

The international spread of Asian and Islamic art histories: an intersectional approach to trajectories of the Vienna School (c. 1920 – 1970)

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‘Confronted with the complacent ignorance of the art historical establishment, feminist art historians are obliged to prove the very existence of women artists. Reacting to this provocation, feminists rummage in dusty basements and return to ancient sources in search of ‘Old Mistresses’ to rescue them from undeserved neglect and re-establish their reputations, justifying their research, however, according to the establishment criteria.’

Parker and Pollock, *Old Mistresses*, 45.

Introduction

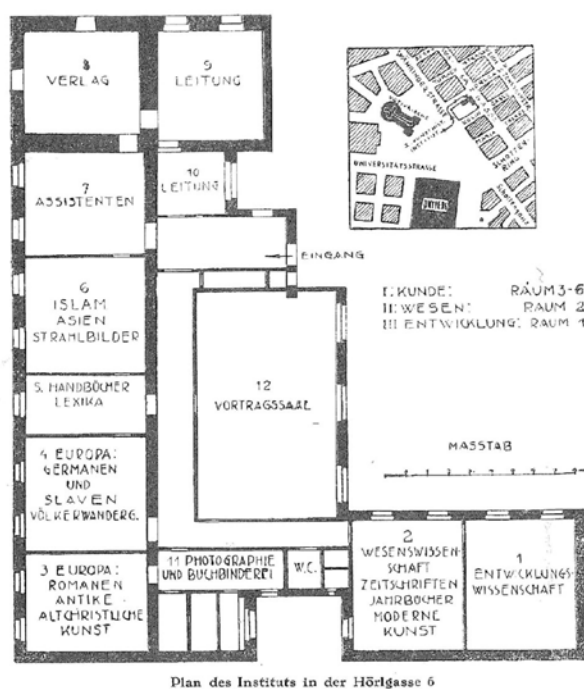


Figure 1 Floorplan of the art historical institute of Strzygowski, in Anon. ed, Josef Strzygowski Festschrift, 1932, 194.

In early 20th century, the art historical institute in Vienna led by Josef Strzygowski (1862-1941) offered the unique opportunity to study the arts of Asia and the Middle

East at university level (fig. 1).¹ The rich material repository for the study of ‘Oriental’ art – consisting of ca. 4000 books, 52.000 photographs and images, and 20.000 lantern slides – was unparalleled in Europe.² It attracted a large number of students and turned the institute into a hub for Asian and Islamic art. Numerous guest auditors from all over Europe and abroad further enriched the lively community.³ Between 1910 and 1933, more than one hundred students supervised by Strzygowski completed their dissertations on Northern European, Austrian, Persian, Islamic, Chinese, Japanese and Indian art.⁴ Suzanne Marchand has directed attention to the strikingly ‘large number of female students’ at Strzygowski’s institute, ‘who would make careers outside Central Europe and remain relatively free from racist ideologies’.⁵

The numbers support Marchand’s statement. Between 1909 and 1932, averagely 37% percent of graduates were women, with a sudden increase in 1918, when women gained the right to vote in the Republic of Austria.⁶ In 1932 – the year when the survey with such figures was published – 54% of the graduates were women.⁷ The student body at the other Viennese art historical institute led by Max Dvořák (1874-1921) and his successor Julius von Schlosser (1866-1938) during the same period remained male dominated with only 21% of women graduates.⁸ The comparison of the gender-balance at the two art historical institutes in Vienna shows that even once women were supposed to be regular students equal to their male colleagues, the men professor’s attitude and admission procedures to their seminars

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¹ On Josef Strzygowski see Monica Juneja, *Can Art History be Made Global? Meditations from the Periphery* Berlin/Boston: DE Gruyter, 2023, chapter one: The World in a Grain of Sand: A Genealogy of World Art Studies, 41-78; Piotr Otto Scholz and Magdalena Anna Długosz, eds, *Von Biala nach Wien, Josef Strzygowski und die Kunstwissenschaft*, Vienna: European University Press Verlagsgesellschaft, 2015; Matthew Rampley, *The Vienna School of Art History, Empire and Politics of Scholarship, 1847-1918*, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania University Press, 2013.

² Anon. ed, *Josef Strzygowski Festschrift, Zum 70. Geburtstag dargebracht von seinen Schülern*, Klagenfurt: Artur Kollitsch Verlag, 1932, 194.

³ For example Eleanor von Erdberg-Consten.

⁴ Anon. ed, *Josef Strzygowski Festschrift*, 195-199.

⁵ Suzanne L. Marchand, *German Orientalism in the Age of Empire. Religion, Race, and Scholarship*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009, 410.

⁶ Anon. ed, *Josef Strzygowski Festschrift*, 195-199.

⁷ Anon. ed, *Josef Strzygowski Festschrift*, 195-199.

⁸ Julius v. Schlosser, ‘Die Wiener Schule der Kunstgeschichte. Rückblick auf ein Säkulum deutscher Gelehrtenarbeit in Österreich’, *Mitteilungen des Österreichischen Instituts für Geschichtsforschung*, 13:2, Innsbruck: Universitäts-Verlag Wagner, 1934, 213-226.

still worked as thresholds.⁹ Strzygowski, despite his feisty character, was equally supportive of women and men students. He knew about women colleges in the US such as Bryn Mawr,¹⁰ and included the research of graduated male and female students in edited volumes.¹¹ Furthermore, Strzygowski was highly appreciative of self-taught women scholars such as archaeologist Gertrude Lowthian Bell (1868-1926).¹² Strzygowski's support of women graduates was particularly fruitful in the field of Oriental topics. Georg Vasold notices that fifty percent of the thesis' on Oriental and Asian art were written by women. He concludes that, 'non-European art history [...] was evidently one of the main fields (there were not many of them) in which female scholars were able to conduct original academic research.'¹³ While the noteworthy amount of women graduates at Strzygowski's institute is widely acknowledged, their impact on art history as well as the history of the institute from a gender-historical perspective remain astoundingly understudied. This gap is the starting point for this article's exploration of the international spread of Asian and Islamic art histories.

Even though the 'complacent ignorance of the art historical establishment' of women artists challenged by Parker and Pollock in early 1980 has changed, I argue that historiographical mechanisms that work against a gender-balanced history of art history are still intact.¹⁴ Even if one researches historically invisibilized women in dusty basements as described in the prefixed quote, if one then adopts 'establishment criteria' to write about them, history-writing is not yet depatriarchalized. Rather, it seems that 'academic conservatism and defensiveness' repeatedly outrules gender-critical and gender-balanced histories.¹⁵ Therefore, academic historiography

⁹ K. Lee Chichester and Brigitte Sölch, 'Einleitung und Editorische Notiz', in

Kunsthistorikerinnen 1910–1980. Theorien, Methoden, Kritiken, Reimer: Berlin 2021, 9-37.

¹⁰ Friedrich Polleroß, 'Josef Strzygowski: Seine Teil-Nachlässe sowie seine Schüler und Schülerinnen zwischen Zionismus und Nationalsozialismus', *Mitteilungen der Gesellschaft für Vergleichende Kunstforschung in Wien*, no. 3, October 2021, 1-24, here 12.

¹¹ See for example: Kunsthistorisches Institut Wien, Lehrkanzel Strzygowski, ed, *Beiträge zur Vergleichende Kunstforschung, Heft II, Kunde, Wesen, Entwicklung*, Vienna: Adolf Holzhausen, 1922, 175-194: with contributions by Ernst Diez, Heinrich Glück, Karl Ginhart, Friedrich Plutzar, Melanie Stiassny, Emmy Wellesz and Herbert Cysarz; Josef Strzygowski, ed, *Asiatische Miniaturmalerei*, Klagenfurt: Kollitsch, 1933: with contributions by Emmy Wellesz, Stella Kramrisch, Heinrich Glück.

¹² Maciej Szymaszek, 'Josef Strzygowski in the letters and diaries of Gertrud Lowthian Bell', in Scholz and Długosz, eds, *Von Biala nach Wien*, 100-111.

¹³ Georg Vasold, 'The Revaluation of Art History. An Unfinished Project by Joseph Strzygowski and His School', in Pauline Bachmann, Melanie Klein, Tomoko Mamime, Georg Vasold, eds, *Art/Histories in Transcultural Dynamics*, Paderborn: Wilhelm Fink, 2017, 119-138, here 129.

¹⁴ Rozsika Parker and Griselda Pollock, *Old Mistresses, Women, Art and Ideology*, New York: Pantheon Books, 1981, 45.

¹⁵ Parker and Pollock, *Old Mistresses*, 45-46.

remains to a large extent a patriarchal practice, which holds true even today.¹⁶ One reason for the fragmentary impact of feminist scholarship on mainstream (patriarchal) historiography is the naturalized separation of women and men. Parker and Pollock argue that 19th century history writing treated women ‘collectively as a homogenous group by virtue of their shared gender’, which has relegated them to a sphere totally separated from that of men.¹⁷ It was just when women gained more rights and visibility in the public sphere that art history established the misrepresentation of women artists as inferior to male creativity.¹⁸ Art history does not stand as a witness to the naturalisation of difference of the sexes. Rather, the field of art history has co/produced the gender binary and misogyny. Drawing upon these insights, Parker and Pollock ask:

why modern art history ignores the existence of women artists, why it has become silent about them, why it has consistently dismissed as insignificant those it did acknowledge.¹⁹

Despite the passage of time, the exact same questions remain relevant today when surveying women graduates of art history in early 20th century.²⁰ This article, then, adopts ‘establishment criteria’ although the author agrees with Parker and Pollock that ‘art history is not the exercise of neutral “objective” scholarship, but an ideological practice’.²¹ The article pursues the twofold aim of combining a historical intersectional study of the Vienna school with a critique of patriarchal patterns of historiography. This study aims to contribute to research of the co-constitutive relation of art and identity markers such as gender and race.²²

The article consists of three parts: two historical studies (part I and III) embrace a theoretical section on patriarchal patterns in historiography (part II). In the first part, Melanie Stiassny’s presidency of the Society of Friends of Asian Art and Culture is the centerpiece of the historical investigation. The society was one of the liveliest in interwar Vienna, and Stiassny, as its managing vice-president, organized exhibitions, broadcasts and adult education, edited the journal of the society, and published articles on Chinese art. Knowledge about Stiassny and the infrastructure

¹⁶ Patriarchy, literally the rule of father and sons, describes the hierarchical social system based on gender differences in which men* rule over women* and children. Although patriarchy manifests in private and public life, this article focuses on the effects of patriarchy in the art historical field. See Abeda Sultana, ‘Patriarchy and Women’s Subordination: A Theoretical Analysis’, *Arts Faculty Journal*, no. 4, 2012, 1-18, <https://doi.org/10.3329/afj.v4i0.12929> [last accessed April 18, 2023].

¹⁷ Parker and Pollock, *Old Mistresses*, 44.

¹⁸ Michael Hatt and Charlotte Klonk, *Art History. A critical introduction to its methods*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006, 155.

¹⁹ Parker and Pollock, *Old Mistresses*, 49.

²⁰ Chichester and Sölch, ‘Einleitung und Editorische Notiz’, 9-37.

²¹ Parker and Pollock, *Old Mistresses*, xvii, 46.

²² Parker and Pollock, *Old Mistresses*; Sigrid Schade and Silke Wenk, ‘Inszenierungen des Sehens: Kunst, Geschichte und Geschlechterdifferenz’, in Hadumod Bußmann and Renate Hof, eds, *Genus: Zur Geschlechterdifferenz in den Kulturwissenschaften*, Stuttgart: Alfred Kröner Verlag, 1995, 340-407.

of the society sheds light on the processes of valorizing Asian art. It furthermore gives insights into how Strzygowskian graduates built networks and professionalized.²³ The second part, the theoretical section, draws on feminist, gender and intersectional studies to analyse patterns and conventions of historiography. A close reading of several articles on Viennese art history reveals how androcentric criteria shape historiography to date. The third part adopts some of the androcentric historiographical criteria such as ‘success’ to comparatively trace careers of ‘successful’ women and men art historians.²⁴ Interestingly, their migratory trajectories reveal a gendered and raced pattern of migration: Women and non-European men art historians often found their first academic positions at universities in the Middle East or Asia, whereas European men began their careers at museums in Vienna and Berlin. Eventually, most worked in area studies departments at US-American universities.

I. Appreciating Asian art in Vienna – Melanie Stiassny and the Society of Friends of Asian Art and Culture

The Natural History Museum (opened in 1889) and the Art History Museum (opened in 1891) that embrace the Maria-Theresien Square on the Burgring in Vienna set in stone the modernist dichotomy between nature on the one side, and art as the highest cultural achievement on the other. This distinction, untenable and much challenged today, was already contested during the early 1920s, as the history of one group of objects – the Chinese collection – shows.²⁵ Chinese objects were part of the ethnographic collection and thus housed in the Natural History Museum.²⁶ Not everyone agreed to the subsumption of Chinese objects under ethnographic and natural history classificatory schemes. Melanie Stiassny (1876-1960) was one of the

²³ For the relation between extra-academic and academic traditions see Heinrich Dilly, *Kunstgeschichte als Institution, Studien zur Geschichte einer Disziplin*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1979, 170.

²⁴ This study focuses on graduates from Strzygowski’s institute who pursued careers in Asian and Islamic art history. An encompassing social history of the institute would have to trace the more diverse cultural-political agendas of students, including those involved with the ‘völkisch’ movement, anti-Semitism and national socialism. See: Andre Gingrich and Peter Rohrbach, eds, *Völkerkunde zur NS-Zeit aus Wien (1938–1945): Institutionen, Biographien und Praktiken in Netzwerken*, Vol. 1-3, Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2021. In particular the chapter: Andre Gingrich, ‘Viktor Christian und die Völkerkunde in Wien 1938-1945: Universität, Anthropologische Gesellschaft und Akademie der Wissenschaften’, 373-424.

²⁵ For the history of collecting and exhibiting Asian and Islamic art in Vienna see Johannes Wieninger, ‘Die Asiensammlung im Österreichischen Museum für Kunst und Industrie und die Wiener Weltausstellung von 1873’, in Roland Prügel, ed, *Geburt der Massenkultur. Beiträge der Tagung des WGL-Forschungsprojektes ‚Wege in die Moderne ...‘ im Germanischen Nationalmuseum*, Nürnberg: Verlag des Germanischen Nationalmuseums, 2014, (30-37); Gabriele Anna Reisenauer, *Josef Strzygowski und die islamische Kunst*, MA Thesis, Vienna University 2008, <https://theses.univie.ac.at/detail/694#> [last accessed April 18, 2023].

²⁶ Melanie Stiassny and Ernst Diez, *Katalog der Ausstellung Ostasiatischer Kunst im Österreichischen Museum für Kunst und Industrie, April – June 1922*, Vienna/Berlin/Leipzig/Munich: Rikola Verlag, 1922, vi.

strongest proponents of the aesthetic value of Chinese art. In 1922, Stiaßny organized together with Ernst Diez (1878-1961) an *Exhibition of East Asian Art* in the Museum of Art and Industry.²⁷ Both Stiaßny and Diez were graduates of Strzygowski. Their aim was to validate hitherto neglected Chinese artworks as ‘true art of the Far East’.²⁸ One third of the exhibits came from the collection of the Natural History Museum.²⁹ After the temporary exhibition, Stiaßny arranged a permanent display of Chinese art in a separate hall in the Natural History Museum. The goal of both exhibitions, the temporary larger show in the Museum of Art and Industry and the subsequent permanent installation in the Natural History Museum, was to show that Chinese painting and sculpture, just like European fine art, was ‘the climax of the spiritual ennoblement of a people’.³⁰

The appreciation of Chinese art resonated with aesthetic, historical, and economic interests of scholars, collectors, connoisseurs, and traders. To stabilize a community of interest, Stiaßny and others formed a working group ‘for the care of Asian art and culture’ housed in the Natural History Museum.³¹ By 1925, the working group formalized its goals and consolidated its material, financial and social basis by founding the ‘Society of Friends of Asian Art and Culture’. A similar ‘Society of East-Asian Art’ was founded in Berlin one year later.³² These societies of Asian art forged networks between scholars, collectors, diplomats, museums, and universities, and thus functioned as platforms for academic scholarship and public education.³³ Between 1926 and 1936, the Viennese society was one of the most active cultural initiatives with over 600 members who attended the manifold exhibitions,

²⁷ Stiaßny and Diez, *Katalog der Ausstellung Ostasiatischer Kunst*.

²⁸ Stiaßny and Diez, *Katalog der Ausstellung Ostasiatischer Kunst*, vi.

²⁹ The other two thirds were loaned from the Art Historical Museum, Museum for Art and Industry, Hungarian State Property (collection of Friedrich Déri), Strzygowski’s art historical institute, Galery Arnot, and 31 private collectors. See Stiaßny and Diez, *Katalog der Ausstellung Ostasiatischer Kunst*.

³⁰ Melanie Stiaßny, ‘Neuerwerbungen Chinesischer Plastik in der Ethnographischen Sammlung des Naturhistorischen Staatsmuseums in Wien’, *Wiener Beiträge zur Kunst und Kulturgeschichte Asiens*, Vol. 2, Jahrbuch 1926/27, Vienna: Krystall-Verlag, 1927, 35-46, here 35.

³¹ Anon, ‘Announcement’, *Cicerone*, no. 1, 1926, 40, <https://doi.org/10.11588/diglit.41317.4> [last accessed April 18, 2023]; Andrea Brandstätter, *Verein der Freunde Asiatischer Kunst und Kultur in Wien, Ein Beitrag zur Wissenschaftsgeschichte über die Entstehung ethnologisch orientierter Ostasienforschung in Österreich in der ersten Hälfte des 20. Jahrhunderts*, MA Thesis, Vienna University, 2000, 80.

³² Hubert Butz, ‘Die Geschichte’, website of the German society of East-Asian art, <https://www.dgok.de/mitgliedschaft/die-geschichte/> [last accessed April 18, 2023].

³³ For a detailed study of the cultural relevance of a society of Asian art see: Sarah Turner, ‘Crafting Connections: The India Society and the Formation of an Imperial Artistic Network in Early Twentieth-Century Britain’, in Susheila Nasta, ed, *India in Britain, South Asian Networks and Connections 1858-1950*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012, 96-114.

guided tours, scholarly lectures and publications, and an even broader audience listened to its broadcasts and public lectures.³⁴

After its foundation, the society moved its headquarters to the Museum of Art and Industry that became a key collaborator for its future exhibitions.³⁵ The move was conditioned by disagreements between the director of the ethnographic collection, Friedrich Röck (1879-1953), and the society.³⁶ Although critics praised the separate display of East Asian art within the ethnographic collection,³⁷ Röck rejected the emphasis of artistic quality.³⁸ The debate about the position of the Chinese collection within the broader categories of 'ethnography' and 'art' reveals how disciplinary differences were acted out methodologically and institutionally.³⁹ By 1928, the East Asian hall in the ethnographic department of the Natural History Museum was dismantled, but Stiasny installed a new Asian and Islamic exhibition in the Museum for Art and Industry (fig. 3). Rudolf von Eitelberger (1817-1885), the first professor of art history in Vienna, had initiated the foundation of the Museum of Art and Industry.⁴⁰ Thus, the museum counts as original site of the Vienna School of art history. The societies' presence at that museum was a significant symbol regarding the importance of Asian art in art history.

During the society's initial years its connection to Strzygowski's institute was of vital importance. In the catalogue of the 1922 exhibition of East Asian art Stiasny and Diez acknowledge Strzygowski for having initiated the exhibition.⁴¹ Although Strzygowski thus helped to get the ball rolling, he was neither on any committee nor listed as regular member of the society.⁴² Nevertheless, personal, material and

³⁴ Melanie Stiasny, 'Jahresbericht' (annual report), *Wiener Beiträge zur Kunst- und Kulturgeschichte Asiens*, Vol. 7, Jahrbuch 1931/32, Vienna: Krystall-Verlag, 1933, 96. Not every annual report provides a list of members, and the annual report from 1932 is the last one that does it. The publication of the members' lists might have been given up to protect the members and the society itself from rising anti-Semitism.

³⁵ Brandstätter, *Verein der Freunde Asiatischer Kunst und Kultur in Wien*, 80.

³⁶ Nevertheless the society remained on good terms with the director of the Natural History Museum that provided the lecture hall for the society's lectures series. See: *Wiener Beiträge zur Kunst- und Kulturgeschichte Asiens*, Vol. 1, Jahrbuch 1925/26, Vienna: Krystall-Verlag, 1926, 70.

³⁷ P.-N., 'Das Neue Ethnographische Museum in Wien', *Cicerone*, no. 14, 1928, 481-482, <https://doi.org/10.11588/diglit.41322#0515> [last accessed April 18, 2023].

³⁸ Stiasny, 'Neuerwerbungen Chinesischer Plastik', 35; Andreas Hauber, 'Melanie Stiasny', *Wiener Kunst Geschichte Gesichtet*, https://geschichte-gesichtet.univie.ac.at/m_stiasny.html [last accessed April 18, 2023].

³⁹ P.-N., 'Das Neue Ethnographische Museum in Wien', 481; Melanie Stiasny, 'Ostasiatische Kunst am Wiener Markt', *Belvedere*, Vol. 12, no. 65, 1928, Vienna, 116-120.

⁴⁰ On the Asian collection of the Museum of Art and Industry see Johannes Wieninger, 'Zur Geschichte der Ostasiensammlung des Österreichischen Museum für angewandte Kunst 1918-1939', *Minikomi: Austrian Journal of Japanese Studies*, 4/1997, 14-18.

⁴¹ Stiasny and Diez, *Katalog der Ausstellung Ostasiatischer Kunst*, vi.

⁴² 'Mitgliederverzeichnis' (list of members), *Wiener Beiträge zur Kunst- und Kulturgeschichte Asiens*, Vol. 5, Jahrbuch 1929/30, Vienna: Krystall-Verlag, 1931, 81-89; 'Mitgliederverzeichnis'

ideological links tied the institute and the person of Strzygowski to the society. Many of the societies' active members were Strzygowskian graduates, among them Mehmet Ağa-Oğlu, Ernst Diez, Stella Kramrisch, Emmy Wellesz and Karl With – all of whom we will meet in the course of the article in more detail.⁴³ Materially, Strzygowski's institute loaned parts of its collection for several exhibitions organized by the society.⁴⁴ And ideologically, Strzygowski's emphasis of the independent artistic value of Asian art was fundamental for the societies' mission to valorize Asian art as fine art.⁴⁵ Thus, although Strzygowski was not personally involved in the society's activities he provided the groundwork and networks upon which Stiasny and the society build.

The life of the society is inseparably linked to the work of Melanie Stiasny. In the first yearly report, Stiasny states that the society is a 'young tree' whose further development 'depends on continuous, loving care [andauernden, liebevollen Pflege]'.⁴⁶ Stiasny herself saw to nurture the sapling, first as secretary ['Schriftführer'] and from 1929 onwards as 'managing vice-president'. The presidents – Michael Haberlandt (1927) and Arthur Rosthorn (1928) – repeatedly thanked Stiasny for 'devoted work [hingebungsvolle Tätigkeit]' at general assemblies.⁴⁷ Visible fruits of her dedicated work were exhibitions, guided tours through exhibitions, and the society's journal that she edited.⁴⁸

Stiasny was in her late 40s when she began to manage the society and had already for more than ten years worked in the field of Asian art. She belonged to the first generation of women students at the art historical institute in Vienna. When she began to study art history and ethnography in 1911 at the age of 35, she had already raised two children.⁴⁹ By 1915, Stiasny was manager of the Asian art collection at Strzygowski's institute and substituted as assistant. Since her name does not appear in the university's employee's register she probably worked without being paid, as usual for women in academia at that time.⁵⁰ Stiasny furthermore worked with

(list of members), *Wiener Beiträge zur Kunst- und Kulturgeschichte Asiens*, Vol. 2, Jahrbuch 1926/27, Vienna: Krystall-Verlag, 1927, 68-72.

⁴³ 'Mitgliederverzeichnis', *Wiener Beiträge*, 1931, 81-89; 'Mitgliederverzeichnis', *Wiener Beiträge*, 1927, 68-72.

⁴⁴ For example: 1922, *Ostasiatische Kunst*, at Museum für Kunst und Industrie; and 1932, *Ausstellung Ostasiatischer Malerei und Graphik 12. bis 19. Jahrhundert*, at Albertina.

⁴⁵ Stiasny and Diez, *Katalog der Ausstellung Ostasiatischer Kunst*.

⁴⁶ Melanie Stiasny, 'Jahresbericht' (annual report), *Wiener Beiträge zur Kunst- und Kulturgeschichte Asiens*, Vol. 1, Jahrbuch 1925/26, Vienna: Krystall-Verlag, 1926, 69.

⁴⁷ Melanie Stiasny, 'Jahresbericht' (annual report), *Wiener Beiträge zur Kunst- und Kulturgeschichte Asiens*, Vol. 2, Jahrbuch 1926/27, Vienna: Krystall-Verlag, 1927, 67; Melanie Stiasny, 'Jahresbericht' (annual report), *Wiener Beiträge zur Kunst- und Kulturgeschichte Asiens*, Vol. 2, Jahrbuch 1927/28, Vienna: Krystall-Verlag, 1928, 68.

⁴⁸ Melanie Stiasny, ed, *Wiener Beiträge zur Kunst- und Kulturgeschichte Asiens*, Vienna: Krystall-Verlag, 1925 to 1936.

⁴⁹ E.H. v. Tschärner, 'Melanie Stiasny zum achtzigsten Geburtstag', *Asiatische Studien: Zeitschrift der Schweizerischen Asiengesellschaft*, Vol. 9, 1955, (1-4) 1.

⁵⁰ Hauber, 'Melanie Stiasny'.

Asian art housed in collections in the cities – probably unpaid, as well.⁵¹ After ten years of studious activities, she graduated with distinction with a thesis on Chinese landscape painting.⁵² Subsequently, a shorter version of the thesis was published in a volume edited by her supervisor Strzygowski.⁵³ Just after Stiasny finished her studies she organized the display of East Asian art in the Natural History Museum and thus lay the cornerstone for the formation of the society.

Exhibitions

Between 1928 and 1937, the society organized six temporary exhibitions modelled on the exhibition of East Asian Art in 1922. Being located at the interstice of high-ranking museums and an international network of scholars, private and public collectors, and connoisseurs, the exhibitions served several goals. Apart from the already mentioned mission of the society to improve the status of Asian art by educating the public and enhancing scholarship, the exhibitions also functioned as cultural-political tokens. Many exhibitions were chaperoned by diplomats, private collectors and scholars who partook in building an international network. Five out of six exhibitions were on Asian art: three on East Asian art (1928, 1932, 1937), one on Asian art including China, Japan and India (1930), and one on 'Eurasian art', including nomadic art (1934). The sixth exhibition organized by Emmy Wellesz and Kurt Blauensteiner with the society and the Kulturbund showcased 'Islamic miniatures, textiles and applied art' (1935).⁵⁴ Wellesz, a specialist of Gandharan Buddhist and Islamic art, furthermore published articles in the journal, and organized the only international excursion of the society to the 'International Exhibition of Chinese Art' in London.⁵⁵

⁵¹ Tscherner, 'Melanie Stiasny zum achtzigsten Geburtstag'.

⁵² Anon, ed, *Josef Strzygowski Festschrift*, 196.

⁵³ Melanie Stiasny, 'Bodenständiges und Fremdes in der Chinesischen Landschaftskunst', in Art Historical Institute of Vienna University, Chair of Strzygowski, ed, *Beiträge zur Vergleichende Kunstforschung*, Vienna: Adolf Holzhausen, 1922, 175-194.

⁵⁴ 1928, *Ausstellung ostasiatischer Gerätekunst und Kleinbildneri*, Museum für Kunst und Industrie; 1930, *Ausstellung von Werken asiatischer Kunst aus Wiener Besitz*, Museum für Kunst und Industrie; 1932, *Ausstellung Ostasiatischer Malerei und Graphik 12. Bis 19. Jahrhundert*, Albertina; 1934, *Ausstellung Eurasiatischer Kunst (Nomadenkunst und Tierstil)*, Kunsthistorisches Museum; 1935, *Ausstellung islamischer Miniaturen, Textilien und Kleinkunst*, Museum für Kunst und Industrie; 1937, *Ausstellung ostasiatischer Malerei aus dem Museum v.d. Heydt, Eysden, Holland, and Chinesisches Lackgerät aus verschiedenem Besitz*, Museum für Kunst und Industrie.

⁵⁵ Emmy Wellesz, 'Buddhistische Kunst in Baktrien und Gandhara', in Art Historical Institute of Vienna University, Chair of Strzygowski, ed, *Beiträge zur Vergleichende Kunstforschung*, Vienna: Adolf Holzhausen, 1922, 137-151; Emmy Wellesz, 'Die Buddhistische Kunst von Gandhara', Leipzig: Seemann, 1924; Emmy Wellesz authored three articles out of four in Stiasny, ed, *Wiener Beiträge, Studien zur islamischen Kunst*, Vol. 10, Jahrbuch 1934/35, Vienna: Krystall Verlag, 1936; *Ausstellung islamischer Miniaturen, Textilien und Kleinkunst*, Museum für Kunst und Industrie, 1935, curated by Emmy Wellesz and Kurt Blauensteiner; Emmy F. Wellesz, 'Mughal Painting at the Burlington House', *The Burlington Magazine*, Vol. 90, no. 539, 1948, 44-47, here 49. For the excursion organized by Wellesz to the *International Exhibition of Chinese Art* in London see: Melanie Stiasny, 'Jahresbericht' (annual

Stiassny was the driving force behind the five Asian exhibitions. Her curatorial tasks included to select artworks, arrange them in the exhibition space, and edit the catalogues.⁵⁶ She always collaborated with colleagues and museums to realize the shows. Curatorial colleagues were Ernst Diez (1928), Heinrich Glück (also 1928), and Viktor Griessmaier (1937), but in some cases Stiassny appears as sole curator (1930, 1932). To assemble the exhibits, the society relied on a wide network of private and public lenders in Austria and Europe. To then mount the exhibitions, the society collaborated with the Museum for Art and Industry (four exhibitions were shown there, 1928, 1930, 1935, 1937). But even the Art History Museum, located opposite the Natural History Museum, opened its doors for an exhibition on 'Eurasian art' (1934). And the Albertina, another prestigious museum that houses one of the world's most renowned collections of prints and drawings, accommodated the exhibition on 'East Asian painting and prints from the 12th to the 19th century' (1932). In contrast to the director of the ethnographic collection who had the East Asian room disassembled, both directors of the Art History Museum and the Albertina supported the display of Asian art as fine art. Thus, by early 1930, Asian art was on display in the halls of world-famous Viennese institutions for fine art.

The display of the exhibits – in temporary exhibitions (fig. 2) as well as the permanent one in the Museum of Art and Industry (fig. 3) emphasized the individual aesthetics of each artwork. Each art object was presented on its own or arranged in small groups on pedestals that allowed visitors to view them from all sides. The display of single items gave space to their aesthetic, technical and material qualities that were ignored in the crowded display cases of ethnographic collections. The acknowledgement of the individuality of each piece through their isolated display was constitutive for the creation of their aesthetic and artistic value. The objects were presented without descriptive labels which was a common practice in exhibitions of Asian art during early 20th century.⁵⁷ Supplementary catalogues provided contextual art historical knowledge for interested viewers.

report), *Wiener Beiträge zur Kunst- und Kulturgeschichte Asiens*, Vol. 11, Jahrbuch 1935/36, Vienna: Krystall-Verlag, 1937, 76. The *International Exhibition of Chinese Art* was the largest exhibition of Chinese art of unmatched international scope. It took place at the Royal Academy of Arts, London, November 1935 to March 1936. On the exhibition see: Jason Steuber, 'The exhibition of Chinese art at Burlington House, London, 1935-36', *The Burlington Magazine*, August 2006, 528-536.

⁵⁶ Melanie Stiassny, *Katalog der Ausstellung von Werken asiatischer Kunst aus Wiener Besitz, anlässlich des sechsten deutschen Orientalistentages im Juni 1930*, im Museum für Kunst und Industrie, June – July 1930, Vienna, 3.

⁵⁷ Compare with the exhibition *Chinesische Kunst* organized by the Society for East Asian Art Berlin and the Prussian Academy for Art, Berlin, 12 January to 2 April 1929, that also did without labels, much to the regret of the critic Rosa Schapire. See Rosa Schapire, 'Zur Ausstellung chinesischer Kunst in Berlin', *Der Kreis*, Vol. 6, 1929, 168-173, here 173.



Figure 2 Anon. photographer, exhib. shot printed in Florence Ayscough, 'Ausstellung von Werken Asiatischer Kunst aus Wiener Besitz', Wiener Beiträge zur Kunst- und Kulturgeschichte Asiens, Vol. 5, Vienna: Krystall-Verlag, 1931, 65-70.



Figure 3 Anon. photographer, exhib. shot of permanent display of Asian and Islamic Art at the Museum of Art and Industry. Printed in Melanie Stiassny, 'Bericht aus dem Österreichischen Museum für Kunst und Industrie', Belvedere 1929, no. 9, 372-376.

Academic scholarship and adult education

The exhibitions were only activity of the 'Society of Friends of Asian Art and Culture'. The society tailored various formats to meet the needs of academic scholars and the public. To enhance academic knowledge-making on Asian art, the society organized six to eight lectures each year (total of eighty-five lectures), given by acclaimed international and local experts.⁵⁸ Among the most accomplished international speakers were William Cohn (*Ostasiatische Kunst in amerikanischen Museen*, 27 February 1926), Surendranath Dasgupta (*The spirit of Indian art*, 11 December 1926), Paul Pelliot (*L'art bouddhique en Asie central et principalement à touen houang*, 25 May 1928; *Königsgräber von An-Yang*, 6 April 1937), Chen Huan Chang (*The principal doctrines of Confucianism*, 26 November 1928), Florence Ayscough (*Chinese painting and poetry in its connection with calligraphy*, 5 February 1930), Victor Goloubew (*Explorations et travaux archéologiques au Cambodge*, 13. March 1931), and Laurence Binyon (*Chinese Painting*, 5 March 1937). Viennese lecturers who gave multiple lectures were Melanie Stiassny, Emmy Wellesz, Heinrich Glück, Viktor Christian, Arthur Rosthorn, and Robert Heine-Geldern.⁵⁹ The society involved both international and local speakers sustainably. Usually, international speakers were elected as corresponding members subsequent to their lectures.⁶⁰ Over the years, the number of corresponding members thus grew and with it the international network of the society became global spreading from Stockholm over Chicago to Beijing, Hanoi, Calcutta, Leningrad, Budapest, Berlin and Paris.⁶¹ Local members often published shortened versions of their lectures in the society's journal, the 'Wiener Beiträge zur Kunst- und Kulturgeschichte Asiens'.

The 'Wiener Beiträge', edited by Stiassny, appeared annually between 1926 and 1937.⁶² The journal was composed of scholarly articles, reviews of exhibitions and books, and the annual report, sometimes including a list of members.⁶³ The publisher Hanel supported the work of the society by producing all printed materials, including the annual yearbook, for free during the first years of the society's existence.⁶⁴ Although the society's name indicates an interest in all Asian arts, half of the contributions to the annual journal dealt with East Asian topics, while only about one fifth of the articles covered South and South East Asian topics.⁶⁵ The focus on East Asian art mirrors Stiassny's area of expertise and shows how strongly Stiassny shaped the agenda of the society. Stiassny and the society hit

⁵⁸ Brandstätter, *Verein der Freunde Asiatischer Kunst und Kultur in Wien*, 79.

⁵⁹ Brandstätter, *Verein der Freunde Asiatischer Kunst und Kultur in Wien*, 102-108.

⁶⁰ Stiassny, ed, *Wiener Beiträge zur Kunst- und Kulturgeschichte Asiens*, 1927, 67.

⁶¹ Stiassny, 'Jahresbericht', *Wiener Beiträge zur Kunst- und Kulturgeschichte Asiens*, 1936, 72.

⁶² From 1930, Vol. 4, onward, Stiassny is named as 'Schriftleitung' [editor] of the *Wiener Beiträge*.

⁶³ Stiassny, ed, *Wiener Beiträge zur Kunst- und Kulturgeschichte Asiens*, Vol. 1-11, 1926-1937.

⁶⁴ Stiassny, ed, *Wiener Beiträge zur Kunst- und Kulturgeschichte Asiens*, Vol. 2, 1927, 67;

Stiassny, ed, *Wiener Beiträge zur Kunst- und Kulturgeschichte Asiens*, Vol. 3, 1928, 68.

⁶⁵ Brandstätter, *Verein der Freunde Asiatischer Kunst und Kultur in Wien*, 79.

a nerve: Although the journal was published in German, its first volume was a huge success that quickly sold out, particularly abroad.⁶⁶

By early 1930, the society was not only a well-established player in the international community of Asian art experts. It also broadened its outreach in Vienna through broadcasts and public lecture series. Again, Stiasny's work and the society's trajectory are closely entangled, suggesting that Stiasny was the driving force behind the new initiative for science communication. In 1931, Stiasny appeared as speaker on the radio. The radio's journal published a full page of illustrations that enabled listeners to follow the lecture since her topics always relied on visual material that the auditive medium itself did not transport (fig 4). The collage of black and white reproductions substituted proper exhibits or lantern slides, and at the same time might have raised the listeners' curiosity to see original works in one of the society's exhibitions. About the same time of Stiasny's broadcasts, the society also conducted several radio lecture series.⁶⁷ The society further strengthened non-academic adult education by forging a collaboration with the Urania Wien. The Urania Wien, modelled on the Urania Berlin, was an adult education center. Themes of the society's lecture-series at the Urania included archaeological excavations at Lo-Lang in Korea (1930), *Oriental places of worship and royal palaces* (1934/35), and *Woman and Goddess in Oriental Art* (1935/1936).⁶⁸

Through its manifold activities – exhibitions, including catalogues and guided tours, academic lectures, 'Wiener Beiträge', broadcasts and lectures series at the Urania – the society worked towards its goal of enhancing the knowledge and appreciation of Asian art in Vienna. And it reached its goal: On an institutional level, the society under Stiasny's lead managed to realize exhibitions of Asian art at fortresses of fine art, such as the Art History Museum and the Albertina. Viennese academics, connoisseurs, artists, and industrialists supported the work of the society as members.⁶⁹ They flocked to the exhibitions and made the society one of the largest and liveliest of the interwar period. Furthermore, appreciative reviews of Stiasny's works in popular and art historical journals show that Stiasny's dedication to Asian art was perceived as the core of the society – the water and sun that nurtured the small tree, to stay with Stiasny's metaphor she had used for the young

⁶⁶ Stiasny, ed, *Wiener Beiträge zur Kunst- und Kulturgeschichte Asiens*, Vol. 2, 1927, 66.

⁶⁷ Stiasny, ed, *Wiener Beiträge zur Kunst- und Kulturgeschichte Asiens*, Vol. 5: *Studien zur Kunst der Han-Zeit, Die Ausgrabungen von Lo-lang in Korea, Josef Strzygowski zum 70. Geburtstag gewidmet*, Vienna: Krystall-Verlag, 1931, 66.

⁶⁸ Titles of single lectures and names of lecturers are unknown. Stiasny, ed, *Wiener Beiträge zur Kunst- und Kulturgeschichte Asiens*, Vol. 5, 1931, 96; Stiasny, ed, *Wiener Beiträge zur Kunst- und Kulturgeschichte Asiens*, Vol. 9: *Studien zum Eurasiatischen Tierstil*, Vienna: Krystall-Verlag, 1935, 72; Stiasny, ed, *Wiener Beiträge zur Kunst- und Kulturgeschichte Asiens*, Vol. 10: *Studien zur Islamischen Buchkunst*, Vienna: Krystall-Verlag, 1936, 72.

⁶⁹ Hauber, 'Melanie Stiasny'; Eva Maria Mandl, 'Verein der Freunde Asiatischer Kunst und Kultur Wien, Mitgliederliste 1931', *Pratercottage*:

<http://www.pratercottage.at/2013/01/31/verein-der-freunde-asiatischer-kunst-und-kultur-in-wien-1931/> [last accessed April 18, 2023].

society. Critics very much agreed with the agenda to appreciate the aesthetic and artistic qualities of Asian art.⁷⁰



Figure 4 Melanie Stiassny, 'Relations of European with Asian art, impact of the relation in the modern era', radio lecture 27 December 1932, Radio Vienna, Vol. 9, no. 13, 1932, 15.

In 1938, after the annexation of Austria to Nazi Germany and the Nazification of public and private life, the 'Society of Friends of Asian Art and Culture' ceased to exist because many of its responsible members went into exile while others resigned their membership from the Nazified society as a sign of silent protest.⁷¹ Stiassny emigrated to Geneva in Switzerland where she proceeded to work with Asian art collections. Once again, she dedicated her exceptional knowledge of and care for Asian art to the collection of the Ethnographic Museum,⁷² the 'Swiss Society of Friends of East Asian Culture',⁷³ and, from 1943 onwards, as private lecturer at Geneva University to the education of future generations.⁷⁴

⁷⁰ P.-N., 'Das Neue Ethnographische Museum in Wien', 481-482; Dr. S.L., 'Ausstellung ostasiatischer Malerei und Graphik', *Die Österreicherin*, no. 9, 1932, 5-6.

⁷¹ Letters by Viktor Griessmaier to former members of the society, 1947-1948, quoted after Wieninger, 'Zur Geschichte der Ostasiensammlung', 17.

⁷² Marguerite Lobsiger-Dellenbach, 'Hommage de Genève à Madame Stiassny', *Asiatische Studien: Zeitschrift der Schweizerischen Asiengesellschaft*, Vol. 9, 1955, 4-5.

⁷³ See articles that Stiassny published in the journal of the Swiss society *Mitteilungen der Schweizer Gesellschaft der Freunde Ostasiatischer Kultur* between 1940 and 1955, and the announcement of her lectures in the same journal, as well as other daily newspapers such as *Berner Woche* and *Le mouvement féministe: organe officiel des publications de l'Alliance nationale des sociétés féminines suisses*.

⁷⁴ Tschanner, 'Melanie Stiassny zum achtzigsten Geburtstag', 3.

II. Analysis of androcentric historiography

Stiassny – a doctor, expert of Chinese art, middle-aged woman – could not have achieved the reinterpretation and relocation of Asian art without the society that operated between institutions such as museums, university, adult education, and radio. And the society would not have had such a high impact on academic scholarship and the public image of Asian art without Stiassny. She carried the main responsibility and acted effectively as managing president, even if she remained managing vice-president nominally. Stiassny could attain this practically presidential position for two reasons. First, she initiated the foundation of the society and remained the most stable and most active member overseeing all of the society's activities.⁷⁵ And second, women scholars, who were during the early Republican period in the German-speaking countries excluded from high-ranking positions in museums and universities could hold key roles in infra-institutional infrastructures like the society.

These two motives – Stiassny as initiator of the society, and the societies' infra-institutional position – were intertwined. So why did Stiassny work towards forming the society in the first place? Besides the obvious agenda to enhance the knowledge about and image of Asian art in Vienna, I can only speculate about her experiences as women scholar, because Stiassny left no ego-documents that protocolled her intentions and motives during the formative years of the society. But after hitting a glass ceiling as assistant of Strzygowski and in her work with several museum collections, she might have strategically worked towards building a forum that gave her the kind of organizational power she sought. Then, the society would have had another hidden agenda beneath its claimed dedication to Asian art, namely to function as a space that engendered the inclusion of women scholars, primarily of Stiassny herself, but also of colleagues like Emmy Wellesz. But, owing to the lack of documents, these are mere speculations.

Neither Stiassny's nor Wellesz' art historical work has been recuperated by historiographers. In the following I argue that the lack of research of their trajectories for understanding the international spread of Asian art histories is no accident, but symptomatic of the still-prevailing patriarchy that translates as an 'unconscious androcentrism' into art historiographical scholarship. Since more general surveys of patriarchal patterns in art historiographical writing already exist,⁷⁶ I analyze writings that deal more specifically with Strzygowski's graduates. The aim is not to ac-

⁷⁵ Emmy Wellesz' autobiographical memoirs and manifold sources quoted above describe Stiassny as initiator and founder of the society. However, the biographer of Arthur von Rosthorn, who was professor of Sinology in Vienna, diplomat, and for many years the president of the society, credits Rosthorn for having founded the society. Since Rosthorn did not participate in many of the activities of the society and was absent from most annual meetings in the 1930s, Stiassny appears to be the more likely founder. See Brandstätter, *Verein der Freunde Asiatischer Kunst und Kultur in Wien*, 20.

⁷⁶ Chichester and Sölch, 'Einleitung und Editorische Notiz', 29-33.

cuse art historians of misogyny, but to attend to the discipline's epistemological underpinnings,⁷⁷ in this case, to understand how patriarchy shapes the language and methods used by art historians. The lessons learned from the deconstruction are supposed to inform a more gender-sensitive art historical practice.

Articles edited by Matthew Rampley in a special issue on 'The Vienna School beyond Vienna. Art history in Central Europe' study the relation between art history in Vienna and Poland, the Czechoslovak Republic, Serbia, Romania, and Hungary and thus considerably broaden the understanding of the 'Vienna School'.⁷⁸ The method most articles use is institutional and socio-political history of art history tracing professors and museums directors. Owing to the institutional historiographical method, women art historians are largely missing. Although historically correct, the unmarked androcentrism ought to be questioned because it reproduces misogynist laws that governed institutions in early 20th century. A close reading of one article exemplifies how social misogyny translates as the 'father-and-son' trope into historiography, reproducing the much criticized his/story.⁷⁹ An article on the Czech legacy of the Vienna school carves out the lineage that connects Vienna with art history in Prague.⁸⁰ The author directly refers to the 'father-and-son' trope: They stage the professor-student relation as a father-son relation, name all the men involved, but omit the name of one art historian's daughter about whom we only learn that she, as daughter and then wife of prominent art historians, somehow contributed to the unbroken genealogical continuation of the Vienna school in Prague.⁸¹

The books and research of the issue's editor, Matthew Rampley, has considerably deepened the knowledge about the social, institutional and intellectual life of the Vienna school of art history and its legacy. And yet, the negligence to acknowledge misogynist ideology inscribed into historiographical knowledge-making characterizes much of his work. For example, in his important history of the Vienna school of art history, Rampley briefly assesses the impact of Strzygowski's graduates on the formation of art histories in Europe and beyond, without referring to the high amount of women students that had been uncovered by Suzanne Marchand.⁸² Instead, the author names eight exemplary graduates, six men and two women, 'who would become prominent members of the art-historical profession

⁷⁷ Monica Juneja, 'A very civil idea...' Art history and world-making with and beyond the nation', *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte*, Vol. 81:4, 2018, 461-485, here 464.

⁷⁸ Matthew Rampley, ed, *The Vienna School beyond Vienna. Art history in Central Europe*, *Journal of Art Historiography*, no. 8, 2013, <https://arthistoriography.wordpress.com/8-abstracts-2/> [last accessed April 18, 2023].

⁷⁹ Schade and Wenk, 'Inszenierungen des Sehens: Kunst, Geschichte und Geschlechterdifferenz', 342.

⁸⁰ Milena Bartlová, 'Continuity and discontinuity in the Czech legacy of the Vienna School of art history', in Rampley, ed, *The Vienna School beyond Vienna*, 1-10.

⁸¹ Bartlová, 'Continuity and discontinuity in the Czech legacy of the Vienna School of art history', 2.

⁸² Marchand, *German Orientalism in the Age of Empire*, 410.

across central Europe'.⁸³ The criteria to assess 'prominence' are not further explained. The achievements of four art historians are explained in a few sentences, while those of four others, including both women, remain uncommented. The criteria of 'prominence' of scholars is strikingly similar to the criteria of 'greatness' of artists. Feminist scholars have critiqued – very 'prominently!' – these blurry assessments of the value of someone's work.⁸⁴ Furthermore, the two women scholars included in Rampley's list, Stella Kramrisch (1896-1993) and Emmy Wellesz (1889-1987), have gained 'prominence' through very different activities: While Kramrisch pursued an institutional career as professor and curator, Wellesz worked as scholar and guide with the Society of Friends of Asian Art and Culture and never held a high-ranking institutional position. The kind of career, and thus the criteria, that accounts for a scholars' 'prominence' remain hidden – but seem to be oriented somewhere along the lines of public visibility paired with institutional success. Precisely these opaque criteria for 'prominence' and 'greatness' more often than not write women either entirely out of history, or brush over their specific contributions to the formation of institutional and public discourses about art.

After this general introduction to the mechanisms of androcentric historiography, a close reading of two peer-reviewed articles more closely related to the Vienna school follows. The first article traces the legacy of Strzygowski's focus on East Asian art history.⁸⁵ The article first engages with Strzygowski's scholarship on East Asia, and then investigates the 'legacy' of Strzygowski 'in East Asian art history by exploring the work of two of his students', Karl With (1891-1980) and Alfred Salmony (1890-1958).⁸⁶ After their graduation in Vienna, both gained directorial positions in institutions in Cologne, Germany – Salmony as vice-director of the Museum of East Asian Art, and With as director of the *Kunstgewerbemuseum* (Museum for Applied Arts). Both lost their directors' positions in consequence of the rise of the Nazi regime, and emigrated to the US. After rough transitory years, each gained a professorship.⁸⁷ The article mentions Stiassny once, because With remembered her as a colleague (although he misspelled her name).⁸⁸ Although the article does not explicitly apply an institutional historical approach, it nevertheless unconsciously reproduces the androcentrism of institutional historiography.

⁸³ Rampley names the following students of Strzygowski: Vojslav Molè, Stella Kramrisch, Emmy Wellesz, Virgil Vatasianu, Otto Demus, and Fritz Novotny, Ernst Diez, Coriolan Petranu. See Matthew Rampley, *The Vienna School of Art History, Empire and Politics of Scholarship, 1847-1918*, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2013, 177.

⁸⁴ Linda Nochlin, 'Why have there been no great woman artists? (orig. 1971)', in *Women, Art and Power and other Essays*, New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1988, 145-178.

⁸⁵ Julia Orell, 'Early East Asian art history in Vienna and its trajectories: Josef Strzygowski, Karl With, Alfred Salmony', *Journal of Art Historiography*, no. 13, 2015, (1-32).

⁸⁶ Orell, 'Early East Asian art history', 2.

⁸⁷ Orell, 'Early East Asian art history', 8-9.

⁸⁸ Orell, 'Early East Asian art history', 5-6.

Since barely any scholarship exists on Melanie Stiassny,⁸⁹ a biographical article on Emmy Wellesz serves as second case study for unconscious androcentrism in art historiography.⁹⁰ A linguistic and a methodological decision render the article problematic: First, to distinguish between Emmy Wellesz and her husband Egon Wellesz the author uses the paternalizing practice of referring to the man as ‘Wellesz’, whereas the woman is called by her first name. Second, the article is structured biographical, or rather relational, as it maps Emmy Wellesz’ impact on her husband, the institutionally more successful composer and musicologist Egon Wellesz.⁹¹ The methodological focus on the inner-marital exchange leaves unexplored Emmy Wellesz’ public work, leading to misconceptions regarding her scholarly impact: The author oversees Wellesz active role in the society, and instead assumes that she was somehow ‘influenced’ by the society. The author thus relegates her to a passive recipient of cultural activities shaped by her husband and the society, and oversees her active role as art historian.⁹²

My point in analyzing the unconscious androcentrism and methodological patriarchy of art historiography is to show that biographical and institutional histories have a tendency to reproduce patriarchal patterns that governed institutions during the last two centuries. But even if I adopt the patriarchal criteria of opaque ‘prominence’ and a successful institutional career, a more gender-balanced picture of the legacy of Strzygowskian graduates emerges. The following comparison of academic careers of men and women graduates from Strzygowski’s institute shows how both contributed to the international spread of Asian and Islamic art histories. The gender comparison is complicated by the political relevance of further identity markers such as race and religion.

III. The international spread of Asian and Islamic art histories

During the 1920s, several Strzygowskian graduates found positions outside of Europe. By the mid-1930s, the annexation of Austria to Nazi Germany rapidly increased the emigration of scholars.⁹³ Two prime destinations of migrating Viennese art historians of Asia were first Eurasian regions that were home to the arts they studied, and second US-American universities and museums. In the following, I give some exemplary accounts of careers of Strzygowskian graduates between c. 1920 and 1970. None of the scholars I survey left Austria as an immediate reaction to the Nazification of state and private life. Yet, all the migratory paths are conditioned

⁸⁹ Obituaries of Stiassny have been published by Tscherner and Lobsiger-Dellenbach. Furthermore, Brandstätter and Wieniger acknowledge Stiassny as managing president in their studies of the Society of Friends of Asian Art and Culture, Vienna.

⁹⁰ Karl Johns, ‘The long shadow of Emmy Wellesz, with a translation of her ‘Buddhist Art in Bactria and Gandhāra’’, *Journal of Art Historiography*, no. 19, 2018, 1-18.

⁹¹ Johns, ‘The long shadow of Emmy Wellesz’.

⁹² Johns, ‘The long shadow of Emmy Wellesz’, 4.

⁹³ On Austrian exiles see: Margit Franz and Heimo Halbrainer, ed, *Going East, Going South, Österreichisches Exil in Asien und Afrika*, Graz: Clio, 2014; Doris Ingrisch, ‘Weibliche intellektuelle Kulturen in Wien und ihre Vertreibung 1938’, in Inge Hansen-Schaberg and Hiltrud Häntzschel, ed, *Alma Maters Töchter im Exil, Zur Vertreibung von Wissenschaftlerinnen und Akademikerinnen in der NS-Zeit*, Munich: edition text + kritik, 2011, 226-236.

not only by professional interests, but also by social and political events, including the rise of fascism and anti-Semitism in Germany and Austria that threatened scholars of Jewish descent and those involved with modern art, socialism and communism. In other words, not only the area of expertise and professional networks conditioned routes of migration, but also the intersection of gendered and racist structural discrimination and privilege.



Figure 5 Richard Gerstl, *Ernst Diez*, 1906.
© Österreichische Galerie Belvedere.

Ernst Diez, who worked on Islamic and Asian art, began his career as assistant in museums and universities in Austria and Germany before becoming professor in the US and Turkey (fig. 5). After his habilitation in 1919 supervised by Strzygowski, Diez was appointed first private docent then associate professor at Vienna University. Further professorships at two universities in the US (1926-1931) followed, and, after a brief interlude in Vienna, he moved on to Istanbul University



Figure 6 D. K. Deb Barman, *Stella Kramrisch*, 10 December 1922. Stella Kramrisch Papers, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Library and Archives.

(1943-1949). In Istanbul, Diez instituted the art historical chair and educated the next generation of art historians.⁹⁴ Diez's career was conditioned by his gender, in so far as the institutions he worked with privileged men. For women, neither the habilitation nor the job as private docent, let alone associate professor, would have been possible in Europe at that time.⁹⁵ And yet, women experts of Asian art found their way into professorships, but only if they left Europe. For example, Stella Kramrisch (1896-1993), after having obtained her doctoral thesis on early Buddhist temple sculpture in 1919 in Vienna, was invited as lecturer to the art school of the reform-university Visva-Bharati, located in Santiniketan in Bengal (fig. 6). After her first year in Santiniketan, Kramrisch worked as lecturer at Calcutta University, where she was appointed professor in 1943. By early 1950, Kramrisch had published extensively, built a unique collection of ancient Indian sculpture and folk art, and looked back at almost 30 years of teaching experience. Standing out due to all these assets, not least her valuable collection, Kramrisch was invited to relocate as professor and curator to Philadelphia, US.⁹⁶ The difference between Kramrisch's and Diez' careers – Kramrisch was employed in India, where she became professor after twenty years, and then moved on to the US; Diez became assistant and then professor in Vienna,

⁹⁴ Burcu Dogramaci, 'Kunstgeschichte in Istanbul, Die Begründung der Disziplin durch den Wiener Kunsthistoriker Ernst Diez', in Ruth Heftrig, Olaf Peters, Barbara Schellewald, ed, *Kunstgeschichte im „Dritten Reich“, Theorien, Methoden, Kritiken*, Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2008, (114-133).

⁹⁵ On the habilitation of women in German-speaking countries see: Barbara Lange, 'Aenne Liebreich – Facetten einer Hochschulkarriere in den zwanziger und dreißiger Jahren', *Kritische Berichte: Grenzverschiebungen*, 4/1994, (22-34).

⁹⁶ For a biography of Kramrisch see: Darielle Mason, 'Interwoven in the Pattern of Time: Stella Kramrisch and Kanthas', in *Kantha. The Embroidered Quilts of Bengal*, exhib. cat., Philadelphia Museum of Art, 2010, (158-168).

subsequently taught in the US, in Turkey, and again in Vienna – indicates a gendered pattern of professional migration. Men could start their institutional careers in Europe and then seize opportunities elsewhere, whereas women had to get their first institutional positions in Eastern regions whose art they studied. The comparison of the gendered aspect of professional careers furthermore suggests that women had to build and rely on more varied infrastructures such as societies (in the case of Stiassny), and their own collections (in the case of Kramrisch) to become interesting as collaborators for stately institutions.

The example of Kramrisch and Diez is no exception but rather exemplary of the professional paths of graduates from Strzygowski's institute. The trajectories of two other graduates exemplify how a scholar's positionality shaped their opportunities within institutions. Mehmet Ağa-Oğlu (1896-1949) and Katharina Otto-Dorn (1908-1999) were both founding figures of Islamic art history. When Mehmet Ağa-Oğlu arrived in Vienna in 1924 to study Islamic art at Strzygowski's institute, he already looked back at ten years of academic education and occupation. In 1916, he had completed his first Ph.D. in history, philosophy and languages at the Oriental department in Moscow. He then studied in Constantinople (today Istanbul), Berlin, and Jena before completing his second doctoral thesis on Turkish architecture in Vienna in 1926. A highly trained and experienced specialist of Islamic art he became a curator and professor in Constantinople. In 1929, he was invited by the German director William R. Valentiner of the Detroit Institute of Arts (U.S.A.) to build up the Near Eastern collection.⁹⁷ In 1933 he became professor in the History of Islamic Art at Michigan University. Thus, Ağa-Oğlu established the field of Islamic art as curator, teacher, editor and scholar in the USA.⁹⁸

Katharina Otto-Dorn graduated from Strzygowski's institute in 1933 with a thesis on Sassanid silver ware and its images.⁹⁹ After her graduation Otto-Dorn spent a year as volunteering trainee at the Islamic collection of the Berlin Museum. From 1935 until 1944, she worked first as excavator, then as lecturer for the German Archaeological Institute in Istanbul. In Istanbul, she met and married the archaeologist Otto Heinz, who died prematurely in 1941. While Otto-Dorn worked for the

⁹⁷ Between 1927 and 1963 Adele Coulin Weibel (1880-1963), who had also studied with Strzygowski, worked at the Detroit Museum of Art, too, which was the same institution where Ağa-Oğlu became curator for the Near East in 1929. Weibel's work as curator of Textiles, Pre-Columbian and American Indian Antiquities, Pre-Historic Art, and European Art as well as her previous occupations as private tutor and assistant in various cities in Europe and the US remains to be studied. See: *Textile Department Records of Adele Coulin Weibel at the Detroit Institute of Arts*, <http://www.dalnet.lib.mi.us/dia/guides.html> [last accessed April 18, 2023]. I thank Anne Söll for generously sharing her archival findings and knowledge about Coulin Weibel.

⁹⁸ Zeynep Simavi, 'Mehmet Ağa-Oğlu and the formation of the field of Islamic art in the United States', *Journal of Art Historiography*, no. 6, 2012, 1-25.

⁹⁹ Käte Dorn, *Das sassanidische Silbergeschirr und seine Sinnbilder*, Dissertation zur Erlangung des philosophischen Doktorgrades an der Universität Wien (doctoral thesis), Vienna, June 1933. Private archive Gierlichs, Berlin.

German Archaeological Institute in Istanbul, Ernst Diez arrived as professor of Islamic art. Although Diez was not persecuted for political or racial reasons by the Nazi regime, Dogramaci suggests that he nevertheless seized the chance to get away from the war in Austria and expand his reputation internationally.¹⁰⁰ The Austrian Diez could wait out the war in Turkey, whereas Otto-Dorn, a German citizen, was expelled from Turkey in 1944. On her way back to war-ridden Germany, Otto-Dorn left all her research papers and study material in Vienna to safeguard them from destruction. Penniless, widowed, without research material, and back in the bombed home of her parents, Otto-Dorn was determined to find new professional opportunities.¹⁰¹ During the late 1940s, she worked as lecturer at the newly founded department for East Asian art history at Heidelberg University, but was not appointed professor despite her high qualification and experience. Instead, she gained a professorship at the University of Ankara where she set up the department.¹⁰² Otto-Dorn returned to Heidelberg University and tried to set up a chair of Islamic Art again around 1960, but her mission remained unsuccessful. Thus, in 1967 she left Heidelberg once more, this time westwards, to become professor at UCLA in the US.

The institutional careers of both Kramrisch and Otto-Dorn became possible only by migrating to the regions whose art they studied, which were (British) India for Kramrisch and Turkey for Otto-Dorn. In contrast to the Germanophone countries, universities in India and Turkey welcomed women scholars in teaching positions. There, it seems, the Viennese education and whiteness outweighed the female gender. Further accounts of careers of women scholars bring more clearly to the fore the dimension of anti-Semitism that intersects with race and gender, for example in the case of Hilde Zaloscer (1903-1999). Upon completion of her dissertation on mediaeval ornaments of the Mediterranean in 1926, Zaloscer could not find a paid position in Vienna due to her Jewish family background.¹⁰³ In 1936 Zaloscer departed for Alexandria (Egypt), where she worked as a nanny. A decade later, after the 1939-1945 war, Zaloscer returned to Vienna hoping for a position, but the hope was disappointed as it had been for Otto-Dorn in Heidelberg. In 1950, mediated through a friend, the well-connected intellectual Taha Hussein, Zaloscer was appointed professor at the University of Alexandria. In 1968, Zaloscer fled increasing nationalism and anti-Semitism in Egypt and emigrated to Canada, where she was professor for three years at Carleton University in Ottawa before moving 'back' to Vienna as guest lecturer.¹⁰⁴ This pattern of women art historians' migration to Arabic and Asian countries shows the intersection of gendered and racist discrimination and

¹⁰⁰ Dogramaci, 'Kunstgeschichte in Istanbul', 116.

¹⁰¹ Joachim Gierlich, 'Katharina Otto-Dorn (1908-1999)', *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft (ZDMG)*, 152/1, 2002, 5-9, here 6.

¹⁰² Joachim Gierlich, 'In Memoriam Katharina Otto-Dorn, A Life Dedicated to Turkish Islamic Art and Architecture', *EJOS*, IV, no. 21, 2001, 1-14, here 4.

¹⁰³ Alisa Douer, 'Hilde Zaloscer – eine Biografie', in Franz and Halbrainer ed, *Going East, Going South, Österreichisches Exil in Asien und Afrika*, 177-191, here 178.

¹⁰⁴ Douer, 'Hilde Zaloscer – eine Biografie'.

privilege: European institutions excluded them on the basis of their gender and Jewish family background, whereas institutions in Turkey, Egypt and India gave them professorships on the basis of their European education and whiteness. From these professorial positions the women scholars then could move on to professorships in the US joining their male colleagues with a delay of three to four decades.

Conclusion and outlook

Melanie Stiassny as managing vice-president of the ‘Society of Friends of Asian Art and Culture, Vienna’, steered its manifold scholarly and cultural activities like an octopus.¹⁰⁵ The infra-institutional position of the society created a space that allowed Stiassny, as a woman, to unfold her leadership qualities and furthermore create space for fellow women scholars. Salmony, With, and Diez quickly rose into the ranks of directors and professors in Europe and the US, whereas Kramrisch, Otto-Dorn, and Zaloscer attained professorships at universities in the regions they researched. The women scholars relocated to the US in a second migratory movement, after having held prestigious positions in the Middle East and Asia. Similar to women scholars, Ağa-Oğlu’s educational and professional path shows that he had to achieve more – such as the double doctorate that was common for European women graduates of the first generation – and gain institutional acknowledgment in the East before he obtained an institutional position in the US. Thus, a geo-political map of patriarchal and racist power hierarchies within universities and museums becomes visible which determined the global spread of Asian and Islamic art histories together with larger political developments, such as the disintegration of European empires, fascism and anti-Semitism, and postcolonial nation-making.

Beyond the intersectional agenda, this investigation of the international proliferation of Asian and Islamic art histories through Strzygowskian graduates opens up a new perspective on the history of world art history. As the revision of the role of Strzygowskian graduates has brought to light, world art history did not simply fail or end in the early 1930s – which is a common trope in world art historiography. Rather, the next generation of scholars transformed the universalist/masculinist paradigms of world art history into particular art histories, specializing in the arts of specific regional or religious communities, such as East Asian, Persian, Islamic or Indian art.

The limited survey of Strzygowski’s graduates who contributed to establishing the fields of Asian and Islamic art histories in Vienna and the world is sufficient to uncover patriarchal patterns in historiography. That said, however, a more systematic intersectional historiography would have to include further actors and further art historical activities.¹⁰⁶ The legacy of further Strzygowskian graduates re-

¹⁰⁵ ‘Octopus’ serves as metaphor for a worker who juggles multiple (precarious) occupations simultaneously to make a living. The metaphor was introduced by Asija Ismailovski und Eva Kovač at the conference ‘Why have there been no great female art historians?’ (Vienna, Nov. 4-6, 2021).

¹⁰⁶ K. Lee Chichester et. al., ed, *Kunsthistorikerinnen 1910-1980, Institutionen, Analysen, Strukturen*, Vol. 2, Berlin: Reimer, forthcoming 2024.

mains to be studied. For example, Luise Potpeschnigg was the art historical institute's pedagogical department director. She was in charge of transmitting the art historical program into schools in Vienna.¹⁰⁷ Another example is Fannina Halle, specialist in Russian architecture and icons, who engaged as critic and exhibition organizer with modern painters such as Vasily Kandinsky and Oskar Kokoschka, and furthermore contributed to women history and gender studies with sociological research on the role of women in Russia.¹⁰⁸ These actors and their infrastructures – academic societies, temporary exhibitions, art criticism, or adult and school education – gave space to women's academic agency in the art historical field. Coming back to this articles' focus on Viennese and international establishments for the study of Asian and Islamic art, women and men have proven to be transcultural brokers of knowledge and founders of societies, chairs and museum collections. But, owing to androcentric bias in historiography and a strong focus on institutional history, the activities and agency of women actors have been much less studied so far. This article hopes to contribute with its historical investigation and its theoretical argument to a more gender-balanced, intersectional history of art history.

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¹⁰⁷ Luise Potpeschnigg, *Einführung in die Betrachtung von Werken der bildenden Kunst*, Vienna: K.K. Schulbücherverlag, 1915, (2nd edition 1923).

¹⁰⁸ Fannina Halle, *Ikonen aus dem ehemaligen Museum Kaiser Alexander III. in St. Petersburg*, Leipzig: Seemann, 1924; Fannina Halle, *Frauen des Ostens, vom Matriarchat zu den Fliegerinnen von Baku*, Zurich: Europa-Verlag, 1938.