

Max Dvořák, Wilhelm von Bode, and the Monuments of German Art

Jonathan Blower

*Sanctus amor patriae dat animum*¹

Wilhelm von Bode (1845–1929), director general of the Royal Prussian Museums in Berlin from 1906 to 1920, maintained a lively professional correspondence with the key figures of the Vienna School. His meticulously catalogued literary estate in Berlin contains 108 letters from his opposite number within the Austrian museum system, Julius von Schlosser, as well as some 137 from Josef Strzygowski, who shared his keen interest in non-European, and especially Islamic art. There are a handful of letters addressed to Bode by Alois Riegl and Franz Wickhoff, and, of particular interest in this context, thirty-six from their younger Bohemian protégé, Max Dvořák (1874–1921).²

By contrast, there are very few letters preserved among the eighteen cartons of Dvořák's academic papers at the University of Vienna, and unfortunately only one of them is from Bode. Nevertheless, the general gist of the complete correspondence can be largely inferred from the content of the existing half, which provides a number of revealing insights, from the particular to the general, into the intellectual history of this significant Bohemian academic; on the institutional history of German art scholarship; and, finally, as a case study on the broader question of Austro-German cultural relations in the early twentieth century.

The correspondence opens in July 1904 with an unsolicited letter of introduction from Dvořák, a copy of his *Rätsel der Kunst der Brüder van Eyck* (Riddle of the Art of the Brothers van Eyck) enclosed 'as a humble token of the great esteem in which you are held by myself and all of us here in Vienna.'³ Fifteen years later, after the disaster of war, the collapse of the German and Austrian empires, and revolutions in their respective capitals, the exchange comes to a rather tragic end with this despairing plea:

As Your Excellency knows, the government is selling our works of art. Things are worse than one reads in the newspapers, which are not allowed to write about it. [...] And all this is happening just to keep the radical

¹ Motto of the *Gesellschaft für ältere deutsche Geschichtskunde* (1819) and its publications, the *Monumenta Germaniae historica* (from 1826).

² Friedrich Künzel and Barbara Götze, *Verzeichnis des schriftlichen Nachlasses von Wilhelm von Bode*, Berlin: Staatliche Museen zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz, 1995.

³ Dvořák to Bode, Vienna, 12 July 1904, Zentralarchiv der Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin (hereinafter ZASMB), Nachlass Bode 1579. My warm thanks to Beate Ebelt at the Zentralarchiv in Berlin for all her kind assistance.

socialist wing at the helm for a few more months. The experts were not and are still not consulted, and when they protest they are threatened with the armed proletariat. I find all this so embittering that I want to leave Vienna. Could I not come to Göttingen, Cologne, or Hamburg? I would prefer anything to remaining here.⁴

The influential museum director acted promptly on the appeal of his younger Austrian colleague, underlining sections of the letter in red pencil and annotating it as follows: 'I could recommend Dvořák to the Rector at Cologne, since they are supposed to be [illegible] a chair for art history and Dvořák is apparently Catholic.' Sure enough, the summons from Cologne came soon after, though Dvořák ultimately decided not to take up the post, remaining in his adoptive city, as the obituaries would later put it, 'for the love of Vienna.'⁵

Between these extremities, the other letters and documents Dvořák sent to Bode in the intervening period touch on a variety of subjects, international, academic, and mundane: Austro-German trade agreements, art historical associations, export laws and museum appointments, conservation bodies and kidney stones, Karlsbad, the Kaiser, and so on. There are also frequent and revealing remarks on the state of art history as a scholarly discipline, and the not unrelated problem of the art market and its agents. One name singled out for repeated censure in this regard, for instance, is that of Georg Biermann, who seems to have represented the very embodiment of academic dilettantism and market-savvy opportunism.⁶ As editor of a number of journals and, from 1912, artistic advisor to the Grand Duke of Hessen, Biermann was an influential figure in the German art world. And to judge from the Dvořák–Bode correspondence, he repeatedly abused his privileged position for personal financial gain. This and similar cases of pseudo-academics bringing the German cultural establishment into disrepute moved Bode, in May 1917, to make a public call for the foundation of a professional association of German art historians, curators, and museum officials; a sort of guild that would bring accountability and self-regulation to an otherwise unregulated playing field.⁷ In this case, Bode sent an advance copy of his article to Dvořák, and the reply came back as follows:

⁴ Dvořák to Bode, Vienna, 8 October 1919, ZASMB, Nachlass Bode 1579.

⁵ 'Personalien', *Kunstchronik und Kunstmarkt*, 55, 1920, 310, 826; 'Max Dvorak †', *Reichspost*, 9 February 1921, 6.

⁶ Georg Biermann (1880–1949) of the Klinkhardt und Biermann publishing house edited *Die Deutsche Kunst*, *Cicerone*, and the *Monatschrift für Kunstwissenschaft*. From Dvořák's perspective these publications lacked rigour: 'I would be more than happy to write a text against Biermann and consorts. This company is discrediting us abroad and, what's perhaps worse still, has become a focal point for all the failures and second-rate art historians.' Dvořák to Bode, Vienna, 12 February 1914, ZASMB, Nachlass Bode 1579. See also Bode, *Mein Leben*, 2 vols, Berlin: Reckendorf, 1930, I, 399–400, II, 353.

⁷ Bode, 'Sollen die deutschen Kunsthistoriker sich zu einer Fachgenossenschaft zusammenschließen?', *Kunstchronik*, 28, 1917, 337–41.

Your Excellency, please accept my deepest thanks for kindly sending the article in the *Kunst Chronik*. I was most pleased to read it. Once again, Your Excellency has openly stated that which many of us have been concerned about for so long now, for this proposal is the only thing that can bring us forward. I have written a few lines of agreement for the *Kunst Chronik*, which I enclose here. Should Your Excellency be of the same mind, then I would ask that Your Excellency send the manuscript directly to the editors of the *Kunst Chronik*.⁸

He evidently did. Dvořák's response was published as the leading article of the *Kunstchronik* in June 1917. Echoing Bode, he called for a strict separation of art scholarship and art market – *Wissenschaft* and *Handel*. The position of art history as an independent academic discipline, he argued, had been hard-won by the previous generation thirty years earlier, and now a small minority (read Biermann) was threatening to undermine its scientific credibility by creaming off percentages for themselves and using positions in the public museum sector as a springboard for lucrative careers in the gallery business. Bode's professional association, Dvořák concurred, would be the ideal way to stamp out these instances of materialistic malpractice. He merely urged that the association's sphere of jurisdiction be extended beyond the German Reich to include Austria as well.⁹

All this has to strike the cultural historian as rather ironic on a number of counts. For one, flicking through the pages of the *Kunstchronik*, the amount of space it dedicates to art sales and auctions provides eloquent witness, contra Dvořák, to the vital links between base material interests and the loftier realms of art. Also ironic: that the acquisitive Bode – who was later dubbed the Bismarck of the German museums by Karl Scheffler – should have been the one to call for a regulation of the market he so deftly exploited on behalf of the Berlin collections.¹⁰ But the main point here is a simple one. Dvořák was a great admirer of Bode, and the two men had more than just kidney stones in common.¹¹ Cultural ties between Vienna and Berlin remained close as late as 1917, and while the Sixtus affair foundered behind closed doors, signalling Austria's fatigue vis-à-vis its military

⁸ Dvořák to Bode, Vienna, 20 May 1917, ZASMB, Nachlass Bode 1579.

⁹ Dvořák, 'Sollen die deutschen Kunsthistoriker sich zu einer Fachgenossenschaft zusammenschließen?', *Kunstchronik*, 28, 1917, 369–71.

¹⁰ Werner Hofmann, 'Bode und Schlosser', *Jahrbuch der Berliner Museen*, 38, 1996, supplement, 177; Stephan Waetzold, 'Wilhelm von Bode – Bauherr?' in Angelika Wesenberg (ed.), *Wilhelm von Bode als Zeitgenosse der Kunst*, Berlin: Staatliche Museen zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz, 1995, 56.

¹¹ In this regard, see Dvořák's public defence of Bode in the wake of the 'Flora' controversy: 'Geheimrat Bode und die Leonardo da Vinci Büste', *Neue Freie Presse*, 24 November 1909, 8–9. Dvořák puts the dubious provenance of the forged bust aside, arguing instead that it is absurd 'to pile invective on a man who has done art scholarship such great service. By creating in Berlin, virtually out of nothing, the most instructive museum in the world, he has achieved something one would barely have thought possible. The benefits that art history and our knowledge and research of monuments have derived from this can hardly be overlooked.'

obligations to Germany, Dvořák and Bode were negotiating favourable bilateral terms for art export laws in their respective empires.

These concerns aside, though, the majority of Dvořák's communications to Bode revolve around one project in particular: a monumental series of publications entitled *Die Denkmäler der deutschen Kunst* (The Monuments of German Art), which was instigated and funded by Bode's *Deutscher Verein für Kunstwissenschaft* (DVfK, German Society for Art Scholarship, est. 1908). The word 'monumental' is not used flippantly here either – the projected series would have stretched to an estimated four hundred folio volumes and printing costs of some six million marks, the present day equivalent of around a hundred million euros.¹²

The principal object of the present study will be Dvořák's involvement with the DVfK and his contribution to Bode's highly ambitious, not so say utopian project in pan-German art scholarship. At first glance, this would appear to have been minimal. None of the major publications bear his name on anything but their acknowledgement pages, Bode nowhere mentions Dvořák in his autobiography, and there are only three references to the *Denkmäler der deutschen Kunst* in the standard bibliography of Dvořák's published writings.¹³ But the archival sources show that Dvořák's involvement behind the scenes, initially at the level of planning and organization, then in driving the project forward, was far more substantial than these rather self-effacing documents would seem to suggest. If anything, Hans Tietze understated the point when he recalled his former colleague's 'decisive collaboration on the creation of the *Deutscher Verein für Kunstwissenschaft*.'¹⁴ After Wilhelm von Bode (and perhaps even more than him), no other member of the DVfK was quite so insistent on the necessity of publishing a comprehensive and systematic survey of the monuments of German art.

The following institutional history will begin with the prehistory and founding aims of the DVfK, tracing its origins back to the first congress of art history in 1873. Here, in the context of the Vienna World Exhibition, a proposal for

¹² This ball-park figure is based on a present-day salary of around €16,000 and the average salary of a German proletarian in 1913, which, according to Ashok V. Desai, *Real wages in Germany*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968, 112, was about 1,000 marks. The figure of six million marks was a conservative estimate that excluded intellectual labour: 'According to book-market estimates, the production costs of each of these works [...] will come to an average of 15,000 M; at around forty folio volumes the costs would thus come to around 600,000 M. But since these publications will only have covered around ten per cent of Germany's artistic monuments, the enormous total sum for the publication costs alone is to be estimated at around six million marks.' Bode, *Denkschrift betreffend den Deutschen Verein für Kunstwissenschaft und die Denkmäler der Deutschen Kunst*, Berlin: n.p., 1914, 7.

¹³ Dvořák, 'Notiz: Denkmäler der deutschen Kunst', *Kunstgeschichtliches Jahrbuch der Zentral-Kommission*, 2, 1908, Beiblatt für Denkmalpflege, 95–98; Dvořák, 'Notiz: Denkmäler der deutschen Kunst', *Kunstgeschichtliches Jahrbuch der Zentral-Kommission*, 3, 1909, Beiblatt für Denkmalpflege, 173; Dvořák, *Die Denkmäler der deutschen Kunst. Vortrag, gehalten an dem zu Ehren des Deutschen Vereins für Kunstwissenschaft veranstalteten Festabend der Gesellschaft der Kunstfreunde in Wien*, Berlin: Georg Reimer, 1913; for the standard bibliography see Dvořák, *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Kunstgeschichte*, edited by K. M. Swoboda and J. Wilde, Munich: Piper, 1929, 371–81.

¹⁴ Hans Tietze, 'Max Dvořák †', *Kunstchronik und Kunstmarkt*, 56, 1921, 443.

an international art historical association was put before delegates and accepted in principle, though little came of it until thirty-five years later, when the political and intellectual climate in Europe was decidedly less conducive to internationalist cultural collaboration. In 1907, Bode's plan for the DVfK was announced, and hotly debated, at the eighth international congress of art history in Darmstadt, a crucial moment that can justifiably be seen as a turning point in German art historiography. Heinrich Dilly has remarked that the discipline of art history around this time was a predominantly German affair, as indeed it had been ever since the first professorial chairs were set up at mid-century.¹⁵ But around 1907 there was a marked shift, in some circles at least, away from an outward-looking, internationalist art history and towards an introverted and explicitly German-nationalist one.

While Dvořák himself was not party to the initial planning of the DVfK, he was present during the final consultations and constituent assembly at Frankfurt am Main in March 1908, where, according to his own account, he brought the rigorous scholarly principles of the Vienna School to bear on the otherwise rather diffuse statutes of the nascent German society.¹⁶ His voice was heard for good reason. As a discerning critic of the existing German art inventories, one-time contributor to the provincial Bohemian art topography, and editor of the far more ambitious and critically acclaimed *Österreichische Kunsttopographie* (Austrian Art Topography), Dvořák already had a wealth of experience behind him in the field of monument inventories. Insofar as they have a bearing on the DVfK and its series of publications, Dvořák's work on these inventories will also be considered here.

With the DVfK established, Bode asked three men to draw up separate programmes for the proposed monument publication: Georg Dehio, Max Dvořák, and Adolph Goldschmidt. Dvořák's experience stood him in good stead here. A comparison of the draft programmes and their distillate clearly shows – and superlatives are justified here – that the most ambitious series of publications in the history of German art history was substantially planned by the son of an archivist from Raudnitz. Finally, a few reservations as to the scope and feasibility of the *Denkmäler der deutschen Kunst* should also be heard, for ultimately the whole undertaking was to prove quite impracticable; highly admirable, perhaps, for its scientific idealism and rigour, but flawed on account of its disregard for economic and political realities.

Art history: international congress or German members' club?

In his opening address to the first ever congress of art history at Vienna in September 1873, Rudolf von Eitelberger underlined the importance of art scholarship for all cultured nations and asserted the existence of the discipline as a matter of fact. This relatively recent field of academic inquiry, he continued, was not

¹⁵ Heinrich Dilly, *Kunstgeschichte als Institution: Studien zur Geschichte einer Disziplin*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1979, 33–35.

¹⁶ Dvořák, 'Über den Deutschen Verein für Kunstwissenschaft. Vortrag, gehalten vor Historikern, 1909', Institut für Kunstgeschichte, Universität Wien (hereinafter IKUW), Nachlass Dvořák 12, Versch. Vorträge u. Rezensionen. Many thanks to Georg Vasold for his help and hospitality.

merely confined to Germany. On the contrary – England, France, Belgium, and Holland perhaps stood at an even higher level. ‘The higher the degree of education in a country, the more research there is in the field of art history, the more works of art history are read.’¹⁷

On the back of this proposition, Eitelberger proceeded to outline the aims of the congress, present and future. It would bring together like-minded scholars engaged in the research of art history as universal culture and it would organize their collaborative scientific endeavour formally, by committee. The main topics of discussion at the first congress would include the methodical cataloguing of public collections, secondary and tertiary art education, the production and dissemination of reproductions, the possible application of photography in these areas, and the conservation of artworks and monuments. Papers on these topics were presented and their conclusions put before the sixty or so delegates in the form of motions which were then debated, amended, and ratified. Thus, for instance, the congress heard a number of short reports on the restoration of paintings, drawings, buildings, and metalworks before Karl von Lützow formulated the collective view of the congress in the following resolution: ‘The congress for art history sees fit to pronounce that, with respect to artistic monuments, the first obligation of restoration is to be designated as conservation.’¹⁸ The only minor objection here was voiced by Moriz Thausing, who argued that this statement was largely redundant because the principle it expressed already went without saying among art historians anyway. But the resolution was accepted and discussion moved on, treating a few less fundamental questions before the second session was wound up for lunch.

The following day, the third session of the congress heard a lengthy letter from Prof. Anton Heinrich Springer (1825–1891), a Bohemian art historian based in Leipzig. Springer’s letter addressed most if not all of the points on the agenda, and included a proposal and programme for a new art historical society, or, more accurately, a ‘society for the application of photography to art historical scholarship’.¹⁹ It was to be called the Gesellschaft Albertina, with reference to the Viennese museum and in honour of Queen Victoria’s Prince Consort, who was supposedly a great advocate of technical reproduction. Springer’s eight-point programme can be summarized as follows: 1) The society will utilize photography for the benefit of art historical study and ‘provide the means necessary for producing a methodically organized sourcework on art’;²⁰ 2) it will publish photographs of outstanding, unknown, or insufficiently known artworks; 3) it will produce a regular annual publication as well as larger, irregular publications; 4) members receive the regular annual publication (*Jahresgabe*) free of charge; 5)

¹⁷ Vienna 1873, 447. See note 25 below for abbreviated forms of the congresses.

¹⁸ Vienna 1873, 493. In this much, the congress was well ahead of the more general shift towards modern conservation practice that began to assert itself within the relevant Austrian and German conservation institutions after 1900. This resolution is selected as an example for its relevance to Dvořák’s work as conservator general at the Austrian Central Commission. He would have supported the proposition wholeheartedly and may well have been aware of it.

¹⁹ Vienna 1873, 497–502, 522–25.

²⁰ Vienna 1873, 502.

membership costs 20 marks / 25 francs per annum; 6) the society is run by a committee elected by the congress of art history; 7) members paying 200 marks / 250 francs per annum are made committee members; 8) administrative and financial reports are to be sent out with the *Jahresgaben*.

The main aim of the proposed society, then, was the creation of a photographic collection of primary sources; what Springer called an *Urkundenschatz für Kunstgeschichte* (collection of art historical documents). It would consist of reproductions of 'the most outstanding drawings, selected and organized according to certain principles, [...] direct photographic reproductions of the great picture cycles and frescos, particularly those of Italy.'²¹ Reproduction costs were to be covered by membership fees, the incentives for joining being the *Jahresgaben*, consisting of a few choice photographs and facsimiles, as well as discounted prices on the major publications, which would reproduce, in glorious monochrome, entire bodies of work such as Raphael's madonnas, the cartoons for the stanze della segnatura, or Holbein's English portraits.

Springer had consulted a couple of publishers on the economic feasibility of his proposal. He found that if a thousand paying members could be convinced to subscribe, a substantial surplus of means could be procured for the production of the major publications, which would then naturally find a ready market and wide readership among the members themselves.²²

Income from membership fees	25,000 francs
Jahresgabe production costs	15,000 francs
Other expenses	1,000 francs
<hr/> Surplus	<hr/> 9,000 francs

The apparent simplicity of Springer's calculations convinced the congress. There were no significant objections, the self-evident Italian bias of the project went completely unremarked, and, on the suggestion of Richard Schöne (Bode's predecessor at the Berlin museums), the congress resolved to adopt the programme of the Gesellschaft Albertina with the provisional exclusion of point six: the election of a committee by the congress itself. On this point, a committee consisting of Schöne, Eitelberger, and Springer was proposed, but the two men who were present both declined. In any case, von Lützow remarked that Springer had explicitly requested that the committee include foreigners – the society was to be an international one. Eitelberger confirmed this intention on Springer's part, but had

²¹ Vienna 1873, 500.

²² This idea was by no means new to the German publishing industry. A recent, if completely unrelated book provides the following helpful definition: 'The subscription system was introduced to the German book market in the seventeenth century in order to facilitate the publication of books which, on account of their specialist content, their artistic layout, or their proposed size, would otherwise be difficult to sell. It also serves – for instance, in the case of artists' prints, engravings, multi-volume encyclopaedias, or scholarly literature – to ascertain an appropriate print run and to cover production costs.' Marcel Illetschko and Michaela Hirsch (eds), *Alfred Kubin / Reinhard Piper, Briefwechsel 1907–1953*, Munich: Piper Verlag GmbH, 2010, 626.

his own reservations, ostensibly for purely practical reasons, i.e. the shortage of foreign colleagues at the congress and the questionable efficacy of a committee that would thus inevitably be scattered across Europe. His doubts were laid aside, however, and the congress appointed a three-man committee to get the society up and running: Prof. Karl von Lützow (German, resident in Vienna), General Consul Joseph Archer Crowe (English, Düsseldorf), and Prof. Anton Heinrich Springer (Bohemian, Leipzig).

It seems little came of the Gesellschaft Albertina after the congress at Vienna. Twenty years later, a *Kunsthistorische Gesellschaft für photographische Publikationen* (Art Historical Society for Photographic Publications) was founded in Leipzig (1893) on the basis of Springer's plans, but even then it lacked the numbers and thus the funds to produce any sort of 'adequate publication of art historical monuments.'²³

Similarly, the congress itself was supposed to have reconvened at Berlin in 1875, but had to be postponed because the Prussians were busy putting their museums in order. The second congress eventually met at Nuremberg in 1893, and although its foreign contingent was significantly diminished, an official statute was approved in which internationalism was given pride of place: 'Article 1. The congress of art history aims to promote personal contact and the exchange of ideas between colleagues from all countries, to organize lectures and excursions, and to discuss the important questions and tasks of art scholarship.'²⁴ Thereafter, the congress met every two years or so, its numbers growing steadily in line with the gradual expansion of the discipline, its demographics dependent on location more than anything, even if the number of German speakers always remained disproportionately high [see table 1].²⁵ The bilingual printed matter from Budapest

²³ Its committee was exclusively German. See 'Kunsthistorische Gesellschaft für photographische Publikationen', *Kunstchronik: Wochenschrift für Kunst und Kunstgewerbe*, 5, 1894, 297–300; and August Schmarsow's report to the third congress of art history, Cologne 1894, 32. An annual folio of photographic reproductions was published under the name of this society from 1895 (with 18 heliogravures) to 1905, when it seems to have folded.

²⁴ Nuremberg 1893, 54.

²⁵ Figures here are drawn from the printed reports of the congress. Vienna 1873: 'Erster kunstwissenschaftlicher Congress in Wien, 1. bis 4. September 1873', *Mittheilungen des K. K. Oesterreichischen Museums für Kunst und Industrie*, 8, 1873, 445–46; Nuremberg 1893: *Offizieller Bericht über die Verhandlungen des Kunsthistorischen Kongresses zu Nürnberg*, 25. – 27. September 1893, n.d.; Cologne 1894: *Offizieller Bericht über die Verhandlungen des Kunsthistorischen Kongresses zu Köln*, 1. – 3. Oktober 1894, n.d.; Budapest 1896: *Offizieller Bericht über die Verhandlungen des Kunsthistorischen Kongresses zu Budapest*, 1. – 3. Oktober 1896, n.d.; Amsterdam 1898: *Offizieller Bericht über die Verhandlungen des Kunsthistorischen Kongresses in Amsterdam*, 29. September bis – 1. Oktober 1898, Nuremberg: 1899; Lübeck 1900: *Offizieller Bericht über die Verhandlungen des Kunsthistorischen Kongresses in Lübeck*, 16. bis 19. September 1900, Nuremberg: n.d.; Innsbruck 1902: *Offizieller Bericht über die Verhandlungen des VII. Internationalen Kunsthistorischen Kongresses in Innsbruck*, 9. – 12. September 1902, Berlin: n.d.; Darmstadt 1907: *Offizieller Bericht über die Verhandlungen des VIII. Internationalen Kunsthistorischen Kongresses in Darmstadt*, 23. – 26. September 1907, Leipzig: n.p., 1908; Munich 1909: *Offizieller Bericht über die Verhandlungen des IX. Internationalen Kunsthistorischen Kongresses in München*, 16. – 21. September 1909, Leipzig: n.p., 1911; Rome 1912: *Decimo congresso internazionale di storia dell'arte*, Rome: n.p., 1912.

in 1896 referred to the congress as ‘international’ for the first time, and by Innsbruck 1902 the *Kunsthistorischer Kongress* had officially become the *Internationaler Kunsthistorischer Kongress* – at least nominally – though in fact only five per cent of those present were not subject to one of the two German monarchs. Looking at the attendance figures prior to Rome 1912, it would be fair to say that ‘despite the international designation, the congress up to this time was a conference of Swiss, Austrian, and German art historians.’²⁶

The minutes of the Darmstadt congress in particular – besides their convenience for percentage calculations – make for fascinating reading. It was here that Bode first announced his plans for the DVfK; plans that called the international orientation of the congress of art history into question and seemed to represent a genuine threat to its continued existence.

Location	Year	Ger. %	Aus.-Hun. %	Other %	Total
Vienna	1873	31	56	13	64
Nuremberg	1893	75	17	8	63
Cologne	1894	84	6	10	94
Budapest	1896	19	66	14	104
Amsterdam	1898	21	10	69	146
Lübeck	1900	89	2	9	171
Innsbruck	1902	25	70	5	137
Darmstadt	1907	84	9	7	100
Munich	1909	82	7	11	318
Rome	1912	16	8	76	586

Table 1 Redacted attendance figures for the (International) Congress of Art History, 1873–1912, according to stated place of abode. ‘Others’ in 1907, for instance, included three Germans living in Italy. Thus the 8th International Congress of Art History, at Darmstadt, was a 96% ‘German’ affair. And while attendance clearly depended on location more than anything, German representation at non-German locations remained disproportionately high. Bode attended only in 1907. Dvořák was present at Munich and subsequently served on the executive committee for Rome, the first genuinely international congress of art history.

This much was already intimated in the agenda. As usual, the congress would begin with the routine business of reports from its local and provisional committees and the appointment of a new permanent committee (items 1–3). It would then consult on 4. the distribution of art historical literature for review; 5. ‘the foundation of an art historical society’; 6. the lack of an adequate art history journal in Germany; 7. photographic reproductions of German monuments, 8. Aby Warburg’s proposed international iconographic society; followed by any other proposals and motions. But it was item ten, in conjunction with item five, that caused the stir: ‘The future of the congress of art history’.²⁷ Early on in the congress at Darmstadt, after the initial reports had been heard, the assembly was duly asked to nominate a new permanent committee – an easy enough task, one would have

²⁶ Dilly, *Kunstgeschichte als Institution*, 35. This fact was already recognized by contemporaries; see H.W.S., ‘Art in Germany’, *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs*, 12, 1907, 116–18.

²⁷ Darmstadt 1907, 4.

thought. But a certain nationalist element, namely Professors Oechelhäuser (Karlsruhe) and Dehio (Straßburg), argued that this would be impossible before item ten had been discussed. How could they sensibly elect a competent committee before they were clear as to the future of the congress? As chair of the session and representative of the former provisional committee, Joseph Strzygowski conceded that there had indeed been some doubts about the future, although these had been dispelled. He nevertheless acceded to Oechelhäuser's objection and agreed to shift the election of a permanent committee to the end of the agenda. Clearly, item five had set an implicit question mark after item ten, which would thus have to be treated before item three; item four was then skipped because it and the remaining items could for the most part be subsumed under item five. Or in other words, the DVfK was promoted to the top of the agenda and Karl Koetschau (subsequently its secretary) took the floor.

Koetschau began by pointing out the major weaknesses of the international congress: its informal, irregular meetings were unable to provide the continuity that art history as a discipline required and, more importantly, it lacked the funding necessary to implement any of its resolutions and plans. The obvious solution would be a national society with fee-paying membership and, eventually, state subsidies. A working programme could then be drawn up to ensure efficient organization, with working groups, deadlines, and proper remuneration for intellectual labour. As it happened, earlier that year a small group of art historians had been called to a meeting in Berlin with Bode and Friedrich von Althoff, a Prussian civil servant from the Ministry of Education, to discuss an organization along precisely these lines. This conference had decided

to establish a society that will undertake to solve the tasks that we, due to a lack of means, have not been able to carry out, and much more besides. This will free up our congress. It will no longer have to confine itself to those practical things and will be able to dedicate itself to the development of our discipline. Furthermore, it will be able to become a real international congress by trying to encourage other countries to establish societies similar to the one being formed in Germany, such that in future the congress would be a sort of assembly of delegates from the various societies. The Berlin society, though, and I want to underline this point, the Berlin society has a strongly accentuated national tendency. Having spent so long looking around abroad it's high time we put our own house in order.²⁸

Sold on the prospect of a new German art historical society with the moral, if not financial backing of the Prussian government, some of those present at this preliminary meeting in Berlin had at first considered giving up on the international congress entirely. Koetschau had initially thought that the new German society would render it superfluous, and Strzygowski openly admitted that 'a few of us

²⁸ Darmstadt 1907, 16. The conference met at the recently completed Kaiser Friedrich Museum on Museum Island, probably in the summer of 1907.

actually wanted to dash the congress or just let it die out.²⁹ Ultimately though, they had decided that the congress should continue to exist; as Koetschau said, it was to become a forum for theoretical discussion and eventually an international congress proper.

By contrast, the ‘accentuated national tendency’ of the DVfK was presented to the eighth congress as a substantial counterweight to its own superficial internationalism and patent lack of means. A draft statute was circulated according to which the principal aims of the DVfK would be ‘to further art historical knowledge and to elevate artistic life in Germany.’³⁰ When Bode addressed the congress at Darmstadt he outlined the prehistory of the proposed society, its target membership, and some of the many tasks it had set itself. Friedrich von Althoff was credited as its progenitor, but also as a man with an excellent track record in raising funds by way of popular fee-paying societies. ‘He’s financed a good dozen such institutions in this way; I mention here only the Society for Airship Travel and a number of other societies he’s called into life within the education sector.’³¹ Based on a similar financial model, the membership and funds of the DVfK were to be drawn from the broadest possible circles:

Politicians, members of the Reichstag from all the various parties, and a number of art lovers from all over Germany will be invited to join along with the art historians; and not just from within the German Reich, but from the entire German-speaking region, namely also from Austria and Switzerland, where we have many diligent friends and colleagues. It will even extend beyond these borders where other Germans are concerned. Thus the Verein is not just intended as a Verein for Germany, but as a German Verein in the broader sense, and the tasks it has set itself are German tasks in the broadest possible sense.³²

Broad, then, in the pan-German sense. But the tasks Bode calls ‘German’ here largely coincided with those of the international congress: the draft statute of the DVfK included plans for a new journal, a bibliography of the history of art, and reproductions of artworks in the form of a monument publication – all items on the congress agenda (see above). The only difference was a reduction of scope, from

²⁹ Darmstadt 1907, 26.

³⁰ Bode, *Satzungen des Deutschen Vereins für Kunstwissenschaft, Eingetragener Verein*, Berlin: Universitäts-Buchdruckerei von Gustav Schade, 1908, §1.

³¹ Darmstadt 1907, 19. Bode would certainly not have mentioned this particular society a year later. Graf Zeppelin’s *Gesellschaft zur Förderung der Luftschiffahrt* (est. 1898) suffered its first major setback in August 1908, when dirigible airship LZ 4 crashed and burned near Stuttgart, thus failing to complete a twenty-four-hour military test flight. See the leading article in the morning edition of the *Neue Freie Presse*, 6 August 1908, 1. Happily, no one was seriously injured, and the spectacular incident was portrayed as nothing more than a temporary hiccup in the onward march of science and mankind’s mastery of (air) space. The DVfK and the *Gesellschaft zur Förderung der Luftschiffahrt*, it seems to me, have more in common than Althoff’s model of popular financing.

³² Darmstadt 1907, 19.

international to national, and the overlap of intentions obviously represented a challenge to the existence of the congress. Bode was therefore careful to point out that Althoff's statute was merely a draft. Similarly, the meeting in Berlin had been no more than a preliminary assembly; the constitutive assembly, which we will come to presently, was yet to take place. The congress was being consulted in advance rather than simply co-opted or outflanked by the Prussians, and the Bismarck of the Berlin museums diplomatically appealed to its members for their input, advice, and support.

Once Bode had finished his presentation, the floor was opened to debate. Remarkably, nobody took the opportunity to speak; there was stunned silence – or tacit approval. After a brief pause, the collective response of the congress, or rather lack of it, was given proper articulation in a motion put forward by Von Seidlitz: 'The proposed foundation of the Verein is received with unanimous applause; we expect it to promote our future endeavours and express our thanks to Excellency Althoff for his efforts on our behalf.' With that, the nascent DVfK had obtained the blessing of the international congress – which was then immediately threatened with dissolution by the abovementioned nationalist faction. The debate that ensued is worth reproducing here in abridged form:

Oechelhäuser: We need to be clear about this: does our congress, as an international congress, still have any justification alongside the newly founded society? For even under its provisional board the society has already come so far that it will soon be a fact, and a welcome one at that.

Dehio: I am entirely of the same opinion as Professor Oechelhäuser on this. It is impossible to debate the individual issues before we know whether we are to be a German national congress or an international one. The outcome of the discussion will inevitably be completely different depending on which position we take. It is absolutely necessary that we decide whether we are a German congress or an international one.

Von Seidlitz: Is anyone proposing the motion that we give up the international congress?

Interjections from the floor: No!

Von Seidlitz: Then we need only proceed with our discussions on the assumption that the international congress shall continue to exist.

Dehio: The way point ten in the printed matter is formulated seems to call that into question. In any case, the notion of an international congress certainly isn't embodied in this assembly. There are perhaps a few foreign guests among us...

Interjection: Not just guests; members!

Dehio: ...then excuse me if I've been misinformed.

Strzygowski [chairing the session]: The international character of our congress is not to be shaken. Its character may have fluctuated up until the Innsbruck congress, but since then we have definitely been international, and even if we are not yet international, we will have to become so now. [...] So, I would like to ask you to assume that the congress shall continue to exist as an international congress for as long as it is in our hands.³³

Thus despite the nationalist agitation of Dehio and Oechelhäuser, the congress of art history as a whole resolved to stick to its internationalist statute, with Koetschau, Warburg, and especially Strzygowski speaking up in favour of its outward-looking orientation. And these were more than mere empty words: the attendance figures for the congress at Rome (which Dvořák helped to organize) show that an art historical congress on a transnational basis was still feasible, even in the age of nationalism, as late as 1912.³⁴

The foregoing overview of the history of the congress, however, also evidences a marked nationalist turn within German art history after the turn of the century; an introversion that was prefigured by the *Tagungen für Denkmalpflege* (from 1900) and the founding of the *Deutscher Bund Heimatschutz* (1904).³⁵ The

³³ Darmstadt 1907, 21–24. 'Oechelhäuser: Wir müssen uns darüber klar werden: Hat unser Kongreß als internationaler Kongreß noch neben dem neugegründeten Verein eine Existenzberechtigung, denn der Verein ist ja bereits in seinen Vorbereitungen unter einem provisorischen Vorstande so weit gediehen, daß er bald eine Tatsache sein wird, der wir mit Freuden gegenüberreten. [...] | Dehio: Ich bin entschieden derselben Ansicht wie Professor Oechelhäuser. Es ist unmöglich, die einzelnen Fragen zu erörtern, bevor wir wissen, ob wir ein deutsch-nationaler oder ein internationaler Kongreß sein werden. Die Diskussion wird absolut anders ausfallen müssen, je nach dem Standpunkt. Es ist dringend notwendig, daß wir uns entscheiden, ob wir einen deutschen Kongreß oder einen internationalen Kongreß bilden. | v. Seidlitz: Ist denn der Antrag gestellt worden, den internationalen Kongreß aufzugeben? | Zurufe: Nein. v. Seidlitz: Dann würden wir doch nur weiter zu beraten haben über das Weiterbestehen der internationalen Kongresse. | Dehio: Nach der Fassung des Punktes 10 in der Drucksache konnte es als zweifelhaft angesehen werden. Jedenfalls ist der Begriff eines internationalen Kongresses in dieser Versammlung doch nicht verkörpert. Es ist ja möglich, daß wir Gäste aus fremden Ländern bei uns sehen... | Zuruf: Nicht Gäste, sondern Mitglieder. | Dehio: Dann bitte ich um Verzeihung, wenn ich falsch orientiert bin. [...] | Strzygowski: An dem internationalen Charakter unseres Kongresses können wir nicht rütteln. Bis zum Innsbrucker Kongreß war der Charakter schwankend, seitdem aber sind wir definitiv international, und wenn wir es noch nicht wären, müßten wir es jetzt werden.'

³⁴ This promise was dashed by the First World War, as academics on all sides consciously employed artistic heritage as ammunition in the war of words. The first post-war congress met at Paris in 1921. It is perhaps worth noting here that the *Kunstgeschichtliche Kongresse* are not mentioned at all in the official history of the Comité International d'Histoire de l'Art (est. 1930). See Thiery Dufrière, 'A Short History of CIHA', 2007, <http://www.esteticas.unam.mx/CIHA/about.html>, retrieved 30 June 2011.

³⁵ For the introspective nationalist turn considered in this paragraph see Günter Bandmann, 'Die Gründung des Deutschen Vereins für Kunstwissenschaft im Lichte der Gegenwart', *Zeitschrift für Kunstwissenschaft*, 13, 1959, 5; and for a less searching history of the DVfK from

international congress had started out, in Eitelberger's hands, as a collaborative forum for the study of universal visual culture and had subsequently consolidated this international position in its statutes. Similarly, Springer's unrealized Gesellschaft Albertina was to have been consciously internationalist, even if its focus would predominantly have been Italian art. But by 1907 there seems to have been a relatively widespread sense within the discipline – no doubt exacerbated by the predominant Germanness of the congress itself – that German art history had for too long concentrated its efforts on Italy and Greece at the expense of its indigenous monuments.³⁶ The Germans could boast a well-funded archaeological institute in Rome, a thriving institute for art history in Florence, and a large portion of the credit for having rescued the Acropolis. What about German art? Writing shortly after the Darmstadt congress, Bode was able to claim that German art historians had 'produced a far greater number of monumental publications on the Italian art of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance than Italy itself,' although the credit for this achievement was now to be perceived in the negative: 'Even art scholarship,' he complained, 'is not immune to the tiresome old German habit of enthusing over everything foreign and of thus neglecting and denigrating its own homeland.'³⁷

The DVfK was pitched to the congress – in the form of a German member's club – as a remedy to this unpatriotic state of affairs. Its aims and subscription appeals drew heavily on national and pan-German sentiment; financially rewarding ideologies that Springer's more ecumenical, non-starter society had failed to exploit.

The founding aims of the Deutscher Verein für Kunstwissenschaft

The main impetus for the DVfK can be traced back to 1905, when Bode was asked to draw up a feasibility report on a new, centrally administered German monument inventory. As he recalled in his memoirs:

Ministerial Director Althoff had asked me for a report on the rather ill thought-out suggestion of a certain Centre Party politician: instead of the provincial authorities producing monument inventories, as had hitherto been the case, a new, large scale inventory was to be made centrally, by the Reich. I tried to demonstrate how absurd this plan was, that it would entail unnecessary cost and effort, that the work would inevitably have to be given to the same people who were already making the inventories in the

roughly the same temporal perspective see 'Fünfzig Jahre Deutscher Verein für Kunstwissenschaft e.V.', *Zeitschrift für Kunstwissenschaft*, 12, 1958, 1–12.

³⁶ One wildly misguided attempt to compensate for the Italian bias of German art history was the outlandish thesis that the masters of the Italian Renaissance had in fact been Germans – a claim that was taken seriously in some quarters: 'In his anthropological study on the Germans and the Renaissance in Italy [Leipzig 1905], Ludwig Woltmann has provided convincing evidence that 90% of the Italian genius has to be completely or predominantly ascribed to the German race.' Joseph August Lux, 'Die Baukunst der Germanen, von Albrecht Haupt', *Hohe Warte*, 4, 1907/08, 372.

³⁷ Bode, 'Der deutsche Verein für Kunstwissenschaft', *Internationale Wochenschrift für Wissenschaft, Kunst und Technik*, 23 November 1907, 1–6.

individual states, and that they would be none too pleased about that sort of supervision. But we were to proceed with haste and energy on another task, for which the inventories had already done part of the preparatory work, namely a publication of our German monuments in the grand style. This was the greatest and most important task of German art history. Tackling this would put us ahead of all other nations in the field. [...] The idea of a society similar to our Kaiser Friedrich Museum Society occurred to me, only this time extending beyond the Reich to all the German-speaking territories and cultures.³⁸

The first point to be drawn from the above is that the DVfK was basically conceived as a means to an end: the ‘publication of our German monuments in the grand style’. Just as Bode had set up the Kaiser Friedrich Museum Society in 1896 to encourage wealthy benefactors to support the construction of a new museum (now the Bode Museum), so the DVfK would finance its chief undertaking, the monument publication, by way of membership fees and donations rather than government subsidies.³⁹ In this much, Bode was basing his financial model directly on that of Springer’s society, only this time he was counting on a far higher, sustained level of interest on the part of the German-speaking public.

Secondly, the proposed monument publication was to be distinguished from the countless monument inventories and art topographies that had been diligently and laboriously collated in the German provinces, principally for conservation purposes, from the Gründerzeit onwards.⁴⁰ In his report to Althoff, a memorandum entitled ‘Monumenta artis Germaniae: the monuments of German art in image and word, commissioned by the German Reich, published by the Deutscher Verein für Kunstwissenschaft’, Bode argued that a new monument inventory would be largely superfluous, since the existing inventories were already well advanced, and in many cases complete. He conceded that their execution had come in for some justified criticism – ‘they are completely inconsistent in their format of publication and illustrations, as well as in the periods and the artworks they treat, and they have all too often been produced by staff with insufficient training’⁴¹ – but he was disinclined to start all over again and thus cover old ground. Instead, he suggested a richly illustrated ‘monumental history of German art’ based on the research contained in the existing inventories, but structured according to historical

³⁸ Bode, *Mein Leben*, I, 338–39.

³⁹ Bode initially envisaged central government funding for the project, but this plan was dropped in favour of a reliance on public interest, at least while the project got underway. Before long, support from individual states was forthcoming and in 1914 the DVfK sought to obtain major subsidies from the Prussian parliament. See Bode, ‘Monumenta Artis Germaniae, die Denkmäler der deutschen Kunst in Bild und Wort, herausgegeben im Auftrage des Deutschen Reichs vom Deutschen Verein für Kunstwissenschaft’, draft typescript dated 1905, ZASMB, Nachlass Bode 353, 3; and Bode, *Denkschrift*, 1914.

⁴⁰ For an overview of the German monument inventories from Schinkel onwards see Paul Ortwin Rave, ‘Anfänge und Wege der deutschen Inventarisierung’, *Deutsche Kunst und Denkmalpflege*, 11, 1953, 73–90.

⁴¹ Bode, ‘Monumenta Artis Germaniae’, 1905, ZASMB, Nachlass Bode 353, 1.

succession and individual art forms rather than internal geographical divisions. If the existing art topographies were antiquated and amateurish, the new monument publication would follow the rigorous principles of modern historical science; the proposed title, *Monumenta artis Germaniae* (MAG), consciously harked back to the exemplary *Monumenta Germaniae historica* (MGH), a multi-volume critical edition of medieval textual sources that had helped to establish Germany as a world leader in the field of historical scholarship in the nineteenth century.⁴²

Bode's memorandum included a loose sixteen-point outline of the enormous undertaking. The MAG would stretch from late antiquity to the eighteenth century, covering one and a half millennia of religious and vernacular architecture, sculpture, applied art, book illustration, and painting. It was to include monographs on masters such as Cranach, Dürer, and Grünewald, and would perhaps even appropriate Van Eyck, Rubens, and Rembrandt under the broad umbrella of Germanic cultural heritage. Such a history, which was apparently completely lacking, would 'provide a true picture of the incredible development of German art in its principal phases.'⁴³

It was recognized that all this would take time, decades even. But the cultural rewards would be worthwhile. The monument publication would attract a younger generation of art historians to the study of German art, 'which has hitherto been undeservedly neglected.' A cheaper, parallel publication could also be produced alongside the monumental editions for the benefit of university students and the education of the masses. Most importantly, Bode argued, the publication

would put Germany ahead of all other countries in the field, and rightly so, for no other country since the beginning of the Christian era can point to so rich and diverse an artistic development, with the possible exception of Italy. If a monumental work such as this is put off any longer, other nations will no doubt get ahead of us with similar grand publications of their own art; namely France and Italy, where for around a decade now scholarship has been focussed explicitly on the research of national art – in an almost chauvinistic manner and to the universal approbation of the public.⁴⁴

Again, the strongly accentuated national tendencies of the DVfK and its actual *raison d'être*, the projected MAG, are evident not only from Bode's 1930 autobiography, but also from this memorandum at the inception of the project, where cultural antagonisms are deployed as emotive justifications for monumental art history.

⁴² Like the MAG, the MGH started out under the aegis of a small, poorly funded society – Karl von Stein's *Gesellschaft für ältere deutsche Geschichtskunde* (est. 1819). State funding was obtained in 1834 after the success of the first publications (from 1826), and the MGH was incorporated by the Prussian Academy of Sciences in 1874. M. D. Knowles, 'Presidential Address: Great Historical Enterprises III. The Monumenta Germaniae Historica', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 10, 1960, 129–50; Bandmann, 'Gründung', 12.

⁴³ Bode, 'Monumenta Artis Germaniae', 1905, ZASMB, Nachlass Bode 353, 3.

⁴⁴ Bode, 'Monumenta Artis Germaniae', 1905, ZASMB, Nachlass Bode 353, 4.

In many respects, Dvořák was dealing with similar issues at around this time: monument inventories, expansive art histories, and also, though to a lesser extent, national antagonisms within the Austrian cultural sphere. When he succeeded Riegl at the Austrian Central Commission, namely, Dvořák was saddled with the enormous task of producing the long-overdue *Österreichische Kunsttopographie*.

At this stage, with the inventorization of monuments in the German Reich proceeding apace, and with an independent Bohemian art topography beginning to ask questions of any unified conception of Habsburg artistic heritage, the centralized monument authorities in Vienna still had no serviceable list of the thousands of monuments they were supposed to be protecting. A first attempt to chart the art of the empire had been made by Eitelberger and Heider in the late 1850s, and while its coverage was consciously sporadic and temporally limited, the two handsome volumes of their *Mittelalterliche Kunstdenkmale des Österreichischen Kaiserstaates* (Medieval Artistic Monuments of the Austrian Empire) will certainly have pleased the young Franz Joseph I, to whom they were dedicated.⁴⁵ But the cost of producing these books brought an early end to the project, and for the time being all further monument research was confined to the scholarly journals of the Central Commission. The work of inventorization was then resumed in the 1880s by its new president, Alexander Freiherr von Helfert, by which time the daunting size of the task had been diminished – roughly halved in fact – by the Compromise of 1867 and the establishment of an autonomous Hungarian monument authority. Taking the crownland of Carinthia as a test case, Helfert chose to organize his new monument inventory along French lines. The resulting volume, which had taken the best part of ten years to complete, was unanimously declared a failure.⁴⁶

Dvořák first came to the problem of inventorization in 1902, when he reviewed a series of publications that was being issued at a rather alarming rate by the Archaeological Commission of the Bohemian Academy of Sciences in Prague; its *Topographie der historischen und kunst-Denkmale im Königreich Böhmen* (Topography of the Historic and Artistic Monuments of the Kingdom of Bohemia).⁴⁷ This particular project had been conceived in 1894 and was then rapidly implemented with funding from the provincial Bohemian government. The first ten volumes appeared between 1897 and 1902, with the conspicuous absence of any direct financial support from the imperial government in Vienna. Despite Dvořák's own peripheral involvement with the Bohemian art topography (he later contributed to the volume on his

⁴⁵ Gustav Heider and Rudolf Eitelberger (eds), *Mittelalterliche Kunstdenkmale des Österreichischen Kaiserstaates*, 2 vols, Stuttgart: Ebner & Seubert, 1858–60. Particularly interesting here is Eitelberger's art historiography in the wake of Austria's loss of Lombardy (1859) to the nascent Italian nation. In his history of 'Die Kirche des heil. Ambrosius zu Mailand', II, 1–34, he effectively lays claim to the ceded territory by citing the supposedly Germanic origins of its monuments.

⁴⁶ K. K. Central-Commission, *Kunst-Topographie des Herzogthums Kärnten*, Vienna: Kubasta & Voigt, 1889, esp. Helfert's foreword, v.

⁴⁷ *Topographie der historischen und kunst-Denkmale im Königreich Böhmen von der Urzeit bis zum Anfange des XIX. Jahrhunderts*, 51 vols, Prague: Archaeologische Kommission bei der böhmischen Franz-Josef-Akademie für Wissenschaften, Literatur und Kunst, 1897–1934.

birthplace, Schloß Raudnitz), his assessment of the first ten volumes was curt: 'The inventories are being published in Czech and German, and as far as I can tell they are on the whole well produced, if rather inconsistent. The illustrations often leave much to be desired; pictures by dilettantes should only be used in exceptional cases.'⁴⁸ His criticisms here could be interpreted as nothing more than an oblique attack on Josef Mocker, the restoration architect and Czech nationalist who produced the majority of the offending drawings. But they may also have been partially motivated by an overarching Habsburg patriotism. From the perspective of the Central Commission in Vienna, this flurry of art historical activity in the Slavic north will have left the core German-speaking crownlands looking, to borrow Schinkel's words, rather 'naked and barren' by comparison, 'like a new colony in a formerly uninhabited country.'⁴⁹ The Bohemian art topography, then, effectively put pressure on the Central Commission to finally get Austria's own artistic heritage on the map [figure 1].



Figure 1 Art topographies in the Habsburg empire, showing coverage up to 1902 (above) and 1918 (below)

⁴⁸ Dvořák, 'Topographie der historischen und kunst-Denkmale im Königreiche Böhmen', *Mitteilungen des Instituts für Österreichische Geschichtsforschung*, 23, 1902, 371; *Topographie der historischen und kunst-Denkmale im Königreich Böhmen von der Urzeit bis zum Anfange des XIX. Jahrhunderts*, 51 vols, Prague: Archaeologische Kommission bei der böhmischen Franz-Josef-Akademie für Wissenschaften, Literatur und Kunst, 1897-1934, xxvii: Max Dvořák & Bohumil Matějka, *Der politische Bezirk Raudnitz. Teil II. Raudnitzer Schloss*, 1910.

⁴⁹ Karl Friedrich Schinkel, 'Memorandum zur Denkmalpflege' [1815] in Norbert Huse (ed.), *Denkmalpflege: Deutsche Texte aus drei Jahrhunderten*, Munich: Verlag C. H. Beck, 1984, 70.

Dvořák did so conscientiously. As preparation for the *Österreichische Kunsttopographie* he made a thorough study of the existing German inventories and, like Bode, he found them wanting. In a programmatic article published in 1906, Dvořák too compared the German topographies to the analogous MGH, and thus art history to history proper.⁵⁰ The result was not favourable. Whereas the MGH had been followed by 'review upon review, discussion upon discussion,' the publication of the topographies had proven scientifically sterile.

I know of no serious or significant work of art history that has been inspired by or based on the art topographies. Long rows of books stand unused in the libraries and people seldom look anything up in them. This has become all the more conspicuous recently, and especially over the last few years, as people have increasingly started looking into the history of German art.⁵¹

As the causes of this sterility Dvořák identified a long list of shortcomings in the topographies. Due to a desire for consistent coverage, coupled with a lack of critical judgement, significant artistic monuments were often treated as summarily as the insignificant. An important cycle of sixteenth-century frescos, for instance, might be given as little space as a relatively unimportant group of gravestones. At the same time, whole periods were being neglected as a result of the compilers' personal stylistic preferences, which more often than not meant the marginalization of antique and baroque art. The descriptions of the monuments themselves were often vague to the point of non-statement and lacking in even the most basic provenance data. This last point, for Dvořák, was the indispensable precondition of any further art historical investigation. A basic requirement of the topographies had to be the provision of accurate information 'on the date of origin, the artist, and the general and regional significance of the artworks under discussion, the groups they can be associated with and the historical questions and problems they pose'.⁵² And if such information was not immediately to hand, it was to be ascertained by thorough research of archival sources:

just as one can quite rightly require that a publication of historical documents should employ all the available material when dealing with critical questions, so one can also expect the art topographies, if they are to be more than administrative inventories, to draw upon every available source, at least to the extent necessary for determining the chronology and style of the inventorized monument as accurately as possible.⁵³

In short, Dvořák drew two lessons from the failings of the German topographies. If the planned *Österreichische Kunsttopographie* was to be of any use to

⁵⁰ Dvořák, 'Deutsche Kunsttopographien I', *Kunstgeschichtliche Anzeigen*, 3, 1906, 59–65.

⁵¹ Dvořák, 'Deutsche Kunsttopographien I', 60.

⁵² Dvořák, 'Deutsche Kunsttopographien I', 62.

⁵³ Dvořák, 'Deutsche Kunsttopographien I', 63.

art historians – and thus more than merely an administrative list for conservation purposes – it would have to be, firstly, more critical and objective in its selection of monuments, and secondly, far more rigorous in its scientific treatment of them. And according to the ideal demands of the historical method that Dvořák inherited from his tutor Wickhoff, rigorous scholarly treatment meant the exploitation of every available archival source, every relevant document, and every related monument.

The ambitious programme of the *Österreichische Kunsttopographie* was laid out along these lines and fully articulated in Dvořák's introduction to the first volume, which appeared in 1907.⁵⁴ It was reviewed favourably on the whole, even with a degree of admiring envy on the part of the German art historians. Paul Clemen, conservator for the Rhineland, ranked it above every other German art topography in terms of its broad scope and scientific precision, astonished at the seemingly limitless finances of the Central Commission.⁵⁵ Even Georg Dehio, whose concise *Handbuch der deutschen Kunstdenkmäler* (Handbook of German Monuments) was a distant competitor in the inventory market, eventually gave his seal of approval to the undertaking.⁵⁶ There were of course criticisms and reservations too, not least regarding the feasibility and incalculable duration of the enormous project. But suffice it to say here, Dvořák's critique of the German topographies and his programme for their Austrian equivalent essentially served to consolidate his position as one of the leading German art historians of his generation. It was in this capacity that he was invited to attend the constitutive assembly of the DVfK on 7 March 1908.

'On Bode's personal invitation I travelled to Frankfurt with a fixed programme: that of the Vienna School.'⁵⁷ These words are taken from the unpublished notes of a lecture that Dvořák delivered to an audience of Austrian historians in 1909. The subject of the lecture was the foundation of the DVfK, its aim evidently to drum up support for the society in Austria. Any German nationalist

⁵⁴ Dvořák, 'Einleitung' in Hans Tietze and others, *Österreichische Kunsttopographie. Band I: Die Denkmale des politischen Bezirkes Krems in Niederösterreich*, Vienna: A. Schroll, 1907, xiii–xxii. For the secondary literature see Herta Kuben, 'Max Dvořák als Denkmalpfleger in der Nachfolge Alois Riegls. Ein Beitrag über Inhalt, Aufgaben, Ziele und Probleme österreichischer Denkmalforschung und Denkmalpflege am Beginn des 20. Jahrhunderts', unpublished Diplomarbeit, Universität Wien, 1993, 41–58; Eva Frodl-Kraft, 'Die Österreichische Kunsttopographie: Betrachtungen sub specie fundatoris', *Österreichische Zeitschrift für Kunst und Denkmalpflege*, 28, 1974, 114–30; Géza Hajós, 'Riegls Gedankengut in Dvořáks Einleitung zur Österreichischen Kunsttopographie', *Österreichische Zeitschrift für Kunst und Denkmalpflege*, 28, 1974, 138–43.

⁵⁵ Paul Clemen to Dvořák, Bonn, 28 July 1908, IKUW, Nachlass Dvořák 15, Monumenta artis Germaniae; Paul Clemen, 'Der Deutsche Verein für Kunstwissenschaft und seine Veröffentlichungen', *Neue Freie Presse*, 27 October 1919, 2.

⁵⁶ At first his reviews were highly critical, principally of Tietze's text and the lack of architectural drawings. See Georg Dehio, 'Österreichische Kunsttopographie' and 'Berichtigung?', *Repertorium für Kunstwissenschaft*, 32–34, 1909–1911, 192–97, 293–94, 276–77, 470–71; Georg Dehio, *Handbuch der Deutschen Kunstdenkmäler*, 5 vols, Berlin: Wasmuth, 1905–12.

⁵⁷ Dvořák, 'Über den Deutschen Verein für Kunstwissenschaft', IKUW, Nachlass Dvořák 12, 12.

overtones are thus understandably absent from Dvořák's account, though he was certainly well aware of them. Instead he focused on his own decisive role in the formation of the DVfK as an emissary of the Vienna School and its principles of art history. These he defined as follows:

Since Thausing's time, art history in Vienna – thanks to its connection with the Institute for Austrian Historical Research – has developed in constant conjunction with the other historical sciences. As a result, and in contrast to other tendencies, it has always seen its principal task in determining historical facts in a strictly scientific manner; on the basis of a thorough critical investigation of the monuments concerned, and without recourse to any aprioristic theories.⁵⁸

As a highly personal account of how these scientific principles were successfully exported to Berlin via Frankfurt, Dvořák's fragmentary lecture notes are to be treated with due circumspection. But since they are not substantially contradicted elsewhere, and since they represent one of the most detailed available sources on the foundation of the DVfK, they are well worth summarizing here.⁵⁹

Dvořák arrived in Frankfurt a day before the constitutive assembly for a final consultation on the draft statute that had first been made public at Darmstadt six months previously. Althoff, Bode, Dvořák, and around twenty other 'trusted men' were present at this meeting, which began at eight in the evening and was scheduled to last an hour. In the event though, discussion ran on until four in the morning. Dvořák reports these minutiae with a perceptible sense of self-satisfaction, for he personally instigated the heated debate that kept the old guard from their beds that night; a debate over the aims of the DVfK. On this point even the two founders were not in complete agreement. According to Althoff's statute the activities of the new society were to concentrate on the popularization of art by way of educational measures such as the introduction of compulsory art history classes from elementary school upwards. Bode on the other hand saw the greatest task of the DVfK in the systematic publication of German monuments for academic purposes. The difference was basically one of breadth versus depth. Bode had been willing to accept Althoff's democratizing ideals simply for the sake of having the old man on board, for he brought the financial support of a number of big industrialists to the project, even if he was soon to retire from the Ministry of Education. Conversely, Althoff had only consented to the idea of a costly monument publication on the proviso that a cheaper, more accessible series be produced in parallel for the benefit of the masses.⁶⁰

⁵⁸ Dvořák, 'Über den Deutschen Verein für Kunstwissenschaft', IKUW, Nachlass Dvořák 12, 12–13.

⁵⁹ For the best published source on the Frankfurt assembly see 'Der Deutschen Verein für Kunstwissenschaft', *Kunstchronik*, 19, 1908, 330–32. Dvořák further developed his theoretical approach to art history in an essay 'Über die dringendsten methodischen Erfordernisse der Erziehung zur kunstgeschichtlichen Forschung', *Die Geisteswissenschaften*, 1, 1914, 932–36, 958–61.

⁶⁰ Bode, *Mein Leben*, I, 339–40.

The representative of the Vienna School was not so willing to compromise on matters of principle and aligned himself staunchly with Bode's publication plans which, as we have seen, corresponded to his own hopes for art history. So when Dvořák was given the opportunity to comment on the statute at the evening consultation he advised strongly against the popularization agenda. The public interest in historic art was already present in abundance, he claimed, citing the *Bund Heimatschutz* as evidence of a vigorous artistic culture in Germany. Any further efforts to bring art to the masses would therefore be superfluous. What the discipline did need though, and this as a basic precondition for any sort of art historical education, was a deepening of the scientific knowledge of German art through a systematic survey of all existing material. Again, he called for an organization akin to that of the MGH, something that would inevitably require the undivided resources of the DVfK and its members.

Ministerial Director Althoff was clearly taken aback by the nerve of this thirty-something Bohemian, for he responded 'haughtily and almost impolitely' to the demolition of his well-laid retirement plans. But the initial damage had been done, and was completed the following day at the constitutive assembly, where Dvořák's position was reinforced first by Alfred Lichtwark, then by Franz Adickes, the Mayor of Frankfurt. Adickes too 'drew parallels with the foundation of the *Monumenta Germaniae historica* – the importance of which he knew better than many of the art historians present – and his inspiring words challenged the assembly to live up to the founders of this great historical work by creating something similar for the history of German art.'⁶¹ When a ballot was finally taken on the draft statute, a narrow majority elected to have the detailed paragraphs on popular art education omitted, and the publication of the MAG was thereby moved to the forefront of the DVfK agenda.

In his 1909 lecture on the DVfK, Dvořák may have slightly overstated the significance of his own contribution to the Frankfurt negotiations – there were plenty of art historians at the constitutive assembly who shared his views, and it is probable that the shift in the society's aims, from popularization to publication, would have occurred without Dvořák's intervention anyway. But for the sake of effective publicity – bearing in mind that his audience consisted of prospective Austrian members – Dvořák presented the monument publication as an existing desideratum of Vienna School art history and, by extension, the German society as an Austrian concern. And he was quite entitled to do so, for his contribution to the programme of the monument publication itself was indeed substantial.

The Monuments of German Art

In point of fact, when the DVfK was officially registered in June 1908, most of Althoff's ideals seem to have been retained, at least on paper. By all accounts he was a stubborn negotiator, so he may well have insisted on the inclusion of the rejected paragraphs, contravening the democratic process in order to bring about his

⁶¹ Dvořák, 'Über den Deutschen Verein für Kunstwissenschaft', IKUW, Nachlass Dvořák 12, 19–20.

democratization of art. In any case, the main substance of the finalized statute is contained in the first clause:

- § 1. The Deutscher Verein für Kunstwissenschaft aims to further art historical knowledge and to elevate artistic life in Germany. It has set itself the following tasks in particular:
- 1) to provide an illustrated art historical journal and a systematic review of art historical literature;
 - 2) to support the production of art handbooks and photographic visual materials, as well as other art historical works;
 - 3) to bring about the complete inventorization and systematic publication of the monuments of German art (*Monumenta artis Germaniae*) using existing preparatory works where appropriate;
 - 4) to work towards the creation and maintenance of art historical institutions and connections to suitable locations at home and abroad;
 - 5) to lobby for the establishment of travel stipends for contemporary artists;
 - 6) to encourage the public interest in and understanding of art by an expansion and improvement of art historical tuition at secondary and tertiary education institutions;
 - 7) to ensure that all centres of further education place particular value on art historical understanding by way of suitable courses;
 - 8) to influence ever wider circles of the population through various sorts of art historical lectures and demonstrations.⁶²

Noteworthy here is that the definitive statute actually included plans not only for popular education initiatives, but also for international collaboration and the support of contemporary artists. But by the time Althoff died in October 1908 nothing had been undertaken in these areas, for the monument publication had long since become the society's sole concern. Indeed, the very first act of the DVfK after its constitution in March 1908 was to get the MAG underway. To this end Bode appointed a three-man committee consisting of Georg Dehio (b. 1850), Adolph Goldschmidt (b. 1863) and Max Dvořák (b. 1874). They were each to draw up an individual programme for the monument publication and would then consult on their proposals before presenting the results to the board of directors in Berlin in the summer of 1908.

Of the three draft programmes, Goldschmidt's was the thinnest on the ground and the least focussed. He envisaged the DVfK producing not one, but three distinct forms of publication: a series of individual photographs made in conjunction with the Royal Prussian Institute for Photogrammetry, a series of artist monographs, and then the full monument publication as well. The structure of the latter was to be organized primarily according to the four art forms – architecture, sculpture, painting, and the applied arts – but his secondary sub-divisions within these categories were inconsistent and unclear, being based variously on chronology, typology, or materials. His plan for the commencement of the great

⁶² Bode, *Satzungen*, §1.

undertaking was similarly relaxed. The publication of the MAG was to proceed ‘not under compulsion of any strict temporal, geographical, or systematic order, but rather freely; as and when the opportunity arises, when the manpower is there, and as the directors see fit.’⁶³ To his credit, Goldschmidt did reiterate the statutory requirement for works with a broader public appeal, but his programme as a whole was far too loose for the rigorous demands of the DVfK and therefore received no further consideration.

Greater things will have been expected of Dehio, who had actually studied under the director of the MGH and whose experience producing the first full overview of German monuments – the abovementioned five-volume *Handbuch* – ought to have made him a front runner in this particular art historical collaboration. His proposal contained some serious food for thought. Unlike Goldschmidt, Dehio asked himself why the monument publication was necessary at all, and came up with the following reasons. Firstly, it would serve as ‘a permanent visual record of those monuments whose existence is constantly exposed to the danger of alteration or destruction.’⁶⁴ Secondly, it would provide extensive study material, and Dehio too underlined the importance of producing a cheaper, less elaborate edition with this in mind. But the main publication would essentially be a sourcework consisting of photographs plus commentary, with the emphasis on images. Text was to be limited to bare essentials: technical descriptions and information on place, date, patron, and artist. The structure he proposed for the series was a valiant enough attempt to organize the history of German art categorically and chronologically, according to art forms and epochs, but in practice his organizational principles fell apart on paper, fragmenting into monographs and isolated periods that refused to fit neatly into the overall schema.

The two major strengths of Dehio’s proposal were grounded in practicalities. He recognized, firstly, the simple fact that the techniques of photographic reproduction were liable to change. Colour photography, for instance, was not yet adequate for art historical purposes, but would be in future. And since the duration of the project could be expected to span at least one generation (a gross underestimate), he tried to build a certain degree of flexibility into his programme to allow for technical advances.

His second contention was more fundamental. Like Goldschmidt, Dehio drew up his programme on the basis of the draft statute he had received with his invitation to the Frankfurt assembly. And in this version of the statute clause 1.3 differed slightly but significantly from that quoted above. The original intention had been a *complete* publication of *all* the monuments of German art, rather than just some of them (the ‘all’ was omitted in the definitive statute).⁶⁵ Dehio and a number of other sceptics quite rightly had reservations about the feasibility of such comprehensiveness: ‘the literal implementation of this principle would result in an

⁶³ Adolph Goldschmidt, ‘Monumenta artis Germaniae. Plan für die Veröffentlichung’, typescript, 1908, IKUW, Nachlass Dvořák 15, Monumenta artis Germaniae.

⁶⁴ Georg Dehio, ‘Monumenta artis Germaniae. Grundsätze und Organisationsplan’, typescript, 1908, IKUW, Nachlass Dvořák 15, Monumenta artis Germaniae.

⁶⁵ ‘Der Deutschen Verein für Kunstwissenschaft’, *Kunstchronik*, 19, 1908, 330.

accumulation of such inconceivable proportions that it would be an evil in itself, to say nothing of the costs.⁶⁶ Thus the superlative ‘all’ would have to be demoted to a ‘most’ or a ‘many’ – some sort of selection would surely have to be made from the totality of extant German monuments. But the idea of a selection presented Dehio, who was clearly well up on his Riegelian theory, with a minor epistemological dilemma. ‘On the other hand,’ he continued, ‘there are no reliable scientific criteria for dispensing with the insignificant, since an object that is unquestionably only of minimal artistic value may nevertheless still take on unforeseen significance at some stage in the future.’⁶⁷ His solution to this problem was at once practical, counter-intuitive, and quite illogical. He proposed a two-tier system whereby the more significant monuments would be reproduced on a large scale, while the overwhelming mass of less or insignificant monuments were to be pictured in a smaller format. This suggestion had the virtue of meeting the demand for comprehensive coverage, but it also managed to reintroduce the spectre of scientifically inadmissible selection criteria through the back door, as it were, purely for the sake of financial feasibility. The more obvious solution would of course have been to abandon the pseudo-scientific obsession with comprehensiveness altogether.

When Dvořák drew up his programme for the MAG he had the benefit of having seen both of his colleagues’ proposals. On 20 June 1908 Bode sent a short note to Vienna enclosing Goldschmidt’s programme and asking when he could expect to receive Dvořák’s.⁶⁸ This was sent to Berlin a week later with a covering letter and the following remarks:

In the working programme itself my draft differs from the other two primarily in that I have tried to grasp the individual topics more concretely [...]. But the difference is not so great as to prevent us finding a middle line when we come to discuss the matter in person [...]. I hope Professors Dehio and Goldschmidt will agree with my suggestions, which really only represent an expansion of their own proposals.⁶⁹

Dvořák’s ‘Memorandum on the Organization and Working Programme of the *Monumenta artis Germaniae*’ [see Appendix] was far and away the most extensive and thorough of the three drafts.⁷⁰ Unlike Dehio, he did not make the mistake of taking the statute of the DVfK too literally. His considerations began with the acknowledgement that a complete publication of the monuments of German art ‘could not simply mean the visual reproduction of all existing material, which any

⁶⁶ Dehio, ‘*Monumenta artis Germaniae*’, IKUW, Nachlass Dvořák 15, 2.

⁶⁷ Dehio, ‘*Monumenta artis Germaniae*’, IKUW, Nachlass Dvořák 15, 2–3.

⁶⁸ This being the only letter from Bode preserved among Dvořák’s papers at the University of Vienna – Bode to Dvořák, Berlin, 20 June 1908, IKUW, Nachlass Dvořák 15, *Monumenta artis Germaniae*.

⁶⁹ Dvořák to Bode, Vienna, 28 June 1908, ZASMB, Nachlass Bode 1579.

⁷⁰ Dvořák, ‘Promemoria über die Organisation und das Arbeitsprogramm der *Monumenta artis Germaniae*’, typescript, June 1908, ZASMB, Nachlass Bode 354; the same can be found under IKUW, Nachlass Dvořák 15, *Monumenta artis Germaniae*.

photographer could produce, but rather a critical publication of the individual monument groups in line with the principles of modern historical science'.⁷¹ By 'critical' here, Dvořák seems to have meant two things: selection and analysis. Though he never uses the word, a degree of selectivity was going to be necessary in order to make the undertaking possible, hence groups of monuments, not all of them. The mass of German monuments was to be reduced down to a more manageable level, but without resorting to isolated specimens or regressing to the (not inconsiderable) scope of the art topographies, which were 'still far from exhausting the wealth of the artistic production of the past that has survived in Germany'.⁷² On a scale of all to nothing, then, Dvořák's critical selection was located somewhere between the all and the art topographies, and would therefore still have been pretty close to exhaustive. Furthermore, in line with the strict dictates of modern historical science and the ever-present paradigm of the MGH, Dvořák's conception of a critical publication demanded that all available sources and all related monuments be consulted and subjected to scholarly analysis: 'it is an imperative and self-evident requirement that all the extant material be taken into consideration for the groups of monuments that are to be published in the *Monumenta artis Germaniae*'.⁷³ So even if the series of publications was not going to reproduce everything, its textual commentaries and its selection of monument groups would at least be based on analyses of the totality, and could therefore make a justifiable claim to comprehensiveness.

Applied to the entire history of German art from the *Völkerwanderung* to the nineteenth century, these ideal demands would clearly have involved far more time, money, and effort than even Dehio's two-tier catalogue. Dvořák must have realized this, for he introduced an otherwise completely arbitrary temporal limit to his programme, which was to come to an abrupt end in 1550. Besides giving away its author's own periodical preferences – i.e., for the glory days of the Holy Roman Empire – this limit stuck too closely to the medievalist MGH and thereby omitted, for instance, the German Baroque – clearly an unacceptable oversight.

In every other respect, though, Dvořák's articulation of the structure of the series looked watertight. Following Goldschmidt and Dehio, he divided the material up into art forms and periods, but unlike them he precluded any deviation by presenting his structure in a lucid table, with the four columnar sections of architecture, painting, sculpture, and applied art being neatly broken down into four lateral epochs: the *Völkerwanderung* (c. 400–750 CE), the Carolingian era (750–950), the Ottonian, Salic, and Hohenstaufen dynasties (950–1250), and the Gothic (1250–1550). It was a framework of admirable symmetry and grand proportions [figures 2–4]. Each block was to consist of one or more departments which would cover 'all', 'collected', or 'the corpus of' monuments in question and would be assigned to individual art historians as departmental directors. Dvořák admitted that the 'publication of all this material all at once would be such an enormous undertaking that its realization is virtually unthinkable in the foreseeable future',

⁷¹ Dvořák, 'Promemoria', 1.

⁷² Dvořák, 'Promemoria', 4.

⁷³ Dvořák, 'Promemoria', 5.

but his framework would allow for an immediate start on a number of departments – at least those for which competent art historians could be found.⁷⁴ Finally, these directors were to constitute a special monument commission within the DVfK, the organization of which Dvořák also delineated in his programme, again going well beyond his colleagues' efforts.

The next communication between Dvořák and Bode suggests that this brilliantly ambitious draft was well received: 'I would be very glad, and not just for personal reasons, if my programme were to form a suitable basis for the MAG'.⁷⁵ When the working programme for *Die Denkmäler der deutschen Kunst* was finalized later that year (the Latin title having been dropped in favour of the German vernacular), the one flaw in Dvořák's programme was easily rectified. Its premature ending was simply extended to 1800. But the majority of clauses – with one notable exception – were actually taken over directly from Dvořák's programme, in some cases virtually word for word.

§1. *Die Denkmäler der deutschen Kunst* is a collection of sources on German art history in which art historically important groups of monuments are to be published methodically.

§2. The work shall employ all available material on the individual groups of monuments and shall endeavour to publish, as comprehensively as possible, everything that is of significance for the scientific problems they pose.

§3. The pictorial reproductions shall be accompanied by commentaries.

These shall contain descriptions (e.g., of technical characteristics, restorations, etc.), as well as all information that can be ascertained from external sources as to place and date of origin, artist, and patron.

§4. The methods of photographic reproduction employed for the illustrations shall be determined by the characteristics and the significance of the monuments in question. The publications shall be of a consistent format; exceptions shall be allowed where necessary.

§5. A monument of German art is not only to be understood as something created within the borders of the present German empire, but rather any monument which expresses the artistic creativity of, or has a direct connection to, the German nation.

§6. The monuments are grouped according to chronological and objective criteria, always bearing in mind stylistic coherences. According to these criteria and in line with the attached synopsis, four sections shall be created with a number of departments. The directors of the individual departments are free to propose further articulations of their departments.

§7. The execution of the work is entrusted to the monument commission, whose organization shall be laid out in a separate agenda.⁷⁶

⁷⁴ Dvořák, 'Promemoria', 4.

⁷⁵ Dvořák to Bode, Raudnitz, 1 August 1908, ZASMB, Nachlass Bode 1579.

⁷⁶ Deutscher Verein für Kunstwissenschaft e. V., *Programm der 'Denkmäler der deutschen Kunst'*, Berlin, n.d.; see also ZASMB, Nachlass Bode 350.

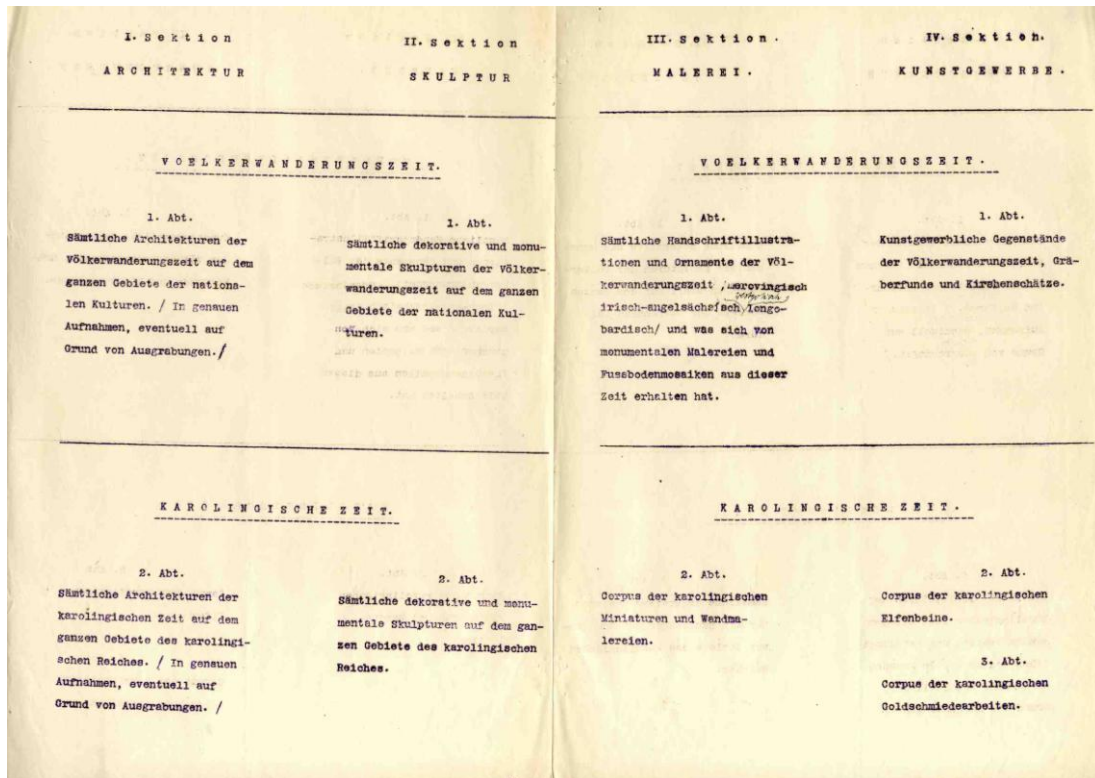


Figure 2 Dvořák's draft framework for the *Monumenta artis Germaniae* (1908), ZASMB, Nachlass Bode 354

Parts of clause three and four here can be ascribed to Dehio. Almost all the rest is Dvořák, and his structural framework also formed the basis of the monument commission's four sections and twenty-nine departments. The exception is clause five, which appears seemingly out of nowhere as a jarring note of cultural imperialism in a monumental art historical undertaking that can otherwise only be criticized for being unrealistically over-ambitious and academically detached from the broad public interest that the DVfK was supposedly attempting to court. The implicitly expansionist fifth clause was added some time after the board of directors had received the three draft proposals and can be attributed to Karl Koetschau, the secretary of the Verein who had heralded its 'strongly accentuated national tendency' at the international congress of art history in Darmstadt the previous year.⁷⁷

Dvořák's involvement with the DVfK continued long after his contribution to the planning of *Die Denkmäler der deutschen Kunst*. He was a member of the hundred-strong extended committee from the outset and replaced Wickhoff on the board of directors in 1909. He was of course also a member of his own monument commission and in this capacity directed research for the publication in no less than five departments – more than any of his German colleagues. As such, he was able to employ a number of Austrian art historians on the project, notably fellow Vienna School graduate Wilhelm Köhler (Carolingian miniatures) and his own former

⁷⁷ 'Vorschläge von K. Koetschau', ZASMB, Nachlass Bode 354; Rainer Kahsnitz, 'Der Deutsche Verein für Kunstwissenschaft im Nationalsozialismus. Versuch einer Spurenlese', *Zeitschrift des Deutschen Vereins für Kunstwissenschaft*, 62, 2008, 91–93.

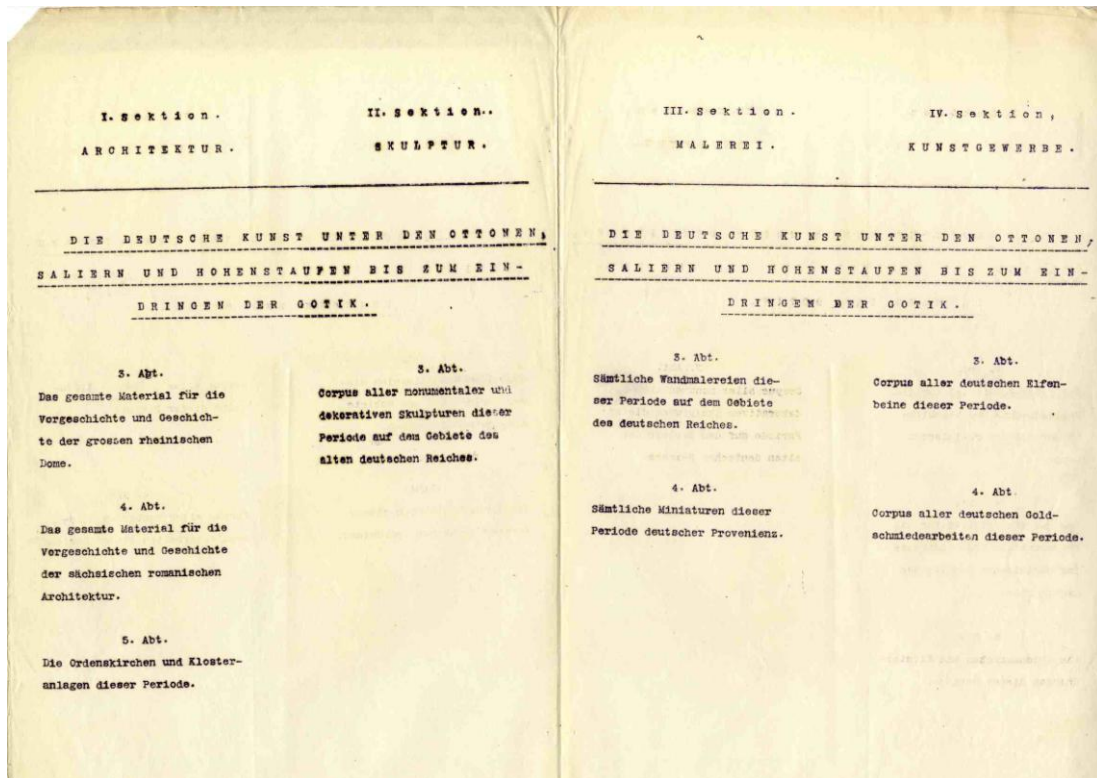


Figure 3 Dvořák's draft framework for the *Monumenta artis Germaniae* (1908), ZASMB, Nachlass Bode 354

student, Betty Kurth (medieval German tapestries), though he never lived to see the fruits of their labours. In fact, both Austrian subject matter and Austrian art historians are surprisingly well represented in the bibliography of DVfK publications.

The publicity that Dvořák arranged for the DVfK in Austria seems to have been effective.⁷⁸ As well as the two promotional lectures he delivered in 1909 and 1913, and the notices he published in the *Kunstgeschichtliches Jahrbuch der Zentral-Kommission*, he also petitioned the Austrian government and a number of wealthy patrons for financial support, with some degree of success. While the imperial government only contributed a paltry 5,000 marks, Prince Liechtenstein was persuaded to fund Kurth's work on German tapestries to the tune of 25,000 marks.⁷⁹ Thoughts in this direction extended to the highest level. In Germany, Kaiser Wilhelm II had accepted the protectorate of the DVfK in August 1908. In Austria five years later, shortly after the Verein's general assembly in Vienna, Dvořák

⁷⁸ Of members registered in 1908, 25% were resident in Berlin and 4.4% in Vienna. After Dvořák's lectures in 1909 and 1913 the corresponding figures are Berlin 23% and Vienna 5.8%. See Deutscher Verein für Kunstwissenschaft, *Eingetragener Verein, I. Mitglieder-Verzeichnis, Abgeschlossen am 30. September 1908*, Berlin: n.p., 1908; Deutscher Verein für Kunstwissenschaft, *Eingetragener Verein, II. Mitglieder-Verzeichnis, Abgeschlossen im Oktober 1913* Berlin: n.p., 1913.

⁷⁹ Dvořák to Bode, Vienna, 22 January 1913; Weissenbach bei Gloggnitz, 1 February 1913; Vienna, 18 March 1913, ZASMB, Nachlass Bode 1579; Bode, *Denkschrift*, 1914, 4.

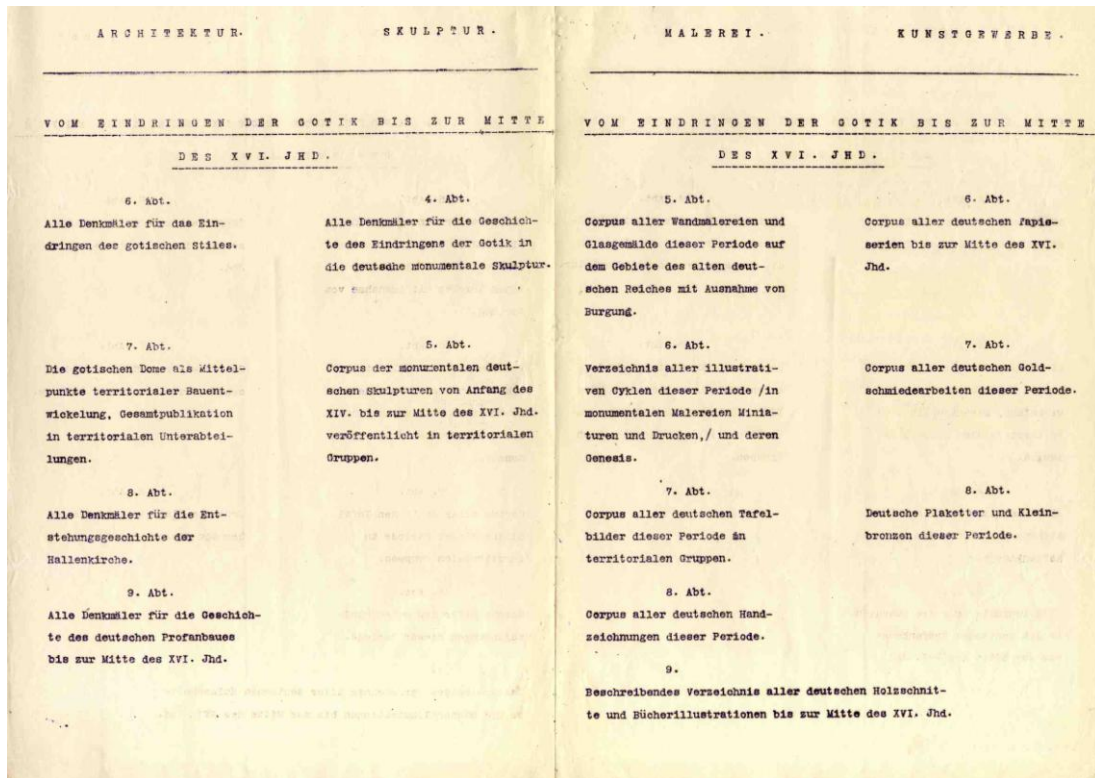


Figure 4 Dvořák's draft framework for the *Monumenta artis Germaniae* (1908), ZASMB, Nachlass Bode 354

considered inviting Kaiser Franz Josef I to join, though evidently nothing came of the idea.⁸⁰

If Dvořák's decisive influence on Bode's project in pan-German art scholarship has until now been largely overlooked in both Vienna and Berlin, it has hopefully been amply demonstrated here. The *Deutscher Verein für Kunstwissenschaft* – in its day the largest and most important art history society in central Europe – ultimately has Vienna School principles to thank for its rigorous publication programme, a programme which may have produced a handful of books that are now considered standard works, but could never have been realized in its entirety within, say, a hundred years by anything but the most wealthy of empires, let alone private funding initiatives. The art historical results, one suspects, would not have been all that different had Goldschmidt's laissez-faire approach been adopted. But putting these questions of feasibility and the organization of art historical labour aside, there is also the issue of influence in the opposite direction to consider, i.e. that exerted upon Dvořák by Bode and the other leading lights of the DVfK. Here, there are some ingrained assumptions to be challenged, and an interesting personal development, as much political as intellectual, to be outlined.

In the online dictionary of art historians, an anonymously authored entry on Dvořák states the following: 'When Dvořák was appointed a full professor in 1909, the appointment touched off the great schism among the art faculty at Vienna. The decidedly pro-Germanic camp resented the Czech Dvořák's elevation; their retribution erupted at Wickhoff's death when the group succeeded in appointing

⁸⁰ Dvořák to Bode, Vienna, 18 March 1913, ZASMB, Nachlass Bode 1579.

the maverick and nationalist ideologue Josef Strzygowski from Graz.⁸¹ This piece of received wisdom goes back to Schlosser's canonical and openly selective chronicle of the Vienna School, in which he explicitly wrote Strzygowski out of history as an apostate.⁸² All very well. We are not concerned with Strzygowski here, nor his ongoing personal feud with Dvořák. The problem with this account – the standard version of events – is that it presents Dvořák in a rather flattering light; as the innocent Czech victim of German nationalist agitation and thus, implicitly, as an opponent of German nationalist ideology. His involvement with the DVfK calls this view into question. Following Bode's own shift from Italian to German art, and the more widespread (though by no means universal) tendency in German art history around the time of the foundation of the DVfK, Dvořák also became decidedly pro-German. This development could be traced through the art historical subject matter he chose to address in his lectures and essays over the years, or, for instance, in his repeated laments about the comparative lack of knowledge on German art as opposed to that of Italy. Two points of reference will have to suffice here.

The first is his essay on modern Czech art, 'Von Mánes zu Švabinský' (From Mánes to Švabinský, 1904), the second a feuilleton on a proposed 'Oesterreichische Staatsgalerie' (Austrian State Gallery, 1912). These two texts lend themselves to comparison, for in both cases – though they deal with quite different issues – Dvořák employs identical forms of argumentation: taking one derogatory statement on a particular national culture as his starting point, he then contests that statement in defence of the given national culture. In the 1904 essay he quotes an unnamed German art historian as calling the Czechs 'an artless nation' and then proceeds to refute this claim by presenting a history of nineteenth-century Bohemian art in which foreign influences are downplayed in favour of a unique and immanent historical development based on vigorous indigenous artistic traditions.⁸³ By 1912, though, the focus of Dvořák's attention had shifted. In his feuilleton of that year, he cites another German art historian, one who claimed 'that German art, with very few exceptions, has only ever been receptive.' This assertion is rejected out of hand as being ridiculous; Dvořák merely reminds his readers that 'the times in which only Italian or Netherlandish artworks were deemed worthy of inclusion in public collections – according to a definite, sacrosanct rank order – are long since passed. [...] But little by little we have broadened our horizons where art history is concerned.'⁸⁴

Thus we see a broadening of Dvořák's own cultural horizons over time; a development that begins in his native Bohemia and progresses – perhaps as a compensatory reaction to the traumatic experience of his appointment at the university – through and beyond Habsburg patriotism on the way to an increasingly ardent advocacy of the dominant German culture. In this much he was no more

⁸¹ 'Max Dvořák', *Dictionary of Art Historians*, <https://arthistorians.info/dvorakm>, retrieved 23 April 2022.

⁸² Julius von Schlosser and Hans Hahnloser, 'Die Wiener Schule der Kunstgeschichte. Rückblick auf ein Säkulum deutscher Gelehrtenarbeit in Österreich', *Mitteilungen des Österreichischen Instituts für Geschichtsforschung*, Ergänzungs-Band 13, 1934, 195.

⁸³ Dvořák, 'Von Mánes zu Švabinský', *Die Graphischen Künste*, 27, 1904, 30.

⁸⁴ Dvořák, 'Oesterreichische Staatsgalerie', *Neue Freie Presse*, 10 February 1912, 1–2.

than a vessel of the prevailing intellectual tendencies of the empire, in which the complex constellation of nationalities required and allowed a native Bohemian art historian to become, in addition, politically Austrian and culturally pan-German. The latter can be ascribed to Dvořák's unflinching admiration for the Bismarck of the Berlin museums.

Appendix

Max Dvořák, 'Memorandum on the Organization and Working Programme of the Monumenta artis Germaniae' (1908)

Source: Max Dvořák, 'Promemoria über die Organisation und das Arbeitsprogramm der Monumenta artis Germaniae', Zentralarchiv der Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin, Nachlass Bode 354, Vorschläge von Fachkollegen zur Herausgabe der Monumenta artis Germaniae

According to the statutes of the Deutscher Verein für Kunstwissenschaft the *Monumenta artis Germaniae* are to be a comprehensive publication of the monuments of German art. Naturally, this does not simply mean the visual reproduction of all existing material, which any photographer could produce, but rather a critical publication of the individual monument groups in line with the principles of modern historical science. The enormous advance that the *Monumenta Germaniae historica* represent in comparison to all earlier publications of historical documents lay in the fact that the publication was based on the entirety of relevant, critically scrutinized material and was not, as had formerly been the case, simply a collection of reprinted documents. Germany's present leading position in the historical sciences is based on this advance. The *Monumenta artis Germaniae* will have to take the same path if it is to attain a similar significance for art scholarship.

The obvious consequence of this is that the material to be published will in the first instance have to be grouped according to two criteria, namely the objective and the chronological. If a publication of documents, chronicles, or laws is to follow the precepts of modern historical method, it cannot simply be a colourful conglomeration of sources; it has to be based on clearly defined fundamental categories which facilitate consistent critical treatment. Likewise, the publication of artistic monuments is to be based on subject groups that are as homogenous as possible and represent distinct stylistic categories. On the other hand, the prerequisite of any systematic publication is that the monuments be published in chronological groups, for this is the only way to investigate and bring out those factors that depend on when the monuments were created. These factors are not merely of primary interest to the researcher; they are the *conditio sine qua non* for any critical treatment of the monuments published.

The most obvious organization of the subject matter would appear to be a four-way division according to the principal arts (architecture, sculpture, painting, the applied arts). Further sub-groupings of the subject matter could also be established

within these, though this would have to be done with caution in order to avoid giving too much emphasis to differences at the expense of common stylistic factors.

It would be utopian to want to publish all the material within these four series without any sort of chronological sub-division – it would be equivalent, for instance, to wanting to publish every imperial German decree in one book. This would not be possible even if one were to limit oneself to the Middle Ages. And even if such a comprehensive publication were technically feasible, the sheer breadth of the work would rule out any in-depth critical treatment of the individual series of monuments, something which has to be seen as an unconditional requirement in light of the present state of the historical disciplines. It is therefore essential that the individual sections be divided up into historical periods. In this way, individual departments will be created within the four sections and their coverage defined according to universal developmental-historical stages.

Having established these departments it would be quite impossible, or so it seems to me, to consider the entirety of material from the history of German art all at once. The art topographies already fill a whole library, and yet they are still far from exhausting the wealth of the artistic production of the past that has survived in Germany.

A new systematic publication of all this material all at once would be such an enormous undertaking that its realization is virtually unthinkable in the foreseeable future. It would be like coming up with a programme for the *Monumenta Germaniae historica* and setting out to include every conceivable source on German history, with a corresponding number of sub-divisions. No one can seriously have considered this for a moment, for the whole undertaking would thus have been compromised straight away and would never have got beyond a few isolated first attempts.

On the other hand, though, nothing would be more misguided than to try to solve the problem by publishing individual specimens from various regions and periods. This has been the rule for the best part of half a century now; every photographer and every publisher does it, and if one were to give a photographer the money he would probably do so in the largest possible format, which is clearly unnecessary for a scholarly undertaking. The main reason for the paucity of our knowledge of German art is that, whereas the material in Italy was constantly inventoried from the Renaissance at the very latest, in Germany one is forced to rely on one or two examples for even the most important periods, which only allows one to make hypothetical conclusions at best. *Thus it is an imperative and self-evident requirement that all of the extant material be taken into consideration for the groups of monuments that are to be published in the Monumenta artis Germaniae.*

These considerations inevitably lead to the conclusion that, even if the intention, in principle, is the publication of all the monuments of German art, the work will initially have to limit itself to a few concrete tasks, as it did with the *Monumenta Germaniae historica*; to those tasks which seem to be the most important historically, the most pressing in terms of the current state of art historical scholarship, and whose completion is least likely to be hindered by insurmountable difficulties. Clearly this is not to say that individual works should be taken in hand without the existence of any sort of plan. Nothing would be more harmful than to

see the Verein's principal task in initiating or supporting individual works on a case by case basis and as the impulse arises. Even if it is not yet possible to establish a detailed overall programme with all the departments that might be considered, the individual publications must nevertheless fit into a common organizational framework that would include in advance publications which are of particular importance for the history of German art and whose realization would doubtless be desirable and possible according to the principles delineated above. This organizational framework should be laid out such that any further publications of a similar sort, whose necessity and feasibility would perhaps become evident in the course of more precise research into the history of German art, can then be included without difficulty. The following tables contain this organizational framework [figures 2–4].

It goes without saying that these departments need not all be called into life at once – indeed, this would not be advisable even if the necessary financial means were available, because the prerequisite for creating the departments is the formation of absolutely competent and trustworthy editorial boards, something that can hardly be deemed possible for all of the abovementioned topics at present.

Thus it would be advisable to begin with a limited number of departments and for the Verein to entrust the direction of these departments to individual researchers. The directors, who would either be individuals or, where territorial division is desirable (as with the panel paintings for instance), a number of academics working together, would be responsible for the preparation and realization of the individual publications and would constitute the monument commission, which should also include representatives from the academies of science. Since a certain degree of stability will be desirable for the sake of the research, these positions would last for five years, after which time the Verein would be free to renew or not to renew the mandate. The latter would require a two thirds majority with at least two hundred members in attendance. Similarly, the chairman of the monument commission would be elected by the Verein for a term of five years.

The monument commission shall coordinate the work and take responsibility for its scholarly realization. It is also to see to the printing of the publication. It may suggest new departments, though the Verein itself may also make proactive proposals in this regard, and these are to be put before the monument commission for consultation prior to any decision-making. The monument commission shall meet in Berlin at least once a year to deal with any on-going issues. The directors of the various departments are to deliver oral and written reports on the progress of the work at these annual meetings. The written reports are to be published together as the annual report of the monument commission. A list of new photographs is to be included as a supplement to every annual report.

All photographs and work carried out by the individual departments is property of the Verein and must be returned to its director if work is interrupted in the long-term. The photographic negatives are to be kept by the department while a publication is in preparation and returned to the office of the Verein's board of

directors after publication. Cost price copies of the photographs shall be available to everyone on demand at any time (according to the published lists).

Individual investigations arising from the preparatory work may also be published before the main publication appears. It would be desirable to publish such investigations in a monument commission periodical, which might also print any other research on German art that falls within the scope of the commission's activities.

As well as exact reproductions and supplementary descriptions, each volume of the publication must contain a critical apparatus providing a summary, in concise form and without digression, of everything that can be said, according to the results of the research, as to the local and temporal provenance and historical significance of the individual monuments in the monument group under discussion. Each publication must also include a full index.

No one can deny that the study of the history of German art is still only in its infancy; it is at roughly the same position as German history was at the beginning of the nineteenth century. We know next to nothing about certain eras and others only from the perspective of a few sporadic, unrelated monuments. These gaps cannot be filled by speculations and deductions, no matter how ingenious. The only remedy here is the methodical research and publication of all available material from the decisive epochs in the history of German art, as delineated in the considerations above. The history of German art might even take on a completely new meaning for certain important periods, a completely new significance that has perhaps been hidden from us until now by dogmatic theories and an ignorance of the monuments themselves.

But the extraordinary value of the *Monumenta artis Germaniae* would even go beyond this if it were to be organized according to the suggestions outlined above.

The most lavish and opulent publications remain sterile without researchers who are willing and able to convert the content of such publications into historical results. There may well be a number of outstanding researchers working on the history of German art today, but one can hardly claim that the history of German art is being researched with anything like the same intensity as the study of German history. Publications alone will hardly be able to change that. One might well expect a change, however – and this would be the case if the suggested organization is implemented – if a group of department directors and co-workers were to dedicate their research to the critical preparation of the individual publications of the *Monumenta artis Germaniae* over a number of years. The experience gained, the thorough research of the various periods in the history of German art that would inevitably accompany it, and not least the concentration of academic erudition, the large number of researchers working in the field of German art history, may even be of greater advantage than the publications themselves.

The organization would also be of inestimable benefit for the consolidation of art history as a scientific discipline. Of all the historical disciplines, the greatest lack of clarity as to the aims and methods of the relevant research is perhaps most evident in art history, where both are left to the judgements and inclinations of individual authors, as they once were in other disciplines – in the eighteenth century. This is one of the principal reasons why, even today, art history has still not

managed to rid its research of dilettantism to the extent that other historical disciplines now take for granted. If a group of young researchers, through working on the various departments over a number of years, could be taught above all to examine the credibility of visual documents without relying on aphoristic or literary theories; if they could be taught to study their material critically and come to the conclusions that are there to be drawn from their sources as objective enrichments of historical knowledge, then we would soon see a consolidation of method and an agreement on the scientific aims of art history comparable to that which German historical scholarship was able to achieve as a result of the *Monumenta Germaniae historica*.

Vienna, June 1908, Max Dvořák

Jonathan Blower is a translator of German texts on the visual arts. His translations of early twentieth-century art historical works include Heinrich Wölfflin's *Principles of Art History* and Julius von Schlosser's *Art and Curiosity Cabinets of the Late Renaissance*.



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