenth century. It is only over the course of the eighteenth century that princely collections were opened up to broader audiences and the first public museums were created. This gave rise to the demand for marketable collection catalogues, which took one of two forms. The first was the grand gallery catalogue with illustrations and, occasionally, detailed descriptions, for use in libraries, e.g. Pigages's *Galerie Electorale de Dusseldorff ou catalogue raisonné et figuré de ses tableaux* (1778).<sup>58</sup> The second type was a smaller, more portable book without illustrations and generally also without descriptions, intended for use while visiting the collection, e.g. Mechel's *Verzeichnis der Gemälde der Kaiserlich Königlichen Bilder Gallerie in Wien* (1783).<sup>59</sup>

The mounting of regular art exhibitions began at the Parisian Academy in 1665. From 1673 on, these *salons* were accompanied by catalogues or *livrets* that listed all works exhibited.<sup>60</sup> Monographic exhibitions and their accompanying catalogues only became widespread in the second half of the nineteenth century.<sup>61</sup>

<sup>56</sup> Germer, *Kunst-Macht-Diskurs*, 321–334.

<sup>57</sup> For catalogues of princely collections, see Astrid Bähr, *Repräsentieren, bewahren, belehren: Galeriewerke (1660–1800). Von der Darstellung herrschaftlicher Gemäldeansammlungen zum populären Bildband*, Hildesheim: Olms, 2009; Agnes Husslein-Arco and Tobias G. Natter, eds, *Fürstenglanz. Die Macht der Pracht*, Vienna: Belvedere, 2016. There is currently no overview of the catalogues of the non-princely *Kunstammern*, many of which were probably never printed. A noteworthy example is the profusely annotated but sparingly illustrated *Museum Wormianum* (1665).

<sup>58</sup> Heidrun Rosenberg, ' "... mindeste Connexion nicht habend ...". Zu den Galeriepublikationsprojekten von Wilhelm Lambert Krahe und Nicolas de Pigage', in *Schloß Benrath und sein Baumeister Nicolas de Pigage 1723–1796*, ed. Stadtmuseum Düsseldorf, Cologne: Wienand, 1996, 119–135.

<sup>59</sup> Gudrun Swoboda, *Die kaiserliche Gemäldegalerie in Wien und die Anfänge des öffentlichen Kunstmuseums*, 2 vols., Vienna: Böhlau, 2013.

<sup>60</sup> For a history of early art exhibitions with some discussion of the *livret*, see Georg Friedrich Koch, *Die Kunstausstellung. Ihre Geschichte von den Anfängen bis zum Ausgang des 18. Jahrhunderts*, Berlin: de Gruyter, 1967.

<sup>61</sup> Maia Wellington Gahtan and Donatella Pegazzano, eds, *Monographic Exhibitions and the History of Art*, New York and London: Routledge, 2018.

### 8. Art criticism

Art criticism is the discussion of contemporary art. It passes value judgements and makes no claim to objectivity. Dresdner saw the beginning of art criticism in the sixteenth-century as part of a social change in the art system where lay people were becoming increasingly important as recipients of art.<sup>62</sup> The emergence of art criticism as an independent genre of art literature occurred in the eighteenth century and depended on three things: the mounting of regular art exhibitions, an interested lay public and, lastly, media in which art criticism could be published and read. This constellation of conditions first occurred in Paris. The first salon reviews were printed in the *Mercure de France* in the 1720s. They contained much praise and no censure; they were bound by impartiality, strove for comprehensiveness and sought to confine themselves to the facts.<sup>63</sup>

Potential alternatives to these rather stale texts were indicated by Saint-Yenne in his *Réflexions sur quelques causes de l'état présent de la peinture en France. Avec un examen des principaux ouvrages exposés au Louvre le mois d'août 1746*. His book inspired art criticism and review articles that featured in periodicals from 1751 onwards. The finest eighteenth-century articles came from the pen of Diderot, who wrote salon criticism for Grimm's hand-written *Correspondance littéraire* from 1759 to 1781. These letters reached many of the princely courts of Europe, less so the Parisian public. The quality of Diderot's writing was outstanding, his range of rhetorical strategies unique in his time. His reviews elevated salon criticism to the status of a noble literary calling, to which numerous French writers then rose over the course of the following century. Among them were Stendhal (1824, 1827), Heine (1831), Baudelaire (1845, 1846, 1855, 1859), Gautier (1847), the brothers Goncourt (1852, 1855) and Zola (1866).<sup>64</sup>

## Conclusion

In the century that has elapsed since Dresdner's history of art criticism was first published in 1915, several chapters of a history of art literature by genre have already been written. Further chapters may follow. What has been lacking until now is a systematic overview of the genres of art literature. I have attempted to sketch such an overview here. For all its sketchiness, I hope the advantages of this system have become clear. An author's perspective is rendered more comprehensible by providing the context of the genre in which he or she was writing, the models they followed consciously or unconsciously, and the innovations they introduced. It allows the reader to follow the changes and continuities in the themes that have

<sup>62</sup> Dresdner, *Kunstkritik*, 8.

<sup>63</sup> Cf. Thomas E. Crow, *Painters and Public Life in Eighteenth-century Paris*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985

<sup>64</sup> Neil McWilliam, Vera Schuster and Richard Wrigley, eds, *A Bibliography of Salon Criticism in Paris from the Ancien Regime to the Restoration, 1699–1827*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991; Neil McWilliam, ed., *A Bibliography of Salon Criticism in Paris from the July Monarchy to the Second Republic, 1831–1851*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991; Christopher Parsons and Martha Ward, *A Bibliography of Salon Criticism in Second Empire Paris*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986.

been written about, which in turn facilitates a history of the genres, concepts and modes of expression that authors have used to reflect on art through the ages. This history shows that talking and writing about art is a learning process that has been going on for centuries, a process that is connected to the development of specific genres of text and informs modern art discourses and the publication formats that we use every day.

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