

‘A higher architectural unity’: Max Dvořák on new buildings in historical settings

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In one of the first reactions to the online conference *The Influence of the Vienna School of Art History II: The 100th Anniversary of Max Dvořák's Death*, which took place in Prague in mid-April 2021 on the initiative of the Institute of Art History, Czech Academy of Sciences,¹ the art historian Milena Bartlová took issue with what she saw as the lack of current relevance of some of the issues discussed there. ‘I do not know exactly what I should think about a field in which current debates take the form of disputes over who can best interpret a few short texts written and published in Vienna around the year 1900’, she wrote in the journal *Art & Antiques*. As she was evidently irritated in particular by the presentations on Dvořák’s involvement in heritage conservation, one of the targets of her criticism was probably my contribution on the stance adopted by this Viennese scholar with regard to new buildings in historical settings. Today, according to Bartlová, heritage conservation needs to deal with far more complex problems than this. ‘And it is not surprising that dissecting brief texts that are more than a hundred years old is not quite enough’, our Prague colleague concluded her criticism of the Dvořák conference.²

The difficulty lies in the fact that the question of the relationship between a new building and its old setting, which Dvořák and his colleagues from the Vienna School of Art History were among the first university scholars to consider, continues to irritate us today just as much as it did our predecessors in the early 20th century. Disputes such as the one we have seen in Prague recently over the preservation of the Brutalist *Transgas* building,³ or the one we are currently engaged in about plans for new buildings to be attached to the Baroque *Invalidovna* building designed by Kilian Ignaz Dientzenhofer,⁴ are so fierce that they are beginning to

¹ See Tereza Hrdličková and Tomáš Murár, ‘Conference Report on the Vienna School of Art History II: The 100th Anniversary of Max Dvořák’, *Journal of Art Historiography*, <https://arthistoriography.wordpress.com/2021/06/25/tereza-hrdlickova-and-tomas-murar-report-on-second-vienna-school-conference-on-max-dvorak/>. Accessed 14 October 2021.

² Milena Bartlová, ‘Úplně nové baroko’, *Art & Antiques*, 6, 2021, 2.

³ The *Transgas* building in the Vinohrady district of Prague, a work by the architects Aulický, Eisenreich, Loos, and Malátek dating from 1971–1976, was demolished in 2019 with the agreement of the National heritage authorities, who argued that the free, bulky composition of the building did not respect the urbanistic structure of the closed blocks around it. See Rostislav Švácha, ‘Debata o památkové péči v 60. letech 20. století. Ivo Loos, Jindřich Malátek a Transgas’, *Zprávy památkové péče*, 77, 2017, 361–372.

⁴ The *Invalidovna* building in the Karlín district of Prague, a work by Kilian Ignaz Dientzenhofer dating from 1731–1737, will become the home of the National Heritage Institute and the Prague Philharmonic Choir. The architect Petr Hájek designed two modern buildings for the Choir adjoining the southern side of the building. See Jiří Varhaník,

resemble cultural wars. It therefore does not seem to me so irrelevant for today to investigate what attitude Dvořák adopted towards problems of this type a hundred years ago. If for no other reason, I consider it important because, together with other members of the Vienna School (in particular Alois Riegl and Hans Tietze), Dvořák founded a certain tradition of protection of historical heritage sites which for a long time formed the basis for modern heritage conservation in Central Europe, and which is still referred to today. With today's disputes, it is therefore generally useful to be familiar with its early forms and to learn from them, one reason being that these early forms may conceal the source of today's problems.

The debate about new buildings in old towns emerged in the early 20th century as something new. It was a reaction to events and processes unknown in earlier times. The first such new phenomenon was the expansion of what was covered by heritage conservation. This was no longer limited just to the protection of solitary monuments, such as old churches, town halls, or city gates, and started to regard old towns in their entirety as monuments, or at least their characteristic townscapes.⁵ [fig. 1]



Figure 1 Pelhřimov, historical centre of the town with adaptations to the Fára house by the architect Pavel Janák, 1913–1914. Photo Martina Mertová, 2009

This change of viewpoint can be observed in Dvořák's letter to his former teacher in Prague, Jaroslav Goll, written in 1903, three years before Dvořák assumed the office

'Disharmonické řešení: Sporná dostavba Invalidovny', A2, 1, 2021, 30; Rostislav Švácha, 'Kontext versus kontrast: Polemika o přestavbě Invalidovny', A2, 3, 2021, 30.

⁵ See Sandro Scarrocchia, 'II. Baustellen der Erhaltung und Restaurierung: Wien, Split, Krakau, Prag, Trient und Aquilea', in: Max Dvořák, *Schriften zur Denkmalpflege*, Vienna, Cologne, Weimar: 2012, 43–122.

of Curator General of Public Monuments in the Austrian part of the Habsburg monarchy, after the death of Riegl: 'It seems to me that the question of preserving the character of old towns consists not so much in the preservation of individual buildings as in the preservation of certain prospects and vedute. For practical reasons, it is often not possible to maintain a solitary object, but it is easy to preserve the major outlines and overall character of a town. Where this is taken into account, harmony between old and new is easily found, as for example in Brussels.'⁶ The concept of protecting urban areas as a whole, whether applied to the historical centres of metropolises or to small towns in the countryside, was something that Dvořák advocated in *the Central Commission for Monument Protection* in Vienna, in the journals published by the Commission, and in the book *Katechismus der Denkmalpflege*.

The second event which shaped Dvořák's views on new buildings in historical settings was the rise of Modernist architecture. The adherents of this new architectural movement used a new language which liberated itself from the language of old buildings, and so there was a danger that the more Modernist buildings came to be built in old towns, the more the latter would lose their 'stamp' or 'character', which was the value closest to the hearts of those trying to protect entire historical areas at that time. Glaring examples of clashes between Modernist interventions and valuable historical settings did indeed take place, especially in situations when the new building was connected with an overly ambitious business project and did not respect the scale of the older environment. Thus for example the frontage of old houses on the Large Square in Hradec Králové was disrupted by the large Modernist buildings of a department store and a bank; both the Central Commission in Vienna and the *Club for Old Prague* protested against their construction.⁷ [fig. 2] At the same time there was a wave of opposition to the unadorned façades of the new Goldman & Salatsch department store in the historical centre of Vienna,⁸ but on this occasion it was a leading representative of heritage conservation, the secretary of the Central Commission Hans Tietze, who started to defend this work by Adolf Loos in the *Kunstgeschichtliche Jahrbuch der k. k. Zentral-Kommission* in 1910.⁹

⁶ Letter from Max Dvořák to Jaroslav Goll dated 14 January 1903, in: Max Dvořák, *Listy o životě a umění: Dopisy Jaroslavu Gollovi, Josefu Pekařovi a Jaroslavu Šustovi*, Prague: 1943, 110: 'Zdá se mi, že otázka zachování rázu starých měst spočívá ne tak v zachování jednotlivých objektů jako v zachování určitých perspektiv a vedut. Jednotlivý objekt nedá se často z praktických příčin udržeti, ale snadno lze zachovati velké linie a celkový charakter města. Kde se k tomu přihlíží, nalezne se snadno harmonie mezi starým a novým, jako například v Bruselu.'

⁷ 'Königgratz, Hauptplatz', *Mitteilungen der K. K. Zentralkommission für Erforschung und Erhaltung der kunst- und historischen Denkmale* 10 (1911), p. 176. – Ješek Hofman, 'Z Hradce Králové: Krásnému rázu Velkého náměstí hrozí nové nebezpečí čtyřpatrovými domy!' *Za starou Prahu: Věstník Klubu Za starou Prahu* 1 (1910), pp. 57–58.

⁸ See Christopher Long, *The Looshaus*, New Haven, London: 2011.

⁹ Hans Tietze, 'Der Kampf um Alt-Wien: III. Wiener Neubauten', *Kunstgeschichtliches Jahrbuch der K. K. Zentral-Kommission für Erforschung und Erhaltung der Kunst- und Historischen Denkmale* 4, 1910, 32–62; See also Hans H. Aurenhammer, 'Max Dvořák und die moderne



Figure 2 Hradec Králové, Large Square with the department store designed by Vladimír Fultner and the bank by Osvald Polívka, 1910–1913. Photo Rostislav Švácha, 2021

The argument that the products of Modernist architecture were not suitable for old towns because they were 'flagrantly out of keeping with their surroundings',¹⁰ was used against the new movement by architects, critics, and heritage protection officials from the older generation with links to Historicism. For Historicist architects, harmony between new buildings and their environment was a question of the choice of the appropriate language – Neo-Gothic, Neo-Renaissance, or Neo-Baroque – whereas for the Modernists this language was already decided on in advance – it had to be the Modernist style. Dvořák's work in the Central Commission was characterised by an uncompromising struggle against Historicism. In this, he followed the course set out by Alois Riegl in his book *Das moderne Denkmalkultus* (1903). Riegl, however, did not go so far as to regard old towns in their entirety as heritage sites,¹¹ and so he did not express an opinion on the question of new buildings in their settings either. His article on the historical centre of Split, also written in 1903, which Sandro Scarrocchia has drawn attention to, merely hints at an extension of Riegl's interest to old towns as a whole.¹² Dvořák thus found himself faced with a new problem, the solution to which was delimited

Architektur. Bemerkungen zum Vortrag 'Die letzte Renaissance' (1912)', *Wiener Jahrbuch für Kunstgeschichte* 50, 1997, 23–40, here 39–40.

¹⁰ See František Xaver Harlas, 'Moderna v pražských ulicích', *Architektonický obzor* 3, 1904, 33–37.

¹¹ Ivo Hlobil, 'Alois Riegl und die Theorie der modernen Denkmalpflege', in: Alois Riegl, *Moderní památková péče*, Prague: 2003, 139–167, here 144. See also Ivo Hlobil, 'The Reception and First Criticism of Alois Riegl in the Czech Protection of Historical Monuments', in: Richard Woodfield (ed), *Framing Formalism: Riegl's Work*, London: Routledge 2001, 183–194.

¹² Scarrocchia, 'II. Baustellen der Erhaltung und Restaurierung', 64–65.

on the one hand by his opposition to Historicism, and on the other hand by doubts as to whether distinctive manifestations of Modernist architecture did not harm the character of old towns.

Borromini, the Karlsplatz and the *Katechismus*

Unlike Hans Tietze, who wrote an extended reflection on the question of new buildings in historical settings in 1910, Dvořák expressed his views on the subject only briefly in short texts. He examined the issue of the development of the Karlsplatz in Vienna in three articles written during the years 1907–1910. He later formulated several instructions on how to build in an old city in his *Katechismus der Denkmalpflege* (1916). The basic principles of his reflections on the relationship between old and new are contained in his article 'Francesco Borromini als Restaurator', published in the *Kunstgeschichtliche Jahrbuch* in 1907 (although here Dvořák did not explicitly mention new buildings in historical towns). So we are indeed only dealing with 'a few short texts' – as Milena Bartlová put it – which are, however, important because of the major role played by Dvořák in the beginnings of modern heritage conservation and his ability to react quickly to the new situation. So far as I know, they have only been examined in detail by Sandro Scarrocchia and, in the case of the Karlsplatz, by Hans Aurenhammer.¹³ I will draw on their interpretations here, but will digress from them in placing more emphasis on Dvořák's concept of the whole, the 'higher architectural unity'. I will also add some remarks on Dvořák's contacts with the *Club for Old Prague*, which may perhaps help to throw further light on the position he adopted in the debates of his time.

The article 'Francesco Borromini als Restaurator' linked Dvořák closely with the Modernist movement. Underlying its theme of the history of 17th-century architecture were hidden bolder thoughts than those expressed by the Viennese scholar in his texts on the Karlsplatz or in the *Katechismus*. In the article, Dvořák regarded the Roman pioneer of radical Baroque as a forerunner of Modernism, or even as a revolutionary, who had parted ways with previous conventions just as resolutely as had more recently been done by new artistic trends. It is of course not surprising that it also contains an attack on Historicism or, as Dvořák put it, against 'antiquarians in the fields of science and the arts'.

The subject of the article was Borromini's reconstruction of the ancient Christian basilica of San Giovanni in Laterano, which the architect in reality did not approach quite so reverently as Dvořák suggested in 1907.¹⁴ Nevertheless, the way the old tombstones in the side chapels were altered was genuinely the result of Borromini's intentions. As though Dvořák was describing a Modernist collage, he depicted with great enthusiasm how Borromini decided to preserve the old Gothic tombstones and provide them with a Baroque framework, without either the architect or the interpreter of his work in 1907 having any problem with the

¹³ Scarrocchia, 'II. Baustellen der Erhaltung und Restaurierung', 64–65; Aurenhammer, 'Max Dvořák und die moderne Architektur', 29–31.

¹⁴ On this see Joseph Connors and Augusto Roca de Amicis, 'A new plan by Borromini for the Lateran basilica', *The Burlington Magazine* 146, 2004, 526–533.

disparity between the Gothic and Baroque languages. [fig. 3] And it would be possible to observe a similar relationship between the historical setting and the insertion of Modernist architecture into it in old towns in the early 20th century.

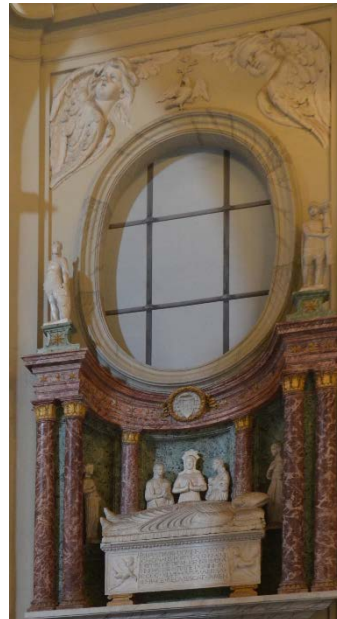


Figure 3 Francesco Borromini, adaptation of the tomb of Cardinal António Martins de Chaves in the basilica San Giovanni in Laterano in Rome, ca. 1646–1650. Photo Vincenzo Frustaci, 2021

It is worth noting that in his article on Borromini Dvořák regarded the relationship between the old Gothic monument and its newer Baroque addition differently than Riegl had done in *Das moderne Denkmalkultus*. For Dvořák's predecessor, the key requirement for an artistic architectural work had been its integral nature (*Geschlossenheit*).¹⁵ The integral appearance of a medieval monument could be disturbed by it falling into disrepair, but also by later, stylistically disparate additions, which Historicists, in the interests of stylistic unity, removed and replaced by their own additions 'in the original style' of the restored building.¹⁶ Riegl turned his back on this Historicist practice. He accepted the loss of a monument's integrity as a fact with which modern heritage conservation must come to terms, whether it liked it or not.

In his article 'Francesco Borromini als Restaurator', Dvořák presented a different solution to the problem of integrity. He put forward the idea that a work made up of stylistically disparate elements can also give the impression of integrity if the artist creates it with the vision of 'higher architectural unity' (*höhere architektonische Einheit*). Although Borromini incorporated old Gothic tombs into his new work, in Dvořák's opinion he was successful in achieving this unity. The effect of the new work as a whole was further augmented by its environment:

¹⁵ Alois Riegl, *Das moderne Denkmalkultus, sein Wesen und seine Entstehung*, Vienna, Leipzig: 1903, 23–24, 51–52.

¹⁶ See Ivo Hlobil and Rostislav Švácha, 'The Decline of Stylistic Unity: Alois Riegl and Conservation', *Society of Architectural Historians of Great Britain, Newsletter* 59, 1996, 1–3.

However, just as his style achieved popularity throughout the world, so, too, an impact was made by the new role he gave to old monuments through a new artistic sentiment. Even today, the most important source of artistic participation in all architectural works of art is not the individual form, but the overall appearance of a monument in relation to its surroundings.¹⁷

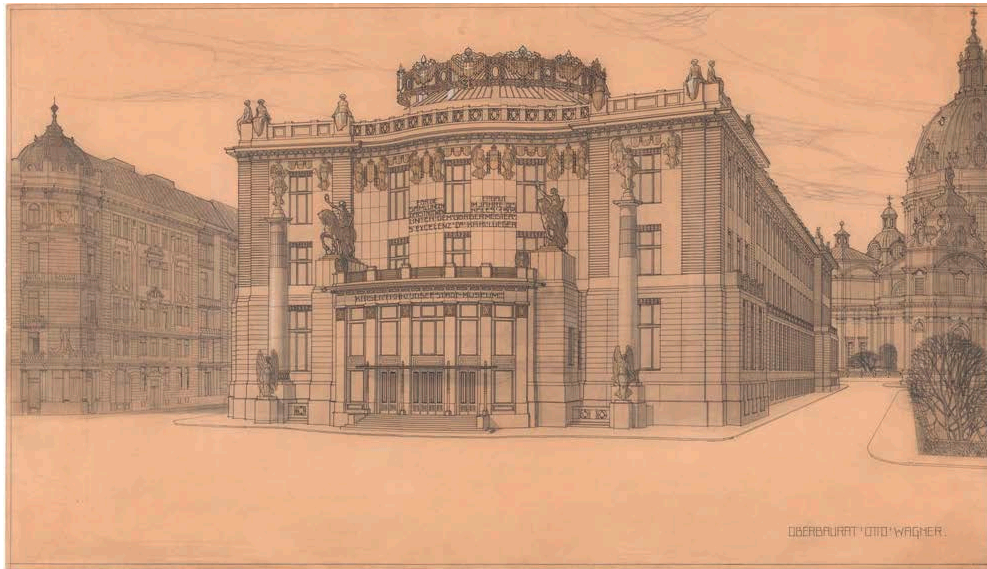


Figure 4 Otto Wagner, the 'grand project' of the Municipal Museum of Emperor Franz Joseph I on the Karlsplatz in Vienna, second alternative, 1907. Wien Museum, Online Sammlung, "Stadtmuseum", Open content

If his article on Borromini reveals Dvořák's sympathy for Modernism, his comment on 'Die Verbauung des Karlsplatzes in Wien', published in the *Kunstgeschichtliches Jahrbuch* in the same year 1907, may give an indication that the scholar did not yield to the new movement unreservedly, and that he was prepared to accept its products only under certain conditions. Since the late 19th century, a number of Viennese architects had attempted to complete the final appearance of the city's Karlsplatz, a square dominated by the Baroque Church of St Charles Borromeo, designed by Johann Bernhard Fischer von Erlach. In the years 1907–1908 their endeavours culminated in the design for the municipal museum by Otto Wagner, the leader of Central European Modernist architecture.¹⁸ [fig. 4] Dvořák's comment in 1907 does not mention Wagner's work directly, but from the context it is obvious what he was directing his attention to. Dvořák did not display any enthusiasm about the design

¹⁷ Max Dvořák, 'Francesco Borromini als Restaurator', *Kunstgeschichtliches Jahrbuch der k. k. Zentral-Kommission*, 1, 1907, 89–98, here 98. See also Max Dvořák, *Schriften zur Denkmalspflege*, 217–222: 'Ähnlich aber wie sein Stil die Welt eroberte, so hat auch die neue Rolle, die er alten Denkmälern im neuen Kunstempfinden zugewiesen hat, weiter gewirkt. Noch heute ist nicht die Einzelform, sondern die Gesamterscheinung eines Denkmals im Verhältnisse zur Umgebung die wichtigste Quelle künstlerischer Anteilnahme an allen architektonischen Kunstwerken.'

¹⁸ Otto Antonia Graf, *Otto Wagner 2: Das Werk des Architekten 1903–1918*, Vienna / Cologne / Graz 1985, pp. 457–488.

for the museum. He was unhappy that Wagner's museum would replace Fischer's church as the dominant feature of the square and would partly hide it. Thus in Dvořák's view Wagner did not achieve on the Karlsplatz that 'higher architectural unity' which he had appreciated in Borromini's work; Fischer's church would acquire an overly strong rival, and the view towards it from the centre of Vienna would not remain sufficiently open.

However, Dvořák also took a reserved view of the stylistic concept of Wagner's work. He did not believe it was right that the design of the foremost Viennese Modernist was based on a mere cultivation of structure; on the 'recasting of a purely technical premise into an architectural expression', as he put it. However, in Dvořák's opinion, a satisfactory solution would not have been provided by Historicism, either – in this respect he adopted the Modernist position – but by a style or styles which did not completely sever the tie with the 'legacy of the old artistic culture', as he referred to this phenomenon in his comment on the Karlsplatz. In this comment, therefore, Dvořák welcomed the rise of Modernism in European architecture, but in his view it did not have to relinquish all ties with tradition and, especially with interventions in historical settings, it ought to modify its language:

This most recent trend in modern architecture, which comes from England and Belgium, and is continuously gaining ground in Germany, is based on the conviction that new architecture should avoid imitative Historicism and should endeavour to deal with architectural problems in a new way, in line with modern technical assumptions and modern formal sentiment. Nevertheless, it must not completely abandon what can be regarded as the legacy of the old artistic culture, and, especially where something new is to be created within the framework of an older artistic culture, the new must be subordinate to the overall historical picture.¹⁹

A second, more extensive article on the Viennese square, 'Die Karlsplatzfrage', was published by Dvořák in the newspaper *Neue Freie Presse* in 1909. In it, he once again referred to the need to preserve the dominant position of Fischer's church and to leave vistas towards it open, a theme on which he focused a year later in the

¹⁹ Max Dvořák, 'Die Verbauung des Karlsplatzes in Wien', *Kunstgeschichtliches Jahrbuch der k. k. Zentral-Kommission*, 1, 1907, 146–148, here 148. See also Max Dvořák, *Schriften zur Denkmalpflege*, 412–413: 'Diese neueste Richtung in der modernen Architektur, die von England und Belgien ausgeht und in Deutschland immer mehr Boden gewinnt, beruht auf der Überzeugung, daß eine neue Architektur sich wohl von jedem imitierenden Historismus fernhalten und eine neue, den modernen technischen Voraussetzungen und dem modernen formalen Empfinden entsprechende Bewältigung der architektonischen Probleme anstreben muß, dabei aber nicht ganz darauf verzichten darf, was als ein Vermächtnis der alten künstlerischen Kultur angesehen werden kann und besonders dort, wo es sich darum handelt, im Rahmen alter künstlerischen Kultur Neues zu schaffen, das Neue sich dem historisch gewordenen Gesamtbilde zu unterordnen hat.'

brochure *Der Museumsbau auf dem Karlsplatze*,²⁰ and which he also accentuated around the same time in a debate about the threat of the Emmaus monastery in Prague being hidden by Modernist tenement houses.²¹ In the *Neue Freie Presse*, however, he returned to the idea of integrating old and modern components into a newly created whole, whose desired quality he now defined as 'internal unity' (*innere Einheitlichkeit*) or the 'unity of artistic cooperation' (*Einheitlichkeit des künstlerischen Zusammenwirkens*). He expressed the conviction that even the disparity between old and new styles did not necessarily have to preclude achieving this unity. In order for the integration of a modern building into an old setting to be successful, however, the old artistic tradition must in some way continue in the style of the modern work, and in Dvořák's view the radical style and technical doctrinarism of Wagner's architecture prevented this.²²

Whereas in his texts about the Karlsplatz Dvořák was dealing with a concrete project in a concrete situation and merely added to his analysis some general principles for new buildings in an old town, the passage on this subject in the *Katechismus der Denkmalpflege* concentrated entirely on general guidelines. It is shorter than all the articles about Wagner's project, although this is compensated for by an extensive pictorial appendix with commentaries by the author. Both in the main text and the texts accompanying the illustrations, Dvořák constantly criticised Historicism. Nevertheless, he continued to express his belief that the forms of new buildings in an old setting should be modified by the legacy of the old artistic culture. In the case of small towns, his view was that architects should avoid forms appropriate for large cities. On this point, Dvořák was in agreement with Tietze and his article published in the *Kunsgeschichtliches Jahrbuch* in 1910. Tietze also anticipated another of Dvořák's recommendations, that new buildings in an old environment should draw inspiration from local building traditions. Thus the thinking of both these Viennese scholars tended towards a Modernist regionalism.²³ In the *Katechismus*, Dvořák called for the following:

Big cities should not be imitated. / Houses or public buildings should not be built with false pretensions as pinchbeck palaces in various kinds of style, but simply and practically, as was previously usual in the locality and had been tested and established by long tradition. / Care should be taken

²⁰ Max Dvořák, *Der Museumsbau auf dem Karlsplatz*, Vienna, Leipzig: 1910. See also Max Dvořák, *Schriften zur Denkmalpflege*, 421–426.

²¹ Max Dvořák, 'Verbauung des Ausblickes auf das Emauser Kloster in Prag', *Mitteilungen der K. K. Zentralkommission*, 9, 1910, 190–193. See also Max Dvořák, *Schriften zur Denkmalpflege*, 432–433.

²² Max Dvořák, 'Die Karlsplatzfrage', *Neue Freie Presse*, Morgenblatt, No. 16284, December 21, 1909, 1–3. See also Max Dvořák, *Schriften zur Denkmalpflege*, 217–222.

²³ For the history of this architectural movement, see in particular Liane Lefaivre and Alexander Tzonis, *Architecture of Regionalism in the Age of Globalization: Peaks and Valleys in the Flat World*, London, New York: 2012.

that every new building should be subordinated to its surroundings and the overall appearance of the locality.²⁴

In the pictorial appendix to the *Katechismus*, Dvořák gave 10 or 11 examples of the overall integrity of an old town being disturbed by a new building. In so doing, without exception he criticised the products of Historicism, not Modernism. When, however, he wanted to demonstrate that new architecture can make a good impression in an old setting, he only chose two examples, and in making his choice he certainly did not show himself to be a Modernist radical. It is true that neither the new post office and savings bank in Hall in Tyrol, designed by Theodor Fischer in 1910–1911,²⁵ [fig. 5] nor the completion of the Gothic church in Schenna (today Scena) in South Tyrol, designed by Eduard Hütter in 1909,²⁶ can be classed as typical examples of Historicism, but both works are situated on the borderline of this category. Fischer's building came close to the local Tyrolean tradition with its shutters and stylised Neo-Baroque decoration, and both architects used pointed Gothic arches.



Figure 5 Theodor Fischer, post office and savings bank building in Hall, 1910–1911. Photo Petr Šmídek, 2017

From this, we may perhaps conclude that Dvořák knew what he should evaluate negatively – Historicism – but in his choice of positive examples he was hesitant, and even willing to accept a certain Historicist element in Modernist buildings. In a commentary on Dvořák's lecture 'Die letzte Renaissance', which was given in 1912 but not published until 1997 in the *Wiener Jahrbuch für Kunstgeschichte*, Hans

²⁴ Max Dvořák, *Katechismus der Denkmalpflege*, Vienna: 1916, 50. See also Max Dvořák, *Schriften zur Denkmalpflege* 521–720, here 580: 'Man äffe nicht Großstädte nach. / Man baue nicht Häuser oder öffentliche Gebäude mit falschen Prätentionen als Talmipaläste in verschiedenen Stilarten, sondern einfach und praktisch, wie sie früher ortsüblich waren und durch eine lange Tradition erprobt und bodenständig wurden. / Man achte darauf, daß sich jeder Neubau seiner Umgebung und dem Gesamtbilde des Ortes unterordne.'

²⁵ Dvořák, *Katechismus der Denkmalpflege*, 133.

²⁶ Dvořák, *Katechismus der Denkmalpflege*, 116–117.

Aurenhammer²⁷ showed that at the beginning of the second decade of the 20th century Dvořák was fascinated by the 'new monumental architecture'²⁸ of Hermann Billing, Martin Dülfer, Bruno Schmitz, and Alfred Messel. This would mean that at that time Dvořák saw a guarantee of an acceptable combination of new forms with tradition and with the legacy of the old artistic culture in the Neo-Classical stylistic devices of these German architects. However, he only touched fleetingly on the theme of the incorporation of their buildings into historical settings in his 1912 lecture – with reference to Schmitz's design for a new tower for the Gothic minster in Freiburg in Saxony – and in addition he was talking about a stylistic movement which does not seem to be sufficiently close to the forms of Fischer's post office in Hall and Hütter's completion of the church in Schenna.

Evidently, however, other factors also played a role in Dvořák's choice of Fischer's and Hütter's works. The *Katechismus* was conceived of as a handbook that would be comprehensible to the broader public,²⁹ and it was evidently this didactic purpose that made its author prefer to illustrate the book with conservative examples rather than with Modernist experiments. It seems probable that he was also concerned about reaching a consensus within the Viennese Central Commission. It could hardly have escaped his attention that Hütter's completion of the work in Schenna was highly regarded by Karl Holey, the assistant to the Commission and Dvořák's successor in the function of Austrian Curator General,³⁰ or that Theodor Fischer's new houses in the historical centre of Stuttgart had attracted the attention of Hans Tietze in his 1910 article referred to above.

Contacts with the Club For Old Prague

Dvořák propagated his views on new buildings in historical settings 'from above', as the most senior official of the Central Commission in Vienna. In terms of civic heritage preservation 'from below', represented in the Czech lands most prominently by the *Club For Old Prague*, the preservation of old towns as a whole became its programme, too, in the first decade of the 20th century. Dvořák maintained close links with the Club, which had been founded in 1900 in protest

²⁷ Aurenhammer, 'Max Dvořák und die moderne Architektur', 23–40.

²⁸ Max Dvořák, 'Die letzte Renaissance (1912)', *Wiener Jahrbuch für Kunstgeschichte* 50, 1997, 9–22, here 16.

²⁹ Jonathan Blower, 'Max Dvořák, Franz Ferdinand and the Katechismus der Denkmalpflege', *Umění* 58, 2020, 433–444.

³⁰ Karl Holey, 'Kirchenerweiterungen vom Standpunkte der Denkmalpflege (Die Erweiterung der Kirchen in Rossitz in Mähren und Schenna in Tirol)', *Mitteilungen der k. k. Zentralkommission*, 9, 1910, 64–75. For the influence of Holey's book *Ein Denkmalschutzgesetz für Österreich*, Vienna 1911, on Dvořák's *Katechismus* see Scarrocchia, 'II. Baustellen der Erhaltung und Restaurierung', pp. 146–148, and Mario Schwarz, 'Restaurování a přestavba farního kostela v Palterndorfu v Dolním Rakousku, provedená v roce 1936 Karlem Holeyem', in: Jiří Jiroušek, Miloš Kruml, and Martin Kubelík (eds), *Historická architektura: Sborník k poctě Milana Pavlíka*, Prague: 1995, 157–169.

against the redevelopment of Prague's Old Town.³¹ He kept its committee informed about the standpoints of the Central Commission on various incidents in Prague, gained support from it for his own attempts to preserve heritage sites in Prague, and encouraged his friends in Prague – for example the historians Jaroslav Goll and Josef Šusta – to join the Club and play an active part in it. His respect for the Club arose from the fact that, unlike various other societies for the preservation of the homeland at that time, it was not a completely lay association. Architects and university scholars were members of its committee from the beginning, and during the first decade of the 20th century adherents of Riegl's and Dvořák's views on heritage conservation established their position in it, in particular the art historian Zdeněk Wirth and the architect Pavel Janák, the pupil of Otto Wagner. In 1909 Wirth published the article 'Stavební rytmus malého města' in the architecture review *Styl*,³² which was in harmony with Dvořák's concept of towns in their entirety as heritage sites, and the same admiration of the integral whole also characterises Wirth's monographs on the historical towns of Pelhřimov (1911) and Kutná Hora (1912). The architect Janák drew up plans for several projects in Pelhřimov and other towns in the Czech lands in the years 1910–1914, which attempted to convert the new programme for heritage preservation into practical form.

In controversial cases in Prague – for example, the debates about the restoration of Prague Castle³³ or the repairs to the Gothic Church of St Henry³⁴ – Dvořák was strongly opposed to the projects of the Historicists. He found an ally for these positions in the *Club for Old Prague*. Situations did occur, however, in which the Club took the side of a more Modernist design than the Curator General in Vienna. In 1909, for example, before the competition took place to choose a design for the completion of the Old Town Hall, Dvořák expressed the wish that the old houses on the Small Square, adjacent to the Town Hall block, should be preserved.³⁵ Designs by architects active in the Club, however, mostly replaced these houses by new buildings. And when in the same year a debate arose in Prague as to whether some partially preserved Baroque statues on Charles Bridge should be replaced by copies or by Modernist sculptures, some members of the Club took the side of

³¹ Kateřina Bečková (ed.), *Sto let Klubu Za starou Prahu 1900–2000*, Prague: 2000; Radmila Kreuzzigerová, Kateřina Bečková, and Richard Biegel, *Society For old Prague: One Hundred and Two Years*, Prague, Paris: 2002.

³² Zdeněk Wirth, 'Stavební rytmus malého města', *Styl*, 1, 1908–1909, 327–336.

³³ Max Dvořák, 'Restaurierungsfragen: I. Die Prager Königsburg', *Kunstgeschichtliches Jahrbuch der k. k. Zentral-Kommission*, 2, 1908, 336–341; See also Max Dvořák, *Schriften zur Denkmalpflege*, 336–341. See also Viktor Kotrba, 'Max Dvořák a zápas o novou ideu památkové péče v Čechách: Listy Maxe Dvořáka Kamilu Hilbertovi z let 1907 až 1919', *Umění*, 11, 1963, 268–282.

³⁴ Max Dvořák, 'Restaurace kostela sv. Jindřicha', *Styl*, 1, 1908–1909, 152–154. The monumental anthology of Dvořák's *Schriften zur Denkmalpflege*, edited by Sandro Scarrocchia, does not contain this article, which was written in Czech.

³⁵ Archive of the *Club for Old Prague*, books containing minutes of committee meetings ('Domácí rada'), Book 4, 19 January 1909.

Modernism,³⁶ while Dvořák advocated the installation of old statues from the 18th century, in spite of the fact that they were damaged.³⁷ However, in both cases, with the houses on the Small Square and the statues on Charles Bridge, he was resolutely opposed to copies being made of them, no doubt because in his view Historicism consisted of the uncreative copying of what was old.



Figure 6 Leaflet no. 3 of the Club for Old Prague calling for the preservation of the Braun house in Prague. On the lower left-hand side a design by Vlastislav Hofman, on the right a design by Pavel Janák, 1910

An example of Dvořák's close cooperation with the Club, but also of a certain distance that the Viennese scholar maintained from the Club's activities, is provided by the controversial case of the demolition of a Baroque house in

³⁶ Archive of the *Club for Old Prague*, books containing minutes of committee meetings ('Domácí rada'), Book 5, 24 April 1909. The installation of 'modern artistic works' on Charles Bridge was advocated by Zdeněk Wirth and Dvořák's pupil Antonín Matějček.

³⁷ Max Dvořák, 'Die Statuengruppen des hl. Franz Xaverius, des hl. Ignatius und der hl. Luitgardis auf der Karlsbrücke in Prag', *Mitteilungen der k. k. Zentralkommission*, 8, 1909, 152–160. See also Max Dvořák, *Schriften zur Denkmalpflege*, 405–408. See also 'Naše anketa', *Volné směry*, 13, 1909, 221–236.

Vodičkova Street in Prague, designed by the sculptor Matthias Braun. The owners of this historical building sold it to the developer Hulicius in 1910, and he planned to build a large tenement house in its place. The architects Pavel Janák and Vlastislav Hofman, both members of the Club, wanted to avoid the loss of this historical building by retaining the Baroque façades and to construct inside them a new tall building with the same capacity as that planned by Hulicius. [fig. 6] The two architects chose a Modernist language for their extension to the building, even emphasising its difference from the Baroque fragments. Janák's handwritten notes about the plans testify to his intention to use 'the opposite means' to those used when the house was built in the 18th century.³⁸ As can be seen from archive documents, Dvořák acquainted himself with the plans made by Janák and Hofman, and promised a subsidy from the Central Commission for them to be carried out.³⁹ His own commentary on this case in the *Kunstgeschichtliche Jahrbuch*, however, only expresses sadness at the loss of this valuable building and makes no mention of the plans drawn up by members of the Club to save it;⁴⁰ they were not printed either in the *Mitteilungen* or in Dvořák's *Katechismus*. I am convinced that it was the overly Modernist, excessively experimental approach of the plans drawn up by Janák and Hofman which limited Dvořák's interest in them. And as can be seen both from their drawings and models and from the statements they made, what Janák and Hofman were aiming at in their designs for the Braun house was not something similar to Dvořák's ideal of a 'higher architectural unity', but rather the sort of approach to the relationship between the old and new parts that later began to be called 'contrasting'.

In 1911, however, Janák's style changed. It was at this time that Janák, together with other architects who were active in the Club – Hofman, Josef Gočár, and Josef Chochol (another pupil of Wagner's) – started to work on a new architectural concept which, already before the First World War, started to be called Cubism.⁴¹ With this new concept, the four Prague architects intended to respond to the challenges they were confronted with by the latest trends in European art, but equally important was their endeavour to design buildings whose language would be in harmony with the integral wholes of historical towns. In this respect, we should regard Cubist architecture as a continuation of the trend within Modernism

³⁸ Kateřina Hanzlíková, 'Braunův dům na Novém Městě', in: Bečková, *Sto let Klubu Za starou Prahu 1900–2000*, 105–111.

³⁹ Archive of the Old Prague Club, Book 6, 26 April and 24 May 1910.

⁴⁰ Max Dvořák, 'Monumenta deperdita: 1. Das Haus des Bildhauers Braun in Prag', *Kunstgeschichtliches Jahrbuch der k. k. Zentral-Kommission*, 4, 1910, 175–178. See also Max Dvořák, *Schriften zur Denkmalpflege*, 446.

⁴¹ Rostislav Švácha, *The Pyramid, the Prism and the Arc: Czech Cubist Architecture 1911–1923*, Prague: 2000; Dalibor Veselý, 'Czech New Architecture and Cubism', *Umění* 53, 2005, 586–604; Ákos Moravánszky, 'Die Befreiung der Form aus der Materie. Architektur und Theorie des Prager Kubismus', in: Tomáš Valena and Ulrich Winko (eds), *Prager Architektur und die europäische Moderne*, Berlin: 2006, 25–38. On the term 'Cubism' see Jindřich Vybíral, 'Český kubismus na trhu symbolických statků. Původ a hranice pojmu dějin architektury', in: Michal Novotný (ed.), *Kubismus v české architektuře – Sto let poté*, Prague: 2013, 9–19; Rostislav Švácha, 'Popírači a schvalovači: Neokubismus v dnešní architektuře', in: Michal Novotný (ed.), *Kubismus v české architektuře – Sto let poté*, Prague: 2013, 181–201.

whose aspirations were in keeping with the requirements of Dvořák's articles. However, Cubism was connected with Dvořák's ideas in other aspects, too, in spite of the fact that in these aspects the Prague architects sometimes came to different conclusions than those indicated by Dvořák's texts. In the forms of their projects, the Cubist artists also clearly distinguished whether they were intended for a metropolis or a small provincial town, and they, too, endeavoured to incorporate into their Modernist buildings something of the 'legacy of the old artistic culture'. However, it was neither local traditions and customs (which Tietze had recommended that architects follow in 1910, as had Dvořák six years later in the *Katechismus*), nor the Neo-Classicist 'new monumental architecture' so admired by the Curator General in 'Die letzte Renaissance', which inspired Janák and the other Prague Cubists in their work and about which they wrote in their texts, but rather the universal tradition of Gothic and the radical Baroque of Borromini.⁴²



Figure 7 Pavel Janák, adaptation of the Fára house on the square in Pelhřimov, 1913–1914. Photo Martina Mertová, 2009

Thanks to Zdeněk Wirth, a provincial branch of the *Club for Old Prague* was established in Pelhřimov in 1911.⁴³ At the request of its members, Janák drew up plans for several Cubist projects in the historical centre of Pelhřimov during the

⁴² Rostislav Švácha, 'Cubist Theories of Architecture', in: Pavel Liška, Jiří Švestka, and Tomáš Vlček (eds), *Czech Cubism 1909–1925*, Prague: 2006, 220–231.

⁴³ Hana Kábová, 'Zdeněk Wirth a Pelhřimov: Karel Polesný, Pavel Janák a pelhřimovská pobočka Klubu Za starou Prahu (1908–1914)', in: Jiří Roháček and Kristina Uhlíková (eds), *Zdeněk Wirth pohledem dnešní doby*, Prague: 2010, 125–156.

years 1911–1914. In 1912, for example, he criticised a design by the local architect Kotrnoch for a hotel on the main square, saying its appearance was more appropriate for a big city, and submitted his own plans for the hotel to the town council, using Cubist forms by means of which he wanted to accentuate the 'gabled character' which had been preserved in the square.⁴⁴ The council preferred Kotrnoch's design. During the following two years, however, Janák provided a new Cubist gable for another Baroque house not far from the hotel, a work commissioned by Vojtěch Fára, a member of the Pelhřimov branch of the Old Prague Club.⁴⁵ [fig. 7] If we compare the Fára house after Janák's adaptation, which was finished in 1914, with Janák's design for the completion of the Braun house in Prague from the year 1910, we will probably come to the conclusion that the combination of Baroque language with Cubist forms came much closer to Dvořák's ideal of the 'higher architectural unity' in Pelhřimov than it did in Prague. But Dvořák did not pay any attention to Janák's work in Pelhřimov, either, neither in the journals of the Central Commission nor in the *Katechismus*. Later experiments by Janák and Gočár in adapting older buildings in the Late Cubist style, designed at a time when the culture of the Czechoslovak Republic had turned its back on Vienna, never came to Dvořák's notice at all, due to his premature death.

Conclusion

During the course of more than a hundred years since the time when Dvořák published his texts about new buildings in historical settings, many things have changed. However, the basic situation – the relationship between new buildings and an old town as a whole – has remained the same, and so Dvořák's opinions might well still be instructive for us today. It would, however, be risky to use them as arguments in today's disputes, because in so doing we would probably be abandoning the domain of art history. If in spite of this I were to apply the views of the Viennese Curator General to current debates in this dangerous way, it would probably turn out that they would be appealed to by the conservative thinkers in today's discussions, while the advocates of bolder architectural designs would refer to Janák's and Hofman's plans for the preservation of the Braun house or later buildings in the Cubist style.

But let us ask ourselves whether the cause of these unending controversies is not to be found with Dvořák himself, and try to learn something from this. Dvořák attempted to deal with the phenomenon of Modernist interventions in historical settings in a theoretical way. He created new terms for it, in particular 'higher architectural unity' or 'internal unity'. At the same time, he acknowledged that the components of this unity do not have to be homogenous, in a single style, or from the same period. Nevertheless, he was afraid that with the insertion of new buildings into old towns the tension between these components might be too great.

⁴⁴ Pavel Janák, 'Starobylý ráz krásného náměstí v Pelhřimově ohrožen novostavbou hotelu', *Za starou Prahu* 3, 1912, 33–35.

⁴⁵ Švácha, *The Pyramid, the Prism and the Arc*, 148–153.

The problem, however, consists in whether it is possible to measure the extent of this tension objectively, or whether subjective, de facto aesthetic factors become involved in evaluating it – factors which in addition are constantly changing, together with the professional and cultural background of the evaluator, the trends in Modernist architecture, or the willingness of the broader public to accept or reject experiments. As Ivo Hlobil recognised in his commentary on Riegl's book *Das moderne Denkmalkultus*, it was Dvořák, and not his predecessor Riegl, who consciously introduced aesthetics into modern heritage conservation, in other words the subjective activity of the evaluator.⁴⁶ And it was terms like 'higher architectural unity' or 'internal unity' which opened wide the doors to such subjective judgements.⁴⁷

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⁴⁶ Hlobil, 'Alois Riegl und die Theorie der modernen Denkmalpflege', 146–147.

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