

## Conference Report: *Art History and Its Institutions in the Austro-Hungarian Empire*, 28th-30th September 2023, Polish Academy of Arts and Sciences and Institute of Art History of the Jagiellonian University in Kraków

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The conference *Art History and Its Institutions in the Austro-Hungarian Empire* marked the 150th anniversary of the establishment in 1873 of the Commission of Art History of the Academy of Science and Arts in Cracow and was held at the Wawel Royal Castle between 28th and 30th September 2023. Wojciech Bałus, as the main organiser, opened the proceedings with a short inauguration speech and then introduced Jan K. Ostrowski, who chaired the first session entitled *Institutional Context of Establishing the Discipline*.

Natalia Koziara-Ochęduszko presented the opening lecture of the conference, entitled *Before PAU. The grounding of historiographical myths and narrative topos before the establishment of institutional art history in Poland*. Following Hayden White's concept of history as a tale, she examined the rhetorical underpinnings of early art historical research in Poland. As the author argues, figures such as Franciszek Lekszycki and Szymon Czechowicz were studied with a clear purpose in mind – that of building a form of pantheon of Polish great artists. The cult of personality led to overvaluation of quasi-mythologised biographies written by *dilettanti* for various dictionaries of artists, culminating in Edward Rastawiecki's *Słownik malarzów polskich tudzież obcych w Polsce osiadłych lub czasowo w niej przebywających* (3 vol., 1855-1857, Eng. *The dictionary of Polish artists or artists residing temporarily or permanently in Poland*). Their undeniable value as early foundational Polish art historical scholarship should not be overlooked. However, the social position of its authors, often coming from high nobility, as was the case of Rastawiecki, should be taken into account when dealing with their biased, aristocratic view of art and a strong patriotic agenda. Jan K. Ostrowski noted after the lecture that one of the reasons for such biases towards the myth was *dilettanti's* mainly classical education, aside from many concerns of the growing field of academic art history.

Following this thread of analysing the national background of art historical research was Mariana Levytska's presentation *The emergence of museums – the emergence of art history? Establishing Ukrainian art historical scholarship in Lviv*. By tracing the history of first institutional efforts of establishing the discipline in Ukraine, like the first Department of Art History in Lviv University (1893), the author showed how the strong influence of ethnological and folkloristic studies shaped the perception of national heritage in Ukraine and its subsequent institutionalisation. An important step in that process was creating museums as venues of presentation and self-definition of art history in Ukraine. Illarion Svetsitskyi (1876-1956) was a key figure in those regards, as he was able to

transform the local church museum into the National Museum in Lviv in 1933 and establish the institutional regulations for its functioning. His emphasis on the myths of pan Slavic and Byzantine roots of Ukrainian culture influenced the early research on the topic, however they were clearly rooted in his attributionist attitude towards the material under study. Ukrainian art was viewed as part of European culture, however a search for unique characteristics was very important. During that period a series of publications helped formulate the clear thematic focus of art history in Ukraine. Matthew Rampley remarked that many concepts in this early process were undefined, for example the question of what constituted *value* of a work of art for these early scholars, or what the term *folk* meant. However, Mariana Levytska pointed out that the distinction between folk and high art was not as pronounced within Ukrainian art historiography.

Sabrina Raphaela Buebl presented a lecture entitled *Defining a discipline. "Kunstgeschichtliche Anzeigen" as a critical institution for the Vienna School* that touched on an interesting aspect of the professionalisation of art history as a discipline. Taking early editions of the famous journal *Kunstgeschichtliche Anzeigen* created by Franz Wickhoff (1853-1909) and Max Dvořák (1874-1921) as a case study, it showed how the conflation of private and scientific interests shaped its often sharply critical tone. Created with the goal of "monitoring and controlling art history" as defined by Dvořák and focused on elevating art history to the status of a proper scientific discipline, it was strongly shaped by Wickhoff's position as a chief reviewer of scientific literature. His criticism of aesthetic judgement as the primary function of scientific inquiry was often carried out beyond accepted norms of professionalism. For example, his attacks on Henry Thode's (1857-1920) attributions of works to Michelangelo were clearly meant as not only an attack on author's mistakes, but as provocations against academic hierarchies within which Dvořák and Wickhoff wanted to carve a space for themselves. Paradoxically, the presentation showed that such attacks were not detrimental to professionalisation of the discipline, but rather – helped to shape an image of seriousness to which it aspired. It also left a project of a journal that was supposed to operate on an international scale, however unrealised in *Kunstgeschichtliche Anzeigen*.

Robert Born focused on the paradoxes inherent in the narratives about centres and peripheries in the concluding lecture of the session entitled *The Central Commission at the gate to the Orient: explorations of Greek Orthodox sacral architecture on the periphery of the Habsburg Monarchy in the 2nd half of the 19th century*. Focusing on the activities of Central-Commission zur Erforschung und Erhaltung der Baudenkmale in the region of present-day Romania, it shows how the contact with what was presumed to be a peripheral architecture led to the creation of national identity. The case of Curtea de Arges Monastery, an object preserved by Johann Baptist Coronini-Cronberg (1794-1880) and studied by Ludwig Reissenberger (1819-1895) helped to question the negative assessment of Byzantine culture by scholars such as Rudolf Eitelberger, even against the intentions of scholars. Similarly, the cases of the palace in Suceava and Putna Monastery helped to forge the identity of the region as evidenced by the Jubilee Exhibition in Bucharest in 1906, in which fragments of decorations from Putna were shown.

The second session of the conference, chaired by Wojciech Bałus, focused on the topic of art historical milieus and narratives surrounding them. Milena Bartlova's paper *Cultivating its own roots: Czech art history in the 1980s in the search of its own beginnings* focused on the issue of attempts at creating a national identity within a Czech art historical milieu. Detailed analysis of two volumes of *Kapitoly z českého dějepisu umění* (Eng. *Chapters from the Czech historiography of art*), released in 1986 and 1987, showed how within a context of loosening censorship in Communist-controlled countries a chance for reflection unfiltered through an enforced Marxist lens was possible. Strong focus on the context of the Vienna School and especially Max Dvořák is evident, and figures working between 19th and 20th centuries are selected as the grounding for the Czech school of art history, among them Miroslav Tyrš (Tirsch) (1832-1884), Karel Chytil (1857-1934), and Anton Heinrich Springer (1825-1891). Only one woman made it to the volume. The focus in these publications lies on the one hand on attempts at providing a developmental model of art. On the other hand, however, an anticipation of postmodern pluralism emerges in the first volume, where often contradicting narratives signal the impossibility of providing such a narrative. The discussion followed with questions surrounding the availability of resources on Western methodological perspectives in art history, especially the ones related to perceived crisis of the discipline. A question was posed as to the demarcation between the state-mandated Marxist perspective and the one that can still be useful in analysing the emergence of social art history in Czechoslovakia before the collapse of communism.

Violetta Korsakova dealt with a similar question of geographical identity, studying the emergence of the Lviv School of Art History in her paper *A school, a milieu, an environment — on the reception of the Lviv art historians*. It seems that in this context, the strong sense of unity in that milieu is mostly an attempt at distinguishing Lviv from the competing school based in Krakow. The reception of the Lviv school of art history is nowadays based on the supposed 'avantgarde' tendencies within that circle of intellectuals, beginning in 1893 with Jan Bołoz Antoniewicz (1858-1922). However, no precise features had been pointed out beyond the vague pronouncements of interest in methodology, contemporary artistic tendencies and formal aspects of the works of art. 'Lviv Art History' does not fit the easy definition of a School, being rather that of a reactive environment, retrospectively consolidated by art historians in search of their scholarly identity founding myths. As Magdalena Kunińska pointed out in the discussion, the term 'school' itself is strongly tied to exclusions made even within a given milieu, leading to omissions of important researchers made in search of perceived unity.

Matthew Rampley gave a plenary lecture *The Vienna School of Art History 1847-1873: concepts of science, concepts of knowledge*. Its provocative thesis suggested that figures most commonly associated with Viennese art history, such as Max Dvořák, Alois Riegl (1858-1905) and Josef Strzygowski (1862-1941) are highly unrepresentative of the genuine influence that the school as a whole had on the discipline in Eastern and Central Europe. Their speculative models, such as Dvořák's *Kunstgeschichte als Geistesgeschichte* or Riegl's *Kunstwollen* were mostly abandoned, and Strzygowski, despite his pioneering focus on non-European art,

was rejected due to his unacceptable political views. Thus, in searching for the true legacy of Vienna School we should turn to figures from the earlier generations: Rudolf Eitelberger, Moritz Thausing (1838-1884), Albert Ilg (1847-1896) and their project of art history as positivist science. After a brief outline of the intellectual debate surrounding positivism, citing the writings of prominent intellectuals instrumental in shaping its main goals and up to the scathing criticisms of it by Karl Popper (1902-1994), the lecture showed how its formation in Vienna was connected with the reforms of Leo von Thun (1811-1888), modelled on the model of German reforms of education. Thus, positivism can be perceived as realising the state mandated model of scientific accuracy and reliability. The provocative suggestion was then carried out to its conclusion: the perceived overreliance on empiricist principles of collecting data has shaped Eastern and Central European art history to the present day and the question is how to combat this trend? The lecture caused much debate, with some scholars not agreeing with such a link existing. As Matthew Rampley pointed out himself, the inverse trend of overemphasising speculation can be seen as dominant in contemporary Western scholarship. Thus, bridging these methodological divisions might prove useful to both sides of the debate.

The third session entitled *Biographies and institutional mechanisms*, chaired by Magdalena Kunińska, started with Jindřich Vybíral's presentation on the topic *Alfred Woltmann and the history of contemporary art*. Alfred Woltmann (1841-1880), an important figure for the development of the positivist school of art history, a rare case of a researcher focused solely on that discipline. He is known in the Czech Republic mainly for the so-called Woltmann affair, caused by the lecture given at the Prague Academy in 1876. The lecture focused on the double nature of Woltmann's research, strictly scientific and critical in nature. On the one hand he was involved in research on Hans Holbein and took part in 'The Holbein Dispute' of 1863-1871, writing one of the most important monographs on the artist entitled *Holbein und seine Zeit*, researched the works of Albrecht Durer and with Karl Woermann he began work on the volume *Geschichte der Malerei*. Pursuing his interest in Czech artistic heritage, in 1879 Woltmann wrote a study of miniatures and manuscripts in which a thread of research on the topic of Bohemian artistic identity is observable. His lecture on the topic of management of resources of the museum in Prague, combined with his work in it led to many works being transported to the Viennese Belvedere. In terms of methodology, Woltmann developed his empiricist method based on careful study of sources, visual analysis and comparative research of art works. On the other hand, his popular and critical interest focused mainly on the topics of contemporary architecture, in which a model for excellence was set by Karl Friedrich Schinkel and the intellectual basis of Winckelmann's model of classicism. His writings and lectures on the architecture of Vienna, Munich and Berlin were created in the belief that the true spirit of the time was calling for a stripped down, highly functional architecture that eschewed 'excessive ostentation associated with complete disregard for the real purpose' and that renaissance and classical buildings should set the example for the development of contemporary art.

The next presentation by Júlia Papp, *The beginnings of the institutional photography of artworks in Hungary*, provided the less known Hungarian perspective on the beginnings of art history in Central Europe. Following the First Congress of Art History, organised in Vienna in 1873, titled *Reproduction and distribution of artworks for museal and educational purposes*, Papp showed how the attitude to photography in Hungarian museums changed in the 19th century. During the congress, the key lecture was given by Ferenc Pulszky (1814-1897), connected to the Viennese art historians. The aristocrat postulated the great importance of photography and reproductions (plaster casts, for example) in the development of science. In this time photography was starting to be considered as a very important medium, useful to art history and archaeology in a variety of ways, among them: monument protection, museal artwork management, scientific research, and education. As a result, it started to appear in the exhibitions and collections of the public and private museums.

The third lecture of the session '*Es ist meine innigste Sehnsucht es Ihnen ein wenig mit Freude und Liebe danken zu können.*' *Institutional mechanics and archival findings regarding the professorship of Max Dvořák* by Tomáš Murár related in detail a fascinating history of Max Dvořák's attempts at securing the position of assistant professor at Vienna University. Based on extensive archival material, analysis of official documents, correspondence and contemporary press, it showed the scale of controversy caused by the appointment of a non-Austrian citizen to that post. Franz Wickhoff's involvement in the affair is extensively analysed, as well as the scale of public protest on both Czech and Austrian sides. As Matthew Rampley argued in the discussion after the session, the lecture showed the lesser-known side of professionalisation of art history as a discipline – the convergence of private machinations, public interest and nationalistic rhetoric.

Beate Störtkhul and Robert Born presented a lecture entitled *Interactions between the Imperial and Royal Central Commission for the Preservation of Monuments and conservator milieus in Galicia* analysed the institutional as well as extra-professional framing of monuments' preservation in the region of Galicia. It specifically focused on the tensions caused by the strong sense of independence of regional conservators in Galicia from the imperial centre. They are perhaps best exemplified by the debate surrounding the reconstruction of the Royal complex on the Wawel Hill in Krakow. Local conservators like Zygmunt Hendel (1862-1929) and Stanisław Tomkiewicz (1850-1933) wanted to reconstruct the historical state of the buildings closest to the 16th century. However, Max Dvořák, on behalf of the imperial authorities, argued for the conservation of the present state of the complex, fearing the threat of romanticisation of history inherent to reconstructive preservation. Furthermore, the lecture detailed the discrepancies in spending on monuments in Galicia and the rest of the Empire, showing a much greater sums of money demanded by the region. Finally, it detailed the preservation efforts by Tadeusz Szydlowski (1883-1942) especially the ones related to the destruction of the Polish regions during the First World War, culminating in the publication of the study *Ruiny Polski* (1919, Eng. *Ruins of Poland*) modelled on *Kunstschutz im Kriege* (1919) by Paul Clemen (1866-1947).

Barbara Kristina Murovec's and Annette Hoffmann's lecture *Interpreting the East to the West: re-reading Rom oder Orient with Strzygowski's student Avguštin Stegenšek* concluded the session. It examined the work of Avguštin Stegenšek (1875-1920) an important student of Strzygowski that proposed a different interpretation of the stylistic roots of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem than the one proposed in the famous and controversial book *Rom oder Orient* by Strzygowski himself. Stegenšek distanced himself from his professor's proposal to view the stylistic complexity of the Church as proof of influence of the architecture from the time of emperor Constantine and, going back even further, to the Egyptian roots of such works. Instead, by examining the presumed depictions of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Roman tombs and mosaics from the period he was able to confirm its Roman provenance. Apart from that, Stegenšek can be seen as one of the first art historians to examine the model that topography of Jerusalem provided for calvaries in Europe, as proven by his studies of monumental topography of Slovenian region of Styria: *Dekanija Gornji Grad* (1905, Eng. *The Deanery of Gornji Grad*) and *Konjiška Dekanija* (1909, Eng. *The Deanery of Slovenske Konjice*). He understood the 4th century topography of Jerusalem not as an actual site of history, but instead as carefully designed abbreviations of the biblical narrative, so-called *biblical sites of commemoration*. In the following discussion, Matthew Rampley proposed examining the influence that Stegenšek's education as a priest might have had on his interests, which met with objections from both Barbara Kristina Murovec and Annette Hoffmann. They both pointed out that he was questioning rather than attempting to prove the direct reflection of the biblical events in the sites of Jerusalem, opening it up to scientific inquiry.

The fourth session, chaired by Matthew Rampley focused on the topic of extra-European archaeology and art history. Grzegorz First, in his presentation *Between two emerging disciplines. Relations between art history and classical archaeology in the late 19th and early 20th centuries Vienna and Krakow*, shows the moment in the history of science when the institutionalisation of art history and classical archaeology began. In the beginning, both disciplines were dependent on each other, both beginning with the study of ancient art. According to the researcher, the growing interest in the study of ancient art in Krakow circles was directly inspired by the writings of Viennese authors, including those of Alois Riegl and Franz Wickhoff. Contacts between the two schools were conditioned by research interests, methodology of research, institutional organisation and political and the social climate. The author focused on the work of Piotr Bieńkowski, founder of the Department of Classical Archaeology in Kraków (1897), the doyen of the Krakow circle of classicists, fascinated by George Riemann and Otto Benndorf. The professor from Krakow, in his book *Impressionism in Roman and Old Christian Art* (1896), refers to Viennese researchers, making a very interesting comparison between the contemporary movement of Impressionism and antiquity. Bieńkowski, fascinated by the Vienna School of Art history, later started to criticise it for their lack of scientific approach and excessive emotional involvement in writing. In the end however, the Krakow-Vienna connection was crucial for combining archaeology and art history.

Magdalena Kunińska shared her reflections on the roots of representations of Asia Minor in Polish art history and historiography in a lecture *The collector Karol Lanckoroński, the scholar Marian Sokołowski and the artist Jacek Malczewski. Three gazes on Asia Minor*. In it she explored how, in different ways, the conclusions of Edward Said can apply to all of these figures' perception of the 'orientalised Other' during the expedition to Asia Minor organised by Karol Lanckoroński (1848-1933) in 1884, in which they all took part. Aestheticization was inherent to Lanckoroński's 'enchantment' by the area, the perception skewed by the lack of interest in Ottoman culture. Marian Sokołowski (1839-1911) similarly focused on classical roots of the area, with exclusion of the 'barbaric' Eastern presence. The distance from the Other was supposed to be manifested through European languages, and a sense of superiority of classical precedent was almost ritually cemented by Sokołowski's visit to the grave of Johann Joachim Winckelmann (1717-1768) in Trieste. In the case of Jacek Malczewski (1854-1929), his interests were clearly divided between what was meant for the public – works later published, and his private studies. In the end, he contributed the visual component to the gaze on the Asia Minor, with his interest in the body language and 'orientalising' tropes typical of academic painting.

Yuka Kadoi's lecture *Institutionalising World Arts in Austria-Hungary: the birth of Japanese art history* problematised the context of creation of the field of 'world art history', focusing on the emerging field of Japanese art history around the turn of 19th and 20th century. It showed how a slow institutionalisation of this area of study, with roots going back even earlier than Strzygowski's recognition of non-European art, resulted in its problematic methodological assumptions, kept up even in contemporary historiography. Ever since the 1866 Meiji Reform and 1873 Vienna World Fair, which both followed the forced reopening of Japanese culture to the West, Japan strived to create a narrative of its own heritage and art. Lecture examined the figures such as Ernest Fenollosa (1853-1908) a famous collector and professor crucial to the development of Museum of Modern Art in Boston's Japanese art collection, Okakura Kakuzo (1862-1913), author of the *The Ideals of the East* (1903) and later on focusing on Strzygowski and his students Alfred Salmony (1890-1958) and Karl With (1891-1980), author of *Buddhische Plastik in Japan* (1919). Despite many differences in both the degree of familiarity with the language and their ideological goals in promotion of non-European culture, they helped shape the canon of Japanese art founded on the centrality of Buddhism and works related to it. Their perspective also disregarded the importance of the so-called East Asian art apart from Japan, thus leading to the continuing marginalisation of Chinese and Korean cultures in art history. This process continues to this day in the curricula of important Japanese universities, leading to the larger integration of their culture with the West, but a growing sense of isolation from their own geographical context. The field of 'world art' reinforces such imbalanced focus.

Anna Głowa's lecture *Late Antique textiles from Egypt in the studies of Alois Riegl* concluded the proceedings. Based on Alois Riegl's studies of late antique textiles it showed how his speculative texts on ornament were not necessarily based entirely in speculative theory, but were an outgrowth of careful studies of weaving techniques. Especially his catalogue *Altorientalische Teppiche* (1891) collected many of

his findings on the subject and showed a deep understanding of the technical aspects of weaving, which Riegl consulted with scientists from different disciplines, the conservator Severin Schroeder and professor of botany Julius Wiesner (1838-1916) among them. In that way he was able to assert the centrality of weaving in comparison to sewing in developing the characteristic, geometric ornamental patterns of 'Coptic' fabrics, as they used to be called. Apart from that, Riegl's achievement lies in providing the argument for further study of these objects, creating a separate field of study and basic procedures needed for their analysis.

Wojciech Bałus ended the proceedings by thanking all the participants and pointing to the need for establishing a research group focused entirely on historiography of the region. He also expressed his gratitude to Magdalena Kunińska and Violetta Korsakova for the help with organising the conference.

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