

Periodization in the Art Historiographies of Central and Eastern Europe

EDITED BY SHONA KALLESTRUP,
MAGDALENA KUNIŃSKA, MIHNEA ALEXANDRU MIHAIL,
ANNA ADASHINSKAYA AND COSMIN MINEA



Periodization in the Art Historiographies of Central and Eastern Europe

This volume critically investigates how art historians writing about Central and Eastern Europe in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries engaged with periodization.

At the heart of much of their writing lay the ideological project of nation-building. Hence discourses around periodization – such as the mythicizing of certain periods, the invention of historical continuity and the assertion of national specificity – contributed strongly to identity construction. Central to the book's approach is a transnational exploration of how the art histories of the region not only interacted with established Western periodizations but also resonated and 'entangled' with each other. In their efforts to develop more sympathetic frameworks that refined, ignored or hybridized Western models, they sought to overcome the centre-periphery paradigm which equated distance from the centre with temporal belatedness and artistic backwardness. The book thus demonstrates that the concept of periodization is far from neutral or strictly descriptive, and that its use in art history needs to be reconsidered.

Bringing together a broad range of scholars from different European institutions, the volume offers a unique new perspective on Central and Eastern European art historiography. It will be of interest to scholars working in art history, historiography and European studies.

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Cover image: Detail of *Nouveau Tableau De L'Histoire Universelle D'Après Celui De [Friedrich] Strass. Avec des Corrections et des Additions nombreuses. Depuis l'antiquité la plus reculée jusqu'à nos jours 1824*. Engraving by E. Collin, 1824. (Digitale Sammlungen Darmstadt. http://tudigit.ulb.tu-darmstadt.de/show/G1788_07/0001)

First published 2022
by Routledge
605 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10158

and by Routledge
4 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon, OX14 4RN

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Kallestrup, Shona, editor. | Kunińska, Magdalena, editor. | Mihail, Mihnea Alexandru, editor. | Adashinskaya, Anna, editor. | Minea, Cosmin, editor.

Title: Periodization in the art historiographies of Central and Eastern Europe / edited by Shona Kallestrup, Magdalena Kunińska, Mihnea Alexandru Mihail, Anna Adashinskaya and Cosmin Minea.

Description: New York: Routledge, 2022. | Includes bibliographical references and index.

Identifiers: LCCN 2021061448 (print) | LCCN 2021061449 (ebook) | ISBN 9781032013848 (hardback) | ISBN 9781032013886 (paperback) | ISBN 9781003178415 (ebook)

Subjects: LCSH: Art—Historiography. | Art, Central European. | Art, East European. | Europe, Central—History—Periodization. | Europe, Eastern—History—Periodization.

Classification: LCC N7485.E8515 P47 2022 (print) | LCC N7485.E8515 (ebook) | DDC 709.4—dc23/eng/20220426

LC record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2021061448>

LC ebook record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2021061449>

ISBN: 978-1-032-01384-8 (hbk)

ISBN: 978-1-032-01388-6 (pbk)

ISBN: 978-1-003-17841-5 (ebk)

DOI: 10.4324/9781003178415

Typeset in Sabon
by Apex CoVantage, LLC

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Foreword

I was honoured to be asked by the editors of this volume to write a few opening words to it. Ada Hajdu and her team started working on the ERC project *Art Historiographies in Central and Eastern Europe: An Inquiry from the Perspective of Entangled Histories* in 2018, with New Europe College – Institute for Advanced Study in Bucharest as its host institution. It was meant to be a five-year project, which proposed a complex and multifaceted examination of the art historiographies in Central and Eastern Europe over an interval extending from the second half of the nineteenth century to the first half of the twentieth century, an examination that was to be given shape through the operative concepts foregrounded in the project: periodization, style and influence. Besides the individual contributions of the team members, three international conferences were planned within the project, each inspired by one of these concepts, and each leading towards a publication. The untimely death of Ada Hajdu, deeply lamented by us all, curtailed this project. It was reduced from five years to three (of which the third was to a large extent devoted to preparing what has been called the ‘phasing out’ of the project and to working on this volume). Only one of the planned conferences – that on periodization – could take place.

This three-day conference was held from 29 November to 1 December 2019, under the title ‘Questions of Periodization in the Art Historiographies of Central and Eastern Europe’. It gathered together over 20 participants, from countries of Central and Eastern Europe as well as outside the region. The contributions were as diverse as they were rich, and even though this volume is not an exact replica of the conference, what you are about to read reflects its diversity and richness. Inscribed within the more general questioning of periodizations in the history of art over the last decades, the volume contributions are calibrated (as were many of the papers presented at the conference) so as to account for some of the specific ways in which this questioning can be critically and fruitfully applied to the nascent – and subsequently to the more mature – art historiographies in this part of the world. In so doing, they touch upon – or directly address – a number of related aspects that are far from being of secondary importance: the relationship between centres and peripheries, and their conception *as* centres and peripheries through the very act of founding local historiographies that modelled themselves – not without frictions (and not without inventiveness either, on occasion) – on Western ones; the closely related and persistently vexing issue of ‘belatedness’, stemming from this (for all intents and purposes) unavoidable modelling; the perspective of outsiders (read: Western scholars) on local art, and their input to the genesis of local historiographies; the gradual formation of transnational scholarly communities which mitigated these effects, and corrected, at least to a certain extent,

the East–West asymmetries; the definition and promotion of certain styles as ‘canonical’, at the expense of artistic phenomena that do not easily lend themselves to inclusion in such definitions, and – on the other hand – the identification of phenomena of ‘hybridization’ between local and ‘imported’ styles, or between styles that coexist at points of junction between different cultures or different craft traditions; and finally, but most importantly, the inextricable relationship between national historiographies and nation-building projects in this region.

The contributions to the volume cover a wide timespan, looking at artistic phenomena – and at the ways in which they were identified, construed, named and researched in local or foreign historiographies – that range from medieval to modern times up to Socialist Realism. They also cover a large territory, ‘from the Baltic to the Balkans’, to borrow the subtitle of Steven Mansbach’s well-known book. They look at the ways in which local historiographies asserted certain views about the history of art and its periodization which gained authority through textbooks, to the point where the dismantling of such received wisdom became a Herculean endeavour. And collectively they draw the inescapable conclusion that there is an urgent need for approaches on a transnational scale, of which this volume – and the conference that was its starting point – represents an example to be emulated and expanded upon.

I would venture to say that what you are about to read also shows the need to continue such inquiries on the lines already started by the project, all the more since – as I think the volume and conference make apparent – clear-cut distinctions between approaches focusing on periodization, those focused on style or those aimed at disentangling ‘influences’ are difficult to draw and even more difficult to put into practice when addressing specific cases. The team was obliged to suspend these plans; and I am advisedly using this word, which in my perception points towards a possible future. I hope, in other words, that both the team members and their colleagues elsewhere will find inspiration in this volume for resuming the work thus started, and for further developing and refining the kinds of approaches it elicits.

I see this volume as a fitting tribute to the memory of Ada Hajdu, as a way of honouring the enthusiasm and dedication she put into her work, inspiring those around her to participate in it. This effort and this dedication will gain in significance should they be seen as worthy of continuation.

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Acknowledgements

This project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme (grant agreement No. 802700 – ArtHistCEE).

The editorial team for this volume was originally established and led by Dr Ada Hajdu, holder of the ERC Starting Grant *Art Historiographies in Central and Eastern Europe: An Inquiry from the Perspective of Entangled Histories*. Dr Hajdu tragically passed away in July 2020. Her team would like to thank the ERC for its generosity in extending the phasing-out period to allow the completion of certain actions initiated by the project, in particular the writing of this volume. We are especially grateful to our Project Officer, Mr Ioan Gavrilovici, and to Scientific Officer Dr Aneta Barkely for their advice and assistance.

We express our deepest thanks to our host institution, New Europe College – Institute of Advanced Study in Bucharest, for its exceptional support during the phasing-out of the grant. In particular, the editors would like to thank Professor Anca Oroveanu, Academic Coordinator at New Europe College, for her steadfast belief in their ability to continue Dr Hajdu's vision for the project, and Alina Hera for her tireless administrative support.

This volume has its origins in a 2019 conference, 'Questions of Periodization in the Art Historiographies of Central and Eastern Europe', organized with the support of the ERC and New Europe College. We are grateful to all those who contributed to the rich range of papers delivered during the conference, many of which became the starting points for the chapters presented in this volume.

The editors would like to thank the patient, professional and critically astute team at Routledge, in particular series editor Richard Woodfield, commissioning editor Isabella Vitti and editorial assistant Katie Armstrong. We are also very grateful for the thoughtful feedback from the volume's anonymous reviewers, as well as from our colleagues at New Europe College, the National University of Arts in Bucharest, the University of St Andrews and the Jagiellonian University in Kraków. Finally, we owe a special debt of thanks to our proofreader Abigail Grater, a skilful wordsmith who has dealt with the challenges of academic writing from seven countries with endless patience and creativity.

Part I

Introduction



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Introduction

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While the usefulness of periodization in general has been questioned before,¹ the established periodizations of Central and Eastern European art histories have not been systematically compared or criticized. At the heart of the issue is the relationship between Western models of periodization and the emerging discipline of art history in the region. Western (particularly Austrian, French and German) discourses constructed the dominant grand narrative of European art: rooted in antiquity and progressing through the Middle Ages, Renaissance, Enlightenment and Modernity, it was successfully institutionalized in the form of canons. Early Central and Eastern European art historians, trained in Western ideas but operating within the powerful context of nation-building projects, initially discovered and rationalized their regions' artistic identities in response to the Western narrative. In other words, the search for what was local was framed by knowledge of what was Western. Yet the periodizations of Western art history, used to prove synchronicity between regions, were not always well-suited to the artistic production of Central and Eastern Europe. Particularly problematic was the dominant centre–periphery model, in which perceived distance from the Western ‘centres’ of art led to the uncomfortable equation of ‘difference’ with ‘belatedness’, ‘derivation’ and ‘peripherality’.² This book looks at how art historians responded to such issues. Its chapters identify instances where established Western periodizations (such as Romanesque, Gothic, Renaissance or Baroque) were adopted, adapted or contested, as well as cases where alternative local or regional periodizations were proposed. It explores how local art historians refined, ignored or hybridized Western periodizations, while still retaining the West as a point of reference and, in many cases, maintaining the desirability of synchronous development with it. The issue is not whether Central and Eastern European art historians were ‘right’ or ‘wrong’, or whether they were ‘biased’ or ‘objective’: a perfectly ‘objective’ history of art did not exist and is probably impossible to produce; nevertheless, it is fruitful to investigate the historicity of its production and the nature of its biases.³

Central to some of the chapters is a transnational exploration of how the art histories of the region resonated and ‘entangled’ with each other, as well as with Western ideas about periodization. This approach, influenced by recent theories of *histoire croisée* or ‘entangled histories’,⁴ opens the possibility of examining the theoretical frameworks of Central and Eastern European art historians in their own right, and not merely as regional versions of Western European models. It also enables a bypassing of the nationalist traps generally encountered when dealing with national historiographies. By reflecting on the ideological frameworks within which local art histories took shape, in particular the role played by periodization in nation-building discourses, the chapters

presented here demonstrate that the concept of periodization is far from neutral or strictly descriptive, and that its use in art history needs to be reconsidered.

Terminology and Chronological Framework

Any scholar interested in the history and culture of the lands situated between the Baltic Sea to the north, the Mediterranean to the south, the Oder and Neisse rivers to the west and the Ural mountains to the east, faces a multitude of competing historical narratives, contested regional divisions and rivalling geopolitical definitions. In these localities, terms such as ‘Eastern’, ‘South-Eastern’, ‘Central’, ‘East Central’, ‘Balkan’ or ‘Baltic’ lose their strict geographical sense and acquire meanings weighted with the symbolic geopolitics of national identities, political or cultural borders and the historical past. This poses a methodological problem for the title of this volume.

The 1990s and early 2000s saw a series of attempts to address the complexities of these denominations. Larry Wolff, for example, deconstructed the term ‘Eastern Europe’ as a discourse of European ‘othering’ since the Enlightenment.⁵ This division of the continent was further polarized by the rise of Cold War rhetoric. Similarly, the term ‘Balkans’, used to label countries which emerged from the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire, became, according to Maria Todorova, ‘one of the most powerful pejorative designations’⁶ in history and politics, implying an ‘aggressive, intolerant . . . semi-civilized, and semi-oriental’⁷ region marked by excessive nationalism and rival identities.

After the disintegration of the Eastern Bloc in 1989–91, the dialectical process of imposing ‘othering’ or ‘self-othering’ categories via geographical labels assumed more subtle forms. The resurrection of the term ‘Central Europe’ in political and academic life coincided with the gradual accession of many countries of the region to the European Union. The term marked the ‘shared privilege’ of European integration⁸ and the simultaneous ideological, economic and political transformation of the region.⁹ Often viewed as the zone of influence of the great empires (Russian, German and Austro-Hungarian) and as a territory of cultural, linguistic and religious diversity, the ‘Central European project’ was advanced as ‘first and foremost a political one’,¹⁰ opposing the Soviet legacy. Abandoning its imperial past,¹¹ the term was harnessed to a legitimizing narrative of belonging to the larger European commonwealth, but it relied, to a great extent, on notions of the periphery, ‘buffer zone’ and in-betweenness.¹²

We should also take account of the definitions advanced mainly in German-speaking academia, such as ‘East Central Europe’ (meaning the Czech Republic, Poland, Slovakia and Hungary and, in some cases, the Baltic states, Belarus and Ukraine) and ‘South-Eastern Europe’ (meaning, Romania, Bulgaria, Greece, Turkey, Cyprus, Albania, North Macedonia, Serbia, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Slovenia). Both these terms were loaded with the image of ‘young’ nation states emerging from the ruins of the German, Habsburg and Ottoman Empires;¹³ they were developed to conceptualize the German and Austrian spheres of influence and to legitimize their geopolitical claims.¹⁴ The post-Soviet period tended to emphasize the independent character of East Central Europe as a region where conflicting historical memories laid the groundwork for newly built national identities and unbalanced political discourses.¹⁵

Looking at the wider picture, the aforementioned ideological constructs often – consciously or unconsciously – ignore the Russian elephant in the European room. However unfriendly or anti-European contemporary Russian ideology may be, the development of historiographic narratives in many countries discussed in this volume cannot be analysed comprehensively if the Tsarist or Soviet state is excluded. Whether

writing in opposition to Russian standpoints or in dialogue with them, historians and art historians in the region reacted to the policies implemented by Russia. Consequently, the editors of this volume sought a geo-historical definition that would place studies on Russian historiography on a level with texts from other regions.

For these reasons, we chose the term ‘Central and Eastern Europe’ for our title to reflect the simultaneously shared and divided space in geography, history, art and culture. Although imperfect, the term takes account of the separation and unity, border changes and ideological shifts that characterize the cultural zones we discuss. In establishing this conceptual framework, we do not attempt to solve past or existing historiographic conflicts, but to address the diversity of opinions and recognize the mutual dependence of the historical and art historical narratives created by different national schools (even though they may remain sometimes in direct contradiction).

The chronological scope of this volume – from 1850 to 1950 – has an immediate connection with its geographical framework: the century we address was characterized by the disintegration of empires and the emergence of national states in the territories in question. During this turbulent period of war, revolution, regime change and new political entities, writings about art frequently served ideological ends. By examining national and imperial historiographic narratives, we see how histories – produced in different countries or even in the same region in different years – resonate with each other, either proposing conflicting interpretations of the past or ignoring uncomfortable competing discourses. The chapters in this volume analyse, among other issues, interdependencies between imperial and nation-building discourses and the production of academic narratives around art.

The period of ‘modernity’¹⁶ that the chapters investigate leads the reader from the formation of national ideologies to the Communist vision of pan-national modernity. The chapters attest to both the ruptures and the continuities caused by political change. On occasion, the duration of certain historiographic discussions or the analysis of long-lasting artistic phenomena require contributors to stretch the chronological limits of our study. Certain tectonic shifts in history, such as the nation-building processes that followed the 1848 revolutions, had their roots in the formulation of national ideologies in history-writing during the preceding decades. Other processes, such as the division of Europe after 1945, produced long-lasting effects whose repercussions could be felt in art historiographies for years to come. For this reason, the chronological limits of our focus are occasionally overstepped.

Issues of geography and chronological divisions (i.e. periodization) remain central to art history in the region today. Many contemporary art historiographic discourses still rely on the periodizations and methodologies developed between 1850 and 1950; when brought together, the academic voices of Central and Eastern Europe frequently offer a cacophony of contradictory opinions. As editors we have tried not to privilege one narrative over another, or to generalize them unnecessarily; rather, we welcome the polyphony this volume offers, one that reveals competing discourses but also commonalities in the construction of art historiographies.

Questions of Periodization in Art Historiography: Between the ‘Universal’ and the ‘National’

The emergence of *Kunstgeschichte* at the end of the eighteenth century was associated with the transition from *die Historie* to *die Geschichte*, the latter understood as a singular and ordered narrative. Johann Winckelmann, whose aim was ‘to attempt

to present a system',¹⁷ incorporated a historiosophical concept into the narrative he wove from pre-Classical times to the fall of ancient art. As an Enlightenment thinker, Winckelmann believed in the possibility of presenting a universal model for the history of art. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, this received powerful philosophical momentum with George Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel's idealistic concept of 'universal history'. Efforts were even made to encode the latter pictorially. The illustration featured on the cover of this volume is a detail from an 1824 interpretation of 'universal history' developed from the famous 'Stream of Time' map created by Friedrich Strass in 1804. Entitled 'Tableau de l'histoire universelle', it connects time and space with the changing rhythms of ruling dynasties and significant events (Fig. 0.1). It offers a hermetic universe, a visual encyclopaedia reminiscent of medieval *mappae mundi*. However, a closer look at this 'universal history' of the world from its origins to ca. 1800 reveals its blind spots and, with them, the scale of the challenges facing the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century historians of Central and Eastern Europe. Against the backdrop of the political formation of nation states, they would wrestle with their cultures' ambiguous relationship to the 'universal' canon.

Dividing the history of art into great epochs – what Keith Moxey has called the 'Hegelian unconscious' of art history – became the primary mode of constructing 'universalist' narratives about art.¹⁸ This teleological view of history, with its stages ordered according to the rhythm of stylistic changes, has been the focus of critique for some time, especially in debates surrounding the challenges of writing global art history with the temporal frameworks and ideological tools of a discipline that was founded in the West. That traditional periodizations of art history cannot be applied to non-Western art production has been emphasized time and again. Yet critiques have tended to focus on extra-European areas, with less recognition of the equivocal place occupied by Central and Eastern Europe, which is neither a real 'Other' nor a real West, but rather a 'not-quite-Other'.¹⁹ In these regions, the creation of art historiography was shaped by the dual pressures of, on the one hand, adopting a universalist model from the position of 'close Other' and, on the other hand, responding to the Romantic concept of 'nation' – understood as a cultural community – which led to nationalist entrenchment.

The chapters in this book attempt to draw attention to the ways in which this intermediate Other adapted, adopted and created new frameworks for periodizing art history. The core theoretical issues at play are thoughtfully addressed in Matthew Rampley's opening chapter, which discusses how art historians have responded to critiques of linear time and periodization by exploring alternative ideas of time, and highlights the dangers of conflating historical narratives with temporal horizons. From this starting point, the book is divided into four further parts, each engaging with a conceptual or methodological aspect of periodization. 'Part II: We Have Always Been Byzantine' contains four chapters which address attempts to integrate local heritage – in this case Byzantine – into the grand narrative of art history. Anna Adashinskaya takes an 'entangled' approach to the research narratives that emerged around Byzantine art in Austrian, Russian, French and Balkan art historiography. She examines how the scholarly creation of 'Byzantine renaissances' foregrounded what was perceived to be the art form's internal Classical component, in order to integrate it into mainstream art history; in so doing, it reconfirmed the normative authority of the Italian Renaissance. Such efforts to standardize narratives around local monuments so as to win visibility within European canons led to a search for local characteristics

and, in time, the creation of national styles. The role of national heritage as a gateway towards constructing the past²⁰ is the focus of the other three chapters in this section. Cosmin Minea demonstrates how the Western-defined Byzantine style was initially used as a tool by Romanian writers to reappraise the country's forgotten monuments. But it also stimulated local research into an 'authentic' architectural idiom – associated with the Brâncovenesc period – that would come to form the basis of the Neo-Romanian style. Timo Hagen explores the politics underpinning the canonized understanding of the Byzantine style that emerged in the work of nineteenth-century Western scholars, and the problems this posed for assessment of the local Byzantine heritage of Wallachia, Moldavia and Bucovina. Using the case study of the Romanian Orthodox Cathedral of Sibiu (1902–6), he demonstrates the difficulties faced by those trying to harness Western understandings of the periodization of Byzantine art in the service of a 'national' monument. The final chapter in this section is based on notes left by Ada Hajdu, which have been reconstructed by Anna Adashinskaya into an edited version of Dr Hajdu's ideas concerning the project for a Museum of the Bulgarian Revival in Sofia (1900–1). This explores the at times opposing notions of Bulgarian and Byzantine style, as well as the periodization problems caused by the rejection of Bulgaria's Ottoman past on the one hand, and the conceptualization of a distinct period (1762–1868) known as 'Vazrazhdane' (meaning both 'Revival' and 'Renaissance') on the other.

As Foteini Vlachou has argued, the distance between centres and peripheries is not only a matter of geographical space but also of historical time, which always has ideological dimensions when engaging the canon from the margins.²¹ In their efforts to deal with grand narratives, art historians used – and in the words of Béatrice Joyeux-Prunel 'abused' – the status of the periphery in order either to align art to the canon or to offer an alternative.²² While this dichotomy remains a challenge for researchers today, it was something that early art historians had to confront with some urgency. In 'Part III: Our Art Is in Textbooks', contributors discuss how art historians from so-called peripheral regions engaged with centre–periphery dialectics, particularly in response to popular international survey handbooks by figures such as Karl Schnaase, Franz Kugler and Wilhelm Lübke. Magdalena Kunińska, for example, disentangles the methodological transfers and borrowed periodization schemes that lay behind the writing of the first Polish art-historical survey by Józef Łepkowski in 1872. Kristina Jõekalda analyses the structural relationships between international textbooks and the use of periodization in surveys of Baltic and Estonian art, in terms of how both Estonian art historians and those from the German diaspora struggled to overcome a perceived 'inferiority' in relation to Western models. Dubravka Botica argues that the keen interest of Croatian art historians in relating the art of the Adriatic region to Western and Italian examples shaped national art history, in particular the 'mixed Gothic Renaissance style' devised to counter the notion of peripheral belatedness.

'Part IV: Tradition was Invented by Modernity' looks at how art historians engaged with periodization as a means of constructing a region's past in dialogue with, or in opposition to, Western modes. In many cases, this was used to justify the modern project of nationhood. Andrey Shabanov explores the dialectic that emerged in Russian art historiography of the 1890s between the national and European identities of the Russian school; he addresses how this debate played itself out in the periodization of Russian painting and in the politics of display of the imperial collection. Natalia Koziara-Ochęduszek engages with the formation of linguistic mechanisms in the very

early construction of Polish art history. She posits that early writers, in their search for a language of art history, grew increasingly dependent on historical chronology and thus shaped the emergence of the fully fledged academic discipline. Taking discussion firmly into the twentieth century, Shona Kallestrup investigates how Romanian art historians politicized analysis of peasant art in the interwar period as a means of asserting national specificity and countering the hierarchical problems of Western periodization. Finally, in a disruption of traditional art historical periodizations of the avant-garde after the ‘threshold’ year of 1918, Julia Secklehner argues for the continued centrality of regional modernism in the entangled art historical discourses of Austrian and Czech culture. Focusing on the *longue durée* of modernisms that emerged in Salzburg and Košice, she demonstrates how both centres ‘reframed’ art in line with new geopolitical realities.

While Secklehner challenges the conceptualization of 1918 as a ‘turning point’ in art, the final part of the book engages with temporal milestones that have distinctively marked the construction of art historiographies. In art history and history alike, turning points that punctuate beginnings and endings had – and still have – a certain appeal, from major boundaries such as that between the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, to particular years that coincided with great historical events.²³ Understanding the mechanisms at work behind the choice of a particular temporal marker, as well as arguing for a more fluid understanding of historical processes, is one way of tackling the monolithic structure of established periodizations. The Mongol invasion of 1241–42, and the significance given to this major historical event in the writings of Hungarian and Saxon art historians of the nineteenth century, is the focus of the chapter by Mihnea Alexandru Mihail. By exploring the entangled histories of how this event (seen to underpin the transition from Romanesque to Gothic) was articulated differently by scholars in Hungary and Transylvania, he demonstrates the political and cultural instrumentalization of the history of art. A similar interest in nuancing the clear-cut distinctions with which art history operates can be observed in the final chapter by Irina Cărăbaș. She addresses the historiographic rupture represented by the arrival of Communism and the promotion of Socialist Realism as a replacement for modernist art. Focusing on the Romanian case, and its preoccupation with the ‘turning point’ of 23 August 1944, she argues that the temporal distinctions between modernist and Socialist Realist art were far from being clear-cut, and that their treatment in art historical discourses after 1944 was strongly inflected by cultural politics.

Reflection: Nationalism and the Challenges of an ‘Entangled Histories’ Approach to Central and Eastern European Art

Our contributors engage with ideas about periodization and national identity in a complex way. They deconstruct and destabilize national narratives, but they also offer alternative ways of understanding the art histories of the region. Departing from ‘universal’ models, they use case studies to focus on the processual nature of the production of meanings and concepts related to art history. Significantly, they do not reject nationalism altogether. Although contextualizing various processes and emphasizing alternative discourses, they recognize the role of nationalism in empowering local voices and encouraging innovative and diverse forms of artistic production. Multiple understandings of nationalism are still very much at the centre of political and historical debates today. By explaining the role of art historiography in the creation and

propagation of mythologies (to use Roland Barthes' term) of national identity and culture, the chapters in this book offer valuable contextual information that makes the continuing popularity of nationalism easier to understand.

This does not mean that we consider the problem of periodization to be solved, nor do we propose a definitive lens through which the concept can be made to work when analysing Central and Eastern Europe. Our aim, rather, is to signal the need to revisit and reassess some of the accepted notions of periodization in the region with the goal of understanding and, eventually, deterring the continued reification of national and authoritative conceptual models in present-day art-historical writing. This is not without its problems. As Matthew Rampley argues in Chapter 1, the constant struggle to distinguish between different temporalities, and the coining of alternative terminology and concepts, might deplete art history of its potential outcomes.

In particular, the experiences of this book and the 2019 conference that preceded it have highlighted the challenges faced by scholars from the region who attempt to write entangled histories of Central and Eastern Europe. The main hurdle is the linguistic skills required to access and study primary and secondary literature produced in multiple national contexts. Another is the lack of institutional and political support in the region: a lack of funding for academic exchanges, research trips, sabbaticals or workshops is a reality in many Central and Eastern European universities. Moreover, interdisciplinary projects and collaborative work are not institutionally encouraged: universities still largely maintain the traditional separation of disciplines and specialists, while established practices and laws make new initiatives difficult to introduce and maintain. It also became apparent in our collaboration with various scholars that teaching duties often absorb the entire working time of researchers. Many of the universities in the region are essentially teaching-focused.

Despite such difficulties, overcome in large part by the generous ERC funding that facilitated the conference and this book, our contributors have opened up discussions around related and competing discourses in the writing of art histories in the regions of Central and Eastern Europe. But there is still a need for development of further theoretical tools to help break through reified narratives and assess these art histories from a 'horizontal' viewpoint. The conceptual framework developed for the grand narrative of Western art has proven to be inadequate, as have national frameworks. Indeed, many studies, our own included, still borrow core concepts from either the Western European or the national paradigm. Artistic styles, time periods, cultures or religions remain concepts profoundly charged by their specific Western usage. Even such basic terms as 'Byzantine', 'Islamic' or 'Medieval' require critical distance and extra contextualization when used in relation to Central and Eastern Europe.

Béatrice Joyeux-Prunel has noted that the current global orientation of art history has credited the postcolonial turn with reshaping disciplinary approaches, sometimes at the expense of the work of art historians who were interested in transnational or global interactions prior to, or in parallel with, postcolonial discourse.²⁴ Discussing global art history, Beáta Hock has even observed that 'Eastern Europe remains nearly as invisible in this new and ever more mainstream scholarship as it has always been in traditional master narratives on the continent's art history'.²⁵ How, then, can we increase the visibility of the region in the global field, and facilitate recognition of the fact that its art historians have always wrestled with the problems of 'universal' art history that are now being critiqued on a global scale? One way forward, we suggest, is greater collaboration between transdisciplinary and multilingual teams of scholars.

How else could a research project explain in a comprehensive way the similarities between, say, Venetian and Wallachian art and their entangled histories across centuries? Or grasp, schematically at least, the extended and complex Slavic artistic space of the post-medieval period, stretching from the Ural and the Caucasus Mountains to the Balkan Peninsula and Central Europe? Or begin to comprehend the multiple artistic relations and exchanges between the Orthodox and Islamic worlds over the last five centuries? Central and Eastern Europe, whose art and art histories are still insufficiently understood on an international scale, offer rich potential for innovative ‘entangled’ research. By building on the work of current projects and drawing on the excellent expertise that exists in the region, it can begin to assert its own unique voice in the field of global art history.

Notes

- 1 Kaufmann, ‘Malaise dans la périodisation’. See also Schapiro, Janson and Gombrich, ‘Criteria of Periodization’.
- 2 Castelnovo and Ginzburg have thoughtfully nuanced the definition of centres and peripheries. See, for example, ‘Domination symbolique et géographie artistique’.
- 3 A monograph investigating similar issues in French and German art historiographies is Passini, *La fabrique de l’art national*.
- 4 On the methodology of ‘entangled histories’ see, for example, Werner and Zimmermann, ‘Vergleich, Transfer, Verflechtung’; Werner and Zimmermann, ‘Beyond Comparison’; or Espagne, ‘Sur le limites du comparatisme’.
- 5 Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe*.
- 6 Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans*, 7.
- 7 *Ibid.*, 194.
- 8 *Ibid.*, 190.
- 9 Iordachi, ‘Central Europe’.
- 10 Neumann, *Uses of the Other*, 146.
- 11 Brechtefeld, *Mitteleuropa and German Politics*.
- 12 Neumann, *Uses of the Other*, 127–28.
- 13 Bartov and Weitz, *Shatterzone of Empires*.
- 14 Hackmann, ‘Ostmitteleuropaforschung’; Puttkamer, ‘East Central Europe’; Beer and Seewann, *Südostforschung im Schatten des Dritten Reiches*.
- 15 Troebst, *Erinnerungskultur*.
- 16 Lefebvre, *Introduction à la modernité*; Taylor, ‘Nationalism and Modernity’; Todorova, ‘Modernism’.
- 17 Winckelmann, *Geschichte der Kunst des Alterthums*, xvi: ‘meine Absicht ist, einen Versuch eines Lehrgebäudes zu liefern’.
- 18 Moxey, ‘Art History’s Hegelian Unconscious’.
- 19 Piotrowski, ‘Towards a Horizontal History’, 52; Pejić, ‘The Dialectics of Normality’, 120.
- 20 Rampley, ‘Contested Histories’.
- 21 Vlachou, ‘Why Spatial?’.
- 22 Joyeux-Prunel, ‘The Uses and Abuses of Peripheries in Art History’.
- 23 De Grazia, ‘The Modern Divide’; Lawton, ‘1453 and the Stream of Time’.
- 24 Joyeux-Prunel, ‘Art History and the Global’.
- 25 Hock and Allas, *Globalizing East European Art Histories*, 5.

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1 Linear, Entangled, Anachronic

Periodization and the Shapes of Time in Art History*

Matthew Rampley

Introduction

I perhaps am living in 1908, but my neighbour is living in 1900 and the man across the way in 1880. . . . The peasants of Kals [in the Tyrol] are living in the twelfth century. And there were people taking part in the Jubilee Parade [of Emperor Franz Joseph in 1908] who would have been considered backward even during the period of the migrations.¹

Adolf Loos's famous comments in his essay 'Ornament and Crime' embody a widely held presumption: that human history consists of a progressive linear development. Loos's statement also illustrates its converse, that not all participated equally in this process. There were 'unmodern' people, he noted, 'even in the cities' of the Habsburg Empire, left behind in the onward march of progress.²

This teleological view of history long shaped how histories of art and architecture were written. The specific terms of that presumed development might vary from author to author, but the basic structure persisted, from Hegel's *Lectures on Fine Art* of the 1820s onwards.³ Mention of Hegel reminds us of another facet of art historical narratives: the division of that linear development into stages or periods. In Hegel's case, these were the 'Symbolic', 'Classic' and 'Romantic', but, again, individual authors chose other periods.

In recent times, the idea of linear development and the division into periods has been criticized for misrepresenting the complexity of art's history. Periodization imposes artificial boundaries; as Susan Bassnett argues, 'it is virtually impossible to divide periods according to dates . . . human culture is a dynamic system'.⁴ Art is too varied, even within a single culture, to talk of it following a single line of linear development. As a result, not only has the division of art into historical periods been challenged; in addition, various authors have advanced alternative models of time. In place of time as linear, it has been referred to as, amongst others, 'coexisting, collapsing, conjoined, crisscrossing, crumbled, deferred, discontinuous, disjunctive, disruptive, dissident, doubled, enmeshed, entangled, foreshortened, fractured, heterogeneous, interwoven, multidimensional, multidirectional, multiplanar, multiple, plural, simultaneous, stretched'.⁵

This is a general issue in the history of art, but it has particular importance for historians of the art and architecture of Central and Eastern Europe. Accounts of the latter have usually been compelled to fit into a univocal, linear narrative organized around privileged art centres such as Florence, Rome and, later, Paris, Berlin and New York. In histories of modernism, for example, the linear progression encompassing

Impressionism, Symbolism, Expressionism, Cubism and Constructivism, for example, has generally provided the standard against which the numerous modernisms of Central and Eastern Europe have been measured. As a result, the latter have almost invariably been cast as derivative and belated, for they have been forced into a temporal grid devised primarily to encompass artistic events elsewhere.⁶ If we wish to counter this syndrome, it might be reasoned, the first step may be to adopt alternative models of time and discard the old linear model.

Although the question of time and history is of no small significance for the historiography of Central and Eastern European art, this chapter is less concerned with specific re-readings and new narratives of these regions' art than with the broader conceptual and theoretical questions raised by recent attempts to address this issue by rethinking time and periodization. For it argues that while the diverse array of temporal metaphors is enormously suggestive, they pose their own attendant problems. Indeed, the chapter suggests that talk of 'multidirectional' and 'fractured' time may, by placing the incommensurability of artistic cultures at its heart, undercut the very basis for making meaningful comparisons between them.

Self-Criticism within the History of Art

Presumptions about the shape of time in art history were already being criticized almost a century ago. In 1926, the German art historian Wilhelm Pinder took issue with the idea of periods which, he argued, rests on a view of culture and time as homogeneous and as fitting into a single linear narrative.⁷ Yet for Pinder any one historical moment is composed of multiple temporalities. Coining the concept of the 'non-simultaneity of the simultaneous', he asserted: 'There is no simple "present" because every historical "moment" is experienced by people with their own different senses of historical duration; each moment means something different for everyone – even a different time'.⁸ At any moment, different generations of artists are working, each with a different historical trajectory (Pinder refers to this as its 'entelechy'). The late work of an older artist may *coincide*, chronologically, with the early work of a younger artist, but it has a different temporality, being rooted in a different historical experience. An artist such as Max Liebermann (1847–1935) continued painting Impressionist pictures into the 1920s because of the generation to which he belonged (we might note he was older than Gustave Caillebotte and only three years younger than Mary Cassatt), even though he was a 'contemporary' of many younger artists whose work was completely different.⁹ If we focus on the lived experience of artists, Pinder was suggesting, it is clear that one cannot talk of the development of art in the singular.

Pinder was not without his critics. Erwin Panofsky, for example, held fast to the validity of art historical periodization.¹⁰ In a postscript to a discussion of the dating of Reims cathedral, he responded directly to Pinder. He, too, acknowledged that the meaning of the art of any historical moment varies in relation to its cultural context or 'frame of reference'. Two artworks made at the same time, chronologically, may still belong to different, incommensurate historical contexts. Hence, 'the sixth decade of the fourteenth century . . . signifies something completely different for the historical, linguistic, and intellectual customs of Byzantium than it does for the West' and 'something different for Italy than it does for Germany . . . it even signifies something different for Cologne than it does for Schwäbisch-Gmünd'.¹¹ Recognizing the implications of Pinder's position, he asked, rhetorically: 'are we not then faced with a completely

inhomogeneous contiguity of such frames of reference . . . frozen in self-sufficient isolation and irrational specificity?’¹² He disputed Pinder’s conclusion, however. He suggested it was still possible to construct a ‘continuous temporal order of artistic phenomena’ by identifying the smallest possible frame of reference where the difference between natural (chronological) and historical time would be insignificant. One would consequently be ‘able to acknowledge historical dissimultaneity in the objectively simultaneous (and vice versa)’.¹³

This was hardly satisfactory, both because it was unclear what exactly he meant and also because it might apply to only a limited range of examples. Panofsky talked of comparisons between the sculptural groups of Reims cathedral of 1230 as an illustration, but art historians are seldom faced with such a tightly delimited set of groups. Moreover, as Fred Schwarz suggests, he was not really addressing Pinder’s argument at all. The latter was analysing a problem to do with historical *experience*, whereas Panofsky was treating it as a problem of epistemology (the relation between natural and historical time). Schwarz notes:

Panofsky ignores non-simultaneity as a problem of experience. He fails to register the fact that, as Pinder points out, history *feels* very different from the pictures we draw of it. Panofsky missed the subtext of the argument – that the present was experienced not as stability and unity but as conflict and confusion.¹⁴

Pinder seems to have drawn back from the consequences of his argument; he claimed that one could nevertheless identify ‘lawlike’ constants such as geography and national character that gave art history some kind of stability. In this sense he was not so different from Panofsky, seeking some axiological principle. Nevertheless, he posed significant questions about time and periodization.

We can find a parallel concern with temporality and experience in the work of his contemporary Aby M. Warburg, whose analysis of the persistence of Classical culture has come to be taken as having implications for this issue.¹⁵ Central to his thinking was his description of this persistence as *Nachleben* or survival. Specifically, he claimed that Classical culture had survived not as some inert tradition handed down from the past, but as a set of memories of emotional trauma imprinted on its images and symbols: the work of art as a vehicle of collective memory. Moreover, he ascribed agency to images – especially those of the body – for they could awaken the irrational, psychological, emotional impulses of primitive prehistory, brought to life by the spectator’s capacity for empathic projection. *Nachleben* suggests that the meaning of an image is never settled; primitive memories can be suppressed but never entirely erased. The history of art is never a neat and orderly succession of art historical styles; any work of art may harbour a disruptive, atavistic, psychological and emotional force. As Georges Didi-Huberman has suggested, ‘No longer imaginable as an unbroken river, where accruals are carried from up- to downstream, tradition should, after Warburg, be conceived as a tense dialectic, a drama that unfolds between the river’s flow and its whirling eddies’.¹⁶ A poignant example of this was anti-Semitic imagery. For Warburg, Renaissance stereotypic images of Jews engaged in child abduction or in blood sacrifice were never just historic documents; they fuelled anti-Jewish prejudice in the present, and he carefully documented the resurgence of anti-Semitic violence in his own lifetime.¹⁷ One could not talk of culture as a straightforward path of progress, for it could always regress into some earlier primitive form of consciousness.

Questioning Time

Although nearly a century old, the writings of Pinder, Panofsky and Warburg contain many of the basic conceptual conundrums that have motivated the more recent problematization of historical time. These include disputing the idea of art history as a linear progression and of any moment in time as a coherent, homogeneous totality, challenging the division of history into neatly bounded unities.

These ideas were part of a much broader reflection on time in the early decades of the early twentieth century. Stephen Kern has explored how scientific and technological discoveries, as well as modernist literary and artistic practices, of a century ago led to a profound questioning of traditional notions of time and space.¹⁸ Thinkers such as Henri Bergson, Georg Simmel, Martin Heidegger and Ernst Bloch made interrogation of temporal experience a central aspect of their thought. We might interpret such reflection as prompted by what Reinhart Koselleck has since spoken of as the accelerating pace of events in modernity, an acceleration that did not, however, occur universally at a uniform rate, leading to the chronological contemporaneity of those who were not 'politically or socially contemporaneous'.¹⁹ As Bloch states, echoing Loos: 'Not all people exist in the same Now. They do so only externally, by virtue of the fact that they may all be seen today. But that does not mean that they are living at the same time with others'.²⁰ One can find an echo of this idea in Raymond Williams's subsequent distinction between the dominant, the residual and the emergent. Any particular cultural moment is marked not only by the dominant values and practices of the present, but also by nascent elements, that will become dominant in the future, and by residues of the past. He states:

[T]he residual . . . has been effectively formed in the past, but it is still active in the culture process. . . . Thus certain experiences, meanings and values which cannot be expressed or substantially verified in terms of the dominant culture, are nevertheless lived and practised on the basis of the residue – cultural as well as social – of some previous social and cultural institution or formation.²¹

Panofsky's engagement with the question of temporality was, perhaps, an exercise in disavowal. For, as Schwarz has stated, he 'has no sense of the instability of history, the vertigo it creates, its disorienting tendency to move in one direction while one is looking in another. He has, in other words, no sense of the modern'.²²

Indeed, just as Panofsky was appealing to the possibility of anchoring historical events in natural, objective, time, his contemporary Walter Benjamin was arguing that the very idea of objective homogeneous time was socially constructed, a product of capitalist commodity culture.²³ In other words, natural time is historically generated. This idea has since become widely accepted. The historian and cultural theorist Harry Harootyan, for example, argues that 'with the production process and expanded reproduction and capital accumulation as its unlimited goals, time is submitted to strict measures of control by means of the clock, calendar, time-study regimes, and the like' and 'diminishes the differing temporalities by reducing them to simple distances'.²⁴ Capitalism imposes uniformity and objectifies time. Historians and cultural theorists have expanded on this point. Wolfgang Schivelbusch, for example, examined how the invention of the railway and the introduction of standardized timetables brought about the regularization of space and time; national time zones were created,

overriding older localized forms of time that followed the cycles of the sun.²⁵ It has also been pointed out how the different instruments and means of measuring time (clocks, calendars) have shaped perceptions of time; objective universal time is a cultural artefact.²⁶ European modernity was thus Janus-faced. On the one hand, social and technological change led to an accelerating pace of events that destabilized the experience of time. On the other hand, time was objectified, resulting in the creation of a homogeneous time and space.

The idea of time as a uniform linear progression was dependent on this homogeneous temporality. As the geographical horizons of theories of modernity have widened, so critical attention has also turned to the way this idea of time served other political and ideological ends, above all, legitimation of Western global dominance. Johannes Fabian's *Time and the Other*, for example, argues that the objectification of time enabled anthropology, the 'science of other men in another Time', to place the cultures of the colonized at an earlier stage of the same developmental path, and hence categorize them as stagnant, underdeveloped and 'traditional'.²⁷ It is widely accepted that there has been an almost inescapable tendency to plot world history as a teleological process, the path of which has been traced back from European modernity as its *telos*.²⁸ Such a view saw the colonized as on the path of progress towards the same goal, but belatedly, rather like Loos's Tyrolean peasants, or indeed at some stage of arrested development. As Sebastian Conrad has recently observed,

the conceptual toolbox of the social sciences and the humanities abstracted European history to create a model of universal development . . . by imposing categories particular to Europe on everybody else's past, the modern disciplines rendered all other societies colonies of Europe.²⁹

It is in the light of such critiques, too, that theorists such as Harootunian have emphasized the *unevenness* of time. Drawing on Ernst Bloch and Henri Lefebvre, Harootunian has argued that we should regard history as a 'locus of uneven rhythms', and as 'the scene where the ghosts of the past comingle daily with the living . . . in a habitus of a haunted house'.³⁰ Likewise, with her blunt assertion that 'history is not a box', literary critic Rita Felski has posited the need for 'models of textual mobility and transhistorical attachment' that emphasize the unevenness of the history of literature.³¹ Consequently, the history of literature is nothing but the trans-spatial and trans-historical operations of networks of relations between literary works. Time

is not a tidy sequence of partitioned units but a profusion of whirlpools and rapids, eddies and flows, as objects, ideas and images and texts from different moments swirl, tumble and collide in ever-changing combinations and constellations. New actors jostle, alongside those with thousand-year histories; inventions and innovations feed off the very traditions they excoriate.³²

A number of authors have tried to translate such metaphors and ideas into art historical inquiry. Alexander Nagel and Christopher Wood's study *Anachronic Renaissance*, for example, argues that while an artwork is produced at a particular historical moment,

it also points away from that moment, backward to a remote ancestral origin, perhaps, or to a prior artifact, or to an origin outside time, in divinity. At the same

time, it points forward to all its future recipients who will activate and reactivate it as a meaningful event.³³

The meaning of an artwork is never constrained by the circumstances of its creation alone, a fact that contradicts the ordering of artworks into ordered temporal units and periods. Keith Moxey has likewise claimed that historical time is heterochronic; it moves at different speeds in different places. As a result, 'the history of art faces the disconcerting possibility that the time it imagines, history's very architecture, is neither uniform nor linear but rather multivalent and discontinuous'.³⁴ Warburg's idea of the disruptive agency of the work of art has taken on a renewed significance in this context. As María del Carmen Molina Brea has stated, '*Nachleben* anachronizes history. . . . The coexistence in an image of heterogenous times that are in tension . . . produces an anachronistic time, and an anachronistic image'.³⁵ It is with Warburg in mind, too, that Moxey has claimed: 'The aesthetic power of works of art, the fascination of images and their capacity to shape our response in the present, argues against treating them as if they were simply documents of particular historical horizons'.³⁶ A similar point has been taken up by Dan Karlholm, who has argued for the need to see artworks *anachronically*. Not just dead specimens belonging to the past, they 'demand to be actualized or realized anew with each attentive encounter'.³⁷

Other Art Histories

The critique of art historical time draws on an extensive body of social and cultural thought. What might an art history look like that was informed by these critical observations? Much critical interest has tended to focus on their role as a means of decolonizing art history. Partha Mitter, for example, has argued that the reliance of European scholars of Indian art on linear conceptions of time has led to important misunderstandings of its history.³⁸ Prior to British colonization, he states, members of Indian cultures had only a vague sense of the past as different from the present, and certainly not as an earlier stage of a linear development. In addition, time was seen as cyclical. Hence, if we view Indian art in terms borrowed from the history of European art, we misrecognize how artists and architects understood tradition, how they placed themselves in relation to it, and we may misinterpret their intentions and the meanings of the artefacts they produced. John Clark, writing in the same collection of essays as Mitter, has explored the implication of altered models of time for understanding the interaction between modern Euroamerican art and that of several Asian countries.³⁹ Asian modernism was not, he argues, simply the transfer of styles and motifs, as if catching up with and becoming integrated into the ever-expanding development of modern art from Paris. Rather, it was a series of points of contact between artistic cultures on different temporal trajectories. Locally, Japanese, Chinese or Thai art, for example, are organized around systems of periodization (based on political dynasties) that have little in common with those used in the history of Western art. This difference should inform how we view specific instances of cultural interaction, such as the adoption of figurative oil-painting in 1950s Indonesia, or the shift, in mid-nineteenth-century Siam, towards quotidian and mundane subject matter in art following encounters with American missionaries. They have to be understood in the context of local histories and temporalities and not as part of a single globalizing narrative of modernization.

Our concern is with its implication for central and eastern Europe, and it is not difficult to envisage the salience of the rethinking of time here, too. In relation to modernism, for example, a major starting point would be to stress the multivalent character of modernity. I have already stated that a notable flaw in histories of modernism has tended to be the laying down of a basic historical template, shaped by innovations and practices in the major art centres of Western Europe such as Paris, Munich and Berlin. Accepting this as a *generalized* model inevitably means that Central and Eastern European modernisms are relegated to the status of peripheries or satellites. Yet the possibility of another reading was already being highlighted by Carl Schorske in the 1960s, when he outlined the specific character of Viennese modernity (marked by a culture of aesthetic disenchantment and quasi-aristocratic withdrawal), how it differed from the traditional yardstick of Paris and how that explained the specific features of Viennese modernism.⁴⁰ A wide-ranging analysis is still lacking for the remainder of Central and Eastern Europe, but more focused studies have highlighted how this might inform our approach, such that we might also cease fitting artworks into a historical timeline that relates them to Parisian art and, instead, identify local historical trajectories. Czech Cubism is an instructive example. Cubist architects and artists in Bohemia and Moravia were informed by a historical sensibility (their paintings often included mythological subjects) that was completely absent in the contemporaneous works of Braque and Picasso. There may have been a superficial formal affinity, but artists such as Bohumil Kubišta, Emil Filla and Antonín Procházka radically reinterpreted its purpose and meaning. Following this argument, Cubism in Paris and Prague belonged in two different historical trajectories. The predominance of the still life in the Cubist work of Picasso and Braque highlighted the importance of the Classical tradition whereas, as Jiří Švestka has argued, Czech Cubism was in part an interrogation of the legacy of Baroque Bohemian culture.⁴¹

Jindřich Vybíral has suggested that the very term ‘Czech Cubism’ may be, for all its ubiquity, problematic, because it was, in certain respects, a *post hoc* invention; when the Prague-based art critic Vincenc Kramář published his study *Kubismus* – the first book on Cubism in any language – in 1921, not a single Czech artist was mentioned.⁴² Not until the late 1920s was the notion coined in order to grant a place for Czech art and architecture in the wider landscape of European modernism. But in so doing, it unintentionally diminished Czech Cubism’s originality, casting it merely as a local, exotic variant of the Parisian originator.⁴³

A similar questioning of historical frameworks has been proposed by Tomáš Pospiszyl in relation to Czechoslovak art from the 1950s and 1960s. At first sight it appears to be a slightly belated adoption of ideas to be found in American art of the same period, testament to the porous nature of the Iron Curtain. The sculptures of Jiří Kovanda bear formal comparison with American Minimalism, those of Eva Kmentová to work by Eva Hesse. On the one hand, this is an arresting similarity, since it reminds us that the border between the capitalist West and the socialist bloc of Central and Eastern Europe was permeable. Yet, Pospiszyl argues, Czechoslovak art cannot simply be ‘slotted in’ to a single narrative of post-war modern art, nor seen merely as a set of eccentric variations on a basically American theme, despite superficial similarities. For the work of Kovanda, Kmentová and others was the product of local genealogies and historical trajectories. Its meaning would be completely lost in an analysis primarily concerned with their relation to the dominant tradition of American modernist sculpture.⁴⁴ These are just a few of many examples where it becomes clear that local

trajectories and histories have to be mobilized to do justice to the art and architecture of Central and Eastern Europe and that if we do so, we become sensitive to specific meanings that would otherwise be erased by a single, all-encompassing narrative.

Critical Observations

Multiple frames of reference, fragmented periods, disruptive artworks, uneven, discontinuous time and the simultaneity of the non-synchronous – such figures and metaphors have fuelled a growing interrogation of the way traditional art history has thought about time and temporality. Yet despite their importance, they are not all equally decisive, and have their own drawbacks. Before developing this latter point, it may be useful to summarize some of the principal arguments. We might do so as follows:

1. The division of art into periods simplifies cultures which do not, in fact, lend themselves to such generalizations.
2. Art is too diverse to be reduced to a single linear path or to be seen as developing towards a specific goal; such a view is not only simplistic, it also entails wilful exclusion of practices that do not fit into it.
3. The linear narrative of art privileges certain traditions (primarily those of Western Europe and North America) and categorizes divergent practices as backward and peripheral. It has therefore been one of the many instruments of Western symbolic domination.
4. The division of art into a succession of periods negates its dynamic character. It treats artworks as a sequence of ‘specimens’, whereas they exert a powerful emotional and intellectual hold long after the time of their creation. Artworks have a surplus that spills over the boundaries of rigid temporal categorization.
5. The linear history of art misrepresents the temporality of lived experience. This is particularly so in cultures where time is experienced as cyclical, for example, but it is a general issue. The experience of modernity was complex, involving experience of the intermingling of past, present and future, anachronisms and heterochrony.

The arguments revolve around two basic issues: adequacy (is this an accurate representation?) and the politics of representation (what interests does this serve?). Some of them involve both. The debate over linear art history, for example, involves questions of adequacy (e.g. did art really develop in *this* fashion? did it even ‘develop?’) and of ideology (e.g. to what extent does a linear view legitimize cultural hierarchies and make European culture normative?). Yet, although these issues are often overlapping, they are not mutually dependent. For example, the division of art history into periods is not a necessary consequence of a linear model of time. Moreover, if ‘individual period formulations always secretly imply or project narratives or “stories” – narrative representations – of the historical sequence in which such individual periods take their place’, to cite one author, these stories need not be linear narratives.⁴⁵ A cyclical history of art, for example, could equally be structured into periods, and, indeed, certain stylistic period terms – such as ‘modern’, ‘Baroque’ or ‘archaic’ – have been used in this way.

Pinder’s book on generations reminds us that the practice of periodization is one of the most commonly criticized aspects of art historiography, but though few would dispute that the use of ‘periods’ involves simplification, this does not automatically discredit their use. For, it can be objected, *all* art history involves simplification; indeed, simplification

is a necessary condition of historical representation, which involves making selections. Conversely, *lack* of selection leads to incoherence. This much was understood even in the formative years of the modern discipline. In 1886, Anton Springer complained:

[W]e accommodate far too many artists in our art history books; we fill them with so many names that there is no place left for the subject itself, namely, the depiction of the constant development of art and the narration of the great destinies of our past artistic life. . . . Art History only concerns itself with personalities who typify the dominant direction, or who influenced the course of development. How laughable it would appear if the political history of a century or of a nation also treated in detail the insignificant state formations, the rulers who had undertaken nothing and the silent, mediocre minister.⁴⁶

The contemporary reader may demur at Springer's invocation of the idea of the 'dominant direction', although most art historians do indeed talk of the logic of particular historical moments, but his characterization pinpoints an important issue. Art historians make judgements about the relative significance of works of art in relation to one or other frame of analysis. Even if one makes a point of attending to 'marginal' artworks, this will be in the name of some larger narrative to do with marginality and will involve selecting from amongst the larger pool of such works. Since there cannot be a history of *every* artwork, individual examples are selected as representative of some larger conception or theme.

It may be useful to ask what an art historical period is. Fredric Jameson's much-cited characterization of a period as a notional span of time in which 'everything becomes so seamlessly interrelated that we confront either a total system or an idealistic "concept" of a period' hardly encompasses the many and varied ways in which periods have been used.⁴⁷ In some cases, periods are defined in terms of chronology (e.g. the nineteenth century), but others are defined by a historical relation (e.g. the Archaic, the Middle Ages), by an aesthetic or sociocultural concept (e.g. the Enlightenment, modernity, the Baroque), by a historical event or process (e.g. interwar, pre-Columbian) or even in relation to a person or dynasty (e.g. Habsburg, Ming). Some periods are not even defined by temporal markers at all, or are so loosely defined (e.g. early modern) as to make it difficult to pinpoint them to a specific chronological moment in the way Jameson suggests.⁴⁸ Artworks can also belong to several different periods at the same time. It is instructive here to consider Robert Bagley's discussion of style and periodization in relation to the Louvre. He notes that it can be described alternately as Classical, by reference to other Classical and non-Classical buildings, as French, in which case it is discussed alongside examples of French architecture to which it possesses salient similarities, as well as Baroque, which would be to note that

it has borrowed from seventeenth-century Italian buildings some of the qualities that distinguish them from sixteenth-century Italian buildings. To call the building French is to direct attention to qualities that distinguish it from Bernini's designs; to call it Baroque is to say that Bernini and Perrault have something in common.⁴⁹

It can also be designated as Perraultesque, which conjures up a series of other comparisons or frames of reference, placing it in the context of other buildings by the architect in question.

For Bagley the conclusion is clear: there is no single definitive characterization of *the* period style of the building, for it is ‘not a property of single objects considered in isolation. It is a way of talking about one object’s relationships with other objects’.⁵⁰ Periods serve the heuristic function of shaping how historical relations between works of art are posited, but a single object may be described in terms of several different historical frames of reference at the same time, depending on which aspects are brought into focus. Artworks are produced either at the same time or in chronological succession, and art historians posit relations between them, bringing into consideration, too, various aesthetic and sociohistorical categories. Different temporal scales may also be invoked, from the *longue durée* to a single day or hour. It is also possible to identify what Foucault would later refer to as ‘discursive regularities’, that is features shared by large numbers of artworks that, where deemed salient, may lead to generalizations about art in a particular place and time. To state that we cannot dispense with such ‘regularities’ is not simply to be resigned to the notion that periods are ‘necessary fictions’.⁵¹ The term ‘fictions’ implies a reluctance to accept their legitimacy. Rather, periods exemplify a wider phenomenon, namely that art history necessarily involves schematizations and simplifications. The problem with periodization, therefore, may not lie in the division of art history into periods per se. Instead, it may be found in the situation described by Bagley with regard to style, namely when it ‘becomes a metaphysical entity with a life of its own, a life that unfolds independent of individual caprice . . . a phenomenon that precedes and shapes the objects’ in which ‘artists are the instruments through which it acts’.⁵² In addition, problems arise when the criteria of periodization remain opaque or, indeed, when traditional practices of periodization are reproduced by force of habit or in reference to arbitrary frames of reference, including chronological dates.

We might explore the implications of its converse: what might an art history look like that resisted generalizations, including periodization? Moxey has argued that ‘the requirement to relate historical developments to one another and to attribute them to a common source obscures the particularity of the local for the sake of the universal’.⁵³ We might be sympathetic to his attitude towards the imposition of *universal* frames of reference, but it is difficult to make out what kind of art history it would be that refused the requirement to relate historical developments to each other. It would be denuded of any means of determining the significance of singular artworks. Just as the meaning of the individual terms of a language is dependent on their relation to others, so judgements of art historical significance – and hence principles of selection – are always relational.

At this point it is pertinent to turn to the topic of time. For it has been suggested that we rethink the shape of time. Yet for all the suggestive nature of the metaphors proposed, time, strictly speaking, has no form at all. It is neither discontinuous nor entangled, neither linear nor uneven, nor fractured, circular, heterogeneous, multidirectional or plural. As George Kubler notes: ‘We know time only indirectly by what happens in it: by observing change and permanence, by marking the succession of events among stable settings, and by noting the contrast of varying rates of change’.⁵⁴ Things can be organized *within* time, but not time itself.

This observation has a number of implications. If, like Pinder (and Schwarz), we argue that the art historical division into neat sequences or periods fails to capture the temporality of lived experience, we do so by relying on generalized abstractions (mobilizing concepts such as ‘the temporal horizon of modernity’, ‘the Indian

experience of time'), positing a collective historical subject that is assumed to stand, metonymically, for the culture as a whole. Yet the meaning of this is not clear. To take Koselleck's discussion of modernity, one may notice events taking place at a certain rate, that innovations occur at an accelerating pace, and the difference between the new and the old may be more jarring, but this is distinct from the claim that time itself is experienced in a certain way. Indeed, Jameson argues that the subjective experience of historical individuals simply cannot be represented, leading him to the conclusion that 'the narrative of modernity cannot be organized around categories of subjectivity . . . only situations'.⁵⁵

A central point here is the relation between natural and historical time. For Panofsky the distinction was fundamental, and it is so for Koselleck, too, who has argued that 'natural time, with its recurrence and its time limits, is a permanent premise both of history and of its interpretation as an academic discipline' since 'even seemingly general patterns of explanation inevitably refer to chronological succession, without which every history would be not only meaningless but impossible'.⁵⁶ For Benjamin, Harootunian, Moxey and others, however, there is no form of time that is not a social construct. For Moxey and Karlholm, one of the fundamental questions of art history is the following: 'Can the different scales of qualities of time that have marked the world's cultures be reconciled with one another? If times are to be made commensurable, by what standard are they to be translated?'⁵⁷ It is notable that they are not talking in terms of differing interpretations of the historical relations between events *in time* but, rather, differing *qualities* of time itself. The precise meaning of this is not entirely clear, but they appear to have erased the difference between natural and historical time.

The difficulty here is that this manoeuvre removes the grounds on which judgements of cultural unevenness, synchronicity/asynchronicity and so forth can even be passed. Moxey and Karlholm are right to inquire as to what might be the common point of reference, but they are describing an impossible comparison. For if it were the case that it was 'qualities of time' that were being compared, there would be no answer to their question since there really would be, as they imply, no way to compare them. In fact, we might better describe the problem of commensurability not in terms of how *time* is organised but of how relations between events are described and organized in different cultures.

We might approach this in the light of the philosopher Donald Davidson's comments on the idea of conceptual schemes. Davidson points out that experience cannot be organized, only experiences:

We cannot attach a clear meaning to the notion of organizing a single object (the world, nature etc.) unless that object is understood to contain or consist in other objects. Someone who sets out to organize a closet arranges the things in it. If you are told not to organize the shoes and shirts, but the closet itself, you would be bewildered.⁵⁸

As with experience so with time. Events *in time* can be organized, but not time itself. Indeed, it is difficult to grasp what it might even *mean* for time, rather than the relations between objects and events, to be described as entangled or asynchronous. Understood as a matter of the commensurability and inter-translatibility of different ways of describing temporal relations between events, it then becomes a different kind of problem, but one that can be resolved.

Conclusion

We might conclude by asking how this theoretical debate can be translated back into the concerns of art history. At the heart of the recent interventions about time and periodization is the question of the temporal schemas we construct when we describe the relations between works of art. If we focus on the specific topic of modernism, the source of most examples discussed, the debate revolves around the implications of a unitary, linear model of time for the kind of relations traditionally posited between artistic practices in Prague, Paris, Berlin, Budapest and Bucharest, to name but a few examples. The argument of this chapter is that approaching this issue in terms of different temporalities hardly resolves the question. It would instead place us in the situation described in Davidson's discussion of conceptual schemes. Like the closet in his analogy, it would be like inquiring not into how to organize the relations between modernist artworks and practices across Europe but, rather, into how to organize modernism itself.

One can emphasize (rightly) the plurality of historical trajectories of modernist art across Europe (and globally) without having to invoke metaphors of multiple temporalities. For without some common background – the 'natural time' of Koselleck – it would be impossible even to begin that task of mapping out relations. Talk of multiple, incommensurable, temporalities potentially obscures rather than illuminates analytical judgements and ends up being counterproductive, since it undercuts the grounds or common frame of reference on which the judgements of difference can be made.

This touches on the question of periods, too. For if we are to heed Bagley's comments, the problem may not lie in referring to periods, which serve an important heuristic function and which are, in any case, considerably more flexible than critics would admit. Rather, it may lie in the reliance on reified notions of periods – or of 'modernism' in this case – which thereby cease to serve the purposes of the interpreter and become, instead, a fixed grid imposed on singular practices, objects and images.

Historians of modern Central and Eastern European art have understandably been wary of narratives privileging the modernisms of Paris and Berlin. Yet positing a variety of different metaphors of time arguably does little to address the basic issue: namely, how to construct a framework for the analysis of modernism that problematizes the arbitrary hierarchies that have governed discourse hitherto. Indeed, the invocation of multiple, non-commensurable temporalities avoids the issue entirely. Unless one is to discard the idea of modernism – an implausible solution given the profound ways that a self-consciousness of being 'modern' shaped the course of art in the twentieth century – it will be impossible to avoid describing in some way the relation between the different modernist practices, of Central, Eastern and Western Europe, and one in which 'modernism' functions as a meaningful heuristic term. The debate over temporality merely betrays the fact that we have yet to devise better terms of comparison and analysis.

Notes

* The research for this chapter was conducted as part of the European Research Council project 'Continuity / Rupture: Art and Architecture in Central Europe 1918–1939' (Project no. 786314).

1 Loos, 'Ornament and Crime', 21.

2 Ibid., 21.

3 Hegel, *Aesthetics*.

- 4 Bassnett, *Translation Studies*, 41.
- 5 Friedman, 'Alternatives to Periodization', 388.
- 6 The problems of interpreting Central and Eastern European modernism in relation to that in France or Germany are eloquently described in Elkins, 'Review of Mansbach, *Modern Art in Eastern Europe*'.
- 7 Pinder, *Das Problem der Generation in der Kunstgeschichte*.
- 8 *Ibid.*, 15.
- 9 *Ibid.*, 3.
- 10 Panofsky, '"Renaissance": Self-Definition or Self-Deception?'.
- 11 Panofsky, 'Reflections on Historical Time'.
- 12 *Ibid.*, 697.
- 13 *Ibid.*, 700.
- 14 Schwarz, 'Ernst Bloch and Wilhelm Pinder: Out of Sync', 68.
- 15 See for example Didi-Huberman, *The Surviving Image*; Beyer and Bredekamp, eds., *Bilderfahrzeuge*.
- 16 Didi-Huberman, 'Artistic Survival: Panofsky vs. Warburg and the Exorcism of Impure Time', 273.
- 17 This is documented in Schoell-Glass, *Aby Warburg und der Antisemitismus*.
- 18 Kern, *The Culture of Time and Space 1880–1918*.
- 19 Koselleck, *Sediments of Time*, 91.
- 20 Bloch, *Heritage of Our Times*, 97
- 21 Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, 122.
- 22 Schwarz, 'Ernst Bloch and Wilhelm Pinder', 69.
- 23 Benjamin, 'On the Concept of History', in *Selected Writings 4: 1938–1940*, 389–400.
- 24 Harootunian, 'Some Thoughts on Comparability and the Space-Time Problem', 45.
- 25 Schivelbusch, *The Railway Journey*.
- 26 Birth, *Objects of Time*.
- 27 Fabian, *Time and the Other*, 143.
- 28 Pomeranz, 'Teleology, Discontinuity and World History'.
- 29 Conrad, *What Is Global History?* 4.
- 30 Harootunian, 'Remembering the Historical Present', 478.
- 31 Felski, *The Limits of Critique*, 154.
- 32 *Ibid.*, 158.
- 33 Nagel and Wood, *Anachronic Renaissance*, 9.
- 34 Moxey, *Visual Time: The Image in History*, 1.
- 35 Del Carmen Molina Brea, 'Rhizomatic Mnemosyne', n.p.
- 36 Moxey, *Visual Time*, 139.
- 37 Dan Karlholm, 'Is Art History to be Closed, Saved or Restarted? Considering Efficient Art History', in *Time in the History of Art*, eds. Karlholm and Moxey, 21.
- 38 Partha Mitter, 'Colonial Modern: A Clash of Colonial and Indigenous Chronologies – The Case of India', in *Time in the History of Art*, eds. Karlholm and Moxey, 62–78.
- 39 John Clark, 'Time Processes in the History of the Asian Modern', in *Time in the History of Art*, eds. Karlholm and Moxey, 45–61.
- 40 Schorske, *Fin-de-Siècle Vienna*.
- 41 Švestka, 'Czech Cubism: The Dilemma of the Nascent Central-European Avant-Garde'.
- 42 Kramář, *Kubismus*.
- 43 Vybíral, 'Český kubismus na trhu symbolických statků'.
- 44 Pospiszyl, *An Associative Art History*.
- 45 Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*.
- 46 Springer, *Bilder aus der neueren Kunstgeschichte*, 396–97.
- 47 Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*, 28.
- 48 On this see Brown, 'Periods and Resistances'.
- 49 Bagley, *Max Loehr and the Study of Chinese Bronzes*, 123.
- 50 *Ibid.*, 124.
- 51 Perkins, *Is Literary History Possible?* 65. Perkins states: 'we require the concept of a unified period in order to deny it and thus make apparent the particularity, local difference, heterogeneity . . . that are now preferred categories for understanding any moment of the past'.
- 52 Bagley, *Max Loehr and the Study of Chinese Bronzes*, 125.

- 53 Moxey, *Visual Time*, 26–27.
 54 Kubler, *The Shape of Time*, 13.
 55 Jameson, *A Singular Modernity*, 57.
 56 Koselleck, *The Practice of Conceptual History*, 109.
 57 Moxey and Karlholm, ‘Introduction: Telling Art’s Time’, in *Time in the History of Art*, 3.
 58 Davidson, ‘On the Very Idea of a Conceptual Scheme’, 14.

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Part II

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2 Renaissances in Byzantium and Byzantium in the Renaissance

The International Development of Ideas and Terminology in Late Nineteenth- and Early Twentieth-Century Europe

Anna Adashinskaya

Introduction

Traditional twentieth-century art historical narratives point to a series of renaissances or revivals in Byzantine art and literature: the first taking place under the Macedonian dynasty (867–1056);¹ the second starting in the 1160s during the rule of the Komnenian dynasty (1081–1185);² and, finally, the last renaissance under the Palaiologoi (1261–1453).³ Byzantine culture was thus represented as a constant sequence of deaths and rebirths motivated by its internal ‘Hellenistic’ or ‘Classical’ component. Moreover, the primary merit of Byzantium was considered for a long time to be the preservation of Classical tradition and the transmission of ancient artistic forms to Italian humanism.

This chapter explores how different scholars belonging to Austrian, French, Russian and Balkan schools instituted the normativity of Byzantine art within the Classical discourse and how, at the same time, some of them represented Byzantine art as part of their national heritage. The idea of Byzantine art as a repository of Antique forms transmitted to the West appears in the historiography of the late nineteenth century in the works of Russian Byzantinists who articulated it within the framework of Austrian and French theories of styles.

These two interconnected concepts – Byzantine art as an heir of Hellenism and, simultaneously, as a foundation for Italian *Rinascimento* – were widely supported during the early twentieth century for the purpose of ‘inserting’ Byzantine art into mainstream art history. From its very origin, this discipline acquired a Classicist bias and proclaimed the undisputed superiority of Classical art (antiquity, Renaissance, Classicism).⁴ The central notion establishing the connection between ‘antiquity’ and ‘*Rinascimento*’ was the Byzantine Renaissance or, more precisely, renaissances, as periods of revived interest in ‘Hellenistic’ modes of artistic expression and imitation of Antique monuments. Within this construct, antiquity was the producer of tradition, whereas Byzantine art became the agent preserving it for its final recipient, the Italian Renaissance.

Vienna School: Peripheral Byzantium

The founder of the Vienna School, Rudolf Eitelberger von Edelberg (1817–1885), discussed Byzantine art from the strong political bias of his contemporary situation.⁵ In order to promote Austrian colonial policies and to represent the Habsburg Empire

as a progressive power, taking a stand against the Oriental influence of Tsarist Russia, he contrasted the Catholic and Orthodox cultural impact on the Balkans.⁶ The empire of the Romans became a ‘dying Greek culture’ which ‘lacked freedom, imagination and heart’ but preserved ‘the ancient technology’.⁷ Considering the entire Byzantine culture to be ‘the decline’,⁸ he nevertheless pointed to two periods when this art ‘took a fresh start’ under the Macedonian and Komnenian dynasties. Introduced *en passant*, this notion of two renewals of ‘Justinian’ models would be further developed into the concept of ‘Byzantine renaissances’.

Even though the central figures of the Vienna School – Franz Wickhoff (1853–1909) and Alois Riegl (1858–1905) – never dealt with Byzantine imagery in depth, their conceptual framework became instrumental for the study of Eastern Christian art. Whilst they no longer considered Late Antiquity as decadent, and regarded its formal transformations positively,⁹ these scholars saw Byzantium as merely copyist, imitative and grounded in Late Antique artistic discoveries. Wickhoff thought that the ‘original’ images, invented in the fourth century, were copied ‘during all the centuries of Byzantine art’.¹⁰ Riegl developed this idea in his discussion of the ornamentation of Byzantine manuscripts and architecture, to which he attributed no originality, considering it merely skilful emulation:

Byzantine art is nothing more than the Late Antique art of the eastern Roman Empire. . . . We can . . . express our gratitude to the artists who so capably upheld the tradition of Roman technical skills, but Byzantine art will never be counted among the truly creative artistic styles. What we think of specifically as the mature products of the Byzantines were not really their own inventions at all, but the heritage bequeathed by the greater artistic energy and creativity of the Hellenistic period.¹¹

By the time Josef Strzygowski (1862–1941)¹² challenged the Vienna School’s views, the image of Byzantine art as a repository of techniques from antiquity was not only fully formed but also accepted by a wider research community.¹³

Studying the European and non-European ‘periphery’, Strzygowski advocated a new, non-Eurocentric direction for art history and pointed to the Oriental roots of Eastern Christian art overlooked by earlier scholars dealing exclusively with Rome. He helped institutionalize the academic discipline of Byzantine Studies together with its founder Karl Krumbacher,¹⁴ publishing numerous articles in its first professional periodical, *Byzantinische Zeitschrift*.¹⁵ Though Strzygowski considered that, ‘as long as art studies bypass the study of Byzantium and do not recognize it, they actually lack scientific character’,¹⁶ he also took advantage of the peripheral character of the research area.

As a new research field, Byzantium provided Strzygowski with an abundance of non-canonical material that enriched his claims for the importance of Oriental influence on medieval art. The Byzantine milieu was ‘the only existing cultural phenomenon which unites antiquity and Christianity, the Orient and Hellenism, without barbarian immigration’.¹⁷ He thus constructed the image of Byzantium as a part of the Late Antique world where cultural ‘Oriental elements’, such as ‘Asia Minor and Armenia, Syria, Palestine and Egypt’, which used to be mere subjects, soon came to dominate in the ‘newly founded capital of the Empire’.¹⁸ Here,

the simple dignity of the Early Christian spirit was replaced by Oriental influence, which grew stronger over time, and when a new independent art movement

developed again in the territories of the former Western Roman Empire, this no longer happened in the Roman spirit.¹⁹

Although Strzygowski never denied that Byzantine culture, as ‘the last foothold’ of antiquity, preserved a Classical component, he viewed it as moving ‘further and further away from the aesthetic ideals of Greek-Hellenistic-Roman art’.²⁰ Using traditional formalist analysis, the scholar established a clear division between Antique and Byzantine visual strategies in relation to naturalism. Byzantine art tended to represent the human form with non-naturalistic proportions, following Orthodox ideology which saw no value in the physical body: ‘Man, neglected in his physical form by Christianity, which pictures him exclusively for his inner value, became a mere scheme of ancient art in the hands of Byzantine artists’.²¹

When examining a fourteenth-century illuminated typikon from Vatopedi Monastery,²² Strzygowski drew parallels between the calendar miniatures and fourth-century examples he had previously studied,²³ thus positing aesthetic continuity between Late Antique and Byzantine art and seeing ‘the essence of Byzantinism, its adherence to what was created earlier’.²⁴ On the other hand, he considered Orthodox monasteries in the Holy Land to be vessels of an Oriental spirit, even associating the presence of Oriental stylistic elements in miniatures of Serbian psalters with pilgrimages to Palestine.²⁵ He claimed the origins of Late Antique art lay not in Rome but in multiple Eastern provincial artistic centres, which ‘cling to the Hellenistic form in figurative terms’.²⁶ This ambiguity in Strzygowski’s understanding of Byzantine art as both the heir of Antique tradition and also simultaneously its interrupter may be a consequence of his interaction with a different field of scholarship: that of Russia.²⁷ As the Viennese research ‘centre’ was relatively ignorant of and disinterested in Byzantine art, whereas the European ‘periphery’ had profound knowledge of the issue, this topic became the main focus of discussion between the scholars of the ‘periphery’ and members of the Vienna School seeking to expand the borders of normative research subjects.

Russian School: Mainstream Byzantium

In the second half of the nineteenth century, Romanov Russia became a world centre for emerging Byzantine Studies. This was due to a growing focus on medieval scholarship in its universities (Moscow, St Petersburg, Kiev, Odessa, etc.), imperial commissions and the Academy of Sciences, as well as the emergence of numerous privately funded learned societies (the Society for History and Antiquities, the Imperial Russian Archaeological Society, the Society for Ancient Literature, etc.).²⁸ Within this milieu, Strzygowski became associated with a group of scholars at St Petersburg University headed by Nikodim Pavlovich Kondakov (1844–1925).²⁹ Russian contemporaries acknowledged the influence of their school on the Austrian scholar, sometimes praising him for following in Kondakov’s footsteps,³⁰ while other times accusing him of stealing the Russian scholar’s ideas.³¹

Kondakov, regarded as the founding father of Byzantine Studies in Russia, focused his efforts on the investigation of monuments from the entire Byzantine *oikumene*. In contrast to Strzygowski, who often borrowed photos from other people’s expeditions,³² Kondakov visited and produced detailed reports on an impressive number of sites (in the Caucasus, Balkans, Mount Athos, Rome, Egypt, Syria and Palestine).³³ He adopted a strictly analytical approach, largely avoiding aesthetic, patriotic or

emotional evaluation,³⁴ and preferring to discuss the dating, historical context and iconography of monuments.³⁵ This way, Kondakov did not take any clear conceptual standpoint and turned to theoretical explanations only when necessary for an understanding of an artefact's role in broader artistic trends.

In addition to the lack of a clear methodology, his writings were not widely known to European researchers: only seven of his works were published in Western languages,³⁶ of which *История византийского искусства и иконографии по миниатюрам греческих рукописей* (The History of Byzantine Art and Iconography as Exemplified by Miniatures from Greek Manuscripts; 1876) was considered the most influential.³⁷ Kondakov's views on the evolution of the Byzantine artistic style can be discerned from some of the comments that accompany his discussion of monuments. He believed that a Classical component was preserved throughout the entire history of Byzantine visual culture, its importance lying in the merging of an Antique aesthetic with Christian values. He explained the unequal temporal distribution of Classical-style monuments through the notion of the periodic revival and decline of interest in antiquity: 'it was Byzantine art that has always been and remained the bearer of Antique tradition, the guarantor of communication between the Christian and Classical worlds, the vehicle of its principles in European art'.³⁸ Kondakov assumed that Classical ideas were transmitted through the copying and later imitation of Antique images. Without directly involving himself in style-related debates, he saw the revival (возрождение) of Hellenistic models occurring at two levels, namely artisanship and imagery: 'This revival is manifested both in the improvement of the formal aspect of art – technology, drawing and composition – and in some revival, if not of ideas and images, then of the manner of representation'.³⁹

Kondakov's numerous field trips enabled him to compare Byzantine and Western monuments first-hand, leading him to develop the theory of Byzantine influence on the origins of the European Renaissance. He traced this to the historical circumstances of the fall of the empire in 1453 when 'all these calligraphers, chrysographers and miniaturists were scattered from East to West . . . to pass it [Byzantine culture] on to the re-emerging West'.⁴⁰ When discussing the fourteenth-century Venetian school of painting, he stated that 'a prolonged experience of the Byzantine style [was] partially the base for the later astonishing success of the sixteenth century, because this style exactly preserved the principles of Antique painting'.⁴¹ He also remarked that the works of Italian painters like Cavallini, Duccio and Giotto showed a continuation of Byzantine style and imagery. Thus, by appointing the 'successors' and 'heirs' of Byzantine culture in Europe, he was perhaps trying to compensate for the feeling of irreplaceable loss he felt as a Byzantinist seeing the imperial capital under Ottoman rule.⁴²

Kondakov was thus one of the first scholars to articulate the conceptual framework of 'Byzantine renaissances' in its entirety (the idea that Byzantine art inherited style and imagery from antiquity, periodically revived it and then transferred it to the *Rinascimento*), although he did not use the term itself. He represented Byzantine art as a phenomenon stylistically distinct from both antiquity and the *Rinascimento*, but influenced by the former and influencing the latter.

Russian–Viennese Dialogue: Oriental Byzantium

A dialogue between Russian and European scholarships was initiated by *Эллинистические основы византийского искусства* (Hellenistic Origins of Byzantine Art)⁴³ by Dmitry V. Ainalov (1862–1939).⁴⁴ Published in 1900, the book only became accessible to European

readers in 1961,⁴⁵ ‘becoming one of the greatest missing chapters in the early twentieth-century European historiography’.⁴⁶ Yet its content was known to the European public as early as 1903, due to an extensive review by Oskar Wulff (1864–1946),⁴⁷ an art historian of German origin who studied in both St Petersburg and Leipzig.⁴⁸ Strzygowski himself owned his own copy of the text and knew its content:⁴⁹ it is significant that his *Orient oder Rom* [Orient or Rome], published a year later in 1901, shows similarities in its structure and general conclusions to Ainalov’s study.⁵⁰

Almost simultaneously, Ainalov and Strzygowski raised the issue of Oriental influence on Late Antique art countering mainstream Viennese theories of style. Ainalov’s *Эллинистические основы* begins with an extensive quote from Riegl’s *Stilfragen: Grundlegungen zu einer Geschichte der Ornamentik*,⁵¹ which sets the polemic tone for the entire work.⁵² In the same vein as *Orient oder Rom*, Ainalov placed the origins of the Byzantine style not in ancient Rome or Greece, but in the Roman provinces (Egypt, Syria, Palestine and Asia Minor), where Classical artistic language merged with local Oriental tendencies. Thus, he argued, the genesis of Eastern Christian formal expression lay in the East, with its mysticism and religiosity; these traditions were then reconsidered and amalgamated in Constantinople, the melting pot of the new empire.

The Russian–Viennese dialogue continued in Ainalov’s later work, ‘Византийская живопись XIV столетия’ (Byzantine Painting of the Fourteenth Century; 1917).⁵³ It began with a discussion of the relationship between Byzantine Art and the Italian trecento,⁵⁴ in response to an article by Max Dvořák on the contribution of Byzantine artists to the European Renaissance.⁵⁵ Dvořák had argued that Greek mosaicists working in St Mark’s Basilica in Venice, together with their local students and associates, influenced Italian visual tradition and encouraged ‘the revival of ancient Byzantine art’ in that city as well as Rome and Siena.⁵⁶ Ainalov, on the other hand, while supporting the idea of similarity between Byzantine and Italian artworks of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, saw the process of exchange as mutual and long-lasting. He found Gothic influences in Eastern Christian painting, as well as Byzantine ones in Italian painting, and argued for interconnection of Byzantine and Western art during the entire Late Middle Ages. Using a historical and comparative approach to the mosaics of St Mark’s Basilica and of Constantinople’s Chora Church, he contextualized these monuments through comparison with further contemporary examples from the wider Byzantine *oikoumene*: other Italian towns, Constantinople, Mystras, Novgorod and the Balkans. Thus, he envisaged the development of Italian, Byzantine, Serbian and Russian visuality in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries as an interrelated phenomenon.⁵⁷ In the style of Late Byzantine painting, he noticed Gothic motifs in the arrangement of landscape, architecture and perspective, but believed that other elements of these images emerged under the influence of antiquity:

[T]he new artistic manner in Byzantium combines the desire to apply not only the more vital art of the European Renaissance, but also its [the Byzantine manner’s] forgotten artistic tradition of Antique, Hellenistic origin. Many sources of the new Byzantine manner are found in the new art of the trecento and earlier in the Romanesque, and also in Gothic styles.⁵⁸

Ainalov’s book was barely known in the West: a Baltic-German art historian, Philipp Schweinfurth, made a brief summary of its main ideas in his 1930 volume *Geschichte der russischen Malerei im Mittelalter* (The History of Russian Medieval Painting).⁵⁹

However, the translation of *Эллинистические основы* into English in 1961⁶⁰ stimulated new interest in the Russian scholar over the next two decades, while several Balkan and Western authors also became acquainted with ‘Византийская живопись XIV столетия’ in Russian.⁶¹

Russian–French Dialogue: Classical Byzantium

The ideas formulated by Kondakov’s school concerning the Antique component of Byzantine art, its periodic revivals and its transmission to Italy were also promoted by several French scholars – notably Charles Diehl (1859–1944), Gabriel Millet (1867–1953) and Louis Bréhier (1868–1961) – who developed the theoretical framework around the concept of the Byzantine renaissances. Perhaps this parallel is not a coincidence, as some of Kondakov’s works were translated into European languages.⁶²

The term ‘Byzantine Renaissance’ was coined by Diehl in his 1910 *Manuel d’art byzantin* (Manual of Byzantine Art).⁶³ In Book III (*La Renaissance macédonienne* (The Macedonian Renaissance)), he explicitly discusses the Byzantine revival of antiquity after iconoclasm with multiple references to Kondakov.⁶⁴ Like Kondakov, Diehl emphasizes the important role of laymen in manuscript illustration, arguing that they largely preserved Classical imagery and techniques. However, Diehl extended the notion of Antique revival proposed by Russian periodization beyond the tenth century, prolonging this renaissance into the twelfth.

The grounds for the concept of multiple or, rather, periodic Byzantine renaissances were laid by another French scholar, Gabriel Millet. He pointed to the revival of antiquity in the tenth to eleventh centuries, as well as to ‘some kind of Renaissance’ in Palaiologan visual culture.⁶⁵ This notion was formulated in dialogue with Russian scholarship, because Millet knew the language and extensively quoted from various books by Kondakov in his *Recherches sur l’iconographie de l’Évangile aux XIVe, XVe et XVIe siècles* (Investigation of the Iconography of the Gospels in the 14th, 15th and 16th Centuries).⁶⁶ In the pages of this milestone work, the paths of Russian and Austrian scholars crossed once again.

Millet insists on two points of connection between Byzantine art and Classical heritage: periodic revivals of antiquity and mutual influences between Byzantine and Italian art. He thus realized that a series of Classical revivals throughout the entire Byzantine visual tradition allowed the insertion of Middle and Late Byzantine art into a broader European artistic context, whereas Byzantium’s role in the transmission of Antique heritage to Italy guaranteed its place in the mainstream art historical discourse. Millet considered that it was the Byzantine capital which remained the richest treasure of Hellenistic models:

But they [Byzantine models] are recognized by a very sure sign: certain details, or even the character of the composition, recall the Hellenistic manner. When we see the artists of the imperial city enlightened by Classical culture, which grows from Photius to Psellos and from Psellos to the humanists of the Palaiologan period, we admit that this privileged school has preserved throughout time and has restored, better than any other, the forms of ancient art; and when we recognize the eminent merit of transmitting the tradition of the style to the Renaissance, we will be able to honour the iconographic motifs which express this sense of moderation, elegance and nobility.⁶⁷

He believed that erudite Byzantine artists and writers consciously revived Classical stylistic features and subject matter. His book abounds with expressions such as ‘preserved’, ‘restored’, ‘transmission’ and ‘reserve’, directly pointing to Byzantium’s important role as a storehouse of antiquity and a provider of material for the Renaissance.

French–Austrian–Russian Polylogue: Byzantine Renaissances

In his introduction to *Recherches sur l’iconographie*, Millet sets up a dialectic with Strzygowski,⁶⁸ rephrasing his opponent’s famous statement into ‘Orient or Byzantium?’. He highlights what he sees as the problems of Strzygowski’s theory, namely (1) the historical impossibility of the Christian Orient being the driving force of cultural change, due to its political subjection to the Arabs and Turks; and (2) that creative forces should not be seen as concentrated in Oriental monastic centres, but in the capital as the imperial centre of power. Questioning Strzygowski’s thesis, Millet demonstrates that at the turn of the tenth century, ‘Byzantium separated from the Orient’ and returned to Hellenistic prototypes;⁶⁹ he supports this view with reference to Kondakov’s research.⁷⁰

Millet insists on ‘the preponderant influence’⁷¹ of Byzantine art on Italian culture and vice versa: he argues that Greek artists facilitated the entrance of Oriental style and iconography into twelfth- to fourteenth-century Italian art, and that ‘Italian motifs take on a Byzantine form’ in Greek territories. In support of his hypothesis, he draws on the work of Kondakov, who proved the uniformity of iconographic types of the Virgin in Late Byzantium, Russia and Italy,⁷² and of Nikolai Lihachev,⁷³ who demonstrated the influence of the Italo-Cretan School on Russia and the Balkans. It can safely be said, then, that the development of the notion of Byzantine renaissances took place in the course of this polylogue between French, Russian and Austrian schools of Byzantine studies. Kondakov’s works directly influenced Millet’s ideas on Byzantine revivals and the transmission of antiquity to Italy, while Ainalov’s works delivered a Russian response to the ideas of the Vienna School.

Nonetheless, Millet’s vision of Byzantine culture as distant from the Orient (Syria and Palestine) was strongly opposed by Diehl, who considered that both traditions, Hellenistic and Oriental, were present in Byzantine art. In his review of Millet’s *Recherches sur l’iconographie*, entitled ‘La dernière renaissance de l’art byzantin’ (The Last Renaissance of Byzantine Art; 1917), Diehl furthered this topic by proposing the concept of consecutive Byzantine renaissances:

From very early times, in the formation of Art of the Christian East, two traditions appeared to be present: the Antique tradition, ‘Hellenistic’, more inclined towards idealism, more concerned with nobility, design, sobriety; and the Oriental tradition, born in the hinterland of Syria, Mesopotamia, Cappadocia, more realistic, more eager to express passions and dramatic emotions.⁷⁴

In this vision, Diehl combines the different approaches proposed by scholars: those (Kondakov and Millet) who viewed Eastern Christian art as following the Classical tradition, and those (Strzygowski and Ainalov) who saw the development of a new spirituality borrowed from the Orient. Thus, the ‘Last Byzantine Renaissance’ reinterpreted Oriental heritage within the Classical stylistic framework.

What were the reasons for the periodic decay of the Classical tradition and the acceleration of Eastern trends in Byzantium? This question gave rise to the theory of the

dual-style evolution of Byzantine art, which combined the Oriental component found in Byzantine monastic visuality with the Antique revivals of the Constantinopolitan artistic milieu. Byzantine art was interpreted as the coexistence of two artistic currents: Oriental (monastic, expressive, provincial) and Classical (noble, naturalistic, Constantinopolitan). The first to apply the dualist framework was the French historian Louis Bréhier. As expressed in his book *L'art byzantin* (Byzantine Art; 1924),⁷⁵ he considered that the Hellenistic heritage was constantly reconsidered and emulated at the imperial court in Constantinople. On the other hand, 'the indigenous tradition of the Orient', distinguished by ornamental tendencies and simplification, 'often prevailed' in the provinces and, particularly, in provincial monasteries. These conflicting currents reappeared several times throughout Byzantine history. Provincial Oriental moods dominated the art of the Iconoclast period, but the School of Constantinople restored the creative power of the Classical legacy under the Macedonian dynasty and the Komnenoi. Oriental tradition, however, was preserved in the frescoes of the monastic caves of Southern Italy and Cappadocia. The final triumph of Byzantine Classicism over Syriac monastic style took place under the Palaiologoi. Thus, the narrative of Byzantine art as a chain of declines and revivals of Classical tradition was formulated.

In his review of Bréhier's book, Millet noted that this conceptual framework brought Strzygowski's inconvenient ideas into the mainstream narrative:

For years, Mr Strzygowski had warned that the term 'Byzantine art' should not be taken to mean the Imperial art that came from the capital and exercised its influence everywhere. He credited the monasteries with having maintained the old traditions of the Asian Christian communities throughout the Middle Ages, in opposition to Constantinople.⁷⁶

The book proposes a balanced vision of two stylistic trends, the Hellenistic and royal versus the Oriental and monastic. Essentially, it combines the opposing schools of thought and represents Byzantine art not as influenced by various traditions but as containing these traditions within itself. This dualist discourse was also extended to Late Byzantine painting and appeared in the works of later Greek, Bulgarian, German, Serbian and French scholars. Ernst Kitzinger (1912–2003),⁷⁷ for example, considered Early Byzantine art to be rooted in the stylistic dichotomy between Constantinople's 'endemic' Hellenistic trends and more primitive 'exotic regional stylistic tendencies'.⁷⁸ Tania Velmans (b. 1938) identified two trends in the Palaiologan period: Classical Greek idealism and a severe monastic style.⁷⁹ Doula Mouriki (1934–1991) studied the conflict between the hieratic and Classical tendencies in the art of tenth- to eleventh-century mainland Greece.⁸⁰ Following on from Diehl and Bréhier, Kurt Weitzmann (1904–1993) developed the notion of a 'Macedonian Renaissance' using the evidence of manuscripts, with their unification of visual arts and text.⁸¹ He distinguished this 'Renaissance' not only in terms of its stylistic traits but also in terms of the subject matter it borrowed from antiquity: the return to naturalistic representation was accompanied by the reappearance of Greek mythological figures in Christian-themed illustrations.

The theoretical framework of 'Byzantine renaissances' became so omnipresent that historian August Heisenberg (1869–1930) was the only scholar who opposed the concept at the peak of its popularity.⁸² He separated Classical heritage from the notion of a 'renaissance' as something characterized by personal creative freedom. In his opinion, the Empire uninterruptedly preserved its Antique heritage, but fused it with Christian

ethics; as a result, its art and literature lacked any expression of personal creativity. Heisenberg's objections had a rather terminological character: he acknowledged the Byzantine revivals (*Erneuerungen*), but considered that they 'did not deserve' to be called 'renaissances'.⁸³

Balkan Schools: National Byzantium

For Balkan scholars (Greek, Bulgarian and Serbian), the theory of 'Byzantine renaissances' offered a perfect opportunity for the inclusion of their national art into the grand European narrative.⁸⁴ The best example of this strategy appeared in Serbian scholarship on the connections between the Palaiologan Renaissance and the paintings of Sopoćani Monastery (1260s). Svetozar Radojčić (1909–1978) considered that the Sopoćani murals represented a climax in medieval understanding of Antique art,⁸⁵ reached during the Balkan phase of the Komnenian Middle Byzantine Renaissance. Thus, new Hellenistic tendencies, which had 'forcedly erupted in Byzantium in 1204',⁸⁶ continued their life in Serbian art. He argued that the origins of the Byzantine Palaiologan style could be traced to Balkan thirteenth-century painting, which predated the stylistic novelties in the art of Constantinople. He proposed the concept of two Palaiologan styles, 'Classical and Classicism' (*Klassik und Klassizismus*).⁸⁷ The 'Classical' style of the mid-thirteenth century exhibited an organic absorption of Antique prototypes, heroic proportions and restrained movements, whereas the 'Classicism' of the fourteenth century relied on powerful theatrical and decorative effects, complicated subjects and deep emotions. He characterized the style of Serbian monuments (such as Sopoćani and Peć) as truly 'Classical' and 'noble', and used the derogatory term of 'Classicism' for Greek art, whose facial types he called 'apple-headed' and 'reminiscent of present-day Macedonian peasants'.⁸⁸ In this way, Serbian national art was not only placed in a wider international context but also presented as a superior form of Byzantine art.

The discourse of Byzantium as a deliverer of antiquity to the *Rinascimento* was turned upside down in Balkan historiography which valued the Renaissance because of its connection to Byzantium and assumed an air of superiority for having discovered the Antique past earlier than the West. To quote the Serbian art historian Sreten Petković (1930–2015), whereas medieval Serbian artists 'had mastered all the secrets of painting', the West 'could not attain beauty in expressing aesthetic ideals. The West had to wait for Giotto'.⁸⁹ Bulgarian art historian Nikola Mavrodinov (1904–1958) even suggested that it was a Macedonian, most probably an Ohrid master, who influenced Giotto's style, and that the proper Renaissance started in Macedonia and Bulgaria:

The Italian Renaissance began with Giotto, that is, from the year 1300, while the Bulgarian Renaissance began with St Sofia in Ohrid. Nerezi exemplified [the Renaissance] much earlier than Giotto. . . . [I]t is clear that the Italian trecento is based entirely on Macedonian painting, that the murals in the crypt of the Church of St Francis in Assisi were definitely made by a Macedonian and probably by an Ohrid master . . . following them, Giotto developed his own particular artistic concept.⁹⁰

For Greek scholarship, the concept of a 'Byzantine renaissance' became a 'missing link' in the development of the Greek national spirit, rooted in the concept of a democratic and liberal ancient world.⁹¹ Hence, in their discussions of the Classical school

of painting in fourteenth-century Thessaloniki, the leading Greek Byzantinists showed more than a little national pride when quoting the French priest Alexandre-Stanislas Neyrat who, after his trip to Mount Athos in 1880, compared the painter of the Protaton there, Manuel Panselinos, with Giotto and Raphael.⁹²

Conclusion

The concept of ‘Byzantine renaissances’ appeared within the framework of debates on the role of ancient Classical heritage in Byzantine culture, in which several generations of scholars, representing various art historical schools (Austrian, Russian, French, Serbian, etc.), participated over a timespan of almost 100 years. The meaning of the concept underwent numerous changes. For the early members of the Vienna School, the imitation of Classical elements in the art of the Byzantine Empire was a reason to consider its culture inferior and unworthy. The same Classical echoes enabled Russian historians to represent Eastern Christian culture as belonging to Western civilization. Still considering themselves successors of the Byzantine world, Russian scholars insisted, in particular, on the Italian reception of Classical elements from the Greeks, thus indicating the contribution of Orthodox communities to the European Commonwealth. For Strzygowski, Hellenistic influences meant the advance of the Orient with its infusive creative forces, mysticism and spirituality, whereas French scholars like Diehl and Millet considered that the Byzantines’ periodic return to Classicism was, on the contrary, the triumph of educated humanism and court culture.

Formalized by the 1920s, the ‘Byzantine renaissance’ concept meant the conscious use of idealized Classical features in opposition to the ascetic artistic language of the Orient, as well as the imitation of previous renaissances. By transmitting ancient Classical values to Europe, Byzantine influence stimulated the emergence of the Italian *Rinascimento*. Balkan scholars, however, used this framework of stylistic analysis to help develop national art discourses and even to prove their superiority over ‘Western’ tradition. Nevertheless, the very application of the term ‘Renaissance’, referring to the Western concept of a Classical revival as a positive shift in art, reinforced the old paradigm of the cultural superiority of antiquity.

Notes

- 1 For the revival of Antique models and techniques in Byzantine art, see Buchthal, *The Miniatures of the Paris Psalter*; Weitzmann, *Greek Mythology*; Weitzmann, ‘Das klassische Erbe’; Weitzmann, *Ancient Book Illumination*; Weitzmann, ‘The Survival of Mythological Representations’; Weitzmann, *Geistige Grundlagen*; Kitzinger, ‘The Hellenistic Heritage in Byzantine Art’; Kitzinger, ‘The Hellenistic Heritage in Byzantine Art Reconsidered’. For the revival of the interest in antiquity in Byzantine literature, see Lemerle, *Le premier humanisme byzantin*; Treadgold, ‘The Macedonian Renaissance’. For deconstructing the notion of ‘Macedonian Renaissance’, see Hanson, ‘The Rise and Fall’; Spieser, ‘La “Renaissance macédonienne”’.
- 2 The concept of the twelfth-century Byzantine Renaissance was introduced by David Talbot Rice, *Byzantine Art and Its Influences*, Part VIII.
- 3 For the theory of the Palaiologan Renaissance in Byzantine painting, see Schmidt, ‘La “Renaissance” de la peinture byzantine’; Millet, *Recherches sur l’iconographie de l’Évangile*, xiii and 602; Bréhier, ‘La rénovation artistique’; Xyngopoulos, *Thessalonique*, esp. 3–10; Radojčić, ‘Uloga antike’; Radojčić, ‘Die Entstehung der Malerei’; Radojčić, ‘Der Klassizismus’; Chatzidakis, ‘Classicisme et tendances populaires’; Velmans, ‘L’héritage antique’. For Palaiologan humanism in literature, see Hunger, ‘Von Wissenschaft und Kunst’; Runciman,

- The Last Byzantine Renaissance*. The theory was accepted not without some remarks by Ševčenko, 'The Palaeologan Renaissance'. The most recent work written within the Palaiologan Renaissance framework is Fryde, *The Early Palaeologan Renaissance*.
- 4 On the superiority of antiquity in art-historical scholarship, see Arciszewska, 'Classicism: Constructing the Paradigm'; Spieser, 'Héllénisme et connaissance de l'art byzantin'.
 - 5 Rampley, *The Vienna School of Art History*, 169–71.
 - 6 Marchand, 'The View from the Land', 30–32; Rampley, 'The Idea of a Scientific Discipline'.
 - 7 Eitelberger von Edelberg, 'Zur Orientierung auf dem Gebiete der Baukunst', 50–51.
 - 8 *Ibid.*, 73.
 - 9 Elsner, 'The Viennese Invention of Late Antiquity', 46–48.
 - 10 Wickhoff, *Römische Kunst*, 197.
 - 11 Riegl, *Stilfragen*, 273; Riegl, *Problems of Style*, 240–41.
 - 12 On Strzygowski's research and ideological development, see Schödl, 'Josef Strzygowski'; Marchand, 'Appreciating the Art of Others', 265–67; Elsner, 'The Birth of Late Antiquity'; Elsner, 'The Viennese Invention of Late Antiquity'.
 - 13 A similar position was adopted by Marian Sokolowski in his studies on Ruthenian art; see Kunińska, 'On the Borderline'.
 - 14 Schreiner and Vogt, *Karl Krumbacher*.
 - 15 *Byzantinische Zeitschrift*, vols 1 (1892): 61–73, 340–41, 575–90; 3 (1894): 1–16; 4 (1895): 590–91, 592–93; 5 (1896): 140–57; 6 (1897): 585–86; 8 (1899): 678–81; 10 (1901): 218–22, 546–67; 11 (1902): 473–90.
 - 16 Strzygowski, 'Die byzantinische Kunst', 62.
 - 17 *Ibid.*, 61.
 - 18 Strzygowski and Forchheimer, *Die byzantinischen Wasserbehälter*, 189.
 - 19 Strzygowski, *Iconographie der Taufe Christi*, 9.
 - 20 Strzygowski, *Der Bilderkreis des griechischen Physiologus*, 54.
 - 21 Strzygowski, 'Die altbyzantinische Plastik', 580.
 - 22 Strzygowski, 'Eine trapezuntische Bilderhandschrift'.
 - 23 Strzygowski, *Die Calenderbilder*.
 - 24 Strzygowski, 'Eine trapezuntische Bilderhandschrift', 258.
 - 25 Strzygowski and Jagić, *Die miniaturen des serbischen Psalters*, 87–104, 112–14.
 - 26 *Ibid.*, 89.
 - 27 Khroushkova, 'Йозеф Стриговский'.
 - 28 On the nineteenth-century Russian research landscape, see Vzdornov, *The History of the Discovery*, 167–250, 321–410; Üre, *Byzantine heritage*.
 - 29 On Kondakov, see Kyzlasova, *История изучения*, 74–155; Vzdornov, *The History of the Discovery*, 339–77; Khroushkova, 'Kondakov'; Eadem, 'Geschichte der Christlichen Archäologie'; Foletti, *From Byzantium to Holy Russia*.
 - 30 Ainalov, 'Retsenziya na: J. Strzygowski', 140.
 - 31 On the complicated relations between Russian scholarship and Strzygowski, see Lidova, 'The Rise of Byzantine Art', 144–49; Khroushkova, 'Йозеф Стриговский', 545–59.
 - 32 Ainalov, 'Retsenziya na: J. Strzygowski', 150; Khroushkova, 'Йозеф Стриговский', 572–73.
 - 33 Kondakov, *Опись памятников древности*; Kondakov, *Путешествие на Синай*; Kondakov, *Памятники христианского искусства на Афоне*; Kondakov, *Археологическое путешествие по Сирию*; Kondakov, *Македония: Археологическое путешествие*.
 - 34 Mango, 'Preface', 7–9; Kyzlasova, 'Исследовательские методы', 87–95.
 - 35 Kyzlasova, *История изучения*, 140–47; Foletti, *From Byzantium to Holy Russia*, 174–219.
 - 36 Kondakov wrote over a hundred books, articles and travel reports; for a complete bibliography, see Kyzlasova, 'Библиографический список трудов'.
 - 37 Kondakov, *История византийского искусства*. In 1886–91, the book was translated into French: Kondakov, *Histoire de l'art byzantine*. See also Khroushkova, 'Н. П. Кондаков в зарубежной научной литературе', 260–61.
 - 38 Kondakov, *История византийского искусства*, 49.
 - 39 *Ibid.*, 70.
 - 40 *Ibid.*, 14.
 - 41 Kondakov, *Иконография Богородицы*, 117.
 - 42 Kondakov, *Византийские церкви*, 195–97.
 - 43 Ainalov, *Эллинистические основы*.

- 44 Khroushkova, 'Йозеф Стриговский', 545–59; Khroushkova, 'Ajnalov', 53–54; Lidova, 'The Rise of Byzantine Art', 141–49.
- 45 Khroushkova, 'Йозеф Стриговский', 553; Lidova, 'The Rise of Byzantine Art', 145.
- 46 Lidova, 'The Rise of Byzantine Art', 145.
- 47 Wulff, 'Review: Д. Айналов, Эллинистические основы'.
- 48 Feist, 'Wulff, Oskar'.
- 49 Strzygowski refers to Ainalov's book several times in *Orient oder Rom*, 49, 56, 59–60, 61, 137.
- 50 The similarities were noted by Anfert'eva, 'Д.В. Айналов', 310; Khroushkova, 'Йозеф Стриговский', 549–51; Lidova, 'The Rise of Byzantine Art', 146–47.
- 51 Riegl, *Stilfragen*, 273.
- 52 Ainalov, *Эллинистические основы*, 2.
- 53 Ainalov, 'Византийская живопись'.
- 54 *Ibid.*, 68.
- 55 Dvořák, 'Rezension von A. Venturi'; a similar standpoint appears in Dvořák, 'Byzantinischer Einfluss'.
- 56 Dvořák, 'Rezension von A. Venturi', 18.
- 57 Ainalov, 'Византийская живопись', 227.
- 58 *Ibid.*, 225.
- 59 Schweinfurth, *Geschichte der russischen Malerei*, 357–62.
- 60 Ainalov, *The Hellenistic Origins*.
- 61 Rice, *Byzantine Painting*, 211; Velmans. *La Peinture murale byzantine*, vol. 1, 13–15, 19–20, 220–22; Spatharakis, 'An Usual Iconographic Type', 142.
- 62 Vzdornov, *The History of the Discovery*, 363; Lidova, 'The Rise of Byzantine Art', 131.
- 63 Diehl, *Manuel d'art Byzantin*, 308, 340, 348, 365–86. See also Spieser, 'La "Renaissance macédonienne"', 46–47.
- 64 Diehl, *Manuel d'art byzantin*, 365, 371, 385, 386, 409, 434, 441, 479, etc.
- 65 Millet, *Recherches sur l'iconographie*, 449, 558, 680, 688 ('une sorte de Renaissance').
- 66 *Ibid.*, viii, 22, 77, 78, 84, 88, 97, 103, 152, 155, 157, 176, 184, 220 etc.
- 67 *Ibid.*, xiii.
- 68 *Ibid.*, x–xiv.
- 69 *Ibid.*, 555–70, esp. 558.
- 70 *Ibid.*, 558, where the author refers to Kondakov, *История византийского искусства*, 131.
- 71 Millet, *Recherches sur l'iconographie*, 625–30.
- 72 Kondakov, *Иконография Богоматери*.
- 73 Lihachev, *Изображения Богоматери*.
- 74 Diehl, 'La dernière renaissance', 364.
- 75 Bréhier, *L'art byzantin*, esp. 26–37, 105–14.
- 76 Millet, 'Louis Bréhier, L'Art byzantin', esp. 582.
- 77 For Kitzinger's application of Strzygowski's theories, see Elsner, 'The Birth of Late Antiquity', 374–75.
- 78 Kitzinger, *Byzantine Art in the Making*, 3–4, 11–12, 115.
- 79 Velmans, *La Peinture murale*, vol. 1, 14.
- 80 Mouriki, 'Stylistic Trends', 86–88.
- 81 Weitzmann, 'Der pariser Psalter'; Weitzmann, 'Euripides Scenes'; Weitzmann, *The Joshua Roll*. See also note 1 above.
- 82 Heisenberg, 'Das Problem der Renaissance'.
- 83 *Ibid.*, 404.
- 84 On the interrelation of historical discourse and politics in the emerging Balkan states, see Angelov, 'Byzantinism'; Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans*.
- 85 Radojčić, 'Uloga antike'; Radojčić, 'Die Entstehung der Malerei'; Radojčić, *Geschichte der serbischen Kunst*, 48–94; Radojčić, 'Der Klassizismus'. For detailed information on Radojčić's career and scholarship, see Vujnović, *Doprinos Svetozara Radojčića*.
- 86 Radojčić, 'Uloga antike', 67.
- 87 Radojčić, 'Die Entstehung der Malerei'.
- 88 *Ibid.*, 106.
- 89 Petković, *Ikone Manastira Hilandara*, 24.
- 90 Mavrodinov, *Старобългарската живопис*, 192.

- 91 Stephenson, 'The World of Byzantine Studies'; Christodoulou, 'Byzantium in Nineteenth-Century Greek Historiography'.
- 92 Adamantiou, *Η Βυζαντινή Θεσσαλονίκη*, 152; Xyngopoulos, *Manuel Panselimos*, 17, 27; Tsigaridas, *Μανουήλ Πανσέληνος*, 19–20.

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3 From Byzantine to Brâncovenesc

The Periodization of Romanian Art in the Second Half of the Nineteenth Century

Cosmin Minea

Introduction

In studies of the historiography of Romanian art in the modern period, the nineteenth century is almost always ignored. The history of art history in Romania usually starts with writings from the early twentieth century, with attention focused mainly on the first major survey works.¹ However, some of the main concepts, periods and styles used to describe Romanian art had already become apparent in the second half of the nineteenth century, in the first decades after Romania was formed, through several brief studies, monographs and letters written in close relation to each other. Their authors were not exclusively based in Romania and the writings illustrate how art historical narratives, styles and artistic periods emerged out of transnational relations, beyond the borders of the new nation-state.

This chapter focuses on the early writings, restoration and artistic practices that established some main ideas and periods for the study of Romanian art. In this way it builds on the increased attention that has already been given in Central Europe to the period before the establishment of art history as an academic discipline.² The earliest writings on Romanian art and the restoration of monuments were underpinned by a desire to integrate Romania into the grand narrative of European art while arguing that the main characteristic of the local monuments is that they derive from and thus can be classified as Byzantine art. However, towards the end of the nineteenth century, new concepts and artistic periods emerged that portrayed Romanian art as unique and valuable. Central to the increased emphasis on originality and ethnicity was the artistic heritage of the period of the Wallachian voivode (ruler) Constantin Brâncovenanu (ruled 1688–1714), which quickly became representative of Romanian art as a whole. The emphasis placed on the so-called Brâncovenesc style is a good illustration of how artistic periods are key to understanding the formation of modern national artistic canons.

Significantly, this chapter will not only analyse the writings and activities of Romanian architects and thinkers but also assess the contribution of foreign-based scholars and transnational ideas to definitions of Romanian art. For even if geographically at the periphery of the European continent, and politically squeezed between major Empires (Ottoman, Habsburg, Russian), Romania's artistic and political elite was perfectly and unambiguously connected to the Western intellectual world. A late nineteenth-century Romanian architect was more at ease in Paris among fellow artists from all over Europe than he was, say, in a small Romanian town. All the actors in this research were defined more by their Western education, common cultural values

and set of practices than by their Romanian citizenship. Therefore, the chapter aims to contribute to configuring a more *horizontal Europe*, a concept that describes how local elites in Central and Eastern Europe were less impacted by their geographical positioning or the colonial hierarchies of power dictated by Western Europe than has generally been acknowledged.³

The Church of Curtea de Argeş and Early Writings on Historical Monuments in Romania

The earliest scholarly writing on a Romanian monument relates to the struggle between the main European powers for political and economic control over South-Eastern Europe. Before, the monuments had been described only in traveller accounts, in a purely visual and unsystematic way. During the brief Habsburg occupation of the two Romanian Principalities, Wallachia and Moldavia (1856–56), Austrian troops remarked on the distinctive architecture of the region and, in 1857, the German-speaking Transylvanian scholar Ludwig Reissenberger (1819–1895) was commissioned to study the church of the former monastery Curtea de Argeş in Wallachia (now an Episcopal cathedral) (Fig. 3.1).

The monument, built between 1512 and 1517 under the reign of Prince Neagoe Basarab (ruled 1482–1521), has a unique aspect, with some similarities to Russian Orthodox and Armenian churches (e.g. the Cathedral of St Demetrios in Vladimir or the Church of the Holy Cross in Akdamar), to other Romanian churches, as well as to Ottoman and Arab mosques.⁴ In 1860, Reissenberger published a monograph about the Church of Curtea de Argeş in the main annual publication of the Habsburg Commission for the Study and Protection of Historical Monuments.⁵ His study is evidence of the lingering Habsburg political interest in the two Romanian Principalities (whose status was still uncertain at the time), as well as of Habsburg attempts to tighten relations with the Orthodox population of the region in order to counter Russian influences.⁶

Reissenberger started the writing from an important assumption that would have a far-reaching impact on ideas and attitudes towards Romanian heritage. He described the architecture of Curtea de Argeş Church as ‘Byzantine’, a concept that was quickly taken up by Romanians to describe the heritage of *all* Romania. But what did ‘Byzantine art’ mean for a mid-nineteenth-century Habsburg scholar? Reissenberger defined it through mostly negative descriptors, such as ‘oppressive’, or characterized by ‘sterile conventions’ and a ‘lack of creativity’.⁷ The church was also seen ambivalently, as having ‘ingenious’ and ‘charming’ exterior decorations but an ‘obscure’ and ‘frightening’ interior.⁸ Reissenberger’s opinion of the Romanian monument seems to have been informed by the descriptions of Byzantine art in the first major (Western-centric) surveys of architecture, published just a few years before (he quoted, for example, from several works of the Prussian scholar Franz Kugler).⁹ Therefore, the study was, on the one hand, a valuable scholarly work of architectural history and, on the other hand, a reflection of the stereotypical and mostly negative view in Central (and Western) Europe of Byzantine art.¹⁰

Reissenberger’s study, which focused on the artistic aspect of the monument and included a detailed description of the church and its history, together with drawings and engravings, was a novelty for a time when art history was a nascent academic discipline (the first Chair of Art History in Vienna was established in 1852 and the



Figure 3.1 Church of Curtea de Argeș, 1515–17.

Photo: Author.

Commission for Historical Monuments in 1853). On the other side of the border in Romania, scholars overlooked the architecture of monuments because they did not perceive it as something significant.¹¹ In this context, Reissenberger's study, while not fulfilling its initial goal of supporting Habsburg regional policies, was used by the Romanian elite in their first-ever attempts to define a national identity based on the country's architectural heritage. The study was translated into Romanian in 1862 and published with a long introduction by the architect Dimitrie Berindei (or Berindeiu; 1831–1884), which corrected Reissenberger's negative view of Byzantium and tried to prove that Curtea de Argeș was not a unique monument, as the Austrian scholar had argued, but the expression of a Romanian artistic tradition.¹²

Berindei's introduction constituted the very first attempt to write a historical narrative of Romanian art.¹³ He started by describing a different Byzantium, one that led a

‘civilizing mission’ in the West because, according to him, the first Christian cathedrals in France, Germany or Italy were directly influenced by Byzantine art.¹⁴ He was in effect using to his advantage studies – particularly from France – that argued for Byzantine influence on early Christian monuments in Europe, and in this way attempted to make Byzantium firmly part of European culture.¹⁵

Once he had established that Byzantium, and consequently Curtea de Argeş, were part of the European art historical narrative, Berindei celebrated the monument as proof of the past existence of a rich architectural tradition in Romania. Key to his argument was the idea that Curtea de Argeş was merely the tip of the iceberg, as most of Romania’s architectural heritage had been lost in the struggles to defend ‘the religion and the civilization of Europe’.¹⁶ The Christian theme of sacrifice for a noble cause would become a recurrent motif in Romanian historiography and was used in subsequent decades to explain the small size and number of monuments in Romania compared to Western Europe. As further proof of this allegedly lost heritage, Berindei pointed out that the triconch plan and general proportions of Curtea de Argeş could be found in several other Romanian monuments and thus could be considered defining elements of many other (now lost) monuments.¹⁷

The Byzantine Style in Romania: Restoration and Promotion of Historical Monuments

Reissenberger’s study was used by the Romanian intellectual elite to promote Curtea de Argeş as a cultural symbol of the new state on the international stage, particularly at World’s Fairs. Alexandru Odobescu (1834–1895), the main Romanian archaeologist of the time, ordered a translation of Reissenberger’s study into French for the 1867 Exposition Universelle in Paris and displayed it like a national exhibit in the Romanian section, together with a scale model of the church (Figs. 3.2 and 3.3).¹⁸ Curtea de Argeş was also used as a source of inspiration for Romanian pavilions at the Paris Expositions Universelles of 1889 and 1900. World’s Fairs were important for fuelling the processes of national-identity creation. Perhaps even more significantly, they contributed to a certain way of looking at national heritage and identity as something that had to be carefully managed and displayed. Monuments were meant not to serve any practical purpose for the local communities they were part of but rather to forge a certain image of the nation for an international audience.

This representational role of historical monuments came fully to the fore in the first-ever campaign to restore architectural monuments in Romania. Reissenberger’s criticism of Curtea de Argeş led the Romanian government to recommend the repainting of the church’s interior in a Neo-Byzantine fashion (Fig. 3.4), and the renovation of the exterior.¹⁹ Realized between 1875 and 1886, the works were overseen by André Lecomte du Nouÿ (1844–1914), a French architect who, following the directions of the Romanian Government, also partially reconstructed Trei Ierarhi (Three Hierarchs) Church in Iaşi, the former capital of Moldavia (1881–90), and demolished and then rebuilt the Metropolitan Church in Târgovişte (1885–95) (Fig. 3.5), the Church of St Demetrius in Craiova (1887–96) and the Princely Church of St Nicholas in Iaşi (1886–1904).²⁰ His ‘restoration’ processes effectively meant the design of new churches that manifestly displayed idealized Byzantine forms such as prominent cupolas, series of round arches, alternating layers of brick and stone, mosaics and bright colours. The historical monuments were therefore transformed into symbols of Byzantine art in Romania, hand-picked and presented almost in the fashion of exhibition



Figure 3.2 Ambroise Baudry, Romanian section (modelled after the twisting towers of Curtea de Argeş Church), Galerie des Machines, Paris World's Fair, 1867.

Source: Musée d'Orsay, Paris, Documentation, 'Boîte 48: Ambroise Baudry'. Photo: Author.

pavilions, isolated from their former urban and social fabric, disconnected from their role in the local communities, surrounded by new buildings and stripped of their original architecture. Despite its unsuitability for describing a diverse heritage, the 'ideal' Byzantine type continued to carry prestige into the twentieth century, when the most important cathedrals of Romania were also designed in an idealized 'Byzantine' style (see Chapter 4 by Timo Hagen).

Lecomte du Noüy was guided in his work by an idealized vision of what a Byzantine church *should* look like, namely as close as possible to the best-known models in the Western world: Hagia Sophia in Istanbul, St Mark's Basilica in Venice and churches in Ravenna.²¹ Everything outside this narrow 'Byzantine' canon was generally discarded and Lecomte du Noüy criticized Romanian churches that did not look like 'typical' Byzantine monuments. He noted 'oriental negligence' in the construction techniques of Curtea de Argeş, as well as its 'narrow' interior.²² He also criticized now revered monuments such as Trei Ierarhi Church and Voroneţ and Dragomirna Monasteries, the last being condemned for its 'decadent, heavy and pretentious style'.²³ A few decades earlier,



Figure 3.3 Ambroise Baudry, Romanian pavilion, Paris World's Fair, 1867.

Source: Musée d'Orsay, Paris, Documentation, 'Boîte 48: Ambroise Baudry'. Photo: Author.

but in the same vein, the French architect Abel Blouet contrasted Orthodox monuments in Greece (which he termed '*églises grecques*') with the far more prestigious '*temples helléniques*' or Classical monuments.²⁴ Similarly, the British traveller Robert Curzon characterized Orthodox monuments from the same region as 'small' or 'confusing'.²⁵

The category 'Byzantine' was, however, not only a quasi-colonial concept used to assert Western cultural superiority, but equally a powerful cultural concept for the Romanians. It was a way to have 'their' monuments recognized internationally and be considered 'European'; it also provided an important escape from uneasy discussions about periodization or art historical chronologies. Byzantine art, which today is recognized as the product of a long-lived empire with several artistic periods, was understood in nineteenth-century Europe in a very schematic way (as stated previously), without the nuances given by chronological periodization. But the lack of recognized



Figure 3.4 Émile Frédéric Nicolle, Charles Paul Renouard et al., frescoes inside the Church of Curtea de Argeș, 1881–86.

Photo: Author.

artistic periods was an advantage because in this way monuments far apart in time and space could be unified as constituting a coherent corpus of buildings that belonged to the Byzantine ‘style’ and could also be presented as ‘Romanian’. Therefore, precisely because it lacked periodization, the concept of Byzantine art was used as a binding agent to unify monuments built in different political contexts from the fourteenth to the eighteenth century, and present them as part of the same heritage of Romania (as seen at World’s Fairs or in the writings of Berindei).



Figure 3.5 Metropolitan Church, Târgoviște, sixteenth century, shown after the late nineteenth-century restoration.

Credit: Fusion-of-horizons. https://www.flickr.com/photos/fusion_of_horizons/40553971822/

A further reason why the Romanian Government not only condoned but even recommended to Lecomte du Noüy many of the modifications to the historical monuments was a lack of belief in the value of Romania's own architectural heritage. As a result of their Western education and close contact with the most important artistic centres of Europe, Romanian intellectuals internalized the need to compare Romania's monuments with Western architecture, believing that the former were inferior. When he held the first-ever course in art history at the University of Bucharest, Alexandru Odobescu barely mentioned Byzantine or Orthodox art, referring only twice to artworks from Romania in 350 pages of lectures, and allocating the rest of the space to Western art and art scholarship.²⁶ Odobescu's counterpart, the painter Paul Verussi (1847–1886), Professor of Art History at the School of Fine Arts in Iași, complained that 'we don't have any national art' and decried 'the lack of a glorious past of the Romanian people'.²⁷ While some criticized Romania's heritage, others were involved in the demolition of old buildings, such as the tallest construction in nineteenth-century Bucharest, the belltower of the former Colței Monastery, which was taken down because 'it does not represent any national memory and it does not have any architectonic value'.²⁸ This led in practice to a long tradition of embellishing or modernizing monuments through restoration that extended into the twentieth century and is still felt today in the way Romanian society often neglects original aspects of the local heritage in favour of the adoption of things 'Western' or 'modern'.

Revolt Against the Restorations, and Establishment of the First Artistic Periods in Romanian Art History

The modification and demolition of Romania's architectural heritage was not unanimously accepted, and provided the justification for the definition of the first original artistic periods in Romanian art. In 1888, the year Colței Tower was pulled down, several writers and artists published protest letters and even founded a journal to oppose the demolition.²⁹ Among them was a group of architects who had recently returned from studies in Paris. They included some of the best-known names in the modern history of Romania: Ion Mincu (1852–1912), Grigore Cerchez (1850–1927), Ion Socolescu (1856–1924), George Sterian (1860–1936), Nicolae Gabrielescu (1854–1926) and Ștefan Ciocârlan (1856–1937). They soon focused their dissatisfaction on the restorations of Lecomte du Noüy, reproaching the architect for his 'carelessness' about the country's past and for 'erasing the memory of great figures'.³⁰ With a patriotism bordering on xenophobia, they accused him of being unable to work on things 'relevant to the history of the country' because he was a foreigner.³¹

Their criticism was characterized by a much more emotional engagement with monuments, seen as an integral part of their personal identity and as vivid traces of 'the glorious deeds of the past' and of 'the struggles of our parents'.³² Writing about them was important not only to form an image for the country but also to serve as a guide for future generations and artistic developments.³³ As will be discussed in the next part of this chapter, these passionate criticisms and ideas about national identity paved the way for Gabrielescu and Sterian to develop new innovative artistic periods and concepts to define a chronology for Romanian art.³⁴ In this case, nationalism, while more often providing a basis for exclusionary ideas about ethnic identity, was used by the local Romanian architects for their emancipation and specifically to have a voice and work towards defining their identity. Indeed, the explosion of nationalist feelings between 1888 and 1890 provided liberation from the Western architectural canon and a start for the historiography of Romanian art.

But how could one define a 'Romanian architecture' based on common features and a coherent chronological development when much of the country's heritage was similar to, and shared a history with, the heritage of its neighbours? Gabrielescu and Sterian tackled these issues via innovative theories that aimed to integrate all artistic production from the territory of Romania into an ethno-national framework. Gabrielescu argued that monuments in Wallachia were similar to those in other Balkan regions because the artists involved shared the same ethnic background. He named them 'Macedo-Romanians from Pindus, descendants of the Roman colonists'.³⁵ Macedo-Romanians, also called Aromanians or Vlachs, are in fact an ethnic group native to the Balkan peninsula, mostly Northern Greece, Albania and Macedonia, whose dialect is also a Romance language like Romanian.³⁶ Their identity has remained different from the Romanian one up to the present day. Nevertheless, Gabrielescu argued for a common ethnic background with the Romanians; it was this shared ethnicity, he believed, that explained the building of similar monuments.

If, according to Gabrielescu, ethnic Romanians were spread out beyond the boundaries of the nation-state, so too was Romanian culture. He argued that the cultural patronage of Romanian voivodes at the Orthodox Monasteries on Mount Athos was proof of the cultural dominance of Romania in the region. He referred to a 'major role in the policy of the East' for sixteenth-century Romanian voivodes, even if his only evidence was a series of donations by the Romanian voivodes related to pan-Orthodox

relations across the Balkans.³⁷ Nevertheless, Gabrielescu's brief remark regarding the cultural relations between the Romanian Principalities and Mount Athos became a major theme for Romanian historians in the following decades.³⁸

A further mandatory characteristic of any national art was a chronological history that implied changes and evolution – and was therefore based on artistic *periods*. To this end, Gabrielescu briefly sketched a set of artistic periods configured according to princely reign. His periodization is particularly significant because he outlined for the first time some main periods in Romanian art history and laid the chronological skeleton for subsequent writings which developed his arguments more fully. He started with a historical note about ancient Dacia, the Roman period, barbarian invasions and the Byzantine Empire, in order to explain the lack of significant material remains from before the fourteenth century, but also as an argument that the population on these lands survived from ancient times.

He then identified common architectural features of monuments built during the reign of specific princes in both Romanian Principalities. In Moldavia, Gabrielescu defined the period of Stephen the Great (ruled 1457–1504) as characterized by churches with a common triconch plan, similar proportions and exterior polychrome decoration.³⁹ He noted the other significant artistic period in Moldavia as that of Vasile Lupu (ruled 1634–53), whose monuments, chiefly Trei Ierarhi, were defined by decorations and system of arches that were 'rather Arab and Persian' and were introduced via Russia.⁴⁰ In Wallachia, Gabrielescu identified the 'Byzantine period' of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, followed by the reign of Matei Basarab (1632–54) 'who continued the Greco-Roman architecture of the thirteenth century', the latter being considered a time when the 'Romanian element' flourished.⁴¹ Finally, he highlighted the period of 'Venetian influences' in Wallachia, from the mid-seventeenth century to the mid-eighteenth century, characterized by original decorative motifs, as seen not only in architecture but also in religious objects and fabrics.⁴²

His brief survey was in fact a *tour de force* that defined in a few pages a basic periodization framework for the entire history of Romanian art, from antiquity to early modern times. He defined for the first time several unique artistic periods in Romanian architecture (and pre-modern art more generally), outlining their most significant architectural characteristics and representative monuments. Gabrielescu saw these monuments as 'Romanian' and used the idea of foreign 'influence' to consolidate the notion of national art. Indeed, 'influence' assumes the existence of at least two clearly defined entities and therefore the existence of a Romanian artistic *core* that was moulded and changed but did not disappear over the centuries.

The Rise of the Brâncovenesc Period and the Emergence of the 'Romanian' Style

The most influential artistic period defined by Gabrielescu was that of 'Venetian influences'. This covered the monuments built in Wallachia during and shortly after the rule of Constantin Brâncoveanu. Its spectacular heritage, consisting of monuments with rich stone carvings, exterior paintings and valuable frescoes (highlights include Hurezi Monastery, Mogoșoaia Palace and the former Văcărești Monastery), was in subsequent decades promoted as the quintessential 'Romanian' heritage of the past, and became known as the Brâncovenesc style.⁴³

The period signalled the first break with the historical narrative, marking an important step for Romanian art historiography as a self-standing discipline with the potential

to inform ideas about national identity. This is because, at the time of Gabrielescu's treatise, the reign of Brâncoveanu was generally unappreciated by historians. It was seen as politically unremarkable and was considered to have ushered in a period of foreign princes directly appointed by the Ottoman Empire. Alexandru Odobescu, for example, considered Brâncoveanu 'a pale and wobbly figure who tragically foresaw the humiliation that for a century would choke the poor Romanian people'.⁴⁴ For Gabrielescu, however, the period was highly significant because of its artistic achievements.

One of the best illustrations of the difference in attitude between scholars who cherished the Brâncovenesc period and those who generally regarded it as lacking in value was the brief debate around the restoration of the small Stavropoleos Church in Bucharest (Fig. 3.6). The monument was built in 1724, so after Brâncoveanu's reign, but considered nevertheless to be one of the most representative examples of Brâncovenesc art. A heated debate took place in 1904 between the architect Ion Mincu and Alexandru Tzigara-Samurcaş (1872–1952), the first Romanian with a doctorate in art history (awarded in Munich in 1896) and long-time director of the Museum of National Art in Bucharest (see Shona Kallestrup's chapter in this book).

Tzigara-Samurcaş contended that Stavropoleos lacked historical and artistic value because of its recent construction date, little-known founder and small dimensions, concluding that it was 'far from being representative of the true, pure Byzantine style'.⁴⁵ Mincu responded with a defence not only of the church but also of an entire new direction for Romanian art that he saw in need of emancipation from the label 'Byzantine'. He noted:

[B]ecause it is not made in 'pure Byzantine style', the church represents for us a very precious 'archetype'. From the pure Byzantine style, evolved what I call the



Figure 3.6 Stavropoleos Church, Bucharest, 1724, as restored by Ion Mincu in 1904–7.

Credit: Fusion-of-horizons. https://www.flickr.com/photos/fusion_of_horizons/30097770888

‘Romanian style’. . . . The monument is a guiding and inspirational source for our future generations of artists.⁴⁶

Mincu’s words can be read as a birth certificate for the idea of Romanian art, a notion liberated from the Western concept of ‘Byzantine’ and based on new and original artistic periods.

Sterian further developed the characteristics of the Brâncovenesc period. He wrote an extensive study of various decorative motifs and architectural fragments from seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Wallachian monuments and compared them to those seen in much older monuments in Venice. He compared the tenth-century St Mark’s Basilica to the fourteenth-century Princely Church in Curtea de Argeş, judging both to be in the ‘pure Byzantine style’.⁴⁷ He believed that the thirteenth-century Fondaco dei Turchi Palace on the Grand Canal (Fig. 3.7) and the former monastery of Curtea de Argeş (Fig. 3.8) both represented the Arab influences on Byzantine art. He compared the Doge’s Palace to the Moldavian churches founded by Stephen the Great as proof of the influence of the Gothic style. He also compared sculpted Venetian capitals with examples from Wallachian monasteries, and even argued for similarities between the garments worn by the princely boyars and those of the doges and other figures in the paintings of Giovanni Bellini.⁴⁸ The reference to garments by both Sterian and Gabrielescu in their discussions of Brâncovenesc architecture was not uncommon in Europe at the time and reflected the influential argument of Gottfried Semper (1803–1879) that architecture had been born from the design of the textiles that clad prehistoric shelters, just as architecture is the ‘dressing’ for a building (his so-called *Bekleidungsprinzip*).⁴⁹



Figure 3.7 Fondaco dei Turchi, Venice, thirteenth century.

Credit: Tony Hisgett. <https://www.flickr.com/photos/hisgett/7232517578/>

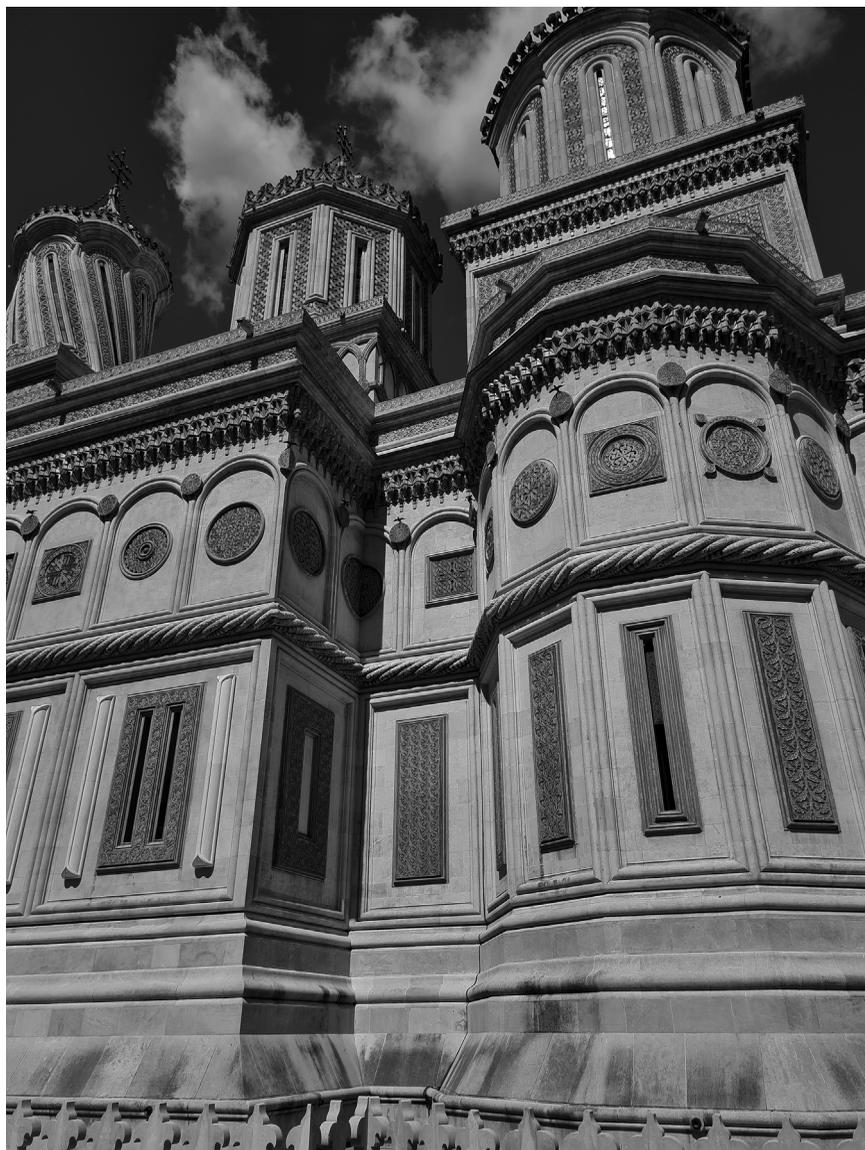


Figure 3.8 Church of Curtea de Argeș, 1515–17: detail of the southern façade.

Photo: Author.

The significance of Sterian's in-depth comparison between the architectural monuments of Romania and Venice extended beyond the realm of the visual arts. Romania and Venice were presented as two regions whose similar artistic heritage could be explained by their common Latin ethnic background. Sterian noted that both 'Romanian and Venetian architecture emerged from their common Latin roots and kept a predominant Byzantine character throughout their development'.⁵⁰ The connection

with Venice, and the definition of the Brâncovenesc style, indicated that the artistic heritage of Romania was not just the result of historical developments (and therefore merely subordinate to historical studies) but could itself shed light on bigger historical and cultural debates, such as the idea of the Latin origins of the Romanian people.

Sterian further exploited the Venetian connection by publishing drawings of Venetian trefoil arches, the most prominent architectural feature common to both Romanian and Venetian monuments.⁵¹ Such arches, as well as open balconies and rich sculpted façades likewise similar to those seen in Venice, featured prominently in several designs by the architect Ion Socolescu, Director of both the first School of Architecture in Bucharest and of the first architectural journal in Romania – for example, the Ionescu-Gion House in Bucharest (1889) and the Museum of Folk Art (former City Hall) in Constanța (1895).⁵² All these architectural motifs were also emphatically used by another leading Romanian architect, Ion Mincu, whose three contemporary buildings in Bucharest – the Lahovari House (1886), Central School for Girls (1890) (Fig. 3.9) and Bufetul Restaurant (1892) – are the main reason why he is considered the creator of the modern Neo-Romanian architectural style.⁵³ Indeed, all the motifs used by Mincu and inspired by Brâncovenesc (and Venetian) architecture, such as trefoil arches, coloured ceramics and a first-floor balcony, would become archetypes for the Neo-Romanian style in subsequent decades.

The emphasis placed on particular artistic periods as highly significant for national identity was not of course a phenomenon confined to Romania. Moreover, in late nineteenth-century Europe, there were many different attempts to revive historical periods characterized by rich, flourishing architecture. Examples include nineteenth-century Ottoman Revival architecture;⁵⁴ the use of Neo-Baroque motifs to express Austrian and later Czech identity;⁵⁵ the use of French Rococo motifs by Art Nouveau



Figure 3.9 Ion Mincu, Central School for Girls, Bucharest, 1890.

Credit: cdnh. <https://www.flickr.com/photos/claudiunh/6198232717>

artists in France who saw it as ‘their’ national heritage;⁵⁶ and Queen Anne Revival architecture in England.⁵⁷ Whether coincidence or the result of still little-understood circulations of ideas in the early modern period, some of the styles on which these revivals were based – such as the English Queen Anne and the Central European Baroque – flourished around 1700 and thus were roughly contemporary with the Brâncovenesc style. Therefore, the notion of a ‘national style’ as representative of the ethnic identity of a whole country, and the emphasis placed on certain artistic periods as markers of unique national identities, were phenomena present throughout nineteenth-century Europe, from the British Isles to the Ottoman Empire.

Conclusion

Art history in Romania emerged via a patchwork of short studies, reactions, intellectual exchanges and artistic practices. The first writings, restorations and promotion of architectural monuments supported an idealized view of what Romanian heritage should be, namely that it should conform to Western ideas about Byzantine architecture. But, as the second part of this chapter has indicated, the last decade of the nineteenth century brought new writings and works that attempted to overcome the label ‘Byzantine’ and identify unique periods and styles underpinning a chronological narrative for Romanian art. These key late nineteenth-century writings defined a number of major new periods and styles connected to the artistic patronage of native rulers. Above all, they centred on the Brâncovenesc period, whose heritage also became the major source of inspiration for the Neo-Romanian architectural style.

Concepts such as the Brâncovenesc or Stephen the Great periods became core to any narrative about Romanian heritage over the next decades. They were employed in writings about ‘national’ art that were in turn used to justify ethnic-based nationalism and ideas about ethnic purity. At the same time, the newly emerged artistic periods were a way to identify a common identity for a diverse heritage, give a voice to Romanian artists and create the framework for new, original architectural designs. Not least, the Brâncovenesc period became the spearhead of Romanian art history’s efforts to prove its autonomy as a discipline, beyond the historical narrative but with the potential to bring new arguments about the genesis and identity of the Romanians.

This dual nature of nationalism, at once underpinning exclusionary narratives and having an emancipatory potential for states or communities, is at the core of many debates today. The appeal of nationalism, often seen as a comforting retreat in the face of advancing globalization and of technology-driven societies, demonstrates that many, if not most, still feel more at ease among ideas about ‘the nation’. This brief history of how some key national art historical periods and concepts emerged in late nineteenth-century Romania gives contextual background to the enduring popularity of national art historical narratives in the country and the persistence of nationalism more broadly.

Beyond the national framework, the art historiography in Romania and many other countries finds itself with limited conceptual tools. For obvious political and economic reasons, the idea that Romania’s architectural heritage should somehow be analysed as part of a grand ‘European’ narrative is largely uncontested. Indeed, Romanian art historiography (as well as historical studies in general) still oscillates between the European and the national framework. A more innovative and appropriate framework that identifies relations and similarities between the artistic production of Romania and that of other countries is yet to be thoroughly defined. Similarly, the complex network

of transregional artistic exchange, and the overlapping, entangled or opposing nature of monuments and artists' careers in the wider Orthodox and Islamic worlds, are yet to form the basis of grand art historical narratives.

Notes

- 1 See, for example, Țoca, *Art Historical Discourse*. The first survey works are Iorga and Balș, *Histoire de l'art roumain*; Oprescu, *L'Art roumain*; Oprescu, *Pictura românească*; Vătășianu, *Istoria artei feudale*.
- 2 Karge, 'Die Entfaltung'; Karge, 'Projecting the Future'.
- 3 Piotrowski used the term 'horizontal history' to signal his attempt at destabilizing geographical hierarchies in the case of European avant-garde art. See Piotrowski, 'Toward a Horizontal History', 49–58.
- 4 See Minea, 'The Episcopal Church'.
- 5 Reissenberger, 'Die bischöfliche Klosterkirche bei Kurtea d'Argyisch'. More details in Minea, 'The Monastery'.
- 6 Hartmuth, 'Vienna', 109; Rampley, *The Vienna School*, 170–71.
- 7 Reissenberger, 'Die bischöfliche Klosterkirche bei Kurtea d'Argyisch', 177–81.
- 8 Ibid.
- 9 Fergusson, *The Illustrated Handbook*; Lübke, *Geschichte*; Kugler, *Geschichte*.
- 10 On the negative image of Byzantine art and culture in Central Europe, see also Chapters 2 and 4 in this volume. See also Kunińska, 'On the Borderline', 20–23.
- 11 See Hajdu, 'În Căutarea patrimoniului'.
- 12 Berindei, 'Răpide ochire'.
- 13 Minea, 'Foreign and Local Entanglements', 296.
- 14 Berindei, 'Răpide ochire', 831–32.
- 15 An early article popularizing the Byzantine influences in Romanesque architecture was Vitet, 'L'église de Saint-Cunibert'. In the first list of historical monuments in France, published in 1836, the initial section comprised over 30 monuments classified as in 'Byzantine or Romanesque style': Laborde, *Monuments of France*. More details in J. B. Bullen, *Byzantium*, 56–58.
- 16 Berindei, 'Răpide ochire', 823.
- 17 Ibid., 843.
- 18 Reissenberger, *L'église*. For more details, see Popescu, *Le Style National Roumain*, 40–43.
- 19 Minea, 'The Monastery', 197.
- 20 Popescu, 'André Lecomte du Nouÿ'; Moldovan, 'Arhitectura bisericii lui Neagoe Basarab'.
- 21 Equally in France, England or Germany, discussions about Byzantium related mostly to these two monuments. See Nayrolles, *L'invention de l'art roman*, 249, 297; Hajdu, 'The Search', 402.
- 22 Lecomte du Nouÿ, 'Letter'.
- 23 Lecomte du Nouÿ, 'Sketchbook'.
- 24 Magouliotis, 'French Architects', 1034.
- 25 Karydis, 'Discovering the Byzantine Art of Building', 180.
- 26 Odobescu, *Cursu de archeologia*; republished in Odobescu, *Opere*.
- 27 Verussi, 'Despre arta națională', 148, 151. See also a brief note in Popescu, 'Digging Out the Past', 202–3.
- 28 Opinion of the institution responsible for the administration of hospitals in Bucharest (Eforia Spitalelor Civice): Samurçaș, 'Turnul', 96.
- 29 Avramescu, 'Footnote 95', 173.
- 30 Gabrielescu, *Memoriu*, 49, 57.
- 31 Gabrielescu, *Privire generală asupra monumentelor naționale*, 19; Ciocârlan, 'Restaurările', 25.
- 32 Ciocârlan, 'Clădirile vechi', 13.
- 33 Ibid., 5.
- 34 Gabrielescu, *Privire generală*; Sterian, *Despre restaurarea monumentelor istorice*, 4–6. Two of the only instances where their writings are analysed are in the recent studies: Popescu, 'Digging Out the Past', 203–5; Hajdu, 'The Search'.

- 35 Gabrielescu, *Privire generală*, 13.
- 36 See Sorescu, 'Inventing a Prosthetic Bourgeoisie'.
- 37 Gabrielescu, *Privire generală*, 13.
- 38 See Iorga, *Portretele domnilor noștri*; Iorga, 'Două opere'.
- 39 Gabrielescu, *Privire generală*, 14–15.
- 40 *Ibid.*, 15–16.
- 41 *Ibid.*, 16.
- 42 *Ibid.*, 17.
- 43 The first mention of the term 'Brâncovenesc style' is made in Drăghiceanu, 'Curțile domnești Brâncovenesti', 101, 110. See also Lepădatu, 'Mănăstirea Hurezii', 60, 63, 69, 70. The prolific historian Nicolae Iorga also mentions the 'Brâncovenesc period' (*epoca brâncovenească*) in his early writings: Iorga, *Viața și domnia lui Constantin-Vodă Brîncoveanu*, 50, 78, 169.
- 44 Odobescu, 'Ateneul', 336.
- 45 Samurcaș, 'Stavropoleos', 260–61.
- 46 Mincu, 'Cronică Artistică', 282–84.
- 47 The Princely or Courtly Church of Curtea de Argeș (Biserica Domnească din Curtea de Argeș) is a Greek-cross plan church finished in 1352, not to be confused with the sixteenth-century former monastery in the same town that was the focus of most attention in the nineteenth century (see the first section of this chapter).
- 48 Sterian, *Despre restaurarea*, 7–10. See also Sterian, 'Cele mai însemnate proporțiuni de colone și forme de arcuri a loggielor', 106–8.
- 49 Houze, 'The Textile as Structural Framework', 295; Prokopovych, 'Semperian Trajectories', 103–4.
- 50 Sterian, *Despre restaurarea*, 6–7.
- 51 Sterian, 'Cele mai însemnate'.
- 52 Popescu, *Le Style National Roumain*, 64–68.
- 53 Kallestrup, *Art and Design in Romania*, 76; Popescu, *Le Style National Roumain*, 51–54.
- 54 Ersoy, *Architecture and the Late Ottoman Historical Imaginary*, 151–52. See also Ersoy, 'Architecture and the Search for Ottoman Origins', 117–40.
- 55 Rampley, *The Vienna School*, 96–108, esp. 106–7.
- 56 Silverman, *Art Nouveau*, 142–59; Greenhalgh, 'Alternative Histories', 41.
- 57 Muthesius, 'Periodisation According to Authenticity', 281–82.

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4 Regional Variations of the Byzantine Style

Canonization/Nationalization of Art and Architecture in South-Eastern Europe

Timo Hagen

Introduction

Many have believed, and believe to this day, that in Byzantine painting figures of saints are shown as dry and lifeless forms. This belief originated in the decay of Byzantine painting, which, namely in the fifteenth century, degenerated in many cases into simple decorative patterns without any expression; yes, sometimes these figures are totally unnatural, ridiculous caricatures even. Icons preserved from the Golden Age of Byzantine painting, however, are neither dry nor non-expressive, but lively and artful.¹

This qualitative periodization of an important part of South-Eastern European art appears at the beginning of the volume *Iconografia și întocmirile din interiorul bisericeii răsăritene* (Iconography and Interior Design of Orthodox Churches) published by Elie Miron Cristea (1868–1939) in 1905. The book accompanied the construction of the Metropolitan Cathedral of the Holy Trinity in Sibiu (1902–6), the highest-ranking church of the nearly two million Orthodox Romanians of Transylvania and Hungary, then part of the Habsburg Dual Monarchy (Fig. 4.1). This chapter analyses Cristea's book and the design of Sibiu Cathedral as representative of the complex interrelationship of centre and periphery, periodization, national politics and aesthetic normativism affecting the canonization (or the neglect) of peripheral art production. It will also tell a story of self-orientalization in the Habsburg borderlands between 'Orient' and 'Occident'.²

Both the historical region of Transylvania as a whole and Sibiu as one of its urban centres were characterized by a heterogeneous population of, among others, Orthodox and Greek Catholic Romanians, Roman Catholic and Calvinist Hungarians and German-speaking Saxons of Lutheran faith. A main goal of the cathedral building, as well as of the accompanying book, was to generate an artistic renewal of Romanian Orthodox ecclesiastical art and architecture based on a proclaimed Byzantine tradition in accordance with the developing self-image of the church as representative of not only the religious but also the national interests of the Orthodox Romanians in Transylvania and Hungary.³ The autonomy granted to the church by the Hungarian constitution allowed such a role, even if governmental measures to constrain this autonomy caused recurring conflicts between the state and its minorities. These



Figure 4.1 József Kommer and Virgil Nagy, Romanian Orthodox Metropolitan Cathedral of the Holy Trinity, Sibiu, 1902–6.

Photo: Author.

conflicts contributed to an ever-closer orientation of the Romanian national movement in Transylvania towards the Kingdom of Romania.

Designing such an Orthodox cathedral in Transylvania was no easy task. On the one hand, Cristea promoted the idea of a binary opposition between a Golden Age of Byzantine painting (from Late Antiquity up to the Ottoman conquest of the Byzantine Empire in the fifteenth century) and an ongoing era of decay which followed it. On the other hand, only a few Orthodox churches older than the fifteenth century still survived in the lands inhabited by Romanians. Clearly, the periodization scheme implied by Cristea was not modelled on this regional heritage; nonetheless, it shaped his perception of it, and therefore posed problems when used as a source of national identity.

The cathedral was meant to function as a prototype for further church-building in a style proclaimed by the project's instigators to be truly Orthodox as well as Romanian.⁴ To support the dissemination of this idea, the project was accompanied by Cristea's *Iconografia*. Cristea was a leading figure within the Romanian Orthodox Church of Transylvania who would become patriarch and eventually prime minister of Greater Romania after the First World War. Born into a Romanian family in Northern Transylvania, he had trained first at the Institute for Orthodox Theology in Sibiu and later studied philosophy and modern philology at the University of Budapest.

Cristea's book developed a decorative programme for the new cathedral based on broad research into regional ecclesiastical art in a transregional context. From the beginning, it was clear that the new cathedral would follow Byzantine tradition.⁵ In the nineteenth century, ecclesiastical architecture of Orthodox denomination from Late Antiquity up to the eighteenth century was generally categorized as being in 'Byzantine style'.⁶ Consequently, this style was the primary choice for many Orthodox church-building projects during the second half of the nineteenth century. In the case of Sibiu Cathedral, the problem was how to decide which kind of Byzantine tradition should be followed and how it should be adapted to modern purposes. The finished building, interior murals and elaborate furnishings suggest that these questions were highly disputed. To find inspiration, scholarly works on the established major centres of Byzantine art such as Mount Athos, Venice and Sicily, as well as Constantinople, were studied. In addition, research trips were undertaken in 1903 by Cristea and Josef Schuschnig Jr, Sibiu's city engineer in charge of the building project's site management. These were organized by the planning committee of the cathedral's interior (Cristea, Schuschnig and Partenie Cosma [1837–1923], a bank director and consistorial councillor based in Sibiu), with the aim of studying the local Orthodox heritage of Transylvania and its neighbouring regions, namely Bucovina (in the Austrian half of the Dual Monarchy), Moldavia and Wallachia (both within the Kingdom of Romania).⁷ The focus on regions inhabited by Orthodox Romanians (among others), and the neglect of the Orthodox heritage of other parts of South-Eastern Europe like Serbia and Bulgaria, clearly reveal the national scope of the enterprise. The two travellers also went to Germany, Russia and Italy.⁸

The way in which Cristea and Schuschnig approached the Byzantine heritage of South-Eastern Europe that they encountered during these trips was substantially shaped by the canonization and periodization of the 'Byzantine style' in Western literature since the 1830s.⁹ Cristea mainly cites German and French authors in *Iconografia*, and I will take his select bibliography¹⁰ as the starting point for a short overview of the development of Western scholarly perspectives on Byzantine art.¹¹ In addition, I will outline early engagement (from the 1850s onwards) with regional variations of Byzantine architecture in South-Eastern Europe.¹² Researchers trained, financed and published by official institutions in the imperial capital of Vienna laid the groundwork in this field and, even though their writings are not always cited by Cristea, it can be argued that they played a role in the planning of the cathedral. Finally, I will provide some insight into the struggles involved in appropriating the stylistic concepts and periodization developed in the aforementioned literature for the main goal of the cathedral project: the promotion of Romanian Orthodox identity in a heterogeneous society.

Byzantine Art and Its Centres: Western Perspectives Ranging from Perceived Decay to Glorification

Among the earliest titles dealing with Byzantine art on Cristea's reference list are the French authors Charles Texier (1802–1871)¹³ and Adolphe-Napoléon Didron (1806–1867).¹⁴ After having travelled in the 1830s to Greece (which had recently gained its independence from the Ottoman Empire) and Mount Athos on behalf of the French state, Texier and Didron presented Byzantine architecture and iconography as an alternative to Gothic Revivalism¹⁵ with the potential to renew Christian belief and Catholicism in post-revolutionary France. Contemporaries hinted at the similarities

between Byzantine architecture and France's Romanesque heritage, thereby incorporating the former into French architectural history.¹⁶

Seeing the Byzantine style in a positive light was something radically new at the time. Byzantine art was commonly associated with an age of decay following the idealized Classical era of antiquity. The German art historian Franz Kugler (1808–1858) declared, in his highly influential *Handbuch der Geschichte der Malerei seit Constantin dem Grossen* (Handbook on the History of Painting since Constantine the Great; second edition of 1847), that the Byzantine Empire had only retained lifeless formalities of Rome's Late Antique high art.¹⁷ Byzantine icons offered 'spectral', 'half-animated corpses',¹⁸ whose stiffness was attributed to a lack of artistic freedom in the study of nature,¹⁹ and whose perpetuation of rigid models was due to 'inner servile fear and constraint'.²⁰ This judgement of icon painting derived from a Classicist standpoint of ideal human beauty, combined with 'enlightened' stereotypes about the 'morose asceticism' of the artist monks.²¹

The astonishing persistence of such stereotypes of Byzantine icon painting in a book written for a broader audience is reflected in Cristea's quote at the beginning of this chapter. Cristea, however, did not evaluate Byzantine painting as a whole in such a negative way. Instead, he established a periodization scheme that attributed differing degrees of approval to each period. His positive attitude towards the art of the earlier centuries, culminating in the fourteenth-century paintings of Mount Athos, certainly owes much to the writings of scholars like Texier and Didron. Their appreciation of Byzantine art laid the groundwork for its integration into Romanian national history narratives and its use in contemporary building projects.

Cristea found additional support for his project in the account of Byzantine Venice offered by John Ruskin (1819–1900) in *The Stones of Venice* (1851–53), which was available to him in a Hungarian translation.²² Here Ruskin challenged another classical stereotype of Byzantine art, namely its perception as something alien in a negative sense. In his account of St Mark's Basilica, the use of different materials and colours to ornament a building crowned by multiple domes, as well as the play of light and shadow in the interior, contribute to a mystical, majestic and unreal experience.²³ For Ruskin, the perception of something alien does not cause rejection but religious awe.²⁴ This distinctive interplay of different genres of art and elements of interior design – from the comprehensive painting of the interior with icons and ornaments, to the richly gilded church furnishing, to the approach to lighting – was what Cristea considered *the* characteristic feature of Orthodox church interiors. The purpose of such an interior design, he felt, lay in touching the visitor's soul and conveying the 'holy earnestness' of the place.²⁵ His approach in *Iconografia* was correspondingly comprehensive, with St Mark's repeatedly discussed as a possible model.

For his knowledge about the Hagia Sophia and other Byzantine structures in Constantinople, Cristea, like many others, drew on the first detailed architectural survey of these buildings published by the Berlin architect Wilhelm Salzenberg (1803–1887) on behalf of King Frederick William IV of Prussia in 1854. Comparing the Hagia Sophia with key monuments of Western Christianity and Roman antiquity, such as the Pantheon or St Peter's in Rome, Salzenberg ranked the Hagia Sophia first.²⁶ Unsurprisingly, he also used it as a model for one of his own designs: the interior of the Church of SS Peter and Paul in Potsdam (1867–69).²⁷ Designed for a Roman Catholic congregation in a predominantly Protestant area, the church showed that, even here, a momentum of alterity was still associated with Byzantine art. As will be discussed

later, it was exactly this way of looking at Byzantine art in general, and the Hagia Sophia in particular, which made the latter a highly attractive model for the design of Sibiu Cathedral.

Scholars such as Texier, Didron, Ruskin and Salzenberg contributed to what would soon become a normative image of Byzantine art and architecture through publications, academic teaching and prominent Byzantine Revival structures based on their travel experiences in Greece, Constantinople and Venice. Interestingly, this normative image was not consistent but made up from different sources depending on the genre. The monumental sixth-century structure of the Hagia Sophia was seen as the ideal example of Byzantine architecture, even though its merging of a basilica with a centralized plan differed from the crossed-dome plan perceived as the most common Byzantine layout. The image of Byzantine mosaics was shaped by artworks in Venice, Sicily and Ravenna. With regard to painting, for Cristea at least, medieval icons in the monasteries on Mount Athos were the model. He shared this appreciation with authors like Didron and Heinrich Brockhaus (1858–1941) from Leipzig who is considered the first to have included Byzantine art in his university teaching.²⁸ Brockhaus's 1891 book on monastic art on Mount Athos received a special mention in *Iconografia*.²⁹

Byzantine Art at the Margins of Empire: Habsburg Scholars and the Quest for Regional Identities

The discovery of a Byzantine artistic heritage in the South-Eastern European border regions, a heritage stemming mainly from the fifteenth century onwards, started as early as the 1850s. Nevertheless, this discovery did not affect the canonization of a particular idea of the Byzantine style, which, although multifaceted, was defined through art from the fourth to the fourteenth centuries from a limited number of centres 'discovered' by Western scholars. On the contrary, scholars dealing with regions like Wallachia and Moldavia consciously evaluated their findings in relation to this normative image. Many of these scholars were associated with the Kaiserl. Königl. Central Commission für Erforschung und Erhaltung der Baudenkmale (Imperial and Royal Central Commission for the Investigation and Preservation of Monuments), which had the political task of consolidating the Habsburg Empire after the Revolution of 1848–49. A key method used in response to this task was the documentation of the artistic heritage of the empire's border regions by politically reliable local experts.³⁰ As Maximilian Hartmuth has shown, some research expeditions financed by the state even went beyond the borders of the dual monarchy, indicating that regions such as Wallachia and Serbia belonged to the sphere of the empire's political interests.³¹

In 1857, Ludwig Reissenberger (1819–1895), a Transylvanian Saxon schoolteacher from Sibiu, was sent to the monastery church of Curtea de Argeş in Wallachia. At this time, the region had been briefly occupied by Austrian troops following the Crimean War. Reissenberger published a detailed illustrated account of the monument in the Central Commission's yearbook.³² He placed the church, commissioned by Prince Neagoe Basarab in 1512, in the 'Byzantine' tradition of Greek-Orthodox ecclesiastical architecture. As Cosmin Minea has noted, Reissenberger's attitude towards Byzantine art was in part informed by Kugler's writings.³³ Nevertheless, his negative opinion was limited to the period after the 'splendid reign of the Greek emperor Justinian' (527–65), when the Byzantine building style was considered to have reached its peak. According to Reissenberger, this was followed by a period of little development or

creativity and a commitment to conventions, which he blamed on the 'hieratic form of the religious rite' of the Orthodox church. Within this context, the monastery church of Curtea de Argeş was considered an attempt to transgress boundaries and give ecclesiastical architecture a new direction.³⁴ One might conclude that Reissenberger conceptualized the history of Byzantine art as a sequence of flowering and decline, followed by a potential new awakening.

Reissenberger observed two main deviations from the stylistic norm in Curtea de Argeş: the elongation of the crossed-dome plan, considered as a merging of Occidental and Oriental features,³⁵ and the frequent use of ornaments derived from Islamic – 'namely Moorish' – art.³⁶ Interestingly, Reissenberger disliked the former aspect, which he felt resulted in a 'fragmented' impression of the interior space,³⁷ but praised the 'Moorish' ornaments as the 'highlight' of the whole building.³⁸ By placing the building in the 'Byzantine' tradition and, at the same time, hinting at deviations from this stylistic norm, Reissenberger opened the door to a vivid reception history of a building which in time came to be regarded as a Romanian national monument.³⁹ In this, the exact deviations perceived and named by Reissenberger became crucial.

When Joseph Hlávka (1831–1908), a successful architect-entrepreneur in Vienna and member of the Central Commission, was commissioned to design the residence of the Greek-Orthodox Metropolitan in Czernowitz (Chernivtsi), the capital of the province of Bukovina, he made a study trip to seek inspiration in local artistic traditions.⁴⁰ In 1866, as an outcome of this trip, Hlávka published an article on Bukovinian Greek-Orthodox monastery churches from the fourteenth to the seventeenth centuries.⁴¹ The article was cited by Cristea in *Iconografia*, which also included an illustration of the Metropolitan's residence, erected between 1864 and 1883.⁴² Hlávka described the Bukovinian monuments as belonging firmly to the Byzantine style and Orthodox church ritual but demonstrating an autonomous development in response to local climatic conditions. He suggested that this development, leading to elongated church plans, an interior space with higher and narrower proportions, steeper roofs and domes raised on high tambours, might have been stimulated by the Gothic architecture of the Occidental Middle Ages. For Hlávka, the outcome was unique, but still in line with the essence of the Byzantine style.⁴³

He was anxious to stress that contemporary structures in Greece or 'the Balkans' lacked a comparable autonomous development and merely repeated inherited Byzantine models in an unreflective way.⁴⁴ Where Western influences had been adopted, this had happened without an inner cause, leading to inhomogeneous solutions.⁴⁵ As Ada Hajdu has suggested, Hlávka might have been conflating the observed differences in the degree of artistic originality with the lack of political independence in the former lands of the Ottoman Empire.⁴⁶ Until 1775, Bukovina had belonged to the Principality of Moldavia, which was an Ottoman vassal state but not part of Ottoman territory, while other South-East European regions like Greece were. It is clear that, for Hlávka, Bukovina, then part of the Habsburg Empire, was not part of 'the Balkans' but belonged to the 'enlightened' West. At the same time, his canonization of Bukovinian ecclesiastical architecture as the 'true heir' of Byzantium can be understood as an effort to foster a regional identity for Bukovina's local Romanian population in order to counter growing cross-border nationalism.

In contrast, Karl Romstorfer (1854–1916), a Vienna-trained architect teaching at the Staatsgewerbeschule (State School for Applied Arts) in Czernowitz, coined the term 'Moldavian-Byzantine style' to stress the cross-border relations of architecture

in Bukovina. Romstorfer's 1887 study trip to Moldavia was financed by the state, and an overview of his findings was published in the *Allgemeine Bauzeitung* (General Construction Magazine) in Vienna in 1896.⁴⁷ Romstorfer characterized the 'Moldavian-Byzantine style' as 'one of the youngest branches of the Byzantine style',⁴⁸ his description of its typological features largely aligning with Hlávka's account of the Bukovinian churches. He observed a consistent combination of Byzantine and Gothic formal features in the style's decorative details, but was eager to stress that this influence did not affect the overall layout of the churches. He believed that the Moldavian-Byzantine style was distinguished by a stylistic purity similar to the churches on Mount Athos.⁴⁹ In contrast, he argued that monuments in regions such as Wallachia had adopted foreign influences, causing an 'alien' (*fremdartig*, that is unpleasant) impression.⁵⁰ It can be assumed that Romstorfer was referring to the frequent use of ornamentation derived from Islamic – 'namely Moorish' – art that Reissenberger had observed in Curtea de Argeş. Like Hlávka, Romstorfer styled the local heritage as the true offspring of Byzantium, while downgrading monuments such as the monastery church of Curtea de Argeş (which was about to become a model for the creation of a national style in the Kingdom of Romania) by hinting at its deviation from the stylistic norm.⁵¹ Thus, the reason why Romstorfer might have termed as 'alien' those precise deviations that Reissenberger had praised presumably lies in the changing political context. Nevertheless, another aim of Romstorfer's research was to foster a revival of this 'Late-Byzantine, more or less Romanian national style', resulting in the design of several ecclesiastical buildings both in Bukovina and in the Kingdom of Romania.⁵² It can be surmised that, from a Viennese perspective, a self-defined, contained nationalism was better than a rogue movement spilling over from across the Romanian border.

Romstorfer's stylistic concept, the 'Moldavian-Byzantine style', was discussed as a possible model for Sibiu Cathedral by its planning committee in 1898.⁵³ Romstorfer's name is not mentioned explicitly, but the committee named the 'beautiful and original Romanian churches of Moldavia in the Moldavian-Byzantine style' as a possible source of inspiration. Furthermore, Cristea cited Romstorfer's 1896 article in *Iconografia*,⁵⁴ and expressed appreciation for his restoration works in Suceava.⁵⁵

Romstorfer's stylistic concept was, in all likelihood, introduced to the committee by Ştefan Emilian (1819–1899), a Transylvanian-born Romanian architect then working in the Moldavian capital of Iaşi.⁵⁶ Emilian advised the committee on how to adopt design elements of Orthodox ecclesiastical architecture from the lands inhabited by Romanians outside Transylvania for the cathedral project.⁵⁷ As early as 1853, Emilian had published an article (under the name 'Kertesz') in the *Allgemeine Bauzeitung* about the Greek-Orthodox Church of St Nicholas in the Transylvanian town of Braşov. He valued the church, which had been erected in several stages from the sixteenth century onwards with help from Moldavian and Wallachian princes, as having been constructed in the 'Byzantine style' and as 'one of the most important historic monuments of the Romanian nation and of the Christian-Oriental faith in this land'.⁵⁸ Here the emphasis on cross-border cultural relations can be understood as a statement in favour of Romanian nationalism by a man who had taken part in the Revolution of 1848–49 on the Romanian side and moved to Moldavia in 1858 to settle permanently.

As can be observed from these examples, authors financed and/or published by institutions in the imperial capital of Vienna played a key role in putting Orthodox church architecture of the South-Eastern European border regions on the art historical map. At the same time, they tried to widen the perception of what should be regarded

as valuable 'Byzantine style' architecture. As previously mentioned, even those Western European scholars who generally appreciated Byzantine art considered the period after the downfall of the Byzantine Empire (during which most of the structures in South-Eastern regions were built) to be an era of decay. Viennese scholars, on the other hand, had a different perspective: where they observed deviations from the set of characteristics so far canonized as 'Byzantine', they instead interpreted them as a further development dependent on regional conditions, but still in line with the essence of the Byzantine style. The stylistic variations described could then be used as bearers of a proclaimed regional or national identity.

Nationalization as Westernization and Self-Orientalization: Byzantine Art – A Perspective from the Borderlands Between 'Orient' and 'Occident'

Despite these early efforts to make a broader audience aware of the existence of regional variations in Byzantine-style art and architecture and to connect them with identity concepts for the local population, in 1899 the cathedral's planning committee finally launched a competition for a church in 'Oriental-Byzantine style' without any regional specifications.⁵⁹ This is remarkable not only with regard to the national and regional specifications of the stylistic choices discussed by the planning committee until this point (which favoured the 'Moldavian-Byzantine style') but also because during these discussions certain architectural forms like a dome or triconch plan had been demanded. The triconch plan, albeit commonly found as much in Serbian Orthodox church architecture as in Romanian, had been discussed as a typical feature of Romanian architecture as early as 1862 by the Wallachian architect Dimitrie Berendei.⁶⁰

Clearly, any requirement for a particular regional variation of the 'Byzantine' design would have demanded specialist knowledge and therefore narrowed the field of competent participants in the competition. Furthermore, it can be argued that general comprehensibility of the design for a diverse audience was crucial for a cathedral of supra-regional importance – especially in a place like Sibiu with its multicultural population. This comprehensibility could only be ensured by maintaining the established canon of Byzantine art, as drawn from its major centres.

For this reason, it is unsurprising that the winning entry by the Budapest architects Virgil Nagy (1859–1921) and József Kommer (1862– ?) was closely modelled on the Hagia Sophia.⁶¹ As can be observed from Salzenberg's 1854 book and his church design for Potsdam, the widely known monument offered a unique double connotation: superiority in the context of world architectural history, together with cultural alterity.⁶² This was an attractive solution for the issues involved in designing an Orthodox cathedral to sit alongside Lutheran, Roman Catholic and Calvinist churches in a town with a strong Transylvanian Saxon tradition and a partly German-, partly Hungarian- and partly Romanian-speaking population.

Furthermore, Cristea and the planning committee expected 'grandeur' (*grandiositate*) to be a central feature of the new cathedral.⁶³ In Cristea's book, 'grandeur' features as a main quality of 'Occidental' church architecture, whereas 'Oriental' churches are seen as much more modest (the Hagia Sophia being one of the few exceptions). Reissenberger's account of Curtea de Argeş comes to mind: the author disliked the penumbrous, gloomy interior, subdivided into spaces of small dimensions, and missed the 'grandeur' and spatial unity of the domed central space in larger monuments such

as the Hagia Sophia.⁶⁴ The main quality of ‘Oriental’ churches is judged by Cristea to be the beauty and lavishness of the interior decoration.⁶⁵ He and the planning committee wanted the best of these two worlds for the cathedral: a vast, undivided, well-lit interior space, as well as opulent interior decoration with murals and elaborate furnishing (Fig. 4.2). The combination of a centralized plan under a huge dome with



Figure 4.2 József Kommer & Virgil Nagy, Romanian Orthodox Metropolitan Cathedral of the Holy Trinity, Sibiu, 1902–6: interior.

Photo: Author.

two large bell towers at the front seems to be in line with such a merging of cultures; however, at the same time, it raised criticism for disturbing the stylistic purity of the Byzantine architecture. Nonetheless, the bell towers were added at the request of the Metropolitan Ioan Meşianu (1899–1916) to create a bigger impact on the cityscape.⁶⁶

Regarding the decoration of church interiors with ecclesiastical paintings, Cristea again observed a binary opposition between a ‘Latin-Occidental’ and a ‘Byzantine-Oriental’ pictorial tradition. The former strives for formal beauty, realism and rationalism, while the latter uses stylization and idealization to find an expression for abstract virtues and dogmata: ‘Western Christianity is, together with the artistic manifestations of its ideas, more real, more rationalistic, while Eastern Christianity, where vivid imagination plays an important role in art and religion, is more idealistic’.⁶⁷ According to Cristea, Byzantine Christian art learned from the Ancient Greeks, turning their idealization of natural beauty into an idealization of God:

The Byzantine painter deviates from nature, from reality, and delves into the understanding of the dogmata. . . . Byzantine art strives to produce painted ideals, although not ideals in which beauty is depicted, but dogmata in painted form. . . . Pagan Greeks idealized nature itself, whereas Christian Greeks did not content themselves with that, but searched for the ideal in divinity, idealized divinity.⁶⁸

What Kugler had observed as a lack of ability to build on Classical traditions depicting the human body is seen here as a refinement. Certainly, Cristea’s narrative was informed by the writings of Charles Bayet (1849–1918)⁶⁹ and Josef Strzygowski (1862–1941)⁷⁰ (both of whom he cited in his bibliography): two art historians who stressed continuities between Classical antiquity, Byzantium and the Middle Ages. On the other hand, Cristea could not agree with Strzygowski’s interpretation of Byzantine art as a merging of Hellenistic, Syrian and Anatolian traditions;⁷¹ he believed the decoration of Byzantine churches in Wallachia with painted and sculpted ornaments of ‘Arab, Persian, Egyptian, Syrian or Armenian origin’ was nothing but a sign of the decay of the Byzantine tradition.⁷² Already observed by Reissenberger in Curtea de Argeş, and considered by Romstorfer as ‘alien’, such ornaments were not deemed acceptable inspiration for the cathedral in Sibiu. The fathers of the cathedral were eager to present themselves as representatives of Eastern Christianity rather than exotic figures associated with the Near East. Similarly, when praising the colourfulness of Byzantine Venice, John Ruskin was anxious not to create an impression of ‘mindless luxury’ associated with Islamic art.⁷³

In Cristea’s conception of Byzantine painting outlined in *Iconografia*, a proclaimed Golden Age ends with the final downfall of the Byzantine Empire in the fifteenth century, followed by a period of decay.⁷⁴ This means that nearly everything Cristea had seen during his journey through Transylvania, Bukovina, Moldavia and Wallachia, where only a few older churches were still standing, must have been a disappointment for him:

During my journey, and on the basis of observations by different parties, I have not at all been able to reconcile myself to old Byzantine painting, much less to painting from the period of decay . . . or to the purely Western direction adopted by many Romanian painters from the Regat [Kingdom].⁷⁵

This verdict means that neither the oldest structures mentioned by Cristea (like the Princely Church of St Nicholas in Curtea de Argeş with paintings from the fourteenth

century) nor the lavishly painted monastery churches of Moldavia from the sixteenth century (Sucevița, Voroneț), nor structures restored or recently built (the monastery churches of Curtea de Argeș and Sinaia among others) were considered fully to qualify as a model for his handbook and for the cathedral, respectively.

Travelling with a normative image in mind, which was mainly formed by the books on Mount Athos by Brockhaus, Didron and others, every deviation from that norm incurred Cristea's disapproval. Consequently, he wanted nothing less than a reform of Romanian Orthodox ecclesiastical painting by returning to what he perceived as its lost roots on Mount Athos.⁷⁶ It was in this spirit that an ideal arrangement of murals was laid out in his book and used for the decoration of the cathedral dome (Fig. 4.3). It was modelled on a schematic layout presented by Brockhaus to illustrate instructions given in a seventeenth-century handbook written by a monk from Mount Athos, who himself drew from much older sources.⁷⁷ Cristea intended to overcome not only a historic period of decay in Byzantine painting but also its observed 'revival' in recent church building and restoration projects in the Kingdom of Romania. Here, he criticized two tendencies: the work of foreigners little versed in Byzantine painting who introduced elements of Western church art into Orthodox church decoration (e.g. artists working under the French architect André Lecomte du Noüy, who was commissioned to restore the monastery church of Curtea de Argeș among others),⁷⁸ and 'archaeological' approaches which maintained unfavoured historical models from the



Figure 4.3 Romanian Orthodox Metropolitan Cathedral of the Holy Trinity, Sibiu, 1902–6. Paintings in the dome by Octavian Smigelschi and Arthur Coulin after a concept by Elie Miron Cristea, 1904–5.

Photo: Author

region.⁷⁹ With this attitude, Cristea went beyond earlier efforts to reform ecclesiastical art in Romania, which were probably known to him.⁸⁰

In addition – and quite surprisingly – Cristea suggested looking to Munich for inspiration. He revealed himself to be an ardent admirer of the celebrated portrait painter Franz von Lenbach (1836–1904), whom he had visited in his Munich studio.⁸¹ This experience seems to have limited Cristea’s approval of stylization in icon painting to a certain degree. Talking about Byzantine painting from the ongoing ‘period of decay’ in the Romanian principalities, Cristea criticized its expressionless, mask-like faces and neglect of the rules of anatomy and perspective.⁸² Kugler’s opinion of Byzantine icon painting from nearly 70 years earlier comes to mind. Cristea’s critique extended to historicist adaptations of this style in Romania, such as the murals by the Danish painter Aage Exner (1870–1951) in the Monastery Church of Sinaia, commissioned by King Carol I in 1903 (Fig. 4.4):

The paintings of Sinaia are technically well executed and they would make a good impression if the figures were not so Byzantine in the manner of models to be found in different old churches of the Kingdom, almost all of which come from the period of decay of Byzantine painting.⁸³

As a result, in 1904 the painter Octavian Smigelschi (1866–1912) was commissioned to adorn the interior of the cathedral with paintings that combined traditional Byzantine iconography and style with the design modes of the Munich School of painting, ranging from Naturalism and Realism to Symbolism. For the ornamentation of saints’ clothes and the wall surfaces between icons, borrowings from Islamic art were not an option for Cristea;⁸⁴ instead, he suggested turning to the folk art of the local rural population as an expression of a true Romanian spirit unaffected by ‘foreign’ influences and the course of time – one could say an art beyond periodization. Colourful textile patterns were collected and included in the design.⁸⁵

Cristea and the other clergy members involved in the planning of the Metropolitan Cathedral in Sibiu thus drew on a canonized image of Byzantine art created by Western scholars from monuments in Italy, Greece and Constantinople and promoted it as a true and generally comprehensible expression of Orthodox Christian belief and identity. Their use of a Byzantine style was a testament to the successful efforts of a number of international writers and architects from the 1840s onwards to change the overall negative perception of Byzantine art as the product of an inferior Oriental culture and period of decay.

The internalization of the aforementioned canonized image led to neglect of regional variations of the Byzantine style dating mainly from the fifteenth century onwards in the South-Eastern European border regions. Deviations from the stylistic canon were still interpreted as signs of decay, even though Viennese-sponsored research in the empire’s peripheries and beyond had conceptualized this heritage as a witness to a new awakening of Byzantine art, and tried to stimulate its use as a reservoir for regional identities under an overarching Habsburgian universalism.⁸⁶ This observation is supported by considering the third-prize competition entry for Sibiu Cathedral by Gyula Berczik (1853–1933) from Budapest. He studied at the Viennese Academy of Fine Arts under Theophil Hansen (1813–1891) who played a major role in the dissemination of Byzantine Revival architecture across Central and South-Eastern Europe. Berczik modelled his cathedral design relatively closely on crossed-dome churches from Greece,⁸⁷

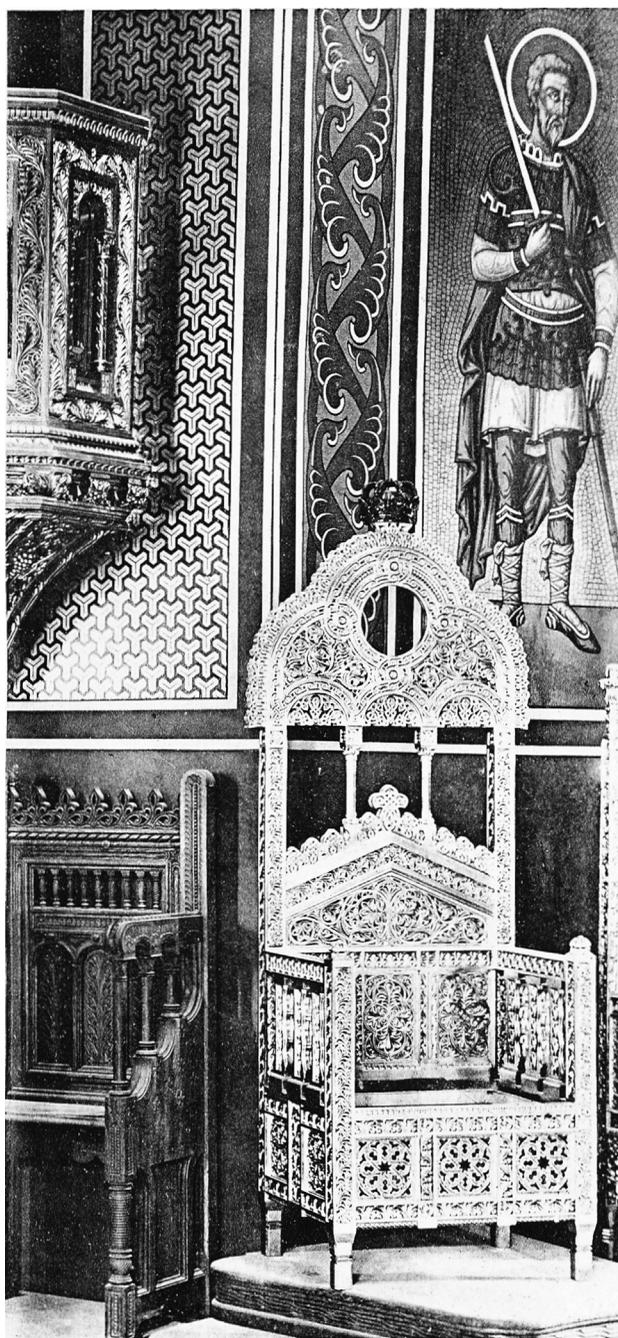


Figure 4.4 Monastery Church of Sinaia, 1898–1903. King's throne, sculpted at the School of Art and Industries, Bucharest, and mural of a saint, painted by Aage Exner.

Source: Elie Miron Cristea, *Iconografia și întocmirile din internul bisericii răsăritene* (1905), pl. 8.

such as those studied by Hansen during his years in Athens,⁸⁸ but renounced the Islamic and Gothic elements such as latticework and pinnacles that the Danish-born architect liked to integrate into his designs. The merging of different artistic influences, which later authors such as Ljubo Karaman (1886–1971) and Jan Białostocki (1921–1988) understood as a strength of peripheral art production,⁸⁹ seems to have been perceived as a sign of transculturation – something most unwelcome at a time when different national movements and religious groups were competing against each other in the same city or region. The resulting need for differentiation explains why deviations from an art conceptualized as ‘purely Byzantine’ were perceived less favourably in the border region of Transylvania, with its heterogeneous society, than from a Viennese perspective or in the Kingdom of Romania. As mentioned earlier, such deviations played a crucial role in the conceptualization of a national Byzantine heritage in Romania after Reissenberger and others first identified them.

Only in the final stage of the planning process for the cathedral, during the design of the ecclesiastical furnishings (ca. 1905), did Byzantine-style structures from Romania serve as a model; among them was the historicist Monastery Church of Sinaia, recently commissioned by King Carol I.⁹⁰ The carved and gilded pieces of furniture for Sibiu Cathedral, such as the throne or the iconostasis, feature latticework inspired by Curtea de Argeș and columns and arches evoking Brâncovenesc architecture. What seems to be an inconsistent and contradictory approach might possibly be explained by the overlapping discursive arenas in which the cathedral operated: conflicts within a heterogeneous but largely Western-oriented urban society, debates about measures by the Hungarian government to limit the national activities of the Church, and finally, Pan-Romanianism. Within these discursive arenas, the cathedral had to address different audiences, while the orientation towards Romania became more and more dominant. In addition, it must be noted that in the Regat itself, the local Byzantine heritage had only become a model for a ‘national’ ecclesiastical architecture in the 1890s (for example in Sinaia or in the churches designed by George Mandrea (1855–1916) in Bucharest); earlier Neo-Byzantine structures had largely followed internationally established stylistic modes.

Conclusion

Beyond the fact that the thinking of Cristea, a member of Transylvania’s Orthodox Romanian clergy, was shaped by Western discourses, the Church itself had to participate actively in such discourses in order to make itself heard in a German- and Hungarian-speaking environment and state system. Therefore, the act of nationalizing the ‘Byzantine style’, which was itself also an act of Westernization and self-orientation,⁹¹ had to follow certain rules: in the heterogeneous societies of the border regions between ‘Orient’ and ‘Occident’, artistic and architectural distinction had to be balanced by the general comprehensibility of the design. In the case of Sibiu Cathedral, this led to the neglect of regional variations of what was considered ‘Byzantine’ heritage as a source of inspiration – a heritage which was thought to have lost its ‘purity’ through the adoption of ‘foreign’ influences in an age of decay. Instead, the established canon of art and architecture from the ‘Golden Age’ of the Byzantine style was maintained. This canon drew from various sources, but more important than the history of the individual artworks was the fact that prominent Western scholars had written about them. The adoption of this periodization scheme, which favoured works of art from the fourth to the fourteenth century, hindered a cultural appropriation of

the largely younger heritage of the peripheries, the ecclesiastic furnishings being the one exception. Yet, there was a segment of peripheral art production that Cristea promoted: folk art, which he conceptualized as non-developing and static and hence as a vessel of essential national virtues. In terms of religious virtues, Cristea granted highest importance to the use of icons in the tradition of Mount Athos. The adaptation of this model therefore cannot be explained solely within the context of Westernization/self-orientalization, but owes much to denominational considerations as well: ‘A people, which does not ground itself in such virtues and does not seek any means for their cultivation and strengthening, should not expect any “golden future”’.⁹²

Notes

- 1 Cristea, *Iconografia*, 4.
- 2 Popescu, ‘Balkan Orientalism’ deals with the phenomenon of self-orientalization.
- 3 For a comprehensive investigation of the cathedral project and further literature, see Hagen, *Gesellschaftliche Ordnungsvorstellungen*. The most important source for the planning history is Cristea, Pușcariu and Voileanu, *Biserica Catedrală dela Mitropolia Ortodoxă Română în Sibiu*.
- 4 Cristea, Pușcariu and Voileanu, *Biserica Catedrală*, 54, 82; Cristea, *Iconografia*, XIII–IV; N. N., ‘A Nagyszebenben építendő gör. kel.’, 116.
- 5 Cristea, Pușcariu and Voileanu, *Biserica Catedrală*, 46.
- 6 Hajdu, ‘The Search for National Architectural Styles’, 412.
- 7 Cristea, Pușcariu and Voileanu, *Biserica Catedrală*, 82.
- 8 Abrudan, *Ansamblul architectural al catedralei și edificiului seminarial din arhiepiscopia Sibiului*, 361.
- 9 Bullen, *Byzantium Rediscovered*. Before the nineteenth century, the number of buildings shaping the image of ‘Byzantine’ architecture in the West was very limited – among them, the Hagia Sophia in Constantinople and St Mark’s Basilica in Venice (Bender, ‘Regards sur Sainte-Sophie’). Despite the significant increase of knowledge in the following decades, these buildings remained highly normative throughout the nineteenth century and up to the present day.
- 10 Cristea, *Iconografia*, XVI–III.
- 11 There are only three Romanian authors who managed to join the list of 40 Western authorities who substantially shaped Cristea’s thinking about Byzantine art. First was Ghenadie Enăceanu, Bishop of Râmnic, whose 1891 edition of a manual on iconography and ecclesiastical painting Cristea believed to be based on the handbook by Dionysios of Phourna (Enăceanu, *Iconografia*; see Cristea, *Iconografia*, XVIII). Second was Sever Mureșan’s lecture on Christian iconology, held at the Iași School of Fine Arts in 1894 (Mureșan, *Iconologia*). The final entry was an 1890 theological treatise on icon-worship by Melchisedec Ștefănescu, Bishop of Roman (Ștefănescu, *Tratat*).
- 12 Hajdu, ‘The Search for National Architectural Styles’; Hartmuth, ‘Vienna and the Art Historical “Discovery” of the Balkans’.
- 13 Cristea refers to ‘Tetier: Archeologie byzantine. Paris’ (Cristea, *Iconografia*, XVIII). A publication with that title does not exist, but it can be assumed that he meant one of the following books: Texier, *Description de l’Asie Mineure*; or the French edition of Texier and Popplewell Pullan, *Byzantine Architecture*.
- 14 Didron, *Iconographie chrétienne*; Didron and Durand, *Manuel d’iconographie chrétienne*.
- 15 Bullen, *Byzantium Rediscovered*, 83–84.
- 16 *Ibid.*, 57–59; Magouliotis, ‘French Architects and “Églises Grecques”’.
- 17 Bullen, *Byzantium Rediscovered*, 113.
- 18 Kugler, *Handbuch der Geschichte der Malerei*, 61.
- 19 *Ibid.*, 59–61.
- 20 *Ibid.*, 63.
- 21 *Ibid.*, 61.
- 22 Ruskin, *The Stones of Venice*; Ruskin, *Velence kövei*.
- 23 Ruskin, *The Stones of Venice*, vol. 2, 60–119.
- 24 Bullen, *Byzantium Rediscovered*, 126–30.

- 25 Cristea, *Iconografia*, IV, 4.
- 26 Salzenberg, *Alt-christliche Baudenkmale*, 14.
- 27 Nelson, *Hagia Sophia*, 34–35.
- 28 Pickert, 'Brockhaus, Heinrich'.
- 29 Brockhaus, *Die Kunst in den Athos-Klöstern*; Cristea, *Iconografia*, XVI.
- 30 Born, 'Die Architektur auf dem Balkan', 801–2; Frodl, *Idee und Verwirklichung*, 11, 94–95, 100–7; Rampley, *The Vienna School of Art History*, 22–26.
- 31 Hartmuth, 'Vienna and the Art Historical "Discovery" of the Balkans'.
- 32 Reissenberger, *Die bischöfliche Klosterkirche bei Kurtea d'Argyisch*; Chevallier, 'L'affirmation de l'identité nationale', 272–73; Hartmuth, 'Vienna and the Art Historical "Discovery" of the Balkans', 109–10; Minea, 'The Monastery of Curtea de Argeș'.
- 33 Minea, 'The Monastery of Curtea de Argeș', 187.
- 34 Reissenberger, *Die bischöfliche Klosterkirche bei Kurtea d'Argyisch*, 1.
- 35 *Ibid.*, 5.
- 36 *Ibid.*, 4. Even before Reissenberger, the Romanian writer Alexandru Pelimon (1822–1881) described the church in his travelogue as being in 'Moorish style' (Pelimon, *Impresiuni de călătorie*, 73; cited after: Minea, 'The Monastery of Curtea de Argeș', 185).
- 37 Reissenberger, *Die bischöfliche Klosterkirche bei Kurtea d'Argyisch*, 5.
- 38 *Ibid.*, 3.
- 39 Cf. Hajdu, 'The Search for National Architectural Styles', 419.
- 40 Born, 'The Vienna School of Art History and Bukovina', 128–29; Hartmuth, 'Vienna and the Art Historical "Discovery" of the Balkans', 110.
- 41 Hlávka, 'Die griechisch-orientalischen Kirchenbauten in der Bukowina'.
- 42 Cristea, *Iconografia*, 17, 39, fig. 14.
- 43 Hlávka, 'Die griechisch-orientalischen Kirchenbauten in der Bukowina', 106–7, 110–11, 114–16, 120.
- 44 *Ibid.*, 106–7.
- 45 'These changes . . . cannot be considered as an autonomous development resulting from the inner nature of the structure; these changes are not caused by necessities resulting from changed conditions, nor from progress in construction or formal design and are therefore to be considered only as an impact of foreign influences': *ibid.*, 109–10.
- 46 Hajdu, 'The Search for National Architectural Styles', 423.
- 47 Romstorfer, 'Die moldauisch-byzantinische Baukunst'.
- 48 *Ibid.*, 82.
- 49 *Ibid.*, 88.
- 50 *Ibid.*, 88–89.
- 51 The architecture of Moldavia was rarely used for such a purpose by the architects of Romania (Hajdu, 'The Search for National Architectural Styles', 423).
- 52 Romstorfer, 'Gruft-Kapelle der Familie R. v. Tabora'.
- 53 Cristea, Pușcariu and Voileanu, *Biserica Catedrală*, 46.
- 54 Cristea, *Iconografia*, 17.
- 55 *Ibid.*, 38–39.
- 56 Niculescu, 'Emilian, Ștefan'.
- 57 Cristea, Pușcariu and Voileanu, *Biserica Catedrală*, 45.
- 58 Kertész, 'Die romanische Pfarrkirche'.
- 59 Cristea, Pușcariu and Voileanu, *Biserica Catedrală*, 47.
- 60 Minea, 'The Monastery of Curtea de Argeș', 190.
- 61 N. N., 'A Nagyszébenben építendő', I, 104–6, III, 115–16.
- 62 Salzenberg, *Alt-christliche Baudenkmale*, 14–33.
- 63 Cristea, Pușcariu and Voileanu, *Biserica Catedrală*, 47.
- 64 Reissenberger, *Die bischöfliche Klosterkirche bei Kurtea d'Argyisch*, 4–5; Minea, 'The Monastery of Curtea de Argeș', 188.
- 65 Cristea, *Iconografia*, 1–4.
- 66 Cristea, Pușcariu and Voileanu, *Biserica Catedrală*, 57–59.
- 67 Cristea, *Iconografia*, VI.
- 68 *Ibid.*, VI–III.
- 69 Bayet, *Recherches pour servir à l'histoire de la peinture et de la sculpture chrétiennes en Orient*.

- 70 Strzygowski, 'Die byzantinische Kunst'.
 71 Rampley, *The Vienna School*, 172.
 72 Cristea, *Iconografia*, 14, 41.
 73 Ruskin, *The Stones of Venice*, 149–50, 234–35, 411, discussed in Bullen, *Byzantium Rediscovered*, 129.
 74 Cristea, *Iconografia*, 4.
 75 In his handbook, Cristea provides a list of the numerous Orthodox churches he visited during his study trip through the lands inhabited by Romanians; sometimes historical remarks and/or short comments are added: Cristea, *Iconografia*, 15–18.
 76 *Ibid.*, IX–XI.
 77 Brockhaus, *Die Kunst in den Athos-Klöstern*, pl. 11, 157; Phurnâ, *Hermēneia tēs zōgraphikēs*.
 78 Cristea, *Iconografia*, 19–21.
 79 *Ibid.*, 22–23.
 80 One of these efforts resulted in an ecclesiastical law, which codified the mandatory use of the 'Byzantine style' in painting, architecture and ornamentation in order to resist the adaptation of 'Western' design concepts. See *Legea pentru alegerea mitropoliților și episcopilor eparhioți și pentru înființarea consistoriului superior bisericesc (Law for the Election of Metropolitans and Bishops of Parishes and for the founding of the Superior Church Council)*, 1872, in Cojocaru, 'Pictura religioasă din Țara Românească'.
 81 Cristea, *Iconografia*, 23–24.
 82 *Ibid.*, 22.
 83 *Ibid.*, 21.
 84 *Ibid.*, 41.
 85 *Ibid.*, 43–47. This approach, which finds parallels in several national movements in Central and South-Eastern Europe and beyond (Moravánszky, *Das entfernte Dorf*), is embedded in similar efforts on the local level by the 'Transylvanian Association for Romanian Literature and Culture of the Romanian People' (Asociațiunea Transilvană pentru Literatura Română și Cultura Poporului Român [Astra]): Dunlap, 'Astra and the Appeal of the Nation', esp. 228–36.
 86 Hajdu, 'The Search for National Architectural Styles', 426; Hartmuth, 'Vienna and the Art Historical "Discovery" of the Balkans', 115.
 87 N. N., 'A Nagyszebenben építendő', III, 115, 122, 128–29.
 88 Cf. Villadsen, 'Studien über den byzantinischen Einfluß', which can still be considered the most lucid study of Hansen as a Byzantinist.
 89 Korvenmaa, 'Neither a Centre nor a Province'.
 90 Cristea, *Iconografia*, 211.
 91 Cf. Hajdu, 'The Search for National Architectural Styles', 437.
 92 Cristea, *Iconografia*, X.

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5 Bulgarian versus Byzantine

The Unrealized Museum of the Bulgarian Revival and National Style Debates in Architecture, ca. 1900

*Ada Hajdu**

Introduction

Architecture produces not just forms but also cultural discourses; as such it may be regarded in Pierre Bourdieu's terms as a 'field of practice', a social construct structured according to hierarchies, relative values and different forms of capital.¹ The main actors in this field (architects, critics and historians) establish both a written and visual discourse between a building and its audience; in so doing, they evoke certain meanings related to the audience's social experience. For a viewer not equipped with specialist knowledge of engineering, planning or design, the experience of architecture only partially pertains to its direct materiality: it also incorporates knowledge gained from other sources, which helps guide the perception of forms and spaces. Thus, the viewer's understanding of architecture is shaped by various kinds of knowledge: it includes the architecture one sees and experiences as well as ideas received from those directly involved in architectural practice. In this sense, architecture as a system relates to a building just as fashion relates to a particular coat. To be appreciated and understood, it should not only be seen and experienced but also narrated.

This chapter addresses an unsuccessful turn-of-the-century attempt to create a museum in Sofia dedicated to the Bulgarian National Revival or *Vazrazhdane*, a period celebrated as marking the 'rebirth' of Bulgarian culture and identity that culminated in independence from Ottoman rule. In addition to offering a historical investigation, it also analyses how the notion of a Bulgarian 'national style' was articulated for the first time. It explores how this conceptualization was undertaken by practising architects who wished both to situate themselves within an international stylistic discourse and to justify the value of their national tradition. In this case, the stylistic discourse was activated by proposals for a project that was never constructed.

Bulgarian Architects in Search of a National Style

The pressing need for a narrative of Bulgarian architecture appeared at the end of the nineteenth century and was strongly connected to Bulgarian architects' desire to create a national style grounded in historical precedents and local heritage. At this time, however, Bulgaria did not have a higher school of art or architecture: art and architectural history were not taught, nor were they an important focus of intellectual interest.² The only scholarly venue for disseminating growing knowledge of older Bulgarian architecture was *Spisanie na BIAD* (Journal of the Society of Bulgarian Architects and Engineers), founded in 1893.³ The related Society's members, predominantly

educated in the European tradition, began a search for the 'origins' of national architecture and declared the study of Bulgarian historical heritage to be one of the main goals of the association.⁴ Consequently, the pages of its periodical became a battlefield for discussions concerning the indigenous (*rodni*) Bulgarian style, its origins and sources of inspiration.⁵

The selection and conceptualization of historical monuments as objects of a shared heritage and as sources for architectural imitation constituted a conscious attempt to demonstrate national 'authenticity' in architecture. In turn, claims around a local 'Bulgarian' architectural style symbolically defined the historical existence of the Bulgarian nation,⁶ despite the fact that the country had only been independent since 1878. To support their belief that a national style could and should be invented, architects needed to demonstrate the value of local architectural tradition and its ability to produce buildings as monumental and modern as those built in Western styles.⁷ Educated abroad and taught that each nation has its own architectural history, they believed that their country had an architectural tradition waiting to be discovered and reinvented for modern needs. By 1912, there were 372 registered engineers and architects working in Bulgaria, all of whom had studied abroad.⁸ Most were educated in German-speaking centres and a minority in other European countries (for example Paris, St Petersburg and Turin), with only a few training in Bucharest, Belgrade and Athens.⁹ Almost all studied in technical universities rather than Beaux-Arts schools. In their attempt to validate a national style and rationalize the past through reference to historic architecture, these Western graduates relied on an analogous use of the stylistic periodizations favoured abroad: if Gothic and Romanesque had become the architectural manifestations of Western European nations, then the roots of Bulgarian tradition should be sought in the pre-Ottoman past.¹⁰

The need to create a national architectural style based on Bulgaria's medieval heritage was first articulated by one of its ideologists and practitioners, the architect Anton Tornyov (1868–1942), as a reaction to the Bulgarian Pavilion designed by the French architect Henri Jules Saladin for the 1900 Paris International Exhibition. Unhappy with what he saw as the explicitly Ottoman forms used in the pavilion's construction and decoration, Tornyov condemned the Western understanding of the Bulgarians as a nation without its own political history:

Our pavilion leaves foreigners with the impression that it represents a European colony recently saved from Turkish slavery. . . . We scorned our ecclesiastical style as unsuitable for a pavilion and instead hired a Parisian architect who has hardly even heard of the Bulgarians. He knew that we are yesterday's Turkish slaves and, therefore, our pavilion had to have a Turkish spirit. . . . Could we really not find a design similar to the Rila monastery or to another church?¹¹

For Tornyov, a national style should continue into the present elements from a recognized architectural tradition of the past; his indignation arose from what he perceived as public neglect of Bulgaria's existing architectural heritage, namely its ecclesiastical buildings.

Even before Tornyov's turn to the national, the issue of using the historical patrimony as the basis for contemporary style had appeared in the writings of another practising architect, Yanaki Shamardzhiev (1864–1937). In 1894, he suggested that the funeral monument for Alexander Battenberg, the first prince of modern Bulgaria,

should be designed in a ‘Byzantine style . . . because our national style is the Byzantine, adapted by our country to suit the climate, local conditions and needs’.¹² His 1904 book, *L’Architecture en Bulgarie*,¹³ clarified what kind of Byzantine architecture he considered a suitable source for modern interpretations, pointing to the continuous presence of Byzantine decorative and formal elements in all periods of artistic development in Bulgaria, from the Middle Ages to the Ottoman period and right up to the National Revival.¹⁴ This idea that Byzantine features survived in the later periods of Bulgarian art – meaning that even the Ottoman style could provide some inspiration for national architecture – was also articulated in documents related to the competition for the Museum of the Bulgarian Revival. The competition organizers’ statement that ‘the influence of Muslim art . . . does not harm, but rather underlines local flavour and originality’¹⁵ opened the door to an eclectic approach to the question of a ‘national style’.

The Museification of the Bulgarian Revival

In 1899, a group of intellectuals launched a proposal to set up a public association called the Комитет ‘Цар Освободител’ (‘Tsar-Liberator’ Committee) that would ‘nurture the feeling of national pride in the Bulgarians’, raise funds for public projects and organize artistic competitions. The first of its projects was the Museum of the Bulgarian Revival in Sofia, intended to commemorate the freedom-fighters of the recent past.¹⁶ Stoyan Zaimov (1853–1932), a participant in the April Uprising of 1876 (the Bulgarian anti-Ottoman insurrection that provoked the 1877–78 Russo-Turkish war) and member of the Bulgarian liberation movement, led the committee, which was named after the Russian Tsar-Liberator Alexander II. It also included, among others, the painter Anton Mitov (1862–1930), the sculptor Marin Vasilev (1867–1931) and the architect Nikola Lazarov (1870–1942), all of whom would advocate the national style in their later work.

On 19 February 1900, the committee adopted Zaimov’s programme for an architectural competition for the design of the museum. The press announced the tender, and the *Български търговски вестник* (Bulgarian Trade Gazette) printed the conditions in full.¹⁷ According to the programme, the museum would be ‘built by the Bulgarian nation for the fighters who won its political and religious independence’.¹⁸

In order to understand the relevance of the museum project, it is necessary to grasp the significance for the contemporary Bulgarian public of the period to which the museum was to be dedicated, namely the period of the Bulgarian National Revival (*Balgarskoto Vazrazhdane*).¹⁹ Bulgarian historical narratives agree that the National Revival began in 1762, when Paisii Hilendarski wrote *Istoria Slavianobolgarskaia* (Slav-Bulgarian History), and ended in 1878 with independence from the Ottomans.²⁰ This was a time that also saw the important declaration of autocephaly by the Bulgarian Church in 1860 and its recognition in 1870. Religious self-governance meant independence from the Patriarchate of Constantinople and from its imposed Hellenization of the Slavic population.²¹ Initially, *Vazrazhdane* was the name given to a nineteenth-century cultural movement which sought to revive local history and promote research into Bulgarian ethnography and folklore. It was related to a growing cultural desire to understand and popularize rediscovered monuments and writings related to the Balkan Slavic, non-Greek and non-Ottoman tradition. By the beginning of the twentieth century, however, *Vazrazhdane* had come to signify the well-defined historical period

of 1762–1878, representing the transformation of a frequent historiographical metaphor of the nineteenth century into a historiographical concept.

The name given to this period is important. The conceptualization of the *Vazrazhdane* as a distinct period with its own chronological framework points to the fact that, in its historical development, Bulgaria was seen to lag behind the general history of Europe, a delay attributed to the Ottoman conquest. Nevertheless, even a late renaissance was welcomed as proof of the country's inclusion into the European historical context.²² This was reinforced by the double connotation of *Vazrazhdane*: in Bulgarian, the term refers to both 'revival' and 'renaissance'. While the Italian Renaissance is also called *Vazrazhdane*, the period of national history is sometimes referred to as *nasheto Vazrazhdane*, meaning 'our Renaissance', to differentiate it from the Italian phenomenon.²³

In Bulgarian historiography, the Bulgarian Revival was predominantly associated with the awakening of national consciousness.²⁴ With the development of the *Vazrazhdane* grand narrative, the political, social, economic and cultural phenomena of the second half of the eighteenth century and most of the nineteenth century were represented in relation to the national struggle. The term gradually acquired an explanatory value and, in this sense, its use as a characteristic adjective is especially indicative: all things considered important for the period (periodicals, schools, cities and art) were accompanied by the adjective *vazrozhdenski* (Revival), thus charging them with ideological value during the nation-building process. Such overuse of the adjective creates the impression that everything that happened during the nineteenth century took place due to the Revival.

The founding of a Museum of the National Revival was proposed barely 20 years after the 'end' of the Bulgarian Revival itself and the winning of Bulgarian independence. It was intended to preserve national memory of the recent events and to honour the 'national struggle for religious and political independence'.²⁵ It thus represented the first attempt to reify the recent past as a heroic myth, harmonize competing memories and narratives and contribute to the architectural and symbolic legitimation of the Bulgarian nation-state. The inscription for the planned entrance to the museum explicitly expressed this commemorative purpose, dedicating the monument 'to the fighters – from the grateful fatherland'. The space was to be divided into three halls representing the main actors involved in the Liberation: those who fought for religious independence, the insurgents and revolutionary committees and the liberators and hero-fighters.²⁶ It was planned to construct the building on the highest ground in the capital, on a plot between the Russian diplomatic mission and the Church of St Sofia and opposite the future cathedral of St Alexander Nevsky.²⁷

In his programme Zaimov, who himself had been a member of the Liberation movement, envisaged the museum as an institution commemorating the 'great, five-century long, epoch of resistance and liberation struggles'.²⁸ He collected together numerous objects to display in the historical exhibition: weapons, uniforms, flags, personal belongings of the freedom fighters, instruments of torture, personal seals and encrypting tools. These were to be contextualized with works of art associated with the Revival and Liberation (including painted and sculptured portraits of historical figures and images of battles and national gatherings), together with books and significant documents of the Bulgarian people.²⁹

At this time, other museums dedicated to recent struggles for independence were emerging across Europe; these similarly used memory as a resource for political

affirmation, symbolic legitimation and patriotic pedagogy. A good comparative example is the museums dedicated to the Italian Risorgimento.³⁰ At the *Esposizione nazionale di Torino* of 1884, the Padiglione Storico del Risorgimento was set up to display the same types of objects, documents and images that were planned for inclusion in the Bulgarian museum.³¹ The pavilion was so successful that a permanent museum dedicated to the Risorgimento was then founded in Turin, and soon several other Italian cities opened further museums (by 1906, there were 29 Risorgimento museums, most of them in Northern Italian towns like Turin, Milan and Bologna, as well as in Rome).³² These, however, belonged more to the category of civic museums and although they contributed to the reification of the Risorgimento period in Italian historiography, they presented its materiality in a fragmentary manner. Moreover, none of the Risorgimento museums were built in a style considered ‘national’ (in fact, many were curated in pre-existing buildings).

The Museum Competition

The third article of Zaimov’s programme stipulated the architectural conditions of the competition: the building must be constructed ‘in the Bulgarian architectural style’. The competition consisted of two stages. In the first stage, by 25 September, the architects should anonymously submit their projects, each distinguished by a unique motto. The jury would choose the five best designs and award monetary prizes of 500, 450, 400, 350 and 300 leva. In the second stage, in February 1901, the leading five architects would resubmit their projects, revised according to the jury’s first-round comments, following which three winners would receive awards ranging from 1500 to 700 leva.³³

In total, ten projects were submitted to the contest, by eight architects (two participants submitted two projects each; one was disqualified), largely under titles inspired by Bulgarian heroes, landmarks or historic events: ‘Star’ (Alexander Nachev), ‘Milestone’ (Anton Tornoyov), ‘Rakovski’ (Georgi Kozarov), ‘Vlachernski gates’ (Nikola Lazarov), ‘Palette’ (Válko Válkovich), ‘Mirko’ (Stefan Dzhakov), ‘Festina lente’, ‘Sheynovo’, ‘Antemius and Izidor’. The jury included Alexander Pomerantsev (Professor of Architecture at the Imperial Academy of Arts in St Petersburg), Christo Kovachevski (the state architect of Varna), Nikola Neshov (the state architect of Vidin), Marin Vasilev (sculptor), Yuri Bachmetev (a Russian diplomat in Bulgaria) and Boris Schatz (sculptor).³⁴ The jury’s composition reflected its ideological and artistic agenda, namely an orientation toward Russophile imperial discourse and a preference for the so-called Byzantine style. Russophile tendencies were present in the organizing committee from its very inception as Zaimov, its leader, had studied at the Pedagogical University in Moscow and supported naming the association after the Russian Tsar-Liberator.³⁵ Other projects supported by the committee included the creation of regional museums associated with the Russo-Turkish War of 1877–78³⁶ and the organization of a competition for a monument to Alexander II, which was won by the Florentine sculptor Arnaldo Zocchi and erected in Sofia in 1907.³⁷

The president of the jury was Pomerantsev, whose main contribution to the urban architectural landscape of Sofia was the Cathedral of St Alexander Nevsky (designed 1879–82 and built 1904–12; Fig. 5.1),³⁸ a monumental structure in Neo-Byzantine style that explicitly displayed the ideological pretensions and colonial claims of Russian imperial politics. In the same period, several other cathedrals dedicated to St Alexander Nevsky (the patron saint of the Russian Empire and its armies³⁹) were built in



Figure 5.1 Alexander Pomerantsev, St Alexander Nevsky Cathedral, Sofia, 1879–1912.

Photo: Anna Adashinskaya.

different provinces of Russia as part of its colonial policies. Some were distinguished by their Neo-Byzantine forms (for example the St Alexander Military Cathedral in Tbilisi, 1871–97; or the Cathedral of St Alexander in Novosibirsk, 1896–89); others reflected the Neo-Russian style (such as the cathedrals in Łódź, 1884; Tallinn, 1894–1900; and Warsaw, 1894–1912).⁴⁰ In all these cases, the architectural forms, ornamentation and gigantic size of the edifices symbolically reminded worshippers of the presence of the Empire, which viewed itself as an heir of Byzantium.

In this context, Pomerantsev might well have supported the Neo-Byzantine style for the Museum of the National Revival. The idea of building a historical museum in a ‘national’ idiom was familiar to the Russian architect, who had witnessed the construction of the History Museum in Moscow (architect Vladimir Sherwood, 1872–83) in the so-called Russian–Byzantine style.⁴¹ It seems likely then that the insistence on Byzantine stylistic motifs in the competition brief for the Sofia museum had obvious references to the Russian Empire as a successor to Byzantium.⁴² Moreover, because the Byzantine style was regarded as the only indisputable historical style for an Orthodox nation, it was not surprising that competition entries should be based on Byzantine imperial examples. In this way, the Revival Museum was intended not only to commemorate the heroes of the Bulgarian national struggle but also to contribute to the further glorification of imperial Russia as the liberator of the nation.

The competition entries were exhibited in the Small Hall of the Bulgarian Parliament, where they aroused much discussion among the general public and critics. The committee appears to have been pleased with the entries: it declared that they proved that the Bulgarian style ‘has healthy soil for its existence and development’.⁴³ The jury ranked the projects that were to advance to the second round in the following order: ‘Star’, ‘Milestone’, ‘Rakovski’, ‘Vlachernski gates’ and ‘Palette’. It commented on each design, with particular focus on the way that each architect conceived of a Bulgarian style, and on the sources used as inspiration. The five winning projects were later published in *Spisanie na BIAD*.⁴⁴ ‘Star’ by Alexander Nachev (Fig. 5.2) was commended for having ‘the clearest plan and the simplest and most logical façade’, its weaknesses identified as the poor positioning of the Hall of Honour and insufficient planning of the ground floor. ‘Milestone’ by Torniyov (Fig. 5.3) was praised for its ‘rational planning’, but lacked sufficient detail in the elaboration of its façades. ‘Rakovski’ by Georgi Kozarov (Fig. 5.4) was commended for its attentive use of Bulgarian elements, but criticized for failing to meet the financial requirements of the competition brief. Nikola Lazarov’s ‘Vlachernski gates’ was described as having a façade reminiscent of a garden pavilion, while Vălko Vălkovich’s ‘Palette’ lacked explicit use of ‘Bulgarian decorative motifs’.⁴⁵ In the second round, in March 1901, it was the projects by Nachev and Kozarov that shared first place, with each architect receiving a prize of 1000 leva. Sadly, the competition came to a halt at this point, because the committee had run short of funding and the initial plot of land was recalled for a different use.⁴⁶

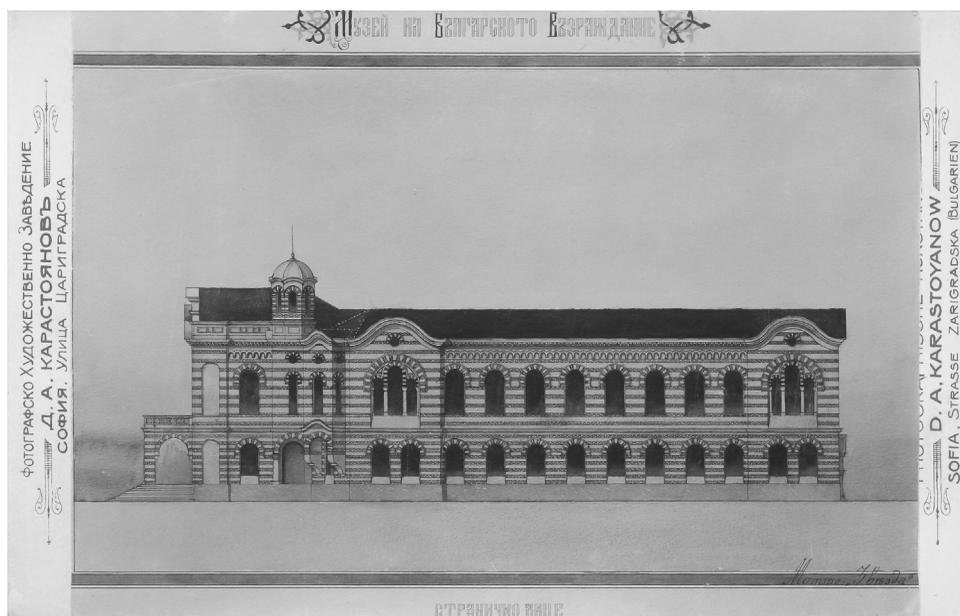


Figure 5.2 Alexander Nachev, Competition entry (entitled ‘Star’) for the Museum of the Bulgarian Revival, ca. 1900, photograph of a line drawing. National Museum of Military History Sofia, Inv. No. 13.

Source: VIF – Visualizing Family, Gender Relations and the Body, the University of Basel. <https://gams.uni-graz.at/o:vase.149>; licensed under Creative Commons (CC BY-NC-ND 3.0).



Figure 5.3 Anton Tornov, Competition entry (entitled ‘Milestone’) for the Museum of the Bulgarian Revival, ca. 1900, photograph of a line drawing (National Museum of Military History Sofia, Inv. No. 16).

Source: VIF – Visualizing Family, Gender Relations and the Body, the University of Basel. <https://gams.uni-graz.at/o:vase.152>; licensed under Creative Commons (CC BY-NC-ND 3.0).

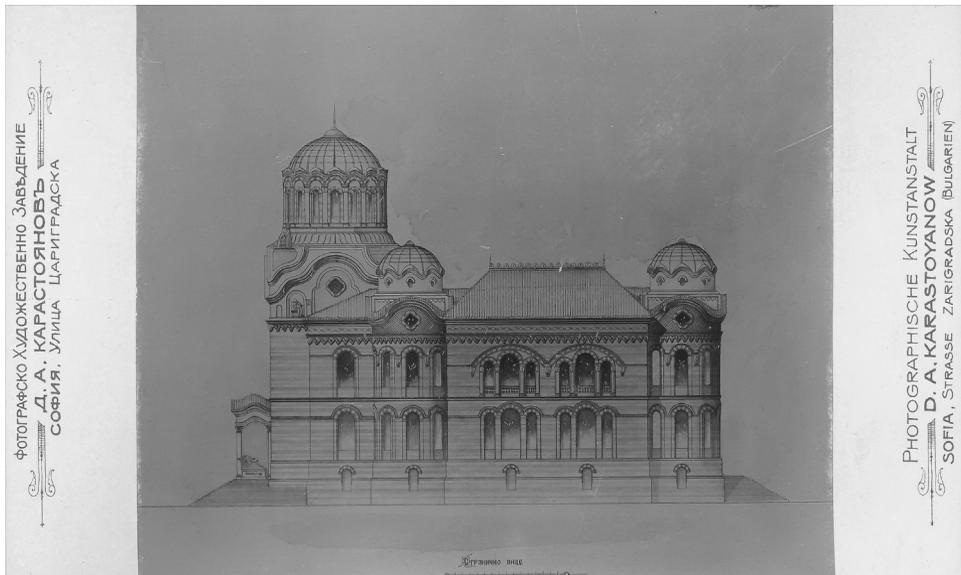


Figure 5.4 Georgi Kozarov, Competition entry (entitled ‘Rakovski’) for the Museum of the Bulgarian Revival, ca. 1900, photograph of a line drawing (National Museum of Military History Sofia, Inv. No. 14).

Source: VIF – Visualizing Family, Gender Relations and the Body, the University of Basel. <https://gams.uni-graz.at/o:vase.150>; licensed under Creative Commons (CC BY-NC-ND 3.0).

Definition of the 'Bulgarian Style'

The competition, and in an even greater measure the negotiations it generated, reoriented the architectural debate from discussion of the need to create a national Bulgarian style to the question of how to articulate it. At the start of the contest, Tornyov had commented on the requirement to design the museum in a 'Bulgarian style':

We welcomed with great joy the condition in the programme that the Museum of the Bulgarian Revival should be designed in a Bulgarian style. Many will find this decision by the committee strange, especially knowing that the Bulgarian architectural style does not exist. Yes, we will answer, there is no Bulgarian style, but there is the material from which this style can be created; we do have the elements from which the style can be formed.⁴⁷

Both the jury and the participating architects clearly regarded the competition as a conscious attempt to create a 'national style'. The committee published additional guidelines regarding the stylistic aspect which explicitly stated that the event was designed to provide 'a starting point for Bulgarian architects to study architectural elements from the Bulgarian past'.⁴⁸ It suggested that a 'Bulgarian style' should essentially be a Byzantine style, or more precisely the regional variation 'perfected' by local masters in 'the national spirit'.

For Bulgarian sources of inspiration, the organizers recommended that competitors examine manuscript illumination, carvings, jewellery and textiles. They seem to have understood the national style as something decorative and unrelated to the structural organization of buildings, believing that decorative elements could be transferred from one medium to another and scaled in size and proportion. For a 'handbook' of Byzantine architecture, competitors were directed to Jules Labarte's 1861 study of the imperial quarter of Constantinople as it appeared in the middle Byzantine period.⁴⁹ As suitable Bulgarian architectural examples, the committee listed churches and monasteries (both medieval and modern) situated in different provinces of Bulgaria, together with vernacular architecture dating from the Revival period in Tărnovo, Arbanasi, Drenovo and Tryavna. It also recommended Pavel Milyukov's study of Macedonian antiquities:⁵⁰ the very inclusion of Macedonian monuments in the list indicates the territorial and ideological views of the competition organizers. Finally, the most surprising element of the published guidelines (in light of the museum's purpose to celebrate liberation from the Ottomans) was the inclusion of Muslim architecture as a source of inspiration, with the committee arguing that Oriental motifs do not affect architecture in a negative way but 'give local colour and originality' to the buildings, provided that the architects 'mix them with other elements in a fair proportion'.⁵¹

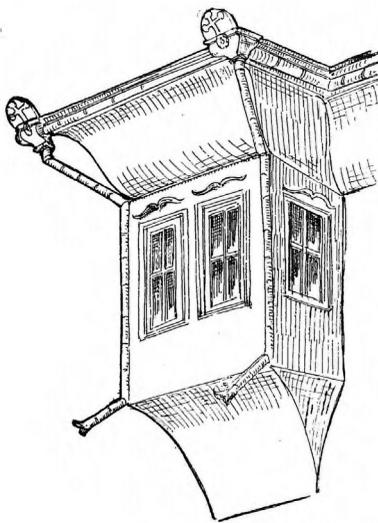
What soon became clear in the debates around what constituted a Bulgarian 'national style' was that there existed a subtle divide between academic and public perception of how this should look. If the Western-trained academic members of the committee considered the presence of Byzantine and Oriental decorative motifs sufficient for the evocation of Balkan heritage, public opinion tended to relate a 'national style' more to vernacular source elements that seemed local and authentic, if less historical. After viewing the museum competition entries, the architectural critic Dabko Usta Genchov commented: 'The Museum of the Bulgarian Revival will be a monumental building that will exist for centuries. It has to embody our medieval and modern art. In its exterior, it must undoubtedly be in the Bulgarian-Byzantine style'.⁵² In naming the style as such, he

praised participants for following medieval models of church architecture, but underlined the need to treat local tradition more attentively. For example, he highlighted the local decorative tradition of including ceramic ornaments in window frames, cornices and arches. Even more radically, he suggested that interiors should imitate the stucco decoration, frescoes, whitewash and wooden elements typical of Bulgarian houses of the Revival period. Ultimately he believed that the use of Byzantine elements was not sufficient to evoke ‘something typically Bulgarian’. Only a dose of purely vernacular (*narodno*) art could transmit the ‘poetic style’ of the Bulgarian Revival.⁵³

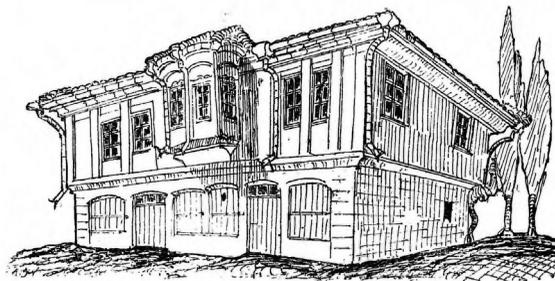
Tornyov himself, in his 1925 essay *Архитектурни мотиви из България* (Architectural Motifs in Bulgaria), directly opposed the idea that a national style should derive from Byzantine architecture and argued that ‘true’ Bulgarian art was in fact created during the period of Ottoman occupation:

On the question of where to look for material for our national style, there is a misconception in society that we will find these materials . . . before the conquest of the Bulgarians by the Turks. . . . From the materials that I have been able to study on this subject so far, I have come to the unshakable conclusion that the main, if not the exclusive, treasury that provides the characteristic forms for our national structures was created during Bulgarian enslavement under Turkish yoke. . . . Do not look for construction forms from the era of the Bulgarian kingdoms, because . . . they are purely Byzantine models that do not show any Bulgarian imprint.⁵⁴

As reflected in his own architectural projects⁵⁵ and further writings (Fig. 5.5),⁵⁶ Tornyov considered the Bulgarian national style to be eclectic in nature and to draw predominantly on the forms associated with the *Vazrazhdane*.



Фиг. 278 представлява пакъ закритъ еркеръ на Бѣленска къща, съ четверостенна форма. Интересното е тукъ, че силно издадения корнизъ е направенъ като сима. Резервоарчетата на улицитѣ сж украсени съ розетки и кръстове,



Фиг. 280. Къща въ гр. Бѣла — Общъ изгледъ

Фиг. 279 е откритъ балканъ—тремъ на Бѣленската къща, въ която е живѣлъ Царь-Освободителя, презъ Освободителната война.

Както показва рисунката, тоя тремъ-чардакъ, е съ доста сложна дървена конструкция. Подпренъ на дебели дъбови стълбове, въ долния етажъ, тоя чардакъ се

Figure 5.5 Anton Tornyov, Illustration of architectural elements in the Bulgarian style

Source: *Архитектурни мотиви из България* (Architectural Motifs in Bulgaria), 1925 (Sofia: Pechatnitsa na AVIF).

Conclusion

In the last decade of the nineteenth century, the lively public and critical interest in the competition designs for the Museum of the Bulgarian Revival opened up discussion around what a ‘national Bulgarian style’ of architecture should be, and what sources architects should draw on for inspiration. Interwar debates concerning the relationship between the concept of Bulgarian *rodni* style and vernacular architecture⁵⁷ thus have their roots in the earliest conceptions of the national style when its ideologists tried to reconcile the imitation of Byzantine historical models with vernacular elements of the Bulgarian Revival. Even if unrealized, the competition for the museum demonstrates how the public discourse of the newly emerged Bulgarian state attempted to periodize and nationalize the past in order to localize and structure the constituent blocks of identity construction and give it material manifestation through a ‘national’ language of architecture.

Notes

- * This essay was written by Anna Adashinskaya from notes left by Ada Hajdu.
- 1 For the definition of the field of practice, see Bourdieu, *Distinction*, 175, 208, 223. For its further interpretation, see Goetze, *The Distinction of Peace*, 15–39.
 - 2 The first institute for the professional training of architects was only established in 1942: Tasheva, ‘Архитект Наум Торбов’, 54. In the 1920s, Anton Mitov initiated a series of art history lectures at the State Drawing School, later renamed the Academy of Art: Bakalova, ‘Art History in Bulgaria’, 290.
 - 3 Tasheva, ‘Българското инженерно-архитектно дружество’, 219.
 - 4 Anon, ‘Устав на Българското Инженерно-Архитектно Дружество’; Stanoeva, ‘Architectural Praxis in Sofia’, 189; for a wider chronological period, see Avramov, ‘За движението “Родно изкуство”’; Vasilchina, ‘Приложното изкуство’.
 - 5 Neshov, ‘Старите и новите’; Torнуов, ‘Всесветската изложба в края на деветнадесетото столетие’; Т.А. / Торнуов (?), ‘По черквостроението в българската столица’; Торнуов, ‘Постройката на духовната академия’; Роров, ‘Въпросът за националната ни архитектура’; Коусчев, ‘Къщата, в която е живял Цар-Освободител’; Коусчев, ‘Художествените богатства на страната ни’; Zlatev, ‘Периоди в българската архитектура’.
 - 6 On the interconnection between heritage promotion and nation-building processes, see Rampley, ‘Contested Histories’.
 - 7 Marinov, ‘Чия е тази къща?’ 327–30.
 - 8 Anon, ‘Списък на сегашните български инженери и архитекти’. In 1914, the Society consisted of 37 members, including 11 architects, all of whom studied abroad: see Anon, ‘Членове на Българското Инженерно-Архитектно дружество в София’.
 - 9 The only architect who graduated in Romania was Naum Torbov; however, he studied with Ion Mincu who himself had trained in Paris: see Tasheva, ‘Архитект Наум Торбов’.
 - 10 See, for example: Lewis, *The Politics of the German Gothic Revival*; Nayrolles, *L’Invention de l’art roman à l’époque moderne*, 81–185.
 - 11 Torнуов, ‘Всесветската изложба’, 234. Partial translation in Stanoeva, ‘Architectural Praxis in Sofia’, 188; see also Hajdu, ‘The Pavilions of Greece, Serbia, Romania and Bulgaria’.
 - 12 Shamardzhiev, ‘Надгробна капела на покойния Княз Александра I-й’, 93–94.
 - 13 Shamardzhiev, *L’Architecture en Bulgarie*.
 - 14 Hajdu, ‘The Search for National Architectural Styles’, 430–33.
 - 15 Anon, ‘Обяснителна записка’, 231.
 - 16 Pantaleeva and Hristova, ‘Из дейността на комитета “Цар Освободител Александър II”’, 238; Karchev, *Признателна България*, 90. Bulgarian Historical Archive (Българският исторически архив), f. 345, containing 2 archival units.
 - 17 Anon, ‘Програмата за конкурса по въздигането Музей на българското възраждане’; Karchev, *Признателна България*, 365–66. For the programme of the competition for the

- Museum of the Bulgarian Revival, see also the fund of the Central State Archive of Bulgaria (ЦДА), f. 134, op.1, containing 435 archival units.
- 18 Anon, 'Програмата', 1; Karchev, *Признателна България*, 365.
 - 19 For the conceptualization of national revivals in the Balkans, see Vezenkov and Marinov, 'Концепцията за националното Възраждане'.
 - 20 Shishmanov, 'Увод в историята на българското Възраждане', 279–82; Yotsov, 'Път на българското възраждане'; Arnaudov, 'Дух и насоки на българското възраждане', 190–91.
 - 21 Shishmanov, 'Увод в историята', 281, 283; Discussion in Daskalov, *Как се мисли Българското възраждане*, 76–78, 166–67.
 - 22 For example, *Vazrazhdane* and Renaissance were seen as 'two epochs related in their essence' by Bogdan Filov (Filov, *Възраждането на българското изкуство*, 27) and were also explicitly compared by Jacque Natan (Natan, *Българское възраждане*, 22). See also Marinov, 'Чия е тази къща?', 332; Daskalov, *Как се мисли*, 60–66; Vezenkov and Marinov, 'Концепцията за националното Възраждане', 420–77.
 - 23 Filirov, 'Възраждане чрез литература', 565; Natan, *Българское възраждане*, 10, 22.
 - 24 Balabanov, 'По народното пробуждане'.
 - 25 Karchev, *Признателна България*, 365.
 - 26 Pantaleeva and Hristova, 'Из дейността', 234.
 - 27 Ibid.; Karchev, *Признателна България*, 365.
 - 28 Sharova, 'Музеят на Българското възраждане и освобождение', 47; Karchev, *Признателна България*, 89.
 - 29 Sharova, 'Музеят на Българското възраждане', 38; Dimitrova, 'Първи стъпки на военномузейното дело в България'.
 - 30 Baioni, *La religione della patria*; Baioni, 'I musei del Risorgimento'.
 - 31 Tarozzi, 'Dentro la storia'; Baioni, *La religione della patria*, 60–69; Correnti, *Catalogo degli oggetti esposti nel padiglione del Risorgimento Italiano*.
 - 32 Baioni, *La religione della patria*, 39–40.
 - 33 Anon, 'Програмата', 1; Anon, 'Обяснителна записка', 230; Karchev, *Признателна България*, 364–66.
 - 34 Pantaleeva and Hristova, 'Из дейността', 237; Dimitrova, 'Първи стъпки', 113; Karchev, *Признателна България*, 367.
 - 35 Sharova, 'Музеят на Българското възраждане', 33.
 - 36 Nedkov, *История на музейното дело в България*, 132–38.
 - 37 Dimitrova, 'Първи стъпки', 95–96; Karchev, *Признателна България*, 108–30.
 - 38 Pirova, *Творчество академика архитектуры А.Н. Померанцева*, 103–7.
 - 39 Filyushkin, 'Дискурсы Ливонской войны', 56.
 - 40 Paszkiewicz, 'The Russian Orthodox Cathedral of Saint Alexander Nevsky in Warsaw'.
 - 41 Kirichenko, 'Архитектор В. О. Шервуд'.
 - 42 On the ideological implications of the Byzantine style in the Russian state's architectural commissions, see Savel'ev, *Искусство историзма и государственный заказ*.
 - 43 Anon, 'Обяснителна записка', 232.
 - 44 Anon, 'Конкурс за Музея на българското възраждане'.
 - 45 Pantaleeva and Hristova, 'Из дейността', 238–40; Dimitrova, 'Първи стъпки', 113.
 - 46 Dimitrova, 'Първи стъпки', 114.
 - 47 Torņņov, 'Инвалиден дом в столицата', 24–25.
 - 48 Anon, 'Обяснителна записка', 230.
 - 49 Labarte, *Le Palais impérial de Constantinople et ses abords*.
 - 50 Milyukov, 'Християнские древности западной Македонии'.
 - 51 Anon, 'Обяснителна записка', 231.
 - 52 Usta Genchov, 'По повод на вътрешния конкурс на Музея на българското възраждане', 690.
 - 53 Ibid., 694.
 - 54 Torņņov, *Архитектурни мотиви из България*, 7.
 - 55 Bankov, 'Архитект Антон Торњњов'; Genova, *Модернизми и модерност*, 127–35.
 - 56 Marinov, 'Чия е тази къща?' 332–33; see also this chapter's bibliography.
 - 57 Marinov, 'Чия е тази къща?'; Avramov, 'За движението "Родно изкуство"'; Vasilchina, 'Приложното изкуство'.

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Part III

Our Art Is in Textbooks



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6 *Sztuka: Zarys jej dziejów* (Art: A Survey of Its History, 1872)

The Disciplinary and Political Context of Józef Łepkowski's Survey of Art History

Magdalena Kunińska

Intersecting Histories in Constructing the Unity of Central European Nations

The mechanisms of structuring art history survey textbooks can be viewed as signs of the times within the discipline's development. In the nineteenth century, such textbooks, as Mitchell Schwarzer argues, 'embodied the vision of history to unify the art of the past into a coherent and relevant story for the present'.¹ This chapter refers to *Sztuka: Zarys jej dziejów; zarazem podręcznik dla uczących się i przewodnik dla podróżujących* (Art: A Survey of Its History; A Textbook for Students as well as a Guide for Travellers), published in 1872 by Józef Łepkowski, who had been appointed as the head of Poland's first archaeology department at the Jagiellonian University, Kraków, in 1866. Łepkowski's textbook is a good starting point both for the investigation of narrative strategies and historical assumptions and as a key moment in the history of the discipline in Poland.

Throughout his career, Łepkowski adopted the strategy of transferring or 'autonomously translating' the methodological and substantive achievements of Western art history and placing them in the Polish context. It seems that one of his chief goals was to reposition Polish art within the rewritten universal history, extending the area previously covered by German research. Meanwhile, early art history in Poland pursued two main ends: on the one hand, to demonstrate the distinctive and unique characteristics of Polish art and thereby prove the autonomous status of the Polish nation;² on the other hand, to preserve its kinship with Western Europe. In the contemporary language of the Hegelian philosophy of history, Western Europe was classified as the 'dominant' civilization – although Daniel Preziosi has described it scathingly as the 'brain of the Earth's body'.³ Łepkowski's *Sztuka: Zarys jej dziejów* is no exception to this. The author divided the development of art into broadly defined periods, whose rhythm was marked by stylistic changes. This approach was somewhat problematic, making it especially difficult to appropriately position Islamic, Byzantine and post-Byzantine art, among others. Thus, Łepkowski shared the perspective of the German *allgemeine Kunstgeschichte* (general art history) textbooks by Karl Schnaase, Franz Kugler, Anton Springer and Wilhelm Lübke, which served as his main reference points. More importantly, his work was the first and only survey of its kind: the next generation of academic art historians rejected survey texts in favour of monographs on individual monuments which, moreover, were limited mainly to Polish examples. The first of these was the 1876 monograph on the ruins at Ostrów Lednicki by Marian Sokołowski, who

would enjoy a brilliant career as Poland's first professor of art history.⁴ The publishing of Łepkowski's survey marked an important stage compared to the previous period in Poland, which was dominated mainly by the Hegelian philosophy of art history propagated by Józef Kremer, as well as by the attempts of patriotically oriented amateurs such as Franciszek Sobieszczanski and Józef Kraszewski. That said, a reflection on *Sztuka: Zarys jej dziejów* may shed new light on the history of 'entangled' art history, as well as on methods of conducting historical research into art.

The nineteenth century, and particularly its second half (in the case of the Habsburg Empire, after 1867), has been described by József Sisa as the period of discovering 'the lost Centre',⁵ with 'exponents of universal or museum-based art history [being] unanimous in their assertion that there was no such thing as the development of a separate Hungarian ([Polish], Danish, French, Romanian, or any other "national") style'.⁶ The 'discourses and strategies' of that period, as Jan Bakoš describes them,⁷ have been the subject of extensive discussions in the last 20 years.

Survey textbooks can be treated as one of the media used to create the 'imagined community'⁸ of a nation, in a similar fashion to the recently analysed institutional and social role of museums and their 'age'. The authors of two volumes dedicated to the latter topic – Matthew Rampley, Markian Prokopovych and Nóra Veszprémi – assume that a construed unity of the arts (and of a nation) functions above and alongside class and gender divisions, thus emphasizing their role in unifying the nation.⁹ Łepkowski's textbook, published by the candidly named Wydawnictwo Dziel Tanich i Pożytecznych (The Publishing House of Cheap and Useful Works), focused on educational tenets and addressed a wide audience:

I shall not speak of contemporary artists, whether foreign or Polish. In my selection of 104 wood engravings to illustrate the discussion, I avoided nudity for the sake of the educational merits of the book; for the same reason, when listing paintings and sculptures in the text, I omitted those that portray gross sensuality or offensive salaciousness.¹⁰

Following in the footsteps of Anton Springer's vastly popular *Handbuch der Kunstgeschichte: Zum Gebrauche für Künstler und Studierende und als Führer auf der Reise* (Handbook of Art History: For Use by Artists and Students and as a Travel Guide; 1855), Łepkowski propagated a specific way of approaching art, advising his reader to travel to places covered by the book and included in the 'List of locations where valuable monuments are situated (this list can be used as a guide during travels with the purpose of viewing relics of art)'.¹¹ This entertainment-oriented aspect of culture and national heritage is something that attracts ever greater interest today. Rampley has discussed how, with the exception of narratives imposed by museum displays, audiences created their own alternative modes of perception.¹²

Surprisingly, the titles of most of the works dedicated to the aforementioned topics include wording that emphasizes agency, activity or inventiveness: from *Motherland and Progress*,¹³ *La fabrique de l'art nationale* (The Factory of National Art)¹⁴ and 'Writing and Displaying Nations',¹⁵ through *Manufacturing Middle Ages*,¹⁶ to searching for the genesis of art history in *Les invasions barbares* (Barbarian Invasions),¹⁷ this tendency is consistent across the European intellectual field. It is no accident that this chapter opens Part III of this volume titled 'Our Art Is in Textbooks'. It will begin by reflecting on the nature of how we read textbooks, as well as on the central notions

which in the last 25 years have shifted from geographical concepts, that generally question the centre–periphery model, towards research into the temporal models present in historiographic narrations, as well as into the constructed nature of periodization in the history of art. This part of the book also features discussions of ways in which Poland drifted towards the West, modes of periodization in the history of Estonian architecture¹⁸ and the difficult heritage of Croatia,¹⁹ offering a range of examples of coexisting competitive discourses about monuments.

The aforementioned countries built their national identity on a couple of easily noticeable mechanisms: self-Easternization and self-Westernization. Scientific exchange was subject to the same mechanisms: from the asymmetrical influence of academic centres dominated by Germany and France, which maintained ‘peripheral’ narrations, to more diffuse contact networks between scholars, which merit investigation according to the network model suggested by, for example, Lucila Mallart-Romero, which maps direct exchange and the spread of thought.²⁰ Łepkowski consciously refers to the asymmetrical relationship arising from the sources of thought he selected.

A Few General Remarks on Reading Survey Textbooks: The Problem with Universality

Neither in knowledge nor in reflection can anything whole be put together, since in the former the internal is missing and in the latter the external; and so we must necessarily think of science as art if we expect to derive any kind of wholeness from it. Nor should we look for this in the general, the excessive, but, since art is always wholly represented in every individual work of art, so science ought to reveal itself completely in every individual object treated.²¹

Taking these words from Johann Wolfgang von Goethe’s *Materialien zur Geschichte der Farbenlehre*²² (Materials on the History of Colour Theory, 1810) as a motto for his critical prologue on epistemology written in the 1920s, Walter Benjamin goes on to argue:

The value of fragments of thought is all the greater the less direct their relationship to the underlying idea, and the brilliance of the representation depends as much on this value as the brilliance of the mosaic does on the quality of the glass paste. The relationship between the minute precision of the work and the proportions of the sculptural or intellectual whole demonstrates that truth content is only to be grasped through immersion in the most minute details of subject-matter. In their supreme, western, form the mosaic and the treatise are products of the Middle Ages; it is their very real affinity which makes comparison possible.²³

It has been 25 years since the structure of survey texts on art history, such as Horst Waldemar Janson’s *History of Art* (1962),²⁴ was questioned by Robert Nelson and others.²⁵ Nelson was writing at a time of critical reflection on the beginnings of the discipline, which took place in the postmodern and postcolonial period. It became obvious that the previous model was strongly Western and, more generally, that investigating the past is never neutral, as it always serves non-scientific (e.g. political, nationalist) ends. The history of surveys dates back to the middle of the nineteenth

century in Germany, when survey texts (by Kugler, Schnaase and most popularly by Lübke and Springer) were the crowning achievement of the so-called *allgemeine Kunstgeschichte*. The struggle to define a new paradigm offered a good opportunity to present the strategies and mechanisms of those texts. Nelson presents the methods of evaluating and positioning Byzantine art in the nineteenth century as a good example of the general paradigm practice of art history. He does not address a specific critical strategy, but rather pictures ‘the deepest structures’²⁶ organizing knowledge, the ‘taxonomy to which we have adjusted our courses, our research’. Because ‘we have been satisfied to work within the paradigm, we have rarely questioned its limits or the processes of organizing and controlling knowledge’.²⁷ In the wake of Michel Foucault, archaeology has attempted to trace the notions lying ‘on the level of disciplinary unconsciousness’.²⁸ A second aspect of disciplinary discourse was addressed by Mitchell Schwarzer, who demonstrated the mechanisms and strategies of general surveys of the history of art.²⁹

Nelson’s voice is part of the American discussion on the new ways of investigating art history, which yielded a special issue of the *Art Journal* in 1995.³⁰ Dedicated to teaching general art history, the entire issue, as well as its introductory essay, shared the same title: *Rethinking the Introductory Art History Survey*. The vast phenomenon of the emergence of such structures of survey textbooks and debates on decolonization crushed the mechanisms behind the unquestionable monolith of Western art. We are currently witnessing a shift in art historical research towards the global, also covering such matters as the artist–user/recipient relationship.

The hegemony of the German cultural and historical view of art as an expression of historical forces is being rejected in historiography. Left-oriented researchers exploited the concepts created by Foucault to the extent that they were accused of blindly following his model in their analyses. However, as demonstrated by the Polish case and by research into conceptualization of the national discourse in Hungary conducted by, among others, Edit András,³¹ critical analysis of existing art history narratives in Central and Eastern Europe is still a thriving research topic.

Chronos and Aion

A worldwide discussion of disciplinary models was a fruitful moment for the analysis and archaeology of research and its ‘ancestors’, the forerunners of which were Foucault with his *The Order of Things* (1966) and, of course, Jorge Luis Borges and the map – territory metaphor used in ‘fiction’ under the title ‘On Exactitude in Science’. Here we read:

In that Empire, the craft of Cartography attained such Perfection that the Map of a Single province covered the space of an entire City, and the Map of the Empire itself an entire Province. In the course of Time, these Extensive maps were found somehow wanting, and so the College of Cartographers evolved a Map of the Empire that was of the same Scale as the Empire and that coincided with it point for point.³²

Simultaneously, poststructuralist critique was a starting point for the analysis of textbooks and surveys treated as belonging to a specific *genre*. As described by Dan Karholm, they used from the very beginning ‘the art of [creating] illusion’.³³ When discussing

the first published art historical survey by Franz Kugler,³⁴ Karlholm defines a certain discourse practice and, at the same time, the result of a semiotic practice. These strategies and structures, whatever they may be called, are a part of art history. The focus on tracing naturalized rationales for creating a world map of art led to a variety of suggestions. A first group of these questioned the existing Eurocentric and Western-centric model. A second strove to widen the range of art to be exhibited and analysed. A third model was Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann's concept of the geography of art history, underpinned by a materialist rationale,³⁵ which resulted in works on the circulation of objects³⁶ and the digital mapping strategies put forward by the 'Artl@s' project.³⁷ These scholarly endeavours also stemmed from a materialist, 'agential' approach.

Currently, the discourse tends to focus on temporality, which appears, among others, in works by Keith Moxey. In his 2013 volume *Visual Time*, Moxey states:

The thrust of my argument, addressed at the current shape of art history, has been fuelled by a growing awareness of the provincialism of its Eurocentric bias. This awareness prompted me to pursue the idea that heterochrony might be a way of articulating resistance to a subscription to a 'universal' form of time.³⁸

Disappointed with the current situation, Moxey poses general questions: 'Where and when is the time of the history of art? . . . What are the prospects for a world or a global art history in circumstances that recognize the incommensurability of different national and cultural traditions?'³⁹ Significantly, precursors of this renewed art history paradigm included Aby Warburg and Walter Benjamin. Matthew Rampley has recently demonstrated that Warburg was the sole historical figure of significance for the discipline, as an inspiration for attempts to break through existing structures.⁴⁰ Nowadays, attempts to question the structure of historical knowledge and Warburg's legacy are approached from the viewpoint of temporality and its modes of time, and the focus is on anachronic or hetero-temporal models.

Georges Didi-Huberman, tirelessly shattering the 'Kantian cage' of rationally structured art history, pointed this out in the subtitle of *The Surviving Image: Phantoms of Time and Time of Phantoms; Aby Warburg's History of Art* (2016) as well as in *Atlas, or the Anxious Gay Science* (2018; 2021 in Polish). We should bear in mind, however, that the concept of Chronos was combined with a naturalized concept of style. As Willibald Sauerländer wrote in his 1983 essay 'From Stilis to Style', connecting the concept of style with a specific concept of time

brought this evolution to its climax. But let us once more recall: there is one fateful turning-point in this long process, the moment when in the age of Enlightenment style was linked with the idea of periodization, evolution, progress. Needless to repeat it was only then that the notion of style was changed from an instrument for art appreciation or better art theory into a tool for art history. Art history could never have come to life without this fateful interconnection of Stilis and Chronos. The whole system of our discipline has been erected on this crossroad of style and time by an ever growing accumulation of comparative material. And yet it is just in this fateful encounter with time that the notion of style is only too easily transformed from an instrument of description, classification, and rational understanding into a medium of revelation, that it can become a kind of spirit, which acts before the fascinated regard of the art-historical public on the stage of history.⁴¹

Didi-Huberman, in turn, offered an analysis of the atlas from the perspective of differed temporality; based on conclusions drawn from the Babylonian hepatoscopy model shown on the first chart, he pictured the art history model practised by Warburg as a section, a cut in the traditional education model existing in Germany, encapsulating the history of art in a smooth line of successive stylistic changes (it is hard to resist the temptation to evoke James Elkins's title *Our Beautiful, Dry and Distant Texts: Art History as Writing*). By suggesting a new heuristic strategy – variable non-petrified tables of relations connecting to form constellations – Warburg proposed a new model of temporality. As noted by Didi-Huberman, a crucial point in Aby Warburg's evaluation of art history as a science is his concept of 'the distributions of time (where the archaeological point of view disassembles the chronological certitudes) and, finally, the units of representation (since, in both cases, it is the tableau classique that will be shaken to its foundations)'.⁴² He also emphasizes the breakdown of the existing framework, referring to the 'birthplace' of Foucault's thought – the fiction of Borges:

This book [*Les mots et les choses*, or *The Order of Things* in English] first arose out of a passage in Borges, out of the laughter that shattered, as I read the passage, all the familiar landmarks of my thought – *our* thought, the thought that bears the stamp of our age and our geography, while breaking up all the ordered surfaces and all the planes with which we are accustomed to tame the wild profusion of existing things, and continuing long afterwards to disturb and threaten with collapse our age-old distinction between the Same and the Other.⁴³

Moreover, Didi-Huberman's analysis does more than to point out the constructionally and historically conditioned structure of knowledge; using Gilles Deleuze's and Félix Guattari's rootstock concept, he also notices underground presuppositions which are decisive for this structure but live in a different, uncountable time dimension. According to Deleuze, classical art history is bound to Chronos (let us remember Sauerländer here).

Concepts of Art and Temporality in Józef Łepkowski's Survey

As a way of linking the reading of Łepkowski's work into the analysis of existing temporalities, I suggest starting from the Halbwachsian concept of remembrance, understood as 'a reconstruction of the past achieved with data borrowed from the present, a reconstruction prepared, furthermore, by reconstruction of earlier periods wherein past images had already been altered'.⁴⁴ It is a concept also used by Moxey, as well as in Susanne Stewart's analysis of poetic works.⁴⁵ In his 1847 book *Starożytności i pomniki Krakowa* (Antiques and Monuments of Kraków), Łepkowski writes:

A grey-haired old man looks over his shoulder, he reminisces about the memories of feelings lingering as souvenirs recalled from his youth; enlivened by youthful ardour, he is happy to revive past images in his memory. Even the remembrance of the suffering he endured fills him with sweet delight. If our past is so dear to us today, with what diligence and zeal should we preserve memories left to us by our ancestors! Moreover, any enlightened nation would value them greatly, not only as memories, but as relics of art.⁴⁶

Łepkowski noticeably emphasizes the emotionality of looking back. Recalling memories of art gives them voice, as the concept of monuments speaking the specific language

of a witness to history is already present in the tale of a nation's life story and very well established in historiography. In his case, it is accompanied by the following motto: 'New buildings say nothing. Ruins – they speak'.⁴⁷

As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, Łepkowski's *Sztuka: Zarys jej dziejów* is a good starting point from which to analyse historical discourse about art as it was conducted in Poland in the past. It reveals narrative strategies and historical assumptions made by Łepkowski, while also serving as a point of reference for the history of the discipline in Poland. Throughout his career, Łepkowski assumed the specific strategy of transferring or 'autonomously translating' the methodological and factual achievements of Western art history to Polish art; in a broader sense, this can be described as an auto-colonizing discourse. The sources are easy to recognize and the author lists them at the beginning of his survey:

This book of mine can be put into the hand of a young boy or girl. It is a primer for the attributes and history of art, written for the first time in the Polish language. It could, perhaps, fulfil any and all requirements if, continuously updated, it were to be republished more than a dozen times (like the German textbook by Lübke). The first editions of works by Otte, Springer or Lübke, published 17 years ago, can be deemed insignificant in view of today's editions of the same books.⁴⁸

It seems that one of Łepkowski's main goals was to place Polish art within the newly written universal art history and to extend the area previously covered by German research; as demonstrated by Matthew Rampley, this was a strategy typical of the time.⁴⁹ Łepkowski's intention recalls the work of Rudolf Eitelberger von Edelberg who, at the very beginning of his scholarly career, embarked on a project to research the areas of Austrian-Hungary Empire that had not been dealt with in Franz Kugler's textbook. Łepkowski's research strategy is outlined in a letter to Edward Rastawiecki, dated 16 September 1850, which he wrote after the publication of the first volume of Rastawiecki's *Słownik malarzów polskich tudzież obcych w Polsce osiadłych lub czasowo w niej przebywających* (Dictionary of Polish Painters and Foreigners Who Have Settled in Poland or Stayed Temporarily; 1850).⁵⁰ Łepkowski thanks Rastawiecki for a reference and for sending him his book; in his opinion, the topic is too short in some places, but he acknowledges that 'it is we, the boring archaeologists, who cherish the many details and minutiae, which may not perhaps suit the taste of a general audience'.⁵¹

Creating a textbook in which carefully selected Polish monuments are 'added' to the general history of art was an act of political involvement. The early history of Polish art committed itself to the double task of demonstrating the distinctive and unique character of the country's art, thus proving the autonomous status of the nation, but still preserving its relationship with Western Europe. Creating a survey also requires pursuing a specific path within the philosophy of history, as well as implementing a chosen concept of periodization for the history of art. Łepkowski's *Sztuka: Zarys jej dziejów* is not an exception to this. The author constructs art history, dividing it into the two most generally defined periods of development: the Christian and the pre-Christian period. Each of these general periods is then in turn periodized according to the rhythm of stylistic changes. In Łepkowski's time, the assumptions of art history, more or less openly referring to Hegelian philosophy, were already naturalized to a large extent. Łepkowski's language refers to the history of style as a presentation of spiritual development without the need for additional justification. Łepkowski's

choice of the Hegelian paradigm came from his exposure to the writings and lectures of the influential philosopher and aesthetician Józef Kremer, who brought the structure of Hegelian historiosophy to Poland. Łepkowski thus defines art history as an organizing strategy:

The history of the fine arts is related to aesthetics in the same way as, for example, natural history is related to physiology. It organizes works of art according to external qualities; it classifies and arranges them according to ages or nations – and then it aligns them according to certain prominent features or attributes (styles), which it calls schools. Descriptions of masterpieces of art, lives of artists, motions, courses, ways, directions which the arts followed also belong to the history of fine art – whereas the very countenance of art, the eternal thought emanating from it, is the subject of the philosophy of fine art.⁵²

Further on he writes:

As regards the distribution and division of the fine arts, they, or rather their philosophy, are distributed or divided by those who think and write about them. Some base their division on the material through which art presents itself, dividing it into plastic and ideal arts. The former comprise architecture, sculpture, and painting, which embody their thought in tangible materials. The ideal arts include music, poetry, and rhetoric, because their thread and material are voice and tone. It is here that thought masters the material and conquers it entirely; independent of it, it has it under its full power. Instead of material, others divided fine arts according to whether they manifest themselves in space or in time. Lamennais derived his division from the unity of God. Hegel puts symbolic arts first, where the spirit has not yet combined its thought with the material, but still it looms over it – where the work of art exists.⁵³

Finally, Łepkowski identifies directly with Hegelian thought. Hegel's philosophy, which underpinned most art historical discourse in the nineteenth century, derived its periodization schema from the teleological notion of *Geist* (spirit). In his lectures on aesthetics, Hegel naturalized the periodization of the symbolic, classic and romantic (or Christian) eras.⁵⁴ In this context, we read in Łepkowski's work:

At that time, art was merely a symbol of thought. This was the character of the arts of Egypt and of the Eastern peoples. In the second stage of the development of the spirit, it comprised classical arts – an absolute connection, a union, a fusion of thought and material, the most beautiful harmony of both form and content, the idea of beauty made real. Such were the fine arts of the Greeks. . . . Finally, the third and highest level to which the fine arts have risen is called romantic art. In the combined harmony of the classical arts, thought drowned in the material; romantic art, on the other hand, evokes thought: thought rules material and masters it, and works of art are dominated by spirituality. This form of art was prepared by Christianity and the age of the knights. Thus, according to Hegel, every single art form went through, and developed within, these three positions: symbolism, classicism and romanticism.

Łepkowski places architecture at the centre of his thinking, which is also typical of his time: 'Architecture is always symbolic, as it is the dwelling place of the spirit; sculpture is classical, as it is the harmony of matter and spirit; painting, music and poetry are romantic, as they are dominated by spirituality'. This approach allows Łepkowski to justify the assumed periodization model: 'A more comprehensible division, however, seems to be the distribution of particular arts and of their development in time'. He divides them as follows:

Architecture is the shield, the shell, the bedrock in which thought is sealed; from there, the human figure is yet to emerge. Sculpture is a manufactured figure of man, but it is still cold. Painting warms the figure up with colours and endows it with warmth and life. . . . This is the first heavenly call of beauty which is incorporated into life itself.⁵⁵

Łepkowski's approach is accompanied by an organic concept of style, which he defines as follows: 'The same secular stylistic attributes were conveyed through all details, the slightest device, the attire, even the crafted article'.⁵⁶

One of the most important aspects of the creation of 'national' narratives in the history of Central European art was reference to medieval ideals. Michela Passini, in *La fabrique de l'art national: Le nationalisme et les origines de l'histoire de l'art en France et en Allemagne, 1870–1933* (The Factory of National Art: Nationalism and the Origins of History of Art in France and Germany, 1870–1933; 2012), has discussed how the search for ideal models in local variants of the Gothic and, in particular, in the Romanesque style was a reaction to the hegemony of post-Napoleonic French discourse in Classical art. Łepkowski addresses the Romanesque style as follows:

The Romanesque style emerged in the West from the shoot of early Roman Christianity; it was nurtured by the Christian way of life that developed in the Middle Ages. The characteristics of this architecture were influenced by the different directions taken by various nations. It is called Romanesque due to its source, in a similar way to our naming of languages that derive from Latin. This style was cultivated from the end of the tenth century (almost since 1000 AD) to nearly the middle of the thirteenth century by all Roman Catholic nations. The clergy, in particular brotherhoods of monks, developed the Romanesque manner of building. This was sometimes called 'round-arched', since the round-headed arch was one of its characteristic features.⁵⁷

Research into local Romanesque styles accorded well with the institutional interests of art history in the Habsburg Empire, especially in the work of Rudolf Eitelberger von Edelberg, who, as early as 1856, pointed out how the Romanesque style differed from the Byzantine.⁵⁸ The frustration caused by the 1848 Spring of Nations, combined with Czech resentment towards imperial policies, meant that research into the medieval architecture of Bohemia actually took place in Hungary in the 1850s, led by the Austrian Institute of Historical Research. But the phenomenon was happening across the whole of Europe; in Catalonia, for example, Josep Puig i Cadafalch was still working on the local Romanesque architecture at the start of the twentieth century. In Poland, Władysław Łuszczkiewicz strove to win recognition for Romanesque art within the

European landscape, while a few years later, Marian Sokołowski's research into the Romanesque style would focus on the Ruthenian 'close other'.

The struggle to create a Polish (i.e. European, in light of the German-centric character of the early years of the discipline) identity led to the rejection and exoticization of non-European art. While a contemporary evaluation of this strategy might associate it with the phenomenon of orientalism as defined by Edward Said, we should be careful when expressing such evaluations if we understand orientalism as 'the strategy of helping the West in defining itself by constructing an Other whose features were understood as the opposite of the West'.⁵⁹ Moreover, the political context of divided Poland reveals questions around defining a nation that were typical of this period. In this context, Łepkowski could be said to presage the perspective later described by Larry Wolff in *Inventing Eastern Europe: The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment* (1994; published in Polish in 2020), as well as the approach of Pheng Cheah, who investigates the unstable opposition between the national and the global from a historical perspective in *What Is a World? On Postcolonial Literature as World Literature* (2015).

General Assumptions About the Character of Art and Counter-Periodization

Józef Łepkowski defines art as an autonomous unity manifesting itself in history, which

like the sun, illuminated with its midday radiance everything it could reach with its influence. Thus, the intricate decoration of a woman's gown, a tool, an iron fitting or a grate all could and can be marked with art, just as a person's character can be marked with style. Hence we meet the cradles of art in the results of archaeological research at the graves of peoples from the most distant past. Fine art used any and all materials – and the spirit sought ideas in the stars of the sky, the calicles of flowers, the colours of butterflies' wings, and in the world of all creatures – creating beauty in sculpture, in painting, and above all in architecture (which encompasses sculpture and painting and is filled with them).⁶⁰

Łepkowski defines periods of stylistic development according to deep-rooted biological metaphors, such as 'new-born' or the 'initial', 'mature' and 'final' stage. Sometimes this results in problems with the proper positioning of art forms: for example, Islamic art is treated as an interlude within, or even as a deviation from, the 'correct' path. This is one of the moments where the borrowed forms of Western periodization show their inadequacy:

Although we are talking about Christian styles, we shall pause our disquisition here to go off course and mention Islamic architecture, describing how it was developed by Muslim peoples. This pause is justified for the sake of contemporaneity, as the style began to develop from the eighth century onwards. Ultimately, it is difficult to omit, since the influence of motifs of the Early Christian and Byzantine style in particular can be noticed in these buildings. Christian baptism worked here as well [Łepkowski thus shows the influence of Christianity] and put its stamp on this art.⁶¹

Here, Łepkowski, a Catholic believer, refers directly to the doctrine of Hugues-Félicité-Robert de Lamennais (1782–1854) which was popular throughout Europe and advocated a common rational sense present in Christianity.

The second typical break in the rhythm of successive periods marked by stylistic changes is that of Byzantine and post-Byzantine art, which seem to be frozen in time. Łepkowski emphasizes this through a rhetoric derived from the philosophical geography of the world developed by Hegel and Jacob Burckhardt⁶²:

[Their art was] bound by prescriptions, a rather assumed custom, a necessary time-honoured form. Hence the silhouettes of saints, in paintings or in mosaics, are stiff and silent, frozen into one hieratic form for ages past. In spite of the gold and the azure, the deathliness of the mummies hits the viewer in the eye. They are flashy figures who have freed themselves from their earthly bonds. Thus, they are not surrounded by bushes or flowers, nor are they standing against a background of mountains or beautiful nature. Instead, those incapable of the true art that conjoins heaven and earth dressed them with gems. This art was brought to us with the Greek rites, so we can observe its characteristics even in Wawel Castle in paintings from the vault of the Jagiellonian chapel, also known as the Chapel of the Holy Cross.⁶³

This passage makes clear the prejudices then present in Polish art historiography. Łepkowski's first-hand experience of this chapel forced him somehow to explain this 'Byzantine' art. Deliberately overlooking how it hybridized with Gothic architecture, he insisted on separating it from 'proper' Polish art, understood as belonging to the Western tradition. This is a view which Łepkowski shared with the so-called *allgemeine Kunstgeschichte* (general art history) textbooks: Schnaase, Kugler, Springer and Lübke remain the reference points for the first and only Polish survey of this kind.

The final example which does not fit into standard categories of periodization for Łepkowski is wooden architecture, which he inscribes into the material and nature-based heritage of the nation, again with direct reference to the ideas of Schnaase and Lübke. Łepkowski treats this kind of architecture as existing outside the general rhythm of periodization, highlighting instead its local distinctiveness:

We have our own terminology for carpentry. It seems that the very nature of our country put an axe into the hands of the builders of our homes and churches. At the moment when nature endowed nations with climate, colour and richness, other peoples were given hotter skies and their lands were blessed with gold and precious stones; we, on the other hand, were given lead-coloured clouds. . . . This character of our land and the historical direction of our nation probably led to the distinctive characteristics of our art relics.⁶⁴

Conclusion

The generation of institutionally trained art historians who followed Łepkowski abandoned the survey approach in favour of monographs on individual monuments. Łepkowski's work remains a document of the discipline's history: published in 1872, at a time when German surveys enjoyed vast popularity and multiple editions, it was an important stage in the discipline's development in Poland, compared to the previous

period which had been dominated mainly by the Hegelian approach to art history propagated by Józef Kremer, as well as by the attempts of patriotically oriented amateurs such as Franciszek Sobieszcański or Józef Kraszewski. A year after Łepkowski's book, the first Congress of Art Historians gathered in Vienna and, as articulated in a letter sent by Karl Schnaase to its participants, attempted to define the tasks of the discipline and to go beyond the old model of 'general art history'.⁶⁵

Reflecting on *Sztuka: Zarys jej dziejów* can shed new light on the history of the convoluted methods and manners of conducting historical research on art. The book opens the door to critical reconstruction of auto-colonizing discourses in the history of style, discourses which attempted to fit in with the general periodization schema of Western art. In so doing, it simultaneously excluded a major part of the region's legacy from art history, in a work written from a Catholic rather than from a Christian point of view.

After the First World War, newly independent countries in East Central Europe made efforts to codify their national heritage – with more or less express or explicit premises. Polish examples of this include Michał Walicki and Stefan Starzyński's study *Dzieje sztuki polskiej* (The History of Polish Art, 1934). They attempted to synthesize art from across the lands of the newly established country in a unified, transparent way, all the while maintaining a guarded approach towards the art of minorities. In so doing, they created new fields for 'histoires croisées', in the terminology of Werner and Zimmermann.

Notes

- 1 Schwarzer, 'Origins of the Art History Survey Text', 24.
- 2 'Nation' is understood here as defined initially by Johann Gottfried von Herder and later elaborated in Alain Finkielkraut's concept of the intra-national genesis of shared value systems. On Herder's concept of nation, see Barnard, *Herder on Nationality*, esp. 38–64. For the first formulation of a concept of nation united by Volksgeist, see Herder, *Auf eine Philosophie der Geschichte*. See also Finkielkraut, *The Undoing of Thought*, 12. For the relationship between the general concept of 'nation' and attempts to create 'national styles', see, for example, Moravánszky, 'Searching for the National Styles', esp. 241–42.
- 3 See the title of the collected Slade Lectures: Preziosi, *Brain of the Earth's Body*. Preziosi's concept is also addressed by Rampley, Prokopovych and Veszprémi, *The Museum Age in Austria-Hungary*.
- 4 Sokołowski, *Ruiny na Ostrowie Jeziora Lednicy*; for Sokołowski's research, see Kunińska, *Historia sztuki Mariana Sokołowskiego*; in English: Kunińska, 'Marian Sokołowski'.
- 5 Sisa, *Motherland and Progress*, 34.
- 6 *Ibid.*, 28.
- 7 The phrase chosen by the Slovak art historian to describe the processual character underpinning the creation of art history in East Central Europe: see Bakoš, *Discourses and Strategies*.
- 8 The concept appears in the title of the influential book by Anderson, *Imagined Communities*.
- 9 Rampley, Prokopovych and Veszprémi, *The Museum Age in Austria-Hungary*; Rampley, Prokopovych and Veszprémi, *Liberalism, Nationalism and Design Reform*.
- 10 Łepkowski, *Sztuka*, iii.
- 11 Łepkowski, *Sztuka*, part II, starting with page liii.
- 12 Rampley, 'Introduction', in *The Museum Age in Austria-Hungary*, eds. Rampley, Prokopovych, and Veszprémi, 1–16.
- 13 See Sisa, *Motherland and Progress*.
- 14 Passini, *La fabrique de l'art national*.
- 15 Filipová, 'Writing and Displaying Nations'.

- 16 Geary and Klaniczay, *Manufacturing Middle Ages*.
- 17 Michaud, *Barbarian Invasions*.
- 18 See Chapter 7 by Kristina Jöekalda in this volume.
- 19 See Chapter 8 by Dubravka Botica in this volume.
- 20 See, for example, Mallart Romero, 'Josep Puig i Cadafalch and the European Periphery'.
- 21 Goethe, *Materialen zur Geschichte der Farbenlehre*, quoted in Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, 27.
- 22 Goethe, *Sämtliche Werke*, vol. 11. See Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, 29.
- 23 *Ibid.*, 29.
- 24 Janson, *History of Art*. Strategies incorporated there are referred to by Patricia Hills as 'hidden persuaders'. Hills, 'Art History Textbooks'.
- 25 See, for example, Nelson, 'Living on the Byzantine Borders'; Nelson, 'The Map of Art History'. For the purposes of this volume, it is also significant that reflection on the underpinning concepts and maps of art history started in Byzantine-oriented studies, which were deprived of the analogous tools of stylistic change used in simplistic Hegelian-rooted historiography.
- 26 Nelson, 'Living on the Byzantine Borders', esp. 4
- 27 *Ibid.*, 3.
- 28 Nelson, 'The Map of Art History', 28. The whole article is based on Michel Foucault's concept of the archaeology of knowledge.
- 29 Schwarzer, 'Origins of the Art History Survey Text'.
- 30 *Rethinking the Introductory Art History Survey*.
- 31 See, for example, András, 'Hungary in Focus'.
- 32 Borges, 'On Exactitude in Science', in *A Universal History of Infamy*, 131. The quote was ascribed by Borges to *Travels of Praiseworthy Men* by J. A. Suárez Miranda, but in fact it was created by Borges himself and Adolfo Bioy Casares in 1946.
- 33 Karlholm, *Art of Illusion*.
- 34 Kugler, *Handbuch der Kunstgeschichte*, as analysed by Karlholm in *Art of Illusion*.
- 35 See, in particular, Kaufmann, *Toward a Geography of Art*.
- 36 See Kaufmann, Dossin and Joyeux-Prunel, *Circulations in the Global History of Art*.
- 37 Artl@s, accessed November 12, 2021, <https://artlas.huma-num.fr/en/about/>.
- 38 Moxey, *Visual Time*, xi.
- 39 *Ibid.*, 1.
- 40 Rampley, 'Agency, Affect and Intention', 2–3.
- 41 Sauerländer, 'From Stilus to Style', 266.
- 42 Didi-Huberman, *Atlas*, 46.
- 43 *Ibid.*, 50, citing Foucault, *The Order of Things*, XV.
- 44 Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*. Cited in Moxey, *The Practice of Persuasion*, 42.
- 45 Moxey, *The Practice of Persuasion*; Stewart, *The Poet's Freedom*.
- 46 Łepkowski, *Starożytności i pomniki Krakowa*, 1.
- 47 *Ibid.*, 1.
- 48 Łepkowski, *Sztuka*, I.
- 49 See Rampley, *The Vienna School of Art History*, 51.
- 50 Rastawiecki, *Słownik malarzów polskich*. Rastawiecki was also the author of the *Mappografia dawnej Polski* (Cartographic Description of the Old Poland), published in 1846.
- 51 Łepkowski, Letter to Edward Rastawiecki, 16 September 1850.
- 52 Łepkowski, *Sztuka*, 87. For a description of the Holy Cross Chapel in Kraków Cathedral, see Różycka-Bryzek, 'Bizantyńsko-ruskie malowidła'.
- 53 Łepkowski, *Sztuka*, 20–21.
- 54 See Hegel, *Aesthetics*. For a Polish response, see Kunińska, 'Rówieńczy'.
- 55 Łepkowski, *Sztuka*, 15.
- 56 *Ibid.*, 16.
- 57 *Ibid.*, 95.
- 58 Eitelberger von Edelberg, 'Zur Orientierung auf dem Gebiete der Baukunst'.
- 59 Said, *Orientalism*, 2.
- 60 Łepkowski, *Sztuka*, 5.

61 *Ibid.*, 90.

62 For Burckhardt's evaluation of the Byzantine world, see Burckhardt, *The Age of Constantine the Great*, 345: 'At its [the Empire's] summit was despotism, infinitely strengthened by the union of churchly and secular dominion; in the place of morality it imposed orthodoxy; in the place of unbridled and demoralized expression of the natural instincts, hypocrisy and pretense; in the face of despotism greed masquerading as poverty developed, and deep cunning; in religious art and literature there was an incredible stubbornness in the constant repetition of obsolete motifs'.

63 Łepkowski, *Sztuka*, 163.

64 *Ibid.*, 163.

65 See Rampley, 'The Idea of a Scientific Discipline'. See also Rampley, 'Chapter 1: Founding a Discipline: Liberalism and the Idea of Scientific Method', in *The Vienna School of Art History*, 26–68.

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7 German Medievalism and Estonian Contemporaneity

Centre, Periphery and Periodization in the Histories of Baltic and Estonian Art, 1880s–1930s*

Kristina Jõekalda

Introduction: Peripheries of Research

According to a powerful metaphor proposed by Wilhelm Neumann, the leading German-language art historian of the Baltic region (today's Estonia and Latvia), 'the art here appears to be humble, like wildflowers by the path that leads to the neighbour's rose garden' when compared to that of the German motherland. Yet his article '700 Jahre baltischer Kunst' (700 Years of Baltic Art; 1900) concludes that Baltic art is not without value, just as 'wildflowers also have their certain charm'.¹ These lines were written 13 years after his influential monograph² – but it seems that in his eyes even the local audience still needed convincing. How can narratives of this sort be positioned in the European canon of art history? And what were the generations of Estonian art historians after the First World War to make of it?

These questions are largely about structuring and periodizing narratives – about constructing art historical time. Every generation tends to write its history books anew. The first history of Estonian art was published – by Neumann – in the 1880s,³ the next ones in the 1920s–30s,⁴ followed by the Soviet reinterpretations in the 1960s–70s⁵ and the ongoing project since the 2000s.⁶ Concentrating on the first two phases, I propose to look at the effects the paradigm shift from a German orientation to the Estonian national perspective had on art history.

The present always contains several presents within it – along with several pasts. This region was governed by the Germans and Danes from the thirteenth century, the Swedes and Poles from the sixteenth century and the Russians from the eighteenth century. The Baltic Germans retained their status as the elite throughout these political eras, though they formed less than 5% of the population in Estonia (ca. 15% in Latvia). More than half of the Baltic Germans left for Germany in 1919 (the remaining half in 1939).⁷ I argue that Baltic German culture – that had previously tended to feel something of an inferiority complex in the face of the German motherland – became a 'periphery' of a different kind within the independent nation-states of Estonia and Latvia. But the shift from writing German-centred histories of art to Estonian ones only occurred around 1930, when the grand surveys in the Estonian language were first published.

I look at these processes on two levels. Firstly, I undertake a historiographical analysis of the periodization of art in five survey books by four authors: Wilhelm Neumann, Heinz Pirang, Alfred Vaga and Voldemar Vaga. Each of these books took a different point of departure and thus had to invent new answers to the same questions. These

surveys are well-known in the Baltic region and feature in previous comparative research on historiography,⁸ yet no studies exist that attempt to provide a comprehensive comparison of the periodization, composition and style categories contained within them.

Secondly, I will comment on the impact that these histories have had in the long run – on how art historiography can itself be periodized. Writing history is a political endeavour: regional and national representations of the past are heavily dependent upon local understandings of temporalities and time horizons.⁹ Power struggles become visible in the vocabulary and methodologies of intellectual disciplines, and in the restrictions they impose on themselves. Temporal notions (progressive/backward, timely/untimely, original/belated) and spatial demarcations (European, colonial, national) are contested repeatedly in competing analyses of the ‘politics of time’.¹⁰ What I intend to inquire into is how the relationship between centre and periphery, as well as the Estonian and the German,¹¹ was reflected in these surveys, and how that changed over time.

My interest thus lies in the place given to the Baltic and Estonian heritage within the dominant narratives of Western and global art history, by both outsiders and insiders. Some of these discussions on the central versus the peripheral arise from the discipline of art history itself, while others come from the role that German culture has historically played – in this region the two are inextricably intertwined. These historiographical entanglements become particularly meaningful in the context of the German diaspora across Eastern Europe, and in the various afterlives of their monuments.¹² Although the heritage left behind all over Eastern Europe by German communities constitutes one essential connecting link, local perspectives tend(ed) to be of interest mainly to researchers from the relevant region, even if clear structural similarities with the neighbouring regions could be traced. On the one hand, this topic thus raises questions relating to monuments seen as being on the ‘periphery’, while, on the other hand, the art histories discussed here were themselves seen as peripheral by Western European readers.

Centres-Centred Art Histories: Or, Why Is the ‘German’ Germane?

I begin by briefly looking at the ways in which international surveys laid out the narratives. Influential books by such figures as Jean Baptiste Seroux d’Agincourt, Karl Schnaase and Franz Kugler sought to implement a totalizing approach,¹³ but in fact both local/national and global perspectives came in several waves. Although written from a Western perspective, most of these grand overviews of the history of art extended their subject matter far beyond Europe. Their authors are often praised for their attempts to provide a global perspective, but while Oriental, Asian and African art may have been included, the output of regions on the edge of Europe mostly merited no attention at all, contrasting the ‘centre’ against intra-European ‘peripheries’.¹⁴

As Mitchell Schwarzer puts it:

[T]he survey text embodies the nineteenth-century vision of history to unify the art of the past into a coherent and relevant story for the present. . . . It is also art history at its most political, reducing cultural and individual differences to questionable hierarchies and generalities.¹⁵

Medievalism was certainly a topic highly suited to German national narratives, and the choice of prioritizing that period chimed well with the contemporary aims of the Baltic Germans. Ernst Heidrich, one of the first historiographers of the field, already

reached the conclusion a century ago that ‘art historiography customarily seized on aspects of the past that served the demands of the present’.¹⁶ The comparative perspective and the global scale that the handbooks facilitated indeed opened the door to the idea of national heritage.¹⁷ But the act of doing so involved taking up a heavy burden, especially in the hybrid ‘margins’ of Europe.

To what extent was Baltic art addressed in such accounts? And what consequences did such labels have for this region? In 1813, Karl Friedrich von Rumohr briefly mentioned that ‘the north-eastern colonies, Danzig [Gdańsk], Elbing [Elbląg] and Thorn [Toruń], Riga and Reval [Tallinn], would have to be included in any general consideration of the art of the Hansa’.¹⁸ Also, Kugler’s *Handbuch der Kunstgeschichte* (Handbook of Art History; 1842) used the opportunity to highlight historical trading relationships through the Hanseatic League as a means by which to extend the notion of German art. His panoramic survey of world art from prehistoric times to his own era includes almost all of Europe in the chapter on ‘Germanic styles’.¹⁹ Kugler devotes a subsection to ‘The Monuments in the Baltic Lands’, by which he means art on the coast of the Baltic Sea and ‘also (it seems) in Courland and Livonia’ – nevertheless, the chapter hardly reaches beyond North Germany and Prussia.²⁰

Wilhelm Lübke’s *Geschichte der Architektur von den ältesten Zeiten bis auf die Gegenwart* (History of Architecture from the Earliest Times to the Present; 1855)²¹ mentions Prussia, but this is the closest he gets. Yet his work left behind ‘gaps’ that Baltic authors began to feel the need to fill: Lübke was to become the main source of inspiration for the first history to focus entirely on Baltic art in the narrower sense – the three Baltic governorates (*Ostseeprovinzen*) of the Russian Empire.

Baltic Art, a Minor ‘Centre’ Within the Periphery? **Wilhelm Neumann**

Wilhelm Neumann (1849–1919), who was German-born but lived in Riga for most of his life, begins his *Grundriss einer Geschichte der bildenden Künste und des Kunstgewerbes in Liv-, Est- und Kurland vom Ende des 12. bis zum Ausgang des 18. Jahrhunderts* (Outline of the History of Fine Arts and Crafts in Livonia, Estonia, and Courland from the End of the Twelfth to the Late Eighteenth Century; 1887) by promoting the richness of Baltic monuments, from architecture to handicraft. Neumann sees the lack of any systematic overview of the topic as being why ‘even in the most important German works of art history one does not come across any mention of what has been preserved in the Baltic provinces’.²² Typically of the era, he interprets these three political units of the Russian Empire as a single shared Baltic region.

In relation to his role models, Neumann’s ‘ordering of the material was based on the method of representation chosen by Kugler and Lübke in their great art historical works’.²³ Furthermore, it was Lübke’s advice that is thought to have brought Neumann to the realization of the need for such a handbook.²⁴ (Lübke even wrote a review to Neumann’s next book on medieval wooden sculpture and painting.²⁵) The *Grundriss* is structured into the following parts:

- ‘The Romanesque Style’ (before 1220)
- ‘The Transitional Style’ (*Übergangsstil*, 1220–1300)
- ‘The Gothic Style’ (1300–1550)
- ‘The Renaissance and Its Offshoots’ (1550–ca. 1800).

At the beginning of each chapter, Neumann briefly outlines the international development of the style.²⁶ The Baltic artworks ‘naturally followed models found in Germany’, according to Neumann. The motif of a time lag is introduced early on: it was ‘the remoteness from leading centres of art and the conservative character of local residents’ that caused each style to last longer in the Baltic region.²⁷

He first writes that in the Baltic lands,

the Romanesque style gave way to the Transitional style only in the second decade of the thirteenth century, and the latter was still in use at the end of the same century, while in Germany by this time it had been completely superseded by the Gothic style.²⁸

In the corresponding chapter, though, Neumann allowed himself a little more generosity: ‘a few decades later, an epoch of high artistic creation also began in the remote Baltic area, and there are works that were able to stand alongside the similar creations of other countries as equals’.²⁹ In Neumann’s eyes, the Gothic was born in France, but it soon spread over to Germany, as ‘even the clumsier North could not ignore the influence of the new direction for too long’.³⁰

Rather than trying to prove otherwise, he seeks to explain the reasons for Baltic belatedness on each occasion it arises. ‘Only the Renaissance appears here fairly simultaneously with that of Germany’, he claims in the foreword.³¹ Again, the same argument is raised with rather less force in the relevant chapter:

Also in the South the complete transition to the new art direction . . . took place slowly and in a struggle with tradition, but in the more conservative North this transition was even more hesitant. Here the Gothic was too closely intertwined with the character of the people for a complete abandonment of this tradition to be considered.³²

Despite the region’s transnational history, the book is essentially a history of Baltic German art. Neumann interpreted the monuments of all the other foreign powers in a German key. He was especially interested in ‘comparative studies on the contemporary monuments of Westphalia, Lower Germany and the former lands of the [Teutonic] Order’.³³ Writing of trade passing through Visby, he claims: ‘it cannot be assumed that these workmen had any special national influence on construction work in Livonia . . . since the buildings on Gotland also followed patterns of construction customary in northern Germany’. He does allow that the Baltic region possessed ‘greater skill than the northern Germans’ in working the local limestone (Figs. 7.1a and b).³⁴

Political conflict determines his entire periodization. Following the Livonian War (1558–83), ‘the heyday of art had passed and it is therefore understandable that we hardly encounter any competitive kind of Renaissance’ in the early seventeenth century, after the region came to be dominated by Swedish power.³⁵ Recovering from the destruction of war took time, but over the next decades ‘a lively artistic activity was revived in the Baltic lands’³⁶ – only to be blocked by yet another conflict, the Great Northern War (1700–21).

Neumann dates the height of the Baltic Baroque to ca. 1580–1630, when the main influences shift towards France, and the Rococo to ca. 1715–50. Notably, all of this is still

included in the Renaissance chapter – his definition appears to rely on the continued use of Classical orders and natural motifs of decoration.³⁷ Around 1800, he writes:

The ingratiating, playful forms of the Rococo had already been bidden farewell, having reached the sort of blandness and sobriety that equates to the exhaustion one feels after a wild feast. With a few lucky exceptions, the works of the final years of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century appear monotonous and sleepy.³⁸

Stopping there, he does not say much more about the later stages, successfully skipping the Russian era and the artists of Estonian or Latvian origin. On the one hand, this can be explained with the common distinctions between *Deutsch* and *Undeutsch*



Figures 7.1a Karja (Karris) church, Saaremaa Island, late thirteenth century.



Figures 7.1b (Continued)

This church was praised for its fine stonework in malleable North Estonian limestone, and was increasingly seen by interwar scholars as an example of Scandinavian rather than German influence. The northern console of the triumphal arch depicts Saint Catherine of Alexandria, with the devil scratching the head of Emperor Maxentius under her feet.

Credit: Photographer unknown, 1980s; images courtesy of the Estonian Museum of Architecture, Tallinn, EAM Fk 5765 and Fk 5776.

corresponding roughly to ‘high’ and ‘low’ art. On the other hand, the political context of the era might be seen as a reason behind this. In an age of Russification and of rising nationalism among native Estonians and Latvians, it certainly did not hurt the Baltic Germans to bring only the connections with the European tradition into the

foreground of their accounts. The early ‘high’ culture of the Germans especially seems to have represented something like an extension of a German ‘centre’ projecting into the Baltic ‘periphery’ for Neumann and his contemporaries.

Grand Narrative of Baltic Architecture in the Making: Heinz Pirang

Before coming to the adaptations made by Estonian authors to the discourse on art history, I will look at one further German-language account, by Heinz Pirang (1876–1936). Like Neumann, he was based in Riga and trained as an architect. In the long introduction to his three-volume *Das baltische Herrenhaus* (The Baltic Manor House; 1926–30), Pirang – rather unexpectedly – gives his own outline of the entire history of architecture of the three Baltic governorates. He puts a lot of energy into issues of periodization and related value judgements. Neumann had looked for common ground with Western narratives rather than the specificity of Baltic art and culture, and devoted his attention to the earlier stages, but Pirang focuses strongly on the post-1700 period, interpreting it as representing the true heyday of Baltic architecture. He structures his history into three phases, based on corresponding political conflicts:

- The age of construction (ca. 1200–1550), following the ‘colonization’ of the region – and its landscape – by the Teutonic Order
- The age of destruction (ca. 1550–1721) and confusion, as determined by the Livonian War and the Great Northern War
- The age of rebuilding (1721–1914) – his main focus. He divides this era into three sub-periods,³⁹ this time using style as their distinguishing marks:
 1. Building from the ground up (before 1750), a period he associates with the Baroque
 2. The blossoming (around 1800), when the Rococo and Classicist manor houses captured the true essence of *Baltentum*
 3. The era of ‘stagnation’ (after 1850) and decline, dominated by the revival styles and Art Nouveau

Pirang was convinced that ‘the inheritance of the [German] motherland is easily recognizable in every architectural monument of the Livonian Middle Ages’.⁴⁰ The idea of a Baltic *Heimat* into which Baltic German national sentiment was generally canalized only began flourishing in the latter part of the nineteenth century,⁴¹ but Pirang curiously attributes the high tide to pre-1850 developments instead.

Although art historical narratives of that era generally tend to correspond to those of statehood, the Baltic regional perspective on the history of art continued to be more important for Baltic German authors. Their ideas of regionality and *Heimat* encompass the three *Ostseeprovinzen*, whose boundaries do not match the borders of the later nation-states. Pirang’s book is therefore a perfect example of the rupture brought about by the First World War – followed by the Estonian and Latvian wars of independence – signalling a need to rethink the established categories of art and even the very notion of time.⁴² With a new state, new monument owners, new identities, new grand narratives, the various layers of and agencies in heritage became increasingly visible (Fig. 7.2). In this last desperate attempt to leave the mark of Baltic German tradition in a region now governed by new states, Pirang’s rhetoric was not very far from that of the Nazi era.⁴³ The Baltic German community was taking its last breaths.



Figure 7.2 Former manor of Abja (Abia), near the Latvian border, built in 1780s, annexe (right) from the late nineteenth century.

Along with other grand estates, this Baltic German manor was nationalized under independent Estonia and became a school of home economics in 1923. This postcard (anonymous photographer) from shortly thereafter depicts a national celebration with Estonian state flags.

Credit: Viljandi Museum, VMF 518:723 F 10282.

Learning to Handle an ‘Alien’ Past: Alfred Vaga

Although individual artists, periods and buildings had already been subjected to some research, the first overarching survey *Eesti kunsti ajalugu* (History of Estonian Art) was published as late as 1932 by Alfred Vaga (1895–1980), a journalist, self-taught in art history.⁴⁴ He originally planned a three-volume work, ending with Classicism, but was only to publish the volume on the Middle Ages.⁴⁵ His structure was based on typology:

- Fortification architecture
- Church architecture
- Convents and bourgeois architecture
- Visual and applied art

To have insisted that the older monuments in the Baltic region were exclusively the heritage of others would have left the Estonians with a vast archaeological and ethnographic heritage but no art history of their own. Vaga therefore highlighted that ‘so-called Baltic art was not brought further by foreigners alone’ – that Estonians were present in artistic production alongside Germans, Danes, Swedes etc. from back in the medieval era. And not merely as ‘receivers’: Tallinn stonemasons, for example, were highly appreciated in North Germany and Finland.⁴⁶ He also emphasized how the climate, local soil and construction materials had affected the appearance of local

monuments – motifs already referenced by Neumann, but now given an additional national twist. Written in Estonian, the 52-page German summary and the illustration captions in German, French and English suggest that Vaga’s book did think of international readers as well.

The book’s most notable contribution is the short final chapter, ‘Standing of Estonian Medieval Art in the Development of Art in the Nordic Countries’.⁴⁷ Vaga’s solution to the dominant anti-German attitudes was to look to Scandinavia as the main source of influence on medieval and later masters. He interpreted the Baltic Sea region not as an area affected by German colonialism but as a shared Baltic-Nordic artistic realm (*Kunstgebiet, artedominium*), following Swedish art historian Johnny Roosval. The same view was propagated by the two Swedish-born professors of art history⁴⁸ at the interwar University of Tartu.⁴⁹

Vaga thereby makes a distinction between ‘art in Estonia’ and ‘Estonian art’. Some claimed his title misleading for this very reason, for the work was not about ‘Estonian art’ per se in the ethnic terms. Vaga regarded this as an insult – both to him personally and to Estonian culture, which does not limit itself to ethnographic items alone, he argued. He preached tolerance towards the ‘alien’ heritage, insisting on the need to understand that ‘Baltic art’ cannot be omitted: ‘everything that has been born over time in our homeland, belongs to Estonian history of art’.⁵⁰ Other critics acknowledged the difficulty of writing the art history of the region’s colonizers, but also the threat that the one-sided German perspective would merely end up being replaced by another one-sided, Estonian nationalist trajectory.⁵¹ During the Second World War, Vaga emigrated first to Denmark and later to Argentina.

Locating the Local in the General History of Art: Voldemar Vaga

Voldemar Vaga (1899–1999), younger brother of Alfred Vaga, worked for most of his lifetime as professor of art history at the University of Tartu. He first offered an overview of local art in his *Üldine kunstiajalugu* (General History of Art; 1937–38).⁵² Vaga structured it over 800 pages into longer epochs, each subdivided by style and country:

- ‘Ancient Art’ (beginning with the so-called Old Orient)
- ‘Medieval Art’
- ‘The Art of the Renaissance Era’
- ‘Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century Art (Baroque, Rococo)’
- ‘Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Art’
- ‘Russian Art’, and ‘Art Outside of Europe’ (an account of African indigenous art completes the book)

In each chapter, Vaga starts with architecture, then tackles painting, sculpture and applied art, relying on comparative analysis. He does not provide data about his role models. In a 1984 interview, however, Vaga admitted that he had no particular structural plan in mind during preparation: ‘the proportions of its individual parts developed randomly in the course of the writing. Retrospectively, they do not seem that bad at all’.⁵³ In his own words, Vaga

tried to be historically objective. I was irritated by the fact that Woermann’s, Springer’s and Lübke’s art histories had rendered all artistic phenomena from the perspective of Germany, even where the phenomenon in question was an

‘imported good’ brought in from Italy or France. But the story of the development of each style or artistic phenomenon must be begun from the land where it first sprang.⁵⁴

This approach sometimes ended up producing extreme subjectivity. Vaga had studied at the Sorbonne in the 1920s and was fond of French culture, finding plenty of occasions to put this knowledge to good effect. In the sections on Estonian art, one can interpret such inclusions as a camouflage for his own national resistance to Baltic German narratives.⁵⁵ He thus bent the narrative in an alternative direction to that of his brother’s Scandinavian trajectory. Then again he speaks of the ‘belatedness’ of the Romanesque in Germany in a positive tone, asserting that its long duration had allowed the style to reach perfection.⁵⁶

The Baltic lands come up in two places. Under the chapter on Gothic art, he devotes a short subchapter to architecture in Estonia and Latvia, beginning with the Transitional style.⁵⁷ Also the chapter on nineteenth- and twentieth-century art outside of France contains a subchapter on Estonia (and a few pages on Latvia and Lithuania). This is where he introduces an implicit periodization for native Estonian ‘high’ art:⁵⁸

- The founders of national art in the later nineteenth century
- Artists (pursuing international careers) working in close contact with their homeland before the 1917 Revolution
- The generation of artists that worked under independent statehood in the 1920s
- The artists of the 1930s

The reception welcomed the long timespan allowed to art in Estonia as well as the alleged objectivity with which Vaga had handled the topic – he presented it on the same basis as any other region. The fewer than 20 pages devoted to it in fact contained little more than a list of monuments annotated with a reference to the style, period or influence that they represent. Even this brief account nevertheless amounted to more than local art had ever been judged to merit in such a global setting. Others criticized the brevity of these chapters (as well as his favouring of French and Italian art).⁵⁹ The Baltic German minority was indeed minute by the interwar era (ca. 2%), but Vaga strongly claims, for instance, that in the ‘independence era, the relative importance of Germans (except perhaps in architecture) merits no mention at all’.⁶⁰

Voldemar Vaga’s New Periodization of Estonian Art

Vaga specified this periodization in his *Eesti kunst: Kunstide ajalugu Eestis keskajast meie päevini* (Estonian Art: The History of Arts in Estonia from the Middle Ages to the Present Day; 1940–41). Trying to avoid repeating previous works, Vaga described ‘Baltic art’ in scarce 50 pages, again ascribing a significant role to the influence of France. The rest of the 360-page book is dedicated to a detailed analysis of ‘pure’ Estonian art, stretching from the mid-nineteenth century to the interwar period. The structure of the book is as follows:

- ‘Baltic Art’, from the thirteenth to the nineteenth century
- ‘The Older Generation of Estonian Artists’, active mostly outside Estonia

- ‘The Realist Epoch in Estonian Art’, when the artists continued to study abroad, but ‘maintained a close contact with their homeland and began to work steadily to promote local art and culture’⁶¹
- ‘The “Young Estonia” Epoch in Estonian Art’, 1903–19. He introduced new terminology in this longest chapter, proposing to rename it after ‘Noor-Eesti’, an avant-garde grouping of Cubist, Futurist and Expressionist writers and artists (Fig. 7.3). Even if the term never became firmly established, artworks from the period are still often researched from within this framework.

The contemporary period was omitted altogether – the book was initially planned to be nearly twice as long, but its final section, destined to cover the interwar era in detail, remained unpublished during the war. Only the late works of the discussed early twentieth-century artists of the preceding chapter were included here and there. Vaga himself points at a certain amount of subjectivity inherent in the writing about recent art: ‘it is difficult to group the period masters according to movements or directions, because the whole of their artistic impression is relatively variable and, besides, we lack the necessary temporal distance to make such a categorization’.⁶²

It might have been the criticism that Vaga had received for his *Üldine kunstiajalugu* that caused him to compose his *Eesti kunst* quite differently, even if his periodization remains roughly unaltered. This time his focus is on stylistic analysis of artworks: he dedicates a chapter to each artist, some stretching over 40 pages.

Taking on the role of critic rather than historian, Vaga is very critical – even in comparison to his own previous evaluations⁶³ – towards almost all ethnic Estonian artists generally regarded by that time as national heroes. He has only negative comments to make on the ‘fathers of national art’ of the older generation: painter Johann Köler, and especially sculptors August Weizenberg and Amandus Adamson. Their academicist sculptures, Vaga complained, were ‘unbearably bland and vulgar’ – even the work of ‘second-rank masters in France’ has more merit (Fig. 7.4).⁶⁴ This aspect of the book seems its most intriguing quality today (no reprints have been made).

Vaga’s justification for his stance appears to have been a response to the threat of becoming lazy or blind (when promoting nationalist values) – after all, research into Estonian art must be evaluated according to the highest standards.⁶⁵ At the same time, when one looks at how he saw the role of Estonians in earlier eras, and why he thought Estonian readers should look at the ‘alien’ medieval culture at all, he was prepared to go to the other extreme. Vaga admits the passive role of native inhabitants during the Middle Ages, mostly providing the labour force rather than as masters or commissioners, but he nonetheless tries to bestow national connotations on that medieval past, especially in the foreword: we may assume that leading masters also sprang from the natives, ‘at least in the case of Estonians, artistically such a uniquely talented people’. These few Germanized masters ‘could not give the art of our land any particular Estonian appearance’, but he certainly regards their output as part of ‘Estonian art’.⁶⁶ This was, of course, said decades before the critical studies of nationalism began to suggest that national thought itself is a relatively new invention.

Vaga solved the terminological issue over his title (which his brother had faced) more elaborately:

What is understood under Estonian art here is actually art in Estonia . . . to draw a separating boundary between the art created by non-Estonians, that is to say,

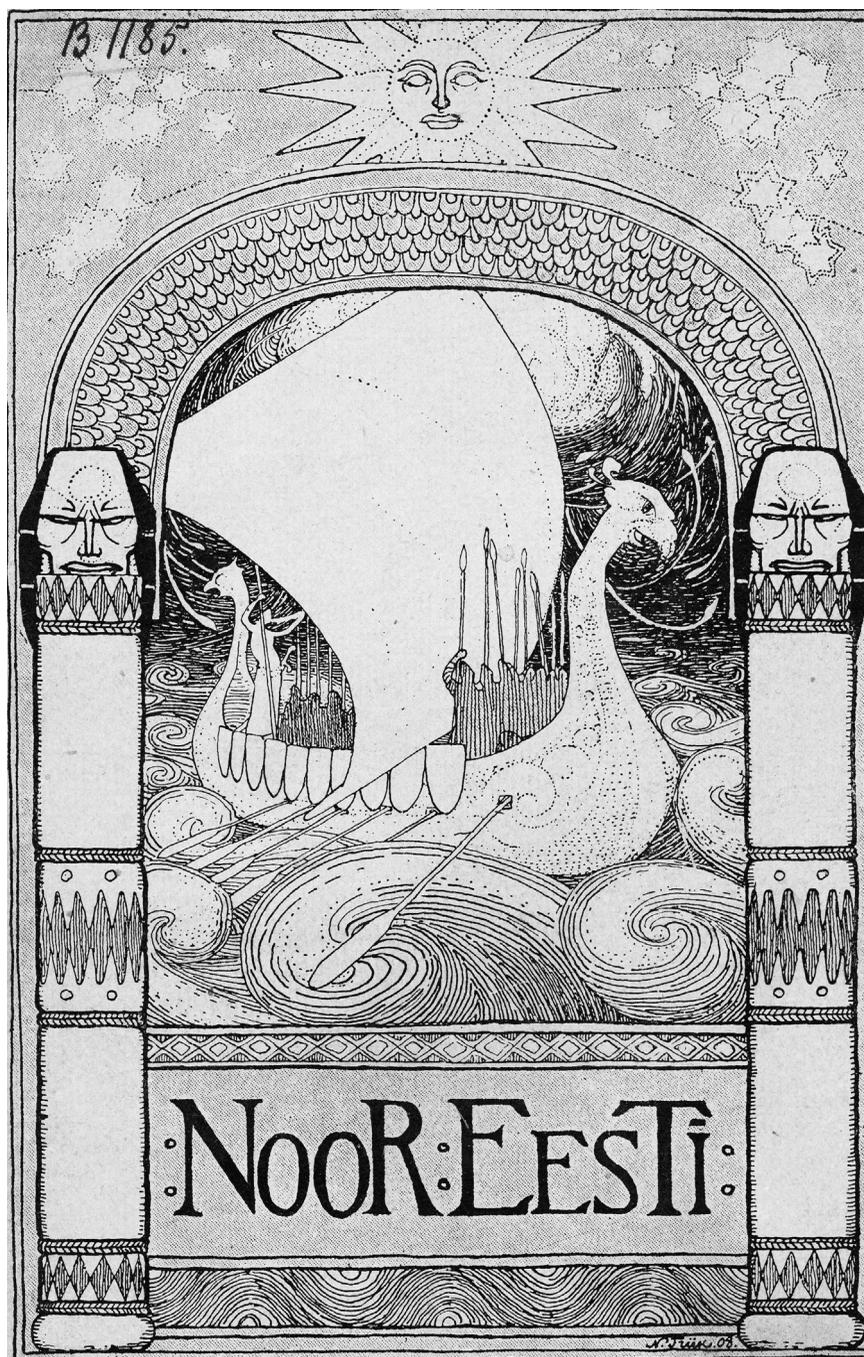


Figure 7.3 Nikolai Triik, cover of *Noor-Eesti*, vol. III, 1909.

The 'Noor-Eesti' (Young Estonia) avant-garde group, with its eponymous journal/album, brought together modernist artists, poets, novelists etc. While rejecting the former foreign rulers of the region, their work was in enthusiastic dialogue with contemporary German, French and Scandinavian culture. Artist Nikolai Triik was the editor of the series.

Credit: Estonian Literary Museum, Tartu.



Joon. 163. A. Adamson: Venemaa ja Sussanin (grupp Romanovite juubeli monumendilt).

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Figure 7.4 Sculptor Amandus Adamson and his daughter Corinna with a fragment of his Romanov Tercentenary monument, to be erected in Kostroma.

The massive 36-metre monument with 26 figures was designed in bronze and granite during 1913–17, but remained unrealized. The fragment shown here depicts Russia mourning Ivan Susanin. Voldemar Vaga interpreted the late work of this national artist of Estonia as an embarrassment, due to both its style and the artist's friendliness towards Russia.

Source: Anonymous photograph reproduced by Voldemar Vaga in *Eesti kunst*, p. 171.

what is called Baltic art, and the oeuvre of Estonian masters can seem artificial and disturbing, but it is nonetheless inevitable.

He highlighted the importance of looking at older art in Estonia and Latvia together because of their shared history. Vaga was thus seeking to define the Estonian contribution to the international discourse: 'Only when comparing the work of our artists with the art of other lands can we clarify what is unique in the oeuvre of our masters and what the particular national traits of our art consist in'.⁶⁷

Of Wildflowers and Rose Gardens: Periodizing the Art of the German Diaspora

The art histories discussed here were not born in isolation but in communication with international role models. They all aimed to verify the value of local heritage within already existing international frameworks. But on the edges of Europe, this often equated to an act of self-marginalization: both Baltic German and Estonian authors were frequently haunted by a fear that local monuments would appear too humble, too belated, too insignificant when compared with the 'universal' canon. At the same time, although more modest in appearance, such local output still represented 'high art' – and the authors seem to have seen it as their goal to prove that fact to local and international audiences alike. For Estonians, this had the effect of revealing a need to deal primarily with the art and architecture left behind by former foreign powers.

The continent's 'smaller' cultures have seldom been examined in systematic comparison. Though they may not have impacted one another directly – as they all tended to look exclusively to the centres for guidance – they undoubtedly participated in comparable projects, whose aim was to domesticate the same grand narratives for use on the local material.⁶⁸ Even less comparative research exists on the many German-language art histories in Eastern Europe – a significant fact given their great number and prominence.⁶⁹ The conclusions I reach are thus not unique to the political units, geographical regions or authors addressed. After all, there would be little point in reproducing the formula of simply providing unconnected national case studies, all based on Western narratives – either for artworks or for art historiography.

Medieval and later monuments were indeed interpreted as constant reminders of German rule to both German- and Estonian-language scholars. But German-centredness also penetrated into Baltic art historiography through the ways in which German art historical handbooks had shaped the discipline.⁷⁰ Even interwar Estonian authors seeking to divert from earlier narratives referred almost exclusively to German-language scholarship – a point that can be made even of the strongly Francophile Voldemar Vaga.

The 'Germanness' of monuments themselves has been subject to debate since the nineteenth century, and here the political goals of the era and/or community in question play an essential role. This is especially true in contexts like Estonian history, which contains so many disruptions that it becomes quite impossible to propose any periodization not based on political fault lines. The tone of such books also depended on their language – on whether they were intended for the local readers or to be accessible to international audiences, the latter tending to be directed to the many German-speaking communities in particular.

In terms of periodization, each of the five histories of Baltic and Estonian art starts by partly rewriting the previous one. The guiding force behind this rewriting was not

the need to make the local specificities fit better into the general narrative. Adaptation seems to have been their main concern, but the question was, rather, which monuments would fit the existing narrative. The motif of lagging behind European centres was easy to swallow as soon as one realized that this model allowed the region to be presented as being part of the West rather than the East.

Wilhelm Neumann's book is heavily inclined towards the historical relationship with Germany. He attributes great importance to the *Übergangsstil* in the transition from the Romanesque (which he deems almost non-existent in the region) to the Gothic. Heinz Pirang's reading of the history of architecture was centred around Baltic German manors from a later period that Neumann had hardly addressed at all. For Pirang, periodization provided a way of writing a heroic 'rise – bloom – fall' type of history for the Baltic Germans, capturing – indeed creating – the ultimate essence of their identity.

It was to counter views like this that the Estonians who had come into possession of that heritage felt the need to write their own histories within the new ideological framework of the nation-state. Yet the Vaga brothers inherited a great deal from the German-language histories. Although the task of nationalizing the past was certainly at issue, they were even willing to carry on appealing to the notion of colonial heritage.

Nevertheless, it was a turning point in historiography when Alfred Vaga, the only author to follow a typological structure rather than a chronological one, published his history of Estonian art in 1932. First of all, because he attempted to rewrite the early history, adding Scandinavian influences to his narrative. Secondly, he reinterpreted the Baltic German past as merely one characteristic period within the longer history of 'art in Estonia'. His new definition of 'Estonian art' (born in the late nineteenth century) – a topic not really at the centre of his book, which concentrated on the Middle Ages – served to distinguish that phenomenon from 'Baltic art' (lasting until ca. 1900).

In his two books, Voldemar Vaga in turn concentrated on periods previously left undescribed. The *Üldine kunstiajalugu* reveals his personal research interests and favourite themes (France) fairly strongly for a work that aspired to be as 'neutral' as any general handbook would want to claim. He too follows the notion of 'Baltic art', developing the same model of German medievalism and Estonian contemporaneity. More importantly, he offers a more detailed periodization of native 'Estonian art', which he revises in his later survey of the same title.

While Neumann and Alfred Vaga were concerned with early history, Pirang and Voldemar Vaga concentrated their efforts on more contemporary times. Curiously, the mid-nineteenth century – which the Estonian authors interpreted in the key of the birth of a native professional tradition – was also where Pirang drew his dividing line, in his case marking the downfall of Baltic German manor architecture.

Therefore, writings on local monuments reflect the construction of a Baltic or Estonian identity as much as they reflect the influence of the international discipline of art history. In this respect, the German and Estonian narratives have more in common than is often acknowledged – both were participants in the struggle to overcome a perceived inferiority to Western European role models. Baltic architectural monuments are already heterogeneous in terms of their 'failure' to correspond to Western styles, yet this aspect of their history was also seen as an asset. Turning back to the opening quote from Neumann, one might well conclude that the task of maintaining diversity in the many species of wildflower that fall between the various preset categories⁷¹ perhaps remains a more difficult task than taking care of the roses, for which there are plenty of specialist instructions available.

Notes

- * I thank Krista Kodres for her comments on the draft of this chapter and Jaime Hyland for his proofreading.
- 1 Neumann, '700 Jahre', 320.
 - 2 Neumann, *Grundriss*.
 - 3 Ibid.
 - 4 Pirang, *Das baltische Herrenhaus*; A. Vaga, *Eesti kunsti ajalugu*; V. Vaga, *Eesti kunst*.
 - 5 Arman, *Eesti arhitektuuri ajalugu*; Solomõkova, *Eesti kunsti ajalugu*.
 - 6 Kodres, *Eesti kunsti ajalugu*. Cf. Kļaviņš, *Art History*. See Rampley, 'The Construction of National Art Histories', 242–44.
 - 7 See Liivik and Liibek, *Viimane peatükk*.
 - 8 Eller, 'Eesti kunst'; Kodres, Mickūnaitė and Pelše, 'Cultures'. See Jõekalda, *German Monuments*.
 - 9 Mishkova, Trencsényi and Jalava, 'Introduction', 1.
 - 10 Lorenz, 'Unstuck in Time', 93–94. See Koselleck, *Vergangene Zukunft*, 349.
 - 11 See Kodres, 'Two Art Histories'.
 - 12 See Marek, 'Können alte Mauern "deutsch" sein?'.
 - 13 Kultermann, *History of Art History*, 62.
 - 14 See Brouwer and Jõekalda, *European Peripheries*.
 - 15 Schwarzer, 'Origins', 24.
 - 16 Quoted from Kultermann, *History of Art History*, 207. See Heidrich, *Beiträge*.
 - 17 See Brouwer, 'Handbook'.
 - 18 Rumohr, 'Nachrichten', 514–15.
 - 19 Kugler, *Handbuch*, 513, cf. 564.
 - 20 Ibid., 561, 588. Cf. Locher, 'Idea', 22–25.
 - 21 Lübke, *Geschichte*.
 - 22 Neumann, *Grundriss*, iii.
 - 23 Ibid., iv.
 - 24 Krastiņš, 'Wilhelm Neumann', 324.
 - 25 Neumann, *Werke*. Review in the German *National-Zeitung* reproduced as Lübke, 'Alte Kunst'.
 - 26 For the contemporary transformations of the concept of style, see Hvattum, 'Style'; Barnstone, 'Style Debates'.
 - 27 Neumann, *Grundriss*, iv, 27.
 - 28 Ibid., iv–v. Lübke (*Grundriss: Mittelalter*, 148, 164–67, 208) used the term *Übergangsstil* mostly for the Rhineland, but also for Sweden and Finland.
 - 29 Neumann, *Grundriss*, 34.
 - 30 Ibid., 5.
 - 31 Ibid., v.
 - 32 Ibid., 111.
 - 33 Ibid., v.
 - 34 Ibid., 2–3.
 - 35 Ibid., 118.
 - 36 Ibid., 120. See Kodres, '16.–18. sajand'.
 - 37 Neumann, *Grundriss*, 112–16. See Kodres, '16.–18. sajand', 23–25.
 - 38 Neumann, *Grundriss*, 180.
 - 39 Pirang, *Das baltische Herrenhaus*, I, 10–15. Cf. Engel, *Stil*.
 - 40 Pirang, *Das baltische Herrenhaus*, I, 10.
 - 41 See Jansen, 'Baltentum'; Jõekalda, *German Monuments*.
 - 42 Cf. Hartog, 'Time'; Tamm and Olivier, *Rethinking Historical Time*.
 - 43 For details, including his reception, see Jõekalda, 'Heinz Pirang's *Das baltische Herrenhaus*'. Cf. the contemporary notoriously aggressive articles, lamenting the lost Baltic lands, by Georg Dehio, *Kleine Aufsätze*. On the effects of the political reality on art history, see Jõekalda, 'Die authentischsten Deutschen?'.
 - 44 A. Vaga, *Eesti kunsti ajalugu*. Several overviews of Latvian art were published already in the 1920s: see Pelše, 'Creating the Discipline', 29–31; Pelše, *History*.

- 45 The failure to publish the other volumes was the result of poor communication with the publisher and Vaga's complicated personality. See Nõmmela, 'Miks'; Nõmmela, *Voldemar Vaga*, 50–56, 67–71.
- 46 A. Vaga, *Eesti kunsti ajalugu*, 5–6.
- 47 *Ibid.*, 280–82.
- 48 Kjellin, *Kirche zu Karris*. See the reviews: A. Waga, 'Helge Kjellin'; V. Vaga, 'Helge Kjellin'.
- 49 See Kangor, "‘Rootslasena’"; Kodres, 'Freedom'.
- 50 A. Vaga, *Eesti kunsti ajalugu*, 5–6.
- 51 See Nõmmela, 'Miks', 55–56; Nõmmela, *Voldemar Vaga*, 70–71.
- 52 With reprints in 1999, 2004 and 2007.
- 53 Priimägi, 'Voldemar Vaga'. See Nõmmela, *Stiiliajaloolise ja marksistliku käsitluse konflikt*, 37.
- 54 Peil, 'Professor Voldemar Vaga'. See Springer, *Handbuch*; Woermann, *Geschichte*.
- 55 See Nõmmela, *Voldemar Vaga*, 68–69.
- 56 V. Vaga, *Üldine kunstiajalugu*, 209–10.
- 57 *Ibid.*, 278, cf. 213–14.
- 58 *Ibid.*, 749.
- 59 See Nõmmela, *Voldemar Vaga*, 68–69.
- 60 V. Vaga, *Üldine kunstiajalugu*, 745.
- 61 V. Vaga, *Eesti kunst*, 232.
- 62 *Ibid.*, 235.
- 63 V. Vaga, *Üldine kunstiajalugu*, 745.
- 64 V. Vaga, *Eesti kunst*, 118–19, 167.
- 65 See Lamp, 'Professor Voldemar Vaga', 12.
- 66 V. Vaga, *Eesti kunst*, 5–8.
- 67 *Ibid.*, 5.
- 68 Mishkova, Trencsényi and Jalava, 'Introduction', 3.
- 69 See Jõekalda and Kodres, *Debating German Heritage*.
- 70 Cf. Müller, *Geschichte*.
- 71 On wild and garden cultures, cf. Gellner, *Nations*, 48–51.

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8 Periodization of Architecture in Croatian Art History

The Case of the ‘Renaissance’ and ‘Transitional’ Styles

Dubravka Botica

Introduction

Periodization was a key issue of twentieth-century Croatian art history, considered within the paradigmatic framework of centre and periphery, as well as in relation to efforts to establish a ‘national’ element in pre-modern art. Stylistic periodization, as a fundamental concept of art history, has remained of prime importance ever since, as seen in recent publications and the art history programmes taught at Croatian universities which focus on the identification of the chronological limits of stylistic periods.¹ In the interwar period, Ljubo Karaman (1886–1971) played a key role in interpreting Croatian art within the dominant centre–periphery paradigm, which had reached Croatia through the strong influence of the Vienna School of art history. Following the Second World War, this approach was continued by Cvito Fisković (1908–1996) who nonetheless contested some of Karaman’s ideas and proposed a different periodization scheme, accompanied by a new interpretative research strategy focused on the role of ‘national’ artists.² In the 1950s – the key formative period of culture and scholarship for the new state – art history, along with other fields in the humanities, operated within the recently established Socialist system. During this decade, art historians continued to promote the ‘national’ component in art and stressed the pre-eminence of local artists in relation to foreign ones. Discourses around periodization foregrounded the idea that tendencies in local art and Western art occurred simultaneously. Through analysis of key texts, this chapter will explore how topics addressed in the debates between the two pillars of Croatian art history, Karaman and Fisković, received considerable attention in scholarly literature.

Before beginning this analysis, it is necessary to make a few introductory remarks about the specific circumstances of Croatian art history in the post-war period. Although Croatia was a federal part of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY) at this time, the labelling of art history as ‘Croatian’ instead of ‘Yugoslavian’ in this chapter is justified by the fact that the discipline evolved separately in each republic. This is especially true for the art historiography of earlier periods, especially the Early Modern period, since historical circumstances, along with considerable political and cultural differences, conditioned the development of distinctive forms of art in each of the former Yugoslav republics. In Croatia, the Early Modern period was characterized by the formation of new states. Following the Ottoman invasions, the dissolution of the historic Kingdom of Hungary (to which Croatia formerly belonged) and the loss of eastern lands meant that, in 1526, the territories of present-day inland Croatia entered into a union with the Habsburg Monarchy, a union which ended

with the Austro-Hungarian Empire's disintegration in 1918. The Adriatic territories of Croatia, on the other hand, continued to be governed by the Republic of Venice until the Napoleonic Wars (1803–15), when the region passed to Austria. The political context thus determined the main sources of artistic influence and the direction of development: in coastal Croatia, influence came from Mediterranean culture, that is Italy, while the inland territories were firstly dominated by artistic stimuli from Hungary, and then became strongly connected to the Habsburg lands from the sixteenth century onwards. While medieval art, as well as the twentieth-century art, tended to be studied within a broader Yugoslav context, frequently addressed in terms of integrated artistic development in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia and later in the SFRY, the situation with Early Modern art was different. As early as the nineteenth century, Dubrovnik was given special status in research related to the art of this period. According to the words pronounced by Bishop Strossmayer at the 1884 opening of the newly built Gallery of JAZU (the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts), Dubrovnik held the same role in relation to the history of the Balkan people as Tuscany held in relation to Italian art.³ Many Serbian historians thus published important studies on Dubrovnik, such as Ivan M. Zdravković's work on Dubrovnik villas,⁴ or Vojislav Korać's study of late medieval architecture.⁵ Slovenian and Croatian art historians also addressed numerous common topics related to the art of the Adriatic area. This chapter, however, focuses on the specific features of Croatian art history in relation to periodization: it provides a brief survey of the development of periodization in the nineteenth century, discusses the main theses advocated in the interwar period and explores the growing interest in the issue within the new social and political framework that accompanied the beginning of the Socialist era after the Second World War.

Predecessors

The history of art history in Croatia has not yet been sufficiently explored and analysed in a broader context, including its development within the chronological framework covered by this book, from the mid-nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century. This chapter offers a brief overview of the issues and methods involved in research into periodization. It is based on a selection of mainly recent texts dealing with the development of individual periods of Croatian art history, but does not include an exhaustive bibliography of earlier research which, due to space limits, cannot be discussed on this occasion.

The development of art history as a discipline in Croatia was affected by the historical circumstances of the country's development, in particular the various influences brought by its membership of different multinational states. The entangled structure of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, with its important centres of art historical scholarship, determined the character of early art historical research. For example, the travelogues and surveys written by Austrian and Italian authors between 1780 and 1850, though concentrating exclusively on ancient art, were the predecessors of studies of Dalmatian art.⁶ As was the case in other countries of Central and Eastern Europe that, as part of multinational states, lacked the political framework of independent statehood, Croatian national ideology emerged from cultural-historical scholarship during the nineteenth century. The national corpus of artwork played an important role in defining the nation;⁷ therefore, the establishment of a national canon and the selection of monuments for inclusion became the central research issue of early Croatian

art history. In the assembling and selection of artwork, and in biographical studies of the artists, special focus was given to ancient and medieval monuments situated on the Adriatic coast. This type of research was encouraged by the imperial centre, specifically by Rudolf Eitelberger von Edelberg's study of Dalmatian art.⁸ The most prominent Croatian author and the nineteenth-century 'father' of Croatian art history was Ivan Kukuljević Sakcinski (1816–1889), a scholar whose manifold interests overcame the borders of art history as a discipline and left a profound mark on the cultural life of Croatia. According to Ivana Mance, he 'understood culture and scholarship in their enlightenment role of awakening national awareness'.⁹ With this aim, in 1851, he founded the Society for South Slavic History and Antiquity (*Društvo za jugoslavensku povescnicu i starine*) which promoted the idea that art, as a key element of national history, played an important role in forming national identity. At the same time, art became an important factor in efforts to establish connections with other South Slavic nations within the Monarchy. Kukuljević's key book, *Slovník umjetnikah jugoslavenskih* (Lexicon of South Slavic Artists), published in 1858, is considered the first work of national art history in the region, while his study *Njeke gradine i gradovi u kraljevini Hrvatskoj* (Some Hillforts and Towns in the Kingdom of Croatia) of 1869–70 also accentuated the definition of art in national terms.¹⁰ He included both descriptions of monuments and biographies of prominent artists, thus laying the methodological groundwork for future research. His work established the nationalization of art and the nation-building role of art history as key issues of the scholarship produced in the region, issues that would reach their peak in the middle years of the twentieth century.

What followed was a period of intense institutionalization through the founding of numerous cultural and museum institutions under the great cultural organizer Izidor (Iso) Kršnjavi (1845–1927), who was Head of the Department of Religious Affairs and Education from 1891 to 1895. In 1878, Kršnjavi had given the first lecture in art history at the University of Zagreb.¹¹ Under his direction, numerous museums and institutions emerged during this 'founding period' (*Gründerzeit*), modelled on the institutions of the imperial centre, primarily the Kaiserlich-Königlichen Zentral-Kommission, museums and the art history programme of the University of Vienna. However, the entangled nature of the Empire provided fertile ground for the development of numerous networks of influence, stemming not only from the centre: Kršnjavi was influenced, for instance, by Polish art and its development into a national school.¹² During the final period of the Empire, encouraged by Max Dvořák's interests and reflecting the political tendency to reinforce the structure of the Monarchy, priority was given to research into Dalmatian monuments.¹³

The monumental encyclopaedic series *Die österreichisch-ungarische Monarchie in Wort und Bild* (The Austro-Hungarian Monarchy in Word and Picture), edited by Rudolf Erzherzog and commonly known as the *Kronprinzenwerk*, became a sort of summing-up of this final period of the Empire. Initiated by Crown Prince Rudolph in 1883 and comprising 24 volumes in German and 21 in Hungarian, it lists and describes art from across the lands of the then soon-to-disintegrate Monarchy and includes the first survey, written by Kršnjavi, of Croatian art territorially divided into Dalmatia and inland Croatia.¹⁴ According to Igor Vranić, the aim of this large publishing project was 'to represent the ethnic, cultural and linguistic diversity of the Habsburg Monarchy. The Monarchy was presented as a state that transformed individual cultures into a new common culture from which all cultures profited'.¹⁵ Kršnjavi's survey, however, presented the art of Croatia and Slavonia as part of the Western cultural milieu, with

a defined territory and distinctive heritage, but viewed the corpus of medieval Dalmatian monuments created in the time of the Croatian kings as a vehicle of national identity.¹⁶ The very structure of the edition, with its division into Mediterranean and inland territories, caused heated polemics, since it contrasted with the imperial integration of Croatian territories and instead argued for Dalmatia's political, historical and cultural unity with inland Croatia. Thus, in the eyes of the Croatian public, 'the *Kronprinzenwerk* unintentionally became part of a nation-building process, despite originally being intended for empire-building'.¹⁷ The importance of the series lay in the fact that it broadened the scope of art historical research to include inland Croatia for the first time. This region would draw scholarly attention again only after the First World War, due to the influence of the second Vienna School of art history (especially Alois Riegl and Max Dvořak); this revived interest was connected in particular with the activities of Gjuro Szabo (1875–1943)¹⁸ and Artur Schneider (1879–1946), who extended the research field to previously neglected Baroque art.¹⁹

From the nineteenth century until the end of the Habsburg Empire, therefore, art historical attitudes towards the 'national' aspect of art changed. Initially the focus was on local (Dalmatian) identity, often employing romanticized constructs connected to the ancient Roman republic and Latin past.²⁰ Under Kukuljević, the focus shifted towards national art in the medieval period, and remained there until the disintegration of the Monarchy. The issue of the 'national' was considered in its relation to German, Italian or Hungarian concepts, often interpreted as part of the pan-Slavic or later South-Slavic discourse. From the 1918 creation of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia until the Second World War, the question of the 'national' in art developed according to new political circumstances: on the one hand, it was impacted by the unitarian policies of the Kingdom and the period of royal dictatorship that followed the abolition of the constitution in 1929; on the other hand, it was determined by the ever-growing Italian tendency to define Dalmatian art exclusively as a part of Italian cultural heritage. The strongest voice determining the character of Croatian art was that of Ljubo Karaman. As a response to the 1926 Croatian translation of Josef Strzygowski's *Forschungen zur Entwicklung der altcroatischen Kunst* (Research into the Development of Ancient Croatian Art, published in Croatian as *O razvitku starohrvatske umjetnosti*), which argued that Croatian pre-Romanesque architecture drew its origins from the timber architecture of northern Europe, Karaman published *Iz kolijevke hrvatske prošlosti* (From the Cradle of Croatian History; 1930).²¹ Here he strongly criticized Strzygowski's argument for prehistoric Germanic influence on early Croatian art, as opposed to the belief in its ancient Roman roots. Karaman also opposed Ejnar Dyggve's thesis on the continuity of ancient art²² and instead introduced the idea of indigenous regional development, which he believed was driven by the relative 'freedom of creation in the periphery'²³ and was characteristically manifested in the architecture of 'small, freely formed churches' attributed to local masters and artists.²⁴ Karaman's definition of peripheral art, with its defining feature of free development, emerged from studies of the key nation-building corpus: medieval art created in the time of Croatian rulers. He thus foregrounded it as indigenous art that was not merely receptive to influences from great artistic centres but also followed its own developmental path via the local artists who shaped its appearance. These ideas would later be expanded in his 1963 book *O djelovanju domaće sredine u umjetnosti hrvatskih krajeva* (On the Influence of Local Context in the Art of the Croatian Lands).

Periodization: The Beginnings of Renaissance Architecture

During the interwar period and in the aftermath of the Second World War, two key issues dominated Croatian art historical discourse: national identity in art, and periodization based on stylistic tendencies. Both remained relevant until the end of the twentieth century. The main goal of periodization was to determine the timeliness of phenomena that, scholars believed, followed tendencies present in Western art. It also had a pronounced normative character, since the assessment of local art's importance and artistic value was firmly rooted in its level of contemporaneity with Western European art, and more precisely with Italian art. Karaman's previously mentioned ideas about provincialism and periphery would have a strong impact on Croatian art historical discourse throughout the twentieth century: his approach gave a positive spin to the delayed adoption of style as one of the key features of the periphery and contextualized it in terms of the freedom of artistic development in areas distant from artistic centres. Although, as we shall see, such ideas were much discussed and contested, the timeliness of phenomena as a key criterion for the quality and importance of an artwork left a deep imprint on Croatian art history until the end of the twentieth century. The broader theoretical discussions of style and the stylistic-chronological narratives of European art history that emerged during the 1960s and 1970s²⁵ had no significant impact on Croatian art history, whose use of style-based periodization founded on morphological description has never been challenged. The new methods and approaches would thus be employed only to confirm already established periodizations.

The Gothic–Renaissance Style in Dalmatia

In Croatian studies dealing with periodization, determining the beginning of stylistic periods was a matter of prime importance. It was frequently claimed that the inception of new styles in the Croatian territories did not lag behind European or Italian art. The criteria for periodization were based mainly on analysis of formal features and morphology, especially decorative elements. Of key importance in relation to art in Dalmatia, as exemplified by the polemical texts of Fisković and Karaman, was the distinction between the Gothic and the Renaissance and the definition of the mixed 'Gothic–Renaissance style'. The beginnings of the Renaissance style were linked to the Dalmatian cities of Trogir and Šibenik where it emerged in both sculpture and architecture. The key monuments of the period included Šibenik Cathedral, especially the presbytery and baptistery (1441) designed by Giorgio da Sebenico,²⁶ and Trogir Cathedral with Andrea Alessi's baptistery (1460–67) and Niccolò di Giovanni Fiorentino's Chapel of Blessed John of Trogir (1468). Croatian scholars regularly stressed the pioneering role of Giorgio da Sebenico in the development of the Renaissance style, in contrast to Austro-Hungarian scholars (such as Eitelberger von Edelberg) who saw the adoption of Venetian Gothic as the dominant tendency of Dalmatian art.²⁷ In this respect, it was precisely the early appearance of Renaissance features that would be regarded as the crucial – and, at the same time, nation-building – feature of art in Dalmatia. Scholarly examination of these features would be helped by the concept of the so-called transitional or Gothic–Renaissance style, which was used as grounds to argue for the early appearance of the Renaissance in Dalmatia.

Karaman established the periodization of artistic development in Dalmatia and connected the beginnings of the Renaissance to Giorgio da Sebenico's oeuvre.²⁸ The architect's personal style was considered so important that it shaped the chronological framework of the periodization of stylistic phenomena in the whole of Dalmatia, even in Dubrovnik. Karaman 'detected' style on a morphological level; when analysing decorative motifs he stated, 'it is inappropriate to associate the work of Master Giorgio exclusively with Gothic, which he used solely in details of decoration'.²⁹ In da Sebenico's work, a change of personal style with the introduction of *all'antica* motifs in the rendering of niches, decorative elements and especially figures during the 1460s was interpreted as an indicator of a major stylistic shift and accepted as a chronological watershed marking the beginning of the Renaissance in Dalmatia. When writing about the emergence of the Renaissance in Dubrovnik, Karaman continued his analysis of decorative motifs as grounds for the definition of style and identified elements of the Renaissance in the alterations that the Florentine architect Michelozzo di Bartolomeo made to the Rector's Palace after a gunpowder explosion in 1463. Karaman argues that the Renaissance was not a revolutionary breakthrough but rather a natural and progressive step in the evolution of Italian medieval art that 'bases the *decorative* stock of its motifs on free imitation of Antique decorative motifs'.³⁰

In addition to establishing morphological interpretation as the criterion for determining style, Karaman introduced another important topic into Croatian art history: the notion of the mixed transitional style. Although not naming it explicitly, Karaman describes it in relation to da Sebenico's oeuvre: 'The adherence of Dalmatian workshops to the forms and ideas of Master Giorgio also gave rise to the existence of special, very interesting mixed forms of Gothic and Renaissance throughout Dalmatia'.³¹ His most disputed and controversial idea was the way he conceptualized the beginning of the Renaissance as a passive adoption of influences from Italy:

Apart from Šibenik and Trogir, the Renaissance in Dalmatian cities was not represented by impressive artwork or introduced by prominent artistic figures. There was a slow, I would say almost silent, penetration of Renaissance forms and motifs, inevitably brought about by the closeness of and contacts with neighbouring Italian coastal regions, especially Venice. This penetration occurred in the final decades of the fifteenth century.³²

His belief in the passive adoption of style and the belated appearance of artistic phenomena in Dalmatian art would provoke strong reactions. Studies conducted during the post-war period, for example, set out to refute it in two ways. Firstly, in terms of chronology, they emphasized the 'timely' beginning of the Renaissance in Dalmatia, in line with stylistic developments in Italian, that is Florentine, architecture. Secondly, in relation to the independence of domestic cultural tradition, post-war studies stressed the role and importance of local artists who, they argued, did not merely passively adopt elements of style but rather *created* them.

This viewpoint was especially present in the works of Cvito Fisković, the chief conservator of Dalmatia³³ and the key research scholar in the period following the Second World War. One of his main works, his 1947 book *Naši graditelji i kipari XV. i XVI. stoljeća u Dubrovniku* (Our 15th- and 16th-Century Builders and Sculptors in Dubrovnik), reflected the growing importance given to local artistic tradition in the period that followed the formation of the new Yugoslav state.³⁴ Fisković published the

names of several previously unknown artists drawn from archival sources, rescuing them from anonymity and connecting them to their artworks. He was also concerned with the ‘timeliness’ of the appearance of styles and looked into the reasons for the ‘delays’, including the role of local patrons:

In the conservative contexts of Dubrovnik and in Dalmatia in general, local stone-cutters were thus not able to deal with the initial problems of a style, as they were neither required nor received any incentive to do so. . . . Our local masters, builders and stone-cutters, therefore, could not have created masterpieces of world art in their country; few of them became distinguished artists, but their successful works are still many, although these did not lead the way in the development of art history, but arrived after some delay; nonetheless they are endowed with artistic value, and this is especially true for architecture.³⁵

According to Fisković, although works by local artists did not chronologically coincide with Italian examples, they still had artistic value:

[I]n judging the beauty and harmony of their buildings, we cannot always take into account the entirety of the historical development of architecture and reject them as belated because of their late date, but we need to consider the individual object in itself, and we will see that in its proportions and balanced arrangement there is a beauty which emanates from the artistic feeling of the master.³⁶

His focus on archival research to determine authorship of artworks and to examine the workings of building and stonemasonry workshops, especially that of the Andrijić family who came from Korčula, brought exceptional insight into the social aspects of art history and significantly changed approaches to Dalmatian art. His scholarship reconstructed the organization of labour within large workshops and teaching practices, addressing the division and types of labour, together with the acquisition and transport of material. As a dominant characteristic of structures built by these masters and workshops, Fisković emphasized the long duration of spatial-typological designs of residential architecture, to which various decorative motifs were applied simultaneously, including ones considered stylistically new.³⁷ He also followed established methods of defining style based on decoration, distinguishing Gothic, transitional Gothic–Renaissance, mature Renaissance and Baroque–Renaissance styles.

Debates Around the Style of the Sponza Palace

In the context of periodization, the Fisković–Karaman debate around the beginnings of the Renaissance style and the existence of a mixed Gothic–Renaissance style is of particular interest. The controversy arose over the Divona or Sponza Palace, Dubrovnik’s customs building situated in a prominent location at the end of the main street, Stradun, across from Orlando’s Column and the Church of St Blaise. The palace’s elaborate façade, with its decorated ground-floor portico and ornamented first-floor trifora, faces the Rector’s Palace and the cathedral. The ground-floor portico features semicircular arches with *all’antica* decorations and Renaissance mouldings, while the first-floor trifora reflects the motifs of Venetian Gothic (Fig. 8.1). The fact that it was built by a local master, Paskoje Miličević Mihov, made it one of the central



Figure 8.1 Façade of Sponza/Divona Palace, Dubrovnik, photographed in 1966.

Credit: Institute of Art History, Zagreb, Photographic Collection, aut. Krešimir Tadić, inv. Nr. 2N-8689.

monuments in discussions about the activity of local artists, while the stylistic differences in its decoration prompted debates over the periodization of the styles employed in its façade. Karaman argues that the palace was built in two phases, the first comprising the ground and first floors (ca. 1485) and the second involving the second floor and the ground-floor portico (ca. 1516–20), modelled in ‘forms of pure Tuscan Renaissance’.³⁸ Fisković proposes a different theory, arguing in *Naši graditelji i kipari*

for the construction of the palace in a single phase. Looking back on the debate from the vantage point of 1959, he realized how his theory had contradicted received opinion: 'in 1947, I tried to correct the earlier opinions of Josip Gelcich, T. Jackson and Ljubo Karaman . . . and partially of R. Eitelberger, E. Freeman, L. Vojnović and Hans Folnesics'.³⁹

The lively debate between Fisković and Karaman regarding the dating of the Sponza Palace had far broader significance. The public visibility of the fervent discussions published in scholarly literature, although conducted at a high academic level, attracted much attention in a country where there were few scholarly journals. Karaman's responses to Fisković's 1947 thesis were published in 1951⁴⁰ and 1952;⁴¹ Fisković replied to them in his 1953 text 'O vremenu i jedinstvenosti gradnje dubrovačke Divone' (On the Time and Uniqueness of the Sponza Palace in Dubrovnik).⁴² Only a year later, in 1954, Karaman argued that the question of mixed styles in Croatian early architecture was a complex one and distinguished between the transitional Gothic–Renaissance style in its 'true' sense (referring to the examples of Alessi's Trogir Baptistery and sections of Šibenik Cathedral) and the retention of Gothic forms in buildings constructed in several phases like the Sponza Palace.⁴³ He also noted that Fisković insisted on denying the Venetian character of the first floor of the palace and stressed the participation of local masters. The discussion ended with Fisković's response, published in 1959, which presented an archival document dated 1 March 1518 that confirmed his view that all the structures belonged to a single phase of construction.⁴⁴

This discussion was highly relevant for the issue of periodization since, according to Radovan Ivančević, it shaped 'the very notion of the "transitional Gothic–Renaissance style"'.⁴⁵ Fisković did not see the style as the result of a successive sequence of construction phases, but identified it in a monument built according to a single design (the Divona Palace). Although he pointed to the different functions of individual parts of the building (which determined the different forms and styles of decoration), he interpreted elements of style exclusively at a morphological level and employed formal analysis of decorative elements. Fisković's exhaustive study of the decorative elements and mouldings of the Divona Palace, together with other examples from Dubrovnik's architectural monuments, established the criteria for determining the style. Through his almost Morellian method, he recognized features of a style in isolated forms and stressed the timeliness of phenomena as the key characteristic determining the quality of monuments; this approach would remain the dominant model of interpretative discourse in Croatian art history for a long time. Not until 2009 – well after the period covered by this volume – was a new approach to the topic introduced, by Nada Grujić. She argued that the first occurrence of the mixed style was not the Divona Palace but the earlier main façade of the Rector's Palace in Dubrovnik, designed by Onofrio di Giordano in 1439.⁴⁶ She did not limit herself to analysis of forms and decorative elements but interpreted the use of the Gothic first-floor bifora surmounting the Renaissance portico as a reflection of frugality and functionality and stressed that the 'inversion of styles in relation to their chronological sequence is consistent with the logic of function: simpler, Renaissance forms appear in secondary positions, while those that are more complex and Gothic appear on parts intended to be emphasized'.⁴⁷

A 1980 study by Radovan Ivančević likewise demonstrates the longevity of debates over the mixed transitional style in Croatian art history.⁴⁸ He applied a different methodology, as well as a distinct interpretative and theoretic approach, arguing that the mixed style employed by local masters was frequently conditioned by a 'functional

logic'.⁴⁹ In his analysis of da Sebenico's role in the construction of Šibenik Cathedral, Ivančević distinguishes the elements (morphology) from the structure of style, with reference to the work of Dagobert Frey (1883–1962).⁵⁰ Frey's texts, interestingly, received little scholarly attention in Croatian art history. The cathedral's semicircular arch, fluted niches and pilasters are not interpreted as decorations but rather as structural parts of the Renaissance style. In his structural analysis, Ivančević regards da Sebenico's cathedral baptistery (1441) as '“bilingualism” of style expressed through dual literacy' (Fig. 8.2).⁵¹ His reasoning is especially relevant in the context of periodization,



Figure 8.2 Giorgio da Sebenico, Baptistery of Šibenik Cathedral, 1441.

Source: Ćiril Metod Iveković, *Šibenik: 43 tablice u svjetlotisku*, Belgrade: Jadranska straža, 1928, 13.

since he regarded the mixed style as ‘one of the forms of existence of early Renaissance art in general, well exemplified by S. Maria del Fiore, the Campanile and Orsanmichele in Florence’, as well as by Michelozzo’s works. Ivančević argues that, in terms of morphology, the Šibenik baptistery could be considered to belong to the mixed style, but da Sebenico’s method of addressing the problem, his iconographical innovations and his approach to the relationship between sculpture and space, all made him in terms of structure an early Renaissance architect, belonging to the first generation of quattrocento ‘problem-solvers’. Ivančević thus included Šibenik Cathedral among the pioneering achievements of early Renaissance art, the ‘first monument through which Croatian Renaissance art became part of European early Renaissance art, not in the passive role of adoption, but rather through the process of creation’.⁵² Though applying different methods of structural analysis, the aim of Ivančević’s research was, nevertheless, similar to that of his predecessors: to emphasize the early appearance of the new style in local art produced by local masters. Analysis of these later studies demonstrates the long duration of debates around the periodization of Renaissance art in Dalmatia, first emerging between the 1930s and the 1950s but continuing to attract scholarly attention until the end of the twentieth century.

Conclusion

In studies devoted to Dalmatian art, the aim was to challenge earlier research by foreign art historians by determining and accentuating the important role of local artists in relation to foreign masters. This discourse was an important aspect of the process of nationalizing the region’s artistic heritage. By proving the notion of timeliness in relation to contemporary phenomena in Western, particularly Italian art, the new corpus of national monuments and their indigenous, independent development gained prominence in Croatian heritage and were increasingly viewed as equal to those in Western Europe. Analysis of the morphology of decorative elements and the personal styles of local Dalmatian artists was central to determining the beginnings of the Renaissance in the region and highlighted the style’s early appearance in relation to Italian (Florentine) examples. The introduction of the mixed Gothic–Renaissance style as a research concept was of prime importance because it served as a means of contesting the earlier belief in the belated adoption of styles. The mixed Gothic–Renaissance style was the leading research problem of the 1950s, and has continued to remain a focus of art historical debate until the present day.

Notes

- 1 See the series *Art History in Croatia* published by the Institute of Art History, in particular Pelc, *Renesansa*; Horvat-Levaj, *Barokna arhitektura*. See also the BA study programmes of the Universities of Zagreb, Rijeka, Split and Zadar.
- 2 Cvito Fisković was one of the most prominent Croatian art historians involved in the ideological project of nation-building. His research promoted the importance of local artists – i.e. artists with Slavic, not Italian names. On his early activity and the political situation in the aftermath of the Second World War, see Špikić and Raič Stojanović, ‘Shaping the Past’, 84–89.
- 3 Dulibić and Pasini Tržec, ‘Bishop Josip Juraj Strossmayer’, 77–78.
- 4 Zdravković, *Dubrovački dvorci*.
- 5 Korać, *Graditeljska škola Pomorja*.
- 6 See Špikić, ‘Strange Parents, Unrecognised Child’.

- 7 Dulibić and Pasini Tržec, 'Bishop Josip Juraj Strossmayer', 77; Born, Janatková and Labuda, 'Vorwort des Herausgebers', 12.
- 8 Eitelberger von Edelberg, *Die mittelalterliche Kunstdenkmale Dalmatiens*. Pelc, 'Rudolf Eitelberger', 235, considers Eitelberger von Edelberg as the key figure in the creation of an art historical scholarly infrastructure within the Monarchy.
- 9 Mance, 'Ivan Kukuljević Sakcinski', 81.
- 10 Mance, *Zrcalo naroda*, 296 ff. On Kukuljević's methodology, see Mance, 'Ivan Kukuljević Sakcinski', 83.
- 11 On Kršnjavi's manifold activities, including the institutions he founded and the exhibitions he organized, see Jirsak, *Izidor Kršnjavi*; Dulibić and Pasini Tržec, 'Bishop Josip Juraj Strossmayer', 73; Mance and Matijević, *Zbornik radova znanstvenog skupa Iso Kršnjavi*; Vranić, 'Izidor Kršnjavi and Beginning of the Arts and Crafts Movement'. On the development of art history in Croatia and the influence of the Vienna School of art history, see Knežević, *Bečka škola povijesti umjetnosti*.
- 12 Dulibić and Pasini Tržec, 'Bishop Josip Juraj Strossmayer', 77.
- 13 Research by O. Kutcher, H. Folnesic and Lj. Karaman: see Ćorić, 'Prilog poznavanju', 40.
- 14 Erzherzog, *Dalmatien*; Kršnjavi, 'Die croatische Kunst'.
- 15 Vranić, 'The Problem of Top-Down Empire Building', 80.
- 16 *Ibid.*, 89–90.
- 17 *Ibid.*, 94.
- 18 On Szabo, see the edited volume Špikić, *Gjuro Szabo* and Špikić, 'Razdoblje borbe'.
- 19 Botica, 'Baroque Art in Croatia'.
- 20 Špikić, 'Strange Parents, Unrecognised Child', 71.
- 21 On the influence of Karaman's methodology, see Scherke, 'Der formale Ansatz', 112–15. On Karaman's attitudes towards the issue of the 'national', see Unković, 'Odras nacionalne ideologije', 264, 273 and Ivančević, 'Ljubo Karaman'.
- 22 Dyggve, *La ville de Salone*.
- 23 'The most interesting feature of the periphery seems to be the freedom of development which such an environment, unrestrained by the authority and examples of great masters and their exquisite monuments, sometimes provides to its masters': Karaman, *O djelovanju domaće sredine*, 191.
- 24 Karaman, *Iz kolijevke hrvatske prošlosti*, 53–58.
- 25 Kaufmann, 'Periodization and Its Discontents', 2.
- 26 For more information on da Sebenico's works, together with an extensive bibliography on the cathedral, see Marković, *Katedrala Sv. Jakova*, 25–92.
- 27 Eitelberger von Edelberg's focus on the dominant influence of Venetian Gothic meant that he was not 'satisfied' with the Renaissance forms of Dalmatian art: Eitelberger von Edelberg, *Srednjovjekovni umjetnički spomenici Dalmacije*, 137–38 (this being the Croatian translation of his *Die mittelalterlichen Kunstdenkmale Dalmatiens*).
- 28 Karaman proposed the following periods: (1) The emergence of Gothic before Venetian rule. (2) Gothic art in Dalmatia before the 1441 arrival of Giorgio da Sebenico in Šibenik. (3) Da Sebenico's *gotico fiorito*. (4) The early Renaissance in Dalmatia: Michelozzo in Dubrovnik (early transitional Renaissance); Andrea Alessi (transitional Gothic-Renaissance period); Niccolò Fiorentino (early Renaissance in Trogir and Šibenik). (5) Spread of the Renaissance within Dalmatia. (6) Sanmicheli in Dalmatia. Karaman, *Umjetnost u Dalmaciji*, 10–104.
- 29 *Ibid.*, 54.
- 30 *Ibid.*, 67.
- 31 *Ibid.*, 69.
- 32 *Ibid.*, 95.
- 33 Fisković was director of the Conservation Institute for Dalmatia from 1945 until 1977.
- 34 Karaman also acknowledged the new, dominant research topics that had emerged after 1945: 'After the liberation, there was revived interest in research into our cultural heritage as materialized in artistic monuments and archaeological material'. Karaman, 'Osvrt na neke novije publikacije', 15, published in the first issue of the newly established scholarly journal *Peristil* (1953).
- 35 Fisković, *Naši graditelji i kipari*, 39.
- 36 *Ibid.*, 39–40.
- 37 *Ibid.*, 78 ff.

- 38 Karaman, *Umjetnost u Dalmaciji*, 98, 100.
- 39 Fisković, 'Pri kraju razgovora', 106.
- 40 Karaman, 'O vremenu gradnje', 167–72.
- 41 Karaman, *Pregled umjetnosti u Dalmaciji*, 142–43.
- 42 Fisković, 'O vremenu i jedinstvenosti gradnje dubrovačke Divone', 33–57.
- 43 Karaman, 'Osvrt na neke novije publikacije', 29–31.
- 44 Fisković, 'Pri kraju razgovora', 107–9 published a document mentioning 'Petro Petrovich et Biasio Radivoevich magistri tagliapetre'. The contract refers to arches of the portico, columns and doors, all according to the already approved model provided by Paskoje Miličević.
- 45 Ivančević, 'Mješoviti gotičko-renesansni stil', 358.
- 46 Grujić, 'Gotičko-renesansna arhitektura Dubrovnika', 236–38, 245–50.
- 47 *Ibid.*, 245.
- 48 Ivančević, 'Mješoviti gotičko-renesansni stil', 355–80.
- 49 'Local builders – unburdened by the idea of the purity and unity of style – chose freely from the repertoire of forms and constructions dating from the fourteenth to the sixteenth century, i.e. from different styles ranging from early Gothic to high Renaissance; furthermore, that choice and the relationship between the chosen forms was not entirely coincidental, but revealed a systematic use of forms according to a functional logic': Ivančević, 'Mješoviti gotičko-renesansni stil', 358.
- 50 Frey, *Der Dom von Sebenico*.
- 51 Ivančević, 'Mješoviti gotičko-renesansni stil', 365–66. He recognizes the duality in the elements of the vault, e.g. the combination of the elaborate late Gothic frame and Renaissance cherubs and angels. The architectural layout of the baptistery is based on a circle, and sculpture frees itself from the architectural frame, which led Ivančević to conclude that Giorgio da Sebenico was one of the key masters of the early Renaissance in a broader context.
- 52 Ivančević, 'Mješoviti gotičko-renesansni stil', 374.

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Part IV

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9 The European and the National in Imperial Historiography and Periodization of the Russian School of Painting*

Andrey Shabanov

Introduction

Throughout the nineteenth century, art writers and institutions alike contributed to the development of historiography and periodization of the Russian school of painting. By the 1890s, they ended up proposing two bold yet contradictory claims on its relationship to the broader European tradition.

The first was pronounced by the emerging Russian scholar Alexandre Benois (1870–1960), who saw the Russian school as an essential part of the European tradition. He presented this assertion in the contributing chapter for the influential survey by Richard Muther (1860–1909), *Geschichte der Malerei im XIX. Jahrhundert* (History of Painting in the XIX Century), published in Munich in three volumes in 1893–94.¹ Benois's effort was fairly consistent with long-held aesthetic and institutional integration of Russian art with Europe. Peter the Great's reign (1682–1725) was a forceful starting point for the rapid Westernization of Russian art, its institutions and historiography. What took centuries of development in Europe was imported and adopted in Russia within a few decades by the early eighteenth century. Not only did Russia appropriate the French Royal Academy of Painting and Sculpture's training model, the practice of public art exhibitions and visual idioms, but also teachers, educational materials and professional patterns. Significantly, the Russian Academy of Arts was inaugurated in 1757 (and re-established in 1764) in the brand-new city of St Petersburg, which was founded in 1703, far from previous cultural centres such as Moscow or Kiev. It was as if this strategic move forged a new origin story for the Russian school of painting, symbolically and literally. Thereafter, like their European colleagues, the best Russian artists were awarded scholarships to continue their training in Western Europe (predominantly in Italy, France and Germany). On completing their studies, many of these artists continued to live abroad, creating works that became part of the Russian national canon of painting. Russian nobility, like their European counterparts, also undertook Grand Tours and amassed collections of Western European art.² All these correlated developments effectively put St Petersburg on the European map of art.

The second, opposing declaration about Russian art's relationship to Europe was made by the Russian state. By coincidence, almost simultaneously with Benois's publication, the entire collection of Russian paintings was moved from the Hermitage Museum, where it had enjoyed the company of other major European schools, to a new home: the Russian Museum of Alexander III in St Petersburg, which had been founded in 1895 and inaugurated three years later. In its new location, Russian painting was cut off from its original, legitimizing European context.

To explain this late nineteenth-century supposed collision between a scholar and an institution, this chapter examines the emergence and development of historiography and periodization of the Russian school of painting during the Imperial period, revealing the equally significant role of art writers (writers, critics, scholars) and institutions (e.g. museums, exhibitions) in this often contentious process. The five volumes of *История европейского искусствознания* (History of European History of Art; 1963–69), supervised by the Soviet art historian Boris Vipper (1888–1967), remain to this day a fundamental text on European and Russian art historiography. Yet, being a general survey, it does not account for the role of institutions in shaping the historiography of the Russian school, nor does it concern itself with its changing periodization patterns and their implications.³ This chapter rectifies that omission and offers a corrective understanding of this development.

The initiation and proper institutionalization of a national school of Russian painting and its historiography occurred in the nineteenth century. This was because it was not until the early decades of that century that Russia accumulated a substantial and representative body of original paintings by Russian artists to form a ‘school’ that could be displayed, talked about and claimed as its own. Periodization of this school was often an integral part of its historiography. In the beginning, art historical narratives simply followed the reigns of the Russian tsars and tsarinas, while describing various artists’ achievements in a largely discrete and chronological manner. The 1880s saw the earliest attempts to introduce a novel, aesthetically defined periodization. Rather audaciously and biasedly, the history of the Russian school of painting was divided into two epochs: the first was defined as foreign and imitative, having begun under Peter the Great; and the second, from the mid-nineteenth century, was a national, realist one. However, by the dawn of the twentieth century, the periodization began slowly to employ a more modern and scholarly approach based on the artistic styles, such as classicism, romanticism, realism, naturalism and the like. During the period, Russian museums also were involved in defining the Russian school, largely following the changing European patterns in museums’ differentiations and specializations (Fig. 9.1). What continuously shaped and connected all these writings and institutional narratives was the lasting debate about the national and European identities of the Russian school of painting, which reached its peak in the last decades of the nineteenth century. By the early 1900s, this debate culminated in a somewhat elegant solution: the slow but sure introduction of style-based art historical periodization that helped embrace and validate both European and nationalist identities in academic and public narratives.

Unpublished German Manuscript, 1750s–70s

The earliest known historical account on the state of fine arts in Russia was written by the German scholar Jakob von Stählin (1709–1785) and largely in German, but for centuries his manuscripts were accessible only to a narrow circle.⁴ Having moved to Russia in 1735, between 1747 and 1766 Stählin supervised various projects of the Academy of Science’s Art Department. There, he obtained direct knowledge of the growing Russian art scene. Between 1754 and 1781, he drafted the first comprehensive description of private aristocratic collections of Western European art in the country. More importantly, around the same time, Stählin also wrote *Записки и письма Якоба Штелина об изящных искусствах в России* (Notes and Letters of Jakob Stählin on

	1820s	1840s	1850s	1860s	1870s	1880s	1890s	1900s
Art teaching institutions/ Museums	Founding of the Russian Academy of Arts (1757/64)	Opening of the Russian Gallery at the Academy of Arts Museum (1842)	The Hermitage opens as a public museum (1852)	Gustav Waagen visits St. Petersburg (1861–2) Moscow School of Painting, Sculpture and Architecture receives the right to award minor degrees (1866)	Andrei Somov's catalogue raisonné of the Museum of Russian Painting and Sculpture at the Academy of Arts is published (1872)		Tret'yakov Gallery in Moscow becomes a public museum (1892)	Alexandre Benois publishes <i>The Guide to the Russian Museum</i> (1906)
				Founding of the Museum of Russian Painting and Sculpture at the Academy of Arts (1868)			Inauguration of the Russian Museum in St. Petersburg (1898)	Nikolai Vrangler's <i>Overview of the Russian Museum</i> is published (1907)
Exhibitions				Debut of the Russian school of painting at the International Exhibition in London (1862)				
						Exposition of Twenty-Five Years of Russian Art at the All-Russian Industrial Exhibition in Moscow (1882)		

(Continued)

	1820s	1840s	1850s	1860s	1870s	1880s	1890s	1900s
XVIII								
Art criticism/ Scholarship	Jakob von Stählin drafts <i>Notes and Letters on Fine Arts in Russia</i> (1750–81)	Nestor Kukulnik's two-part essay 'Russian Painting School' is published (1846)	Aleksandr Andreev publishes <i>Paintings and the Most Important European Schools</i> (1857)		Translation of Franz Kugler's <i>Handbook on the History of Art</i> (1870) and <i>Handbook on the History of Painting</i> (1872)	Vladimir Stasov publishes his essay 'Twenty-Five Years of Russian Art' in <i>Messenger of Europe</i> (1882)	Alexandre Benois' chapter 'Russian School' is included in Richard Muther's <i>Geschichte der Malerei im XIX Jahrhundert</i> (1894)	Alexandre Benois publishes <i>History of Russian Painting</i> (1901–02)
			Inauguration of the History of Art Department at Moscow University (1857)		Inauguration of the History of Art Department at St Petersburg University (1874)	Petr Gnedich publishes <i>History of Arts from Ancient Times</i> (1885)		Alexandre Benois publishes <i>Russian School of Painting</i> (1904)
Periodization	By Russian rulers	By Russian rulers	By Russian rulers	Chronological	Chronological	Chronological and style-based	Chronological	By styles

Figure 9.1 Russian school of painting: key moments in historiography and periodization, eighteenth to early twentieth centuries.

Credit: Author

Fine Arts in Russia).⁵ Here, after a brief discussion of the medieval period, he offered a biography-based list of painters, sculptors and architects working in Russia: from the reigns of Peter the Great to Catherine the Great (r. 1762–96). Stählin was eager to publish his notes in Germany, with the aim of reaching a wider European audience, but this was not realized. However, had his text been published during his lifetime, it would have informed European readers that there were more foreign artists operating in Russia than Russian ones. Almost two-thirds of Stählin's entries are Italian, German, French, English, Dutch and Danish painters, sculptors and architects, who either taught or worked alongside their Russian colleagues during the eighteenth century.

Invention and Institutionalization of the Russian School of Painting, 1820s–60s

The first significant published history of the Russian school of painting coincided with the emergence of a substantial body of artists and work that could constitute a 'school' in the eyes of contemporaries. In 1824, Vasilii Grigorovich (1787–1865), art professional and publisher of the *Журнал изящных искусств* (Journal of Fine Arts; 1823–25),⁶ proposed to the Russian Court the idea to establish a Russian department at the Hermitage. The idea was realized the following year into a 'Gallery of works of art of the Russian school', which included pieces from other imperial palaces.⁷ As if to accompany this innovation, Grigorovich published his five 'letters to a friend' – a common literary and critical genre during the period – under the general title *О состоянии художеств в России* (On the State of the Arts in Russia; 1826).⁸ Here he outlines the historical development of Russian painting, sculpture and architecture, following the reigns of tsars and tsarinas: from Peter I, to Anna Ioannovna (r. 1730–40), to Elizaveta Petrovna (r. 1741–62), to Catherine II, to Paul I (r. 1796–1801), to Alexander I (r. 1801–25). Having emphasized the significance of the first Russian history painter Anton Losenko (1737–1773) as the founder of the Russian school, Grigorovich traces Russian artists' progress in all major genres, in line with conventional academic hierarchy: history paintings followed by portraits, which include works by Vladimir Borovikovskii (1757–1825) and Orest Kiprenskii (1782–1836), genre scenes by Aleksei Venetsianov (1780–1847) and landscapes by Semen Shchedrin (1745–1804) and Maksim Vorobiev (1787–1855), among others. What is more, the reader could enjoy the best of these works in the newly established department of Russian art at the Hermitage.

The Academy of Arts soon followed suit. From its foundation, the Academy collected an increasing number of foreign and Russian original works of art and copies to facilitate the educational process. In 1829, in an attempt to establish a proper museum, the Academy, under the presidency of Aleksei Olenin (1763–1843), decided to 'separate original works of Russian school from foreign ones, and exhibit the former in chronological order, wherever possible'.⁹ The general exposition plan, which accompanied the museum's first official catalogue of 1842, prominently featured the 'Russian gallery', consisting of seven halls (Fig. 9.2).¹⁰

According to a tourist city guide of 1843, these two state-sponsored collections of the Russian school were accessible to the public on certain terms for studying and contemplation. The Academy of Arts' version was incomparably larger than that of the Hermitage, which by 1842 featured only 23 original works by 17 Russian artists, but they were supposedly the best examples, selected to promote the Russian school on a par with other European nations.¹¹



Figure 9.2 Imperial Academy of Arts, St Petersburg: second-floor ('bel-étage') plan, 1842.

Source: *Указатель, находящихся в Академии произведений*, National Library of Russia.

The major museums' institutionalization of the national school of painting prompted a new critical account of its historical development. Written by the prominent art critic Nestor Kukulnik (1809–1868), a former editor of the influential *Художественная газета* (Art Newspaper; 1836–38), the two-part essay 'Russian Painting School' (1846) provided a largely familiar story of the progress of the Russian arts under Imperial rulers, ending with the reign of Nicholas I (r. 1825–55).¹² Yet Kukulnik advanced the growing discourse on the history of Russian art with one novel observation. He notes that the Russian school of painting was a result of revolution rather than evolution. Whereas Western Europe for centuries enjoyed the gradual and accumulative development of art, eighteenth-century Russia witnessed rapid change from craft to fine art and experienced the radical range from icon painting to Losenko.¹³ In terms of periodization, this means that Russia missed successive generations of artists and works which could constitute its own 'Old Masters' epoch, for example the period of European art from the Early Renaissance to the end of the *Ancien Régime*. A few decades later, this observation would be instrumental for understanding the changing perception of the Russian school within the Hermitage picture gallery.

The Hermitage, meanwhile, acquired its eventual reputation as the principal collection of Classical art and Old Master paintings in Russia once the 'palace museum' became a 'public museum'. This was a gradual process that began in 1852 when the

imperial collection was moved from the Winter Palace to the purpose-built New Hermitage, and continued as different attributes of a modern museum – such as a director, professional staff, scholarly hanging and regular opening hours – were introduced towards the end of the next decade.¹⁴ All of this made the Hermitage the last significant instance of conversion of the major princely art collection into a public museum in Europe.¹⁵ While the library, manuscripts, numismatics, archaeological and antiquities collections occupied the first floor of the new museum building, the picture gallery was arranged on the second floor, with the Russian school occupying two rooms and neighbouring other European paintings (Fig. 9.3). The school increased in size (65 paintings) and now included major works from the mid-nineteenth century, such as *The Last Day of Pompeii* (1833) by Karl Briullov (1799–1852), *Moses and the Brazen Serpent* (1840) by Fedor Bruni (1799–1875) and *The Ninth Wave* (1850) by Ivan Aivazovskii (1817–1900).

The inauguration of the Hermitage as a public museum inspired a sizeable new narrative, which for the first time placed Russian paintings along European artistic developments, just like the museum did through its display. Published in 1857, *Живопись и живописцы главнейших европейских школ* (Painting and Painters of the Most Important European Schools) by writer and historian Aleksandr Andreev (1830–1891) was the earliest attempt in Russian to offer a chronological survey of the history of European painting, spanning from antiquity through to the early nineteenth century, and arranged accordingly by major epochs, regions and schools.¹⁶ The chapter ‘Russian Painting’ concludes the survey. In terms of the sources for this chapter, Andreev explicitly acknowledges the writings of Kukolnik and Stählin.¹⁷ The European context, however, did not add anything new to the Russian narrative. Briefly dwelling on icon painting, Andreev chronologically lists, in a dictionary-like manner, major Russian artists, their biographies and paintings, through the changing Imperial rulers, from Peter the Great to Nicholas I. Wherever possible, the author points to local collections (mostly Hermitage, Academy of Arts, or some private galleries), where one could examine many of the described works in person. Andreev ends his narrative with a history of the Hermitage Museum and its picture gallery, as if to explain why he has included the otherwise poorly connected European and Russian artistic narratives under the same cover.¹⁸

The problematic nature of the association of Russian and European schools at the Hermitage became apparent in the mid-nineteenth century. After the death of Catherine II, the Hermitage largely stopped acquiring contemporary Western European art while it slowly continued to purchase Russian works.¹⁹ This did not align with the Hermitage collection, which increasingly began to favour Old Master paintings. The most authoritative individual to voice this conundrum was Gustav Waagen (1794–1868), the influential German art historian and director of Berlin’s Gemäldegalerie whom the Russian state invited to study and improve the scholarly presence of the Hermitage Museum. A major result of his visit in 1861–62 was the changes in attributions and display, made to correspond with modern museum practice to represent and educate on the history of art: an arrangement according to schools and the chronological order within schools, professional lighting conditions, visitor-friendly catalogues and the like. Of particular relevance is that in his extensive report (‘Memorandum’, 1861) Waagen advised that the entire Russian collection be moved to the Academy of Arts, on the basis that this school did not look advantageous next to the Rembrandts (‘die Nachbarschaft mit Rembrandt nicht bekime’). This was the

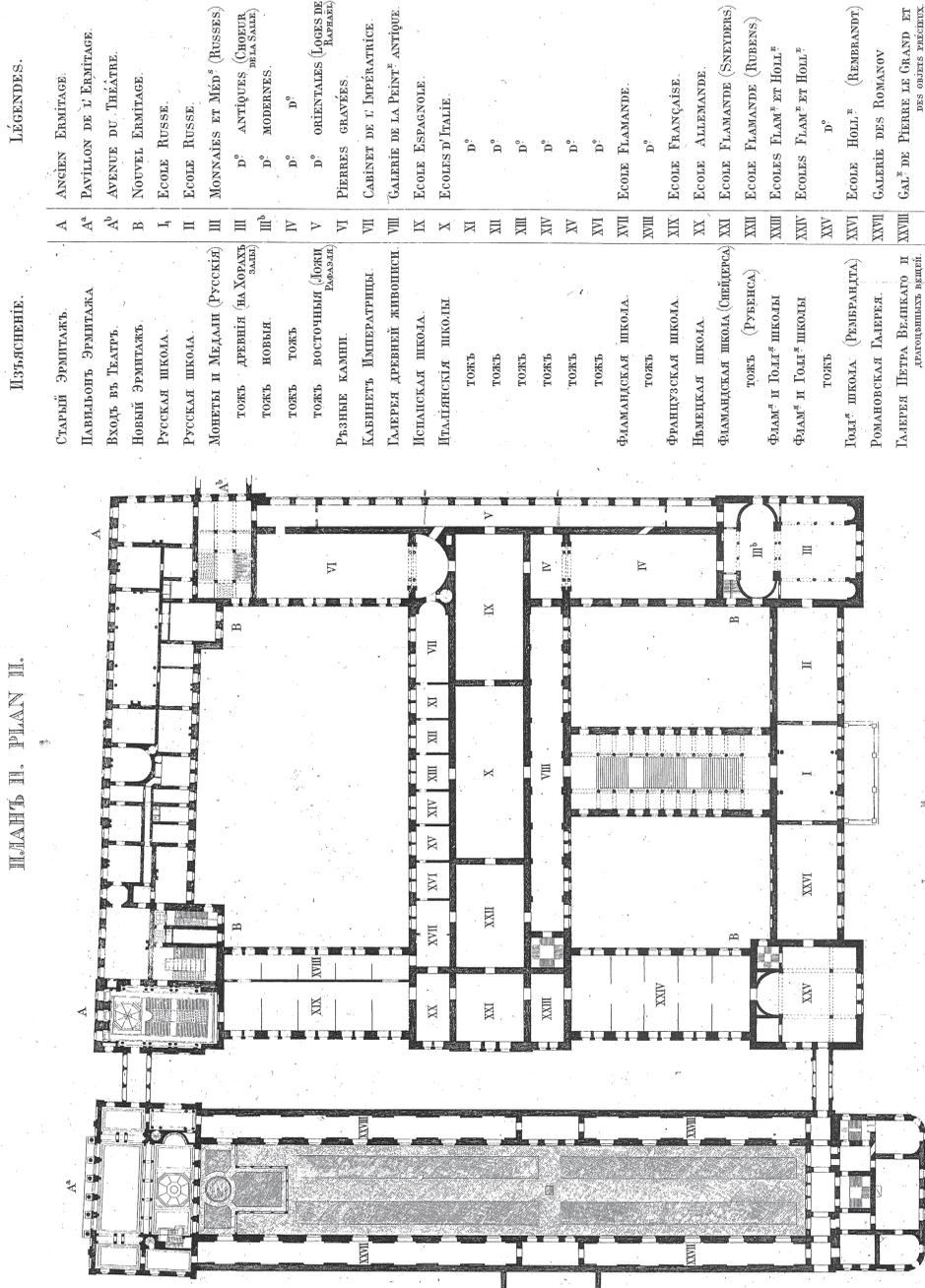


Figure 9.3 Imperial Hermitage Museum, St Petersburg: second-floor plan, 1861.

Source: Florian Gilles [Флоріан Жиль], ed., *Эрмитаж. Описание различныхъ собраний, составляющихъ Музей, с историческимъ введениемъ об Эрмитажѣ имп. Екатерины II и о образованіи Музея новаго Эрмитажа*, St Petersburg: tip. Imp. Akad. nauk, 1861, National Library of Russia.

only major suggestion of Waagen that Alexander II firmly rejected.²⁰ Hence, just like the museum's galleries, the first official scholarly catalogue (*catalogue raisonné*) of the Hermitage, which was consulted by Waagen and began to appear in 1863, included Russian paintings among Italian, Spanish, German, Dutch, French and English ones.²¹ Moreover, because Waagen's *Die Gemäldesammlung in der Kaiserlichen Ermitage zu St. Petersburg* was published in Munich, the Hermitage collection and the Russian school in particular received unprecedented international exposure. Here the German scholar remains silent about his reservations on placing 'Die russische Schule' with other European schools, while authoritatively singling out some of the most important Russian artists and their works for a large international audience.²²

Waagen's remark that the mostly nineteenth-century Russian paintings were at odds with the Rembrandts and his proposal to remove them from the Hermitage should be seen in the light of concurrent changes in European museum practices. In the first half of the nineteenth century, for example, museums in France and in German states began to separate their Old Master collections from contemporary art and establish new museums to purposely house the latter. These new museums included the Musée des Artistes Vivants at the Musée du Luxembourg in Paris (opened 1818), the Neue Pinakothek in Munich (1853) and the (Alte) Nationalgalerie in Berlin (1861).²³ It would take a couple of decades before such a trend of museums' diversification and specialization would eventually reach the Russian museum world.

Meanwhile, two additional events advanced the international and national prominence of Russian paintings. Around the time of Waagen's visit to St Petersburg, the Russian school was introduced to a European public at the International Exhibition of 1862 in London. Following the British example, Russia decided to present the development of Russian art over the previous hundred years.²⁴ The display of approximately 40 paintings in all major genres was drawn from the collections of the Hermitage, the Academy of Arts and private collections, and included works by Losenko, Borovikovskii, Venetsianov and Aivazovskii, among others.²⁵ A few years later, in 1868, in celebration of its centennial, the Academy of Arts opened its reorganized museum of Russian paintings to the general public.²⁶ The exhibition was notably extended and now also occupied the inner circle of the second floor of the Academy. Significantly, this was followed by the publication of the *catalogue raisonné* of the Academy's entire collection, the first volume of which was dedicated to the Russian school. Prominent art historian Andrei Somov (1830–1909) oversaw this groundbreaking scholarly effort towards 'studying the history of Russian art'.²⁷ Guided by the museum's holdings and archives, Somov arranged all artists' entries chronologically, beginning with those operating in the early eighteenth century and continuing through to contemporaries like Ilia Repin (1844–1930) and Vasilii Polenov (1844–1927). The catalogue was widely recognized as a major achievement. But, as Eduard Dobbert (1839–1899), German art historian and Russian art contributor to the prestigious *Allgemeines Künstlerlexikon*, noted, there was one major drawback. In his review, he writes:

As it is well known, the St Petersburg Academy of Arts, according to the manner it was established, could not avoid a long-term influence of artistic directions, dominated in the foreign countries. It seems to us that Mr. Somov could be very useful to his reader if he would have described the significance of such foreign influence on many Russian artists. Such remarks would have nothing to do with subjective opinion. On the contrary, the [artistic] direction, expressed in any work

of art, should be considered as an absolutely objective fact. . . . The very circumstance that Western Europe constantly influenced the Russian academic school, significantly simplified the task of presenting the history of the best Russian artists within the framework of pan-European development of art.²⁸

It is clear that by ‘artistic directions’ Dobbert implies classicism, romanticism, idealism, realism, naturalism and other stylistic categories. Yet, like Waagen earlier, this commentary was reflective of the growing field of modern art historical scholarship in Western Europe, more than a pointed criticism of the Russian school.

Foreign versus National: Two Periods of the Russian School of Painting, 1870s–80s

Vladimir Stasov (1824–1906), the most influential Russian art critic of this period, was one of the first to introduce an aesthetic characterization to the rehashed chronological narrative of the Russian school. Throughout his long career, which began in the 1850s, Stasov was a consistent advocate of a national realist agenda. He was notoriously sceptical about the preceding hundred years of Russian art, pejoratively labelling it with the general term ‘foreign’. Similar to European critics, in response to Russia’s presentation at the 1862 International Exhibition, for example, Stasov famously wondered: ‘What kind of *our* art is it in which everything is *foreign*?’ But he also saw in that display some signs of a *new* period in the work of Pavel Fedotov (1815–1852).²⁹ In a similar vein, Stasov celebrated the 1868 opening of the museum of the Russian school at the Academy of Arts, mainly because it signalled an end to the epoch of imitation and dependence on Europe – a chapter, he argued, that should be definitively closed.³⁰

It took another decade, a substantial body of a new type of paintings and a major national event for Stasov to eventually propose his own periodization of the Russian school. In 1882, to mark the 25th anniversary of the reign of Alexander II (r. 1855–81), the All-Russian Industrial Exhibition with a Fine Arts section was organized in Moscow. Showcasing art that was produced during Alexander II’s reign, the display was accompanied by a richly illustrated catalogue that featured more than 500 paintings, representing all major artistic directions and genres.³¹ In response to this event, Stasov published his exhaustive text *Двадцать пять лет русского искусства* (Twenty-Five Years of Russian Art) in the authoritative journal *Вестник Европы* (The Messenger of Europe), shortly after the exhibition closed. The critic enthusiastically welcomed what he perceived as the new Russian school, reinforcing his already familiar argument: the true Russian school emerged only when it began to promote ‘nationality and realism’ in the mid-nineteenth century, and that what came before was mere imitation of European art and therefore insignificant. The critic divides the history of Russian painting into two periods, split by the liberal, emancipating reign of Alexander II: old, foreign, European, Petersburg-based, academic, official, bureaucratic art gave way to a new, Russian, national, realist one (Stasov’s words).³² Notwithstanding the remarkably biased, contradictory and oversimplified character of Stasov’s argumentation, there was one important innovation in his proposed periodization: the critic connected certain politically framed periods in Russian art with specific stylistic categories, such as academicism and realism.

Three years later, Petr Gnedich (1855–1925) published his *История искусств с древнейших времен* (History of Arts Since Ancient Times; 1885) which further

popularized Stasov's characterization. Unlike Andreev's *Живопись и живописцы* (Painting and Painters) of 1857, Gnedich's illustrated volume was already a proper historical narrative, and in this way was the first original Russian publication on the broader history of art. Gnedich addresses the Russian school in the final chapter dedicated to nineteenth-century European artistic developments. In structuring his narrative, he loosely echoes Stasov's two periods in the history of Russian painting, 'old' and 'new', with Fedotov serving as a starting point for the latter.³³ Yet, one distinction here is Gnedich's mention of the Moscow School of Painting, Sculpture and Architecture. Open since 1843, the institution managed to obtain a certain level of autonomy from the Academy in 1866, including the right to award minor professional titles. This strengthened the growing role of the Moscow School in promoting novel aesthetics, for which the 'new' epoch stood.³⁴ Gnedich's pioneering account was a popular survey and widely read in Russia; but it was at the same time suggestive of the still-developing state of art history as a discipline in the country.³⁵

Institutionalization of the Discipline of Art History in Russia, 1850s–80s

Indeed, art history was still a young discipline in Russia. For years, it was taught exclusively at the Academy of Arts and at the Moscow Art School, where the course largely focused on classic aesthetics and theory. The first professorship position distinctly in the history of art was granted to the archaeologist Karl Gertz (1820–83) at Moscow State University in 1857. In his inaugural speech, Gertz said: 'It is for the first time this new branch of human knowledge, in all its voluminosity, will be the subject of a scholarly course at a *Russian* university'.³⁶ In 1874, St Petersburg University followed suit and inaugurated the History of Art Department with historian and archaeologist Adrian Prakhov (1846–1916) as its head.³⁷ The Moscow and St Petersburg universities principally taught archaeology, ancient, Classical, medieval, Byzantine and Renaissance art, as well as general aesthetics. In this respect, their curricula largely echoed, if not relied on, German publications, often through Russian translations. Among these were two works by Franz Kugler (1808–1858) – *Handbuch der Geschichte der Malerei seit Constantin dem Grossen* (Handbook on the History of Painting since Constantine the Great; 1837) and *Handbuch der Kunstgeschichte* (Handbook of Art History; 1842) – which were translated into Russian by the early 1870s. To be sure, by the 1880s, Russian art historical scholarship had developed enough to gain international recognition in work on Byzantine studies by Nikodim Kondakov (1844–1925) and his pupils, Egor Redin (1863–1908) and Dmitrii Anailov (1862–1939), among others. However, until the end of the nineteenth century, the history of the Russian school of painting was noticeably underrepresented in studies and curricula of the country's leading universities.³⁸

National and European: Towards Style-Based Monographic Periodization, 1890s–1900s

In the mid-1890s, the Russian school gained incomparable international exposure in the aforementioned Muther's *Geschichte der Malerei im XIX. Jahrhundert*. Everything about this publication was considered novel, as was Alexandre Benois's contribution to it. Before Muther became a curator in Munich's Kupferstichkabinett in

1885, his research interest focused on German medieval art. That is to say, *Geschichte der Malerei* was notably his first major work on a contemporary period. And the publication was a resounding success. It became the first comparative scholarly overview of nineteenth-century art in the West, and was quickly translated into several languages (the English translation was ready within two years, by 1896). The book advanced Muther's academic career: the following year he was appointed professor at Breslau University.³⁹ As for young Benois, his contribution to *Geschichte der Malerei* marked his first significant piece of writing, which promptly launched his art historical career.⁴⁰ As Muther explained elsewhere, he knew very little about Russian art and thus did not plan to include it in his publication at first. Benois, however, approached him with an offer to provide materials for such a chapter and, in the end, wrote it. Consequently, his chapter on Russian art began with the disclaimer 'Unter Mitwirkung von Alexander Benois. St. Petersburg' (In Collaboration with Alexander Benois, St Petersburg) – although Muther wrote the introduction and edited the concluding paragraphs on the latest developments in Russian art.⁴¹ Thanks to the joint effort, the history of Russian painting was featured alongside European and North American art of the period in a pioneering and truly international publication.

While its context was radically new, the Muther-Benois telling of Russian art was duly conventional. The Russian chapter (42 pages) was twice as long as the preceding one on Norway (20 pages) and roughly the same size as the next one, which was on American art (40 pages). Benois's narrative loosely followed the tsar-based chronology, beginning with Peter I and ending with Repin's work under Alexander III (r. 1881–94). The only significant novelty was to suggest European analogues to Russian artists: thus, portrait painter Dmitrii Levitskii (1735–1822) was described as no Reynolds (1723–1792) or Gainsborough (1727–1788), but 'could be easily mistaken for portraits by Ms Vigée Le Brun' (1755–1842); 'Venetsianov has the same significance for Russia as [genre and landscape painter Heinrich] Bürkel [1802–1869] has for Germany'; Fedotov is the Russian William Hogarth (1697–1764); academic history painter Fedor Bruni is the Russian Hippolyte Flandrin (1809–1864); Repin in Russia is Adolph Menzel (1815–1905) in Germany; etc.⁴² Reasonably illustrated, the Russian artistic process was synchronized and familiarized through European individual artists.

Benois's involvement in *Geschichte der Malerei* prompted him to study Russian painting further, which soon brought about truly innovative results. The Russian translation of Muther and Benois's chapter was published first in 1894 by the journals *Артист* (Artist) and *Русский художественный архив* (Russian Artistic Archive) and in 1900 as a separate volume.⁴³ The years 1899–1901 saw the publication of Zinaida Vengerova's translation of all three volumes of *Geschichte der Malerei im XIX. Jahrhundert*.⁴⁴ However, the third volume did not include the original Muther-Benois chapter, because Benois took this opportunity to write a radically new and now completely his own narrative of the history of Russian painting. This was soon published in two parts as an additional, fourth volume, under the title *История русской живописи в XIX веке* (History of Russian Painting in the XIX Century; 1901–2).⁴⁵ Benois's history significantly departed from the chapter in Muther's book, chronologically and analytically. It now covered Russian artistic developments up to the beginning of the twentieth century, ending with artists Mikhail Vrubel (1856–1910), Leon Bakst (1866–1924) and Konstantin Somov (1869–1939). But, most innovatively, the conventional chronological story framed by political reigns gave way to a largely aesthetically defined critical narrative. Benois employed European stylistic categories,

such as classicism, romanticism, academicism, realism, naturalism, impressionism and their various hybrids and derivatives, as the analytical framework to analyse the development of Russian art, including its conflicting, overlapping periods and trends, and all this in relationship to pan-European art history. Benois did not elaborate on his methodological sources, but it is safe to assume that the employed stylistic categories were largely defined by French nineteenth-century artistic processes and internationalized through German scholarship.⁴⁶

However, Benois's highly original work is not without one large drawback: a lack of historical distance in his ovation of contemporary Russian art. This weakness can partly be explained by the fact that Benois had already secured a reputation as an art critic for the new generation by the time that he prepared this fourth volume. Working on the magazine *Мир искусства* (World of Art; 1898–1904), with Sergei Diaghilev (1872–1929) as editor-in-chief, Benois cultivated a name and standing through numerous articles and reviews.⁴⁷ Ironically, it was Diaghilev who in his review of Benois's book reasonably criticized its shortcomings, recollecting how decades earlier another prominent critic – and Benois's ideological opponent – Stasov embraced mid-nineteenth-century nationalism and realism as the final, ultimate period of the Russian art.⁴⁸ Benois seemed to consider some of Diaghilev's criticism in his following monograph *Русская школа живописи* (Russian School of Painting), published in 1904. In this more compact and popular narrative, he not only discusses the Russian artistic development within European stylistic categories but also arranges and names accordingly the different chapters of the book: beginning in the eighteenth century and going through Classicism, Romanticism and all sorts of Realisms, before arriving to its contemporary state.⁴⁹

Benois's periodization of Russian art according to style and period looks unmistakably refreshing in comparison to similar retrospective surveys that were being published by the end of the nineteenth century in large numbers. Foremost among the latter were Stasov's 'Искусство в XIX веке' (Art in the Nineteenth Century; 1901), as well as *История русского искусства* (History of Russian Art; 1899–1903) by Aleksei Novitskii (1862–1934).⁵⁰ Although aware of European styles, when discussing Russian art, these two authors largely offered the conventional chronological narrative, in which the principal structuring element remained branches of painting: history, landscape, genre and portrait. *Главные течения русской живописи XIX века* (The Main Trends in Nineteenth-Century Russian Painting; 1904) by Petr Ge (1859–1939) was an exception and demonstrates that slowly but surely, Benois's novel approach to writing about the Russian school in aesthetic terms was attracting more followers.⁵¹

National and European: Towards Style-Based Periodization in Museums, 1900s

Europe remained the point of reference for the idea of a national museum of Russian art. In his 1882 essay, Stasov had lamented that 'we still do not have a national museum', whereas almost all major European nations had opened one.⁵² A proposal for a separate museum for Russian art began to circulate within the Hermitage. In 1881, the museum's director Aleksandr Vasilchikov (1832–1890) noted in his report that above all, in Europe it had become the norm to separate old and new art, because the juxtaposition of contemporary works with Old Masters did not favour the recent ones.⁵³ That is to say, 20 years after Waagen recommended that Russian painting be

moved from the Hermitage, museum professionals in Russia began to find his suggestion palatable and in line with current European institutional trends.

It was only at the end of the nineteenth century that all these lines, arguments and interests came together and culminated in an institutional form. In 1895, the Russian State acquired the private Mikhailovsky Palace to convert it into the Russian Museum of Alexander III. Three years later, in March 1898, the splendid private residence opened as a public museum.⁵⁴ In contrast to Moscow's famous Tretyakov Gallery, which became public in 1892 and predominantly represented art of the 1860–80s, or the Museum of the Academy of Arts, which increasingly specialized in academic art, the new Russian Museum was intended to show the entire history of Russian art of the European period. However, unlike the Tretyakov which came from a single collector, the Russian Museum was a compilation of works from several institutions: the entire 'École Russe' from the Hermitage Museum, as well as the Academy of Arts, the Winter Palace, Tsarskoe Selo, Gatchina and other imperial palaces. Predictably, this produced a mixed result, and fuelled numerous commentaries of which important works were missing and which were unnecessary. All in all, the consensus was that the Russian Museum represented the eighteenth and the first half of the nineteenth centuries better than the late nineteenth century or contemporary art.⁵⁵ Nevertheless, its foundation meant that like elsewhere in Europe, the Russian capital now had a distinct Classical and Old Master public collection and a separate museum for later and largely national developments.

It was again Benois who first configured the style-based periodization of the history of the Russian school into a publication that introduced the Russian Museum's collection to a public. The inauguration of the national museum encouraged many catalogues, guides and tours, starting in 1898. These either simply listed exhibits or described highlights, following the chronological arrangement of the museum exposition; some guides arranged their narratives according to major branches of painting (history, genre, portraiture and landscape).⁵⁶ For the museum's 1904 official catalogue, the young art historian Nikolai Vrangél (1880–1915) found no better solution than alphabetically presenting artists' biographies and their works.⁵⁷ Most likely because of his two major publications on the Russian school, Benois was asked to write the introduction to the museum's collection.⁵⁸ Significantly, a year later, Vrangél's new and a more user-friendly overview of the Russian Museum also employed style-based periodization to describe the chronologically arranged display of the history of the Russian school, thereby effectively connecting it with the larger European tradition (Fig. 9.4).⁵⁹

What appeared at first a collision between a scholar (Benois) and an institution (the Russian Museum) turned out to be an illusion. Benois's successful effort to include the Russian chapter in Muther's nineteenth-century Western art survey was in line with the long-standing association of Russian art, its institutions and historiography, with Europe. But so was the institutional idea to relocate the Russian works from the Hermitage to the newly established national art museum, as was the European trend to separate Old Masters from the more modern and mainly national artistic developments.

What conceptually connected these two late nineteenth-century scholarly and institutional developments was the introduction of style-based art historical periodization of the Russian school of painting. In the light of the established historiographic approach to Russian art, this was a methodological innovation, albeit indebted to

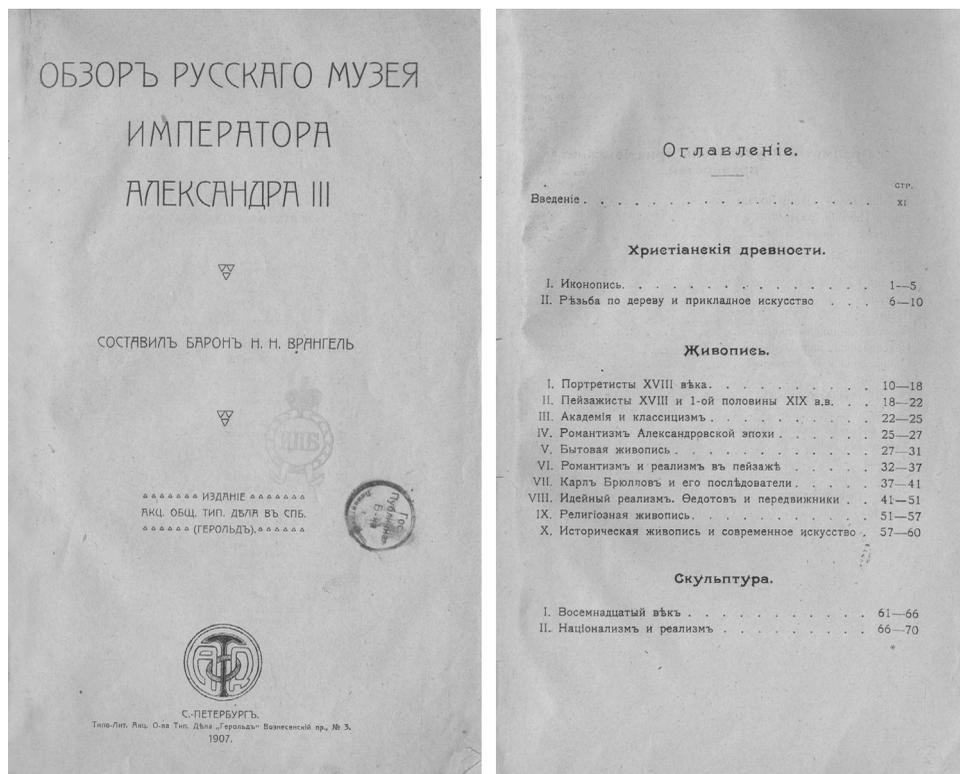


Figure 9.4 Cover and Contents pages of Nikolai Vrangl’s *Обзор Русского музея императора Александра III* (Overview of the Russian Museum of Emperor Alexander III), published in 1907.

Source: Vrangl, *Обзор Русского музея*, National Library of Russia.

German scholarship. The style-based periodization provided Russian art historical discourse with a novel analytical framework to describe, compare and analyse the development of the Russian school throughout the nineteenth century, critically employing pan-European stylistic categories, such as classicism, romanticism, realism, impressionism and their derivatives. While Stasov should be credited for being the first who juggled these categories in his promotion of the realist and nationalist agenda, it was Benois who began to incorporate the style-based periodization consistently and inclusively in his evaluative narrative of the Russian school. And he was the first to do so not only in his monographic works but also in the catalogue of the newly established Russian national art museum. At the dawn of the twentieth century, the concurrence of these two events – namely, the establishment of the first national Russian art museum and the introduction of style-based art historical periodization – allowed the Russian school of painting both to promote its specific national identity *and* to be perceived as an essential part of the broader European tradition.

Notes

- * I am grateful to Alla Lapidus and Galina Mardilovich for their generous assistance in preparing the material for this chapter.
- 1 Muther, *Geschichte der Malerei*.
 - 2 See Blakesley, *The Russian Canvas*.
 - 3 Vipper, *История европейского искусствознания*, 1963–69. See also Ostroi, *История искусствovedческой библиографии*.
 - 4 Stählin's archive is shared between various institutions, the main ones being the National Library of Russia, Manuscript Department (Fund 871) and the Archive of the St Petersburg Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences (Fund 170).
 - 5 Malinovskii, *Материалы Якоба Штелина*, 7, 16–51, 57–154, 199–225, 231–68.
 - 6 Vereshchagina, *Критики и искусство*, 379–415.
 - 7 Ostroi, *История искусствovedческой библиографии*, 62–63; Levinson-Lessing, *История Картинной галереи Эрмитажа*, 152–55; Severiukhin, *Старый художественный Петербург*, 55.
 - 8 Grigorovich, *Избранные труды*, 179–210.
 - 9 Tselishcheva, *Музей Академии художеств*, 60–63; Burlykina, *Музеи высших учебных заведений*, 58–59.
 - 10 *Указатель, находящихся в Академии произведений*.
 - 11 Pushkarev, *Путеводитель по СанктПетербургу*, 340, 406–7.
 - 12 Kukolnik, *Избранные труды*, 199–220.
 - 13 *Ibid.*, 204, 209.
 - 14 Levinson-Lessing, *История Картинной галереи Эрмитажа*, 9–10, 191–6; Dianina, *When Art Makes News*, 136–44.
 - 15 See for instance Paul, *The First Modern Museums of Art*.
 - 16 Andreev, *Живопись и живописцы*.
 - 17 *Ibid.*, ii, 474.
 - 18 *Ibid.*, 468–579.
 - 19 Levinson-Lessing, *История Картинной галереи Эрмитажа*, 152.
 - 20 *Ibid.*, 193–94; Aswarischtsch, 'Gustav Friedrich Waagen in Rußland'; Aswarischtsch, 'Waagen v Peterburge'.
 - 21 Kene, *Императорский Эрмитаж: Каталог картин*; Somov, *Императорский Эрмитаж: Каталог картинной галереи*.
 - 22 Waagen, *Die Gemäldesammlung*, 16, 311–16.
 - 23 For more on this, see Lorente, *Cathedrals of Urban Modernity*.
 - 24 *The International Exhibition of 1862*, 55.
 - 25 *Catalogue of the Russian Section*, 118–24.
 - 26 Tselishcheva, *Музей Академии художеств*, 65, 69, 73; Burlykina, *Музеи высших учебных заведений*, 134–35.
 - 27 Somov, *Картинная галерея Императорской Академии художеств*, ii–iv.
 - 28 Dobbert, *Рецензия на соч. А. Сомова*, 9–10.
 - 29 Stasov, *Собрание сочинений*, vol. I (Художественные статьи. Критика), 114, 121. See also Dianina, *When Art Makes News*, 63–68.
 - 30 Stasov, *Собрание сочинений*, vol. I (Художественные статьи. История), 132.
 - 31 Sobko, *Иллюстрированный каталог Художественного отдела*.
 - 32 Stasov, *Собрание сочинений*, vol. I (Художественные статьи. История), 494–590.
 - 33 Gnedich, *История искусств*, 457–96.
 - 34 *Ibid.*, 487. See also *Краткое историческое обозрение действий Московского художественного общества*.
 - 35 See review of the book: Shelashnikov, *История искусств с древнейших времён П. П. Гнедича*.
 - 36 Gertz, *О значении истории искусства*, 1.
 - 37 Stasov, *Собрание сочинений*, vol. II (Художественные статьи. Критика), 327–30; Vipper, *История европейского искусствознания: вторая половина XIX века*, 227–28, 235.
 - 38 Vipper, *История европейского искусствознания: вторая половина XIX века*, 236, 237–41; Vipper, *История европейского искусствознания: вторая половина XIX века – начало XX века. Книга вторая*, 8–17.

- 39 Vipper, *История европейского искусствознания: вторая половина XIX века – начало XX века. Книга первая*, 163–71.
- 40 Etkind, *Александр Бенуа как художественный критик*, 18–22.
- 41 Benois, *Мои воспоминания*, 685–90.
- 42 Muther, *Geschichte der Malerei*, 324–65.
- 43 Muther, *Русская живопись в XIX веке*.
- 44 Muther, *История живописи в XIX веке*.
- 45 Benois, *История русской живописи в XIX веке*.
- 46 See for instance Muther, *Главные течения иностранной живописи XIX в.*, 9.
- 47 Etkind, *Александр Бенуа как художественный критик*, 22–43.
- 48 Diaghilev, 'По поводу книги А. Бенуа', 39–44.
- 49 Benois, *Русская школа живописи*, i–ii, 1–96.
- 50 Respectively: Stasov, 'Искусство в XIX веке', 212–99; Novitskii, *История русского искусства*.
- 51 Ge, *Главные течения*.
- 52 Stasov, *Собрание сочинений*, vol. I (Художественные статьи. История), 493.
- 53 Levinson-Lessing, *История Картинной галереи Эрмитажа*, 298.
- 54 Severiukhin, *Старый художественный Петербург*, 103–12.
- 55 Breshko-Breshkovskii, *Русский музей*, i–xi; Vranghel, *Русский музей*, lviii–lix; Benois, *Русский музей*, 1–91. See also Dianina, *When Art Makes News*, 177–89.
- 56 Respectively: Polovtsov, *Прогулка по Русскому музею*; Breshko-Breshkovskii, *Русский музей*.
- 57 Vranghel, *Русский музей*.
- 58 Benois, *Русский музей*.
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10 Magmatic Foundations

The Emergence and Crystallization of Early Ideas of Periodization in Polish Painting in the Nineteenth Century

Natalia Koziara-Ochęduszeko

Introduction: Conceptualizations of Art History in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century

It is difficult to identify the beginning of Polish art history as a discipline. An even greater challenge is to outline the approach to periodization adopted by the researchers who laid the foundations of our present understanding of the field. Although Polish painting was the main focus of research in the early stages of Polish art history, it eluded clear systematization and classification. The vagueness of the language employed seems to be the critical problem here, as it prevents us from understanding how early Polish art historians conceptualized the division of art history into eras or stylistic periods. It could be argued that when studying nineteenth-century publications on art, we should focus less on the state of knowledge or methodology and more on the way content is shaped – through the descriptions, phrasing and narrative language chosen by their authors. This would mean, as noted by Magdalena Kunińska, paying attention to previously overlooked issues such as narrative contextualization, as well as analysing the language used, in order to grasp the role a historical work plays in creating meanings.¹

Particular attention should therefore be paid to analysis of materials from the first half of the nineteenth century. The pioneering writers on Polish painting, such as Franciszek Maksymilian Sobieszczański (1814–1878), Edward Rastawiecki (1805–1874) or Józef Ignacy Kraszewski (1812–1887), paved the way for their later nineteenth-century successors. The methods and modes they chose to describe artwork remained embedded in research practice for a long time, despite art history's transformation into an academic discipline.² Due to the popularity of art-collecting and the maintenance of private art collections, studies on painting dominated the first half of the century, dwindling significantly in later years to make room for research into architecture, which was by this stage considered central for deliberations on style. For these reasons, formulas and schemes developed in the first decades of the nineteenth century were retained for a significant stretch of time. The period of activity by these 'amateurs' can be compared to *magma*³ – a liquid, almost shapeless matter whose contents are not clearly defined and which precedes and conditions the formation of rocks. In time this bedrock would become the foundation of future methodological reflection.

This chapter therefore examines the language of the writers and amateur researchers who produced the earliest literature on historical Polish painting in the first half of the nineteenth century. It pays particular attention to the categories of periodization that they used or did not use. Emphasis is placed on the historical and cultural

conditions of these phenomena – the intellectual ferment that stimulated the texts produced at this time.

When discussing the origins of art history in Poland, scholars have tended to focus strictly on the beginnings of the academic discipline and overlooked its antecedents in the first half of the nineteenth century. This period is considered to predate the history of art in Poland, as it is generally understood in terms of its fully formed identity.⁴ This disregard for previous achievements in the field might result from a belief that research undertaken during this period lacked a clear methodology, and thus the issue of its academic contribution has been overlooked.⁵ However, Henrik Karge, who has highlighted the lack of research on the historiography of the nineteenth century in general, points out that it was in this period that the term ‘art history’ (*Kunstgeschichte*) emerged as the name of the discipline, implying that the subject area was also defined at this point.⁶

Moreover, the early nineteenth century saw the appearance of various types of texts focused on art – literature reviews, compendiums, textbooks, modern artists’ biographies (*Künstler Geschichtsschreibung*), tabulated works of art, press articles and reviews – that became the canonical forms of art historical writing in Poland.⁷ These models were developed as scholars strove to find a suitably accurate language that could translate artistic matters into academic texts.⁸ Their efforts went beyond definitions and terminology, attempting to devise structures that would enable modes of writing not only about art and artists but also about art as history (an issue of particular importance in the first half of the nineteenth century). There was a need for a basic conceptual vocabulary that would allow history to be filtered through the lens of periodization.⁹ Considering that historiography, at its very core, is closely related to literature,¹⁰ it is helpful to examine the literary structures that shaped the ‘pre-academic’ discussions of art and recognize that the search for new formulas in history-writing evolved into a mutually influential ‘creative kinship between history and literature’.¹¹ For example, the historical novels of Walter Scott (1771–1832), which were particularly popular in the Commonwealth and dominated the literary scene in the first decades of the nineteenth century, used historical sources to build a credible, historically plausible world.¹² Historians, on the other hand, who throughout the Enlightenment had favoured the empirical reporting of facts, now realized that the moulding of past reality in an illustrative way had the potential to present wider historical contexts; this discovery encouraged them to invent new kinds of academic historical narratives, enriched with imaginative details and picturesque forms.¹³ When seen this way, historiographic research relates to literary studies, where historical facts are a stimulant to narration or, as Hayden White conceptualizes it, ‘before they become . . . subject to research and analysis and before they can be presented, they must first be imagined’, that is put into words.¹⁴

Survey versus Dictionary: The Curious Case of Franciszek Maksymilian Sobieszczański

When searching for the origins of Polish writings on painting, one should look at Sobieszczański’s essay ‘Rzut oka na historią malarstwa w Polsce’ (A Glance at the History of Painting in Poland), published in stages in *Dziennik Krajowy* (County Journal) in 1843.¹⁵ The article was the first attempt to present the history of Polish painting synthetically, published seven years before the first (and at that time only) dictionary

of Polish painters by Edward Rastawiecki.¹⁶ Sobieszczański's work provides a sort of manifesto for a certain 'art historical' method that has been almost completely overlooked by researchers.¹⁷

Sobieszczański's dissertation is a coherent treatise divided (for the sake of printing in the newspaper) into ten parts, structured as follows: a motto and a short introduction, followed by a chronologically ordered overview. He explains that his work focuses on 'the art of painting from a historical point of view, as it has evolved in Poland'¹⁸ and, therefore, creates a general narrative of the history of art, where biographical notes on artists are merely a decorative inlay to the historical argument. Central to his thought was the Kantian concept of 'aesthetics'.¹⁹ For Sobieszczański, 'aesthetics' meant knowledge about beauty and art, which he saw as being of great importance for the historical process, and which he often equated with the discipline of art history:

In the current state of the development of learning, when there is a general consensus that all sciences are interrelated, the fine arts have won an essential status in the field of the education of humankind. It is in our time that they have been recognized as grounded in the theory of feeling and, as such, represent the most difficult part of philosophy. Thus their influence and importance go far beyond the satisfaction of human eyes or senses.²⁰

He recognizes that since Kant, the fine arts have given rise to 'a separate branch of philosophy, called "aesthetics", that endows them with a "higher aim and vocation"'.²¹ It is also from Kant that Sobieszczański borrows the concept of 'taste' as an aesthetic category enabling the judgement of beauty and, therefore, the judgement of art.

An examination of the intellectual biography of Sobieszczański suggests that his youthful experiences and contacts significantly influenced not only his general interest in art and painting but also his historical and methodological approaches.²² Born in 1814, he moved at the age of seven to Horochów in Wołyń (Volynhia) where his father worked as a gardener for Count Jan Felix Tarnowski.²³ After briefly participating in the November Uprising of 1830–31, the future historian and publicist travelled to Tarnowski's Dzików estate in Galicia where, with Tarnowski's approval, he was educated alongside the Count's own son. He learned four languages in a short period: fluent in German and French, he was also able to speak English and Italian, which won him the position of private lecturer in the Dzików estate. At the same time, he was entrusted with the curatorship of the Dzików library, a position he occupied until 1834. In order to develop the collection, Sobieszczański travelled throughout Galicia, as well as to Vienna, acquainting himself with the newest publications in history, literature and philosophy.²⁴ In Dzików, he was also exposed to the rich art collection of the Tarnowski family. Tarnowski's wife, Waleria Tarnowska, a known expert and connoisseur, could well have influenced Sobieszczański's interest in this field. After leaving Tarnowski's service, Sobieszczański lived in Kraków where he trained at the printing establishment of Antoni Zygmunt Helcel, who might have introduced him to the famous amateur historian Ambroży Grabowski.²⁵ In 1837, he went to Leipzig via Wrocław and Dresden, before travelling through South Germany and Strasbourg to Paris, where he met the exiled Polish book editors, librarians and historians Eustachy Januskiewicz and Karol Sienkiewicz.

Of particular importance is the fact that Sobieszczański attended the lectures of the French historian Jules Michelet at the Collège de France. Michelet believed that the

role of a historian was to resurrect the past in its totality, in all its forms, to present a living synthesis. A historian should aim to reveal as many different aspects of the past as historical sources are able to provide.²⁶ It is possible that this methodological approach to viewing the past synthetically inspired Sobieszczański to create a thorough study of the history of painting.²⁷

Sobieszczański's Vision of the Place of Art in History

Sobieszczański's 1843 essay was groundbreaking for its time. He declared:

[F]ine art may blossom anywhere, in all countries, wherever human reason achieves some level of development, and the heart shows gentleness and sensitivity. Thus, wherever they appear, the tender shoots of art require much care not to perish; like the plants of this world, they are shaped by climate and the hand of a careful gardener. If reason fails or taste is corrupted, they wilt away.²⁸

Sobieszczański considered that historical circumstances cause art to flourish or to decay, but he rejected the idea that art should be in the service of history. For him, painting (or art in general) is a symptom of, and a factor in, the historical process, but not its consequence. As will be shown, his view of art as a symptom of culture enabled and conditioned his method of periodization. This view echoes early essays by Joachim Lelewel, who viewed a work of art as a legitimate historical source expressing the character of the time in which it was created.²⁹ According to Sobieszczański, taking such a standpoint meant arguing against the opinions of certain Polish historians and poets (especially Wincenty Pol), who believed that 'fine arts were supposed to be the handmaids of whatever was happening in the country (a situation probably best proved by painting)'.³⁰ Sobieszczański decided that 'this presumption was only relatively true' and he hoped that in the future, as the discipline of art history developed, this belief would fade away completely.³¹ He considered education and culture to be the main favourable factors driving artistic development. Such a belief echoed the Hegelian concept of 'Zeitgeist' – the then popular notion that the cultural or artistic developments of a certain age were induced by the 'spirit' of the era. According to this perspective, art should mirror the culture of its period, while an artist, considered 'a product of their own time', was an agent funnelling the cultural climate into their artworks. It does not come as a surprise that Sobieszczański adopted this Hegelian doctrine; as Ewa Starzyńska-Kościuszko points out, this philosophy merged harmoniously with the pluralistic universalism characteristic of Romanticism and provided a model for the future development of Polish culture. She argues that Hegel's writings became crucial key educational texts for an entire generation of thinkers in the first half of the nineteenth century. Anyone who lacked knowledge about absolute idealism would be disqualified from taking part in cultural life.³² The omnipresent Hegelianism permeating the art writings available to Sobieszczański at that time further pushed him to remain within the historiosophical paradigm.³³

These circumstances set the stage for an examination of the periodization proposed by Sobieszczański for the history of painting in Poland. He presents the issue chronologically, placing it in the context of Polish history and referring specifically to the rulers overseeing each period. Though he uses such expressions as 'the time of oriental taste, the so-called Byzantine style' or 'German Gothic painting' when defining the art

produced between the tenth and fourteenth centuries, it seems that these terms were employed merely as a stylistic means of expression. He does not give much attention to them, nor does he take their character into consideration in any conscious way. Sobieszczański's approach to periodization is to label periods according to kings or dynasties. He begins with the reign of the Jagiellonians, which he calls 'a golden era for [arts] and sciences in Poland' and 'a time friendly to arts in the whole of Europe, when different countries competed above all in one discipline, namely painting, that reached its most perfect form'.³⁴ Reading this text today, an art historical audience may have the strong impression that the scholar was referring to the beginnings of the Renaissance, not just in the territory of the Polish Kingdom, but in the whole of Europe. Analysis of the text indicates that Sobieszczański was aware of the development of painting across historical periods. He states that during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, one 'starts to see the dawn of painting', and notes the further progress of art in Germany and Italy. When he writes about the art produced during the reign of Jan III Sobieski, a style known today as 'Baroque', he mentions 'the barbaric taste of that time'.³⁵ However, Sobieszczański did not link individual periods or ages with particular concepts of style; instead, he identified specific schools of painting through terms like 'German School', 'French School', 'a pupil of the last Venetian School', 'the Dutch School founded by the great master, Peter Paul Rubens' or 'Rembrandt's school'.

He used these terms to signify a certain style or way of painting particular to a given place or workshop, usually not tied to any specific point in time, or at most related to a very blurred time frame. Compiling a canon of artists – the 'great masters' – around specific schools of painting became a well-established strategy of Polish writings. Both painters and the periods in which they lived were represented through an extensive description of the artist's school of origin, while artworks were discussed from the perspective of the influence or training they had received from other masters. Many dictionaries of Polish painters written at this time made use of such an approach to periodization; but they never discussed features of the 'styles' specific to different schools. To characterize each of the schools, researchers used connoisseurial methods to establish what came from a certain entourage and what did not, and often refrained from attempting to define styles per se. Sobieszczański's dissertation appeared when the demand for an overview of Polish art was growing. Offering a new approach, it seemed to provide a stimulus for this community to conduct systematic detailed studies of key figures of Polish painting. While it is impossible to measure the exact significance of Sobieszczański's article for the connoisseurs' work, they were undoubtedly familiar with his study, and frequently referred to its content and methods.

Competing Visions? Dictionary-Writing

Polish writings on art from the first half of the nineteenth century demonstrate encyclopaedic tendencies, as scholars (or 'art archaeologists' as they were called at the time) attempted to compile dictionaries of Polish artists and painters. Such pursuits were undertaken by several connoisseurs simultaneously and independently, 'with an ardour larger than their abilities', as Andrzej Ryszkiewicz has noted.³⁶ Ryszkiewicz is convinced that the situation in Poland after the November Uprising (1830–31) was one of the main contributing factors.³⁷ Brutal repressive measures by the partitioning powers caused political disillusionment, and hopes of regaining national independence were lost. Thus, the studies of this period were characterized by a certain *passéisme* and

an eagerness to ‘run back to the past’ in order to find and display ‘each sign of the glorious acts by past generations’. Therefore, Ryszkiewicz argues, it was patriotism that ‘guided these attempts much more than actual academic needs.’³⁸

Early nineteenth-century researchers found themselves in a slightly difficult situation for other reasons too. Before the turn towards a history of artistic styles, art history had been written mainly as a sequence of artists’ biographies (as exemplified by the work of Giorgio Vasari). The structures of these narratives followed a primeval chronological framework in which the rhythm of artistic development was schematized as cyclical or even biological.³⁹ This approach was hardly conducive to generating a panoramic form of art history, or to encapsulating the art history of a particular nation. Yet it seems that amateur art historians aimed at this kind of synthetic overview in their works. Their search for a suitable form of expression made them more akin to historians engaged in a quest for a relevant formula for history writing. As Violetta Julkowska has argued, two simultaneous trends are distinguishable in the development of this phenomenon. Firstly, authors sought a broader form of speaking and writing about history, one that stemmed from Enlightenment thought and was related to the ‘unfulfilled Voltairian dream of history that encompassed a history of civilizations as well as a history conditioned by the geography and climate of its subjects, while avoiding a history focused on political events in specific nations’.⁴⁰ The second tendency was marked by the desire to enrich ‘the work of a historian with a new method of source criticism’ that determined the exact time and location of events and attempted to view historical phenomena from a global multilayered perspective.⁴¹ Analogous tendencies can be observed in the field of early art historical research as well. In a similar way to their European counterparts, early nineteenth-century Polish academic historiographers largely relied on theories of national formation that looked at the subject according to the expectations of Romanticism. They drew arguments from historical discourse and viewed history as a reservoir of the past whose legacy was open to everyone.⁴²

Art lovers like Kraszewski,⁴³ Rastawiecki,⁴⁴ Gwałbert Pawlikowski (1793–1852)⁴⁵ and Żegota Pauli (1814–1895)⁴⁶ made competing attempts to compile dictionaries. Although ‘amateurs’, their works were for the most part based on thorough academic study. They relied on both library and archival research, as well as on the examination of artistic collections (sometimes considered as a *conditio sine qua non* for the development of art historiography), and also referred to available academic literature, including writings by Johann Joachim Winckelmann (1717–1768), Johann Dominicus Fiorillo (1748–1821), Luigi Lanzi (1732–1810), Franz Kugler (1808–1858), Gustav Friedrich Waagen (1794–1868), Atanazy Raczyński (1788–1874) and Sebastiano Ciampi (1769–1847).⁴⁷ It is worth noting that these Polish amateurs were mainly from a high social class and had all received a comprehensive education.

Pawlikowski, a landowner who had studied law in Lviv and at the University of Vienna, held the position of Imperial Court Secretary in Vienna between 1826 and 1830. His wealth allowed him to amass a comprehensive collection of artworks and ancient artefacts. Pauli, albeit of bourgeois background, attended the Faculty of Philosophy at Lviv University. Fluent in Latin, Greek and German, he also spoke Italian and French. In 1844, he moved to Kraków to work as librarian, archivist and secretary for Prince Adam Potocki. The frequent travels this position involved gave him an opportunity to inspect libraries and archives in Warsaw, Dresden, Berlin, Göttingen, Prague, Vienna and Wrocław, and to establish contacts with German and Czech scholars along the way. Kraszewski belonged to landed gentry and studied literature

at the University of Vienna. Remembered as one of the most prolific writers on Polish literary history, he was also a publicist, historian and encyclopaedist, as well as a collector and art lover. Editor of the Vilnian literary magazine *Athenaeum* between 1841 and 1851, he had also contributed to *Tygodnik Petersburski* (The Petersburg Weekly) since 1837 and *Gazeta Warszawska* (The Warsaw Gazette) since 1851. As for Baron Rastawiecki, he was a recognized art collector and patron who received a thorough home education and graduated from Warsaw Lyceum and the Faculty of Administration at the Royal University of Warsaw. Between 1826 and 1828, he undertook a Grand Tour that involved, *inter alia*, visits to Prague, Vienna, Munich, the Italian Peninsula, Switzerland, Germany and Paris. He used his inheritance to buy works of art and provide patronage to other scholars. He published in *Biblioteka Warszawska* (The Warsaw Library) and engaged in the activities of the Towarzystwo Zachęty Sztuk Pięknych (Society for the Encouragement of Fine Arts) of which he was vice president between 1860 and 1866. Rastawiecki used his own financial means to print all his publications, as well as some by other authors, including Kraszewski's *Ikonoteka* (a dictionary of Polish painters). He also supported field research into ancient Polish artefacts. Thanks to Rastawiecki, Józef Łepkowski was able to travel throughout Galicia and then publish a series of articles in *Biblioteka Warszawska* in 1848–60. Rastawiecki himself wrote the popular 'Spominki historyczne i artystyczne' (Reminiscing about History and Art).⁴⁸

Listed together, these facts demonstrate several significant issues related to the first attempts to study Polish painting. Firstly, it seems that all the so-called dilettantes were in fact extensively educated researchers whose travels and knowledge of different languages granted them familiarity with the art historical concepts emerging in Western Europe. Furthermore, their background suggests that the work they undertook, though reinforced by the patriotic motivations mentioned earlier, was largely dependent on the financial resources available to them (consequently, it was only Baron Rastawiecki whose situation allowed the publication of his own dictionary). For most of the authors mentioned here, the selection of subjects in their dictionaries was conditioned by the proximity of artworks in their own collections or in the collections they curated professionally. The authors of such lexicons were expected not just to compile pre-existing knowledge on Polish painting in general but to gather further information on the artists in order to establish the basis for future research and the production of a comprehensive synthesis of this knowledge – an endeavour that would engage their successors. Therefore, the dictionaries ought to be viewed as quasi-source material to be harvested and used by later scholars.

The 'records of painters' compiled by these encyclopaedists focused on the lives of artists, thus belonging to the writing tradition that originated in Vasari's sixteenth-century works and was analogous to the method adopted by Sobieszczański. When describing particular artists, Polish writers avoided periodization and stylistic definitions, even though these concepts were not unknown to them. Although they did employ stylistic notions established in theoretical discussions of architecture, it seems that their understanding of stylistic expression in painting lagged behind that of architecture.

Counter-Periodization I: A Model for Artistic Biographies

What is noteworthy in the circumstances, however, is that these writers did not choose to follow the chronological order known from Vasari's works. Instead, their writings

were organized in alphabetical order, meaning they did not offer the possibility to perceive continuity in the history of art. Their departure from the chronological model also resulted in a disturbance of the Vasarian pattern according to which each artist exceeded the achievements of their predecessor, a scheme that established the idea of progress in art.⁴⁹ Thus, the biography of each artist became a separate, independent story focused on the facts of their life, arranged in the following order: (1) the course of the artist's life; (2) the school where they developed their skills; (3) artistic genres; (4) a degree of talent; (5) known works of painting; (6) written sources used. The fact that art historians chose to prioritise these autonomous stories, although somewhat contradicting the aim of creating a synthetic history of painting in Poland, can be explained as a response to the Hegelian concept of 'spirit' with its cult of great individuals determining general progress. From this point of view, artistic biographies with their psychological and anecdotal colour served to justify the historical desires of the spirit, to use the words of Ryszard Kasperowicz.⁵⁰ What remained from the Vasarian model was the effort to compose a canon of the most important painters, while almost completely ignoring the meaning and character of the artworks themselves. It appears that these researchers considered the analysis of artworks, or assessment of their nature, to be of secondary importance (often paintings were merely listed) to the key question of establishing whether or not a painter was, indeed, Polish.

Counter-Periodization II: In Search of a 'Polish School of Painting'

Equally important is the fact that, in the literature of the first half of the nineteenth century, the concept of a 'Polish School of painting' started to emerge. The concept arose as an analogy to the names of Italian painting schools – Florentine, Sienese and Roman – as well as to other European schools, such as the French or Flemish. The expression 'Polish School' was probably used for the first time in a document discussing 'The Project for a National Gallery of Liberal Arts' (1785), which the Governor of the Province of Podlasie, Józef Salezy Ossoliński, presented to the Rector of Kraków Academy. Ossoliński declared that he would donate his collection to the Academy. His artworks were to be classified into sections according to 'the schools of art, already commonly known, with the addition of the Polish School, divided into two parts'.⁵¹ This division was necessary in order to differentiate between native artists and foreigners who worked in Poland. For the Krakovian donor (as for Sobieszczański), it was clear that a phenomenon called 'the Polish School of painting' actually existed, but in the years to follow, the concept provoked strong debates in the expert community – a discussion that lasted for almost the entire nineteenth century.⁵²

The growing prominence of painting in European culture during this period meant that the field of art history gained more importance as a manifestation of culture. A search therefore began for signs of 'the Polish School' in the art production of the past, accompanied by predictions around its future and, first and foremost, definitions of its key features.⁵³ Attempts by patriotic publicists of the time to define 'Polishness' in painting were often limited to lists of subjects that should be addressed by 'Polish painters', such as Polish history, Polish landscapes or Polish people. Polish painters were also supposed to be educated in Poland, whose specific 'climate, character and social status [are] crucial for the development of native painting' (according to Sobieszczański's ironic note).⁵⁴ Moreover, as Elżbieta Gieysztor-Miłobędzka has pointed out, 'in the years without sovereignty, art history from its very beginnings had

the purpose of establishing a body of “national heritage” and safeguarding it as the material and moral foundations of Polish identity’.⁵⁵ As early as the turn of the eighteenth century, the country’s artistic legacy began to be recognized as a ‘monument’, part of a symbolic totality of ‘cultural’ or ‘national’ heritage.⁵⁶

As Maria Janion has highlighted, the nineteenth century was an exceptional period for the Poles: it saw the emergence of both early and mature forms of modern Polish self-identity and consciousness, which heavily echoed the country’s painful experience of partition and occupation.⁵⁷ This was also the time when attempts were undertaken to develop a language not just for literature but for art in general, a language appropriate to the needs of the age. The language and rhetoric that emerged in relation to the issue of the ‘Polish School’ clearly owed much to Romantic modes for evaluating artistic phenomena, with four crucial criteria that intersected to build more or less consistent systems: national, historical, sociopolitical and aesthetic principles. The first two focused on nationality, indigeneity, folklore elements and the originality of a piece of art. The sociopolitical criterion was linked to ideological and political components of art that endowed it with a leading role in the nation’s fight for liberation.⁵⁸ Paradoxically, it was for this reason that older Polish artists were not usually considered as belonging to the ‘Polish School’ in the dictionaries of painters. As their works lacked purely ‘Polish’ subjects and they had trained abroad, they did not satisfy the conditions to be considered part of the ‘native’ art scene. Kraszewski summed this up as follows in 1840: ‘All these painters and craftsmen, simple exceptions to the general rule, appearing here and there, unrelated to one another, without similarities in character, by no means constitute a single school’.⁵⁹ Older artists, especially Baroque painters working in the second half of the eighteenth century, were considered to be ‘foreign’ or ‘Italianized’ Poles.⁶⁰ A national missionary zeal clearly marked this way of thinking, a *spiritus movens* for Polish art history that, in the second half of the nineteenth century, not only determined the scope of its studies – that is Polish art and the canon of Polish artworks – but also ascribed artistic value based on the criterion of ‘national’, while ignoring the periodization of older Polish painting completely.⁶¹

Conclusion

One might ask the question of whether the periodization of painting was in fact necessary for Polish researchers in the first half of the nineteenth century? They seem to have been absorbed by the exploration of archives, searching for any mentions of painters and growing more interested in the artistic manner of particular individuals than in the definition of style, as witnessed by the widespread phenomenon of mythologized artist biographies. Moreover, the discussion of whether such a thing as a ‘Polish School’ of painting existed turned to a consideration of ‘schools’ in other European nations in order to find a starting point for the search for distinctive characteristics of the Polish School. At the same time, periodization of the chronology of styles was ignored completely. As for Sobieszczęński, he considered it ‘sufficient’ to place art into the context of historical chronology in general. Perhaps the notion of ‘painting schools’ with specific characteristics was enough for him and other researchers, so they did not feel a need to think about styles as dependent on the chronology of history. With this perspective in mind, one may paraphrase the question posed by Hans Robert Jauss: was it possible for art history, in its attempts at periodization at the beginning of the nineteenth century, to refrain from borrowing the predominant

framework of pragmatic history?⁶² As an unstable magma that was just beginning to crystallize, art history's search for its own language gradually grew more dependent on historical chronology and, whether consciously or not, shaped the perspective of later researchers working within the fully-fledged academic discipline.

Notes

- 1 Kunińska, *Historia Sztuki Mariana Sokołowskiego*, 26.
- 2 After the publication of Edward Rastawiecki's three-volume *Słownik malarzów polskich* (Dictionary of Polish Painters; 1850–57), attempts to create a comparable work were abandoned for many years. Another major dictionary was not published until the 1970s (*Słownik artystów polskich* (Dictionary of Polish Artists), edited by Andrzej Ryszkiewicz), and Rastawiecki's work, though imperfect, influenced ways of thinking and writing about painting in Poland for a long time. This is especially visible in monographs on individual painters active in the Polish Commonwealth in the eighteenth century, such as Szymon Czechowicz, Tadeusz Kuntze or Andrzej Radwański (see Wiercińska, Liczbińska, *Polska Bibliografia sztuki 1801–1944*), which uncritically repeated Rastawiecki's words and ideas. A similar pattern can be observed in the writings of Franciszek Maksymilian Sobieszczański. The synthetic views of painting in Poland, written in the second half of the nineteenth century, derive their structure, and thus their method of periodization, from Sobieszczański's 'Rzut oka na historią malarstwa w Polsce' (see, among others, the anonymous article 'Słów kilka o malarstwie i malarzach w Polsce' published in stages in the periodical *Sobótka* in 1870).
- 3 I wish to acknowledge here the help of Professor Wojciech Balus who suggested 'magma' as a suitable metaphor to illustrate the situation of Polish art scholars in the first half of the nineteenth century.
- 4 Kunińska, *Historia Sztuki Mariana Sokołowskiego*, 15.
- 5 For more on the academic nature of art history, see Rampley, 'The Idea of a Scientific Discipline'.
- 6 Karge, 'Die Entfaltung der wissenschaftlichen Kunstgeschichte'.
- 7 *Ibid.*
- 8 Kunińska, *Historia Sztuki Mariana Sokołowskiego*, 26.
- 9 The situation in the former Polish Commonwealth was not exceptional in this regard. A similar problem can be observed in other European countries, such as Russia, as discussed in Chapter 9 of this volume.
- 10 As pointed out by Arthur C. Danto (*Analytical Philosophy of History*), Hayden White (*Metahistory* and *The Content of the Form*) or Frank Ankersmit, who established a narrative model of history (see Ankersmitt, *Narrative Logic; History and Tropology*). Studies by these scholars focused on the form of historiographic literature, together with pictures from the past that can be decoded from its language, rhetoric and aesthetic considerations.
- 11 Julkowska, 'Problem "wizualizacji" przeszłości', 140.
- 12 See Shaw, *The Forms of Historical Fiction*.
- 13 Julkowska, 'Problem "wizualizacji" przeszłości', 140.
- 14 Domańska, 'Wokół metahistorii', 14.
- 15 Sobieszczański, 'Rzut oka na historią malarstwa'.
- 16 Rastawiecki, *Słownik malarzów polskich*.
- 17 See, for example, Jolanta Polanowska's study of the early stages of art historiography in Poland which significantly underestimates Sobieszczański's contribution: *Historiografia sztuki polskiej*.
- 18 Sobieszczański, 'Rzut oka na historią malarstwa', no. 114, 1.
- 19 See Kant, *Kritik der Urteilskraft*.
- 20 Sobieszczański, 'Rzut oka na historią malarstwa', no. 111, 1.
- 21 *Ibid.*
- 22 On Sobieszczański see Konarski, 'Franciszek Maksymilian Sobieszczański'; Polanowska. *Historiografia sztuki polskiej*, 61–84.
- 23 The library in Dzików was founded by Jan Feliks Tarnowski. Its collection was related to his public, cultural, scientific and literary activities. Tarnowski collected works for the

- library from the late eighteenth to the first half of the nineteenth centuries as gifts, exchanges and purchases from private and ecclesiastical libraries. He bought books at auction or via agents. Initially, the library did not have a single location. Jan Feliks kept books in Dzików, Horochów and his palace in Warsaw. After the collapse of the November Uprising, when Tarnowski moved to Dzików, the libraries were merged. His wife, Waleria Tarnowska, helped care for the collection, but he also hired professional librarians to draw up numerous catalogues of the library. See Paduch, 'Jan Feliks Tarnowski'.
- 24 Paduch, 'Jan Feliks Tarnowski', 143.
- 25 See Estreicher, 'Dzieło Ambrożego Grabowskiego', 7–42.
- 26 See Barthes, *Michelet*; Creyghton, *La survivance de Michelet*; Wright, 'Book Review of "Jules Michelet"'.
 27 Another significant moment for Sobieszczański was his return to Kraków in 1838. When he applied for a passport the following year, proof of his participation in the November Uprising landed him in jail first in Kielce, then in the Warsaw Citadel. During the trial conducted by Rittmeister F. Leichte, Sobieszczański not only admitted to participating in the national liberation movement, but also provided a detailed account of Polish émigré activities in France. He prepared an extensive document revealing the ways in which literature by exiles was transferred to the Congress Kingdom of Poland, including the role played by Eustachy Januskiewicz and Heinric Brockhaus. Sobieszczański fully collaborated with the Russians (and continued to do so for the rest of his life), agreeing, in exchange for release from prison, to travel to Belgium and France under the false name of Jan Müller in order to penetrate émigré circles. In 1840, during his stay in Brussels, he befriended an exiled Polish historian, Joachim Lelewel, as well as the activist and historian Leonard Chodźko. After returning to Poland, Sobieszczański provided a detailed report of his findings. Due to 'mental exhaustion', the 20-year-old researcher requested time off – and less than a year later published 'Rzut oka na historią malarstwa w Polsce'.
- 28 Sobieszczański, 'Rzut oka na historią malarstwa', no. 114, 1.
- 29 Lelewel, *Dziela*. See also Janowski, 'Romantic Historiography'; Polanowska, *Historiografia sztuki polskiej*.
- 30 Sobieszczański, 'Rzut oka na historią malarstwa', no. 114, 1.
- 31 *Ibid.*, 2.
- 32 Starzyńska-Kościszko, 'Kremer – Trentowski', 196.
- 33 Kunińska, 'Rówieśnicy', 268; see also Moxey, 'Art History's Hegelian Unconscious'.
- 34 Sobieszczański, 'Rzut oka na historią malarstwa', no. 114, 3.
- 35 *Ibid.*, no. 121, 1.
- 36 Ryszkiewicz, 'Słowniki artystów polskich', v.
- 37 This was a national insurrection against the partitioning powers which started in Warsaw. The failure of the November Uprising provoked heavy repressive measures against Poles in the Russian and Prussian Partitions. The sovereignty of the Free City of Kraków was also restricted. Polish higher education was suppressed, the quality of secondary schooling was significantly lowered and the number of elementary schools was reduced. Russification of the population intensified in the Russian Partition through, for example, adding Russian language lessons to the curricula of secondary schools. On the November Uprising, see Wandycz, *The Lands of Partitioned Poland*, 105–31.
- 38 Ryszkiewicz, 'Słowniki artystów polskich', v–vi.
- 39 For an analytical position on this approach, see Jauss, 'Dzieje sztuki i historia', 258.
- 40 Julkowska, 'Problem "wizualizacji" przeszłości', 139.
- 41 *Ibid.*
- 42 Waśko, *Historia według poetów*, 10.
- 43 Józef Ignacy Kraszewski, *Prospekt. Słownik Artystów Polskich Ikonotheka polska*, manuscript archived in National Museum in Kraków. No signature number.
- 44 Rastawiecki, *Słownik malarzów polskich*, vol. 1; Rastawiecki, *Słownik malarzów polskich*, vol. 2; Rastawiecki, *Słownik malarzów polskich*, vol. 3.
- 45 Pawlikowski, 'Wiadomości o rytownikach Polakach i cudzoziemcach' as well as Pawlikowski, *Słownik Polskich Malarzy*.
- 46 Żegota Pauli, *Dykcjonarz artystów obrazowych w Polsce*, written in the first half of nineteenth century, manuscript archived in the Jagiellonian Library, Manuscript no. 5755.

- 47 As the authors listed differ in provenance and nature, it is worth noting that these texts served only as auxiliary materials, as quasi-source or quasi-factual material. Polish amateurs accepted the contents of what they presented without reflecting deeply on their nature and their own methodological presuppositions.
- 48 Rastawiecki, 'Spominki historyczne i artystyczne'.
- 49 Locher, 'The Idea of the Canon', 32.
- 50 Kasperowicz, 'Józef Kremer', 300.
- 51 Ryszkiewicz, *Kolekcjonerzy i miłośnicy*, 58.
- 52 See Grabska and Morawski, *Z dziejów polskiej krytyki i teorii sztuki*.
- 53 De Rosset, 'Malarstwo Polskie', 207.
- 54 Sobieszcański, 'Rzut oka na historię malarstwa', no. 114, 1–2.
- 55 Gieysztor-Miłobędzka, 'Polska Historia Sztuki', 59.
- 56 Ibid.
- 57 Janion, 'Badania literackie nad XIX stuleciem', 9.
- 58 Zawadzki, 'Kryteria wartościowania dzieła sztuki', 61–62.
- 59 Kraszewski, *Gawędki o sztuce*.
- 60 Zaucha, 'Artysta niezapoznany', 53.
- 61 Gieysztor-Miłobędzka, 'Polska Historia Sztuki', 58.
- 62 Jauss, 'Dzieje sztuki i historia', 258.

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11 Problematizing Periodization

Folk Art, National Narratives and Cultural Politics in Early Twentieth-Century Romanian Art History*

Shona Kallestrup

Introduction

When in 1924 the Romanian poet-philosopher Lucian Blaga published his famous line ‘I believe eternity was born in the village’,¹ he evoked a conception of time and space that was at odds with conventional Western, allegedly ‘universal’, structures of periodization. Attempting to provide a philosophical foundation for the essence of his native land, he privileged the Romanian ‘subhistory’ and its particular temporal and metaphysical connection between environment and culture. In so doing, he offered a potent example of Romanian interwar efforts to bridge what Virgil Nemoianu calls ‘the wide chasm separating Western and non-Western intellectual behavior’.² These centred on creative new frameworks for self-understanding that had culture and art at their heart.

In the 1920s, Romanian art historians also looked for ways of overcoming the intellectual ‘chasm’ between local traditions and Western canons. In particular, they mobilized folk art in the service of narratives that simultaneously were imbricated in the processes of nation building and participated in what Michela Passini calls ‘the internationalization of cultural goods’.³ This was the decade that saw art history assert itself in Romania as a self-confident discipline with international reach in the work of figures like Alexandru Tzigara-Samurcaş (1872–1952), Nicolae Iorga (1871–1940), George Oprescu (1881–1969) and Coriolan Petranu (1893–1945). Trained in the crucibles of Western art history – Berlin, Munich, Leipzig, Paris and Vienna – but operating within the febrile context of newly unified Greater Romania, they realized that the Western model, in particular its hierarchical concept of periodization, did not always offer a comfortable framework for the artistic production of the region. Far from providing universal schema, it tended to explain difference in terms of ‘belatedness’, ‘derivation’ and ‘peripherality’. Instead, these scholars argued increasingly for the particular temporal rhythms of Romania’s own art forms, both Byzantine and vernacular, perceived as deep-rooted, largely anonymous and uninterrupted. In its resistance to periodization, this heritage was believed to have preserved the ‘national soul’ through centuries of fickle foreign rule, thus offering autochthonous justification for the modern-day political project of nationhood.

This chapter explores the ways in which art historians used Romanian folk art and architecture as a way of circumventing the hierarchical aspects of Western periodization and establishing a more sympathetic framework for the national art narrative in the 1920s. For some, like Tzigara-Samurcaş, Iorga and Petranu, this was bound up with the wider cultural-ideological project of Romania’s new post-war political borders. For

others, such as Oprescu and the French art historian Henri Focillon (1881–1943), it was part of a broader interwar effort to build bridges between cultures by recognizing folk art as ‘rooted in something universally human, common to all’.⁴

Problems of Periodization in South-Eastern Europe

As Anca Oroveanu, citing Gombrich, has pointed out, Western art is amenable to periodization, while non-Western art is not.⁵ South-Eastern European art, shaped by a medley of Byzantine, Ottoman, Venetian, Georgian, Armenian and Russian influences and their interaction with a strong folk tradition, does not map comfortably onto Western hegemonic ideas of linear time (what Mary Roberts calls the West’s ‘disabling temporal logic’) where the value of art is measured by its chronological novelty and time is historicized through stylistic change.⁶ Yet (as Cosmin Minea discusses in Chapter 3 in this volume) for the early scholars who formulated the core art histories of the region in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, trying to interpret the local art in alignment with Western criteria was not only the result of their training in the main Western centres of art historical thought but also initially part of a wider political drive to demonstrate the Europeanization of the region and its ability to share in the modernist project. Carmen Popescu argues that as soon as the Balkans entered modernity and tried to integrate with the so-called civilized world, they had to negotiate Hegelian ‘universal history’, as well as respond to the expectations of the Occidental gaze. For ‘half-awakened’ peoples, ‘entering history demanded an entire readjustment of local coordinates in keeping with Western values’.⁷ This inevitably led to aspirational, if somewhat contorted, discussions of periodization and style. Tzigara-Samurçaş, for example, wrote in 1924 that Romania ‘is the only country where not only all the great periods of European art are represented, sometimes even by examples which are unique within their genre, but where even the most opposing styles merge to give birth to new schools’.⁸

Hegel’s development of the Herderian concept of *Volksgeist* to imply that only ‘well-defined’ people could aspire to a place in ‘universal history’ meant that the question of national styles became a pressing one.⁹ One of the biggest challenges local scholars faced in their quest for a convincing national art narrative was the problem of how to bridge the temporal and cultural caesura between a largely uninterrupted tradition of Byzantine and folk art and the accelerated arrival of Western art forms, institutions and intellectual frameworks in the nineteenth century. Their solution lay in a positive re-evaluation of the atemporal nature of regional traditions, which were seen as existing outside the rhythm of historicized time and preserving a native *simț artistic* (artistic feeling) that transcended the shift to Western forms in the work of modern Romanian artists. Ideas of atemporality, longevity and authenticity thus not only became valuable tools in dealing with the challenges of periodization but also dismantled the Western distinction between fine art object and ethnographic artefact. As Tzigara-Samurçaş (founder of the Museum of National [Folk] Art in Bucharest), wrote in 1927:

[F]olk art has maintained the superior value of continuity, in comparison to the art of the ruling classes. The latter is very sporadic: manifesting itself only when supported by rulers, in their absence it endures entire periods of stagnation. Another inferiority is the way it varies according to whoever commissions it . . . while folk art remains eternally unchanged.¹⁰

In their efforts to find alternative frameworks and value systems for art history, such scholars began an interrogation of the temporal, qualitative and spatial binaries that defined the region's alterity, binaries that today have also become the focus of attempts to reconsider the place of local art histories within master narratives and explore new models for dealing with the problems implicit in asynchronicity. The issue of periodization is thus in many ways at the heart of wider discussions not just about time and space in art history but also about geographies of art, concepts of 'circulations' and 'transfers' and theorizing about agency and reception.¹¹

Interpretative Frameworks: Parochial versus Universal

Recent discussion of the ways that Romanian interwar art historians engaged with peasant art has often focused on the sometimes contentious nationalist agendas of the actors involved and on the influence of the controversial Viennese art historian Josef Strzygowski, whose interest in wooden architecture and efforts to reorientate art history away from Greece and Rome contributed much to the emergence of nationalist histories of art in the region.¹² Strzygowski's championing of cultures at the margins of traditional art historical interest, his belief in the importance of generative artistic influence from the north and east and his focus on material artefacts over text-based evidence were certainly evoked as legitimation for their national art by Romanian art historians, who used the discipline to construct ideas about identity in the fevered context of nation-building. Nowhere was peasant art given more explicit political value than in the disputed region of Transylvania, formerly part of the historical Kingdom of Hungary. In Cluj (Kolozsvár), where a Chair of Art History was created in 1920 following the Romanianization of the Hungarian university, Coriolan Petranu published important studies of the region's Romanian vernacular architecture. Influenced by Strzygowski, his work, together with that of his younger colleague Virgil Vătășianu (1902–1993), attempted to bring to light the 'neglected' history of Romanian wooden architecture, particularly churches, and argue for its artistic merits and longevity in relation to Hungarian, Ukrainian and Saxon monuments.¹³ Matthew Rampley contends that in the increasingly right-wing atmosphere of the 1930s, the contested field of Transylvanian art became a forum for essentialist ideas that sidelined Romania's minorities and 'threw an instructive light on some of the darker sides of the legacy of the Vienna School'.¹⁴ The perceived insular focus of the search for a 'national soul' in folk art also meant, according to Rampley, that the ethnocentric writings of many scholars in the region 'had a certain parochial quality . . . concerned almost exclusively with questions of national art, which was almost a guarantee that their work would be only of local or regional interest'.¹⁵

A less provincializing view is offered by Popescu in her assessment of how European cultural politics of the 1920s embraced folk art as an attempt to build bridges between what Blaga called 'major and minor cultures' and rehabilitate those forms of expression not normally considered to belong to the realm of art. She relates this to wider efforts by international cultural organizations, such as the League of Nations' International Committee on Intellectual Cooperation, to create links between cultures after the war and forge a horizontal strategy around folk art (termed 'popular arts') as a way of transcending political geographies and elevating the working classes.¹⁶ The Secretary of the Committee from 1923 to 1930 was George Oprescu who, together with his close friend Henri Focillon, organized the first congress of the Commission Internationale des Arts Populaires (CIAP) in Prague in 1928. Central to Oprescu's strategy was the international dissemination of knowledge about Romanian folk art.

For Oprescu, as for others who wrote about Romanian folk art for an international audience in the 1920s, the growing recognition of the artistic aspects of peasant culture offered a potential solution to a core challenge of art historiography in the region: how to overcome the inferiority implicit in Western periodization. In their writings, one can sense a shift away from the desire – which began in the nineteenth century – for Romania to assert itself as a competent player in the Western art game, and a growing awareness that there was a need, if not for an alternative model of art-related time, then at least for a different understanding of ‘art’ that minimized the importance of hegemonic temporal periods. Identifying ‘authentic’ national tradition with folk art rather than fine art became a way of deflecting the negative consequences of Hegelian historicity. But there was still the need, the unspoken plea, for legitimacy through Western acknowledgement. The writings of both Petranu and Tzigara-Samurcaş, for example, frequently make reference to the admiring comments of foreign commentators. Like other small nations, the Romanians also employed that persuasive tool of cultural soft power: the exhibition of ‘national art’, exported to museums in Western Europe and proselytized through catalogue essays. These are worth looking at, since they served as the international mouthpiece of Romanian art historians in the 1920s and demonstrate the discipline’s role in international cultural diplomacy. They also illustrate the rivalries of a small field, particularly between Tzigara-Samurcaş on the one hand, and Oprescu and Iorga on the other.¹⁷

In what follows, I will discuss a number of key writings about Romanian folk art produced for a foreign audience. In many ways, these established a narrative that shaped international understanding of the field for decades to come. Although it was a somewhat fragile rhetoric, vulnerable to xenophobic appropriation in the interwar years and to reactionary class ideology in the socialist period, it did offer a deft way of sidestepping the problems of the ‘universal’ model of art historiography and linking the artistic traditions of the past with the arrival of Western forms in the modern era.

Tzigara-Samurcaş and Early Interest in Folk Art as Part of a National Art Narrative

Interest in Romanian folk art as a focal point of study, collection and preservation emerged with the arrival of Western institutions and intellectual preoccupations in the second half of the nineteenth century. Upper-class women played an important role in the early stages: both German-born Queen Elisabeth and British-born Crown Princess Marie collected and wore folk costume and patronized societies dedicated to the encouragement of the crafts, while other female writers and educationalists published some of the first illustrated albums of folk patterns. While these were intended mainly as records of regional differences and manuals for craft societies, they did contain some reflection on the naming, origins and importance of motifs.¹⁸ At this point, folk art, although seen as worth protecting in the face of Europeanization and modernization, was not a significant part of the growing debate around a ‘national style’ in art and architecture, which tended to prioritize the country’s Byzantine past. The beginnings of a public discourse concerning folk culture’s role in a national *history of art* can be attributed to Tzigara-Samurcaş and his efforts in 1906, the year of the heady national celebrations of the Jubilee Exhibition in Bucharest, to found a Museum of National Art.¹⁹

Of the four art historians mentioned at the start of this chapter, Tzigara-Samurcaş is today the least recognized outside of Romania.²⁰ Even Romanian art historiography has only recently begun to reassess his significant role in the early stages of the

discipline.²¹ A colourful and argumentative character, he managed to alienate many of his colleagues, accusing Petranu of plagiarism and publicly falling out with Iorga and Oprescu on several occasions.²² Despite such antagonisms, Tzigara-Samurcaş was a scholar of prodigious energy and a key figure in the emergence not only of art history but also museology and art conservation.²³ During his PhD at Munich University (awarded 1896), he worked with the *Volkskunde* specialist Wilhelm Heinrich Riehl, as well as with Heinrich von Brunn (who had supervised Strzygowski's doctorate eleven years earlier) and Adolf Furtwängler. With further study periods in Paris (under Eugène Müntz) and Berlin (where he worked on the collections of the Museum of Decorative Arts under Wilhelm von Bode), he was well-versed in German and French approaches, as well as their strengths and weaknesses when applied to Romanian art. He pioneered the teaching of art history in Romania, arguing – in opposition to Iorga – that the discipline was distinct from history in that ‘it speaks a language that can be grasped by all those who have eyes to see, without any need for an interpreter of literary works written in other languages’.²⁴ His inaugural lecture in May 1911, richly illustrated with his own glass slides, argued for art history's central position among the humanities.²⁵

With its valuable record of Romanian monuments and peasant culture, Tzigara-Samurcaş's slide collection illustrated his progressive belief that folk art was as worthy of study as fine art and, consequently, in the need to break down hierarchies of ‘high’ and ‘low’, ‘fine’ and ‘decorative’ (Fig. 11.1).²⁶ In this, his interests intersected with the



Figure 11.1 Alexandru Tzigara-Samurcaş ‘Porte cochère de Bumbesti, Gorj, Oltenie’, glass slide, republished in *L’Art du peuple roumain*, 1925.

Photo: Author.

artist Apar Baltazar (1880–1909) who, in 1908, was one of the first to argue for the role of folk art in creating a ‘modern Romanian style’ in painting and the decorative arts.²⁷ This idea was embedded in the plan to house the School of Fine Arts in the same building (the former State Mint) as the Museum of National Art, whose collections, Tzigara-Samurcaş believed, would serve as inspiration for the creation of modern Romanian art. Originally envisaged to bring together all forms of ‘national art’ – religious art, folk art, prehistoric art, Graeco-Roman art and a picture gallery – in a display that would assert the artistic continuity of the nation from prehistory to the present,²⁸ the museum’s radical disregard of existing disciplinary boundaries was too much for the Director of the School of Fine Arts, George Demetrescu Mirea (1852–1934), who, in a squabble over the allocation of rooms, claimed that folk artefacts would be better housed in the Zoological Museum.²⁹

The Standard Periodization Narrative of Romanian Art

Mirea’s attitude was fairly typical of the pre-war artistic establishment, which generally followed Western disciplinary constructs. In 1914, even Tzigara-Samurcaş, in a Paris-published essay entitled ‘Esquisse sur l’Art Roumain’ (Outline of Romanian Art), was still attempting to justify Romanian art to a Western audience in the West’s own terms, including periodization. Almost apologetically, he recognized that, for the foreigner, Romanian art barely dates back further than 1866, when Napoleon III bought two canvases by Nicolae Grigorescu (1838–1907), ‘the peasant of the Danube’, from an exhibition.³⁰ The essay, an attempt to remedy this lacuna, then periodizes Romanian art in a manner that became standard for such narratives. With more than a nod to Strzygowski’s *völkisch* materialism, it argues that the national artistic treasures ‘reach back to the most distant periods’, notably the Thracian civilization whose ‘splendid specimens of the Neolithic Age’, according to German specialists, ‘support the superiority of this culture over that of the same period on the shores of the Aegean’.³¹ The significance of the Roman period is reduced to a single monument (albeit one Tzigara-Samurcaş returned to frequently throughout his career), the Tropaeum Traiani at Adamklissi from the beginning of the second century. A ‘true’ Romanian tradition, Tzigara-Samurcaş claims, only began in the thirteenth century with the formation of the Principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia and the start of an uninterrupted tradition of church and monastery building. In discussing their evolution, he uses both the trope of centre–periphery (‘this distant corner of old Europe’) and belatedness (commenting on the late arrival of Gothic art which, ‘having sown its most beautiful masterpieces across Europe, came to breathe its last on Romanian soil in the seventeenth century, thus significantly prolonging the existence of a style long extinct in the West’). To period and style is linked the concept of influence: Gothic art came from the north and entered Moldavia via Hungary and Poland (manifesting itself most successfully in the church of Trei Ierarhi [Three Hierarchs] in Iaşi, 1639), while Wallachia was influenced by its proximity to ‘the old towns of ancient Byzantium’ and developed ‘a fairly pure Byzantine style’ in princely churches like Curtea de Argeş (1517).³² Other influences gradually grafted themselves onto these roots: in Wallachia, Serbian churches became the model at the start of the fifteenth century, the start of the sixteenth century saw the influence of the Orient, while the seventeenth century was coloured by the Italian art of the Venetian-Dalmatian coast. It was the gradual interpenetration of the northern Gothic and the southern Byzantine that, at the dawn of the eighteenth century, finally produced a ‘pure Romanian’ style under

the Wallachian Prince Constantin Brâncoveanu, with its most beautiful example at Hurez Monastery (1690).³³ Moldavia saw its own high point in the painted monasteries of the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

Tzigara-Samurçaş lamented Western scholars' improper knowledge of this past, criticizing in particular the eminent French Byzantinist Charles Diehl for his poorly informed and 'unengaging' section on Romania in his *Manuel d'art byzantin* (Manual of Byzantine Art, 1910).³⁴ Strzygowski, on the other hand, elicited unqualified admiration, having not only visited the Bukovinian painted monasteries the previous summer but also written an enthusiastic analysis in which he compared them to St Mark's Basilica in Venice, Orvieto Cathedral and the 'most beautiful marvels of the imperial treasury of Vienna'; he even claimed that 'the individuality of Romanian art' had influenced Mount Athos.³⁵ In Strzygowski, Tzigara-Samurçaş found not only a defender of Romania's 'forgotten' artworks but also an anti-Classicist, anti-philological methodology that redefined culture as 'an organic entity possessed by the nonliterate as well as the literate'.³⁶ The Austrian's belief that the material artefacts of art are a better record of the cultural chronology of the *Volk* than written records (largely the preserve of the elite) informed Tzigara-Samurçaş's arguments for the superiority of art history over history and offered a valuable framework for integrating folk art into the national art narrative. Correspondingly, 'Esquisse sur l'Art Roumain' linked the Paris-recognized fine art of Romania's modern artists with its lesser-known past through 'the innate artistic sentiment of the Romanian people', still retained in 'living' form in the material artefacts of the Carpathian peasant: 'For the peasant, often illiterate, is gifted with a marvellous feeling for harmony and elegance'. Threatened by the advance of modernity, Tzigara-Samurçaş advocated that the peasant's 'innate feeling for beauty' should be preserved through the aesthetics taught in Romania's art schools.³⁷

Greater Romania: Peasant Art and Nation-Building

With the events of the First World War, Tzigara-Samurçaş's desire for folk art to be placed firmly at the heart of the national narrative became a reality. Following Romania's vast territorial gains, the peasant became an important part of the justificatory political rhetoric of unification. As arguments for national enlargement at the 1919–20 Paris Peace Conference had hinged primarily on the presence of Romanian ethnic communities in Transylvania, the Banat, Bukovina and Bessarabia, the peasant now went from being a minor strand of national identity before the war to the common ethnic denominator of unification, mobilized in the interests of institutions and disciplines. The anthropologist Alexandra Urdea has argued that this involved an aestheticization of peasant objects that, in many cases, divorced artefacts from the social conditions of their production and created the paradox of a peasant class that was still reeling from the brutal suppression of a massive revolt in 1907 now being held up as the collective author of a national art.³⁸

More widely, the changed status of the peasantry after the war – due to major land reform provoked by the revolt and fear of Bolshevik sympathies, together with the extension of universal male suffrage – meant that peasants began to feature ever more centrally in discourses around Romanian identity.³⁹ At a time when scholars were sharpening their disciplinary boundaries in relation to the 'national essence', many now began to write about folk culture. The period saw, for example, a wave of new ethnographic research in the ambitious, state-supported projects (1925–48) of the Bucharest Sociological School under Dimitrie Gusti. The country's pre-eminent historian,

Iorga himself, published a study entitled *L'Art populaire en Roumanie* (Folk Art in Romania) in 1923 (Fig. 11.2).⁴⁰ Although criticized by the ever-antagonistic Tzigara-Samurcaș for prioritizing the philological methods of history (evidenced in Iorga's focus on the etymology of the names of folk artefacts rather than their morphological

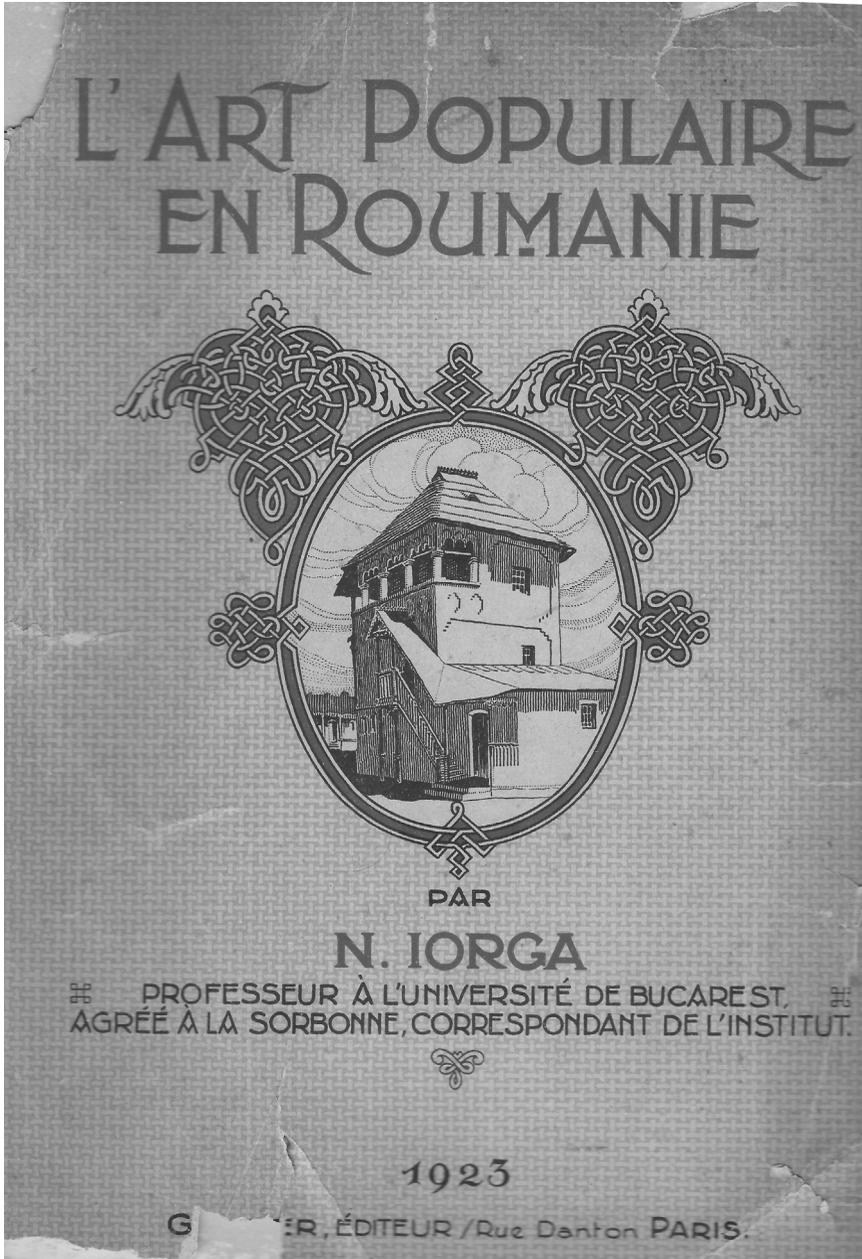


Figure 11.2 Nicolae Iorga, *L'art populaire en Roumanie: Son caractère, ses rapports et son origine*, Paris: Gamber, 1923.

Photo: Author.

appearance),⁴¹ Iorga's study created a potent national narrative with wider Balkan implications. It clearly demonstrated the growing power of Dacianism, the indigenist thesis of the Dacian/Thracian (as opposed to purely Latin) origins of the Romanian people that was used to strengthen political arguments against foreign influence and justify Romanian claims to continuity in Transylvania (Hungarians argued that Transylvania was uninhabited on the arrival of the Magyar tribes at the end of the ninth century). According to Katherine Verdery, this argument not only exalted the 'primitive' but tapped into 'Voltaire's idea, reiterated by Herder, that a people can progress only if they develop in organic continuity with their own nature rather than through forms borrowed or imposed from elsewhere', thus associating 'Dacian ancestry with the virtues of an autochthonous tradition in contrast to the predatory (if civilized) foreigners'.⁴² Both Iorga and Tzigara-Samurçuş believed that the Dacian essence had been preserved in peasant art, conflating the two in a celebration of the natural, organic, spontaneous and durable. On this assumption, Iorga built the core ethno-nationalist claim of his essay: that the evidence of folk art, simultaneously archaic and living, proved the hitherto unrecognized primacy of the Thracian civilization that originated in the Danubian-Carpathian basin (i.e. Romania) and radiated its influence across the Balkans, Greece, Transylvania and even (via the Huns and the Goths) Norway and Sweden. With his Strzygowskian assertion that 'the origin of Hellenic life and civilization' came from the Thracian north,⁴³ Iorga crafted a narrative of Romania as 'an ancient, but misunderstood nation' of significant cultural importance.⁴⁴ For Iorga, therefore, the value of folk art lay in its ahistoricity and its resistance to periodization or stylistic change. In contrast to high art, folk arts alone

are capable of giving us precious information about national origins and the oldest relationships between different civilizations of people. They can, therefore, provide the solution to the most arduous problems of the most obscure periods. Great chapters of history, otherwise unknown or barely elucidated by ethnographic hypotheses, become intelligible through these naïve artistic formulations.⁴⁵

Exhibition Narratives, 1925

Iorga's book, published in Paris, was an early example of an international campaign of publications and exhibitions in the 1920s that used Romanian art as a vehicle for wider political aims. In contrast to earlier Romanian sections at the Paris International Exhibitions and Venice Biennales, this was a narrative that gave folk art equal status with both religious art and modern art, downplaying Romania's non-conformity with high art chronologies and reifying the archaic, the 'primitive' and the native artistic 'sensibility' that linked folk art and modern painters. The endeavour received valuable support from Henri Focillon who wrote a eulogizing essay for the catalogue of the 1925 *Exposition d'art roumain ancien et moderne* (Exhibition of Antique and Modern Romanian Art) held in the Jeu de Paume in Paris (Fig. 11.3). Focillon, who had established a strong friendship with Oprescu in 1921, set up the Institut Français in Bucharest in 1924 and was at the heart of French diplomatic efforts to expand cultural exchanges between the two countries.⁴⁶ The *Exposition* was the fourth in a series of exhibitions of 'national art' held at the Jeu de Paume between 1923 and 1939; Passini has demonstrated how these offered a political platform not only for the construction

of the cultural heritage of the exhibiting nations but also for France to centre its own discourse of art history within such national genealogies.⁴⁷ In the case of Romania, like Italy, emphasis was laid on the spiritual link of shared Latinity as a civilizing force. Focillon's essay describes the Romanians as simultaneously 'rustic and refined', the result of 'a strong Dacian stock, thoroughly infused, rippling, with Latin – or rather Mediterranean – intelligence'.⁴⁸

That the Romanian government chose to organize this separate national exhibition, rather than participate in the large-scale *Exposition Internationale des Arts*

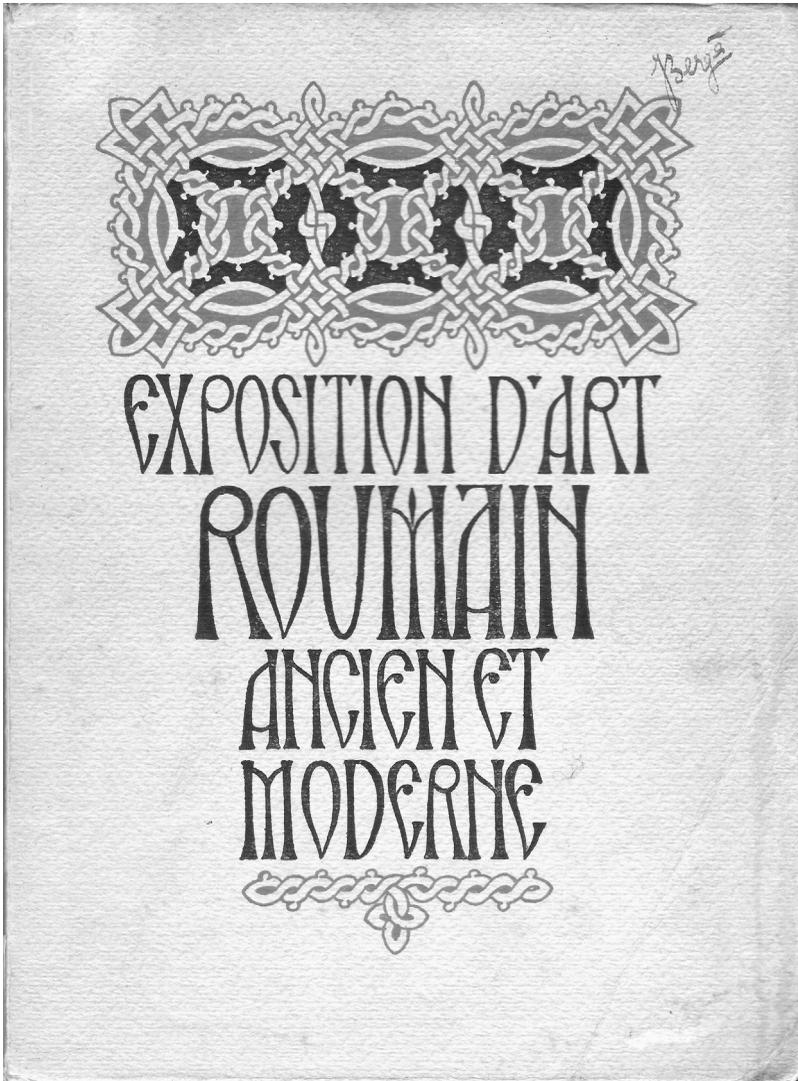


Figure 11.3 *Exposition d'art roumain ancien et moderne: Catalogue des Œuvres exposées au Musée du Jeu de Paume du 25 mai au 1er août 1925, Paris: Georges Petit, 1925.*

Photo: Author.

Décoratifs et Industriels Modernes (International Exhibition of Modern Decorative and Industrial Arts) that dominated Paris that summer, is perhaps reflective of the tensions between the country's burgeoning international modernist scene and official, rather more conservative, narratives of what constituted 'Romanian' identity. The Romanian exhibition catalogue, for example, associated Cubism with Slavic aberration and praised Romanian painters for having escaped its influence: 'this anarchy, of essentially Slavic essence, imported into France rather than born there, is little suited to the rationalist spirit of the Romanian people'.⁴⁹ Instead, it claimed that Romanian painters like Grigorescu and Ion Andreescu absorbed healthy Barbizon Impressionism and spectacularly adapted it to evoke the native poetry of the Romanian landscape. According to Passini, such arguments about how French Impressionism allowed foreign artists to become 'national' were also used in the *Jeu de Paume* exhibitions of Belgium, Canada and Sweden, embedding the paradigm of French modern art within national narratives.⁵⁰ In the Romanian account, though, this was also closely linked to a foregrounding of the innate artistic sensibility of folk art. Focillon's essay lyrically wove together the various sections of the exhibition – folk art, contemporary painting, nineteenth-century painting and historical religious art (frescoes, icons and embroideries) – through their common reference to an anonymous tradition, 'born from the earth like a living plant'. Just as the Romanian language survived 'even when besieged and almost submerged' by foreign influences,⁵¹ so folk art, with its 'marvellous ability to transform the spectacle of life into forms, into designs that are magnificently useless and deliciously necessary', retained 'this constancy of ancient virtues' which resurfaced in the high art of church decoration and even crossed the rupture brought by the arrival of modern Western art forms. For this reason, Focillon explained, folk art was given pride of place in the first room of the exhibition as the 'major chord', the 'basis' of Romanian art.⁵² It was a narrative well-received by French critics like Paul Fierens, who wrote that the natural artistry of Romanian folk art, 'situated outside of time', best expressed 'the spirit of a race'.⁵³

The symbiotic unity of the Romanian arts unfortunately did not extend to the art historians writing about them. The *Jeu de Paume* exhibition was marked by tensions between Tzigara-Samurçaş and other members of the organizing committee.⁵⁴ Humiliated that his catalogue essay on folk art had been reduced by Focillon to a single anonymous page, Tzigara-Samurçaş accepted an invitation from Eugène Pittard, Director of the Ethnographic Museum of Geneva, to organize a separate exhibition of Romanian art to accompany a meeting of the League of Nations in September. With the support of Crown Prince Carol, Tzigara-Samurçaş brought to Geneva from Paris the sections of religious and folk art, which he supplemented with newly purchased examples of Saxon and Szekler costumes and ceramics.⁵⁵ This time he wrote the accompanying publication himself: a luxuriously produced, 120-page essay, richly illustrated with many of his own photographs and drawings by Octav Roguski (Fig. 11.4).⁵⁶

In contrast to his 1914 essay, which still stressed Romania's relationship to core Western terms of reference, Tzigara-Samurçaş's narrative now asserted the originality of Romanian art as the spontaneous production of 'the soil and inhabitants of Romania'.⁵⁷ Importantly, he made a distinction between 'the art of Romania and the art of the Romanian people which alone can be called our national art'.⁵⁸ The former, being the art of the ruling classes, is subject to externally imposed breaks that accompany the forever-changing overlords. Against this periodized art, driven by political circumstance and stylistic change, he positioned the superior and timeless 'art of the



Figure 11.4 Alexandru Tzigara-Samurcaș, *L'Art du peuple roumain: Catalogue de l'exposition de Genève; Musée Rath*. Geneva: Kundig, 1925. Cover illustration by Octav Roguski.

Photo: Author.

Romanian people', used unabashedly to argue for Romanian territorial rights in the new regions. As evidence, he offered morphological analysis, most notably the claim that the spirals of Neolithic pottery found in Ariușd (Erősd, Transylvania) were still present in Romanian peasant motifs (Fig. 11.5), just as the incised markings of bronze-age figurines prefigured Romanian peasant costume: 'By noting this same spiral ornament in all Romanian pottery and in many other areas of our folk art, one naturally deduces the link which exists between our present-day art and the prehistoric art of around 2500 years before Christ'.⁵⁹



Dessin de F. Laszlo

C ramique peinte de l' poque n olithique. Fouilles d'Ariusd Transilvanie.

Mus e de St. Gheorghe.

Figure 11.5 Neolithic painted ceramics from Ariusd, Transylvania. In Alexandru Tzigara-Samurcaș, *L'Art du peuple roumain*, 1925

Photo: Author.

Furthermore, he argued that the spiral motif offered clear evidence in support of ‘recent theories’ (i.e. Strzygowski) that the march of civilization went from north to south and that the spirals found in Greek art originated in the region between Kiev and Romania.⁶⁰ He drew Herderian parallels with language, arguing that peasants were the true guardians of the originary Romanian tongue. When efforts were made to ‘purify’ the language of Greek and Slavonic elements in the nineteenth century, it was the language patiently preserved by the peasants that the scholars turned to. But he was careful to state that the Latin language was the only enduring thing left by the Romans. Lest he undermine his own Strzygowskian efforts to counteract Classical influence, he asserted that the Romans ‘had very little influence on the art of the local population, who, through their descent from the Thracians were from an artistic viewpoint far superior to the Romans, who were practical people rather than artistic ones’.⁶¹

Setting aside its valuable documentation of folk art, Tzigara-Samurçaş’s essay is a fairly dogmatic exercise in nationalist art history. Despite Crown Prince Carol’s wish in his catalogue preface that the exhibition should bring ‘fraternity’ between the different groups inhabiting the Romanian lands, Tzigara-Samurçaş was at pains to assert the superiority of Romanian folk art over Transylvanian-Saxon, Magyar or Szekler. Performed in front of the League of Nations, his exhibition was an open attempt to use art history to justify Romania’s recent land gains. Such a political narrative would have been difficult to craft using the stylistic periodizations of Western frameworks. But by arguing for the timeless, rooted nature of folk art and its ability to preserve evidence of perceived distant ancestors, Tzigara-Samurçaş was able to conflate time and space and politicize the geography of art in Romania’s favour.

Oprescu and *The Studio*

A considerably more nuanced interpretation of folk art was provided by Oprescu in his 1929 volume *Peasant Art in Roumania* which appeared as a special publication of *The Studio* in London (Fig. 11.6). Oprescu, who had been Secretary of the League of Nations’ International Committee on Intellectual Cooperation since 1923, had opposed the Geneva exhibition, more likely due to his professional differences with Tzigara-Samurçaş than any desire to inhibit international knowledge of Romanian art. His account of peasant art, published the year after he and Focillon helped organize the 1928 International Congress of Folk Arts and Folklore in Prague, very much reflected that congress’s internationalist vision of folk art as transcending political geography and reflecting a wider human condition. *The Studio* was an apt forum for his study. With its support for the Arts and Crafts movement, the British journal played an important role in challenging the museum-based distinction between fine art and ethnographic object. Oprescu’s essay, which had its origins in his 1922 book *Arta țărănească la români* (Romanian Peasant Art),⁶² was the latest in *The Studio*’s series of *Peasant Art* publications covering Sweden, Lapland and Iceland (1910), Austria and Hungary (1911), Russia (1912), Italy (1913) and Switzerland (1924). David Crowley has explored how many of these essays reflected ‘a common *Weltanschauung* inspired by the Arts and Crafts movement’, the ruralist-themed writings of thinkers like William Morris having been widely read across Europe since the 1890s.⁶³ The movement had a significant supporter in Romania’s Queen Marie who subscribed to *The Studio*, designed Arts and Crafts interiors for her residences, promoted the sale of Romanian

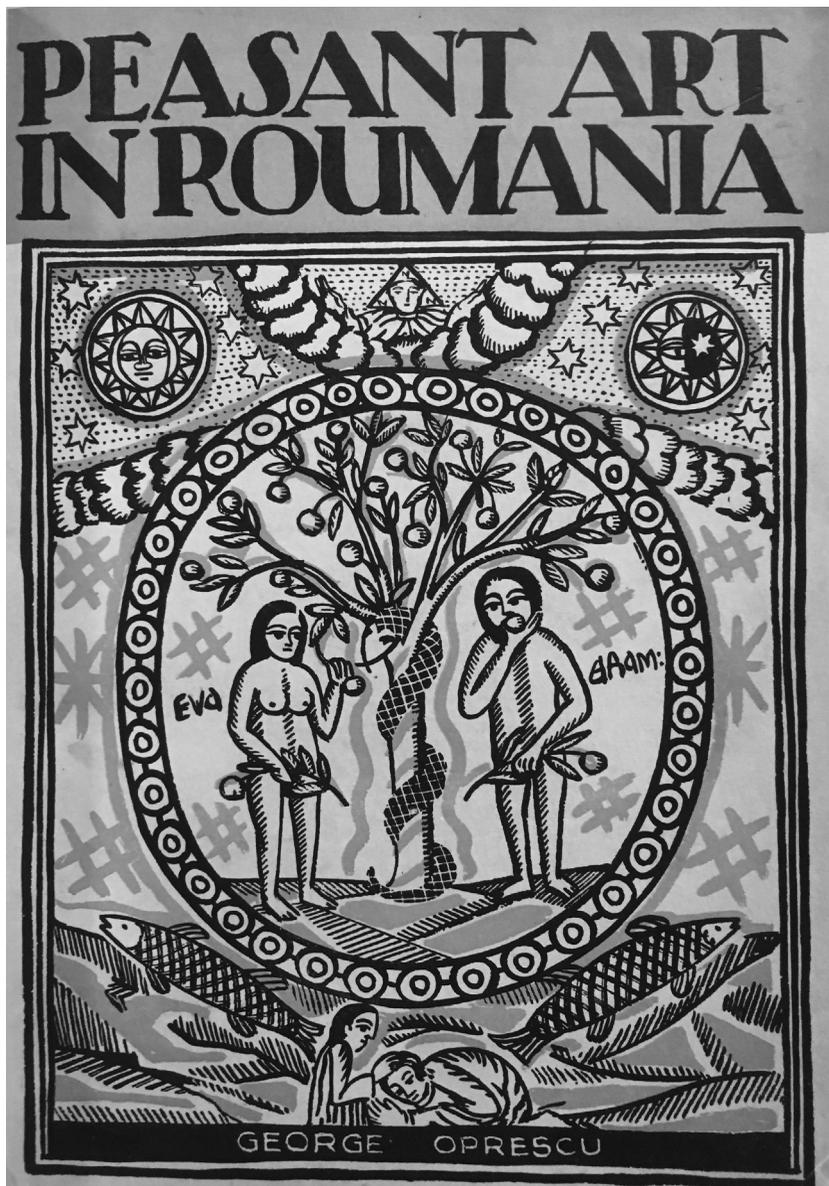


Figure 11.6 George Oprescu, *Peasant Art in Roumania*, special Autumn number of *The Studio*, London: Herbert Reich, 1929.

Photo: Author.

peasant blouses in the department store Liberty in London and, as an important patron of peasant craft societies, also wrote the foreword to Oprescu's book.

This British context aside, both Passini and Ioana Vlasiu have argued for the clear influence of Focillon's ideas on Oprescu's essay, in particular his formalist approach,

interest in mass psychology and exploration of the relationship between art, civilization and society.⁶⁴ Passini claims that this intellectual friendship was indicative of wider French attempts at cultural hegemony in interwar Romania, to create (quoting Focillon) a ‘bulwark against the threats of the “old geographic attraction emanating from Vienna and the universities of Central Europe”’.⁶⁵ Certainly Focillon, in his introduction to the 1931 volume of the Prague Congress, shared Oprescu’s desire to widen the definition of ‘art’ to include work hitherto considered to belong to ethnography.⁶⁶ Both insisted that the value of an artwork lay in its ability to appeal to the senses, a formalist vision clearly articulated by Oprescu:

What, then, is that impulse, that irresistible force, which will not let the peasant rest content with the merely useful, but drives him to seek the best proportioned and most harmonious forms, that which appeals to the eye by colour and line, is pleasant to the touch and produces that rare sense of contentment, and that poise of mind and joy which characterize aesthetic enjoyment?⁶⁷

Of particular interest is the way Oprescu thought about time and periodization in his essay. In contrast to Tzigara-Samurçaş’s blunt insistence on an unbroken four and a half thousand year-old tradition of peasant art as justification for territorial claims, Oprescu probed more interesting questions, including issues of centre–periphery and belatedness. Peasant art, he argued, is not simply a derivative form of town (i.e. ‘high’) art. And influence is not monodirectional from high to low, but rather mutually horizontal. Significantly, he could not quite resist periodization, at one point stating:

Among all the objects of peasant art in our possession, those which are distinguished by a high standard of workmanship belong to the second half of the eighteenth and the first half of the nineteenth century. . . . It is therefore between 1700 and 1860 that we must place the most brilliant period of our peasant art.⁶⁸

Yet there is a paradox: he recognizes that these dates ‘coincide with what is known to have been one of the saddest periods of our national life’, that of Phanariot rule, noting that ‘periods of great public misery and calamity are those in which art grows silent and dies’.⁶⁹ Although he has no explanation for this – beyond speculating that either ‘the peasant’s life was perhaps not as wretched as has been said’ or, conversely, that difficult periods can stimulate the greatest art (‘Fromentin has shown us the Dutch school of painting coming into being in the midst of atrocious wars’) – what is significant here is that, unlike Iorga and Tzigara-Samurçaş, he does not entirely deny coevalness to the peasant.⁷⁰ He mitigates his colleagues’ insistence on peasant art’s impermeability to the rhythms and ruptures of so-called civilization, and recognizes its relationship to wider societal factors. Underpinning this more nuanced approach was his resistance to the nationalism of the First World War and the use of art history to justify political aims:

[N]ot long ago it [peasant art] was the battlefield on which the nations of central and eastern Europe fought and wrangled, each of the contending parties proclaiming its own superiority. . . . Now this will not do at all. Peasant art is the exclusive apanage of none. . . . [I]t is rooted in something universally human, common to all.⁷¹

While still celebrating the particular merits of Romanian folk art – this being after all a publication intended to extol its unique particularities to an international audience – he subsumed it into a wider narrative that accorded well with the League of Nations’ vision of a humanity that rested on unifying principles, while respecting local roots. In contrast to the nationalist argument of Iorga and Tzigara-Samurcaş that Romania was the source and disseminator of geometrical ornamentation, Oprescu believed that the style had appeared simultaneously in disparate lands, the result either of human psychology or of conditions dictated by materials and tools.⁷² As noted by Popescu, this approach was similar to Focillon’s idea of ‘diversity within unity’ in the introduction to *Vie des forms* (Life of Forms, 1934).⁷³ Oprescu’s reverence for the integrity and specificity of folk art also fed into wider attempts by the International Committee on Intellectual Cooperation to reverse the fundamental directionalities of art history by advocating that the periphery (or *arrière*) could help the so-called civilized centre recover its artistic sensibility, and thus its moral soul, in the modern age.⁷⁴

Conclusion

Oprescu acknowledged his allegiance to French modes of art history, dedicating his study to Focillon and publishing a French version of the text in 1937. His self-reflexivity concerning methods, his recognition of the value of interdisciplinarity in the swiftly growing field of folk studies and his attempt at a cultural politics that, while nurturing the local, transcended aggressive nationalism, ensured a sympathetic legacy for his work. Although used for different ends, he shared with Tzigara-Samurcaş, Iorga, Petranu (and of course Strzygowski) an awareness that incorporating folk art into art history allowed the possibility of overcoming the problems of the Western canon and permitting new frameworks for cultures hitherto deemed ‘peripheral’, ‘minor’ or Europe’s ‘exotic other’. Against the ‘rootlessness’ of modernism, folk art appeared to offer authenticity and contextualization. High art had accelerated Occidental time, while for folk art past and present were contemporary. As Popescu explains: ‘It was precisely this shortcut in the constant flow of the linear time of history, the coexistence between past and present, that represented the force of Balkan “rootedness”’.⁷⁵ Inevitably, it was an intellectual manoeuvre in which the voice of the peasant herself was rarely heard: the only named practitioners in Oprescu’s book were the Paris-trained ceramicist Nora Steriadi (1889–1948) and the tapestry workshops of Princess Elisa Brătianu (1870–1957), wife of two former Prime Ministers. But in this distancing lay the power of peasant art to offer an alternative to the Western periodized canon and to resist colonization by ‘radiating centres’. To return to Blaga:

The village has not let itself be tempted and drawn into the ‘history’ made by others over our heads. It has preserved itself chastely, untouched in the autonomy with which poverty and mythology have endowed it, and awaits the time when it will serve as the sure foundation of an authentically Romanian history.⁷⁶

Notes

* I am grateful to Robert Born and Cosmin Minea for their comments on an early draft of this chapter.

1 ‘Eu cred că veşnicia s-a născut la sat’: Blaga, ‘Sufletul satului’.

2 Nemoianu, ‘Mihai Sora and the Traditions of Romanian Philosophy’, 591.

- 3 Passini, 'Les expositions d'arts étrangers', 143.
- 4 Oprescu, *Peasant Art in Roumania*, 5.
- 5 Oroveanu, *Periodization in the History of Art*, 1.
- 6 Roberts, 'Artists, *Amateurs*, and the Pleated Time of Ottoman Modernity', 82.
- 7 Popescu, 'Being Specific', 821–22.
- 8 Tzigara-Samurçaş, *L'Art du peuple roumain*, 4.
- 9 Popescu, 'Space, Time: Identity', 193.
- 10 Tzigara-Samurçaş, 'Conferința despre arta țărănească', 259.
- 11 Among the extensive recent literature in this field, see András, 'The Obscure Object of Desire'; Badovinac, 'Interrupted Histories'; Kaufmann, 'Periodization and Its Discontents'; Kaufmann, Dossin and Joyeux-Prunel, *Circulations in the Global History of Art*; Murawska-Muthesius, 'Mapping Eastern Europe'; Murawska-Muthesius, *Borders in Art*; Piotrowski, 'On the Spatial Turn'.
- 12 See, for example, Rampley, 'The Strzygowski School of Cluj'; Born, 'The Historiography of Art in Transylvania'; Miron, 'Learned History – Lived History'; Marosi, 'Josef Strzygowski als Entwerfer'.
- 13 Miron, 'Learned History – Lived History', 10–12. On Vătășianu, see Simon, *Artă și identitate națională*.
- 14 Rampley, 'The Strzygowski School of Cluj', 21.
- 15 Rampley, 'Rethinking the Geography of Art', 4.
- 16 Popescu, "'Cultures majeures, cultures mineures'".
- 17 Tensions which culminated in Tzigara-Samurçaş's acrimonious 1927 article, 'The Artistic Dictatorship of Iorga & Co.', the '& Co.' being 'the even more ignorant G. Oprescu', 'Dic-tatura artistică Iorga & Co.', 254–56.
- 18 For example, Cornescu, *Cusături românești*; Miller-Verghy, *Modele Românești*.
- 19 Originally called the 'Museum of Ethnography, National Art, Decorative and Industrial Art'. For its evolving name, see Pohrib, 'Tradition and Ethnographic Display'.
- 20 Iorga established an international reputation as Romania's foremost historian and later Prime Minister, Petranu was well-known in the German-speaking world, while Oprescu's international interwar activities and ability to work alongside the post-war regime ensured he would be commemorated as the founder of the G. Oprescu Art History Institute in Bucharest. Tzigara-Samurçaş, a Germanophile and friend of the royal family, was effectively written out of history during the Socialist period. In 1974, a Romanian researcher noted that 'today almost nothing is spoken or written about him' (Leahu, 'Al. Tzigara-Samurçaş, muzeograf', 173).
- 21 A full re-evaluation of Tzigara-Samurçaş's work has been hindered by the partial destruction of his archive in the 1989 Revolution and by the current demarcation between the ethnographic remit of the Museum of the Romanian Peasant and the various institutes of art history. Discussion has therefore focused on his role in the founding of the museum (see, for example, Popovaț, *Muzeul de la Șosea*), with insufficient analysis of his wider-ranging cultural activities. A sense of these can be gained from the bio-bibliography compiled by the Central University Library of Bucharest (Podgoreanu, *Alexandru Tzigara-Samurçaş Biobibliografie*).
- 22 Tzigara-Samurçaş, 'Muzeele din Transilvania'. Other public disputes included a 1902 spat with Professor Grigore Tocilescu over the running of the Museum of Antiquities, a 1904 argument with the architect Ion Mincu regarding the restoration of Stavropoleos Church, and a calumnious disagreement with Constantin Istrati, Commissar of the 1906 Jubilee Exhibition, that led to an aborted duel.
- 23 In addition to founding the Museum of National Art, he served as Professor of Art History at the School of Fine Arts in Bucharest and later the University of Cernauți, Librarian and Director of the Carol I University Foundation, Director of the Aman Museum, Founder of the Society of Romanian Tourists, Inspector-General of Museums and Editor-in-Chief of the cultural magazine *Convorbiri literare*, among other activities.
- 24 Anon., 'Al. Tzigara-Samurçaş', 267. In 1910, Iorga opposed the creation of a Chair of Art History at Bucharest University, refusing to see the discipline as distinct from history.
- 25 Tzigara-Samurçaş, 'Istoria artei la universitate'. The Ion Mincu Institute of Architecture has digitized around 2500 of his slides: see Brătuleanu, *The Alexandru Tzigara-Samurçaş Archive*. Another part of the archive is held by the Museum of the Romanian Peasant.

- 26 For discussion of his role in stimulating the decorative arts in Romania, see VlasIU, 'Réflexions sur les arts décoratifs', 50–51.
- 27 Baltazar, 'Spre un stil românesc'. See also Cărăbaş, 'The Shadow of the Object', 103–7.
- 28 Pohrib, 'Tradition and Ethnographic Display', 320.
- 29 Tzigara-Samurcaş, 'Vrăjmaşii muzeului', 200. For the complicated history of the museum, see Popovaţ, *Muzeul de la Şosea*.
- 30 Tzigara-Samurcaş, 'Esquisse sur l'Art Roumain', 100.
- 31 *Ibid.*, 102. Tzigara-Samurcaş's view was probably also influenced by the *völkisch* ideas of the German archaeologist Gustaf Kossinna, as well as by Carl Schuchhardt who had Romanian connections and built up the South-East European prehistoric collections of the Ethnological Museum in Berlin. I am grateful to Robert Born for this information.
- 32 *Ibid.*, 102.
- 33 *Ibid.*, 103.
- 34 *Ibid.*
- 35 *Ibid.* The analysis referred to is Strzygowski's 'Kunstschätze der Bukowina'.
- 36 Marchand, 'The Rhetoric of Artifacts', 129.
- 37 Tzigara-Samurcaş, 'Esquisse sur l'Art Roumain', 101.
- 38 Urdea, *From Storeroom to Stage*, 22.
- 39 Verdery, 'Antecedents', 44–45.
- 40 Iorga, *L'Art populaire en Roumanie*.
- 41 Tzigara-Samurcaş, 'Dictatura artistică Iorga & Co.', 255–56.
- 42 Verdery, 'Antecedents', 37–38.
- 43 Iorga, *L'Art populaire*, 133.
- 44 *Ibid.*, 135.
- 45 *Ibid.*, viii.
- 46 Passini, 'France and the Evolution of Art History'.
- 47 Passini, 'Les expositions d'arts étrangers'.
- 48 Focillon, 'L'Art et l'histoire en Roumanie', 17.
- 49 Cantacuzène, 'La Peinture moderne', 77.
- 50 Passini, 'Les expositions d'arts étrangers', 150.
- 51 Focillon, 'L'Art et l'histoire en Roumanie', 17.
- 52 *Ibid.*, 21–22.
- 53 Fierens, 'L'art roumain ancien et moderne'.
- 54 Iorga, Focillon and Oprescu were hostile to Tzigara-Samurcaş's perceived pro-German conduct during the war, leading to his exclusion from several of the Paris arrangements: see Tzigara-Samurcaş, 'Expoziția românească de la Paris', 156–57.
- 55 Tzigara-Samurcaş, 'Aceaşi expoziție la Geneva', 161–70.
- 56 Tzigara-Samurcaş, *L'Art du Peuple Roumain*. Roguski was a Brăila-born artist of Polish origin who worked with Tzigara-Samurcaş at the Museum of National Art from 1907 onwards.
- 57 *Ibid.*, 1.
- 58 *Ibid.*, 4.
- 59 *Ibid.*, 27.
- 60 *Ibid.*, 21.
- 61 *Ibid.*, 7.
- 62 Oprescu, *Arta țărănească la români*.
- 63 Crowley, 'The Uses of Peasant Design in Austria-Hungary', 8. For Romanian interest, see, for example, Petică, 'Esthetismul lui Ruskin'.
- 64 Passini, 'France and the Evolution of Art History', 24; VlasIU, 'L'expérience roumaine', 231–40.
- 65 Passini, 'France and the Evolution of Art History', 24.
- 66 Focillon, 'Introduction'.
- 67 Oprescu, *Peasant Art*, 1.
- 68 *Ibid.*, 178.
- 69 *Ibid.*, 179.
- 70 *Ibid.*, 179–80.
- 71 *Ibid.*, 5.
- 72 Oprescu, *Peasant Art*, 7–8.

73 Popescu, “‘Cultures majeures, cultures mineures’”, 240.

74 Ibid., 242.

75 Popescu, ‘Being Specific’, 839.

76 Blaga, ‘Elogiul satului românesc’, 56–57.

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12 Beyond the Provincial

Entanglements of Regional Modernism in Interwar Central Europe*

Julia Secklehner

Introduction

When the subject of regional modernism is mentioned, it tends to prompt thoughts of a space that bears hallmarks of the ‘peripheral’: as Bianca Plüschke-Altöf has put it, ‘by manifesting a hierarchical dichotomy of urban centres and rural peripheries, their equation is consequential’.¹ While rural spaces as an antidote to the metropolis carry both positive (authentic, calm, safe) and negative (backward, poor, deficient) connotations in relation to artistic production, the dominant viewpoint, reaching back to the Vienna School, is that the geographical (and thus socio-economic) periphery is either derivative or at a lower cultural level of development than its urban counterpart.² As a consequence, regional developments of modernism implicitly hold the position of a provincial and thus less significant art, intercepted only by brief moments of success in which urban artists transferred their production to the countryside.³ Shifting away from a perspective in which formal innovation is the prime denominator of artistic development, however, regional modernism carried important sociopolitical functions in Central Europe throughout the first half of the twentieth century.

Within this geographical context, one should add that the notion of the periphery has also been tied to descriptions of the region per se, as addressed in the work of Piotr Piotrowski and Katarzyna Murawska-Muthesius among others.⁴ By extension, regional modernism addresses a ‘double periphery’ – removed both from traditional art centres such as Paris and Berlin and from more nearby metropolises such as Vienna and Prague. Yet, an exploration of the discursive constructions of regional modernism in the early twentieth century sheds light on the wider impact these developments had across Central Europe, far beyond the rural and ‘peripheral’. Holding a significant stake in identity-building processes, regional modernism, moreover, underlines the entanglements between rural and urban, regional and national cultural spaces.

Discussing the state of Austrian culture after the First World War, the writer Erwin Weill noted in 1922 that ‘after the collapse, when one thought that there would no longer be any special interest in art and literature . . . we suddenly gained proof that this apparently deceased art experienced a renaissance in the provinces’.⁵ Referring specifically to two prominent artists who had left Vienna to ‘gather students in their beautiful studios in the Nonntal’ district of Salzburg – Felix Albrecht Harta (1884–1967) and Anton Faistauer (1887–1930) – Weill explores an alternative vision of modern Austrian art, located in the provinces rather than the capital.⁶ Taking his argument as a point of departure, this chapter explores the role of regional modernism in Central European art beyond 1918, arguing that it represents an overlooked trajectory of modernism that

challenges dominant models of periodization. Offering a different view on the entangled histories of Central European interwar art, it furthermore suggests that regional modernism is symptomatic of the *longue durée* of artistic developments that are often bypassed in traditional, teleologic models of periodization.

The *Longue Durée* of Regional Modernism

The concept of the *longue durée* used here refers to the model developed by historian Fernand Braudel, who suggested that, rather than focusing on a history of short-term developments, the tracing of historical shifts over longer periods of time allows the detection of broader trends, repetitions and cyclical patterns: 'If history is called by nature to give a prime consideration to temporalities, to *all* the movements into which it can be distinguished, the *longue durée* seems . . . the most useful for common observation and reflection'.⁷ Reassessing 'traditional' models of art historical periodization in this light opens up the possibility of reconsidering developments viewed as time-specific regional modernism across longer periods of time, as well as in relation to broader geographies.⁸

Broadly defined as a 'cultural movement based on a new interest in folklore, typical landscapes, vernacular buildings, dialect, traditional handicrafts, folk songs and other elements of traditional rural popular culture', regional modernism became a central element of modern Central European culture in the nineteenth century.⁹ Represented by rural 'outposts' of modern culture, it arose from the growing interest in the countryside among urban artists and intellectuals, who began to incorporate vernacular life, forms and traditions into their practice, founded rural artist colonies and workshops, and supported the construction of specific local narratives. As assessed in publications such as *Art and the National Dream* (1993) and *Art around 1900 in Central Europe* (1999), the rediscovery of rural culture was a quintessential facet in projects of modern nation-building at the turn of the century and served a quest for authenticity in modern cultural production.¹⁰ Precisely because of its pertinence to national emancipation movements in the late Habsburg Empire, engagements with regionalism as a part of modern culture have largely focused on a historical period that flourished at the *fin-de-siècle* before 'ending' with the collapse of the empire in 1918. Its significance after this time is often marginalized as attention shifts towards the forward-looking internationalism of the avant-garde in publications such as Timothy O. Benson's *Central European Avant-Gardes* (2002) or, more recently, the multi-author volume *Years of Disarray, 1908–1928: Avant-Gardes in Central Europe* (2018).¹¹

Broadening the perception from regional modernism as a phenomenon dominant at the turn of the twentieth century, the model of the *longue durée* explores its continuous importance across the changing geopolitical structures of Central Europe after the First World War. Challenging dominant models of periodization, it locates entanglements in the art historiography of the Habsburg successor states, which show that, after 1918, regional modernism continued to be constructed as a relevant aspect of modern art in the region, especially in relation to nation-building processes.¹² By assessing the discursive construction of Salzburg as bastion of Austrian culture after 1918, and of 'Košice Modernism' in the First Czechoslovak Republic, I argue that regional modernism persisted as a phenomenon of international importance in Central Europe and indeed gained new importance: as the territories of the former empire were split between new states, the national narratives established at the turn of the century were adjusted or remodelled in the light of the new political situation.

Nationalized Cosmopolitanism and a New Location of Austrian Culture

A small historical town in western Austria, Salzburg was where Harta and Faistauer, the two painters mentioned by Weill, founded a local artists' association, in January 1919. Named Der Wassermann (meaning 'Aquarius'), it represented one of the first collective attempts to expand the Austrian art scene beyond Vienna.¹³ Similarly to Weill's celebration of culture in the provinces, it focused on a consolidation of Salzburg's identity in the visual arts, aiming to establish a decentralized culture in reaction to the collapse of the empire. Seeing Vienna as an overbearing Habsburg remnant, renewal could only take place outside it. Nowhere is it more evident that Faistauer had had enough of Vienna than in a letter sent to the critic Arthur Rössler in April 1919, stating:

My last visit clearly revealed the confusion of artistic Vienna to me, and I think it would be easier to bear Bolshevik Munich than this wholly corrupt, oozy metropole. For my work, too, I see no further opportunities, because I am not working towards a pointedly intellectual but a more meaningful development.¹⁴

This emphasis on a search for something 'meaningful' stood at the core of Faistauer's entire practice. He was not only a prolific painter, playing a significant role in the revival of Austrian fresco painting for example, but also regularly commented on the state of the contemporary Austrian art scene.

In 1923, Faistauer published *Neue Malerei in Österreich* (New Painting in Austria), a book in which he criticized the favouring of form over spiritual content, attacking 'the rush of the city, which has forced us to a stenographic brevity of thought and made our art short of breath'.¹⁵ Proclaiming the need to return to profound spirituality in art, Faistauer praised the work of his contemporaries Franz Wiegeler (1887–1944) and Anton Kolig (1886–1950), emphasizing the 'agrarian character' and 'healthy conservatism' of the former.¹⁶ Like Faistauer, Wiegeler and Kolig had turned their backs on Vienna after 1918, relocating to rural Carinthia where, together with Sebastian Isepp and Anton Mahringer, they founded the Nötsch Circle which predominantly painted religious scenes in a late Expressionist style.¹⁷ Celebrating them as representatives of the most successful development in contemporary Austrian painting, therefore, Faistauer not only set regional artistic practices at the centre of his book, in relation to his own relocation to Salzburg and Der Wassermann, but also constructed a broader landscape of Austrian art located in the provinces, while defining Vienna as a place out of touch with contemporary concerns for profound cultural renewal.

Faistauer was not alone in this opinion. Indeed, contrasting with the lamenting voices of left-leaning, progressive figures such as Hans Tietze about the state of Austrian culture, several of his moderate and conservative contemporaries saw in regional modernism the solution to an Austrian art that corresponded to the country's new set-up as a small alpine republic. In 1921, the German arts magazine *Der Ararat* published a special issue on Austrian art. With 'Vienna' printed in large letters across the header, the capital's prime position still loomed over the Austrian art scene as a whole – to its disadvantage. The first article, penned by Tietze about Oskar Kokoschka, who was living in Dresden by this time, built up an image of the former imperial capital as a lost case, stating: 'Vienna's cultural position today is marked by severe crisis, which

progresses in a *circulus vitiosus*, belated, tired, done with, coated in a patina of used-up cultures, almost wholly consumed'.¹⁸ Following on directly from Tietze's lamentation, however, the art historian Bruno Grimschitz, a student of Max Dvořák and curator at the Belvedere gallery, suggested, 'the withered ground of the city centrifugally disperses talent to the periphery . . . so that, perhaps, the unspent power of the provinces gives new force to bring a new Austrian painting into prominence'.¹⁹ Aside from praise for the Nötsch Circle painters, Grimschitz also emphasized Faistauer and Harta's efforts in Salzburg, placing them at the forefront of hopeful developments for a new Austrian art. While Salzburg and small-town Nötsch shared the fact that they were located in the alpine countryside, which was the new state's main geographical feature, Salzburg also bore further features that made it an ideal new bastion for Austrian culture, based not least on the fact that it already had a strong local history that could be built on and remodelled.

As a small Baroque city and former archbishopric, Salzburg transformed into a hot-spot of culture during the course of the 1920s. Key to manifesting this position was the Salzburg Festival, inaugurated in 1920 as an international celebration of music and drama under the direction of Hugo von Hofmannsthal and Max Reinhardt. In a groundbreaking study on the festival, historian Michael P. Steinberg has argued that Hofmannsthal designed the event as ostensibly cosmopolitan, while simultaneously grounding a new Austria identity in Salzburg's Catholic and Baroque roots: 'Its purpose was the rediscovery and reconstitution of a transcendent Austrian cultural heritage which would help to bridge the gulf that separated the empire from the small Austrian Republic'.²⁰

Rather than locating such an attempt in the former imperial capital, whose destruction and poverty in the post-war years earned it a reputation as a 'downtrodden city of invalid veterans' with severely limited opportunities, as the Hungarian émigré artist Lajos Kassák noted in 1919,²¹ Salzburg represented a viable alternative also for practical reasons: it was well connected to Vienna and Munich, located at the geographical centre of the new republic, a known touristic location and in close proximity to the Salzkammergut lake district, a favourite holiday location among the Viennese upper classes. Demographically, too, Salzburg was much more homogeneous – German-Austrian Catholic – than the former imperial capital, and as such more representative of the new Austria's overall population.²² In other words, for everything that made Vienna seem out of place, Salzburg could be constructed as a 'better Austrian' alternative.

The Salzburg Festival challenged Vienna's cultural hegemony in a place that seemed to embody what Hofmannsthal understood as the 'essence' of Austrian identity: German-Austrian Catholicism rooted in Baroque Habsburg culture.²³ With this ideal of 'nationalist cosmopolitanism', as Steinberg termed it, the festival represented many of the contradictions that defined Austrian interwar culture, fluctuating between a provincialist conservative element and a drive to build on the pan-European ideals that the Habsburg Empire quickly came to signify in the post-war era.²⁴ With Faistauer and Harta, these ideas also found fertile ground in attempts at renewal in the visual arts.

Regional Modernism and Der Wassermann

Introducing Der Wassermann in *Die graphischen Künste* in 1920, art historian Josef Mühlmann noted that the artistic renewal of Salzburg 'rose from an attempt to move

artistic creation from the metropolis to the province'.²⁵ In the catalogue of Der Wassermann's first exhibition in 1919 (Fig. 12.1), Mühlmann further explained:

[T]he intention of this artists' association is not to cling on to a small country narrow-mindedly, but to forge links with artists in foreign countries. Contemporary art is a cosmopolitan art, directed towards all of humanity rather than just one people.²⁶

Mühlmann's proclamations of the group's cosmopolitanism were tightly constructed in reference to Salzburg's specific local identity as a Baroque city deeply tied to Catholicism. A particular highlight of the exhibition was the juxtaposition of medieval sculptures and contemporary works, forging the notion of continuity on the basis of Christian iconography: for instance, Faistauer's votive altarpiece (1918–19; Fig. 12.2),

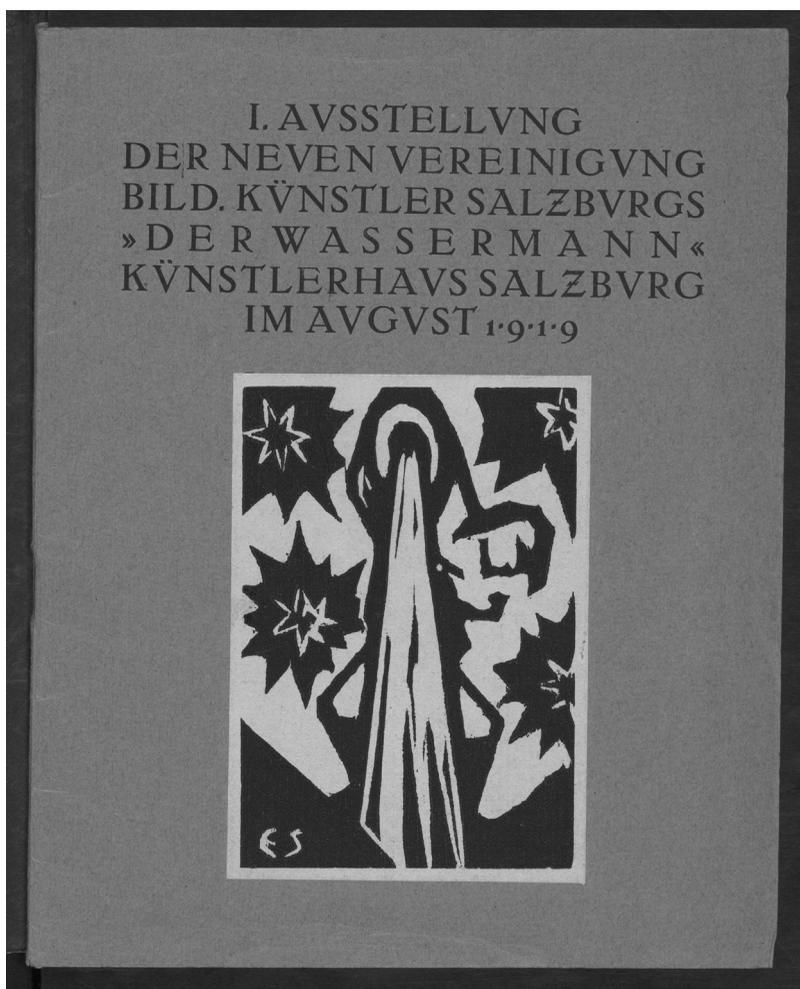


Figure 12.1 Cover of the exhibition catalogue of the new Association of Fine Artists 'Der Wassermann', with woodcut by Emma Schlangenhausen, 1919.

Credit: © ÖNB Vienna: 683.487-B, cover.



Figure 12.2 Anton Faistauer, Great Salzburg Votive Altarpiece (central part), 1918–19, oil on canvas, 185.5 × 93 cm.

Credit: Museum der Moderne Salzburg, inventory number BU 3755. <https://www.museumdermoderne.at/de/sammlung/detail/der-grosse-salzbuerger-votivaltar/>

commissioned by the regional government, and Harta's *Adoration of the three Kings* (1910–20), were shown alongside medieval and Gothic sculpture.²⁷

Eva Michel has suggested that this was part of a legitimization process achieved by a visible genealogy to historical precedents.²⁸ Yet the focus on Christian subject matter and its incorporation of medieval and Gothic icons also defined the specific function of Salzburg as an alternative modern art. 'Cosmopolitanism' in line with the exhibition set-up suggests affinity to Hofmannsthal's definition of the term, which he principally understood as a 'German virtue' and conceived of in German nationalist terms.²⁹ By extension, Der Wassermann, and Mühlmann as one of its main spokesmen, promoted a site-specific regionalism embedded in the nationalist cosmopolitanism that the Salzburg Festival embodied as the locus for a new Austrian culture.

An extensive review dedicated to the exhibition in the *Neue Freie Presse* further indicates how these attempts at cultural emancipation were perceived: 'The turn away from Vienna, the growing independence of the provinces . . . is finally starting to demonstrate some awareness of its independence in a positive light'.³⁰ Despite its 'strange' disposition towards religious art, the reviewer considers the show 'beautiful' for a small city, while pointing towards the curious upheaval it caused with works that were 'through and through moderately modern'.³¹ Faced with a selection of works in established styles, the Viennese journalist Erwin Rainalter noted in an essay about Harta's fascination with the Baroque that the strong opposition the show faced in conservative Salzburg was 'inexplicable', since the exhibition as a whole emphasized tradition over modernity.³² Similarly, Hans Faltinger noted in the *Linzer Tagblatt* that, in the provinces, 'one thinks of [the Wassermann group] as the most modern art and thus wants to reject them. In truth, it no longer belongs to the newest directions in painting'.³³ Thus, while the emancipation of the Salzburg art scene was acknowledged as a positive development that bore the potential to enliven Austrian post-war art, in the

light of Der Wassermann's artistic output, this potential had its limits: the strong links to Christian art traditions in combination with the largely figurative subject matter and repertoire of well-established styles rather evoked an air of provincialism to Viennese reviewers, seen to be concomitant with the group's location outside the capital.

A notable exception in this respect was Hermann Bahr, the vocal defender of the Vienna Secession around 1900.³⁴ Bahr had relocated to Salzburg just before the First World War and, as a devote Catholic convert, increasingly turned Christian conservative. He was also an adviser to and member of Der Wassermann and played an instrumental role in Harta's conversion to Catholicism. Bahr's mention of the group exhibition as part of his column in the *Neues Wiener Journal* was expressed entirely in the vein of his newly found spiritualism, paying exclusive attention to religious work by Faistauer and Harta as well as to the 'spiritual value' of exhibits by Albert Paris Gütersloh (1887–1973), Alfred Kubin (1877–1959) and Carl Anton Reichel (1874–1944); indeed, though ignored by Bahr, the work of the group's female artists such as Emma Schlangenhäuser (1882–1947) showed similar inclinations.³⁵ While emphasizing the Catholic spiritualism of the artworks, Bahr also related Der Wassermann and the first exhibitions of the Vienna Secession, pointing towards their similar 'sincerity, poise, grace and dignity' in display.³⁶ Based on the author's established role as a supporter of new artistic tendencies at the turn of the century, this comparison forges a lineage that manifested Der Wassermann's position as representatives of a new Austrian art. Indeed, that the group was based in Salzburg seems all the more fitting in this regard: already in 1900, Bahr had published 'Die Hauptstadt von Europa. Eine Phantasie in Salzburg' (The Capital of Europe: A Salzburg Fantasy), in which he wrote in a dream-like sequence, 'then we moved here and finally found the capital of Europe'.³⁷ Rather than representing a past phenomenon, regional modernism was thus constructed as a necessary impulse for Austrian art, especially in moderate and conservative circles. Beyond its dominant periodization around 1900, it offered a viable departure from the dominating figures of Austrian modernism before 1918 – Gustav Klimt and Egon Schiele especially – and from an imperial past to which the image of Vienna remained tied.

Shifting some years ahead, the 'moderately modern' impression of regional art in Salzburg indeed rose to greater importance than was anticipated by its earlier defenders. Following the accession of the deeply Catholic-conservative regime of Engelbert Dollfuß in 1934, the culture around the Salzburg Festival, and with it Der Wassermann's successor the Sonderbund (1925–38), represented ideal Austrian culture: modern, yet steeped in tradition, Catholic, German, and deeply conservative.³⁸ Beyond an emancipation of the provinces, the regional modernism constructed in relation to Der Wassermann, as well as the Nötsch Circle, thus grew beyond local significance as a consequence of the anti-democratic shift in Austrian state politics in the early 1930s.

Portrait of a Democratic State

Based on its instrumentalization by the Austrofascist regime, regional modernism formed part of a construction of an Austrian modernism which developed closely in line with the Catholic conservatism that defined much of the country's intellectual and cultural life outside Vienna. This assessment might suggest that a perspective on regional modernism in Central Europe in the *longue durée* reveals its development from a romantic nationalism around 1900 towards an alignment with the fascist

movements of the 1930s. However, expanding the focus beyond the narrow confines of individual nation states, the tendency towards reactionism represents only one of several variants in which regional modernism persisted after 1918. Shifting attention to neighbouring Czechoslovakia, the example of Košice (Hungarian: Kassa; today in Slovakia; part of Czechoslovakia 1918–38) underlines that, equally, regional modernism was constructed as a hallmark of progress and democratic values.

In the light of interwar Czechoslovakia's demographic diversity, regionalism became a prominent topic of debate in the 1920s in the work of philosophers and sociologists such as Josef Ludvík Fischer.³⁹ For Fischer, regionalism was 'a direct continuation of Czech cultural endeavours' that had started in the nineteenth century, and represented a cultural method of applied democracy that could be implemented to realize the full democratic potential of the new state.⁴⁰ In order to stabilize and optimize the economic, political and cultural set-up of the new country, individual regions had to be supported in an emancipation process that would benefit the country as a whole. Moreover, Fischer understood regionalism as a conscious reaction against the sentimental patriotism of the Romantic era, writing, 'compared to the cultural agenda of the national awakening, regionalism replaces small-town sentimentality with explicitly anti-small-town, non-provincial considerations, and its defence mechanism [against German culture] with a democratic outburst'.⁴¹ More significantly still, he understood regionalism as an integral part of Czech modernization efforts within the First Czechoslovak Republic, a method of state-building. While Fischer's main geographical concerns were the southern parts of Bohemia and Moravia, his vision for cultural regionalism across the country under the auspices of stabilization and integration is especially pertinent for the new state's eastern borderlands, where Košice was also located.

Both on a cultural and an economic level, Košice, under Hungarian rule in the Habsburg Empire, was an important town by the early twentieth century, whose cultural vibrance benefited from a diverse population of Hungarian, Slovak and German speakers, as well as a sizeable Jewish community.⁴² When the town became part of Czechoslovakia, the parameters of its diversity shifted from an official orientation towards Budapest to distant Prague within aims to transform Košice from a primarily Hungarian town into an eastern bulwark of the new state.⁴³ One of the new government's most pressing concerns was to raise the national consciousness of the Slovak population, which formed part of the so-called state-forming nations with the Czechs, while other nationalities were regarded as minorities.⁴⁴ To level out the town's dominant Hungarian population, therefore, western Slovak and Czech white-collar workers were deployed – so many, in fact, that the town jumped from 50,000 inhabitants in 1918 to just over 70,000 within the space of a decade.⁴⁵ In line with these developments, a cultural revival took place, which gained the designation 'Košice Modernism' in the early 2010s as part of a research project led by Zsófia Kiss-Szemán.⁴⁶ A central figure in this regard was the director of the local East Slovak Museum, Josef Polák. While his position in the consolidation of Košice Modernism has long been affirmed, the political implications of a well-connected Czech working in a new Czechoslovak border town adds a further dimension to his impact: that of an officially supported regionalism in a multi-ethnic border town. In relation to Polák, Košice Modernism was not only part of the spirit of optimism associated with the founding of the republic but also an example of the ways in which regional modernism gained a central role in state-building processes.

Born to Jewish parents in Prague, Polák was a lawyer with an astute interest in art and culture. As a student he frequented Prague's Union Café, which he would later recall as 'our contemporary institute of history and art', and attended lectures by art historian Karel Chytil, who remained a lifelong contact; he also volunteered in the city's new Jewish Museum, established in 1906.⁴⁷ Polák settled in Košice after serving in the region during the war and, in 1919, became the new collections administrator of the renamed East Slovak Museum.⁴⁸ Appointed by the head of the local district administration, Polák's efforts in restoring the museum were bound to larger factors within Czechoslovak cultural policy. The instigation of a cultural revival of Košice as a regional centre through his efforts at once shows how regional modernism remained an important cultural aspect in interwar Czechoslovakia and underlines the ties to state-building efforts such a project could have.

Throughout his time in Košice, Polák maintained contact with central figures of Czech art history in the capital, most notably Chytil and Zdeněk Wirth. Wirth, a former student of Dvořák, was the chief conservator of monuments in the new state and an important figure in the construction of Czechoslovak art as a state-supporting political narrative. Among others, his work included *Československé umění* (Czechoslovak Art; 1926) and *Umění československého lidu* (The Art of the Czechoslovak People; 1928), two major publications which were devised to affirm the Czechs' cultural and political hegemony in Czechoslovakia as a modern, progressive state.⁴⁹ Polák had known Wirth since his student days in the Union Café, and through his position in the Ministry of National Education, Wirth not only supported Polák's appointment as director of the East Slovak Museum in 1928, he was also an important contact in relation to funding matters and travelling exhibitions – two significant aspects of Polák's cultural programme in Košice. In the context of Polák's ties to Prague, therefore, the city's position as a contested, multi-ethnic border town gains particular importance as a regional modernism that represented state ideals of democracy and cultural progress.

'Making' Košice

Polák's position was to integrate Košice into the new republic. In the first instance, this took place on a local level. In line with Fischer's observations of regionalism as a cultural expression of democracy, Košice came to represent a model image of an integrative society, tied to Polák's close working relationship with the different communities that inhabited the town. Rather than simply overwriting the local mixture of culture with a Czech (state-conforming) vision of modernization, Polák showed acute awareness of the historical entanglements in Košice as a border town. It was this awareness that led to a multifaceted cultural life, much of which developed under Polák's direction.

He set up a public drawing school at the museum, led by the Hungarian graphic artist Eugén/Jenő Krón (1882–1974), established a library in the museum, sent newspapers to surrounding villages, announced art and design competitions and promoted theatre productions staged in Czech, Slovak and Hungarian.⁵⁰ Polák commissioned struggling local artists (regardless of their nationality) to create works for the museum collection and supported applications for residency permits from artists such as Krón, who fled to Košice as a proponent of the short-lived Hungarian Communist Republic.⁵¹ Avant-garde artists such as Ludovít Fulla (1902–80) and Mikuláš Galanda (1895–1938)

spent prolonged periods in the town upon Polák's invitation. Showing their work as part of a busy exhibition schedule, the East Slovak Museum was transformed into a space for both historical and contemporary culture. Exchanges were further nourished by a rich exhibition programme, which included shows by the Czech Tvrdošijní group, the Austrian Hagenbund, as well as the Dresden Secession.⁵²

Just as dynamic as artists' movements to and from the town was their artistic output. Local painter Anton Jasusch (1882–1965) focused on large Symbolist scenes that explored universalized human experiences. Having returned to the town after escaping a Russian prisoner-of-war camp, paintings such as *Z prvej svetovej vojny* (From the First World War; 1920–24; Fig. 12.3) addressed the traumatic experiences of war in an Expressionist and highly dynamic formal language. Géza/Gejza Schiller (1895–1927) and František Foltýn (1891–1976) captured the town's modernization, drawing on Constructivist forms and an emphasis on plasticity.⁵³ Several of Krón's students, meanwhile, focused on a stark social realism which captured the hardships of life at Košice's fringes, such as Konštantín Bauer (1893–1928; Fig. 12.4). Košice Modernism, in this sense, inferred an artistic plurality in its programme and artistic outlook, which embraced modernism in its attention to contemporary life and openness to formal explorations.



Figure 12.3 Anton Jasusch, *Z prvej svetovej vojny* (From the First World War), 1920–24, oil on canvas, 50 × 61.5 cm.

Credit: Východoslovenská galéria, Košice. https://www.webumenia.sk/dielo/SVK:VSG.O_834.

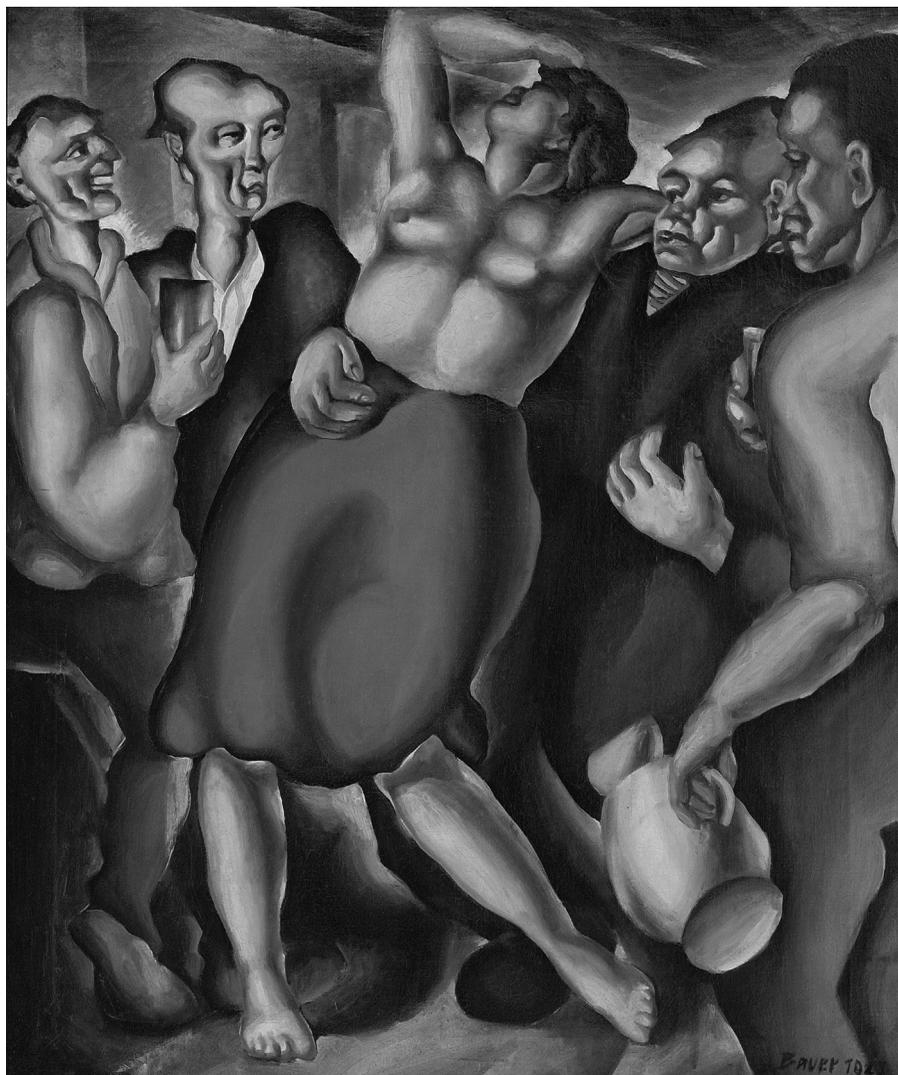


Figure 12.4 Konštantín Bauer, *Odsúdená* (Condemned), 1927, oil on canvas, 100 × 83.5 cm.
Credit: Východoslovenská galéria, Košice. https://www.webumenia.sk/dielo/SVK:SNG.O_2477.

Tomáš Štrauss, one of the first Slovak art historians who dedicated an extensive study to Košice art, noted:

[I]t is symptomatic that in terms of work of the leading artists of the so-called Košice circle, the question of national and cultural identity was irrelevant. . . . In the early 1920s, a few voices rose up in Slovak artistic circles to warn Polák against surrounding himself with foreign elements . . . but these attempts did not have any impact on actual internationalist feeling.⁵⁴

While the kaleidoscope of cultural activities outlined previously certainly affirms this statement, Polák's ties to Prague also shed a different light on Košice's 'internationalism'. In his prolific writing about Slovak art and culture for national and regional art history books, newspapers and exhibition catalogues, Polák clearly adopted the view of Czechoslovakism, according to which he emphasized a natural connection between Czechs and Slovaks that had been 'interrupted' by Hungarian rule.⁵⁵ In broad survey essays such as 'Výtvarné umění na Slovensko' (Fine Art in Slovakia), for example, Polák underlined the strong historical influence on Slovakia by the Czech lands, which was subsequently destroyed by Hungarian and Tatar 'invasions'.⁵⁶ Moreover, he stressed that, while Slovakia had a range of good artists from 'other nations' (referring to Krón, among others), the 'return' of Slovakia to Czechoslovakia led to 'hopes for a new, most beautiful era of art in Slovakia'.⁵⁷ In other words, only by belonging to the new state could Slovakia's cultural life also develop regionally. Looking back at a decade in Košice in 1928, Polák's overview of the beginnings of 'Czechoslovak cultural life' there correspondingly emphasized the town's artistic renaissance as a consequence of its return to (Czecho-)Slovak governance.⁵⁸ Accordingly, his activities as a museologist and cultural organizer were also committed to a reinvention of Košice to suit the new state ideology. Rather than simply representing a place of cultural intersection where modern culture evolved by virtue of democracy, Košice Modernism was intricately related to cultural policies from Prague by a government which aimed to secure the legitimacy of the state.⁵⁹ By extension, Košice not only represented a thriving regional modernism but also the Czech 'civilizing mission' in the country's eastern regions, adjusted to the broader specifications of Czechoslovakia as a progressive, democratic state. Reaching beyond local significance, regional modernism in this context was a part of Czechoslovak state-building efforts, and those who constructed it had in mind not only the emancipation of local centres but also the support of the new state.

Entanglements, Peripheries and Regional Modernism's *longue durée*: Conclusion

Exploring the development of Salzburg as bastion of new Austrian culture and of Košice Modernism as a marker of democratic values in the First Czechoslovak Republic, regional modernism transpires as a movement of continuous importance in the interwar years. While it has long been periodized as a phenomenon of the *fin de siècle* – a process already confirmed in Fischer's references to the national awakening in his text from 1930 – the relevance of regional artistic developments in the post-Habsburg space was no less important. In line with two examples as diverse in outlook as Salzburg and Košice, a consideration of regional modernism in the *longue durée* underlines a number of parallels reaching beyond the regional context and across state borders. In both cases, existing cultural centres were 'reinvented' in line with the changed geopolitical set-up of central Europe: a Baroque citadel, Salzburg was imagined as Austria's new 'national cosmopolitan capital' by figures such as Hofmannsthal, Bahr and Faistauer, who saw the city as a rural, spiritual antidote to Vienna. As a Hungarian-dominated multi-ethnic town on the new Czechoslovak-Hungarian border, meanwhile, Košice's rich cultural heritage was reframed in line with a new state ideology.

While overall Polák's wide-ranging projects held a more progressive outlook than the theoreticians and art historians supporting the Wassermann group, both parties shared the goal of reinventing a regional identity that built on a revalorization of the past, dressed in a new national cloak. Moreover, Faistauer, Polák and Bahr all arrived

in the regions they committed to from the respective state capitals and maintained contact with Prague and Vienna, pointing towards the fact that the construction of regional artistic centres remained closely bound to networks beyond their immediate location. Significantly, this also impacted their wider construction: while both Košice and Salzburg were initially framed as local modernization processes, ultimately they were constructed in response to the demand for a new national or state-supported culture. Thus, while regional modernism after 1918 appeared to be reoriented towards establishing a level of cultural self-sufficiency with the founding of artists' associations, exhibition activities and art schools, beyond the umbrella of a localized modernity, art historians and critics continued to relate these projects to a national framework, particularly within a rhetoric of renewal after 1918. *Longue durée* regional modernism, in this light, indicates myriad entanglements between the regional and the national, the peripheral and the central across the Habsburg successor states. Developing simultaneously to the modernism of the avant-garde that art historical accounts have long focused on, its continuation across traditional period boundaries highlights alternative trajectories in the art historiographies of Central Europe, in which the significance of the 'peripheral' comes to the fore.

Notes

- * This chapter is part of a project that has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme (grant agreement no. 786314).
- 1 Plüschke-Altorf, 'Rural as Periphery Per Se?' 11.
 - 2 Riegl, *Volkskunst, Hausfleiß und Hausindustrie*, 34.
 - 3 Lübbren, *Rural Artists' Colonies in Europe*, 1–14.
 - 4 Piotrowski, 'Toward a Horizontal History of the European Avant-Garde'; Murawska-Muthesius, 'Welcome to Slaka'; Joyeux-Prunel, 'The Uses and Abuses of Peripheries in Art History'.
 - 5 Weill, 'Österreichische Provinzkultur', 2.
 - 6 Ibid.
 - 7 Braudel, 'History and the Social Sciences', 201.
 - 8 See Kaufmann, 'Periodization and Its Discontents'.
 - 9 Storm, *The Culture of Regionalism*, 64.
 - 10 Gordon Bowe, *Art and the National Dream*; Krakowski and Purchla, *Art Around 1900 in Central Europe*.
 - 11 Benson, *Central European Avant-Gardes; Srp, Years of Disarray*.
 - 12 Werner and Zimmermann, 'Beyond Comparison'.
 - 13 Jandl-Jörg, 'Der Wassermann'.
 - 14 Quoted in Schaffer, 'Weltkrieg und Künstlerfehden', 541.
 - 15 Faistauer, *Neue Malerei in Österreich*, 47.
 - 16 Ibid., 59 and 67.
 - 17 Rohsmann and Wimmer, *Der Nötscher Kreis*.
 - 18 Tietze, 'Oskar Kokoschka 1920', 219.
 - 19 Grimschitz, 'Zur Österreichischen Malerei', 227.
 - 20 Steinberg, *Austria as Theater and Ideology*, ix.
 - 21 In Schneider 'Die Künstlergruppe "Freie Bewegung"', 108.
 - 22 Steinberg, *Austria as Theatre and Ideology*, xii.
 - 23 Ibid., 84–115.
 - 24 Coudenhove-Kalergi, 'The Pan-European Outlook'.
 - 25 Mühlmann, 'Der Wassermann', 83.
 - 26 Mühlmann 'Einführung in die Ausstellung', 5.
 - 27 Mühlmann, 'Wassermannausstellung', 2.
 - 28 Michel, 'Inventing Tradition', 100.

- 29 Steinberg, *Austria as Theatre and Ideology*, 23.
 30 -ei-, 'Ein neuer deutschösterreichischer Künstlerbund', 1.
 31 *Ibid.*, 2.
 32 Rainalter, 'Bei dem Maler F.A. Harta', 5.
 33 Faltinger, 'Salzburger Kunstausstellung in Linz', 1.
 34 Farkas, 'Österreich-Bilder Hermann Bahrs'.
 35 Bahr, 'Tagebuch von Hermann Bahr', 6.
 36 *Ibid.*
 37 Bahr, *Kritische Schriften*, 87.
 38 Anon., 'Sonderbund österreichischer Künstler in Salzburg', 4; Staudinger, 'Austrofaschistische "Österreich"-Ideologie'; Bisanz, 'Österreichische Malerei und Graphik der Zwischenkriegszeit', 370.
 39 Lenderová and Jiránek, 'Vývoj českého regionalismu'.
 40 Fischer, *Kultura a regionalismus*, 13.
 41 Fischer, *Výbor z díla III*, 644.
 42 Bartošová, 'Palimpsest', 79.
 43 Ficeri, 'Two Metropolises', 65.
 44 Heimann, *Czechoslovakia*, 65.
 45 Ficeri, 'Czechoslovakism in Mentalities of Košice's Inhabitants', 28.
 46 Kiss-Szemán, 'Košice Modernism and Anton Jaszusch's Expressionism', 65.
 47 Veselská, *The Man Who Never Gave Up*, 5–10.
 48 *Ibid.*, 17.
 49 Wirth, *Československé umění*; Wirth, *Umění československého lidu*; Filipová, *Modernity, History, and Politics*, 128–30.
 50 Bartošová, 'Palimpsest', 80.
 51 Veselská, *The Man Who Never Gave Up*, 43–45.
 52 Bartošová, 'Palimpsest', 81.
 53 Pomajzlová, 'Košická figurace'.
 54 Štrauss, *Anton Jaszusch a zrod východoslovenskej avantgardy*, 35; English citation from Bartošová, 'Palimpsest', 79.
 55 Polák, 'Výtvarné umění na Slovensko'.
 56 *Ibid.*, 471.
 57 *Ibid.*, 528. Lucia Kvočáková has recently assessed the construction of Slovak modernism in interwar Czechoslovakia in *Cesta ke slovenskému mýtu*.
 58 Polák, 'Zaciatky ceskoslovenskeho kulturneho zivota v Kosiciach', 1–3.
 59 Holubec, 'We Bring Order', 225.

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Part V

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13 Disaster and Renewal, 1241–42

The Transition from Romanesque to Gothic in the Historiography of Medieval Art in the Kingdom of Hungary*

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Introduction

This chapter concentrates on a particular aspect of nineteenth-century historiography regarding the emergence of the Gothic style in the Kingdom of Hungary. It argues that the discourses that present the appearance of Gothic art in medieval Hungary as being in the aftermath of the Mongol invasion were the result of a process of entanglement between, on the one hand, local art historians and Western historiography and, on the other hand, proponents of this emerging academic discipline in the region.¹ In seeking to demonstrate this, my study places emphasis on the connections between one of the founders of art history in Hungary, Imre Henszlmann, and French historiography in the nineteenth century. It also considers a possible knowledge transfer between Henszlmann's theories and the ways in which some of these issues were negotiated by Ludwig Reissenberger, a Saxon author from Transylvania, at the end of the century. As I will discuss, Reissenberger did not use Henszlmann's concepts or theoretical insights in his writings, but the two knew each other and even collaborated to a certain extent. I am aware that the concept of entangled history assumes a more direct and profound interaction between two agents, and that the parallel I draw between Henszlmann and Reissenberger is more of a comparison of their approaches to problems that were similar in content.² However, it is my contention that examining how an art historical event as crucial as the birth of a new style was dealt with in the case of the Hungarian Kingdom can prove that not only did art historians adapt Western theories to their own agendas, as in the case of Henszlmann, but they also shaped their discourses in contrast with each other, as I suggest when analysing one particular work by Ludwig Reissenberger.

The great Mongol invasion that swept through the Hungarian Kingdom between 1241 and 1242 left a lasting imprint on medieval mentalities thereafter, and from the middle of the nineteenth century it proved to be of interest for historians. There are two main positions regarding the destruction brought by the Mongols. Some authors have borrowed the vision of medieval authors and accepted the devastating consequences expressed in contemporary sources. Others have pleaded for downplaying the size of the catastrophe, arguing that the presence of Hungary in the international arena at the end of the thirteenth century leads to the conclusion that casualties could not have been on such a grand scale if the Kingdom managed to recover in such a short time.³ Recent research has done much to reassess the impact of the Mongol invasion, putting forward arguments that present a more archaeologically based

assessment of the facts and proposing a ‘disenchanted’ medieval context according to which the Hungarian situation should be evaluated. Among the arguments for a reconsideration of the Mongol invasion are the population loss, mentioned in sources and considered to be significant, but which proved to be difficult to assess in recent research; the evidence of archaeological findings which suggest that destruction seems to have occurred mainly in the Great Hungarian Plain; the long-term economic development of the Kingdom during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries; the military campaigns that Béla IV waged against Austria and Bohemia after the Tatar incursion; and the swift rebuilding of churches after the invasion.⁴ Nonetheless, the invasion that befell Hungary from 1241 was still deemed sufficiently important to be considered a threshold in the history of St Stephen’s kingdom that marked the beginning of a revival in not just artistic but also economic terms.

Henszlmann and the Transition from Romanesque to Gothic in Hungary

It therefore comes as little surprise that nineteenth-century Hungarian art historiography addressed this major historical event as a relevant threshold for the sequence of art historical styles. One of the authors most interested in the periodization of Hungarian medieval art was Imre Henszlmann (1813–88).⁵ Between 1835 and 1836, Henszlmann studied medicine at the University of Vienna; during his stay in the metropolis, he met Josef Daniel Boehm, a sculptor and medallist, but also a collector and teacher of a select group of disciples, including Rudolf Eitelberger von Edelberg.⁶ Henszlmann became the first professor of art history in Hungary in 1872. His lifelong commitment to the research and restoration of St Elisabeth’s Church in his native town Kassa (German: Kaschau; now Košice in present-day Slovakia) began with an 1846 monograph dedicated to the monuments of this city, *Kassa városának ó német stülü templomai* (Old German-Style Churches in the City of Kassa), a work which is considered the first example of academic art historical writing in Hungarian historiography.⁷ His use of the term *ó német stülü* (Old German-style) represents his initial position as a proponent of Gothic art understood as a German medieval style, coining the term in Hungarian as a derivative from Christian Ludwig Stieglitz’s *Von altdeutscher Baukunst* (Old German Architecture), published in 1820. At the same time, Ernő Marosi has pointed out that although Henszlmann considered detailed descriptions to be important for art historical writing, the Hungarian language had not yet developed an adequate terminology, hence the borrowing of foreign concepts.⁸ Nonetheless, after visiting France and meeting architects from the circle of Viollet-le-Duc, his views changed: based on what he considered to be a resemblance between the plans of Saint-Yved of Braine and St Elisabeth’s Church in Kassa, and also fuelled by the discovery of Villard de Honnecourt’s thirteenth-century sketchbook from his travels in Europe, including the Hungarian Kingdom, Henszlmann posited the influence of French Gothic art upon St Elisabeth’s Church.⁹

Even though Henszlmann later downplayed the impact of French architecture in Kassa, I believe that the perspective of a French–Hungarian connection reflects the changes in medieval art historiography of the nineteenth century, because the Gothic style was gradually reconsidered as a northern, French, specifically Parisian development, in contrast to its previously alleged German origins. The German architect and art historian Franz Mertens’s advocacy of the French origins of the cross-vaulted style,

beginning with an article published in 1843, stirred quite a controversy in the context of the struggle for German-ness that was amplified by the *Dombaubewegung* and the famous restoration project of Cologne Cathedral.¹⁰ Mertens was so keen to gain recognition for his theory of French Gothic art that he came into conflict with two of the most widely read art historians of the time, Franz Kugler and Karl Schnaase, and accused them, especially Kugler, of plagiarism.¹¹ Interestingly, Mertens and Henszlmann had similar views on restoration. Both considered the first stages of construction to be the most relevant aspect of medieval monuments, as articulated in Mertens's views on the Palatine Chapel in Aachen Cathedral and Henszlmann's ideas about the Matthias Church in Budapest (both being regarded as symbolic national monuments). This is not surprising, given that Henszlmann's conception of restoration is usually linked to the Viennese milieu and the activity of Friedrich Schmidt. However, by the 1870s, Schmidt's methods were already being critiqued by the likes of Moritz Thausing.¹² At the same time, Aachen Cathedral was also a relevant monument for Hungarian history, since Louis I of Hungary founded a chapel there in 1367 which he provided with relics and liturgical accoutrements. Although the chapel burned down in 1656 and was reconstructed in the eighteenth century, the long history of pilgrimages to the site was still important for the history of the Kingdom of Hungary and might explain the interest that Henszlmann took in Mertens's writing, as well as in his approach towards the restoration of the cathedral built by Charles the Great.¹³

Henszlmann's knowledge of Mertens's work was particularly important in shaping his views about the periodization of Hungarian medieval art. The principles of medieval art history formulated by Mertens in 1850 were adapted by the Hungarian scholar in an article published in 1863 in the Hungarian journal *Archaeologiai Közlemények* (Archaeological Contributions).¹⁴ Two of Mertens's rules were distinctly relevant for Henszlmann's work: the need for a clearly defined moment in the emergence of a style and the idea of the monastic dissemination of medieval architectural styles.¹⁵ Regardless of these borrowing from Mertens, the latter aspect proved to be a diverging point between their theories, because, in the case of medieval Hungary, the propagation of styles was bestowed by Henszlmann upon cathedrals, not monasteries.¹⁶ Two of Henszlmann's major works were intended to be coherent syntheses of the art of medieval Hungary and their titles point clearly to the way in which he conceptualized art historical periods. Borrowing from Franz Mertens the division of medieval art into four phases, which the German scholar recognized as Early Christian, Byzantine, Romanesque and Gothic, the books published by Henszlmann in 1876 and 1880 are suggestively entitled *Magyarország ó-keresztényén, román és átmenet stílű* (Old Christian, Romanesque and Transitional Style Hungarian Monuments) and *Magyarország csúcsíves stílű műemlékei* (Hungarian Monuments of the Cross-Vaulted Style).¹⁷ However, it should be noted that this periodization of medieval art was quite common at the time of Henszlmann's writings, being present in the general surveys of Schnaase or Kugler. The title of Henszlmann's second book might seem to indicate a homogenous art expression, but Henszlmann further divided Gothic into a transitional style (in order to facilitate a connection with his previous publication), followed by a mature age, and ending with a period of flamboyant decay that he approached with contempt. This attitude towards late Gothic art can also be noticed in his approach towards the restoration of St Elisabeth's Church in Kassa. While Frigyes Schulek, one of Schmidt's students, advocated a restoration that preserved the fourteenth-century monument, Henszlmann argued for a restoration that would recover the thirteenth-century

structure and appearance. Because he saw the irregularities and complications of the Flamboyant Gothic style as a sign of decline, Henszlmann was interested in repairing the mistakes of late-medieval builders and bringing the church to its original, regular and symmetrical (therefore ideal) form.¹⁸ In the introductory remarks to both of his books, Henszlmann stated that the era from the middle of the thirteenth century onwards was the time of the naturalization of Gothic art, through the adoption of the cross-vaulted style.¹⁹ Moreover, he argued, the ogival style made its appearance in the Hungarian Kingdom as a consequence of the Mongol invasion, because the destruction inflicted by the Tatars propelled Béla IV to seek aid from the Germans, who then acted as mediators of the new Parisian style.²⁰

However, the transition from Romanesque to Gothic, according to Henszlmann, was not only a temporal and stylistic movement but also a societal and environmental shift that fed through from monasteries to urban churches and cathedrals. His contention, strategically placed between the passages evoking Béla's turn to the Germans and the appearance of the French style, is that before the arrival of the Gothic, 'we used to have less developed urban centres, and the way of life in the monasteries was more Romanesque'.²¹ By equating the Romanesque style with monastic life and Gothic art with urban development, Henszlmann seems to be more dependent on Karl Schnaase's decades-long handbook enterprise, *Geschichte der bildenden Künste* (History of the Fine Arts; 1843–64). As Henrik Karge has shown, when comparing Kugler and Schnaase in terms of the opposition between *Stilgeschichte* (the history of style) and *Kulturgeschichte* (the history of culture), Schnaase strove for a dialectic model in which styles and epochs combine, whilst artistic models are determined by the context and eras in which they were used.²²

The idea that the Gothic style emerged after the Mongol invasion appears, in less trenchant terms, in a two-volume work from 1866 entitled *Műrégészeti Kalauz: Különös tekintettel Magyarországra* (Introduction to the Archaeology of Art: Considerations Pertaining to Hungary), published by Henszlmann together with Flóris Rómer, a Benedictine monk who was interested in archaeology, iconography and the liturgical aspects of art.²³ The first volume, written by Rómer, is dedicated to prehistoric art, while the second, authored by Henszlmann, addresses medieval architecture. In the opening pages of this second volume, Henszlmann writes: 'the Romanesque style in architecture occurred early in our country and lasted, in general terms, until the Mongol invasion, and in some cases for a while after it'.²⁴ A transition can thus be remarked from his 1866 publication to the surveys of 1876 and 1880 in terms of his temporal framing. At first, he saw the Mongol invasion as simply a concurrent event that functioned as a historical parallel to the evolution of styles; later, the events of 1241–42 became for him a trigger leading to the creation of a new art.

Therefore, in his 1876 and 1880 surveys, Henszlmann argued that the Mongol invasion marked the end of the transitional period which led from Romanesque to Gothic. For nineteenth-century historians, archaeologists and art historians dealing with the Middle Ages, the point of evolution from one style to the other was an obscure historical process and a conundrum for periodization. Answering the question of when the Gothic style emerged was sometimes bound up with complex debates about the 'Gothic-ness' of particular architectural elements. Buildings that were composed of different decorative elements posed problems for the definition of style as a homogeneous, coherent construct. Consequently, the issues of defining what Gothic architecture was and how to account for the presence of, for example, classically inspired

columns inside a medieval structure were rather common in the nineteenth century.²⁵ The notion of a Transitional style designating an evolutionary step in art history was used for the first time in 1824 by the French historian and archaeologist Arcisse de Caumont as a gradual stage between Romanesque and Gothic art.²⁶ The Transitional style idea might have reached Henszlmann through Schnaase's popular *Geschichte der bildenden Künste*, which engaged with contemporary debates surrounding the German Transitional style in the Rhineland. According to Willibald Sauerländer, the contextualizing approach of Schnaase's use of the 'Rhineland Transitional style' was devised precisely in order to nuance the more common usage of transitional periods as temporal markers.²⁷ Anne-Marie Sankovitch, on the other hand, has pertinently observed that there is no real incongruity between Schnaase's concept and the term that he was trying to break with, transitionalism being the expression of a singular historical and cultural context.²⁸ She points out that transitional periods were explained in the nineteenth century in terms of national identity and regional specificity which negotiated between past and future and/or local and foreign styles.²⁹

The Cistercians and Their Absence in the Writings of Imre Henszlmann

In my opinion, nineteenth-century French historiography provided another hotbed for disputes that might have inspired Henszlmann's association between a period of transition and a major historical event. As argued by Jean Nayrolles, debates around the Transitional style in nineteenth-century French historiography focused primarily on the year 1000, held as a temporal marker for the beginning of Romanesque architecture.³⁰ For figures like Jules Étienne Joseph Quicherat, Louis Batissier and Ferdinand de Lasteyrie, the year that symbolized medieval chiliastic expectations provided a decisive turning point that had contemporary sources in the Middle Ages, such as the writings of the Benedictine Rodulfus Glaber.³¹ By the middle of the nineteenth century, the use of the 'Transitional style' shifted towards the question of the origins of Gothic, with Arcisse de Caumont giving an axiomatic definition of the term by stating that Transitional monuments are those which belong to the Romanesque but include elements of the ogival style. This certainly did not imply the universal recognition of the 'Transitional style' because, at least in France, the category was largely ignored by architects like Léon Vaudoyer or Viollet-le-Duc.³² Henszlmann cites none of the aforementioned authors in his writings, but he might have encountered this debate during his intermittent stays in Paris between 1852 and 1860.³³ Even though the concept of the 'Transitional style' may have been adapted from Mertens's programmatic *Baugeschichte des Mittelalters* (Architecture of the Middle Ages) or from Schnaase's popular handbook, the French quarrel regarding the nature of the transition between styles might have had an impact on Henszlmann's own musings on Hungarian art historical periodization. Of course, focusing on medieval Hungarian art made any discourse about the origins of a style difficult, because Gothic was already understood as a French style, derived from the pointed arches of the famous Abbot Suger in the Abbey of Saint-Denis, which went on to impact other regions.³⁴

In this context, it is puzzling to notice that the Hungarian scholar was silent on the subject of Cistercian monks and architecture as bearers of early Gothic forms.³⁵ In the nineteenth century, Transitional and early Gothic buildings were sometimes clearly related to the architectural forms implemented by the order of Cîteaux. By the middle

of the century, Cistercian studies became salient in the theoretical quarrels regarding the Romanesque–Gothic divide, especially in Germany where Karl Schnaase, among others, took part in the debate.³⁶ Even in France, despite the lack of interest in this religious order manifested by Charles de Montalambert or Viollet-le-Duc (who thought of Cistercian architecture as a Burgundian product of Romanesque art), the extensive conservation and restoration of monasteries of the White Monks during the nineteenth century proves that their monuments were considered valuable.³⁷ During the second half of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century, the Cistercians were increasingly seen not only as a vehicle of transition from Romanesque to Gothic but also as agents of transfer of the cross-vaulted style into Europe. In one case, an art historian who worked on the Transitional style turned later to the study of Cistercian architecture. Camille Enlart defended his thesis entitled *Monuments religieux de l'architecture romane et de transition dans la région Picarde* in 1889, and five years later published a book about the French origins of Gothic architecture in Italy, presenting Cistercians as ‘missionaries’ of early Gothic forms not only in the Italian Peninsula but also in Scandinavia, Poland and other countries.³⁸ Enlart’s work was published shortly after Henszlmann’s death, so it is impossible for the Hungarian art historian to have known this literature. However, the most plausible reference that Henszlmann might have encountered is in the work of Franz Mertens. In his *Baukunst des Mittelalters* (Architecture of the Middle Ages), Mertens writes, in a chapter devoted to the beginning of Gothic architecture that immediately precedes the pages on Suger, that most types of early Gothic and Transitional monuments belong to the category of Cistercian foundations.³⁹

Without being as popular and numerous as the Benedictines, the order of Cîteaux was fairly widespread in the Hungarian Kingdom and had about 25 monastic establishments during the Middle Ages.⁴⁰ Despite its important presence, and the congruity between Cistercian architecture, the Transitional style and the emergence of Gothic art, Henszlmann was not particularly interested in the order’s monumental heritage. In his 1876 book dedicated to Hungary’s monuments in the Old Christian, Romanesque and Transitional styles, he only included the Cistercian churches in Cikádor and Apátfalva (both in Hungary), and there were even fewer mentions of the Cistercians in his 1880 publication concerning the cross-vaulted style.⁴¹ More interest was shown in the monastery in Egres (Romanian: Igrîș; German: Egresch; in present-day Romania), which he visited together with Flóris Rómer in 1868 and published an article about in 1871.⁴² The church of Egres Monastery was no longer extant and Henszlmann’s interest in the monument was focused on matters of archaeology and measurements. It is true that most of the foundations belonging to the White Monks had either been devastated by the Mongol invasion or refurbished in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, but there was still one that attracted the interest of at least one Hungarian scholar in the second half of the nineteenth century: Kerz Monastery (Hungarian: Kerc; now Cârța in present-day Romania).

Kerz was one of the Cistercian establishments that had suffered the ravages of the years 1241–42 and, soon after the mid-thirteenth century, was rebuilt using early Gothic architectural elements.⁴³ Although partly in ruins, the church had a fairly well-preserved choir and western façade which were included in a descriptive travel account published by Flóris Rómer following his visit to Kerz in 1877.⁴⁴ Beginning with a picturesque narration of his journey, Rómer then relates the history of the

monument and its architectural appearance, accompanied by romantic sketches that depict travellers contemplating the abbey's church and outbuildings.

So it is clear that awareness regarding Kerz Monastery existed and Henszlmann's exclusion of it might have been determined by at least two reasons. First was the need to maintain a coherent theory of Hungarian Gothic art as a phenomenon pertaining to cathedrals and urban centres.⁴⁵ Second were the growing territorial tensions between the Academy of Sciences in Budapest, on whose archaeological committee Henszlmann sat, and the Central Commission for the Research and Protection of Monuments in Vienna. The first programme for the conservation of historical monuments was published by the Hungarian Academy of Sciences in 1847, and was subsequently adopted and developed by the Archaeological Commission of the Academy following its establishment in 1848. The supervision of the Viennese Central Commission came to an end in 1861 and was followed by the founding of a temporary commission for historical monuments in 1872, led by Henszlmann, and a definitive one in 1881.⁴⁶ Austria's imperialist claims triggered reactions from Hungarian scholars which were at odds with the ideals of the Vienna School of art history even after the Compromise of 1867 that established the dual Austro-Hungarian monarchy.⁴⁷ One can, for example, sense the Viennese ideological ideas behind Rudolf Eitelberger von Edelberg's research into medieval art in the Hungarian Kingdom.⁴⁸ His theory of Hungarian dependency on Western Europe and the German lands in the Romanesque period came into conflict with Hungarian views that credited Byzantine and Italian architects for the construction of local monuments.⁴⁹ This art historical discord was fuelled by the Central Commission's policy of appointing a conservator for each of the crown's territories depending on their loyalty to the centre.⁵⁰ But while tensions existed between the Central Commission and Hungarian art historians, it should not be forgotten that the constitutional changes of the 1860 October Diploma actually facilitated an independent organization for the protection of monuments in Hungary, coordinated by the Hungarian Academy of Sciences.⁵¹

Ludwig Reissenberger and His Monograph on Kerz Monastery

Kerz Monastery was situated in the lands of Transylvania, a region that was regarded as a distinct political and administrative territory in the Middle Ages, and one that art historians consequently treated as a separate entity. Its Romanesque monuments were discovered and researched by representatives of the Saxon intelligentsia who also acted as correspondents for the Central Commission.⁵² Not surprisingly, one of the first art historical publications in Transylvania was published by the Saxon scholar Friedrich Müller, whose research on Romanesque-style churches in the region was included in one of the 1859 issues of the Commission's journal.⁵³ It should be noted that the correspondents for the Vienna Commission were more commonly members of the Saxon community who, alongside representatives of the Greek Catholic elite, were responsible for some of the documentation of the monuments in the region. Hungarians, on the other hand, were more likely to orient themselves towards Budapest, especially because the existence of the Institute for the Protection of Monuments was already in place.⁵⁴ However, the underpinnings of the process of naming correspondents by the Commission in Transylvania is not my main interest here; rather, it is mentioned to point out the Saxon community's interest in inventorying and researching medieval

monuments in Transylvania. Already in 1842, Saxons established the Verein für Siebenbürgische Landeskunde (VSL), a regional association intended for the protection and research of German monuments and traditions. Members of this association undertook travels in the region for the purpose of recovering evidence of their historical particularity and uninterrupted German imagined community.⁵⁵ Among them, Ludwig Reissenberger was a multifaceted personality, with interests in such diverse topics as natural sciences, meteorology, numismatics, archaeology and art history.⁵⁶ A member of the Central Commission, Reissenberger undertook the task of inventorying old monuments in Transylvania. His views regarding the bond between the Saxon settlers and the German motherland can be perceived in his 1883 monograph dedicated to the parish church in his home town of Sibiu (in present-day Romania). With the help of Henszlmann, whom Reissenberger knew, he initially published the book in Hungarian, only producing a German version the following year.⁵⁷

However, my main interest for the present research is the monograph on Kerz Monastery that Reissenberger published in 1894 as part of his activity for the VSL.⁵⁸ The monastery's importance, not only architectural but also historical, as a monument of German heritage had been demonstrated two years earlier, when Franz Zimmermann, Carl Werner and Georg Müller published the surviving chronicles of the abbey as part of the *Urkundenbuch zur Geschichte der Deutschen in Siebenbürgen* (Sources for the History of Germans in Transylvania).⁵⁹ Although Reissenberger states that the project of his own monograph arose from a lack of information regarding the monastery, he includes at the start of his book a list of German and Hungarian bibliographical sources that mention Kerz, including Flóris Rómer.⁶⁰ The book is divided into two parts: one dedicated to the history of the monastic ensemble, the other to its architectural and sculptural analysis. The account of the monastery's buildings includes rich historical sources, precise measurements and detailed descriptions of the plans and sculptured features of the ruins, an approach that might have been inherited from Reissenberger's activity in the Central Commission, given Eitelberger von Edelberg's influence in consolidating art history as a discipline focused on the study of sources and his pivotal role in the actions of the Commission.⁶¹ Reissenberger perceived Kerz as a monument that 'marks clearly the end of the transition period and the beginning of early Gothic art', but his chronological threshold is less bound to a precise year.⁶² The construction of the abbey began somewhere between 1222 and 1229 and ended in the first half of the fourteenth century, although the ravages of the Mongol invasion are mentioned in both parts of the book as the moment when the reconstruction of the monument, with its Gothic elements, commenced.⁶³ According to Reissenberger, the Gothic envisioned for the abbey church was a German Gothic and Kerz acted as a central building workshop that spread early Gothic forms in Transylvania. He compares the impact that the White Monks had on the artistic landscape in Transylvania with the activity of the same monastic order in Germany.⁶⁴ Working in collaboration with an architect named Heinrich Eder, he includes plates of a possible reconstruction of the church in which one can notice the intertwining forms of Romanesque round windows, Gothic buttresses and pointed openings. Particular attention is devoted to the western façade with its arched portal, rose windows and monumental gable, emphasizing the now lost stonework of the portal that probably consisted of Gothic finials.⁶⁵ It is interesting to observe that while the finials marking the portal and the roof of the reconstructed monument recall the attention devoted to this type of decorative sculpture by Schnaase, whom Reissenberger cites more than once, other general views of

the monastery and its surroundings continue the tradition of picturesque depictions encountered in Rómer's account of Kerz.

Conclusion

My aim in this chapter has been to underline how the beginnings of the Gothic style were articulated differently in Hungary and in the region of Transylvania, depending on the heritage that the authors wanted to emphasize, even though the historical event that initiated the renewal of Romanesque art through early Gothic forms is considered to be the same, namely the Mongol invasion. Compared to Henszlmann's international reputation, his status as a founding father of Hungarian art history and the wide-ranging impact of his publications, Reissenberger's research had a more muted influence. If Henszlmann's theories were a wellspring of constant inspiration and critique, even during his lifetime, Reissenberger's reception remained at the level of used historical sources and technical information. Despite this difference, the use of Kerz as a monument that marks the transition from Romanesque to Gothic had a long after-life. In his seminal work on the history of medieval art in Romania, Virgil Vătăşianu pointed to Kerz Monastery as the place where Gothic first arrived in Transylvania, and mentioned the year 1242, after the end of the Mongol threat, as the moment when the reconstruction of the monument, with its combination of Romanesque and Gothic elements, commenced.⁶⁶ In an article published in 1963, Géza Entz noted the importance of Cistercian monks as bearers of Gothic forms and included Kerz as an important monument in the development of early Gothic art in the Kingdom of Hungary.⁶⁷ Moreover, the Romanian art historian Vasile Drăguţ's *Arta gotică în România* (Gothic Art in Romania; 1979) opens with the storytelling sentence 'It was the year 1242'; this is followed by an account of the 1241–42 Mongol invasion heavily based on Rogerius's *Carmen miserabile*, a thirteenth-century description of the disaster brought upon the Hungarian Kingdom by the invaders, together with a detailed analysis of Kerz Monastery as a monument that marks the beginning of Gothic art in Transylvania.⁶⁸ In this chapter, I have tried to outline the entanglements between two historiographical traditions that addressed the same specific art historical question: when did Gothic art arrive in medieval Hungary? I have argued that the answers given developed according to different political and cultural agendas, some of them surviving well into the twentieth century, thus demonstrating the dependency of periodization on the ideological frameworks surrounding the artworks and monuments upon which it is projected.

Notes

- * I would like to thank Robert Born, Gáspár Salamon and Shona Kallestrup for their very useful comments and for their support while writing this chapter. All remaining errors are, of course, my own.
- 1 For the theory of entangled history or *histoire croisée*, see Werner and Zimmermann, 'Vergleich, Transfer, Verflechtung'.
- 2 I would like to thank Gáspár Salamon for his insightful comments in this respect.
- 3 For the different perspectives regarding the impact of the Tatar invasion on the Kingdom of Hungary, see Berend, *At the Gate of Christendom*, 23–40.
- 4 In addition to Berend, see Laszlovszky, 'Per tot discrimina rerum'; Rosta and Székely, '*Carmen miserabile*'; Laszlovszky et al., 'Contextualizing the Mongol Invasion'.
- 5 There is an extensive bibliography on Hungarian historiography, which usually includes research on the work of Imre Henszlmann. Many of these works will be mentioned later

- in this chapter, but for the moment, I will only name some of the more recent studies that concentrate solely on the figure of Henszlmann: Szakács, 'Henszlmann'; Becher, 'Imre Henszlmann'; Mentényi, 'Pauer János'. See also the special issue dedicated to Henszlmann in *Ars Hungarica*, no.18 (1990).
- 6 Marosi, 'Das romantische Zeitalter', 49–51. For Rudolf Eitelberger von Edlberg, see Rampley, 'The Idea of a Scientific Discipline'; Kernbauer et al., *Rudolf Eitelberger*.
 - 7 Henszlmann, *Kassa*. See also Marosi, 'Das romantische Zeitalter', 46; Béla Zsolt Szakács, 'The Italian Connection'. On the evolution of stylistic terminology, see Karge, 'Zwischen Naturwissenschaft und Kulturgeschichte'.
 - 8 Marosi, 'Das romantische Zeitalter', 46.
 - 9 *Ibid.*, 58. For the connection between Henszlmann and Viollet-le-Duc, see also Marosi, 'Two Centuries of Research', 30; Stirton, 'The Vienna School', 2–3.
 - 10 Shaffer, 'Restoring Charlemagne's Chapel'; Cortjaens, 'Der Berliner Bauforscher'.
 - 11 Karge, 'Franz Kugler und Karl Schnaase', 99.
 - 12 Shaffer, 'Restoring Charlemagne's Chapel'. For a discussion of Henszlmann's view on the restoration of monuments, see Becher, 'Imre Henszlmann'; Marosi, 'Restoration', esp. 170–73; Marosi, 'Two Centuries of Research', 31. For the importance of Friedrich Schmidt in Central Europe, see Sisa, 'Neo-Gothic Architecture'; Hajós, 'Der Weg der Wiener Schule'. For Matthias Church in Budapest, see Módy, 'Schulek Frigyes'.
 - 13 Nemeš, 'Príspevok k založeniu'.
 - 14 Henszlmann, 'A kis-bényi'.
 - 15 Mertens, *Die Baukunst*; Henszlmann, 'A kis-bényi', 5–7. For a discussion of the parallel between the two, see Marosi, 'Das romantische Zeitalter', 58–59; Marosi, 'Restoration', 167–70; Marosi, 'Two Centuries of Research', 31. The following section owes much to the discussion in Marosi, 'Das romantische Zeitalter', which I found to be the most useful source for the purpose of this study.
 - 16 It should be noted that Viollet-le-Duc also considered Cluny, the famous Benedictine monastery, to be the art centre that helped spread Romanesque art in France, while the Gothic style emerged through the efforts of laymen and the activity of building city cathedrals: see Méhu and Baridon, 'Viollet-le-Duc'.
 - 17 Henszlmann, *Magyarország ó-keresztény román és átmenet stíliú and Magyarország csúcs-íves stíliú műemlékei*. For the relationship between Henszlmann's periodization use and Mertens's model, see Marosi, 'Das romantische Zeitalter', 58–59.
 - 18 See Sisa, 'Neo-Gothic', 181–83; Marosi, 'Das romantische Zeitalter', 47, 68. See also Marosi, *Die Ungarische Kunstgeschichte*, partly translated by Matthew Rampley as Ernő Marosi, 'The Origins of Art History in Hungary', *Journal of Art Historiography*, no. 8 (2013): <https://arthistoriography.files.wordpress.com/2013/06/marosi.pdf>.
 - 19 Henszlmann, *Magyarország ó-keresztény román és átmenet stíliú*, 15–22; Henszlmann, *Magyarország csúcs-íves stíliú műemlékei*, 1–4.
 - 20 Henszlmann, *Magyarország ó-keresztény román és átmenet stíliú*, 4; Marosi, 'Das romantische Zeitalter', 58–59.
 - 21 'kik magukkal hozzák városi és szeszeti szokásaikat, ellentében az azelőtt kevésse kifejlett városi élet és inkább román szeszeti életmodorra': Henszlmann, *Magyarország ó-keresztény román és átmenet stíliú*, 4; Marosi, 'Das romantische Zeitalter', 59.
 - 22 Karge, 'Stilgeschichte'. See also Karge, 'Vom Konzert der Künste'; Karge, 'Stil und Epoche'.
 - 23 Henszlmann and Rómer, *Műrégészeti Kalauz*. For Flóris Rómer, see the special issue dedicated to him in *Arrabona*, no. 51 (2013) and Kerny, *Archaeologia és műtörténet*.
 - 24 'Tartott pedig a román építészetnek kora nálunk, általánosan a tatárjárásig, sőt egyes esetben még az azt követő néhány évtizeden át is': Henszlmann and Rómer, *Műrégészeti Kalauz*, vol. II, 7.
 - 25 Trachtenberg, 'Desedimenting time'.
 - 26 Sauerländer, 'Style or Transition?' 3. For the transitional style and its variants 'alternative Gothic' and the '1200 style', see Sauerländer, 'Entre le roman et le gothique'.
 - 27 Sauerländer, 'Style or Transition?' 4–5.
 - 28 Sankovitch, 'Structure/Ornament', 693–94.
 - 29 *Ibid.*, 694.
 - 30 Nayrolles, *L'invention de l'art roman*, 265–66.
 - 31 *Ibid.*, 266–67.

- 32 Ibid., 267–69.
- 33 For Henszlmann's stay in France, see Marosi, 'Das romantische Zeitalter', 55–58; Komárik, 'Henszlmann'.
- 34 A subsection in one of Mertens's chapters is suggestively entitled 'Abbot Suger is the inventor of Gothic architecture': see Mertens, *Die Baukunst*, 101–2.
- 35 Sternberg, *Cistercian Architecture*, esp. 49–75.
- 36 Fergusson, 'Cistercian Architecture', 582–83.
- 37 Sternberg, *Cistercian Architecture*, 28. For Viollet-le-Duc's attitude towards Cistercian architecture, see Coomans, 'Cistercian Architecture', 151–52.
- 38 Enlart, *Origines françaises*. His thesis was published the following year: Enlart, *Monuments religieux*.
- 39 'Dies kommt von einigen Kirchen des frühgothischen oder einer Art Uebergangsstyls, mesit des Cisterzienser-Ordens, und in den zwanziger und dreißiger Jahren des 12ten Jahrhunderts gestiftet': Mertens, *Baukunst*, 99.
- 40 Romhányi, 'The Role of the Cistercians'. For an overview of the state of research on medieval Cistercian architecture in Hungary up to 2005, see Szakács, 'The Research on Romanesque Architecture', 34.
- 41 Henszlmann, *Magyarország ó-keresztény román és átmenet stílű*, 125–27; Henszlmann, *Magyarország csúcs-íves stílű műemlékei*, 168–69 and 173–75.
- 42 Henszlmann, 'Archaeológiai kirándulás Egresre'.
- 43 For Cârța, see Tătaru, 'Kerz'; Thalgott, *Die Zisterzienser*; Machat, 'Zur Baugeschichte'.
- 44 Rómer, 'Kirándulás'.
- 45 For a discussion of Henszlmann's view on the importance of cathedrals and urbanization for Gothic art, see Széles, 'Henszlmann', 51.
- 46 Marosi, 'Restoration', 161–63. The most important source for the topic is Bardoly and Haris, *A magyar műemlékvédelem*.
- 47 Stirton, 'The Vienna School'.
- 48 Eitelberger von Edelberg, 'Bericht'. See especially Olin, 'The Cult of Monuments'.
- 49 Rampley, 'The Idea of a Scientific Discipline', 63–64; Szakács, 'The Italian Connection', 72.
- 50 Rampley, 'The Idea', 65–67.
- 51 Sisa, 'From the Central Commission'.
- 52 Born, 'Die Kunsthistoriographie'; Szakács, 'County to Country', 59–60.
- 53 Szakács, 'County to Country', 60; Müller, 'Die kirchliche Baukunst'.
- 54 I would like to thank Robert Born for pointing out this aspect to me. See Born, 'Die Wiener Schule'.
- 55 For the multiple intellectual devices through which Transylvania was explored and researched, see Török, *Exploring Transylvania*; see also Born, 'Die Kunsthistoriographie', 352–53.
- 56 Reissenberger, 'Reissenberger, Ludwig'. See also Robert Born's and Cosmin Minea's contributions to the present volume.
- 57 Reissenberger, *A Nagyszébeni*; Reissenberger, *Die evangelische Pfarrkirche*. I want to thank Timo Hagen for drawing my attention to this text and to the relationship between Reissenberger and Henszlmann, as well as for sharing with me his as yet unpublished paper 'Gothic Revival im Land jenseits der Wälder: Politische-Dimensionen siebenbürgisch-sächsischer Architekturgeschichtsschreibung und Baupraxis des 19. Jahrhunderts im überregionalen Kontext', presented at the conference *Nationalismus als Ressource? Konsensbildung in der europäischen Nach- und Neogotik des 19. Jahrhunderts*, Institut für Kunstgeschichte der Universität Bern, 2016. Reissenberger also wrote a study of the monastery in Curtea de Argeș, in Wallachia: see Minea, 'The Monastery of Curtea de Argeș'.
- 58 Reissenberger, *Die Kerzer Abtei*. See also Gross, 'Zisterzienser Forschung', 235.
- 59 Gross, 'Zisterzienser Forschung', 235.
- 60 Reissenberger, *Die Kerzer Abtei*, 6.
- 61 Rampley, 'The Idea', 67.
- 62 'hauptsächlich der Uebergang aus dem Romanismus in die Gothik stattgefunden hat': see Reissenberger, *Die Kerzer Abtei*, 58.
- 63 Ibid., 36–38, 58.
- 64 Reissenberger mentions the impact of the workshop from Kerz on the parish church in Hălmeag and St Bartholomew's Church in Brașov: see Reissenberger, *Die Kerzer Abtei*, 40.

- 65 The façade has undergone two restoration efforts: one between 1913 and 1914, and the other between 1965 and 1967: see Gross, ‘Zisterzienser Forschung’, 239.
- 66 It is clear from Vătăşianu’s footnotes that Reissenberger’s book on Cârța is the only biographical source that he knew or at least used: see Vătăşianu, *Istoria artelor feudale*, 98–107.
- 67 Entz, ‘Le chantier cistercien’.
- 68 Drăguț, *Arta gotică*, 10–17.

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14 Modernism versus Modernism

Socialist Realism and Its Discontents in Romania

Irina Cărăbaș

Introduction

This chapter looks at ways in which periodization ‘before’ and ‘after’ 23 August 1944 was instrumentalized in writing art history in Romania in the 1950s and 1960s and suggests that the meaning of this temporal border – celebrated for nearly half a century as a national day – underwent various changes throughout the first two decades of the Communist regime. These changes further influenced the complex relationship between modernism and Socialist Realism, which, although having much in common in terms of both temporality and stylistic language, defined themselves by denying the other.

During the period when Communist regimes in Central and Eastern Europe were consolidating their authority under Soviet supervision and support, advocating a radical shift away from the former regime(s) constituted an important element of their legitimizing discourse. The selection of a precise date on which to mark and celebrate this historical rupture had to take into account both the end of the war and the new geopolitical position of the states. In Romania, the chosen day was 23 August 1944, when King Michael switched the country’s allegiance from the Axis to the Allies and overthrew the military dictatorship led by Marshal Antonescu which had collaborated with Nazi Germany. After the King’s abdication in December 1947 and the proclamation of the People’s Republic of Romania, the day was invested with new meaning as marking the country’s ‘liberation by the Soviet army’. Throughout the Communist period, it was to be celebrated as a national day, but its overtones changed and it was gradually elided with other temporal landmarks connected either to more general changes in the political discourse or to events and publications internal to different fields. ‘Before’ and ‘after’ 23 August 1944 became a mandatory formula in both political and historical discourse and a criterion for periodization in most fields. Art also had to meet this criterion which, beyond temporal divisions, provided a tool for artistic and moral judgement. Most importantly, it paved the way for stylistic delineations between pre-war modernism, associated with the earlier bourgeois and capitalist political and social order, and Socialist Realism, which was gradually installed as the art of the new Communist era.

Yet claiming a total rupture was a difficult task for the Communist regime’s changing politics over the longer term; this was also an issue for the art historiography addressed in this chapter. The era of Socialist Realism and its aftermath entailed an intricate play of detachment from and attachment to events, narratives and figures from the past, be they distant or very recent.¹ Depending on this back-and-forth

movement that continually altered the notions of past and present, of rupture and continuity, historical periodization was constantly reassessed in many fields, affecting discourses, themes and methods of practice until the present day.

Whilst the beginnings of Socialist Realism in Romania and the other countries of the Bloc are not difficult to identify, in spite of their geographical and temporal differences, its endings were rather unspecific. They have often been associated with the liberalization of cultural politics in the 1960s, which allowed certain links to Western art that had been banned during Socialist Realist times. Romania had to wait until 1965 for a cultural *détente*, but signs of more minor changes could already be perceived in 1956. During the Thaw, modernist elements and genres were gradually reinserted into artistic practice, fostering the invention of a modernist tradition in the sense proposed by Eric Hobsbawm.² The artistic practice of the 1960s that tacitly left Socialist Realism behind was strongly intertwined with the recovery of pre-Second World War modernism and its reactivation of its nationalist strands. Again, the relationship between Socialist Realism and modernism was being re-evaluated, this time in favour of the latter. As this chapter seeks to show through discussion of various art historical accounts of the 1950s and 1960s, the time spans allotted to both Socialist Realism and modernism were far from being clear-cut, while the subsequent reassessments of the distinctions between them depended on political and cultural context.

Socialist Realism as a Stumbling Block in the Periodization of Art

After the fall of Communism, efforts were made to align art history from the former Eastern Bloc to new values imported from the West.³ Boris Groys argued that from the post-Communist standpoint, the Communist period as a whole was considered an interruption which needed to be overcome in order to make room for the recovery of what had allegedly been lost.⁴ Within this framework, the unwanted heritage of Communism nonetheless had degrees of acceptability.

The 1950s were generally seen as the height of totalitarianism in Central and Eastern European states, associated with Stalinist repression and historical trauma. In a similar vein, Socialist Realism embodied totalitarian structures in art and so could only be condemned as lesser art and, therefore, cut out of history. On the one hand, this view has been buttressed by the problematic relationship between totalitarianism and modernity. As Michael David-Fox has noted in relation to the Soviet case, historians have extensively debated the existence of modernity in Communist society and politics, their opinions ranging from denial to belief in an exceptional form of Soviet modernity.⁵ But most of these theoretical positions start from a position that equates modernity with Westernization, a concept that has established differences and hierarchies between Western and Eastern Europe ever since the nineteenth century. On the other hand, the anti-communism that came to dominate the cultural field in many areas of Eastern Europe after 1989 contributed to the condemnation of communism as non-modern. As Ovidiu Țichindeleanu argues, it 'tried to radically change epistemic references, by reducing the past to a homogenous totality identified as a bad deviation from the "normal" course of history'.⁶ Such attitudes have profoundly marked post-Communist historiography, becoming a screen that has obstructed certain continuities between the pre- and post-war periods and ultimately negated the significance of local history.

However, the demise of Socialist Realism has earlier origins, during the cultural *détente*, when it fell into disrepute and then into oblivion. This was a state-controlled

oblivion which provided artists with the feeling of enjoying a certain degree of freedom while, at the same time, it exonerated the Communist regime of any responsibility for its prior Stalinist politics. Thus, it was not only the collapse of Communism, followed by its vehement rejection, but also previous ways of conceiving local art that led to Socialist Realism being erased from Romanian art history.⁷ Furthermore, many artists' post-war careers also fell into oblivion or were intentionally pushed into the shadows. This issue will be addressed in the final section of this chapter which discusses some examples of how artists' biographies were rewritten as Socialist Realism fell out of favour in the 1960s. These monographs reflected a general move towards loosening the critique of interwar modernism and the avant-garde, while reassessing the hierarchies of historical periodization, albeit still without renouncing the boundary between 'before' and 'after' 23 August 1944.

Dividing the twentieth century into two time spans is by no means peculiar to historiographies written during the Communist era. 'Before' and 'after' the Second World War constitute ways of classifying, analysing and, sometimes, assessing the value of the art of the last century, common to both Eastern and Western historiographies. In Romania, as in the entire Eastern Bloc, the split between these two periods was reinforced by the nearly contiguous end of the war and establishment of Communist rule. This seems to have determined not only an almost perfect temporal separation of the two halves of the century but also the radical antagonism between them. In spite of political changes, it still continues to drive many historical approaches even today. Although the two halves of the twentieth century have been valued differently depending on the period and the political regime, standard periodization has not been overturned. On the contrary, the Second World War has proved to be a remarkably long-lasting baseline for art historiography in Romania and elsewhere.

Although Socialist Realism has acquired a certain level of international visibility since the fall of Communism, it is a long way from being connected or integrated into the Western canon.⁸ More recently, Socialist Realism has been included within the much broader category of 'post-war art', not in a chronological sense but as a critical category.⁹ This kind of inclusive approach has started slightly to erode the temporal (and geographical) isolation of Socialist Realism and to make visible the different layers and politics of its reception. Unlike the 1990s and early 2000s, which tended to confine official art produced during socialist times to remotely located buildings or open-air sculpture museums, the last decade has seen a series of substantial exhibitions organized by both national and regional museums across the former Bloc. By displaying works that had previously been left forgotten in museum storage rooms, most of the exhibitions have aimed to retrieve national or local histories of Socialist Realism.¹⁰ A more radical attempt to change prejudices against Socialist Realism was the exhibition *Cold Revolution* recently held at the Zachęta Gallery in Warsaw.¹¹ Not only did the exhibition gather, for the first time, works produced across the Bloc during the 1950s, but it also sought to create a space for multiple interactions between images in a variety of media (painting, sculpture, graphic arts, design, architecture, photography and film). These polylogues built up a picture of a vast and complex visual culture that, in spite of national or local differences, gave a significant account of the real changes which had taken place within Eastern European societies at the time. Furthermore, the exhibition provided a very convincing way of addressing transnational art history in the region.

Periodizing Socialist Realism in the 1950s: Commemorative Publications, Exhibitions and Art History Surveys

Even if 23 August 1944 was assigned national meaning in Romania as part of the process of legitimizing the new Communist rule, it was also something shared with the other countries dominated by Soviet power after the Second World War. Alongside the defeat of the fascist dictatorship, which had local relevance, the day celebrated Romania's liberation by the Soviet army. In every country of the new Eastern Bloc until the mid-1950s, there were similar celebrations, which took a variety of visual forms.¹² Many monuments to the Soviet soldier rose throughout the Bloc, and the liberation became a key theme of Socialist Realist art, expressed through various iconographical formulas. After the foundation of the People's Republic of Romania in 1947, the significance of 23 August 1944 as an absolute turning point in history was foregrounded even further by equating it with the rise to power of the Communist regime, thus completely obliterating King Michael's contribution to the post-war state. It came to be the most important date in the Communist 'red calendar' and therefore deliberately associated with places, times and images that enabled and mobilized popular celebration.¹³

Even before this point, the Romanian Communist Party was preoccupied with reassessing national history in order both to provide a Marxist reading and to give legitimacy to the new era. Mihail Roller (1908–1958), a front-line party member who held many positions in various history institutions and authored a history textbook used throughout the 1950s, published a series of articles in which he engaged in a fierce critique not only of bourgeois history in general but also of its instruments, including periodization.¹⁴ Hence, establishing 23 August 1944 as the starting point of the new Communist history had a double impact on history: on the one hand, it already contained seeds of the future, while, on the other hand, it changed concepts and temporalities of the past. Re-periodizing general history led to transformations within the discourse of art history, which came under official control from 1948. The main transformation that altered temporality in art and art history implied a perfect division between modernism, associated with the past, and Socialist Realism, which was conceived as a process oriented towards the future. Many artists were forced to see their own pre-Second World War work as a thing of the past. What was considered contemporary was quickly historicized and moulded into a critical narrative that equally affected the art system and individual careers. Modernism and the avant-garde were rejected as 'formalist', a loose term that could refer to certain representational formulas, to the political disengagement of artists or to the elitist addressability of works. Furthermore, the relationship of Socialist Realism to formalism embraced a kind of temporal irresolution because not only did formalism (and thus modernism) precede the new art of the Communist era, but it also permeated the present. It was an intruder, a symptom of the past which had to be constantly monitored and fought, even in the work of artists who allegedly declared their commitment to Socialist Realism. As early as 1948, on the eve of the exhibition by the group *Flacăra* (The Flame) in Bucharest, later considered a turning point in the process of imposing Socialist Realism on Romanian art, the painter Max Herman Maxy (1895–1971) stated:

This exhibition is circumnavigated by a series of problems which should be clarified. Thus we must clarify the meaning of the realism towards which we aim. To

get there it is sure that our artists should throw overboard the jetsam of formalist skills (Cubism, Impressionism etc.). . . . Realism is not a formula but a way of getting closer to the new aspects of life.¹⁵

As in the other countries of the Bloc, Socialist Realism in Romania was far from being stylistically uniform and relied on art institutions established on the Soviet model that centralized and controlled artistic sociability and art production.¹⁶ Institutions such as the Artists' Union, the Institutes of Fine Art and the Art Museum of the People's Republic of Romania provided directions and models, assessments and exhibition practices, rituals and discourses that lent life to Socialist Realism while also defining the professional status of the artist. Working for the state, artists could not exist outside institutions and therefore had to comply with at least some of the practices of Socialist Realism.

As part of these rituals, throughout the 1950s, artists participated either directly or indirectly in official commemorations designed to consolidate the new periodization of history and, additionally, the new origin of art. In 1954, a commemorative album was issued under the title *Arta plastică în Republica Populară Română 1944–1954* (Fine Art in the People's Republic of Romania 1944–1954). Luxuriously produced, it contained an introduction by the well-known communist historian Petre Constantinescu-Iași, in Romanian with Russian, French and German translations, and a selection of artworks that had been previously validated as part of the local Socialist Realist canon.¹⁷ From the very beginning, the introduction stated the commemorative aim of the publication: 'In 1954, the Romanian people celebrate 10 years since liberation from the fascist dictatorship with the brotherly help of the great Soviet Union'.¹⁸ At the same time, 23 August 1944 marked the inception of a 'battle for a new art' that still continues today. The first issues of the Artists' Union's newly founded official art magazine *Arta plastică* (Fine Art; 1954) celebrated 1944 as the beginning of Socialist Realism, without any acknowledgement of either the socially engaged art of the interwar years or the transition period in the aftermath of the Second World War.¹⁹ The artworks used to illustrate Socialist Realism in both of the aforementioned publications dated, with a few exceptions, from the 1950s, but the commemorative discourse inserted them into a longer and allegedly continuous history. More significant changes took place a few years later when Socialist Realism gradually abandoned the academic visual language imposed at the beginning of the decade, based on illusionist drawing and perspective, and began to accept representational formulas of modernist origin (especially Impressionist and Post-Impressionist). This also impacted future celebrations. In 1957, the tenth anniversary of the foundation of the People's Republic of Romania (30 December 1947) was commemorated with ostensibly no other goal than that of celebrating the Communist regime, but there were signals that cultural politics were beginning to change direction. The exhibition *10 ani de creație plastică: 1947–1957* (10 Years of Fine Art: 1947–1957) allowed more space for interwar artists and displayed their work together with that of younger artists. Thus modernity and contemporaneity were conceived as a single flow uninterrupted by clear-cut borders.²⁰ 'Modernizing' Socialist Realism, which started at this point, also allowed greater acceptance of interwar artists.

The periodizations that were presented on the occasion of different commemorations paralleled and complemented broader efforts to reshape art history in museums and scholarly surveys. In 1950, the National Gallery opened in the recently established Museum of Art of the People's Republic of Romania, located in the former royal palace

in Bucharest. It was the most suitable site to reconfigure art history and to present art according to the new periodization. Although there was a preference for certain works or genres more easily assimilated to realism, such as portraits, the curatorial organization and canon of artists were not strikingly different from the way modern art history in Romania had previously been conceived. Surveys from the interwar period, which varied in extensiveness, had displayed almost the same artists and hierarchies, tracing a chronology from Theodor Aman (1831–1891) and Nicolae Grigorescu (1838–1907) to Gheorghe Petrașcu (1872–1949) and Camil Ressu (1880–1962).²¹ The gallery's catalogue struck a careful balance between rejection and recognition of the past, an approach that overshadowed the foundational event of 23 August 1944. By claiming a break with the past, Socialist Realism took up the modern idea of progress, while at the same time attempting to assert its roots – and consequently acquire legitimacy – within the local milieu. Hence, it always contained an unresolved tension between a future that was never fulfilled and a past that pulled it back to conservative positions. The introduction to the National Gallery catalogue argued:

The evolution of Romanian painting after 23 August 1944 established a clear-cut position against the ideological confusion that dominated the interwar period and a closer connection to the art of great and progressive masters of the past whose models were adapted to the new requirements of our present era, in order to be carried further; finally, it meant a more active participation in life by artists who had set out on the path towards Socialist Realism.²²

This kind of discourse gained new momentum by the end of the decade when there were attempts to redefine and indigenize Socialist Realism. A survey book published by the Institute of Art History in Bucharest in 1959 entitled *Artele plastice în România după 23 August 1944* (Fine Art in Romania after 23 August 1944) stated that 'the fight for affirmation of the new ideas about culture and art' found 'a precious ally in the most valuable traditions of past culture and art'.²³ More precisely, it was claimed, the new art of Socialist Realism had led to an unveiling of the 'true' tradition, previously obscured by the individualism and cosmopolitanism of bourgeois conceptions. Not only was leftist art from the interwar period being recovered, but also modernist artists such as Nicolae Grigorescu, Ion Andreescu (1850–1882) and Ștefan Luchian (1868–1916) were granted a position in the local genealogy of progressive and realist art. Furthermore, when discussing Socialist Realism, the Soviet contribution was only briefly mentioned, leaving more space to praise the local Romanian Communist Party which was presented as the most important agent of change. In the same vein, Socialist Realism was recast in the light of national specificity, borrowing several features previously considered as identity markers of the modern 'Romanian School'. These included a close attention to colour in painting and a strong feeling for nature:

There is no true Socialist Realist artwork that does not bear the mark of national character, that does not grasp and fix the vibration and colouring that under the new historical conditions is specific to our people's sense of life, humanity, work, and beauty.²⁴

Thus, different topics of pre-war art history resurfaced and gradually refocused the discourse on national specificity and formalist approaches to art. These kinds of

recurring topics helped to expand the practice and discourse of Socialist Realism, keeping it alive for longer and making it more acceptable to artists still attached to modernism.

Artele plastice în România după 23 August 1944 was itself a commemorative book published on the occasion of the fifteenth anniversary of liberation. Although its introduction opened with standard propaganda messages concerning the historical importance of the date, it continued by proposing another periodization for art under Communist rule. The year 1948 was claimed as a turning point in the history of art, thanks to exhibitions such as *Flacăra* and the reform of art education that centralized and rechannelled art towards Socialist Realism.²⁵ In Hungary, a similar exhibition – *Közösségi művészet felé* (Towards Communal Art) – was held in the same year as the first public materialization of Socialist Realism. The closure of exhibitions was also taken as a sign of how the new regimes were seizing control in the field of art. While in Bucharest the 1948 Salon was prepared but never opened,²⁶ *Wystawa sztuki nowoczesnej* (The First Exhibition of Modern Art) in Kraków remained open to the public until it was closed at short notice by the authorities in 1949.²⁷ The years 1948 and, in the case of the German Democratic Republic, 1949 saw the rise to full power of Communist parties across the Bloc, which led to a series of abrupt changes. The earlier post-war period was now considered a transitional stage. The importance of 1948 as a temporal landmark of Socialist Realism would be restated by post-Communist historiography, on a local level as well as on a regional one.²⁸

By the end of the 1950s, when *Artele plastice în România după 23 August 1944* was published, the dominance of the historical rupture of that date in official discourse was starting to dissipate, as different rehabilitations of the past began to emerge. Although bearing the foundational date of the new era in its title, the book also marked its end (or one of its ends). Throughout the 1950s, the date of 23 August 1944 continued to function as a temporal landmark in the periodization of art, but at the same time it was constantly adjusted and redefined by the addition of other references.

Downplaying Socialist Realism in Artists' Biographies in the 1960s

Throughout the 1960s, concepts and terminology related to modernism were reintroduced into art discourse.²⁹ Initially they functioned as an indirect critique of Socialist Realism, which was never officially overturned in Romania. While more and more artworks containing elements of modernist origin were permitted in official exhibitions, realism was still required. As Susan E. Reid and Krista Kodres have discussed in relation to the USSR, passionate confrontations took place between proponents of a more inclusive realism and those supporting academic Socialist Realism.³⁰ Thus, the end of Socialist Realism was rather diffuse and entailed a process that, while officially controlled, involved a plurality of events, publications and actors. By the 1960s, art history in Romania seemed to have renounced the task of writing survey works on contemporary art, focusing instead on artists' monographs in order to establish a modern tradition as well as reassess artistic careers in the light of various retrievals of modernism. These monographs generally followed the new periodization of art that created a direct link between the interwar and contemporary periods by minimizing Socialist Realism. For those artists who had a modernist background, but then reinvented themselves as Socialist Realist artists before re-embracing modernism during the Thaw, 23 August 1944 both enabled and overshadowed their careers, as well as

the ways in which they have been understood to the present day. Artists with similar twisting trajectories that encompassed apparently opposing elements or periods could be found everywhere across the Bloc and have yet to be afforded recognition.³¹ The persistent image of Socialist Realism as a uniform and constrictive period has long circumvented inquiry into artists' individual undertakings and the representational devices that differentiated their works. With the new periodization of art that emerged during the Thaw and was reinforced in the post-Communist period, individual 'portraits' of artists from the 1950s are extremely difficult to retrace and, in particular, to disentangle from certain moral labels applied by post-1989 scholars – either of collaborators or of bypassers of official Communist requirements.

During the period of modernist recollection that took place during the Thaw, solo exhibitions and retrospectives played an important role, alongside monographs, in reconfiguring artists' biographies. These exhibitions started to be organized in the mid-1950s, which retrospectively can be read as a signal that the time of large group exhibitions was over. The first beneficiaries of this new direction were the interwar 'masters' whose prestige never fully disappeared during Socialist Realism.

The majority of artists active in the first decade after the Second World War – that is those who helped in the establishment of Socialist Realist institutions and produced some of its canonical works – had been trained during the interwar period or even before. Their artistic orientation had various origins: Impressionism, Post-Impressionism, New Classicism or the avant-garde. While there was ostensibly a place for everyone within the centralized system of Socialist Realism (the Artists' Union was specially designed on the Soviet model to gather all artists irrespective of their formal approach), hierarchies inevitably emerged, with some artists pushed to the margins and others given top positions in art institutions. The system in fact functioned according to the simultaneous expurgation and preservation of individuals and practices. Similarly, the call for a new form of art coexisted with unchanged practices and people who, more or less publicly, provided an appearance of continuity and even security. There was a need for notable artists who could lend legitimacy to the new system, or be held up as examples of personal transformation. In order to show how Socialist Realism absorbed various representational formulas, and explore how individual careers coped with its double temporal reference, I will turn now to the case studies of two artists: Max Herman Maxy and Camil Ressu. The labels under which they are known today – respectively avant-garde artist and promoter of national specificity – have roots in the way their image was reconfigured during the Thaw.

In the early stages of the Communist regime, the conversion from avant-garde or modernism to Socialist Realism was the only way for the new regime to set up a politically engaged art system that responded to its ideological needs. At first glance, it was not a difficult task for Maxy to emerge as a prominent figure through the process of centralization of the art system. As a young man in the 1920s, he had travelled to Berlin and mixed with Constructivist and Expressionist circles, meeting artists who were advocating a socially engaged art. Back in Bucharest, he was very active in various avant-garde groups and founded his own Constructivist journal, *Integral*. During the 1930s, he took up subject matter related to social issues. Poor families, workers and street musicians populated his paintings, still preserving certain Cubist modes of depiction. His interest in representing poverty developed as he grew closer to the underground Communist Party. After the war, his political opinions helped him win important positions in state institutions: he became secretary then president

of the Syndicate of Fine Arts (1944–50), professor at the Art Institute (the former School of Fine Arts in Bucharest) from 1949 to 1950, director of Fondul Plastic (the Arts Foundation, an organization that oversaw the finances and certain production aspects of the Artists' Union) in 1950, co-editor of the magazine *Arta plastică*, member of numerous exhibition juries, and finally director of the National Museum of Art (1950–71). From the outset, Maxy seemed to understand the importance of institutional participation and navigated from one institution to another, until he settled at the newly founded museum.

However, in terms of artistic practice, becoming a Socialist Realist artist was rather problematic for Maxy. The large-scale paintings filled with active characters that were required by academic Socialist Realism were a challenge for artists like him who had no experience in the matter. Regardless, he started, from 1949 onwards, to make paintings of working factory teams (*In the Factory*, 1949; *The New Oil Well in Moreni*, 1952) or socialist heroes (*The Heroine Mother Aspra Marin Petrache Celebrated by Her Children*, 1955). Of a different nature, but with an equally high propaganda value, was his representation of the liberation by the Soviet army (1949; Fig. 14.1). Maxy also experimented with industrial landscape, a genre considered to have a lower ideological value. His Socialist Realist corpus of work was rather small and, within the given constraints, very eclectic, both in manner and theme. Although they retained echoes of his interwar paintings, these works were presented as entirely



Figure 14.1 M. H. Maxy, *Liberation*, 1949, oil on canvas, 155.5 × 204.5 cm.

Credit: National Museum of Art of Romania, Bucharest.

new, resulting from a process of purification of so-called formalist features – in his case Cubist or avant-garde modes of depiction.

In 1965, during the Thaw, Maxy supervised a retrospective of his own work that aimed to re-establish his prestige as an avant-garde artist. His pre-war avant-garde output was given extensive space in the exhibition, which was one of the first shows to display artworks of this kind since the Communists had come to power. Maxy's intention was clearly to raise the profile of a career rooted in the avant-garde, while at the same time following certain paths of continuity.³² Of some 86 artworks listed in the catalogue, a mere 26 had been produced in the preceding 20 years. Only a few realist landscapes and portraits, most of them related to the oil extraction industry, and a large composition featuring a procession of sportsmen and workers with socialist buildings in the background suggested a relationship to Communist propaganda.³³ The apparent direction followed by Maxy after the Second World War was little different from that of other avant-garde artists who reworked their ideas and themes in later periods of their career. The chronological thread of the exhibition terminated with several paintings of nudes and flowers from 1963–65: these represented an attempt to recover painterly genres and, more particularly, representational strategies from the final years of the 1930s. In performing the past, Maxy managed to re-identify himself with a certain type of image and stitch together the disparate parts of his career.

While Maxy had to curtail his career in order to reinvent himself as a Socialist Realist artist, other artists coped with the transition more easily, due to their different background and former prestige. Camil Ressu – my second case study – belonged to an older generation and had a classical art education in Romania, Munich and Paris. During the interwar period, his inclination towards the New Classicism came together with subjects from rural life, establishing a formula that was to propel Ressu to the fore of the so-called traditional front. His prestige grew even further after being appointed professor and, later, director of the School of Fine Arts in Bucharest. His very early connections with socialist circles and publications must have been the primary impulse to co-opt him into the work of creating a new artistic system. In 1944, he became president of the Syndicate of Fine Arts (1944–47), an organization that was to play the most important role in the centralization of art under state supervision. When the Syndicate subsequently became the Artists' Union, Ressu's election as its honorary president perfectly captured his position within the system: his immense prestige, recognized both by established artists and by the students he continued to teach at the new Art Institute, was appropriated by the regime as a legitimizing asset. Unlike the pre-1944 period, Ressu did not produce many works and did not change his modes of representation. This was due firstly to the fact that the requirements for interwar masters were more lenient in exchange for their support, and secondly because his solid compositions were easier to assimilate into the general norms of Socialist Realism. One of his post-war works, *Signing the Appeal for Peace* (1952) was to be endlessly reproduced as a standard work of the new art. It was often paired with a 1926 painting representing a group of peasants (*Mowers in Repose*) as confirmation of the Socialist Realist claim to have local roots (Fig. 14.2).

Ressu's 1955 retrospective was one of the first solo exhibitions organized after the introduction of Socialist Realism. The unsigned text on the exhibition leaflet presented him as a 'realist master' before 23 August 1944 and a 'combative comrade of our artists on the path to Socialist Realism' afterwards.³⁴ While at the moment of his retrospective he was still seen through the periodization lens of Socialist Realism,

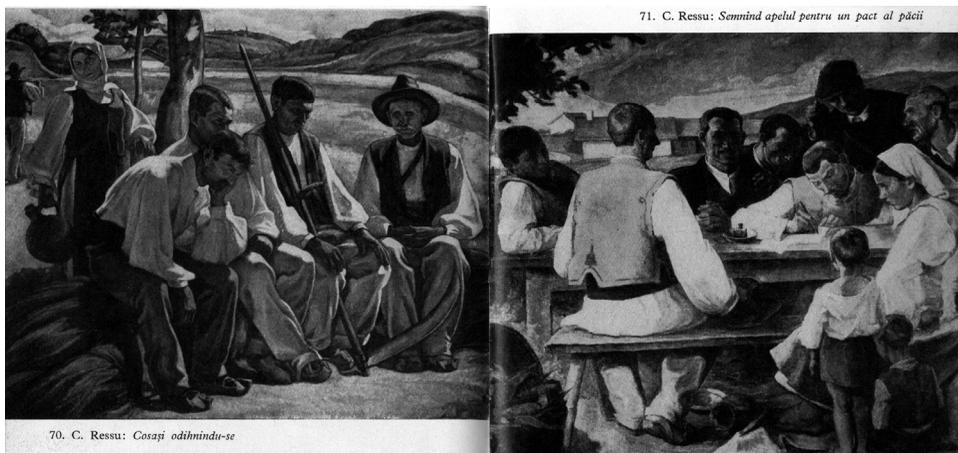


Figure 14.2 Reproductions of Camil Ressu's works in *Galeria Națională: arta românească modernă și contemporană: ghid* (The National Gallery Guide: Modern and Contemporary Romanian Art), Bucharest: Meridiane, 1965.

Theodor Enescu's 1958 monograph on him dedicated only half a page to his post-war career.³⁵ A new monograph by Gheorge Cosma in 1967 combined a chronological narrative with a classification of genres in Ressu's painting and did not mention either 23 August or Socialist Realism.³⁶ His post-war work and his role as a major player in art institutions was thus literally obscured by his ever-growing reputation as a modernist artist who embodied a form of national identity in painting.

There are many cases of other artists who could be discussed through a similar lens. Their post-war work retained elements of previous periods, under the seemingly flexible umbrella of Socialist Realism which accommodated various stylistic options, as the cases of Maxy and Ressu demonstrate. This speaks not of a rupture on 23 August 1944, be it brutal or liberating, but of a continuation of modernity into the post-war Socialist Realist era, something that was later to be disregarded by the Thaw in the name of the autonomy of art. The artists' monographs written during the period of modernist recovery played a direct role in this process by reassessing the temporal boundaries of artistic careers, either by giving prominence to pre-Second World War works or by stressing various connections between contemporary art/artists and what was regarded as a local modern tradition.

During the first two decades of the post-war era under the Communist regime, the periodization of art history in Romania underwent many and various changes, depending on factors ranging from state cultural politics to individual action and more specific events. The advent of Socialist Realism introduced new temporalities into the narration of art. Initially it advocated a radical break with the past, similar to the many other artistic breaks that punctuate the twentieth century. The will clearly to define Socialist Realism as opposed to modernism reflected the revolutionary ideology of the Communist Party that supported it. But, as this re-reading of art historical writings from the 1950s and 1960s has demonstrated, the break was actually less disruptive than it seemed because

strands of modernism continued to be active at the very core of Socialist Realism. Such conclusions pave the way for a redefining of terms and the creation of new frameworks outside of dualist thinking. Socialist Realism should thus be understood as a species of modernism that a lengthy post-communist condition prevented us from acknowledging.

Notes

- 1 Bown, *Socialist Realist Painting*, 187; Cărăbaș, *Realismul socialist*, 9–17; Pietrasik, *Art in a Disrupted World*, 212–39. See also Grama, *Socialist Heritage*.
- 2 Hobsbawm, 'Introduction'.
- 3 Piotrowski, *Art and Democracy*, 15–52.
- 4 Groys, 'Situația postcomunistă'.
- 5 David-Fox, *Crossing Borders*, 23–33.
- 6 Țichindeleanu, 'Decolonizing Eastern Europe'.
- 7 Major surveys mention the decade too briefly (Piotrowski, *In the Shadow of Yalta*) or in too decontextualized a manner (Fowkes and Fowkes, *Central and Eastern European Art*), while other critical anthologies (Hoptman and Pospiszyl, *Primary Documents*; Djurić and Šuvaković, *Impossible Histories*; IRWIN, *East Art Map*) or exhibitions (Macel and Mitkoswka, *Les Promesses du Passé*) refer mainly to the neo-avant-garde; in other words, the regional histories of art beginning with the period of the Thaw.
- 8 Murawska-Muthesius, 'How the West Corroborated Socialist Realism in the East', 309–10.
- 9 Enwezor et al., *PostWar*.
- 10 Among others: *Interrupted Song: The Art of Socialist Realism 1948–1956*, curator Alexandra Kusá, Slovak National Gallery, Bratislava, 2012; *Abschied von Ikarus? Bildwelten in der DDR*, curators Eckhart Gillen, Paul Kaiser and Karl-Siegbert Rehberg, New Museum, Weimar, 2012–13; *Art for the People? Romanian Official Art 1948–1965*, curator Monica Enache, National Museum of Art of Romania, Bucharest, 2016–17. See also Moskalewicz, 'A Second Life', 72–77.
- 11 Bazin and Kordjak, *Cold Revolution*, 2021.
- 12 Fowkes, 'You Only Live Twice', 217.
- 13 Tulbure, 'Către o arhitectură', 54–55.
- 14 Roller, 'Periodizarea istoriei României', 14.
- 15 Maxy, 'Realismul nu e o formulă', 10.
- 16 Baudin, *Le réalisme socialiste soviétique*; Guldberg, 'Socialist Realism as Institutional Practice', 149–77; Preda, 'The State Artist', 19–33; Predescu, *Utopie și heterotopie*, 49–124.
- 17 Constantinescu-Iași, *Arta plastică în Republica Populară Română*.
- 18 *Ibid.*, 1.
- 19 Anon., 'Cuvânt înainte', 3.
- 20 *10 ani de creație plastică*.
- 21 Busuioceanu, 'Arta românească'; Oprescu, *L'Art roumain*.
- 22 Jianu and Frunzetti, *Maeștrii picturii românești*, 3.
- 23 Oprescu et al., *Artele plastice*, 9.
- 24 *Ibid.*, 14.
- 25 *Ibid.*, 11–13.
- 26 Cărăbaș, *Realismul socialist*, 56–57.
- 27 Piotrowski, *In the Shadow of Yalta*, 52.
- 28 Cârnelci, *Artele plastice*, 19–22; Enache, *Artă pentru popor?* 37; Predescu, *Utopie și heterotopie*, 39–47; Rieder, 'A History of Hungarian Socialist Realist Painting', 5; Rusinová, 'The Embodiment of Communist Utopia'.
- 29 For the reintroduction of modernist concepts in art criticism across the Bloc, see the dedicated issue of *Centropa* II, no. 2 (May 2011), edited by Piotr Juszkiewicz.
- 30 Reid, 'Modernizing Socialist Realism', 210–12; Kodres and Jöekalda, 'Introductory Remarks', 21–25.
- 31 See, for instance, the case of Aleksander Kobzdej who started to produce informal painting after a successful career as a Socialist Realist artist: Moskalewicz, 'Who Doesn't Like Aleksander Kobzdej?'

- 32 Cărăbaș, 'Avangarda românească', 36–38.
 33 *Expoziția retrospectivă M. H. Maxy*.
 34 *Expoziția retrospectivă Camil Ressu*, 3–4.
 35 Enescu, *Camil Ressu*, 171–72.
 36 Cosma, *Camil Ressu*.

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