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**On the Jewish Legacy in Viennese Architecture**

The contribution of Jewish architects to building in Vienna 1868–1938

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## Preface

In recent decades much attention has been devoted to the phenomenon of the important, often decisive role played by Jewish artists and intellectuals in fin-de-siècle culture in Vienna. Interest in this period was awakened in particular by Carl Schorske's pioneering study, which led subsequently to numerous exhibitions, research projects and publications.<sup>1</sup> Whereas the Jewish role in the natural sciences, the humanities and the arts, in particular literature, theatre, film and music has been examined in some detail, so far the Jewish contribution to architecture has hardly been given any consideration. Jewish architects – if examined at all – have usually been looked at in the context of research into forced emigration, while their involvement in building activity in Vienna has tended to be marginalized. In this context Jews are usually mentioned as building clients or financiers, but hardly ever as architects or master builders, even though Austrian Jews were responsible for quite a number of prominent buildings that today still contribute to shaping the appearance of Vienna. The remarkable study by Fredric Bedoire *The Jewish Contribution to Modern Architecture 1830-1930* starts from these premises and deals primarily with Jewish building clients and the projects they initiated, but gives little consideration to the architects.<sup>2</sup> In his overview of the history of Jews in Vienna that appeared in 1930 the art historian Hans Tietze, himself a converted Jew, refers only in passing to Jewish involvement in architecture, describing it, rather dismissively, as 'epigonic'. This neglect or dismissal is typical and is also found in Jewish circles.<sup>3</sup> Tietze's comment appears all the more astonishing when we consider that in 1907 he had his villa designed by Hartwig Fischel, a highly qualified man who had received his training at Vienna's Technische Hochschule where – like many other Jewish architects – he attended lectures given by Karl König whom we will look at later in greater depth. König was one of the few Jewish professors and played a very important role, as most of the architects of Jewish origin who worked in Vienna studied with him. Around seventy years later in his extremely comprehensive and

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<sup>1</sup> C. Schorske, *Fin-de-siècle Vienna*, Melbourne 1987.

<sup>2</sup> F. Bedoire, *The Jewish Contribution to Modern Architecture 1830-1930*, Stockholm 2004.

<sup>3</sup> H. Tietze, *Die Juden Wiens*, Vienna 1933.

profound study *Die Juden Wiens im Zeitalter Kaiser Franz Josefs* Robert Wistrich also hardly considered architecture at all.<sup>4</sup>

One possible explanation for this phenomenon is that at the time when most of the Jewish master builders and architects were active many had become so assimilated that they were anxious to hide their Jewish identity. Adolph Kohut, author of the lexicon *Berühmte israelitische Männer und Frauen*, which was published around 1905, complained that many artists refused to give him information ‘as they were afraid to be identified publicly as Jews.’<sup>5</sup> A further conceivable explanation is that the percentage of Jews working in the building industry was approximately 12 per cent, i.e. only slightly higher than the proportion of Jews in the Viennese population as a whole. That is to say in this field there was no ‘over-representation’ unlike, for instance, in the areas of journalism or literature.<sup>6</sup> In the field of building Jews and non-Jews were later relatively closely interwoven in several regards, which could be seen an indication of a cultural-historical symbiosis that was specific to Vienna and that could have offered the possibility of a different and more ‘normal’ kind of development.

Naturally, the avoidance or neglect of this theme was also fostered by Austria’s specific political situation in the 20th century. From 1938, the year of the so-called *Anschluss* [unification, occasionally annexation] of Austria and Nazi Germany, it was already forbidden to publish anything about Jews. When the war ended and for many years afterwards this theme was completely suppressed. Indeed the lack of interest was so great that for a considerable length of time not even the simplest biographical details of the most important personalities were known. It was only gradually, around the mid-1980s, that individual contributions or exhibitions surfaced such as *Die Vertreibung des Geistigen*, where in his catalogue contribution entitled ‘Die geköpfte Architektur’ Friedrich Achleitner referred to the disastrous haemorrhaging in the area of architecture that resulted from the expulsion of Jewish Austrians.<sup>7</sup> Pierre Genée’s publications about synagogues in Austria, which appeared in 1987 and 1992 and focus mainly on Vienna,

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<sup>4</sup> R. S. Wistrich, *Die Juden Wiens im Zeitalter Kaiser Franz Josefs*, Vienna/Cologne/Weimar 1999.

<sup>5</sup> A. Kohut, *Berühmte israelitische Männer und Frauen*, Leipzig no date, issue 1, p. 324.

<sup>6</sup> Around 1900 Jews made up about 9 per cent of the population of Vienna. See: M. L. Rozenblit, *Die Juden Wiens 1867–1914*, Vienna/Cologne 1989.

<sup>7</sup> F. Achleitner, ‘Die geköpfte Architektur’, in: *Die Vertreibung des Geistigen* (exh. cat.), Vienna 1985.

were pioneering works. Finally a spotlight was turned on an area of architecture that had been almost completely ignored. In this context, too, the names of various architects surfaced who at this point in time were still largely unknown.<sup>8</sup> This opened up entirely new perspectives for research. In the mid-1990s the study *Wien, Aufbruch zur Metropole* pointed out the existence of the two architecture schools grouped around Otto Wagner and Karl König respectively, which, naturally, had quite different approaches to specifically architectural themes, but also differed greatly with regard to anti-Semitism.<sup>9</sup> Only a short time later Matthias Boeckl curated the exhibition *Visionäre & Vertriebene*, which focused mainly on those architects who had emigrated to the USA and, for the first time, provided more detailed biographies of the persons concerned.<sup>10</sup> Subsequently, within a short space of time a number of monographs appeared which dealt with the most important personalities of the Viennese Jewish architecture scene. Markus Kristan produced his works about Oskar Marmorek and Karl König, and Maria Welzig published her dissertation on Josef Frank.<sup>11</sup> Within the context of gender research attention was directed to the work of Jewish women artists, an area in which Sabine Plakolm-Forsthuber carried out pioneering work.<sup>12</sup> The lack of documents and of descendants who could have provided information, which was one of the results of forced emigration, made research all the more difficult.

The lexicon *In Wien gebaut*, published by Helmuth Weihsmann in 2005, and the database project *Architektenlexikon Wien 1770–1945*, which was funded by the FWF and compiled by the Architekturzentrum Wien (AzW) over a period of about ten years, represented major advances in this area.<sup>13</sup> For the first time the focus was not confined to just a few, already well-known personalities, instead research became far more wide-ranging and also examined less important architects. This made it possible to establish cross-references and to complete a picture of the Viennese architecture scene. Although

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<sup>8</sup> P. Genée, *Synagogen in Wien 1825–1938*, Vienna 1987; *ibid.* *Synagogen in Österreich*, Vienna 1992.

<sup>9</sup> U. Prokop, *Wien. Aufbruch zur Metropole*, Vienna/Cologne 1994.

<sup>10</sup> M. Boeckl (ed.), *Visionäre und Vertriebene* (exh. cat.), Vienna 1995.

<sup>11</sup> M. Kristan, *Oskar Marmorek*, Vienna/Cologne/Weimar 1996; *ibid.* *Carl König*, Vienna 1999;

M. Welzig, *Josef Frank*, Vienna/Cologne/Weimar 1998.

<sup>12</sup> S. Plakolm-Forsthuber, *Künstlerinnen in Österreich 1897–1938*, Vienna 1994.

<sup>13</sup> H. Weihsmann, *In Wien gebaut*, Vienna 2005; databank of the Architekturzentrum Wien (AzW) *Architektenlexikon Wien, 1770–1945*, retrievable at [www.architektenlexikon.at](http://www.architektenlexikon.at), hereafter cited as *Architektenlexikon*.

they overlapped somewhat thematically, these two projects were quite differently structured and ultimately complemented each other extremely well. After the database went online there were numerous responses from relatives from all over the world, which helped in fitting the pieces of the puzzle together to form a whole, although, of course, many questions still remain unanswered.

Working on the basis of the literature referred to here and, in particular, the database project that was preceded by intensive archive research work, this study attempts to provide an overview of the theme. An undertaking of this kind is confronted with a number of very different problems. The most important of these is the core question about how to define the term 'Jew' and whether, indeed, it is legitimate in the first place to discuss people as a separate group in terms only of their religious affiliation or origins. Today this question would, generally, be answered in the negative and facts of this kind would be regarded as a purely private matter, but the history of the 20th century brutally refutes this approach to the subject. Several scholars, such as Ernst Gombrich, for example, have rejected the idea of a 'Jewish identity' as such and described it as an artificial construct.<sup>14</sup> Characteristically, Gombrich – referring in his essay to the 'iconophobia of Jewish culture' – does not see any level of involvement of Jewish artists in visual art and architecture that is worth mentioning. But the anti-Semitic strategies of the Nazi era, based on theories that had their roots in the nineteenth century, had such appalling consequences for people who lived in the period dealt with here that one is forced to use the very elastic Nazi definition of the term 'Jew'. This approach is also rendered necessary by the 'mixed culture' that developed in Vienna at an early stage as the result of conversions and what were called 'mixed marriages' and which meant that by the end of the 1930s quite a number of Viennese Jews were so assimilated that many of them were unaware that, according to Nazi racial categories, they were classified as Jews. In general the term 'Jewish Austrian' would seem far more valid in this context. Here the theory postulated by Marsha L. Rozenblit that Viennese Jews were, in general, segregated from the non-Jewish population – particularly among

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<sup>14</sup> See E. H. Gombrich, *Jüdische Identität und jüdisches Schicksal*, Vienna 1997.



the ‘bourgeois’ middle class – must be regarded with a certain degree of scepticism.<sup>15</sup> The structuring of the theme represents a further problem. The intention of this study is certainly not to produce an exhaustive encyclopaedic list of all the persons encountered but rather to provide a cultural and historical overview with a number of main focuses. Working on the basis of a chronological order, it is primarily individuals, chosen because of their importance, or groups that formed particular schools, along with their positions and destinies, that are looked at. Individual thematic focal points such as special kinds of building commissions or particularly striking projects are emphasised. Only a limited number of the many Jews who commissioned buildings can be examined here and even these individual cases can only be outlined – a more profound examination of this theme would unduly expand the area to be covered by this work, but, the information offered here is certainly intended as a background for further research in this area.

## **1 The beginnings**

### **1.1 Introduction**

The Jews’ long and difficult path to emancipation, which they achieved in most European countries in the course of the nineteenth century, is probably sufficiently well known, but given the specific theme of this study perhaps it should be briefly summarised here. Although ever since Joseph II issued the Tolerance Patent in 1782 Jews in Austria were theoretically allowed to attend higher education facilities and had the freedom to follow their profession of choice, numerous restrictions remained in force so that it is impossible to talk of ‘normal’ integration. Consequently, in the first half of the nineteenth century there were still very few Jews in most of the professions – in particular those organised on the basis of guilds. It was only as a result of the bourgeois revolution of 1848 that the regulations governing access to the professions were gradually relaxed and finally in 1867, as part of what is known as the *Ausgleich* [compromise] between Austria and Hungary, Jews were guaranteed complete legal

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<sup>15</sup> M. L. Rozenblit, ‘Segregation, Anpassung und Identitäten der Wiener Juden vor dem ersten Weltkrieg’, in: *Zerstörte Kultur* (eds. G. Botz et al.), Vienna 2002.

equality. This applied in particular to the free choice of profession and the right to settle where one wished, freedoms which up to this point had been applied in a highly selective manner. These developments were also reflected in the building trade. Whereas during the *Vormärz* era [Age of Metternich, the era preceding the 1848 revolution] there were practically no Jewish master builders or architects – admittedly the relatively poor state of the building economy during this period may have played a role here – in the mid-nineteenth century, as the result of several different factors that arose around the same time, a number of decisive changes came about. For Vienna's urban history the most importance of these was, without any doubt, the decree issued by Emperor Franz Joseph in 1857 ordering the demolition of the bastions and fortifications that still surrounded the city and the creation of a built connection to the suburbs, which had been incorporated in the city a number of years previously. This imperial decree represented the birth of modern Vienna and allowed the city to develop in a way that kept pace with the growing population. This expansion was subsequently advanced at a scale that is scarcely imaginable today. As a consequence of growing industrialization the population exploded in the 1870s and 1880s and the construction industry boomed. This development reached a highpoint in 1891, when the districts outside the *Gürtel* [outer ring road], which were known as the *Vororte* [suburbs], were made part of the city. In 1904, following the incorporation of Floridsdorf, Vienna covered an area of around 27,126 hectares and had almost two million inhabitants (the population had almost tripled within the space of around fifty years), making it Europe's second largest city. Although this boom was interrupted by a number of slumps growth continued until the outbreak of the First World War. The complete civil equality of the Jews, which was referred to above, played an important role in this development. Jews made up a substantial part of the liberal bourgeoisie and in many cases were the motors of this upswing and of the phases of modernisation. The ambitious urban planning project for the Ringstraße in Vienna, which was laid out where the old bastions once stood, can in many respects be seen as a self-depiction of this class and became the symbol of an era. Many of the great Jewish families, such as the Epsteins, Todescos and Ephrussis, had their luxurious palaces built on Vienna's magnificent new boulevard. Despite the liberalism of this era increasing numbers of anti-Semitic pamphlets were printed which

dealt with this new phenomenon and flogged to death the standard clichés that Jews were capable only of epigonic work.<sup>16</sup> This prejudice had become common property ever since Richard Wagner published his essay *Das Judentum in der Musik* in 1850 and was subsequently applied to other areas of the arts.

The first Jewish architects began to appear in Vienna in the early days of the Ringstraße era. In terms of both their social origins and their approach to architecture they were extremely heterogeneous. Very few of them came from old established Viennese Jewish families, most of whom belonged to a kind of ‘Jewish aristocracy’ and for many years had benefitted from an imperial privilege that allowed them to live in the capital. In contrast these new arrivals – or their parents – had moved to Vienna only a short time previously from one of the many Crown Lands of the Danube Monarchy. Very many of them came from regions such as the area around Pressburg (Pozsony or Bratislava, at the time still part of Hungary), Bohemia, Moravia and Galicia. The first of these immigrants had often received their training outside Vienna, which, of course, was also true of members of other ethnic groups who came to the capital. The most important members of this ‘first generation’ were, by and large, single individuals, although groups of architects began to form very soon. All of them became an integral part of the Viennese architecture scene and protagonists in the transition from late Historicism to modernism. In this respect it is highly interesting to note that Jews were to be found on the side of the traditionalists as well as among the innovators.

## **1.2 The lone individuals: Wilhelm Fraenkel and Josef Unger – palaces for the nobility and workers’ housing**

**Wilhelm Fraenkel** (1844–1916), one of the first Jewish architects to work in Vienna, was involved in the early stages of the development of the Ringstraße. He came from a Jewish merchant family and was born in 1844 in Oberglogau in Upper Silesia (today Glogowek, Poland). He received his training in Breslau/Wroclaw (PL) and later at the Bauakademie in Berlin, at that time the best-known institution of its kind in German-speaking Europe. In Berlin such educational facilities admitted Jews far earlier than

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<sup>16</sup> Anonymus, ‘Das Judentum in der Baukunst’, in: *Zeitschrift für praktische Baukunst* 38.1878, p. 31f.

those in the Habsburg monarchy. Shortly after completing his studies, in the mid-1860s, Fraenkel came to Vienna, where he joined the practice of Karl Tietz (1832–1874), who had also studied at the Bauakademie in Berlin.<sup>17</sup> It seems very likely that they knew each other from their time in Berlin. Tietz, who often collaborated closely with Theophil Hansen, was one of the great Ringstraße architects and alongside a number of palaces for members of the aristocracy built one of the first large hotels in Vienna, the Grand Hotel on the Ringstraße, in 1861. At a later stage in his career, while working in Tietz' office, Fraenkel devoted himself to very similar building commissions. When, at the beginning of the 1870s, psychological problems forced Tietz to retire from professional practice at a very young age, Fraenkel in a certain sense became his successor. A number of years previously, in 1868 when he was not yet twenty-five years old, he had obtained his master builder's license and set up his own office. Fraenkel was among the first Jews to be licensed as a master builder, as up to this point the building trade – much like all institutions organised in guilds – had by and large refused to accept Jews. A photograph of Fraenkel from this period shows us an elegantly dressed young man with a fashionable hair-cut, who clearly understood how to succeed in the upper echelons of society (illustration 1, portrait). One of his first commissions, which he obtained around 1870, was to erect a group of apartment buildings for the high aristocracy at a prominent location in the inner city, Schottenbastei nos. 4–8 (illustration 2). In these urban apartment buildings he used a restrained and elegant neo-Renaissance idiom, very much in the tradition of Theophil Hansen. This project brought the young architect widespread recognition and soon led to further commissions. Subsequently Fraenkel was to build numerous, palace-like apartment buildings and villas, both for the old aristocracy and the new moneyed nobility. In particular he regularly worked for Freiherr Reitzes von Marienwerth, an industrialist and banker who had amassed a great fortune. After designing a palatial apartment building for Reitzes' family in 1878 (Vienna 1, Universitätsstraße no. 5), a short time later he planned a grand villa for the same client in Döbling, which at the time was still a suburb of Vienna (Vienna 19, Sieveringer Straße no. 245). In his design

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<sup>17</sup> I. Scheidl, Wilhelm Fraenkel, in: *Architektenlexikon* (above, n. 13).

for this elaborate building Fraenkel used the principles of palace architecture and underlined the lofty aspirations of the villa with a number of architectural details such as the neoclassical portico and a double flight external stairs. After the so-called *Anschluss* of Austria and Nazi Germany in 1938 this villa, along with the town palace, was 'Aryanised' and an office of the German *Reichspost* was established there. The restitution procedure that was initiated after the end of the Second World War was both slow-moving and lengthy and resulted in only the town palace being returned to the Reitzes family, while the villa continued to be used for a long time as a telephone exchange.<sup>18</sup>

As well as building lavish houses for the upper class Wilhelm Fraenkel – in his role as successor to Karl Tietz – was also particularly active in the relatively new field of hotel design. The gradual development of tourism and, above all, the large world fairs of the late nineteenth century fuelled the need for modern hotels. In the course of the planning for the 1873 World Fair in Vienna Fraenkel, working with a number of others, designed the Hotel Austria on Schottenring. However this hotel was not blessed with economic success and – possibly as a consequence of the stock market collapse – was very soon acquired by the Ministry of the Interior which then used it as the police headquarters.<sup>19</sup> The building was a victim of the bombing during the Second World War.

The story of another hotel, designed by Fraenkel in 1875 for the restaurant owner Eduard Sacher on what was then called Augustinerstrasse (today Philharmoniker Straße), is a far happier one. This building, erected in the Italian Renaissance style, was soon to become an indispensable part of Vienna's cultural life under the name Hotel Sacher (illustration 3). Particularly under the management of Eduard's widow, Anna Sacher, who has entered the annals of history as a highly original, cigar-smoking personality, this establishment flourished, as its location directly behind the Opera House made it a legendary refuge for both bored visitors to the opera and frustrated members of the imperial family, who sought some diversion from the stiff formality of court banquets. To the present day Sacher has remained one the best-known of Vienna's

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<sup>18</sup> See P. Melichar, *Neuordnung im Bankwesen*, Vienna 2004, p. 368ff.

<sup>19</sup> *Wiener Bauindustriezeitung* 8.1890, p. 170, plate 27.

top hotels and, together with its eponymous *Torte*, has become world-famous. The original building – or at least the exterior – has largely survived and reflects the nobility of Ringstrasse architecture at the time it was erected. Only the elegant flat roof that was crowned with vases and evoked an Italian palazzo has had to make way for the addition of a modern roof-top storey. Sources from the time reveal that the original hotel was relatively modest. Alongside the dining rooms and lounges on the ground floor, the hotel occupied only the first floor of the building, while the upper storeys were occupied by rental apartments.<sup>20</sup> Naturally, over the course of the decades extensive adaptations, extensions and renovations have been carried out in order to offer the services and facilities expected in a modern luxury hotel.

Fraenkel, who died in Vienna in 1916, remained very successful until shortly before the First World War. As well as working as an architect in Vienna he maintained his connections with Berlin – which clearly dated from his student days – and he built a number of elegant residences there for members of upper class, for instance the Arnheim family.<sup>21</sup>

Rather than catering to the requirements of elegant Ringstraße society, another representative of the first generation of Jewish architects in Vienna worked for a very different clientele. In the second half of the nineteenth century the advance of industrialization and the rapid growth of the city confronted architects with completely new questions and building commissions, for which they had to find new solutions. Alongside the design of department stores, railway stations, hotels etc., the erection of housing for the newly emerging working class developed into an important task. As this kind of commission did not seem to belong to ‘the art of building’ as understood at that time, for a long time it was largely ignored by the established, academically trained architects. The early pioneers in this area include **Josef Unger** (1846–1922), who today has been completely forgotten. Born the son of a merchant, Isidor Unger, in the small town of Kunarowitzl near Bielsko-Biała (at the time part of Austrian Silesia), following an interlude in Brünn/ Brno (CZ) where he attended the Oberrealschule, he and his

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<sup>20</sup> *Allgemeine Bauzeitung* 42.1877, p. 76, plate 69ff.

<sup>21</sup> *Berliner Architekturwelt* 1912, 11th special edition, p. 73ff.

family came to Vienna around 1864.<sup>22</sup> He was one of the very first students to attend what was known at the time as Vienna Polytechnikum (the predecessor of today's University of Technology), where the famous Ringstrasse architect Heinrich von Ferstel was among his teachers. There are several indications that Unger's family led a very modest existence. Like many of the less well-off Jews, most of whom came from Galicia, they lived in the Leopoldstadt and Josef Unger is registered as being exempted from school fees. After completing his architecture studies, in 1868 he obtained a position with the Österreichische Nordwestbahn [Austrian Northwestern Railways] but he also worked as a self-employed architect – above all at a later stage in his life. The newly built railway line provided an important connection to the industrial regions of Bohemia and Moravia which were rapidly growing in significance. Alongside designing buildings needed to operate the railway line Josef Unger's position as inspector also involved him in the construction of housing for railway workers, which the building of new railway lines made necessary. In the course of this work, which at that time represented relatively new territory, Unger made numerous study trips, especially to Western Europe, in order to look at workers' housing and to examine the theme of the single-family house. Unger published the knowledge he acquired in various specialist articles and became one of the most highly recognized experts in this area. The acquisition by the Austrian imperial Fideikommissbibliothek of his study on Danish and German workers' housing estates, which he published in 1895, indicates the great respect in which Unger was held in this specialised field.<sup>23</sup>

Although at first glance it might seem surprising that questions of social housing, which were new for a society that had been based largely on agricultural structures, were addressed in connection with the expansion of the railway system, it should be pointed out that the railway and everything related to it was one of the most important factors in the advance of modernisation in the nineteenth century. The construction of new railway lines led to numerous technical innovations such as new building methods, bridge-building techniques and the rationalisation of the construction industry, while

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<sup>22</sup> See U. Prokop, 'Josef Unger', in: *David, jüdische Kulturzeitschrift*, 20.2008, no. 79, p. 38ff.

<sup>23</sup> J. Unger, 'Der Arbeiterbauverein in Copenhagen und die Spar- und Bauvereine in Deutschland', in: *Zeitschrift des österreichischen Ingenieur- und Architektenvereines* 47.1895, p. 545ff., 556ff.

rail travel gave people a degree of mobility they had never known before. This not only altered social structures – for instance through the move of the rural population to the cities and better utilisation of raw materials for newly developing industry – but also changed day-to-day culture, as it led to the development of a new kind of tourism, with all its consequences. The phenomenon of the railway also had an impact on the world of art, as is shown by the paintings by the Impressionists, for whom steam locomotives and the shimmering atmosphere of the large train stations often provided a popular subject. It is not by chance that Jews, who had previously been largely excluded from existing economic structures, played an important role in the new area of railway construction from the very start. It is perhaps known that great Jewish families such as the Pereiras and the Rothschilds in particular advanced the development of the Austrian rail network as initiators and financiers. But less attention has been given to the Jewish engineers and technicians who, working one level lower, producing committed and often pioneering achievements in this entirely new area. The number of Jewish students of technology grew and many members of the highly respected Österreichischer Ingenieur- und Architektenverein [Austrian Association of Engineers and Architects] were Jews.<sup>24</sup> Josef Unger, too, became a member of this important association soon after completing his studies and most of his writings were published in the society's journals. His profound knowledge in the field of workers' housing eventually brought Unger into contact with the philanthropist Dr. Maximilian Steiner, under whose direction the Verein für Arbeiterhäuser [Association for Worker's Housing] was established in 1886.<sup>25</sup> As a result of this contact Unger was commissioned in the same year to design a model housing development. In the following years a small group of workers' houses was built on land in Vienna-Favoriten (Vienna 10, Kiese Wettergasse nos. 3–15, illustration 4) that it had proved possible to acquire cheaply. Some of these houses still exist today and represent the oldest example of social housing in Vienna. Using English

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<sup>24</sup> After the breaking up of the association in 1938 this fact led to a considerable haemorrhaging in conceptual and material terms from which, even after it was reconstituted in 1945, the association could never really recover. See G. Widtmann, 'Ein Blick zurück, Abriss der Geschichte des ÖIAV', in: *ÖIAV* 143.1998, issue 7 (*Festschrift 150 Jahre Österreichischer Ingenieur- und Architektenverein*).

<sup>25</sup> J. Unger, 'Die Arbeiterwohnhäuser in Wien Favoriten', in: *Wochenschrift des Österreichischen Ingenieur- und Architektenvereines* 11.1886, p. 329ff.



examples as his models Unger designed two-storey row houses with front gardens or yards. The small, pitched-roof houses were built partly of exposed brickwork, partly finished in render, and in formal terms were very closely related to the standard designs for railway buildings of the time. The floor area ranged between 67 and 97 m<sup>2</sup>, the maximum size of the gardens was 68 m<sup>2</sup>. All dwellings had a direct water supply in the kitchen; the lavatory was in the house and not, as was usual at the time, outside it. Each house had a relatively large number of rooms (a living room and two or three bedrooms) so that residents could earn an additional income by running a business or subletting rooms. The intention was that residents should make annual payments which, after a period of 25 years, would enable them to become owners of their own house.<sup>26</sup> Only about half the number of houses originally planned was actually built. This small development still exists today and has preserved a certain nostalgic charm, even though nearby high-rise buildings threaten almost to overwhelm it and make it seem like a relic from times long gone by. In general this concept, which was widespread in the English-speaking world with its leasehold system, was not very suitable for Vienna, where the rigid legal system of land ownership was based on Roman law. Therefore in the mid-eighteen-nineties the society was dissolved and its assets transferred to the Stiftung für Volkswohnungen [Foundation for People's Housing].

To mark the occasion of the imperial jubilee in 1898 this foundation, amidst great publicity, set up a competition for a people's housing project in Vienna-Ottakring in which Unger decided to take part. After his experience with the project in Favoriten and the failure of the row house idea, this time Unger based his design on the concept of multi-storey housing. He grouped four-storey buildings around a central courtyard, from which the staircases could also be accessed. For the first time communal facilities such as laundries and bathrooms were proposed. In fact Unger's concept anticipated many of the important aspects of the social housing erected by 'Red Vienna' in the interwar period. However, lack of time prevented Unger from working out his proposals in greater detail and he only won second prize and therefore was not commissioned to

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<sup>26</sup> See above and F. Achleitner, *Österreichische Architektur im 20. Jahrhundert*, issue III/1, Vienna/Salzburg 1990, p. 265.

build the Kaiser-Jubiläums-Volkswohnbauten.<sup>27</sup> However, in the same year Unger revived this design when he erected the Jubiläums-Arbeiterwohnhaus [Jubilee Workers Apartment House] for farm workers at the Augustinian Canons Abbey in Klosterneuburg. This complex was considerably smaller and a certain number of modifications had to be made, in particular with regard to the hygiene facilities, as at the time Klosterneuburg did not have a water supply. This early example of social housing still exists today (Klosterneuburg, Lower Austria, Wiener Straße no. 68). After having worked for around thirty-five years for the Österreichische Nordwestbahn Josef Unger took retirement in 1904 and was accorded numerous honours and tributes. He continued to work for some time as a self-employed architect, mostly in the area of housing. Josef Unger died in Vienna in 1922 at the age of 75.

## **2 The students of Friedrich von Schmidt**

### **2.1 Max Fleischer, Wilhelm Stiassny and their circle – the controversy about Jewish self-understanding in the context of synagogue building**

Whereas those discussed above were, so to speak, ‘loners’ in the Vienna architecture scene and therefore had no successors, quite soon a relatively homogeneous group developed that can be legitimately described as a ‘school’, because its members all studied at the Academy of Fine Arts under Friedrich von Schmidt and subsequently became the ‘forefathers’ of a series of Viennese Jewish architects. Although Friedrich von Schmidt (1825–1891), who came from Württemberg, eventually became one of the most important Ringstraße architects, initially he had to battle to establish himself in the Viennese cultural scene. Originally a Protestant, he had to convert to Catholicism in order to obtain a professorship at the Academy and, later, the important position of *Dombaumeister* (master builder of St. Stephen’s Cathedral). His pragmatic approach to religion, a generally very liberal attitude – it was even rumoured that he was a Freemason – and his extremely open, integrative nature seemed to make him predestined to teach the first generation of Jewish students to attend the Academy. It is not surprising that two of his most important Jewish students, Wilhelm Stiassny and

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<sup>27</sup>This project was built to plans by Leopold Simony and Theodor Bach.

Max Fleischer, wrote the most touching and heartfelt obituaries for him.<sup>28</sup> In particular Fleischer, who as well as studying under Schmidt also worked in his office for around twenty years and was very close to him, offers a graphic picture of Schmidt, who was highly sociable and enjoyed taking a glass of wine in cheerful company. What Fleischer wrote about Schmidt's private relationship to his students is particularly interesting: 'Just as Schmidt helped his staff to achieve respected and secure positions, it was a particular pleasure for him to see them get married. And there were only few whose weddings he did not attend. He always willingly and gladly accepted such invitations [...] and so one day we experienced him in the role of witness at a wedding in the synagogue on Seitenstettengasse.'<sup>29</sup>

In the world of late Historicism Friedrich von Schmidt established his reputation as a 'Gothicist'. Having trained at the *Dombauhütte* of Cologne Cathedral, he brought this style – which up to then had not been particularly popular in Vienna – to the imperial capital where, while Professor at the Academy, he initiated a revival of the medieval repertoire of forms in his master school. In his own design work Schmidt concentrated on church building and the restoration of old castles and palaces and in this area became one of the most influential architects of his time. Despite this it is a secular building – Vienna City Hall – that is regarded as Schmidt's principal work and a paradigm of the neo-Gothic direction in architecture. As a result of his many different activities – professor at the Academy, *Dombaumeister* and self-employed architect – a large group of students and staff grew up around Schmidt, which eventually became known as the 'Schmidt School' and played an important role in the architecture of the Danube Monarchy in its later years.<sup>30</sup> In fact many of his students continued his legacy into the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, particularly in the area of Christian religious buildings. So far little study has been made of the influence that Schmidt's theories and aesthetic

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<sup>28</sup> M. Fleischer, *Friedrich Freiherr v. Schmidt*, Vienna 1891; W. Stiassny, *Freiherr v. Schmidt als Künstler und Lehrer*, Vienna 1891.

<sup>29</sup> Fleischer (above, n. 28). The ceremony described here was Fleischer's own wedding.

<sup>30</sup> See also *Friedrich v. Schmidt. Ein gotischer Rationalist* (ed. Historisches Museum der Stadt Wien), Vienna 1991; I. Scheidl, *Schöner Schein und Experiment. Katholischer Kirchenbau im Wien der Jahrhundertwende*, Vienna/Cologne/Weimar 2003.

categories exerted on synagogue building, which flourished at the time as a result of the rapidly growth of Jewish communities.

Naturally, in the development of an independent group of Jewish architects the theme of the synagogue was of major significance. For a long time the small Jewish community in Vienna was forbidden to hold public religious services or to acquire property, so that Jews could only rent modest rooms for their ceremonies and the theme of the synagogue was not of great relevance.<sup>31</sup> It was only at the start of the 19<sup>th</sup> century that the community was allowed to acquire the Dempfinger Hof on Seitenstettengasse, where a prayer room and a school were set up. By the start of the 1820s this building had become dilapidated and a new one was needed. Plans were made to erect the first large representative synagogue – although the street façade had to conceal the fact that this was a Jewish religious building – for which a Jewish architect could not be found. The commission was given to Josef Kornhäusel, one of the leading architects of the time, who had carried out many projects for the high nobility.<sup>32</sup> Known in German as the *Stadttempel* (although, from a Jewish viewpoint, the only temple is in Jerusalem, in German the terms ‘Tempel’ [temple] or ‘Gotteshaus’ [House of God] were commonly used for a synagogue at the time – which indicates an increasing level of assimilation – and are therefore also used in the original German version of this text), this building along with its beautiful interior survived the November pogrom in 1938 because it was so densely surrounded by other buildings. Today in both cultural and historical terms it is regarded as one of the most important buildings of its time. In 1853, when the project to erect the great temple in the Leopoldstadt was initiated – which, interestingly, was the first Jewish religious building permitted to express its religious function externally – there were still no Jewish specialists available. After a competition had been held the building was erected to plans by Ludwig Förster, who was also one of the most important architects of that era and who built a magnificent synagogue in Budapest

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<sup>31</sup> S. Husserl, *Gründungsgeschichte des Stadttempels*, Vienna 1906.

<sup>32</sup> Josef Kornhäusel (1782–1860) was one of the busiest architects of his time. Among his principal clients were Prince Liechtenstein and Archduke Karl (Weilburg near Baden, adaptation of the Albertina).

around the same time.<sup>33</sup> Alongside the problematic aspects of commissioning non-Jewish architects to design the first representative religious buildings, it was also significant that, in formal terms, the question of style was completely open. Whereas Kornhäusel built his *Stadttempel* in a revolutionary neo-Classical style – clearly an expression of the Enlightenment – Förster’s two synagogues were based on oriental, Moorish models, which were seen, above all by Sephardic Jews, as providing a source of identity. By the 1870s, when the rapid growth of Jewish communities created an increasing need for religious buildings, there were trained Jewish architects from a new generation who were able to devote themselves to this theme, which harboured any number of problems and offered plenty of material for discussion. Not surprisingly it was students from Friedrich Schmidt’s school who were to produce important achievements in this area, both in Vienna and the lands of the Danube Monarchy. In this context **Max Fleischer** (1841–1905), who has already been mentioned above, played an important role. He came from Prossnitz/Prostejov in Moravia (CZ) and, after completing his secondary school education, attended the Vienna Polytechnikum and later the Academy of Fine Arts, where he initially studied under Eduard van der Nüll and Karl Rösner. At this early stage in his career he obtained his first practical experience of building as a member of the construction teams for Altlerchenfeld parish church and the Arsenal in Vienna.<sup>34</sup> It was only in the final years of his studies that he changed to the class of Friedrich von Schmidt, whose office he was later to join. As one of the construction site managers, he was closely involved in the erection of the Vienna City Hall, one of the most expensive and elaborate of all the Ringstraße buildings, which took around twenty years to complete (1868–1888). In accordance with the traditions of medieval master builders, busts of those who had worked on the building

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<sup>33</sup> Ludwig Förster (1787–1863) is regarded as one of the most important architects of early historicism. As publisher of the *Allgemeine Bauzeitung* he made a substantial contribution to the renewal of architecture. His clients included a number of important Jewish families such as the Pereiras and the Todescos.

<sup>34</sup> See B. Martens, ‘Virtuelle Rekonstruktion dreier Synagogen von Max Fleischer in Wien’, in: *David* 9.2007, issue 74; E. M. Faber, ‘Max Fleischer und die Synagoge in der Neudeggasse’, in K. Kratz, *Verlorene Nachbarschaft*, Vienna 1999.

were erected in the *Vorhalle* of the City Hall and Fleischer's portrait bust was prominently positioned at the entrance, along the main axis (illustration 5, bust).<sup>35</sup> Until the closure of Schmidt's office at the end of the 1880s Fleischer remained an intensely loyal staff member, which somewhat restricted his freedom to work on his own behalf and it was therefore only later that he was able to devote himself more intensively to his own projects. Alongside a series of apartment houses, industrial buildings, factories and commercial buildings that were erected to his designs, he established a reputation as a designer of synagogues. In the early 1880s, as a member of the board of the local *Tempelverein* [Temple Association], he erected a temple on Schmalzhofgasse in Vienna's 6th district, which borrowed from contemporary neo-Gothic church buildings and was very positively received by many Viennese Jews. As well as borrowing from Christian sacred buildings in formal terms Fleischer also introduced a number of organisational innovations. He rejected the idea of a women's gallery and placed the main emphasis on functionality and the building's suitability for its purpose. Fleischer, who also regarded himself as a painter, lived in the extensive complex of which the synagogue formed part, where he set up a small 'Fleischer Museum' in which his designs and water-colours were kept.<sup>36</sup>

Fleischer obtained further design commissions in rapid succession, for example the synagogues in Vienna 9, Müllnergasse (1888/89), and Vienna 8, Neudeggergasse (1903, illustration 6), and he was also commissioned by many Jewish communities in the Crown Lands of the Danube Monarchy.<sup>37</sup> Among his most important works was the monumental temple erected in 1888 in Budweis/Budejovice (CZ), which, as it was free-standing on all sides, had a strong impact in town planning terms.<sup>38</sup> Fleischer studied the historical development of synagogue building and justified the neo-Gothic character of his Jewish religious buildings with the argument that synagogue buildings had always been related to the style of the time they were built and reflected local

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<sup>35</sup> On his tomb Fleischer is expressly honoured as a staff member of Vienna City Hall.

<sup>36</sup> *Neue Freie Presse* 20.12.1905, Obituary for Max Fleischer.

<sup>37</sup> Particularly in the area of Lower Austria and Moravia (including Budweis (Ceske Budejovice), Lundenburg (Břeclav), Nikolsburg (Mikulov), Krems and Hohenau).

<sup>38</sup> M. Fleischer, 'Über Synagogen-Bauten', Vienna 1894, in: *Zeitschrift des Österreichischen Ingenieur- und Architektenvereines* 46.1894, issue 18, p. 1ff., plate 9.

circumstances. He came to the apodictic conclusion: ‘there is no such thing as a special Jewish style.’<sup>39</sup> Essentially more interested in function and economy than in stylistic symbolism, Fleischer defended the exposed brickwork construction typical of the ‘Schmidt School’ on the grounds that it was simply more economical than a stone façade. Whether this striving for integration in society that is indicated by his designs for Jewish religious buildings was a consequence of anti-Semitic pressure that had already grown very strong or was based on genuine convictions that resulted from Fleischer’s study of history is impossible to say.<sup>40</sup> Possibly it reflected a little of both. In the course of his professional life Fleischer achieved a modest level of prosperity, which allowed him to set up two charitable foundations. In accordance with his understanding of what it meant to be a Jew he became involved in the Jewish religious community, was a board member for many years and, as consultant for cemeteries, was responsible for the design of numerous impressive tombs. Like Wilhelm Stiassny, with whom he had studied, he was also one of the initiators of the *Gesellschaft zur Sammlung jüdischer Kulturgüter* [Society for Collecting Jewish Cultural Material], which led in 1895 to the founding of the Jewish Museum. In the museum he gave numerous lectures, drawing on the profound knowledge of art history he had acquired during his studies. The recipient of numerous awards and honours, in particular for his services with regard to Vienna City Hall, Fleischer died in Vienna at the age of sixty-three. His former fellow-student **Wilhelm Stiassny** (1842–1910, illustration 7) took a very different approach to synagogue design. He rejected Fleischer’s theory and, on the contrary, called for buildings that consciously presented themselves as ‘Jewish’. Stiassny, who came from Pressburg, was almost the same age as Fleischer, with whom, despite their very different ideas about synagogue design, he maintained close ties. Not only had they had the same training as students, both were also very devout Jews who collected Judaica and shared a deep interest in the history of Judaism. Stiassny’s interests and sense of commitment caused him to become involved in the *Gesellschaft zur Sammlung jüdischen Kulturgutes* which, as mentioned above, led in

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> See also Genée (above, n. 8).

1895 to founding of the Jewish Museum, which was the first of its kind in Europe. For many years both these men sat on the board of the Vienna Jewish community and were, so to speak, part of the Viennese Jewish establishment – thanks also partly to their successful careers as architects.

In contrast to Fleischer, however, Stiassny set up his own office shortly after completing his studies, soon becoming one of the most successful architects and building contractors in Vienna. He also designed Jewish religious buildings and was responsible for numerous synagogues, ceremonial halls and tombstones. Around 1875 – a number of years before Fleischer built his first synagogues in Vienna – Stiassny designed a place of worship for the prosperous Jewish community in Teplitz-Schönau/Teplice (CZ) that combined Italian Renaissance elements with ‘Moorish’ architectural forms in a sophisticated manner. The architect’s aim in employing this oriental vocabulary was to achieve a specifically Jewish form of self-expression. The use of quotations from a Moorish formal idiom – such as employed by Ludwig Förster – was, in particular for Sephardic Jews but also for the Ashkenazi, a reference to the 14<sup>th</sup> century synagogue El Tránsito in Toledo, which held a special significance in the ‘Jewish memory’. Although the spectacular building in Teplitz – at that time the largest synagogue in Europe – attracted great interest, initially Stiassny had no success in obtaining commissions for a Jewish religious building in Vienna, where the temples by Max Fleischer were preferred, which seemed better suited to the prevailing situation. However Stiassny extended his series of synagogues in a Moorish oriental style elsewhere – for instance in Malacka (1887) or in Gablonz/Jablonec (1892) – which earned him severe criticism from Viennese experts, who rejected his places of worship as ‘totally unsuccessful’.<sup>41</sup>

In fact Stiassny built just one synagogue in Vienna which, significantly, was for the Polish Jewish community. Erected in 1893, it was known as the *Polnische Schul* (Vienna 2, Leopoldsgasse no. 29, illustration 8) and established Viennese Jews were said to look down somewhat at it.<sup>42</sup> In this building, too, Stiassny employed a richly colourful, oriental vocabulary, crowning the building with an onion dome intended as a

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<sup>41</sup> *Wiener Bauindustriezeitung* 5.1887, p. 604.

<sup>42</sup> In 1879, at an early stage in his career, Stiassny built the ceremonial hall of the old Jewish section of the Zentralfriedhof in a neo-Renaissance style – this building is no longer in existence.



reference to the community's eastern European origins.<sup>43</sup> This debate between Stiassny and Fleischer about synagogue building reflected the divisions among Viennese Jews during this period, who swayed between assimilation and a self-confident emphasis of their difference. On the other hand it also illustrates how much both architects were children of their time, whose thinking was based on the categories of late Historicism which attached great importance to questions of 'styles' and their particular symbolism. Indeed Christian church circles also debated the great question 'in which style should we build?', the options available ranging from Romanesque to Gothic and to modern.<sup>44</sup> Despite the emphatically different approaches to synagogue design taken by Fleischer and Stiassny, in the Nazi era almost all the religious buildings of both architects were destroyed – particularly those in Vienna. One of the few to survive is the elaborate Jubilee Synagogue in Prague which Stiassny built in his final years (1905) and which boasts a magnificent colourfulness that conveys something of the wealth of ideas of late historicist architecture (illustration 9).<sup>45</sup>

Quite apart from his importance in the area of synagogue building Stiassny was a remarkable personality in many respects. As already mentioned, a short time after finishing his studies he was already one of Vienna's busiest architects who built a vast number of apartment and other buildings that have left their stamp on the appearance of the city. As well as building several elegant palaces on the Ringstraße and a stylish villa development in Vienna-Döbling (Reithlegasse nos. 1–3) Stiassny was closely involved in the development of the Textilviertel (Textile District) in Vienna. This quarter developed in the part of the 1st district around the Stock Exchange and Rudolfsplatz where cloth merchants, most of whom were Jewish, erected their company premises and apartment buildings in the course of the 19<sup>th</sup> century building boom. Development started towards the end of the 1860s and was by and large completed in the 1880s, and the homogeneity of the building fabric is still most impressive today. Particularly remarkable is the fact that here apartment buildings of a high standard were combined

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<sup>43</sup> *Allgemeine Bauzeitung* 1894, p. 70f. and plate 55ff.

<sup>44</sup> See Scheidl (above, n. 30).

<sup>45</sup> See T. Satoko, *Wilhelm Stiassny. Synagogenbau, Orientalismus und jüdische Identität*, phil. diss. Vienna 2009.

with shops, storerooms and production facilities, producing a mixed building type that is characteristic of this district. The storerooms were generally at basement level, while the ground floor and mezzanine were reserved for the shops, which were generally grouped around a glass-roofed internal courtyard. The generously sized apartments on the upper floors occupied an entire storey. The elegant reception rooms were usually on the street front, while the private rooms and service spaces were at the back. More than a few of these apartments had bathrooms – a facility not available in the Hofburg imperial palace in Vienna at that time. To separate the different functions these buildings generally had two entrances (e.g. residential and commercial building Vienna 1, Rudolfsplatz no. 10, 1881, illustration 10).<sup>46</sup> In this context it is worth mentioning that, when a discussion arose among Vienna's Jewish community about building a new temple in the inner city, as the old building on Seitenstettengasse had become too small for the constantly expanding community, it was probably Wilhelm Stiassny who designed a synagogue on Rudolfsplatz, which lies at the centre of the Textile District. A water-colour in a poor state of preservation shows a bird's eye view of this square with a mighty synagogue placed along one of the short sides.<sup>47</sup> Whether Stiassny himself was responsible for this sketch has not been clarified, but it seems highly unlikely that he was not involved in some way or other in this project, which ultimately was never carried out.

Stiassny was also deeply involved in the Jewish religious community, particularly in the area of charitable works, and was commissioned by several important Jewish families to design various welfare facilities, including the Blind Institute on the Hohe Warte (Stiftung Königswarter) or the Rothschild Hospital in Währing (Währinger Gürtel no. 97), which was still in operation in 1942, served as a transit camp for Jewish refugees after the war, and was only demolished in 1955. Stiassny produced several publications in which he made an intensive study of hospital design and public health, which he regarded as closely connected to the housing problem. On account of his outstanding abilities in numerous different areas of building, in 1878 Stiassny became a

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<sup>46</sup> *Allgemeine Bauzeitung* 1885, p. 84, plate 56f.

<sup>47</sup> Sakoto (above, n. 45).

member of the municipal council, where he was a representative of the Liberals and one of the very few Jews (around ten per cent of the population of Vienna was Jewish but only three per cent of the councillors, so that the Jewish community was drastically underrepresented at municipal political level) and, with a brief interruption, remained a member until his death. For a short period in 1894/95 as town councillor he was even a member of the Vienna City Government, but following the victory of the anti-Semitic Christian Socialists under Mayor Karl Lueger he had to resign this mandate.<sup>48</sup> During his many years of public work he gave around 1500 talks and sat on numerous committees that dealt with the pioneering developments of the municipal infrastructure undertaken at that time. Gustav Klimt immortalized Wilhelm Stiassny in 1898, when, to mark the demolition of the old Burgtheater, he depicted Viennese society in a kind of group portrait set in the auditorium of the old Burgtheater. Following a lengthy illness Stiassny died during a summer holiday in Bad Ischl in 1910. Today a plaque on the building at Vienna 1, Krugerstraße no. 8, which he built and lived in during the last years of his life, commemorates this great figure.

In connection with Wilhelm Stiassny and his work as a town councillor it does not seem unreasonable to digress slightly in order to take a look at **Donat Zifferer** (1845 –1909), who was also one of the few Jewish town councillors and who played a significant role in building in Vienna. Zifferer belonged to roughly the same generation as Stiassny and Fleischer but he only rarely worked as an architect and did not have an academic training. However he was among the most important master builders and building contractors of the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. He came from Bistritz/Bystrice in Moravia (CZ), studied in Brünn/Brno and later at the Polytechnikum in Vienna. After many years acquiring practical building experience with the Österreichische Baugesellschaft he set up his own business in 1875. In his work as a building contractor he acquired many of the building sites that had been created through the demolition of the old city bastions and were part of the urban expansion project and later erected buildings on them. Zifferer is said to have erected more than two hundred and fifty buildings.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Despite this Stiassny is supposed to have had a good personal relationship to Lueger.

<sup>49</sup> *Neue Freie Presse* 11.01.1905, 'Donat Zifferer zum 60. Geburtstag'; *Dr. Bloch's Wochenschrift* 8.10.1909, issue 41, p. 704f. (obituary).

Working together with the most important architects of the time he erected a series of elegant apartment buildings in the inner city, in the 4th and 9th district (including several prestigious projects for the Rothschild family). In addition Zifferer, a devout Jew, was involved in the construction of various Jewish facilities such as the Rothschild Hospital and a number of remarkable synagogues.<sup>50</sup> In the course of his business life Zifferer amassed a considerable fortune and contributed to the support of numerous humanitarian institutions. Alongside his involvement in welfare and aid for the poor he was a major donor in other areas too. He helped to finance a hospital in his birthplace Bistritz and when he built the synagogue on Hubergasse (Vienna 16) waived his fee. He was a committed Freemason and an honorary member of numerous lodges, both in the Habsburg Monarchy and abroad.<sup>51</sup>

Zifferer's social environment is also most interesting. His wife Rosa (née Schüler, 1851–1911) was an important suffragette and president of the association Wiener Frauenhort, while his nephew Paul was a well-known writer. His daughter Elisabeth (1874–1950) was married to the architect Alexander Gotthilf, with whom Zifferer often worked, especially towards the end of his life, and who will be dealt with further below. Zifferer was also friends with Max Fleischer, who was godfather to his children. Together they were involved around 1890 in the project for the Jewish girls' orphanage at Vienna 19, Ruthgasse no. 19, in building the synagogue on Müllnergasse and, in 1903, the synagogue in the General Hospital. Illness forced Zifferer to retire from professional life around 1905 and he died in Vienna in 1909.

In the context of synagogue architects from the school of Friedrich Schmidt **Jakob Modern** (1838–1912, illustration 11) stands somewhat in the shadow of Fleischer and Stiassny. This is due to the fact that the design of Jewish places of worship played only a minor role in this architect's work. Like Stiassny, Modern came from Pressburg but moved to Vienna when very young to train at the Polytechnikum, after which he studied at the Academy under August von Sicardsburg and later under Friedrich von Schmidt. Soon after finishing his studies he joined the Allgemeine Österreichische

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<sup>50</sup> Zifferer was the building contractor for the synagogues in Vienna 9, Müllnergasse (design Max Fleischer), and Vienna 16, Hubergasse (design Ludwig Tischler).

<sup>51</sup> U. Prokop, *Donat Zifferer*, in: *Architektenlexikon* (above, n. 13).

Baugesellschaft, where he worked as a construction manager and was involved in numerous big projects, which, however, have not been documented by name.<sup>52</sup> After working for this company for around twelve years he took the plunge and became self-employed, continuing to work mostly in the area of residential buildings. It was only at the end of the 1880s that he received his first commission for a synagogue in Währing, which at that time was still an outer suburb of Vienna. Due to its rapid increase in size, the local Jewish community urgently needed a place of worship. The foundation stone for this relatively modest building for a community of around 500 was laid in December 1888 and it was erected, with the use of limited funds, in the short construction time of just ten months. This building formed part of the street front along Schopenhauerstraße (at the time still known as Wiener Straße). For the brick façade Jakob Modern used a stylistic idiom that included neo-Romanesque elements and was also influenced somewhat by the Protestant churches designed by Förster and Hansen (illustration 12).<sup>53</sup> This enabled Modern to avoid borrowing too closely from Catholic church buildings. In contrast the triple-aisled interior was decorated in the ‘Arabian style’.<sup>54</sup> Other designs by Modern for Jewish places of worship were either never built or cannot be precisely located.

Jakob Modern’s creative work, which extended into the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, was affected by the turbulence of early Viennese modernism. Although still strongly influenced by Historicism, his late work includes elements adopted from Secessionism and *Jugendstil*. Such borrowings are particularly evident in his apartment buildings, a sizable number of which he erected in the Rossau area of the 9th district. This quiet, middle-class neighbourhood had a sizable Jewish population that had settled there around the old Oberer Werd – a Jewish settlement area since the late Middle Ages. The district was particularly popular with artists and middle-class intellectuals – for example Sigmund Freud. During the years leading up to the First World War a number of older, lower buildings were demolished as part of the modernisation of the city and in the area known as the Servitenviertel around 1904/05 Modern erected a series of remarkable

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<sup>52</sup> L. Eisenberg, *Das geistige Wien*, Vienna 1893.

<sup>53</sup> B. Martens, *Die zerstörten Synagogen Wiens*, Vienna 2009.

<sup>54</sup> *Allgemeine Bauzeitung* 57.1892, p. 39, plate 32f.

apartment houses, which gave the district a *Jugendstil* charm it has preserved to the present day (illustration 13, Servitenhof). Jakob Modern died only a few years later in 1912.

His son **Richard Modern** (1872–1957), who, contrary to all usual practice and in contrast to his father, had no academic training, joined his father's office shortly after completing the Gewerbeschule and later worked for various construction companies. He, too, was able to profit briefly from the building boom in the years before the First World War and erected a series of apartment buildings.<sup>55</sup> Almost no buildings by him are documented in the interwar period, which suggests that he rarely worked for himself probably due to the poor economic climate. Richard Modern became caught up in the turmoil of the *Anschluss* in 1938 and managed only with difficulty to escape to the USA in January 1940 – when he was already in his late sixties. After a short stay in New York he finally went to San Francisco, where he died at the end of the 1950s.

**Jakob Gartner** (1861–1921, illustration 14) occupies a special position in this chapter. He was not a student of Friedrich Schmidt and therefore, in formal terms, followed a different path. However, as his wide-ranging activity in the field of synagogue building falls largely within this period and is influenced by the spirit of Historicism it seems reasonable to include him here. Almost a generation younger than Fleischer and Stiassny, Gartner, who came from Prossnitz/Prostejov in Moravia (CZ), studied at the Vienna Academy of Fine Arts in the master class of Carl Hasenauer.<sup>56</sup> Gartner appears to have been interested in synagogue design from an early stage, as while still a student he obtained practical experience in the office of Hugo von Weidenfeld who at the time was involved in the construction of the prestigious 'Turkish' temple on Zirkusgasse.<sup>57</sup> Thanks to this specific training Gartner soon became one of the busiest architects in the area of synagogue design, which experienced a boom around 1900 due to the rapid growth of Jewish communities.<sup>58</sup> A short time after setting up his own office in 1888,

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<sup>55</sup> See J. Brandstetter, *Richard Modern*, in: *Architektenlexikon* (above, n. 13).

<sup>56</sup> See I. Scheidl, *Jakob Gartner*, in: *Architektenlexikon*, (above, n. 13).

<sup>57</sup> Jakob Gartner, application form for membership of the *Österreichischer Ingenieur- und Architektenverein*, 1894.

<sup>58</sup> Gartner is said to have built a total of around 25 synagogues (*Dr. Blochs Wochenschrift*, 29.4.1910, issue 17, p. 298).

Gartner erected a number of smaller religious buildings in the provinces. Gartner achieved a major break-through by winning 1st prize in the competition for a large synagogue in Troppau/Opava (CZ). He subsequently erected the building in a lavish Byzantine style – in the manner of Theophil Hansen.

In rapid succession he then obtained further commissions for a temple in Olmütz/Olomouc and, shortly afterwards, in Vienna, where he ultimately built four synagogues in the space of around ten years. Much like Max Fleischer's work, his synagogues often refer to Christian church building, for example in the use of a twin-tower façade with a central wheel window. On the other hand he did not shy from making use of richly coloured, oriental elements. The most striking example of this latter approach was the Favoriten Temple, which he built in 1896 on Humboldtgasse (illustration 15) and which served the strongly growing Jewish community in the 10th district as an association synagogue.

As well as his numerous religious buildings Gartner also designed a series of representative apartment houses in some of Vienna's better residential districts. He built a number of remarkable apartment buildings in the area known as the Stubenviertel, where the demolition of the Franz Joseph Barracks had created a large site for building development and allowed the last section of the Vienna Ringstraße to be completed. Like in his synagogue buildings, in this area, too, Gartner did not follow an avant-garde direction but strove for a compromise based on historicist, neo-Baroque design enriched with a number of Secessionist details. Although Adolf Loos derisively described this section of the Ringstraße as 'five-storey Moravian Ostrau' (for Loos clearly the epitome of provincialism),<sup>59</sup> this moderate direction was extremely popular with the people who commissioned buildings. To the present day Gartner's apartment houses have preserved a certain elegance that reflects the glory of fin-de-siècle culture (e.g. apartment building Stubenring no. 2, illustration 16).

Despite his important contributions to the area of Jewish religious building it was only in 1911 – when he was already quite elderly – that Gartner was appointed a board member of the Jewish religious community, as Wilhelm Stiassny's successor. During

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<sup>59</sup> A. Loos, *Heimatkunst*, 1914, in: *Trotzdem*, Vienna 1982, p. 123.

the First World War he was still involved with the provisional development of the new Jewish section of the Zentralfriedhof cemetery (which was developed further by Ignaz Reiser at the beginning of the 1920s), shortly after the collapse of the monarchy Gartner died in Vienna at the age of fifty-nine. Practically all his religious buildings were destroyed during the Nazi era and therefore it is only his elegant apartment buildings which have survived and today shape the character of the area around Stubenring, in particular.

## **2.2 Karl König – a Jewish professor**

Another important student of Friedrich von Schmidt was Karl König (1841–1915, illustration 17), one of the first Jewish professors in the field of architecture, who as the result of a teaching career that extended over almost fifty years had an influence on the Viennese architecture scene whose importance cannot be exaggerated. König, whose family came from Pressburg (Hungarian Poszony, Slovak Bratislava), was himself born in Vienna, where, the son of a clerk, he grew up in modest bourgeois circumstances. Practically the same age as Stiassny and Fleischer, he was a fellow student of both at the Polytechnikum and also later at the Academy. But after finishing his studies and a short period spent working for Friedrich von Schmidt, he took a completely different path to his two fellow students. Due to his restricted financial situation, König first of all worked in various construction offices, until finally the well-known Ringstraße architect Heinrich von Ferstel became aware of this brilliant draughtsman and in 1866 brought him as his assistant to the Polytechnikum, where König remained until he retired and slowly but steadily ascended the career ladder. It was during this period that the Polytechnikum gradually transformed from an institute focussed exclusively on engineering and technical construction to a proper architecture school – a development that was to be of great significance for König's professional career. In 1873 he was appointed associate professor for theory of architectural design and at the same time he began to work as a self-employed architect. However, due to his intensive involvement in the institute his built oeuvre during this period was limited. One of his first projects was the synagogue in Vienna 15, Turnergasse (1870–1871), which in formal design terms was based on Renaissance architecture, emphasising the integration of Jewish



culture in the Hellenistic-classical tradition, to which König felt close ties (illustration 18).<sup>60</sup> Two years later, in 1875, in course of transforming the old Polytechnikum into a Technical University, as already mentioned above, König was appointed to the board of the chair for propaedeutics, but still did not have his own chair. As he was a public servant König also received right of residence in Vienna to which, as the son of immigrant parents, he would otherwise have had no legal claim. In order not to hinder his further career, he left the Jewish religious community in the mid-1870s, but, remarkably, was never baptised and remained without any religious affiliation.<sup>61</sup> As can be gathered from his later work (e.g. 1889 the synagogue in Reichenberg/Liberec [CZ] or several tombs for Jewish dignitaries) and his various official functions (he was, for instance, a member of the Rothschild Foundation), despite being assimilated he stayed in close contact with Jewish circles.

The death of Heinrich von Ferstel led to a restructuring of the faculty and in 1885 König was appointed Ferstel's successor as professor for the architecture of classical antiquity and the Renaissance. It should be recalled that by this time König had taught at the university for almost twenty years and therefore had a disproportionately long waiting period behind him. The fact that he now had assistants freed him somewhat from everyday duties at the university, allowing König to concentrate more on his work as an architect. A short time previously he had erected the impressive commercial and residential building known as the 'Philipp-Hof', which brought him recognition among a wider public (Vienna 1, Albertinaplatz no.1, illustration 19). Through the use of a neo-Baroque repertoire of forms, in particular a dome – something that was completely new in bourgeois apartment buildings at that time – the Philipp-Hof became a paradigm of late historicist reception of the Baroque.<sup>62</sup> In the context of the discussion about the different nationalities, which grew more heated during this period, the Baroque was

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<sup>60</sup> This building was also destroyed. On Karl König's biography see J. Brandstetter, diploma thesis Vienna 1996; Kristan (above, n. 11).

<sup>61</sup> The exact date on which König left the Jewish community is disputed. Whereas Kristan states that in 1876, when his Heimatschein (certificate of nationality) was produced, König was already registered as without any religious faith, Brandstetter gives 1878 as the date of leaving the community (based on the registers of the IKG).

<sup>62</sup> The Philipp-Hof was destroyed towards the end of the Second World War, in spring 1945, during a bombing raid. Many bodies remained buried beneath the ruins. Alfred Hrdlicka's monument to the victims of fascism now stands in its place.

interpreted as the genuinely ‘Austrian style’, due largely to the writings of art historian Albert Ilg, who as tutor to the later successor to the throne, Franz Ferdinand, exerted a certain influence. Gradually this style replaced the repertoire of neo-Renaissance forms that had been widely used in architecture up to this time.<sup>63</sup> The conceptual closeness of Karl König’s work to ‘Austrian’ identity and to the House of Habsburg – an attitude that was anything but self-evident at the time and in fact was fiercely opposed by German nationalist circles – is evident also in the Palais Herberstein, which he erected towards the end of the 1890s (Vienna 1, Herrengasse no. 1). In design terms this building was conceived as a continuation of the wing of the Hofburg Palace on Michaelerplatz, which had been completed a short time previously and was based largely on old plans by Fischer von Erlach. König’s architectural treatment of the corner of the Palais Herberstein, which he crowned with a dome, provoked widespread discussion and – depending on the individual position – was seen as pretentious (as it directly quoted a motif used by Fischer von Erlach) or as an act of homage. Interestingly, apparently many people continued for years to regard this dome as a thorn in the side, and it was eventually removed during a much-debated remodelling of the building in the 1930s.<sup>64</sup> One of König’s last major commissions was the Haus der Industrie (illustration 20), erected in 1906/09 at a prominent position on Schwarzenbergplatz and intended as an impressive representation of Austrian industry, which, although it developed somewhat later than in much of Europe, was nevertheless highly successful. Disregarding the emergence of modernism which was introduced to Vienna around this time by Otto Wagner and his circle, here König again employed a late historicist vocabulary of neo-Baroque forms, whereby in this case we can safely assume that his approach reflected his client’s conservative taste. At around the same time and working in a similar manner König built the Palais Kuffner in the Cottage district of Döbling (Vienna 19, Peter-Jordan-Straße no. 1) for the younger son of the famous Ottakring brewing dynasty, which is designed in the manner of a French Renaissance palace. Even though at the time this approach was already regarded as somewhat ‘old-fashioned’, the harmonious

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<sup>63</sup> A. Ilg, *Die Zukunft des Barockstils*, Vienna 1880.

<sup>64</sup> Even in more recent literature this dome has been described as ‘brazen’ (R. Bösel, *Der Michaelerplatz in Wien*, Vienna 1991, p. 138).

proportions of the Villa Kuffner offer a convincing demonstration of Karl König's abilities. The shameful aspects of the later history of this building will be discussed in the final chapter.

A few years earlier, in 1886, Otto Wagner had sparked off a heated discussion between experts in Vienna with his *Moderne Architektur*. This work on architectural theory in which Wagner made a plea for a synthesis of technology and the art of building and, as a consequence, called for a 'naissance' of architecture with an aesthetic appropriate to the new forms of construction and new functions.<sup>65</sup> In an inaugural address given in 1901, following his appointment as Rector of the Technical University, König, who published relatively little himself and rarely tended to express an opinion on questions of theory, also confirmed the close connection between 'the art of architecture and the science of the engineer', but justified his ties to tradition by asserting that 'the study of the models that the past has provided us with is one of the main sources of architectural invention.'<sup>66</sup> In contrast to Otto Wagner questions of style played only a minor role for König. Working on the secure basis of his knowledge of the classical tradition, technical aspects such as construction, functional requirements and spatial organisation were more important to him.<sup>67</sup>

Karl König reached the highest level in the university system and was granted numerous titles and decorations. Perhaps the adherence to tradition that characterises his work can be explained by the fact that König, a typical assimilated Jew, felt especially committed to Historicism, as it was in the society of Ringstraße culture with its historicist architecture that Jews, after emerging from the world of the ghetto, had finally been able to establish themselves. The Jewish dream of assimilation and emancipation had, it was believed, been given material form in the palaces of the Todescos, Ephrussis, Epsteins and others. Consequently, the older generation of the Jewish bourgeoisie in particular often viewed the introduction of change with a degree of distrust.

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<sup>65</sup> O. Wagner, *Moderne Architektur*, Vienna 1896.

<sup>66</sup> See Kristan (above, n. 11), p. 41.

<sup>67</sup> See in this regard Chr. Long, 'An Alternative Path to Modernism: Carl König and the Architectural Education at the Vienna Technische Hochschule 1890–1913', in: *Journal of Architectural Education*, sept. 2001, p. 21ff.

This controversy between Karl König and Otto Wagner in the discourse on architectural theory at that time was reflected in their teaching work. Karl König's conservative direction at the Technische Hochschule contrasted with the progressive tendencies of the so-called 'Wagner School' (as the students of Otto Wagner were commonly called) at the Academy of Fine Arts, although it should be added here that these two institutions were organised very differently. Whereas at the Academy of Fine Arts teaching was based on the so-called 'master school' system, with each school directed by a professor, students at the Technische Hochschule attended different lectures given by different professors. König, who taught theory of architectural design, held a particularly important position within this organisation. In terms of the number of students taught alone, his achievements as a teacher were remarkable; in the course of his long working life he had around five hundred students. In addition the introduction of doctoral studies at the Technische Hochschule towards the end of the 1890s, while Karl König was still teaching there, considerably raised the status of this institution. Previously, graduates from the Technische Hochschule had often later attended the Academy to complete their training in an 'artistic' sense, but this practice was gradually abandoned. Significantly, very many of the first doctoral students, such as Max Fabiani, Alfred Teller, Oskar Strnad, Oskar Wlach, Josef Frank and numerous others, most of whom were Jews, submitted their dissertations to Karl König and later became important architects – they will be looked at again in later chapters. Given this fact, it is certainly legitimate to talk of a 'König School'.

Outside the debate about architecture theory, the antagonism between the schools of Otto Wagner and Karl König was aggravated by socio-political conflicts, in particular by increasingly radical anti-Semitic tendencies. Whereas at the Technische Hochschule up to 30 per cent of the enrolled students were members of what was called in German the 'Mosaic faith'<sup>68</sup>, Jewish students rarely studied at the Academy of Fine Arts – especially after the end of the liberal era – and most certainly not in the master school of Otto Wagner, who had a close relationship with Mayor Karl Lueger and was said to be

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<sup>68</sup> In the monarchy the official term for this religious affiliation was 'mosaisch' (Mosaic).

anti-Semitic.<sup>69</sup> Those Jewish students who did attend the Academy preferred the master school of Friedrich Ohmann, who was believed to have a more liberal attitude and who trained a number of Jewish architects.<sup>70</sup> This situation with the two different schools, which prevailed during the last two decades before the First World War, was later to provide a basis for wide areas of the Viennese architecture scene in the interwar period.

### **3 The students of Karl König before the First World War**

In a teaching career which, if his time as an assistant is included, lasted almost fifty years (ca. 1866–1913) Karl König had an enormous number of students, at least one third of whom were ‘of the Mosaic faith’ (the official terminology of the time). To take a look at all of them would go far beyond the scope of this work. In general terms the architects who are mentioned here erected particularly striking buildings in Vienna or played an important role in the cultural and historical context, although the use of even these selective criteria would actually produce far more names than could possibly be dealt with here. As a way of structuring this area somewhat better the architects are positioned within certain thematic contexts.

#### **3.1 The development of the modern big city – new kinds of building commissions**

##### **3.1.1 The department store**

In the 1880s and 1890s, around the time when the number of Jewish architecture students began to increase rapidly, Vienna underwent a dramatic change. Following the demolition of the fortifications and the development of the Ringstraße into a magnificent boulevard, the constant influx of people drawn by industry’s growing need for labour meant that the suburbs gradually lost their rural character and were finally incorporated in the city in 1890. The increasing concentration of people and capital launched Vienna’s transformation into a modern metropolis. New and – at least in

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<sup>69</sup> Of the approximately 190 students who completed Otto Wagner’s master school between 1894 and 1914 Ernst Lichtblau appears to have been the only Jew, and he converted shortly after finishing his studies in 1909. See Prokop (above, n. 9), p. 65.

<sup>70</sup> See I. Meder, ‘Lebens- und Arbeitsbedingungen jüdischer Architekten in Österreich’, in: A. Senarclens de Grancy/H. Zettelbauer (eds.), *Architektur. Vergessen – Jüdische Architekten in Graz*, Vienna et al. 2011.

Vienna – practically unknown kinds of building commissions presented architects with considerable challenges. The process of industrialisation required capital and led to the development of big banks, which wished to outwardly demonstrate their importance, while retailing moved increasingly from small, single-storey *Gwölb* (the Viennese term for a shop) into professionally organised stores. Although in this area Vienna could hardly compare with Western European cities such as Paris or London, there were a number of remarkable individual achievements. Jewish business people played an important role in this modernisation process, and in several branches had almost a monopoly. As mentioned earlier this applied above all to the cloth and textile trade. August Herzmansky belongs to this group of upwardly mobile businessmen. Not himself of Jewish origins, he had opened a textile shop on Mariahilfer Straße as early as 1863 and expanded successfully to become the biggest textile business in the Habsburg monarchy. He opened one of Vienna's first department stores, which over the years was extended and redesigned several times. At the end of 1890s he commissioned the architect **Maximilian Katscher** (1858–1917) to design a large new building for his business (Vienna 7, Stiftgasse no. 3). Katscher, who originally came from Austerlitz/Slavkov in Moravia (CZ), had studied under Karl König at the Technische Hochschule in Vienna in the mid-1870s and was among König's first students. He built a number of villas and apartment houses but it was perhaps his design for the Kurhaus (1885) in Baden near Vienna that established his reputation. This building in the style of an Italian Renaissance palazzo still shapes the character of the Kurpark in Baden today. A further prestigious commission secured by Katscher was for a synagogue in Graz (1890), which he designed, using neo-Romanesque forms, as an imposing domed building on a centralised plan.<sup>71</sup>

Katscher had already designed a children's home and a number of villas for the textile wholesaler August Herzmansky and his family in the early 1890s, when he was commissioned to build the department store. Still relatively new at the time, this building type made certain very specific demands. In addition to the structural problems

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<sup>71</sup> This synagogue, which was impressively located on the banks of the River Mur (Grieskai 58), was also destroyed by the Nazis. The new synagogue built the end of 1990s to a certain extent borrows from the earlier building in terms of structuring.

presented by the fact that the building consisted practically of just a single main space on all levels and included a large impressive staircase, in order to make optimum use of daylight the façade had to have large glass windows which were, of course, also used to present the goods. This contrasts sharply with the situation today, where artificial light has completely replaced natural light and department stores generally present a hermetically closed appearance on the outside.

In his building for Herzmansky's department store, which was finally completed in 1898 (the client did not live to see its completion), Katscher fulfilled both the functional and aesthetic requirements in a very clever way. By using a columnar frame system he was able to make a very spacious, glass-roofed interior in which the marble cladding to the cast iron columns together with the decorative railings to the gallery and the impressive main staircase conveyed the luxurious atmosphere that was called for.<sup>72</sup> Although only rudiments of the interior have survived – the staircase fell victim to various remodelling projects – the striking façade is still largely intact and offers an important example of the historicist understanding of architecture. The synthesis of highly modern glass architecture and neo-Renaissance forms made this façade an important advertising medium for the business (illustration 21).<sup>73</sup> The firm Herzmansky itself experienced an eventful history: in 1938 the business, which was then Jewish-owned, was 'Aryanised', taken over by the Vorarlberg textile firm Rhomberg and then completely liquidated.<sup>74</sup> The building near Mariahilfer Straße (Stiftgasse 1–3) is today owned by a German clothing chain.

Maximilian Katscher worked as an architect until the outbreak of the First World War, in his later years building a number of large apartment houses in Vienna. In 1914, already quite a mature man, he married, converting to Christianity on the occasion of his marriage. Three years later he died in Vienna at the age of fifty-nine.

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<sup>72</sup> A. Lehne, *Wiener Warenhäuser 1856–1914*, Vienna 1990, p. 170ff.

<sup>73</sup> *Wiener Bauindustriezeitung* 16.1899, supplement p. 14, plate 42.

<sup>74</sup> See T. Walzer/St. Tempel, *Unser Wien, Arisierung auf österreichisch*, Berlin 2001.

### 3.1.2 The residential and commercial building

Generally speaking, the department store was a relatively rare building type in Vienna – in contrast to western European cities such as Paris or London. A far more usual type was what is called the residential-commercial building, in which the lower floors were occupied by shops, while the upper storeys were reserved for apartments or offices. As a consequence of this mix of functions – it was not unusual for theatres, cinemas or other premises to also be included – buildings of this kind often presented architects with sizable challenges in terms of structural design, layout, appearance and much else. In this area, too, the students of Karl König produced pioneering achievements, possibly because they had learned from their teacher how to pragmatically apply classical principles of proportion, enabling them to create buildings that were both functional and aesthetically appealing. In the favourable economic climate that prevailed during the last years before the First World War a series of remarkable buildings of this type were erected. Among the multi-functional urban buildings from this period the Nestroy-Hof (Vienna 2, Nestroyplatz no. 1) is one of the earliest of its kind (illustration 22). Built in 1898 by **Oskar Marmorek** (1863–1909, illustration 23), in stylistic terms this building, which is still in existence, is typical of the transition from late Historicism to Secessionism. It is characterised by the use of remarkably large display windows in the business zone, which nevertheless harmonise with the residential part of the building on the upper floors. The architect successfully met the urban planning challenge presented by the difficulties of an extremely irregularly shaped site, while also cleverly resolving the demands of the various different functions (in addition to apartments and shops he also had to accommodate a coffee house and a small theatre).<sup>75</sup> Marmorek was integrated in the Jewish Viennese architecture scene in several respects, so to speak. Not only had he studied under Karl König, he also worked for a time in the studio of Wilhelm Stiassny and remained friends with him for the rest of his life. Born in Skala in Galicia (UA), the eldest son of a military doctor, he grew up in modest bourgeois circumstances. While his two younger brothers studied medicine and law, Oskar

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<sup>75</sup> F. Achleitner (above, n. 26), p. 97.



decided to become an architect.<sup>76</sup> At the start of his career he established a reputation principally as an exhibition architect. He attracted considerable attention with the big show *Venedig in Wien* [Venice in Vienna], which was presented in 1895 in the grounds of the Prater in Vienna and could be regarded as a predecessor to the Disneyland architecture of today.

Through his marriage to a daughter of a prosperous banker he obtained commissions for 'serious' buildings including the Nestroy-Hof referred to above. In terms of his approach to architecture Oskar Marmorek, who also worked as a journalist and for a short time published a number of periodicals, was close to the school of Otto Wagner. This is clearly illustrated by certain elements in his Rüdiger-Hof (Vienna 5, Hamburger Straße no. 20, illustration 24) erected in 1902, which are typical of the work of the Wagner School, such as the cubic massing of the building volume and the widely projecting eaves. Marmorek can certainly be regarded as one of the most original *Jugendstil* architects in Vienna with a very personal signature that is evident also in his highly individual use of colour in the exterior of his buildings. At the age of only forty-seven this gifted architect spectacularly put an end to his life by shooting himself beside his father's grave. Whether this was due to depression or because of financial difficulties has never been clarified. A further detail of biographical interest is that Marmorek became involved in Zionism at a very early stage and was a personal friend of Theodor Herzl. Although a committed Jew, Marmorek was never to build a synagogue, as none of his various competition entries was carried out, but it seems likely that he designed Herzl's tomb in Döbling Cemetery. In his novel *Altneuland* Herzl left a memorial to Marmorek in the figure of the architect Steineck.

Perhaps one of the most elegant residential-commercial buildings of this period is the so-called Residenzpalast (Vienna 1, Fleischmarkt no. 1 / Rotenturmstraße, illustration 25), erected in 1909/10 by **Arthur Baron** (1874–1944).<sup>77</sup> Baron was born in Vienna, into a merchant family that came originally from Hungary but had moved to Vienna in the 1860s. In the course of his studies under Karl König at the Technische Hochschule

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<sup>76</sup> See Kristan (above, n. 11)

<sup>77</sup> See Prokop (above, n. 9), p. 65ff.

he was one of the very few students to take the *strenge Prüfung* [literally: strict examination], a predecessor of the later final degree examination. As a result of this successful completion of his studies Arthur Baron was awarded the prestigious Ghega scholarship, which enabled him to take a lengthy study trip abroad. After a short period as an assistant at the university he set up his own office around 1900 and in the years that followed was among the most successful architects in Vienna, who produced buildings that combine a maximum degree of suitability for their function with great aesthetic quality.

By the time he erected the Residenzpalast, a corner building with two main street fronts which, even through its urban location alone, makes a most striking impression, Baron had already carried out a large number of building projects, among them the elegant Stadtparkhof (Vienna 3, Vordere Zollamtsstraße no. 11), and had reached a highpoint in his creative work. In contrast to his earlier projects, which were in a moderate late historicist style with certain Secessionist influences, in the Residenzpalast Baron introduced a number of highly topical themes that had been introduced a short time previously by prominent members of Otto Wagner's office such as Max Fabiani and Josef Plečnik in a number exemplary commercial buildings, like the Haus Artaria on Kohlmarkt or the so-called Zacherlhaus on Wildpretmarkt. As well as using a reinforced concrete frame, which allowed him maximum flexibility in designing the floor plans, Baron's applied his new-found modernity to the façade of the Residenzpalast, in which the different functions of the various parts of the building are clearly expressed. While the façade of the three lower floors that housed the commercial part of the building is made as a diaphanous wall built of metal and glass, the upper floors have solid walls clad with ceramic tiles.<sup>78</sup> This contrast between the functions was further emphasised by a differentiated use of colour: the tiles of the upper floors, which create a geometric pattern in shades of lilac-beige and violet, form an effective contrast to the black and gold framing of the business zone.

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<sup>78</sup> The tiles came from the famous firm Brüder Schwadron. Baron, who designed his buildings as a *Gesamtkunstwerk*, usually worked with the leading businesses and artists of the time, for instance the glazier Geyling or the sculptor and ceramist Michael Powolny.

Alongside the aesthetic qualities of this relatively large building, which was articulated by means of three courtyards, other important criteria in the design included multi-functionality and maximum exploitation of the site area. Several lifts and what is known as a ‘paternoster’ (an old lift system in which the open cabins travelled continuously in a loop system and were entered while they were slowly moving) accessed the upper floors. In the basements, where the use of a completely new concrete system enabled large spaces without any intermediate columns to be made, the ‘Rotenturmkino’ [cinema] and the ‘Residenztheater’ were housed, the latter giving the building its name.<sup>79</sup> The theatre was fitted out by the well-known architects’ office of Krauss & Tölk and still exists today under the name ‘Kammerspiele’. Baron was himself the owner of the Rotenturmkino and in fact he included cinemas, which enjoyed a rapidly growing popularity at that time, in several of his apartment buildings. Alongside the various offices and apartments in the building, the top floor was occupied by what was known as the ‘Schwedische Turnschule’ [Swedish Gymnasium]. This was one of the first commissions by the young Josef Frank – who will be looked at in detail later – and was decorated in a kind of Swedish folklore style.<sup>80</sup> Arthur Baron and Frank appear to have been friends, as Frank lived in an apartment in a building erected by Baron (Vienna 4, Wiedner Hauptstraße no. 64). After an eventful history the Residenzpalast was finally acquired by the BAWAG, which unfortunately gutted the building, so that today only the exterior survives.

A short time later, next to the Residenzpalast, Baron erected two highly remarkable printing houses for the Steyermühl publishing house (Vienna 1, Fleischmarkt nos. 3 and 5). These buildings also combine a functional response to technical demands with the highest aesthetic quality and are a model of early glass and iron architecture (illustration 26). Baron worked very successfully until the outbreak of the First World War. The difficult economic situation during the interwar period then led him to retire to private life. After the *Anschluss* of Austria into Nazi Germany in 1938, as a Jew he was forced to emigrate under humiliating circumstances, in the process losing his

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<sup>79</sup> Occasionally this building is known as the Orendi-Palast after the carpet shop that originally occupied the commercial zone.

<sup>80</sup> Welzig (above, n. 11), p. 23ff.

numerous properties and cinemas. Although 30 August 1944 has been confirmed as his date of death the destination to which he emigrated (i.e. the place where he died) and the details of his death are unclear. His widow, the painter Kitty Kassowitz, returned to Vienna after the war and a number of the properties were returned to her.<sup>81</sup>

A further remarkable residential and commercial building that contributes to forming the character of the inner city is the Tuchlaubenhof, which was built in 1912 by two former König students, **Emmerich Spielmann** (1872–?) and **Alfred Teller** (1881–?) (Vienna 1, Tuchlauben no. 7–7a, illustration 27), and is a large complex that occupies three building lots.<sup>82</sup> Following the model of the earlier building on the site, which dated from the *Vormärz* era, the new Tuchlaubenhof also included a shopping arcade connecting Tuchlauben with Seitzergasse. In the typical manner of the time this building was characterised by a highly functional approach to design. There were apartments on the upper floors, shops in the lower part of the building and various small halls, a cinema and a gallery in the basement. The extensive complex had four staircases, all of which were entered from the arcade. Typically for the time the exteriors of the residential and commercial areas were designed very differently. Whereas the lower commercial zone was clad throughout with white tiles, the upper floors have a horizontally ribbed plaster façade in which groups of windows are combined within ceramic surrounds. A classical, temple-like roof top element underlined the building's representative aspirations. The two architects of this highly progressive building had formed an office partnership only a few years previously, in 1908. One of their first projects, a competition entry for the War Ministry in Vienna, had been awarded a prize. In the years that followed they built numerous remarkable villas and commercial buildings.<sup>83</sup>

Emmerich Spielmann, the older of the two, was born in Vienna. After completing his studies he worked for some time for Wilhelm Stiassny before starting to work for himself, initially together with his former fellow student Ernst Lindner. Alfred Teller, who came from Prague, where he had begun his studies, was one of the first graduates

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<sup>81</sup> Information from register archive of the IKG.

<sup>82</sup> Today the luxury shopping district known as the Goldenes Quartier is located here.

<sup>83</sup> See Prokop (above, n. 9).

of the Technical University to complete his architectural education with a doctorate. While working on his dissertation, in 1903/04, together with his fellow student Oskar Strnad, he entered the big competition for a synagogue in Trieste. Their design, which was not built, will be discussed further below. In his dissertation Teller examined Roman Baroque architecture, in particular the work of Pietro da Cortona, and, in a certain sense, this is reflected in a number of highly individual details in his architectural work. These two architects worked together until the beginning of the 1930s. Alongside various residential buildings, including the elegant apartment building at Vienna 3, Salesianergasse nos. 29–33, which for many years was attributed to Josef Hoffmann, they concentrated in particular on the construction of factory buildings. Why the business partnership broke up is not known. In 1939 as Jews they were both compelled to emigrate. While Spielman gave notice of his departure for London, Teller probably went to the USA. After they left Vienna, however, all trace of them was lost. Around this time **Arnold Karplus** (1877–1943) also made a name for himself in the area of combined residential and commercial buildings. He came from Wigstadtl/Vitkov (at that time part of Austrian Silesia), went to school in Troppau/Opava, and then studied at the Technische Hochschule in Vienna from 1897 to 1902, where, as well as Karl König, his teachers also included Max Ferstel and Karl Mayreder. Karplus then went to the Technical University in Prague for a number of years, where he worked as an assistant while writing his dissertation. After being conferred with the title Dr. tech. in 1903 he returned to Vienna for good where, after a short time spent acquiring practical experience, he set up his own office.<sup>84</sup> In the years leading up to the First World War as well as building a number of houses and industrial buildings, including the Dambachwerke complex in Windisch-Garsten (Upper Austria), he designed a series of extremely impressive residential-commercial buildings, many of which were multi-functional, but in formal terms generally remained firmly tied to tradition, a characteristic of the work of Karl König's students. Alongside certain elements borrowed from the Wiener Werkstätte, *Heimatsstil* influences played a major role in his work, often linked with a very emphatic modelling of the building volume.

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<sup>84</sup> See H. Weihsmann u. D. Herzner, Arnold Karplus in: *Architektenlexikon* (above, n. 13).

The building in Vienna 14, Nisselgasse no. 1 (illustration 28) offers an example. Through its position alone this corner building, which offered an exceptional mix of functions, stands out in its urban context. A cinema and a coffee house occupied the basement and the ground floor, while the upper floors were used for offices or apartments. Reflecting its somewhat peripheral location in the 14th district, the building is not very high and the strongly articulated *Heimatstil* roof seems appropriate to the rather tranquil atmosphere in this area on the fringe of the city.

Karplus' concentration on residential buildings of a higher quality was also reflected in his publication *Neue Landhäuser und Villen in Österreich* (1910), which today remains an important source for research into villa building during this period. Shortly before the First World War he became construction director of the Wiener Baugesellschaft, a position he retained until the company was dissolved in 1927 and which obliged him to somewhat reduce his work-load as a self-employed architect. He enlisted during the First World War and served in a number of construction divisions of the Austrian army, where he dealt with the construction of functional military buildings. His professional career after the First World War reflected the difficult economic situation during those years. After the winding-down of the Wiener Baugesellschaft he attempted to acquire an interest in other construction firms most of which, however, survived for only a short time. Towards the end of the 1920s this led him to concentrate more on his work as a self-employed architect. He designed a housing complex for 'Red Vienna' (Dittes-Hof, Vienna 19, Döblinger Gürtel no. 14), and his Villa Krasny (Vienna 19, Fürfanggasse no. 5, illustration 29), which he built in 1928, is one of the finest buildings of the interwar period. Abandoning the more traditional style of the pre-war era, here Karplus, who evidently followed closely what was happening in the world of architecture, based his design on the contemporary avant-garde. This is quite remarkable, given that the building was erected several years before the Werkbundsiedlung, which is generally seen as a highpoint of Viennese modernism. Alongside the unmistakable influence of Adolf Loos, manifested, for instance, in the use of plain cubic forms, many details in the Villa Krasny are based on ideas of Le Corbusier, such as the external staircase, an unusual feature in this part of the world, and the garden on the flat roof. Described by Friedrich Achleitner as 'one of the loveliest

private houses in Vienna’<sup>85</sup>, the interior of this house was furnished by the firm ‘Haus and Garten’, which was run by Josef Frank and Oskar Wlach and will be discussed further below.

The modernity of the Villa Krasny did not remain an isolated case in Arnold Karplus’ oeuvre, around 1930 he erected a post office building in his native Wigstadl, which had a rounded corner solution in the manner of Erich Mendelsohn and reflected the most modern trends of its time.<sup>86</sup> Around 1934 his son **Gerhard Karplus** (1909–1995), who had recently completed his study of architecture at the Technische Hochschule, joined his father’s office.<sup>87</sup> As well as redesigning Palais Kranz (which had been adapted by Oskar Strnad) in 1937/38 they erected an apartment building in the 3rd district, Am Modenapark no. 14. This residential building, which formed part of the development of the Modenapark grounds (alongside the Freihaus area one of the biggest urban planning projects of the *Ständestaat*) was remarkable for its elegant proportions and the clarity with which it was articulated. Despite this promising project a short time later the events of the *Anschluss* in March 1938 overtook both father and son. They soon had to close the office and Gerhard Karplus was able to flee to New York via Prague, Zurich and London.<sup>88</sup> Only a year later he managed to bring his parents to the USA. His father died during the war but Gerhard Karplus was able to establish himself professionally in America. After first working in an architect’s office, following the war he became self-employed and concentrated on the design of large industrial buildings. Gerhard Karplus’ fate is one of the few with a relatively conciliatory outcome. After being commissioned by the Austrian government to fit-out the Austrian Cultural Institute and the office of Austrian Airlines in New York, in 1966 he was awarded the Golden Medal for Services of the Republic of Austria. At the end of the 1980s, by which time he was an elderly man, Karplus appeared as one of the witnesses of the events of March 1938 in Hugo Portisch’ TV documentary for ORF (Austrian State Television).

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<sup>85</sup> Achleitner (above, n. 26), p. 68.

<sup>86</sup> Arnold Karplus’ work in Wigstadl, which seems to have been quite intensive, is relatively poorly documented. As early as 1901 he was involved in planning the Stadtpark there and later he regularly carried out projects of very different kinds in this area.

<sup>87</sup> The possibility that Gerhard Karplus was involved in a number of projects before joining the office (as his father states) cannot be excluded, but is disputed.

<sup>88</sup> See Boeckl (above, n. 10); Weihsmann (above, n. 13).

In the context of mixed residential and commercial buildings mention should also be made of **Ludwig Schmidl** (1863–1924), who in his school for the 'Israelitischer Mädchenunterstützungsverein' (Vienna 9, Seegasse no. 16) dealt, in a rather ingenious fashion, with the multi-functional requirements of modern urban buildings. Schmidl came from a well-to-do family, studied at the Technische Hochschule under Karl König, after which he found a position with the Nordwestbahn. Parallel to this he occasionally also worked as a self-employed architect. In the course of this activity he erected two school buildings that are remarkable both from an architectural point of view and in terms of cultural history. Both projects developed against the background of various feminist activities, in which Jewish women were particularly involved at the beginning of the previous century and which concentrated particularly on improving educational opportunities for young girls. One of these projects was for a private girl's secondary school in Vienna-Döbling (Gymnasiumstraße no. 77). Salka Goldmann, the director and possibly co-initiator, was a very active personality in the 'Wiener Frauenclub'. At that time this women's club was one of the most important meeting places for intellectual women and women involved in the arts and it will be discussed further below. The school building erected by Ludwig Schmidl in 1905/08 used forms borrowed from Viennese Secessionism and was approximately the size of a large villa – appropriate to its location at the edge of the Cottage District in Währing – and the high standard of its facilities and fittings clearly suggest that it was intended for the daughters of well-to-do families.<sup>89</sup>

Only a short time later the architect was commissioned to design a school building for the *Israelitischer Mädchenunterstützungsverein* [Association for the Support of Jewish Girls]. It seems likely that Salka Goldmann recommended Schmidl to Regine Ullman, the cofounder of this association and later school director, as Ullman was also a member of the Frauenclub. This association was devoted to the education of poor Jewish girls and enabled them to learn one of what were regarded at the time as women's professions.<sup>90</sup> In architectural terms the design task was somewhat complicated, as the

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<sup>89</sup> Today this building houses the *Hans-Kelsen Institut*.

<sup>90</sup> See E. Malleier, 'Regine Ullmann und der Mädchenunterstützungsverein in Wien', in: *Ariadne (Almanach des Archivs der deutschen Frauenbewegung)*, issue 35, May 1999, p. 28ff.



building to be erected on a site in Seegasse in the 9th district, diagonally opposite the old Jewish hospital, had to accommodate not only a school but also rental apartments on the upper floors, intended to provide an income for the association. Additionally, the school rooms had to include workshops for practical training and much more. Through his extremely clever layout of the association building Schmidl succeeded in meeting the different, potentially conflicting demands. He was able to separate the areas by making two entrances from the street, one for the school and the other for the rooms of the association and the apartments on the upper floors. In order to meet the requirements of a 'public building' the vestibule of the school was designed in a more representative manner, with wall tiling and painting that reflected a Wiener Werkstätte aesthetic. The building's different functions were also legible in the façade, where a wide floral frieze separated the residential and school sections from each other. The reliefs on the pilasters, which show pretty young girls with the various utensils used in learning their trades, have survived (illustration 30).<sup>91</sup> However, shortly after the First World War the difficult economic situation forced the association to sell the building to the Schwedische Israelmission, which in the Nazi era was of great service in helping Jews – especially those who had been baptized – to emigrate. The building is today owned by the Protestant community.<sup>92</sup>

As well as planning a number of representative villas in Hietzing and Währing Ludwig Schmidl designed a further, highly remarkable building which today is a protected industrial monument. As an engineer with the Nordwestbahn he had experience in erecting technical buildings, and 1906 he planned a machine hall for the industrialist Maximilian Luzzatto (Vienna 10, Siccardsburggasse no. 36), which has a delicately made glass roof that represents a fine example of the glass and iron architecture of the time and consequently had to be preserved when the building was extensively remodelled.<sup>93</sup> Maximilian Luzzatto came from an old Jewish family in Trieste and, interestingly, his wife (Elizabeth, née Grünbaum) was also active in the women's

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<sup>91</sup> Today the building is used as by a Protestant community. See U. Prokop, 'Spuren des jüdischen Wien. Die Schule des israelitischen Mädchenunterstützungsvereines in der Rossau', in *David* 22.2010, issue. 85, p. 32ff.

<sup>92</sup> See the story of the Messiaskapelle in [www.meka.at/history](http://www.meka.at/history).

<sup>93</sup> Achleitner (above, n. 26), p. 282.

movement and was a board member and co-founder of the 'Österreichisches Komitee für Frauenstimmrechte'.<sup>94</sup> Why so many of Ludwig Schmidl's projects were related to the women's movement of the time is something that can no longer be explained. The architect himself never married, but when he died in 1924 he left a considerable fortune to the woman who was his life partner.

### 3.1.3 Banks and insurance companies

The economic boom in Vienna increasingly made the city into an important financial centre and, particularly in the years shortly before the First World War, led to the construction of numerous, extremely impressive bank buildings, which today still play a significant role in shaping the appearance and character of the city, and of the 1st district in particular. In this field the studio of Ernst Gotthilf and Alexander Neumann, had almost a monopoly. They were fellow students at the Technische Hochschule, where they studied under Karl König, and later worked at the same time in the office of Fellner & Helmer, the specialists in theatre design. They were also linked by their background, as both came from prosperous Jewish families, which may explain their excellent contacts to the world of finance. As has already been said they both studied at the Technische Hochschule in Vienna, but in terms of further education and the start to their professional careers they initially followed very different paths. The elder of the two, **Alexander Neumann** (1861–1947), came from Bielitz/Bielsko-Biala, which at the time was in Austrian Silesia. After completing his studies in Vienna he worked in a several different studios, but parallel to this also worked as a self-employed architect and designed a number of apartment buildings and villas. Around 1906 he designed the Prague headquarters of the Wiener Bankverein, and this building apparently helped establish his reputation in banking circles. **Ernst Gotthilf** (1865–1950, actually called Gotthilf-Miskolczy) was five years younger and was the son of an ennobled industrialist from Temesvar, which at that time formed part of Hungary (today the town is in Romania). His education was more comprehensive than that of Neumann. As well as studying at the Technische Hochschule in Zürich he also attended the Academy of Fine

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<sup>94</sup> [www.onb.acat/ariadne](http://www.onb.acat/ariadne)

Arts in Vienna, where he was in the master school of Carl Hasenauer and where his talent was acknowledged with a prize.<sup>95</sup> After a short period spent acquiring practical experience he set up his own office at a relatively young age and soon obtained several major commissions from the Wiener Kaufmannschaft [a merchants' association], including such important projects as the association's own hospital (Vienna 19, Peter-Jordan-Straße no. 82, today part of the Universität für Bodenkultur, illustration 31). The exterior of this hospital, which was erected in 1908 in the elegant Cottage district, clearly borrows from palace architecture. In visual terms it is not merely a functional building but reflects the client's lofty aspirations. Under highly favourable circumstances – as regards both their education and their stock of clients from banking and business circles – this pair of architects set up an office partnership in 1909 and, in the space of just a few years, built four large bank and insurance buildings in Vienna alone. Their trademark was an almost lavish style that conveyed their clients' importance and the status, but they also managed to skilfully incorporate discreet references to contemporary modernism.

The first project in this series was the building for the Wiener Bankverein (properly called: Creditanstalt-Bankverein, founded in 1855 by Anselm Rothschild) in Vienna 1, Schottengasse nos. 6–8, which was built between 1909 and 1912. This was quickly followed around 1913 by the headquarters of the NÖ-Escompte-Gesellschaft (Vienna 1, Am Hof no. 2)<sup>96</sup> and the building for the Anker-Versicherung insurance company (Vienna 1, Hoher Markt nos. 10–11); somewhat later, between 1915 and 1917, the building for the Österreichische Creditanstalt (Vienna 1, Renngasse no. 2) followed. All four buildings are, geographically, relatively close to each other and each of them occupies a very prominent position in the inner city. Although designed individually, they all clearly bear the signature of this team of architects. Perhaps the most striking building in this group, and an important example of the neoclassicism of the years shortly before the First World War, is the Wiener Bankverein building (illustration 32), which through its prominent corner position on Schottenring aspires to be part of

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<sup>95</sup> See J. Brandstetter, 'Alexander Neumann und Ernst Gotthilf', in: *Architektenlexikon* (above, n. 13).

<sup>96</sup> The building has been recently converted into a hotel.

Ringstraße architecture, even though the entrance front, which is the main façade, faces onto Schottengasse. In general the way in which the building is articulated, with a projecting central element emphasised by a stepped pediment motif and a columnar portico, clearly follows traditional historicist principles but a number of the formal elements in the design show that the architects also incorporated the latest tendencies of Viennese modernism. This is illustrated, for instance, by the restrained decoration of the exterior and the use of broad giant pilasters without fluting that lend the façade a certain sobriety. Indeed the relatively economic use of decoration in the form of individual elements mounted on the walls may have been influenced by Josef Hoffman. This bank building, which underwent an eventful history and several changes of ownership, has survived to the present day relatively unchanged.<sup>97</sup> The elegant banking hall is one of the few examples of interior design from this era to have survived.

These architects continued their career successfully, erecting further bank buildings and elegant palace-type buildings in Graz, Prague and elsewhere. Even during the First World War, when civilian building almost came to a standstill, they received a spectacular commission from the businessman Daniel Fanto who had amassed a sizable fortune through dealing in mineral oil and spirits. During the last years of the war, in 1917/18, they erected for him the building known as Palais Fanto at an extremely prominent location, Schwarzenbergplatz no. 6 (illustration 33). In contrast to the bank buildings designed just a few years earlier, here they employed a very traditional and explicitly neo-Baroque idiom, much in the manner of their teacher Karl König and in accordance with the style of the great Ringstraße architecture which, quite possibly, reflected their client's preferences and taste. The ground plan of this building is an acute-angled triangle with a projecting element at one corner in the form of a cylinder topped by a dome, reminiscent of Karl König's Philipp-Hof. Despite a number of later adaptations the Palais Fanto has been preserved largely intact. Today the ArnoldSchönberg Center occupies part of the building. Due to economic difficulties during the interwar period this team of architects was able to carry out only a few more buildings. After the so-called *Anschluss* of Austria, both were forced to emigrate in

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<sup>97</sup> This building is presently owned by Bank Austria.

1939, despite their advanced age. Neumann went via Australia to New Zealand, where he died aged eighty-seven. Gotthilf fled to England where, having been robbed of his entire fortune, he died in poverty in 1950.

## 3.2 New directions in synagogue building

### 3.2.1 Projects that never came to fruition and the buildings that followed them – Ernst Lindner and Oskar Marmorek

Although many of Karl König's students were involved in designing the new types of buildings that were needed in the big city, synagogue building remained an important theme but here too the context was changing, the historicist vocabulary of forms was being gradually abandoned and a search undertaken for new, contemporary solutions. Particularly when, in 1903, Otto Wagner embarked on a new path in Christian religious building with his church Am Steinhof, Jewish architects, especially those from younger generation, tried to renew the area of synagogue building, making very similar demands in terms of functionality, good visibility, and better inclusion of the faithful in the religious service. Towards the end of 1903 the relatively large and prosperous Jewish community in Trieste – which at that time was still part of the Danube monarchy – set up a competition for a new synagogue in which numerous Viennese architects took part, using the competition as an opportunity to present their new ideas.<sup>98</sup> As already mentioned those who entered this competition included Oskar Marmorek and Alfred Teller (in a working partnership with Oskar Strnad). Many of the designs reveal an effort to find an alternative to the usual Moorish-oriental or neo-Gothic styles, as represented by the work of Wilhelm Stiassny or Max Fleischer. It was certainly not by chance that several of the designs reveal the direct influence of a concrete study of Wagner's Am Steinhof' church and in general most of the competition entries feature centrally planned, domed buildings that use a reduced 'modern' idiom. In particular the prize-winning project by **Theodor Schreier** (1873–1943) and **Ernst Lindner** (1870–1965) offered a daring synthesis of the criteria outlined above

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<sup>98</sup> Numerous non-Jewish architects also took place in this competition, see E. Fuks, 'Der Synagogenwettbewerb von Triest', in: *Oskar Strnad 1897–1935* (exh. cat.), Salzburg/Munich 2007.

(illustration 34).<sup>99</sup> Ernst Lindner (illustration 35, portrait) and Theodor Schreier, who were also students of Karl König, formed a partnership around 1900. Schreier was from Vienna, while Lindner came from the little town of Skotschau/Skoczow in Austrian Silesia (today Poland). Consequently as well as working in Vienna, the partnership also planned buildings in this region of the Danube Monarchy. The twin town Bielitz-Biała/Bielsko-Biała experienced a remarkable boom around this time and as well as erecting various residential buildings Lindner and Schreier were also able to build a number of schools and local authority buildings there. They also specialised in building synagogues. As early as 1901/02 they had built prayer houses in Lindner's home town Skotschau as well as in nearby Ustron. While the larger synagogue in Skotschau was conventional, in the relatively small synagogue in Ustron they experimented with the concept of a centrally planned building.

Regrettably, their prize-winning design for Trieste, which would have represented an interesting development in the area of synagogue building, was not built, as the commission went instead to a local Trieste office. Despite this, the prestigious award was, very naturally, noted in specialist circles and brought this office a certain degree of fame. However, for reasons unknown, Lindner and Schreier soon went their separate ways. Both later had an opportunity to work again in the area of Jewish religious buildings. Around 1908 Lindner built a temple in Neutitschein/Novy Jitschin (CZ) which – possibly in response to the clients' express wishes – was rather conventional. Other interesting designs for synagogues, in which Lindner tried to depart from the usual scheme of historicist buildings, using instead a vocabulary of forms influenced by the Wagner School, remained just paper architecture.<sup>100</sup> In the years leading up to the First World War Theodor Schreier built a number of houses of real quality in some of the better villa districts of Vienna, such as the villa with rented apartments at Linneplatz no. 3 (illustration 36), opposite the Hochschule für Bodenkultur. Working in partnership with Viktor Postelberg (1869–1920), he built a temple in St. Pölten/NÖ which is remarkable in architectural historical terms and essentially represents a

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<sup>99</sup> Ibid; see also *Wiener Bauindustriezeitung* 9.12.1904.

<sup>100</sup> *Wiener Bauindustriezeitung* 26.1909, p. 339, plate 77.

simplified further development of the Trieste project (illustration 37).<sup>101</sup> This building, which combines *Jugendstil* elements with neo-Baroque structures, is one of the few surviving synagogues in Austria but is no longer used for religious purposes. After separating from his partner, as well as working on the synagogue projects already mentioned, Lindner concentrated in particular on commissions in Bielitz, where he built numerous apartment houses as well as schools and other buildings. In Vienna, too, a number of buildings were erected according to his plans, including an extremely decorative pair of houses in Vienna-Döbling (Huleschgasse nos. 5–7, illustration 38). Little is known about the work of Lindner and Schreier in the interwar period. After the end of the First World War Lindner no longer worked as a self-employed architect but was head of the technical department of the Vienna Jewish religious body. In this role he was responsible for the renovation of the temple in Seitenstettengasse in 1921. After the so-called *Anschluss* Lindner managed to emigrate with his family to the USA via England and he died in New York in 1956 at an advanced age.<sup>102</sup> Theodor Schreier had also given up freelance work in the 1920s due to the difficult economic situation and found a position in the technical office of the Österreichische Creditanstalt. Unlike Lindner, however, he believed that he was not in any immediate danger due to his age and the fact that he had served on the front in the First World War. This was, of course, illusory and he was deported with his wife to Theresienstadt in 1942 where he died a miserable death in January of the following year.<sup>103</sup>

Although the participation of Viennese architects in the competition for the Trieste synagogue had not been a success, it nevertheless introduced new ideas in the area of Jewish religious building, which were soon to exert an influence in Vienna, too. A short time later, in 1906, discussions about a synagogue project in Vienna were initiated by the Tempelverein Döbling [Döbling Temple Association], under the direction of Julius Lederer. This association wanted to make a modest prayer space in an existing

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<sup>101</sup> Viktor Postelberg (1869–1920), who was born in Vienna and died while still relatively young, was also a student of Karl König. He became self-employed at a very early stage and worked mostly in the field of industrial buildings. In Vienna, as well as a number of villas, he also built the secondary school on Albertgasse and a maternity home. The synagogue in St. Pölten was his only Jewish religious building.

<sup>102</sup> Information kindly provided by Doris Baum, Bristol, USA (daughter of Ernst Lindner).

<sup>103</sup> Chr. Gruber, Theodor Schreier, in: *Österreichisches Biografisches Lexikon*, issue 11, 2003.

apartment building in Vienna-Döbling, Dollinergasse no. 3. In architectural terms the task consisted of fitting-out a synagogue in rooms in this building and adapting the external appearance accordingly.<sup>104</sup> Oskar Marmorek, who has already been mentioned above, submitted proposals for this project and published an original design (illustration 39), which retained the residential character of the Dollinergasse building but also indicated its religious function through a number of architectural details such as a generously dimensioned portal and rich decorative work, including a number of Stars of David.<sup>105</sup> It is interesting that Marmorek showed no hesitation in introducing the typical ‘modern’ idiom commonly used by the Wagner School. From the way they are depicted the figures shown strolling around the building in the design drawings clearly do not represent orthodox Jews, but rather elegant upper middle-class people dressed in the fashions of the time. As it would clearly have been far too expensive this project was not carried out. Marmorek’s design, together with the projects by Lindner and Schreier, which were also not carried out, offer interesting evidence of efforts by the students of Karl König to explore new directions in the area of synagogue building by examining contemporary modernism. However, the outbreak of the First World War prevented these ideas from being developed any further.

The temple project on Dollinergasse was eventually carried out at a far more modest scale and rather than one of the big architects, **Julius Wohlmuth** (1874–1931), a local architect, obtained the commission. He had only attended the Höhere Staatsgewerbeschule and usually the planning of ‘monumental buildings’ – a category that naturally included synagogues – was not entrusted to an architect without any academic training.<sup>106</sup> But, as this project only involved the adaptation of an existing apartment building, apparently this restriction was not of any relevance. Possibly in awarding this contract consideration may have been given to the fact that Wollmuth himself belonged to the Tempelverein Döbling and, although still young, had already made his name by building a number of spectacularly elegant villas that reflected the

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<sup>104</sup> See Genée (above, n. 8), p. 73.

<sup>105</sup> *Der Architekt* 12.1906, plate 80. It has not been clarified if this was a competition entry or whether Marmorek produced it on his own initiative.

<sup>106</sup> See U. Prokop, ‘Von der Synagoge Dollinergasse zur “Riviera an der Donau”’. *Der Architekt Julius Wohlmuth*, in: *David* 21.2009, issue 83, p. 44fff.



modernist canon of the time. In his project for the Döbling synagogue he utilized these qualities and, interestingly, his design had certain similarities to Marmorek's proposal, although the architectural details were considerably more modest. The building, which had a fine Star of David in the central gable, made intentional borrowings from the monumental architecture of the Wagner School and was a rare example of a synagogue that used the stylistic idiom of early modernism (illustration 40).

Until the outbreak of the First World War Wohlmuth was able to carry out a number of remarkable projects, including the elegant classicist residential and commercial building Vienna 19, Grinzinger Allee no. 1 (illustration 41), which, thanks to its exposed position, is today still a very striking building in its setting. The history of the Döbling synagogue was less fortunate, like all such Jewish facilities it was destroyed in 1938 during what is called *Reichspogromnacht*. Later converted into an apartment building, it was demolished completely in 1995 so that today not the slightest traces of this remarkable building remain. Wohlmuth's career did not continue successfully. Due to the difficult economic climate in the interwar period he had to temporarily give up working as an architect and took a job as an insurance representative. At the beginning of the 1920s he moved to Kritzensdorf near Klosterneuburg, Lower Austria, where, before the war, he had often spent the summer months with his family. Around this time Kritzensdorf was experiencing a boom as a local recreation area for Vienna and was particularly popular among Jewish artists and intellectuals.<sup>107</sup> In the mid-1920s Wohlmuth erected several weekend houses in this rapidly growing beach colony, including a beach house for the dentist Dr. Grünberg.<sup>108</sup> In 1926, when work started on erecting a new building to replace the existing river baths which had become far too small, it was Julius Wohlmuth who submitted the application to the Lower Austrian Government and played an important role in the planning and preparation of the tender documents. In partnership with the Viennese architect Heinz Rollig he worked until

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<sup>107</sup> See L. Fischer, *Die Riviera an der Donau*, Vienna i.a. 2004. In this context the Viennese lawyer Dr. Marcel Halfon played a not unimportant role, as head of the association of weekend house owners he regularly supported Kritzensdorf and wrote about it a number of times (including M. Halfon, 'Die Wochenendstadt', in: *profil*, 1933, p. 228).

<sup>108</sup> This house was at Kritzensdorf, Donaulände no. 1. After 'Aryanisation' in 1938 it was rebuilt a number of times. Published in M. Halfon, *Das Wochenendhaus*, Vienna 1928.

1928 on the design of the new Danube River baths, in which the rows of huts and changing cabins were architecturally unified by a central square and a comprehensive infrastructure was built.<sup>109</sup> Although it has undergone a number of changes, much of this complex still exists today (illustration 42). This was to be Wohlmuth's last project, as he died in Vienna in 1931 at the relatively young age of fifty-six.

### **3.2.2 Innovative religious buildings on the path to modernism – Ignaz Reiser and Arthur Grünberger**

As regards the history of synagogue construction at the beginning of the 20th century, notwithstanding the relatively modest but progressive building on Dollnergasse, the search for a new stylistic idiom was continued by the students of Karl König. It was **Ignaz Reiser** (1863–1940, illustration 43) who in his Kaiser-Jubiläumstempel in Vienna 2, Pazmanitengasse no. 6, which was commissioned in 1910 by the local temple association to mark the occasion of the Emperor's 80<sup>th</sup> birthday, attempted to liberate himself from the prevailing models. Given the fact that Reiser – similar to his fellow student Marmorek – had studied under Karl König and subsequently worked in the studio of Wilhelm Stiassny, he can certainly be included in the innermost circle of Viennese Jewish architects. He acquired experience in the area of synagogue building at an early stage when, at the start of the 1890s, he was site construction manager for the Gablonz Temple designed by Wilhelm Stiassny. After the latter's death he became his successor, so to speak, and one of the most important architects in the field of Jewish religious building, where he very much went his own way.

In 1910, when Reiser was commissioned to build the Jubiläumstempel, he was already involved in building a synagogue in Mödling, Lower Austria, which offers an indication of how highly regarded he was. The innovative approach taken by Reiser in the building on Pazmanitengasse included both the use of new technologies and methods of construction as well as new directions in formal design terms. Here the experience that Reiser had acquired in erecting a number of remarkable residential-commercial

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<sup>109</sup> *Klosterneuburg, Sonderband 2 (die Architektur der Klosterneuburger Strandbäder)*, Klosterneuburg 2007.

buildings a short time earlier most probably played a role.<sup>110</sup> In 1911 he erected a building known as the Kai-Palast (Vienna 1, Franz-Josefs-Kai no. 47, illustration 44) in the Textile District. His use of a reinforced concrete frame gave this building, which was regarded as one of the most modern of its time, a highly functionalist external appearance.<sup>111</sup> It is therefore not surprising that Reiser also built the Jubiläumssynagoge of reinforced concrete and in general, with a view to fire safety, avoided the use of wood. Despite these precautions, however, the building was allegedly ‘burnt down’ by the mob during the *Reichspogromnacht* in 1938, which knowledge of the particular circumstances exposes as a cynical lie. In formal design terms Reiser attempted to explore new paths through the use of a free stylistic idiom, only very vaguely related to Romanesque architecture. Interestingly, the synagogue, which occupied a gap between existing buildings, had two façades – one facing Pazmanitengasse and one onto Pillersdorfsgasse –, each designed very differently (illustration 45). The main front with the tall gable, which was dominated by a large round-headed window, displayed a highly original use of a historicist vocabulary, while the rear façade featured a large round window with a Star of David. The organisation of the longitudinal interior, which was oriented in a single direction, was designed for the reformed Jewish rite; the thora and almemor were positioned beside each other. The richly decorated interior had a women’s gallery. Reiser paid particular attention to functional requirements such as heating, ventilation, and the easy accessibility of exits, among others.<sup>112</sup>

After the end of the First World War Ignaz Reiser’s work as an architect suffered a decline. He failed to obtain any big commissions – especially in the area of residential buildings – and many of his competition entries never came to fruition. During this period the Jewish religious community was, by and large, his only client. However, in the mid-1920s he won the competition and subsequently obtained the commission to build the ceremonial hall for the new Jewish section of the Vienna Zentralfriedhof [Central Cemetery]. Originally launched by the Jewish community in 1914, this project

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<sup>110</sup> See Genée (above n. 8); B. Martens, ‘Dreidimensionale Rekonstruktionen von Wiener Synagogen’, in: *David*, issue 60, 2004.

<sup>111</sup> This building was only demolished in 2004.

<sup>112</sup> *Wiener Bauindustriezeitung* 31.1914/15, p. 88, plate 21f.

had been delayed by the outbreak of the war, consequently all that existed at this time was a provisional building designed by Jakob Gartner. Between 1926 and 1928 Reiser built the entrance area with the ceremonial hall and the graves behind it (illustration 46). Here, too, he made use of the latest construction methods, for example the shell of the dome that crowned the hall was built using sprayed concrete. This technique was ideal for the extremely complex design of this highly original dome, which inside rose above an octagonal plan and externally had twenty-four folds. The somewhat oriental quality of the exterior was based generally on contemporary Expressionist architecture and in particular on the nearby crematorium erected a short time earlier by Clemens Holzmeister.<sup>113</sup> Although partly destroyed in 1938, the core of the ceremonial hall has survived. This building was to remain Reiser's biggest commission. Up to 1938 he was able to carry out just a few more modest projects, including what was known as the 'Storchentempel' (Vienna 15, Storchengasse no. 21) and the winter prayer hall of the Ottakring Temple. His frequent changes of address during these years suggest that he experienced financial difficulties. It was possibly on this account that Reiser did not emigrate after the Austrian *Anschluss* in 1938. He died of cancer in the Rothschild Hospital in Vienna in January 1940, shortly before the start of the deportations. His wife was deported to Theresienstadt and was eventually murdered in Treblinka extermination camp, whereas his children managed to escape abroad.<sup>114</sup>

Together with the ceremonial hall in the Zentralfriedhof in Simmering the Hietzing Synagogue on Eitelbergasse is regarded as one of most important projects for a Jewish religious building in Vienna during the interwar period. This project, too, was preceded by a lengthy history.<sup>115</sup> In 1912, shortly before the outbreak of the First World War, the Hietzinger Tempelverein had set up a competition that was not restricted to architects of any particular religious faith. One of the top three entries in the competition was the design by **Hugo Gorge** (1883–1934), which was later to provide the starting point for

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<sup>113</sup> See Achleitner (above, n. 26), p. 293; M. Eisler, 'Ein neuer Judenfriedhof in Wien', in: *Moderne Bauformen* 26.1927, p. 498ff.

<sup>114</sup> Information kindly provided by Vivian Schiffmann-Reiser (grand-daughter of the architect).

<sup>115</sup> See R. Hanisch/O. Kapfinger, 'Der Wettbewerb um eine Synagoge in Wien Hietzing', in: *Visionäre und Vertriebene* (above, n. 10); U. Unterweger, 'Die Synagoge in Wien Hietzing', in *David*, sept. 2006, issue 70.

the project that was carried out.<sup>116</sup> The synagogue was to be erected on a site on Onno-Klopp-Gasse, where it would have been fitted into a row of existing buildings. In his prize-winning design Gorge, who had studied under Friedrich Ohmann and later worked as an assistant to Oskar Strnad, had attempted to take a new direction and to avoid the use of historical references. Through its anticipation of expressionist tendencies and its economic use of decoration the building had a somewhat massive and defensive character.<sup>117</sup> The project was delayed – possibly due to indecision about who should be given the contract – and then, due to the outbreak of war, was not carried out. When a second competition was set up in 1924, Gorge was again shortlisted, but did not obtain the commission. In general he built very little during the interwar period. Apart from two housing complexes for ‘Red Vienna’ and a pair of houses in the Werkbundsiedlung he had to concentrate on interior design. His furniture designs, which in formal terms were very close to Oskar Strnad and were exhibited at various Werkbund shows, are among the most original of the interwar period.<sup>118</sup> Gorge, who became ill at a relatively young age, died in 1934 after a lengthy sickness, which perhaps spared him an even more tragic destiny. His wife and children had to flee to London in 1938.

It was only after the end of the First World War that the Synagogue project was revived, as it were, but this time the site on Onno-Klopp-Gasse was rejected. When the economic situation gradually began to stabilise, the Tempelverein acquired a site on Eitelbergergasse in 1924 and a further competition was set up, this time entry was restricted to Jews.<sup>119</sup> This project had a special significance, as due to the location of the site, the building could be completely freestanding and therefore in urban planning terms a specific architectural quality was called for. The architecture journalist Max Eisler took a great interest in this project and in a number of essays addressed the problem of a genuine ‘Jewish style’, which had acquired a new relevance through the emergence of the *Neue Sachlichkeit* movement, as historical references to styles from

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<sup>116</sup> As well as Gorge’s design, the projects by Rudolf Perco and Ernst Lichtblau were also awarded prizes. At that time Hugo Gorge was at the start of his career and had built very little, Rudolf Perco (1884–1942) was the only non-Jewish architect of the three. Ironically, during the Nazi era he worked together with Hanns Dustmann in the innermost circle of the rulers. He committed suicide in 1942.

<sup>117</sup> H. Gorge, ‘Ein Synagogenentwurf’, in: *Der Architekt* 22.119, p. 133ff.

<sup>118</sup> E. Ottilinger (ed.), *Wohnen zwischen den Kriegen. Wiener Möbel 1914–1945*, Vienna 2009.

<sup>119</sup> See Unterweger (above, n. 115).

the past had been rendered obsolete.<sup>120</sup> The young Richard Neutra, who by this time was already living in the USA where he later had a highly successful career, also took part in this second competition. His boldly functionalist design attracted considerable attention but was regarded as too progressive. The jury ultimately selected the entry by Arthur Grünberger and Adolf Jelletz, which used a strongly expressionist style, while also incorporating a number of Gorge's ideas (illustration 47). Although it is impossible to identify the particular contribution of each architect, it appears that Grünberger played the leading role. It is interesting to note that both these architects were students of Karl König at the Technische Hochschule and knew each other from their student days.

**Arthur Grünberger** (1882–1935), born the son of a merchant in Fulnek in Moravia (CZ), studied at the Technische Hochschule and subsequently attended the master school of Friedrich Ohmann at the Academy of Fine Arts. This might explain the very ornamental direction taken by his work, a quality found in the buildings of many of Ohmann's students. After a lengthy study trip Grünberger started to work as an architect in Vienna shortly before the First World War, generally with different partners.<sup>121</sup> By the start of the 1920s he had already left Vienna – possibly due to the poor economic situation – and had gone to the USA. At the time of the competition Grünberger was living in San Francisco, whereas Adolf Jelletz was the man 'on site' in Vienna. To what extent Grünberger, who later became a film set designer in Hollywood, was already working in the film industry at this time or had contacts there is unclear, but it seems very likely that he was already familiar with this branch. In conjunction with his training with Friedrich Ohmann this might explain the decorative, stage-set quality of Grünberger's design for Hietzing Synagogue which, as well as the influences of *Neue Sachlichkeit* and Expressionism also has a 'hint of Hollywood'. While the cubic, flat-roofed building reflected the tendencies of the time, the ring of 'crenellations' at roof level gave the building something of the character of a fortress. The windows, positioned in the external envelope to form a Star of David, allowed a sophisticated use

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<sup>120</sup> M. Eisler, 'Der Wettbewerb um eine Wiener Synagoge', in: *Österreichs Bau- und Werkkunst* 2.1925/26, p. 1ff.

<sup>121</sup> For Grünberger's CV see *Visionäre und Vertriebene*, (above, n. 10), p. 333.

of light in the interior with an almost filmic effect. Work on erecting this building was started in 1928 but it was only completed in 1931. This relatively long construction period was due to the growing economic crisis, which caused major problems for the Temple Association which was largely dependent on donations.<sup>122</sup> This situation meant that – apart from a few smaller prayer houses – this highly remarkable synagogue was the last larger Jewish religious building in Vienna. Only a few years later, in 1938, it too was cynically destroyed. After the synagogue, apart from a pair of houses in the Werkbundsiedlung, Grünberger built nothing more in Vienna and remained in the USA, where he eventually became Art Director at Warner Brothers in Hollywood and died in Los Angeles at the age of only fifty-three.

**Adolf Jelletz** (1878–1936), who was just a few years older and most likely was responsible for the construction of the building, came from Vienna and after his studies at the Technische Hochschule did not take any further training. In the years before the First World War he worked mostly in other architects' offices and built only a few apartment houses as a self-employed architect, generally working with partners. In 1914 he worked with Arthur Grünberger for the first time on an entry for the competition for a new Jewish section in the Zentralfriedhof. This was followed by further joint projects, in particular in 1921 their spectacular competition entry for a crematorium at the Zentralfriedhof, which many regarded as the best entry in this competition.<sup>123</sup> Apart from the Hietzing Synagogue Jelletz built just a housing complex in the framework of the construction programme of 'Red Vienna' (WHA, Vienna 5, Margaretengürtel no. 122). Like almost all architects during this period he was faced with great problems. That he found himself in a difficult financial situation is confirmed by his numerous petitions to the fund for the support of artists in Vienna.<sup>124</sup> He, too, died relatively young at the age of fifty-six. Both these architects were therefore spared the trauma of experiencing the destruction of their synagogue building.

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<sup>122</sup> *Bericht der Kultusgemeinde Wien über die Tätigkeit in der Periode 1929–32*, Vienna 1932, p. 22.

<sup>123</sup> *Der Architekt* 24.1921/22, p. 65. The building was erected to plans by Clemens Holzmeister.

<sup>124</sup> M. Tscholakov, Adolf Jelletz, in: *Architektenlexikon*, (above, n. 13).

### 3.3 Hartwig Fischel – a student of Karl König in the artistic and intellectual circles of Viennese modernism

In a certain sense Hartwig Fischel (1861–1942), who has already been mentioned in the preface, occupies a special position among Karl König's students. Alongside his extensive architectural work – which remain little known – his work as a journalist made him part of the artistic and intellectual world of the turn of the century. Born in Vienna in 1861, the grandson of the first chief rabbi of the Jewish religious community, he came from the Viennese Jewish establishment, as it were. As his father was a well-to-do stockbroker Fischel grew up in comfortable circumstances. After attending secondary school he studied at the Technische Hochschule under Heinrich von Ferstel and Karl König and then rounded off his education in artistic terms by attending the master school of Friedrich Ohmann in the Academy of Fine Arts. After working for a short period as an assistant at the Technische Hochschule, in 1888 he obtained the position of inspector and specialist with the Kaiser-Ferdinand-Nordbahn [Northern Railway], which he held until taking early retirement in 1910.<sup>125</sup> As already mentioned in the entry about Josef Unger, this demonstrates the importance of the railway for this period in general, and for Jewish technicians and architects in particular. In the course of his work Hartwig Fischel erected many railway buildings and published numerous specialist articles about the railway. Although he had also carried out a number of private commissions while working for the railway, it was only after having retired that he was able to work intensively as a self-employed architect and, above all, to devote himself to his journalistic work. Fischel wrote numerous articles about architecture and fine art, on themes ranging from folk art to painting. He also wrote contributions for the prestige project of the *Kronprinzenwerk*<sup>126</sup> and worked as a staff member or editor for numerous specialist journals in Austria and Germany. He dealt in particular with the artists of contemporary modernism, such as the architects Otto Wagner and Max Fabiani or the painters Emil Schindler, Gustav Klimt and Egon Schiele.

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<sup>125</sup> See Weihsmann (above, n. 13).

<sup>126</sup> What was known as the *Kronprinzenwerk* (literally Crown Prince Work) was a series of publications produced by Crown Prince Rudolf with the title *Die Österreichische Monarchie in Wort und Bild*. It comprised 24 volumes and was issued between 1886 and 1902.



His work in the area of art history and art journalism brought him together with one of the most important Austrian art historians of the time, Hans Tietze (1880–1954), whom we mentioned at the beginning of this work. Tietze, who came from a Prague Jewish family and had studied art history in Vienna, soon became one of the key figures in the art world and had numerous contacts among contemporary artists. The young Oskar Kokoschka immortalised him and his wife Erica, who was also an art historian, in an impressive double portrait.<sup>127</sup> In 1906 Tietze was appointed to the Zentralkommission für Denkmalpflege (a conservationist body and predecessor of what today is known as the Bundesdenkmalamt), where, together with Max Dvořák, he was commissioned to prepare an *österreichische Kunsttopographie* [Topography of Austrian Art]. It seems very likely that Hartwig Fischel who, like his teacher Karl König, had a strong sense of history and had himself published numerous essays about historic Austrian architecture, assisted Tietze with this work. The connection between Tietze and Fischel was also reflected by the fact that (as has been mentioned earlier) Tietze commissioned Fischel to design his house in Vienna-Döbling (Armbrustergasse no. 29), which was built in 1907 in the spirit of the new simplicity. Although it has survived, this building has sadly been much altered.

In much the same artistic environment Hartwig Fischel also designed a villa for Alma Mahler-Schindler in Breitenstein, Lower Austria. Shortly before his death Gustav Mahler, with the help of his father-in-law Carl Moll, had acquired this site in the Adlitzgräbern in 1910 to build a place where he could relax amidst the mountain scenery he so loved. It was only after his death that his widow Alma undertook the construction of a country home in 1913. That she chose Hartwig Fischel as her architect is not surprising, as he had written a monograph about her father Emil Schindler and a number of articles about her step-father Carl Moll. In collaboration with Rudolf Bredl the building was erected shortly before the First World War – although the client's somewhat eccentric wishes, for instance a terrace carried on columns which runs around the building, left the architect little room to develop his own design ideas (illustration 48). A particularly remarkable feature of the interior was a monumental

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<sup>127</sup> Today this picture hangs in the Museum of Modern Art, New York.

fresco above the fireplace in the living room, which was painted by Oskar Kokoschka who at the time was involved in a relationship with Alma – which neatly closes the circle of people around Hartwig Fischel. Until she emigrated, Alma Mahler spent every summer in this house and it was the setting for many dramatic events in her life. After the outbreak of the First World War Fischel became involved in the erection of refugee camps, which were needed due to the difficult situation on the eastern front and the large number of refugees – in particular Jews from Austrian Galicia.<sup>128</sup> The bad economic climate and the small amount of building work in the interwar period led Fischel to confine himself mostly to writing and his only documented building is a relatively small housing development for ‘Red Vienna’ (Vienna 9, Sechsschimmelgasse no. 19, built in 1925 in collaboration with Josef Bayer). Following the so-called *Anschluss* in 1938 Hartwig Fischel, who by then was an elderly man, had to flee from the Nazis and went to London, where he died in 1942.

#### **4 Master builders and architects without an academic education – the heyday of apartment house building. Three case studies: Leopold Fuchs, Neumann Tropp and Ernst Epstein**

This chapter is dedicated to a special group made up of master builders and architects without an academic education. Particularly during the years immediately before the First World War they played a significant role in building activity in Vienna and they included increasing numbers of Jews – which is remarkable on several accounts. At that time the standard practice was that the design of what were called ‘monumental buildings’ (by which was meant museums, town halls etc.) belonged to the category *Baukunst* [literally: art of building], which was reserved for architects who had either received their education at the Academy or had attended the Technische Hochschule, whereas master builders were generally allowed only to design residential buildings. The fact that architects without an academic education were excluded from the complex, time-consuming projects financed by the public purse released an enormous

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<sup>128</sup> H. Fischel, ‘Bauanlagen der staatlichen Flüchtlingsfürsorge’, in: *Der Architekt* 21.1916/18, p. 15ff.

potential in other areas, as, in combination with the boom in building industry in the early 20th century, it created a situation in which the persons discussed in this chapter were able to erect an enormous number of residential buildings within a short period of time. On the other hand changing demands in the big city, particularly in the area of the combined residential and commercial building already described above, led to a situation in which boundaries became increasingly blurred. On account of their clear representational aspirations many buildings of this type came close to being ‘monumental buildings’, which allowed a ‘master builder’ to compete with his academically trained colleagues. An important factor in this development was the high standards of the Staatsgewerbeschulen [state trade or vocational schools] in the Danube Monarchy, which were based on a dual system of practice and theory that proved its worth and provided a highly differentiated education. Alongside an obligatory apprenticeship as a bricklayer, graduates had the option of taking a two-year school course which, once they had acquired the requisite practical experience, enabled them to take the master examination and to obtain a license as master builder. Those who attended the four-year Höhere Staatsgewerbeschule, which concluded with a school-leaving examination, could later study at a Technische Hochschule. For admission to the Academy of Fine Arts it was necessary only to sit the Academy’s own qualifying examination but in practice all the students there had already completed a specialist training. This highly flexible system of schooling offered a good starting point for various careers in the building industry and was used by bourgeois assimilated Jew as it enabled them to establish themselves in a branch that had long been organised on a guild basis. The personalities named below, whose work or biographies are particularly worthy of mention for a variety of reasons, are representative of a much larger number. The oldest of this group is **Leopold Fuchs** (also written Fux, 1868–1929). Despite the fact that he was extremely successful and erected a large number of apartment buildings, his biography has been very inadequately documented. Although his buildings were widely published in the specialist journals of the time, no details about his person can be found in anthologies or lexica from the time. All we know is that he was the son of a tenant farmer from Koczoc/Kočovce, which belonged to Hungary at the time and today is in west Slovakia. We know almost about nothing about his

training, but he may have received it in Hungary. From the mid-1890s he surfaces in Vienna as architect and master builder.<sup>129</sup> Up until the outbreak of the First World War he carried out a number of projects, in many cases he was also the building contractor. His building work was concentrated on the districts inside the *Gürtel* [ring road], above all in the 3rd and 7th districts. In Neubaugasse, where he also lived himself (Neubaugasse no. 12), he erected at least six residential-commercial buildings in the space of just a few years. In the sections of this street on which he left his stamp each building was, however, individually designed (this applies to the two corner houses nos. 1 and 2, and to numbers 8–14). In general these apartment buildings erected in the last years before the First World War are among the most original creations of their time. Although initially his apartment houses were in a late historicist, generally neo-Baroque style, here Leopold Fuchs arrived at an idiom that combined traditional elements with ideas of contemporary modernism in a highly individual way. For instance, in accordance with the technoid aesthetic of the time, he made the building's structure of piers legible in the façade, while not dispensing with traditional decorative details (Neubaugasse no. 8, illustration 49) and he met the need for representation with his elaborate design of the entrance zone. Due to his buildings' high architectural quality a number of them are today protected monuments. The outbreak of the war in 1914 brought his creative work to a sudden end. Leopold Fuchs died of heart failure in November 1920, while still relatively young.

The professional career of **Neumann Tropp**, (1873–1928, illustration 50, portrait), who was an extremely colourful personality, shows a number of parallels to Fuchs. Tropp, too, built a series of extremely ambitious apartment buildings and villas in Vienna in the period between 1900 and the outbreak of the First World War.<sup>130</sup> He came from Czernowitz/Černovici (at the time in Austrian Bukovina) and was one of what were called *Ostjuden* [Eastern European Jews], for whom adapting to life in Vienna represented a particular challenge. However Tropp, showing great ambition, mastered

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<sup>129</sup> The earliest documented building by Leopold Fuchs dates from 1894, in the same year he married in the *Stadttempel* in Vienna (wedding register of Israelitische Kultusgemeinde/IKG). As, at this point in time, he was still very young, we can assume that he had not received an academic training.

<sup>130</sup> See U. Prokop, 'Neumann Tropp oder die Leichtigkeit des Seins', in: *David*, 23.2011, issue 90, p. 72ff.

this situation very rapidly. Nothing is known about his family and his childhood. It is certain that he attended the Höhere Staatsgewerbeschule in Czernowitz after which he did his military service in 1892 as a ‘one-year volunteer’ – a privilege reserved for those who had completed secondary school education – and as a reserve officer he achieved a certain social status. In the mid-1890s Tropp surfaced in Olmütz/Olomouc in Moravia (CZ) as a building contractor, where he erected the first *Jugendstil* houses in the town, a style that was immensely fashionable at the time.<sup>131</sup> On the occasion of his marriage in 1898 he formally left the Jewish religious community and changed his Hebrew name Nachmann (or Nahum) into Neumann and took the step towards final assimilation.<sup>132</sup> Around the same time he moved with his family to Vienna, where he was a self-employed architect and building contractor but also often worked together with his younger brother Eduard (or Elias) who, however, soon left the construction business to enter the glittering world of film. Not only did Elias Tropp marry the silent movie star Eugenie Bernay (actually Bernleutner), together with the director Felix Dörmann he founded ‘Vindobona-Film’, which however did not turn out to be particularly successful.

One of Neumann Tropp’s first commissions was a noble villa in Vienna-Dornbach (1898, Vienna 17, Dornbacher Straße no. 27), for which he also designed the remarkable garden.<sup>133</sup> In the following years Tropp erected a series of very imposing apartment buildings in Vienna’s upper middle-class areas, above all in the elegant villa districts in Währing and Döbling that were being developed at the time, including, in 1907, the former headquarters building of the Zahnradbahngesellschaft at Vienna 19, Nussdorferplatz no. 5 (illustration 51). Although Tropp had not been trained in Vienna, in design terms his buildings reflected the Viennese modernism of their time, as is indicated by the Secessionist influences and, later, by his use of popular neo-Biedermeier motifs. Tropp devoted great attention to the design of his façades, which

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<sup>131</sup> P. Zatloukal, ‘Neumann Tropp – autor prvnick secesnich domů v Olomouci’, in: *Židovska obec Brno* 2011 (www.zob.cz).

<sup>132</sup> IKG Wien (Matrikenstelle), for a long time the first name ‘Neumann’ caused considerable confusion about Tropp’s person. Occasionally it was taken to be the name of a partner, which explains why the name ‘Neumann & Tropp’ is sometimes found in the specialist literature.

<sup>133</sup> *Wiener Bauten im Style der Secession*, issue 2, Vienna 1904, plate 59.

are generally extremely elegant, and the same quality is often also a feature of his elaborately designed vestibules, for example in the Donauhof residential-commercial building (Vienna 2, Obere Donaustraße no. 79), in which the glass-roofed staircase is clad with tiles in a Secessionist pattern.<sup>134</sup> Several of the remarkable apartment buildings and villas that Tropp built were published at regular intervals in the specialist journals.

The outbreak of the First World War followed by the general collapse of civilian building meant a decisive change for Tropp, too. As a reserve officer he had to enlist immediately. On account of his technical training he served as a lieutenant in the aviation group, an elite pioneering unit at the time. The collapse of the monarchy and the grim economic climate after the war led Tropp to try to establish his firm on a broader basis and to find work in Brno (CZ) and Berlin. However, his difficult financial situation deteriorated even further, due to a certain happy-go-lucky attitude and a passion for gambling that led him to lose money at the gambling tables in Monte Carlo on several occasions. After going to Berlin in 1928, where he worked on individual projects, he died of a stroke, leaving his family to experience an eventful history. Whereas his widow survived him by only a few months, as Jews his son and his younger brother Eduard (Elias) had to emigrate following the *Anschluss* of Austria and Nazi Germany, but returned after the end of the Second World War.<sup>135</sup> Two further children from a relationship he had with a Christian woman survived thanks to the fact that Tropp had concealed their Jewish origins from the authorities.

**Ernst Epstein** (1881–1938) can without doubt be numbered among the most important representatives of the group of architects that did not have an academic education. In contrast to the two architects just mentioned, he has not been completely forgotten; his name is still known, at least in specialist circles, on account of his collaboration with

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<sup>134</sup> Tropp generally worked together with the Wienerberger company. See B. Bastl, 'Wiener Jugendstilvestibüle', in: *Zeitreisen Syrien–Palmira–Rom* (eds. B. Bastl et al.), Vienna 2010, p. 37ff.

<sup>135</sup> Elias or also Eduard Tropp was born in Czernowitz in 1875. Having emigrated in the NS era he returned to Vienna at the end of the 1950s, where he died in 1963. Information kindly provided by Roland Miksch (grandson).

Adolf Loos.<sup>136</sup> Epstein, who was born in Vienna, was a child of the second marriage of the tradesman Oskar Epstein who ran a plumbing firm which, to judge from the firm's many changes of address, was apparently not very successful. The family's precarious financial situation and the early death of his mother could explain why, after completing the Staatsgewerbeschule in 1900, Epstein did not attend any higher education institutions such as the Technische Hochschule or the Academy but instead very soon began his working life. Having worked for a number of years in various construction offices he acquired a master builder's license in 1906 and then set up his own business. Three years previously he had formally left the Jewish religious community but did not become a member of a Christian church. It is not clear whether this was part of a general attempt to assimilate himself or whether the relationship to his later wife Melanie König, who was a Catholic, prompted him to leave the Jewish community. Whatever the case, it did not save him from later becoming a victim of Nazi racial policy.

One of his first commissions, a rather unpretentious suburban tenement house in Vienna Ottakring (known as the Römerhof, Vienna 16, Stöberplatz no. 9, 1906), introduced Epstein to the Goldmann family, a contact which was later to be of great importance for both him and Adolf Loos. Sigmund Goldmann, who commissioned this unspectacular building and was the owner of an antiquarian bookshop, was the uncle of Leopold Goldmann, who ran the elegant tailoring salon of Goldmann & Salatsch in the inner city of Vienna, where Adolf Loos was a regular customer. Epstein remained in contact with Sigmund Goldmann and later carried out a number of remarkable buildings for him. Initially, alongside more modest projects, Epstein erected another apartment house in the same year, 1906, for Severin Tesar, the owner of a glazing business. In this context it is interesting to note that Epstein worked several times for Severin Tesar, which suggests that he was competent in his field and most probably ran his business on a sound financial basis. As the Tesar apartment house at Sieveringer Straße no. 107 was in a rather elegant residential part of Döbling, Epstein was able to introduce the

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<sup>136</sup> The Jewish Museum even devoted a special exhibition to Epstein and produced a catalogue: K. Gruber et. al. (eds.), *Ernst Epstein 1881–1938*, Vienna 2002.

distinguished, restrained elegance that was one of his special qualities. The building volume was accentuated by a central section that curves slightly forward, while the Biedermeier decorative elements employed reflected the standard canon of the time. The curved gable, which was decorated with putti in the manner of the Wiener Werkstätte, underlined the intention to impress.

Just one year later Epstein was finally able to demonstrate his full ability when commissioned to design a residential and commercial building for the finishing company Krüger's Söhne in Vienna 7, Seidengasse no. 30. This was an apartment house, but the lower part of the building was occupied by the Krüger company, which used various finishing techniques to enhance textiles. Essentially, this was much the same building type with mixed functions that Wilhelm Stiassny had designed thirty years earlier for the Textile District in the inner city. However Epstein took a different approach to designing the floor plans. Whereas Stiassny worked with two entrances, one for each functional area, Epstein used just a single doorway on the street, moving the entrances to the individual areas of the building into the internal courtyard.<sup>137</sup>

Attention should be drawn to the highly individual design of the façade, which visually conveys the separate functional areas by different rhythm of the window axes in the industrial and residential parts and by the very different ways in which the two parts are decorated. The somewhat unusual use of metallic decorative elements could have been influenced by the Eisenhof in Margareten erected ten years earlier by Max Fleischer (Vienna 4, Margaretenstraße no. 70), in which Fleischer also used metal decoration on the façade.

With this building Epstein demonstrated that his abilities placed him at the top of his field and that he could compete with academically trained architects. In addition, the publication of his work in specialist journals helped make him better known.<sup>138</sup>

Epstein's growing reputation was possibly one of the reasons that Leopold Goldmann, a nephew of Sigmund Goldmann for whom, as mentioned above, Epstein had worked several times, invited him in 1909 to take part in an internal competition for a

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<sup>137</sup> *Der Architekt* 15.1909, plate 27.

<sup>138</sup> See Epstein (above, n. 136), p. 71.



residential and commercial building for the tailoring firm Goldmann & Salatch at a most prominent location, opposite the Hofburg on Michaelerplatz. Although quite possibly it had been decided from the very start that Adolf Loos was to design this building and the competition was only held for form's sake, Epstein, who was later commissioned to supervise the construction, was nevertheless involved in one of the most important building projects of the early 20th century, as the 'House on Michaelerplatz' wrote architectural history. In this context it should be noted that there are many links between this key work and the Viennese Jewish bourgeoisie.<sup>139</sup> Not only did Epstein and the building client Leopold Goldmann, who was particularly interested in having Loos as the architect, belong to this group, but in his journalistic writings Karl Kraus also strongly supported this milestone of modernism. As its rigidly purist design ran counter to popular taste this building by Adolf Loos stirred the emotions of the populace to a greater extent than almost any other construction project of the time.

As construction manager and building contractor (and here it should be said that the collaboration with Loos did not always run smoothly), Epstein was hardly able to apply his own creativity to this project. At the same time, however, he was involved in a project of his own, which is among the most original and finest of the time. Around 1910/11 Epstein, again commissioned by Sigmund Goldmann, erected the Paulanerhof (Vienna 4, Schleifmühlgasse no. 3), a residential and commercial building of a high quality.<sup>140</sup> To make optimum use of the narrow site Epstein worked out a very clever floor plan with staggered rooms. The influence of Loos is evident in the design of the façade where Epstein made use of classical elements and, by and large, dispensed with decoration.

Epstein's own inventiveness is manifested in particular in the design of the top floor of this building where he swivels the plane of the windows, which are positioned between columns, inwards at an acute angle (illustration 52); this motif is also repeated, albeit in a slightly varied form, at the entrance door to the building. In contrast to the famous

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<sup>139</sup> See E. Shapira, *Assimilation with Style. Jewish Assimilation and Modern Architecture and Design in Vienna*. phil. diss., Vienna 2004.

<sup>140</sup> *Der Bautechniker* 31.1911, p. 283.

‘Loos-Haus’ on Michaelerplatz however this building has received little of the attention it undoubtedly deserves. This could be due to its relatively unspectacular location and the fact that Epstein was not as prominent a personality as Adolf Loos.

In the years that followed Epstein was extremely successful and built numerous apartment houses, villas and other buildings. Often with the help of his cousin Dr. Siegfried Kantor he functioned as a general contractor who acquired sites, drew up plans for them, obtained the necessary building permits and then sold off the sites again at a profit. At the outbreak of the First World War Epstein, although assessed at the medical examination as unfit to bear weapons, was conscripted and allotted to the military building section in which he served in Lemberg/Lwow [today Ukraine] and later in Vienna.

After the end of the war and the collapse of the monarchy, despite the extremely difficult economic situation at the time Epstein managed to continue running his office successfully. As he had good contacts he was able to carry out apartment buildings of a more elegant kind and impressive villas for a well-to-do clientele at locations on the fringe of the city. But his most important building and probably also his biggest project in the interwar period was for an insurance company for which he had already carried out a number of projects. He built the Phönix insurance company office building at the end of the 1920s (Vienna 9, Otto Wagner-Platz no. 5, illustration 53). On account of its prominent location in urban planning terms – directly beside the printing house of the National Bank that was erected in 1914 and opposite the Landesgericht building [regional court] – in accordance with the thinking of the time this office building, which was freestanding on two sides, was categorized as ‘monumental architecture’. Interestingly, the National Bank, which had sold the site to the insurance company, had reserved the right to have a say about the design of the building and was concerned that it should not be too dominant in architectural terms.<sup>141</sup> Epstein mastered this commission, which was far from simple, in a very clever way, firstly by making the skeleton frame legible externally, thus underlining the building’s functional character, and secondly in formal terms by emphasising the building’s monumental aspirations

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<sup>141</sup> Ibid, p. 159ff.

with the use of traditional elements, in particular a weighty, stepped cornice. Both the strikingly cubist form of the exterior as well as the transparent functionalist design of the vestibule and staircase entirely reflected the spirit of the times. The offices were furnished by the well-known furnishing firm *Haus & Garten*, which had been founded in 1925 by Josef Frank and Oskar Wlach and will be discussed further below. Despite the economic crisis Epstein was even able to carry out a few projects in the 1930s. Generally in Epstein's case one could speak of a successful and well ordered life had he not been one of the first victims of the Nazi racial policy following the *Anschluss* in 1938: on 21 May, just one day after the introduction of the Nazi race laws which prohibited him from practicing his profession, he committed suicide by taking an overdose of Veronal.

In concluding this chapter it can be said this group of master builder architects, who had had a more practically oriented training, generally worked at a very high level, which was often comparable with that of their academically trained colleagues. Although they did not form a school or represent important theories, they were in general of great relevance and importance for the world of building in Vienna in the years before the First World War and made a most important contribution to determining the appearance of the city.

## **5 The students of Karl König in the interwar period – the 'second Viennese modernism'**

The end of the Danube Monarchy, which alongside the political consequences also led to the collapse of the Austrian economy as Austria was now just a small 'left-over' country, meant a radical caesura for all in the building industry. Due to lack of work a number of architects and master builders changed their profession, while some were reduced to complete poverty. Changes in social structures led to changes in the nature of building commissions. Because many of those who had worked in the administration of the empire now returned to their independent native countries, known generally as the 'successor states', Vienna experienced a population decrease for the first time in decades, but nevertheless there was a housing shortage. The over-occupancy of the housing for the lower classes was a fateful legacy of the monarchy. The general

impoverishment and lack of private capital led to housing construction, which was finally understood to be a social matter, being taken over almost completely by the municipal council. The focus was no longer on apartment buildings to meet sophisticated demands but on large housing complexes, known in German as *Volkswohnungspaläste* [literally: people's housing palaces] for the lower sector of the population that were erected in the framework of a social construction programme initiated by 'Red Vienna' and which were later to write history. The villa that aimed to impress became an obsolete type and was replaced by the more modest single-family house. In general, however, the volume of construction work shrank drastically, as the building industry became extremely cautious due to the difficult economic situation. This forced many architects to concentrate on interiors and furniture design, as this area required fewer financial resources. The fact that, to some extent, the best people – including several architects of Jewish origin – devoted themselves to this area, led to a blossoming of interior design, which under the term *Wiener Wohnraumkultur* [literally: Viennese living room culture] has become part of cultural history and can be seen as a characteristic phenomenon of this period.

### **5.1 Josef Frank and the Werkbundsiedlung**

The leading personality of the Austrian architecture scene in the interwar period in general and in the area of *Wohnraumkultur* in particular was, without any doubt, Josef Frank (1885–1967, illustration 54), who through his numerous publications was also an important theorist. Given his importance the literature about Josef Frank is naturally quite comprehensive and it would go beyond the scope of this work to discuss him in detail, consequently only certain aspects which are of significance in the overall context will be dealt with.

Although Josef Frank was Viennese he was actually born in July 1885 in Baden in Lower Austria where, typically for the kind of well-to-do bourgeois Jewish background he came from, his family was spending the summer. Prosperous Viennese families sought refuge in Baden from the summer heat in the big city and the Jewish community there which was of some importance had long played a role in local activities. But Frank, naturally, grew up in Vienna where, after completing his schooling in an

Oberrealgymnasium, he studied at the Technische Hochschule, where he also attended lectures by Karl König. After the introduction of doctoral studies, he wrote his doctorate about the church buildings of Leon Battista Alberti under König and was one of the first to take his doctoral degree from this university.<sup>142</sup> In general it is noticeable that in their doctorates many Jewish students examined Christian art history rather than, as one might expect, the more ‘neutral’ classical antiquity, which can certainly be seen as indicating a desire to be assimilated. A short time previously Frank’s fellow students and later colleagues Oskar Wlach and Oskar Strand had written doctorates about the Florentine Protorenaissance and decoration in early Christian art respectively, in both cases with Karl König as doctoral supervisor.<sup>143</sup> While during this time – the start of the 20th century – Frank and his colleagues at the Technische Hochschule received a soundly based education that was strongly tied to tradition, they also came into contact with the great innovator of Viennese modernism Adolf Loos, who held his discussion sessions and informal ‘seminars’ in the nearby Café Museum, the interior of which he had designed a short time previously.<sup>144</sup> The influence of Loos was later to play an important role for Frank’s work and theory.

However, after completing his studies in 1908 Frank went to Berlin to acquire practical experience with the German architect Bruno Möhring. There he met the Swedish music student, Anna Sebenius, who was five years his elder and whom he married in 1912. This connection was later to make Sweden into a kind of second native country for Frank. And it was probably through his wife that Frank obtained one of his first commissions, the Swedische Turnschiule [Swedish Gymnasium], which was referred to earlier in connection with Arthur Baron. As already mentioned the rooms on the top floor of the Residenzpalast (Vienna 1, Fleischmarkt no.1, no longer in existence) were decorated in a powerfully colourful national style with folklore influences. Despite the strongly decorative direction it is interesting that in explaining this work Frank distanced himself somewhat from the kind of interiors designed by Josef Hoffmann and

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<sup>142</sup> See Welzig (above, n. 11).

<sup>143</sup> Oscar Strnad wrote his dissertation in 1904 on *Das Prinzip in der christlichen Kunst*, Oskar Wlach in 1906 about *Die farbige Inkrustation der Florentiner Protorenaissance*.

<sup>144</sup> Josef Frank, *Arkitekt och outsider* (exh. cat.), Stockholm 2007, p. 35.

the Wiener Werkstätte, which at that time set the tone in interior design. Frank rejected rooms that were too strictly and completely designed, calling instead for an ‘unforced domesticity’.<sup>145</sup> With these principles, which Frank outlined here for the first time, he attempted to modify of the idea of uniform and complete design (in the manner of Josef Hoffmann) by trying to combine this harmoniously with a ‘domestic’ ideal free from any dogmatic constraints, such as Loos had always called for. With this synthesis Frank created a theoretical basis for the *Wiener Wohnraumkultur* of the interwar period.

Alongside the Schwedische Turnschule, in the first years of his career Josef Frank fitted out a number of other interiors and from 1912 was a founding member of the Österreichischer Werkbund, which was based on the model of the German association with a similar name and aimed at ‘the improvement of the [building and decorative] trades in collaboration with art, industry and handcraft’.<sup>146</sup> Later Frank, particularly in his role as Vice-President from 1928-1933, was to undertake numerous activities in this institution and played an important role, which will be discussed further below. In 1913 Frank joined the office partnership of Oskar Wlach and Oskar Strnad with whom he was linked both by his Jewish origins as well as his training at the Technische Hochschule under Karl König. In the last years before the outbreak of the First World War their architecture practice was able to carry out a number of important housing projects. Generally, one of the partners assumed chief responsibility for a particular project. Frank, for instance, played the main role in the design of the two single-family houses, Scholl and Strauß, which were erected around 1913/14 in Vienna-Döbling (Vienna 19, Wildbrandtgasse no. 3 and no. 11, illustration 55). It is interesting to note that here Frank largely emancipated himself from Secessionism, arriving at a solution that could be seen as anticipating the architecture of the interwar period. Alongside the closed cubic nature of the building volume, which certainly shows the influence of Loos, in the exterior he confined himself to a minimalist, purist design of the windows and doors, whose white surrounds combined with the whitewashed brick façade are somewhat reminiscent of late 18<sup>th</sup> century English Georgian architecture.

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<sup>145</sup> *Das Interieur* 1912, p. 41ff.

<sup>146</sup> A. Gmeiner/G. Pirhofer, *Der Österreichische Werkbund*, Salzburg/Vienna, 1985, p. 11.

In designing the layout of the spaces, Frank was interested principally in functional routes which then determined the basic concept. Many years later these considerations formed the basis for his publication 'Das Haus als Weg und Platz'.<sup>147</sup> The role that English models played for Frank, not just in formal terms but also as regard his housing concepts, should not be underestimated.

For Frank, too, the start of the First World War meant the collapse of his professional career and his joint studio with Strnad and Wlach was dissolved. Nevertheless, they remained in close professional contact, also in later years. As a reserve officer Frank had to serve on the Balkan front where, on account of his technical training, he was deployed in the area of railway transport. When the war ended, despite the upheavals caused by the collapse of the monarchy, he was soon able to establish himself again professionally. In 1919 he obtained a lectureship in theory of building construction at the Vienna Kunstgewerbeschule, where Oskar Strnad already ran an architecture class. Thus along with Karl König Frank and Strnad were among the very few Jews to hold professorships in the field of architecture. At the beginning of the 1920s Frank also worked as the architect of the 'Österreichischer Verband für Siedlungs- und Kleingartenwesen', which attempted to organise in an orderly fashion the 'wild' housing development movements that had grown out of people's urgent need for accommodation. In this position Frank was able to carry out only one development, as Vienna's social democratic municipal administration soon decided that priority should be given to multi-storey housing blocks, causing the *Siedlung* movement, which focussed on individual houses, to lose importance.<sup>148</sup> Although he sympathised with the aims of social democracy, Frank was one of the most vehement critics of this decision and never neglected an opportunity to rail against the monumental *Volkswohnungspaläste*.<sup>149</sup> In spite of this dislike he built three of these housing complexes for the Vienna municipal council, although quite clearly it was the weakness of the building industry at the time that led him to accept these commissions. All the same it is noticeable that, despite the size of these complexes, Frank strove to avoid the

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<sup>147</sup> J. Frank, 'Das Haus als Weg und Platz', in: *Der Baumeister* 29.1931, p. 316ff.

<sup>148</sup> The project concerned was the Hoffingergasse development, Vienna 12, Hoffingergasse (1921–1925).

<sup>149</sup> See J. Frank, 'Der Volkswohnungspalast', in: *der aufbau* 1926/27, p. 107ff.

monumental pathos that typified the design of many such buildings at the time. In particular the clear structuring and good proportions of the housing complex in Vienna 14, Sebastian-Kelch-Gasse no. 1 (illustration 56), make it a model example that is based on a profound examination of the principles of contemporary modernism. Following the currency reform and the introduction of the shilling at the end of 1924 the Austrian economy began to consolidate somewhat, and Frank once again ventured to set up his own firm. As an alternative, so to speak, to the Wiener Werkstätte of Josef Hoffmann, together with this old partner Oskar Wlach Frank opened the furnishing business *Haus & Garten* – the firm’s principal focus is indicated by the name alone. However, the goal was not only to provide interior furnishings and fittings of true quality but also to create a synthesis between architecture and the landscape surrounding it. In contrast to Hoffmann’s interiors, which had a strongly representative character and displayed a strict uniformity of design in accordance with the principles of *Stilkunst*, the interiors by *Haus & Garten* followed a very free, often somewhat playful direction. Beside pieces of furniture that reflected the influence of contemporary modernism the designers dared to use strong patterns or to employ the stylistic idiom of the Biedermeier era. The plurality of forms that they aimed for in an interior also allowed room for existing furniture and small occasional tables and chairs etc. Ultimately, it was precisely this relaxed openness that made the firm so highly successful. The business not only furnished entire series of apartments and houses but also took part in various exhibitions so that, in conjunction with numerous publications, *Haus & Garten* exerted a strong formative influence on the style of domestic interiors during this period. One of the highpoints in Frank’s oeuvre – and of Austrian architecture as a whole during these years – is the building known as the Beer House (Vienna 13, Wenzgasse no. 12, illustration 57), which Frank erected around 1930 in Hietzing for the rubber manufacturer Julius Beer. In collaboration with his partner Oskar Wlach Frank built his ideal single-family house in this district of upper middle-class villas. Alongside the use of different room heights that reflected the different functions, the spaces were organised on the basis of a rational route through the interior and in a way that aimed at integrating the garden that surrounded the house. The open floor plan that Frank introduced in his solution led to a completely asymmetrical exterior, which simply



followed the rules that formed the interior. A striking circular window on the street front became the trademark of this house, which was, naturally, furnished by the firm *Haus & Garten* and consequently can be regarded as a paradigm of Frank's ideas.

Frank's most important project, however, was probably the Wiener Werkbundsiedlung. Not only was he responsible for the overall planning, he was also the initiator and *spiritus rector* of this project. Frank's involvement in the Österreichischer Werkbund has already been mentioned and the intentions of this association very much mirrored his own direction. To find solutions to the housing shortage of the interwar period the national Werkbund sections had already organised several exhibitions of model housing developments – for instance in Prague and in Breslau – in which various prototypes for single-family houses presented new approaches to social housing. One of the most important of these was the Weißenhofsiedlung, built in Stuttgart in 1926/27, in which, along with the most important architects of the time, Josef Frank had taken part as head of the Austrian section. Although the moderate modernity of his pair of houses there met with a sceptical response in the foreign press, from 1929, in collaboration with Hermann Neubacher,<sup>150</sup> the director of the municipally-owned GESIBA construction company, Frank arranged for the final exhibition in this series of model housing developments to be held in Vienna. In the concrete situation and in the framework of the discourse about social housing the project was intended, in particular, to offer an alternative to the monumental housing blocks erected by the Vienna Council, which, as has been said already, Frank rejected as petit-bourgeois and undemocratic. In the catalogue to the Werkbundsiedlung he defined his goals, which went far beyond the architecture itself and followed socio-political aims, as follows: 'Today we already know that modesty does not mean poverty and that we prefer to live in a simple setting rather than to decorate our surroundings. [...] We know that an important goal of modern civilisation must be to offer everyone a proper place to live. On this account we wish to combine simplicity and practicality to create beauty. We want to contribute to

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<sup>150</sup> After the *Anschluss* Hermann Neubacher was, ironically, one of the most prominent Austrian Nazis and was also Mayor of Vienna for a number of years.

the founding of a common way of thinking and a common culture through the dwelling, from which alone a higher development of humanity as a whole is possible.’<sup>151</sup>

Almost all the architects invited by Frank to take part in this project were representatives of what was called the ‘Second Viennese Modernism’ which had developed around Frank, Oskar Strnad and the veterans Josef Hoffmann and Adolf Loos. Among those invited were personalities such as Clemens Holzmeister, Ernst Plischke, Walter Sobotka, Hugo Gorge, Ernst Lichtblau, Jacques Groag, Hans Vetter and others. Several were Jews a number of whom will be discussed further below. Even though they did not form a uniform group and the individuals represented a number of quite different positions, all these architects had an almost antithetical relationship to the group made up of former students of Otto Wagner, who were, for the most part, responsible for the monumental *Volkswohnungspaläste*. To demonstrate that the project was fully integrated in current trends in European architecture, a number of prominent foreign architects such as Hugo Häring, Gerrit Rietveld, André Lurçat, Gabriel Guevrekian and two Viennese architects who had already emigrated to the USA, Arthur Grünberger and Richard Neutra, were also invited. The intention of the Viennese project was to present the greatest possible diversity of single-family houses which could serve as prototypes for later housing estates. The range of types extended from single-storey bungalows to three-storey buildings which were to have a maximum of five rooms, all of them however very small. Each house was also to have its own garden in order to allow a (limited) degree of self-sufficiency.

From the very start Frank had to battle with a number of difficulties. The site originally considered on Triester Straße, in a traditional working class district, was not available and so the concept had to be altered, which led to a considerable increase in costs. The change to a site close to a district in Lainz that consisted largely of villas and the decision to build privately owned rather than rented houses meant that the original intention to erect model workers’ dwellings could be implemented only to a very limited extent.<sup>152</sup> Instead the only possible purchasers were, by and large, middle class

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<sup>151</sup> J. Frank, *Die internationale Werkbundsiedlung*, Vienna 1932.

<sup>152</sup> See O. Kapfinger, ‘Positionen einer liberalen Moderne. Die Wiener Werkbundsiedlung 1932’, in: Gmeiner/Pirhofer (above, n. 146), p. 155ff.

people but the design was too bare and the spaces too small to meet their demands. The catchphrase ‘villas for dwarves’ that circulated at the time accurately described the dichotomy in this undertaking. Furthermore, the economic crisis soon cast its shadow over the project. The result of this combination of circumstances was that buyers could be found for only fourteen of the seventy houses and so the Vienna Council had to buy most of the houses and then rent them out.

The site plan made by Frank for the difficult, acute-angled site between Jagdschlossgasse and Veitinger Gasse was ultimately a compromise between row development and a number of free-standing houses, in which everything was, of necessity, very small, as each lot was to have its own garden. Frank himself designed one of the houses. Like all the buildings of the Werkbundsiedlung this flat-roofed house was characterised by its emphatically cubic structure, rendered somewhat less severe by a recessed upper floor with a terrace (Vienna 13, Woinovichgasse no. 32, illustration 8). Based on his examination of contemporary tendencies Frank here presented a simple, practical form of living accommodation. He was very restricted as regards the floor plan and the layout of spaces, and almost no room was allowed for architectural experiments. A further important aim of this project was to give those interested an idea about what modernism could offer in the area of functional and aesthetically appealing fittings and furniture. The interiors of the houses were furnished and decorated to demonstrate this. The interior of Frank’s Werkbund house, which, like few others, illustrated the quality of *Wiener Wohnraumkultur*, did not reflect the dry functionalism of standard Bauhaus modernism of the time, but conveyed an impression of a very middle-class kind of domesticity. As well as fabrics with strong patterns he used furniture whose soft forms in a number of cases were borrowed from the repertoire of the Biedermeier era. Although numerous restrictions and concessions made to the demands of the time meant that not all aspects of the Wiener Werkbundsiedlung project, which could only be built thanks largely to Josef Frank’s initiative, were entirely satisfactory, today it is still regarded as a milestone in Austrian architectural history and has achieved worldwide recognition. Even at the time it was built various inadequacies – in particular the small size of the houses already referred to – were criticised in the media. In addition the economic crisis and the changing political situation hindered the project’s success,

particularly in terms of developing the ideas presented any further. The increasing influence of the political right wing led to the project being decried as ‘left wing’ and, due to the relatively high proportion of Jewish architects (around a third of the 32 invited), as ‘Jewish’.<sup>153</sup> In particular *Die Reichspost*, which leaned distinctly to the right, included a number of barely veiled anti-Semitic clichés in its criticism of this project. Generally speaking it was complained that too few ‘Austrians’ – however the term was to be understood – were involved and that most of the participants lacked a ‘down to earth quality’ and a ‘connection with the landscape’. Josef Frank was a particular target for criticism: the site plan was rejected as ‘unaesthetic’ and the house was described as ‘completely unsatisfactory in formal terms’.<sup>154</sup> The Nazi-friendly *Kampfbund* produced even more extreme reports, describing the project as ‘Tel Awiw [*sic*] in Lainz’ and even spoke of ‘Jewish building swindlers’.<sup>155</sup>

These reports reflect how the general climate of the time was growing harsher. Similar to the way in which the Wiener Werkbundsiedlung became a target for conservative nationalistic circles, a conflict developed within the Österreichischer Werkbund. The dominance of Josef Frank and his friend and former fellow student Oskar Strnad led to anti-Semitic resentments arising among the other members, who complained about the ‘Jewish take-over of the Werkbund’.<sup>156</sup> Above all Josef Hoffmann, whose star was beginning to fade around this time and was described in insider circles as the ‘representative of an era of decoration that has, in fact, died’, felt pushed to the fringes of the association.<sup>157</sup> When Strnad was commissioned in 1933 to design the Austrian section of the Triennale in Milan the tensions and crises became even more acute. Hoffmann, who accused Josef Frank of a ‘commonplace internationalism’, left the Werkbund under protest, and a few months later in February 1934 set up the Neuer Österreichischer Werkbund. This association, in which, alongside Hoffmann, Clemens

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<sup>153</sup> The building contractor Carl Korn, who during the time of the monarchy already ran one of the largest construction firms in Bielitz (then part of Austrian Silesia), was also of Jewish origin. The Wittgenstein House was among the many buildings he erected in Vienna.

<sup>154</sup> Anonymus, ‘Das Einfamilienhaus der Werkbundsiedlung’, in: *Die Reichspost*, 19.6.1932.

<sup>155</sup> *Der Kampfbund*, 11.6.1932, no. 24.

<sup>156</sup> F. Achleitner, ‘Der Österreichische Werkbund und seine Beziehung zum Deutschen Werkbund’, in: L. Burckhardt (ed.), *Der Werkbund in Deutschland, Österreich und der Schweiz*, Stuttgart 1978.

<sup>157</sup> See Kapfinger (above, n. 152), p. 182.

Holzmeister and Peter Behrens played important roles – personalities close to the *Ständestaat* [Austrian Corporate State] or to the Nazi system – included no Jews or social democrats among its members. Thus a course was set which only a few years later was to lead to the complete elimination of the Jews.

Partly due to these circumstances Josef Frank left Austria in 1934 and emigrated to Sweden, where he had already built several single-family houses and designed a number of domestic interiors. However he maintained his connections to Austria for some time. It was only in 1938, following the *Anschluss* of Austria and the ‘Aryanisation’ of the firm *Haus & Garten*, that he finally officially moved his place of residence to Sweden, where he died at the end of the 1960s.

Although he worked very successfully for the furniture and furnishings firm ‘Svensk Tenn’ and indeed his brightly coloured fabric patterns have remained an integral part of Swedish everyday culture, Frank did not succeed in continuing his career as an architect. Whether this was due to bureaucratic obstacles put in his path or to lack of clients is open to question, whatever the case the list of his projects that were never carried out is a long one. His relationship to his native city Vienna remained more than ambivalent. After having been invited to give a lecture at the Forum Alpbach in 1947, in the following year he was invited to come to Vienna. At an event held by the City Building Office he talked about town planning in the USA and in Sweden. The attendance was unusually large and consequently, thanks to the initiative of town councillor Viktor Matejka and Frank’s former colleague Oswald Haerdtl, he was asked to give two further lectures. In this context, with some of his former adversaries sitting in the front rows, Frank spoke explicitly about the shameful events surrounding the split in the Werkbund. Any kind of reparation in intellectual or conceptual terms was out of the question. In the same year Frank produced a competition design for the development of Stephansplatz in Vienna, which was not pursued any further.<sup>158</sup> These two episodes were to remain an intermezzo; quite simply, his native city had no longer any use for him.

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<sup>158</sup> See Welzig (above, n. 11), p. 211.

## 5.2 Oskar Strnad – blurring the boundaries to theatre and film

Alongside Josef Frank, the other most important personality was without doubt Oskar Strnad (1879–1935, illustration 57), who has been mentioned several times already. Born in Vienna, on account of his father's position as a steward Strnad spent his childhood on various rural estates in Hungary and Austria. He attended school in Vienna, where he studied at the Technische Hochschule and wrote his dissertation under Karl König in 1904. He subsequently worked for the famous *Jugendstil* architect Friedrich Ohmann, who at the time was designing the extension to the Hofburg, and later in the office of Fellner and Helmer, the theatre design experts.<sup>159</sup> It is possible that the two years he spent there acquiring practical experience shaped the decorative character of his later work and its relationship to the stage. In 1906, in collaboration with his fellow student Oskar Wlach, he set up his own practice as an architect and designer. Their early joint works such as the competition entry for the War Ministry in Vienna dating from 1907, which was in a pompous neo-Baroque style, were still largely influenced by a late historicist canon,<sup>160</sup> It was only in 1913 that Josef Frank, who was several years younger, joined this practice, which remained in existence until the end of the First World War. The extent to which Frank brought about a change of paradigm in the direction of 'modernism' cannot be ascertained with any certainty. Whatever the case, as mentioned already, the practice was organised in such a way that it was always just one of the three architects who assumed the main responsibility for each project. In 1909 Strnad obtained a lectureship at the Kunstgewerbeschule in Vienna, which a few years later was changed into a professorship of architecture. He was, above all, an important theorist, who in his numerous publications and lectures expounded his ideas about the culture of housing, which were partly shaped by English models and the plain simplicity of preindustrial society, although later East Asian theory was also to play a role. For him it was important to understand and respond to the client's requirements,

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<sup>159</sup> See I. Meder/E. Fuksas, *Oskar Strnad, 1879–1935*, Salzburg/Munich 2007.

<sup>160</sup> This was one of the most important competitions of the time and Otto Wagner and Adolf Loos also entered it. The influence of the successor to the throne, Franz Ferdinand, who had an extremely conservative taste, led to his favourite Ludwig Baumann eventually obtaining the commission for the War Ministry building on Stubenring (today this building accommodates a number of different government ministries).

while reducing the impact of the designer's personal signature; in his search for the human scale he aimed his aim was to 'shape shapelessly'.<sup>161</sup>

As Strnad's theories rejected any form of vanity on the part of the architect they complemented Frank's work and provided a further important basis for the *Wiener Wohnraumkultur* of the interwar period. His many time-consuming activities must, to some extent, have limited his amount of work as an architect. Nevertheless, he succeeded in demonstrating exemplary solutions in two buildings that were completed shortly before the First World War. Both the Hock House (Vienna 19, Cobenzlgasse no. 71) and the house for the famous German writer Jakob Wassermann (Vienna 19, Paul-Ehrlich-Gasse no. 4, illustration 60) are characterised by the way in which all the living areas are linked by a central hall and by the sophisticated organisation of the route through the house that includes the outdoor areas. The unconventional character of this spatial concept, which resulted in an emphatically asymmetrical building with freely positioned and differently shaped wall openings, was the target for severe criticism from some contemporaries. The formal design, enriched with Biedermeier elements or classical motifs that give the building a somewhat mannerist, almost aleatoric character, was typical of Strnad's work. In the interior the furniture was positioned in a relaxed, almost casual way and the design oscillated between the country house style and neo-Biedermeier.

Due to the weak state of the construction industry and his involvement in numerous other activities as mentioned above, in the interwar period Strnad could only carry out a limited amount of architectural work. As well as two housing developments for the Vienna Council he built a pair of houses for the Werkbundsiedlung (Vienna 13, Engelbrechtweg nos. 5–7, illustration 61, the latter project, in particular, was characterised by a special lightness and elegance. Unfortunately, it was destroyed in the Second World War so that very little of his architectural oeuvre survives. However, his designs for graves, which introduced new and unconventional elements to the iconography of Jewish tombs, are noteworthy. By concentrating on the area of interior

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<sup>161</sup> See I. Meder, "'Formlos zu formen" – Oskar Strnad und seine Schule', in: *Moderat modern* (ed. J. Eiblmayer), Salzburg 2005.

design Strnad produced a number of pioneering achievements in the field of exhibitions, where he set new standards in terms of transparency and aesthetics. He designed a series of shows for the Austrian Werkbund, starting with the Cologne Werkbund exhibition of 1914 and continuing to the Triennale in Milan in 1933, which was mentioned above. His affinity to exhibition architecture enabled Strnad to work in the area of stage design also. Through his friendship with Alfred Bernau, director of the Volkstheater in Vienna at the time, he designed numerous sets for this stage at the beginning of the 1920s. As Bernau held the patent for a revolving ring stage, Strnad began to investigate theatre building and made numerous designs for ring-shaped stages with the aim of creating a 'stage space' that could be seen from all sides, rather than adhering to the standard proscenium stage. However, all these projects remained just paper architecture. But Strnad was in general extremely successful as a theatre and set designer, and during the interwar period was among the most sought-after artists in this area. His contacts with the world of the theatre were intensified through his friendship with Max Reinhardt and with the conductor and music director of the Vienna State Opera, Bruno Walter. Later Strnad designed innumerable stage sets (the figures given range between 77 and 122) for the Theater in der Josefstadt, the Vienna State Opera (including the sets for the premiere of *Wozzeck*), the Salzburg Festival and for stages throughout the world, from New York to Moscow. In the last years of his life Strnad began to work in the relatively new medium of film. In 1934 he produced set designs for the film *Maskerade* which was to write film history, in particular as it featured the young Paula Wessely. It is remarkable that in this elegant comedy Strnad's 'buildings', which use an imaginative neo-Baroque style, brought to life a construct of 'Old Vienna' that completely satisfied the nostalgic expectations of the time and contributed greatly to the film's success. A year later, in 1935, he produced designs for the film *Episode*, also starring Paula Wessely.

Alongside all these activities, through his work as a lecturer and theorist Strnad also helped to form an entire generation of architects. He headed the architecture class at what was then the Kunstgewerbeschule (today the University of Applied Art), and was deeply committed to his work there. Among Strnad's most important students were Margarete Schütte-Lihotzky, Oswald Haerdtl, Erich Boltenstern, Franz Schuster and



others who were later to play an important role in the world of architecture after the Second World War.

At the start of the 1930s Strnad began to suffer from heart problems and he died in 1935, aged only fifty-five, during a holiday in Bad Aussee while working on the stage sets for a production of the Mozart opera *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* for the Salzburg festival. Probably few other artists of his generation have contributed so much in the context of their work to the 'Austrian identity' of the young republic as Strnad. His wife Mathilde who in 1938, after the *Anschluss* of Austria and Nazi Germany, had refused to leave Vienna, survived the last years of the war hidden as a so-called *U-Boot* [the German word means submarine and the term was used to describe people who 'submerged' themselves and could thus continue to live in the city illegally.] After the war she was fortunately able to experience a number of the posthumous honours awarded to Strnad.

In this context a short digression to look at **Viktor Lurje** (1883–1944) seems justifiable, even though apart from a small residential building dating from the 1930s he hardly worked as an architect at all but mostly in the decorative arts. He was very close to Oskar Strnad both personally and in terms of the direction followed in his work. They knew each other from their student days at the Technische Hochschule (1901–1906) when they were both involved in the so-called Konkurrenz Club. After completing their studies they worked together on several occasions, for example on the winter exhibition of the Museum of Art and Industry in 1911/12, where their garden room with its powerful colours and patterns caused quite a stir, and also on the Villa Hock, where together they developed the preliminary design. Why Lurje later gave up working with Strnad is not known. Born the son of a well-to-do factory owner in Vienna, despite his technically oriented training Lurje soon moved to the area of the applied arts, where he worked in many different fields. As well as poster painting, designs for glass, textiles, ceramics etc. Lurje concentrated on the less well-known techniques of intarsia painting and plasterwork, which he used in decorating interiors.

After his military service during the First World War and brief periods working for the Wiener Werkstätte and for the ceramics firm Brüder Schwadron, Lurje worked mostly for the Deutsche Werkstätte, fitting out numerous premises and museums in Germany.

However Vienna remained the focal point of his life, where, as mentioned earlier, in 1930 he built a council housing block for 'Red Vienna' (Vienna 15, Pilgeringasse no. 4). When Josef Frank embarked on the Werkbundsiedlung project in 1931 Lurje was among those involved from the very start. Why he later left (as, years earlier, in the case of the Villa Hock) has never been clarified. After the *Anschluss* in 1938 he managed to flee with his wife to Shanghai, which at the time operated a relatively generous immigration policy. No details about his emigration are known. In 1940 he travelled to India (his travel sketches have survived among the papers in his estate)<sup>162</sup>, where in 1944 he worked in Jaipur on decorating the palace of the local maharajah, and where he also died.<sup>163</sup>

### 5.3 Oskar Wlach – Haus & Garten

Oskar Wlach (1881–1963, illustration 58), the third member of the group of architects during the Nazi era derisively referred to as the 'Jewish cloverleaf' by their anti-Semitic colleagues,<sup>164</sup> has, somewhat unfairly, been overshadowed by Josef Frank and Oskar Strnad. This is certainly because it is often difficult to identify his specific contribution and to distinguish it from the work of the two others. Like Frank, Wlach also came from an upper-middle class Viennese Jewish family that made it possible for him to study at the Technische Hochschule. It seems almost superfluous to state that he, too, studied under Karl König and wrote his dissertation about the early Italian Renaissance under König.<sup>165</sup> Wlach thus belonged to the first group of Technische Hochschule graduates to take a doctorate from that institution. Shortly after finishing his studies he set up his own practice together with Oskar Strnad. As has already been said, in the first years working together they took part in a number of major competitions and carried out several apartment buildings. Following the outbreak of the First World War Wlach had to enlist and worked in the technical group of the military representative in Constantinople /Istanbul, where, interestingly, he remained when the war ended and

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<sup>162</sup> Estate of Viktor Lurje, MAK.

<sup>163</sup> Weihsmann (above, n. 13).

<sup>164</sup> F. Kaym, unpublished obituary for Rudolf Perco, 1942 (estate of Perco/Wiener Stadt- und Landesarchiv).

<sup>165</sup> See n. 143.

built a number of projects including several apartment buildings and an abattoir.<sup>166</sup> When he returned from the war, even though the office partnership had been broken up, he continued to work occasionally with Oskar Strnad and Josef Frank. At the beginning of the 1920s he was involved in the design of a number of housing estates and complexes, most of them commissioned by the Vienna Council. When, following the currency reform of 1924, the economic situation began to improve, he set up the furnishing firm *Haus & Garten* with Josef Frank; they were equal shareholders with Wlach acting as office manager.<sup>167</sup> In the next few years the firm was extremely successful and furnished and decorated numerous dwellings. The widespread acceptance was doubtless due to the moderate kind of modernism employed which, while not excluding current trends, never lost sight of the aim to provide bourgeois domestic comfort. *Haus & Garten* had a major share in shaping *Wiener Wohnraumkultur*, which developed an international reputation and was presented at numerous exhibitions and publications. Alongside his involvement in the Beer House in Vienna-Hietzing – where again we are confronted by the difficulty mentioned earlier of determining precisely what Wlach’s contribution was – he also took part in the Wiener Werkbundsiedlung project in 1931/32. The pair of houses he erected at Veitingergasse no. 99 is characterised by an unpretentious simplicity that embodied the project’s aim to present economical prototypes for single-family houses. After Frank emigrated in 1934 Wlach held the fort, as it were, and continued to run *Haus & Garten*, although Frank continued to collaborate on numerous interior designs. One of the most prominent clients during this time was the composer Ernst Krenek, for whom the firm furnished an apartment in 1934. Even in the era of the so-called *Ständestaat* Wlach managed to obtain a number of official commissions, such as the housing complex in Vienna-Favoriten (Vienna 10, Laaerberg Straße no. 22, illustration 63. He was also able to present his furniture in the Austrian section at major international exhibitions, for instance in Milan in 1936 or Paris in 1937. But after Strnad had died and Frank had emigrated Wlach was affected all the more dramatically by the so-called *Anschluss* of

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<sup>166</sup> See M. Welzig, ‘Sobotka, Wlach und Frank’, in: *Visionäre und Vertriebene*, (above, n. 10), p. 201ff.; M. Boeckl, ‘Oskar Wlach’, in: *ibid.*, p. 348f.

<sup>167</sup> See Welzig (above, n. 11).

Austria and Nazi Germany in 1938. The firm *Haus & Garten* had to be immediately ‘Aryanised’.<sup>168</sup> It was only with difficulty that Wlach and his wife, the painter Klari Haynal (née Krausz), managed to flee to Switzerland, his colleague Eugen Wörle (who with his partner Max Fellerer was later one of most important architects of the post-war era) is said to have helped him escape. However a bad aftertaste remains, as it is known that Wörle moved into Wlach’s apartment and was thus a profiteer (or also ‘Aryaniser’).<sup>169</sup>

After a stop in London, Wlach and his wife arrived in the USA in 1939 and settled in New York. Like many emigrants Wlach had to struggle to establish himself. At an advanced age he obtained his license to work as architect and furnished a number of apartments. However, he was unable to find sufficient work. His wife ran a millinery firm called *Madame Klari* that was not particularly successful. This lack of success caused them great financial difficulties, making the rejection of Wlach’s application for the restitution of the firm *Haus & Garten*, which he lodged at the beginning of the 1950s, all the more shameful. Towards the end of the 1950s, already an elderly man, he took a position as a draughtsman in an interior design office and lived from a small pension. Wlach died aged eighty-two in an old person’s home in New York.

#### **5.4 Walter Sobotka – the good and inexpensive object**

Walter Sobotka (1888–1972) was also closely linked to the circle of friends around Josef Frank but was by far the youngest of this group and therefore he had many connections to the group of Loos students that is looked at in the following chapter. They practically belonged to another generation and adopted a relatively more progressive approach. Despite his importance, to date no monographic work has been published about Sobotka and the papers of his estate have yet to be examined, leaving numerous gaps in the information about his work that has come down to us.<sup>170</sup>

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<sup>168</sup> The firm ‘Haus & Garten’ was taken over by Julius Kalmar, who ran a lamp manufacturing company and had been a friend of both Wlach and Frank.

<sup>169</sup> Registration information, Wiener Stadt- und Landesarchiv.

<sup>170</sup> See *Visionäre und Vertriebene* (above, n. 10).

He came from a well-off Viennese industrialist family (his parents owned the Stadlau Malt Factory, which at the time was one of the leading businesses in this area),<sup>171</sup> and from 1907 to 1912 Sobotka studied at the Technische Hochschule, where he was among Karl König's last students. The outbreak of the First World War interrupted his professional career. As his studies had been in the technical field he enlisted in the mounted artillery and on leaving the army in 1918 was a highly decorated first lieutenant. After the war ended he started working on a number of smaller projects such as conversions and interiors. It was only in the mid-1920s that he began to obtain bigger commissions. As well as a number of single-family houses these included two housing complexes for the City of Vienna. Through its clear structuring and lack of ornament the complex he erected in 1927 in Vienna-Landstraße (Vienna 3, Schrottgasse nos. 10–12, illustration 64 is strikingly different to most contemporary buildings of this type, which generally still employed a very expressive pathos, and this characteristic connects his building with Josef Frank's municipal housing complexes.

Through his friendship with Frank he was also involved in the firm *Haus & Garten* for a short time. His collaboration with Frank was particularly fruitful in the context of the Österreichischer Werkbund. For the Werkbund exhibitions Sobotka made numerous furniture designs in an elegant, restrained modernism that contributed much to the quality of *Wiener Wohnraumkultur*. Sobotka also published specialist articles in which he examined in particular the problems involved in producing an 'inexpensive but high quality object'.<sup>172</sup>

As one of the main protagonists of the Österreichischer Werkbund, Sobotka was also involved in the Wiener Werkbundsiedlung. His pair of single-storey houses (Vienna 13, Veitingergasse nos. 95–97), which stands beside the house designed by Wlach, is characterised by functional simplicity and has neither a balcony nor a terrace. Like Strnad's twin houses these buildings were also destroyed in the war. Little is known about Sobotka's work in the late 1930s. After the *Anschluss* in 1938 he managed to emigrate to the USA. At first he settled in New York, where he designed bentwood

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<sup>171</sup> 'Aryanised' in 1938 and later transformed into a limited company, the firm is still in existence.

<sup>172</sup> W. Sobotka, 'Der gute billige Gegenstand', in: *Wiener Werkbund* (exh. cat.), Vienna 1930/31.

furniture for the Thonet Company and worked as a designer. At the start of the 1940s he obtained a teaching position at Carnegie University in Pittsburgh, which he held until his retirement in 1958. In this context he also published a number of theoretical writings about housing construction and furniture design.<sup>173</sup> But an attempt he made to work again in his native country, when in 1952/54, in collaboration with Erich Boltenstern, he worked on the design of an office building for the Veitscher Magnesitwerke (Vienna 1, Schubertring no. 10), remained just an intermezzo. A number of adverse circumstances, in particular the petty bureaucratic refusal to grant him an architect's license because he was a 'foreigner', which meant that, officially, he could only work as a consultant and had almost no influence on the construction of the building, hurt him deeply and prevented him from re-establishing himself in Austria.

In contrast, following his retirement he worked in the USA as a self-employed architect and erected a number of houses in Pittsburgh. However Sobotka's later years were overshadowed by family tragedy, as his daughter Ruth died of cancer while still young. Sobotka then wrote a book that he devoted to his beloved daughter. The summary of his didactic experience, conceived as a three-volume work entitled *Principles of Design* in which the final volume was to contain his lengthy correspondence with Josef Frank as a manifesto of their friendship, was never published. When Sobotka died at the advanced age of eighty-four significantly it was his friend Felix Augenfeld, who also lived in the USA, who wrote a longer obituary for him in *Die Presse*.<sup>174</sup> Despite this, for a long time the wrong date was given for his death, reflecting a general lack of interest in him at that time.

The above is a summary of the most important students of Karl König. But it is far from a comprehensive examination of this group and in the chapter about the victims in particular further names from the same background will be mentioned.

## **6 The circle around Adolf Loos**

As well as the group around Josef Frank and his colleagues there was also a circle of architects in Vienna with a close relationship to Adolf Loos and the boundaries between

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<sup>173</sup> Including *Residential Furniture*, Pittsburgh 1950.

<sup>174</sup> F. Augenfeld, obituary for Walter Sobotka, in: *Die Presse*, 24.5.1972.

these two groups often shifted. As already mentioned both Frank and his colleagues were influenced by the ideas of Adolf Loos. The particular focus here is on those students and colleagues of Loos who were formed by his *Bauschule* [school of building] and continued his ideas. However, as this ‘school’ was never precisely defined as an institution and in fact should be seen more as a loose discussion group, so far it has not proved possible to precisely reconstruct the circle of persons involved.<sup>175</sup> One characteristic of this group was that it advanced modernism in a somewhat more rigorous way than Frank and his colleagues. With regard to the concrete theme of this book it is also remarkable that almost all the students and colleagues of Loos were of Jewish origin. Generally speaking Loos, who himself was not a Jew, preferred persons with a Jewish background, also in his private circle – whether it be friends such as Karl Kraus and Peter Altenberg or his various female companions. A possible explanation for this is that his avant-garde approach appealed far more to the enlightened and liberal Jewish bourgeoisie than to the conservative Catholic milieu.

### **6.1 Jacques Groag and Paul Engelmann – the Wittgenstein House project**

One of the most remarkable students of Adolf Loos was **Jacques Groag** (1892–1962, illustration 65,<sup>176</sup> who played an important role in Viennese modernism in the interwar period, in particular in the flourishing area of the domestic interior. Like Adolf Loos and Josef Hoffmann, Groag came from what was at the time the Crown Land of Moravia. Born in 1892 in Olomouc/Olmütz (CZ), the youngest son of a well-to-do, German acculturated Jewish business family, in 1909 he came as a young student to Vienna, where he worked until his forced emigration. While studying civil engineering at the Technische Hochschule in Vienna the young student was soon fascinated by the artistic avant-garde around Adolf Loos and Karl Kraus, who held their discussion rounds in the Café Museum.<sup>177</sup> At this time a heated debate was raging in Vienna about Loos’ Haus am Michaelerplatz, which, on account of its complete lack of ornament, the conservative side regarded as a provocation. It is likely that Jacques Groag was

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<sup>175</sup> See B. Rukschcio/R. Schachel, *Adolf Loos*, Salzburg/Vienna 1982.

<sup>176</sup> P. Plaisier, *De leerlingen van Adolf Loos*, Delft 1987.

<sup>177</sup> J. Groag, *Erinnerungen* (unpublished typescript / U. Prokop).

introduced to this intellectual circle by Engelmann, to whom he was distantly related and with whom he had been friends since his schooldays in Olmütz. **Paul Engelmann** (1891–1965, illustration 66, who was only slightly older, had started his studies at the Technische Hochschule in Vienna, a year previously, but had soon moved to the *Bauschule* of Adolf Loos, whom he admired intensely. Consequently Engelmann was also an enthusiastic supporter of Karl Kraus, who was a close friend of Loos' and joined forces with him in the battle for modernism. Engelmann even worked temporarily as secretary for Karl Kraus' journal *Die Fackel* and wrote a sonnet in which he vehemently defended Loos' recently completed and hotly debated Haus am Michaelerplatz.<sup>178</sup> Given the circle in which he moved it is hardly surprising that, as well as studying at the Technische Hochschule, Groag also wanted to attend the *Bauschule* that Adolf Loos had recently set up. However the outbreak of the First World War in 1914 interrupted his studies and on account of his technical training Jacques Groag was drafted to the artillery as a reserve officer. As a young officer he served on the frontline, where he came under heavy artillery fire. Through the intensive barrage he suffered a shock that led to a trauma which affected him psychologically for the remainder of his life.

It was only after the end of the war that Groag could complete his studies. He then acquired practical experience in a number of building offices, in one of them working with Fritz Keller, with whom he was linked by their similar German-Jewish background and Keller's origins in the Bohemian Crown Lands. By the mid-1920s the economic situation in Austria had stabilised somewhat and Jacques Groag set up his own office in Vienna. From the very start of his practice he was involved in two projects of immense importance in architectural history. At the time his former teacher Adolf Loos was living mostly in Paris, so in 1927 Groag took over the construction management of the Villa Moller in Vienna-Währing (Starkfriedgasse no.18) where, as Loos was very slow in sending the necessary plans to Vienna, he also contributed a design input.<sup>179</sup> At

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<sup>178</sup> See P. Wijdeveld, *Ludwig Wittgenstein, Architekt*, Cambridge/Mass. 1994, p. 48.

<sup>179</sup> The client, Hans Moller, was a wealthy entrepreneur and patron of the arts and Adolf Loos and Arnold Schönberg were among the regular guests in the house, while his wife Anny Moller, who had studied at the Bauhaus, was a friend of Jacques Groag. The villa, which was 'Aryanised' after the *Anschluss*, was



practically the same time he also supervised the construction of the building known as the Wittgenstein House (Vienna 3, Kundmannngasse no. 19, illustration 67, the original design for which was produced by his friend Paul Engelmann, who was commissioned by Margaret Stonborough-Wittgenstein to built an urban villa in the manner of Adolf Loos.<sup>180</sup> As Engelmann had practically no experience of building he sought the assistance of Groag who was a trained civil engineer. The fact that both the client Margaret Stonborough as well as her brother Ludwig Wittgenstein, who was later to be acknowledged as one of the most important philosophers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, took a great interest in the design, complicated the project considerably and led to extremely difficult and stressful situations for the young Jacques Groag, who was responsible for the cost calculations and the technical aspects of the construction. In particular the expensive changes made to the plans by Ludwig Wittgenstein led on several occasions to serious conflicts between Groag and the famous philosopher. At the end of 1928/29, during the final construction phase by which time Wittgenstein had already left to take up a lectureship in Cambridge and Engelmann had by and large withdrawn from the project to devote himself to the study of philosophy, Groag had the sole responsibility for the works and the design of the built-in furniture, so that in a certain sense he also played a creative role in this building that is so important in both intellectual and architectural history. The historiography of the Wittgenstein house (today an icon of modern architecture) has perhaps concentrated all too much on Ludwig Wittgenstein and his philosophy and so far has hardly examined at all whether this project might have been shaped by a specifically Jewish background. As well as Paul Engelmann and Jacques Groag the client Margaret Stonborough, her brother and even Carl Korn, the proprietor of the construction company that built the house, were largely of Jewish

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later restored to Hans Moller who left it to the State of Israel. Today it serves as the residence of the Israeli ambassador to Austria. See U. Prokop, *Das Architekten- und Designerehepaar Jacques und Jacqueline Groag*, Vienna et al. 2005, p. 31ff.

<sup>180</sup> Engelmann had been recommended to Margarete Stonborough by her brother Ludwig Wittgenstein who had got to know him during the First World War in Olmütz where he trained as an officer. Engelmann, who had a deep interest in philosophy, was subsequently one of Wittgenstein's most loyal devotees and his writings are an important source for Wittgenstein research. See: J. Bakaczy (ed.), *Paul Engelmann und das mitteleuropäische Erbe*, Vienna/Bolzano no date [1999].

origin.<sup>181</sup> In this context the question arises as to what extent, alongside other influences, a certain degree of Jewish tradition may have made those involved more open to the unmistakably iconoclastic tendencies of this project.

After the completion of this building Jacques Groag and Paul Engelmann went their separate ways. The latter carried out a number of villas and housing estate houses in Moravia,<sup>182</sup> and in 1934 moved to Palestina. Unlike most of the other Jewish architects who worked in Vienna Engelmann was a convinced Zionist and left Austria once the political climate deteriorated following the establishment of what is known as the *Ständestaat* [Austrian Corporate State]. Although a sizable wave of immigration meant that the building industry in Palestina (as the country was known then) was relatively strong, Engelmann preferred to devote himself to the study of philosophy and only worked occasionally as an architect, whenever he needed the money. This explains why during these years his œuvre, which is yet to be studied in depth, was relatively modest. While working for Arthur Wachsberger's home furnishings firm Cultivated Home he was responsible for the interior of the King David Hotel and the Press Club in Jerusalem, as well as a number of other projects. In collaboration with Kurt Unger he also took part in various urban planning projects for Haifa and Akko, which, however, were never carried out. One of Engelmann's few surviving buildings is the Yadlin House, which was built in Haifa in 1937/38 and is based on the ideas of Loos' *Raumplan*.<sup>183</sup> Engelmann confined himself largely to writing, producing biographical studies of Karl Kraus, Adolf Loos and Ludwig Wittgenstein. He died in Tel Aviv in 1965.

Jacques Groag's later life took a very different course. A short time after the completion of the Wittgenstein House he built a house for his brother Emo Groag in Olmütz/Olomouc (CZ) where he could implement his own ideas with almost no restrictions. In a previously undeveloped urban area in the south of the town, he built a

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<sup>181</sup> The construction firm of Carl Korn was originally founded in Bielitz-Biała by the master builder Carl Korn (1852–1906) who came from Galicia. He later set up a branch in Vienna. At the time the Wittgenstein House was built the firm, which worked together with many well-known Viennese architects, was headed by his son, Friedrich Korn (1890–1931).

<sup>182</sup> See I. Scheidl, 'Paul Engelmann', in: *Architektenlexikon*, as well as Weihsmann (both above, n. 13).

<sup>183</sup> J. Bakaczy (above, n. 180).

single-family house in 1927/28 in which the rigid structure and strictly cubic volume are entirely in the spirit of Adolf Loos (illustration 68). For all those involved in this project implementing the architect's radical functional concept that aimed at maximum spatial economy and used the purist idiom of contemporary modernism posed a major challenge and eventually led to conflicts with the family.<sup>184</sup> Despite this, the project, which was completed at the end of the 1920s, is one of the most pioneering villas in what was then Czechoslovakia. Jacques Groag also designed the interior of the house in which space-saving built-in furniture and light individual pieces that could be easily moved around played a dominant role.

Reflecting the general trend during these years, Groag had to concentrate on interior design and conversions – above all in his work in Vienna. In this respect his good connections in artists' circles in Vienna proved a great advantage. As he also painted and at times even exhibited his work, he maintained good contacts with fellow artists such as Sergius Pauser, Josef Dobrowsky and the sculptor Georg Ehrlich. In summer a number of artists liked to meet to exchange ideas about art in Zinkenbach on the Wolfgangsee. This summertime painters' colony was a very mixed group. Alongside conservative monarchists and several who were later to become National Socialists some of the painters involved were Jewish.<sup>185</sup> Jacques Groag had many friends among visual artists and his fellow architects, such as Felix Augenfeld, and he also moved in acting circles. Here the well-known photographer Trude Fleischmann, an old friend of Groag's who specialised in photographing actors, may well have provided the introductions. We know that in the 1930s Jacques Groag was commissioned to carry out conversions and interior designs by some very popular actors of the time, such as Liane Haid and Paula Wessely, which helped to make him better known. His interiors were characterised by lightness and transparency and their popularity was certainly due in part to his skill in adapting contemporary modernism to suit the more moderate Viennese taste (illustration 69). During this time Jacques Groag also met the textile designer Hilde Blumberger – who will be discussed further in the chapter on women

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<sup>184</sup> See Prokop (above, n. 179), p. 40ff.

<sup>185</sup> As well as those listed above the Zinkenbach painters' colony also included Ernst Huber, Heinrich Jungnickel, Georg Merkel, Gudrun Baudisch and Oskar Laske.

designers who worked in the arts and crafts –, who often worked with him on his interiors and later became his wife. She designed curtains and carpets that introduced powerful accents of colour to his interiors.

Around 1930 Jacques Groag joined the Werkbund, which offered him an opportunity to present his furniture to a broader public at the various exhibitions organised by this association. It seems only logical that he was also among the circle of architects invited to work on the project for the Wiener Werkbundsiedlung. Despite being a Czech citizen (he had taken Czech citizenship at the end of the First World War), Groag was listed among the group of ‘Austrian’ architects – clearly because both his place of residence and his studio were in Vienna and members of this generation who had grown up in the monarchy continued to see themselves as ‘Austrian’, whatever their formal nationality.<sup>186</sup>

Groag was involved in this project from the very start and produced his first plans in 1929.<sup>187</sup> Reflecting the aim to provide a variety of types he designed a pair of three-storey houses for a sloping site (Wojnovichgasse nos. 5–7) with a pronounced north-south orientation (illustration 70). Although the layout of spaces in both houses is largely identical, there are a number of differences with regard to some smaller details, which was reflected in slightly different prices for the two houses. Taking as his starting point the use of different storey heights – in the manner of Loos’ *Raumplan* – Groag achieved an optimal economy of space despite the difficulties posed by the sloping site. He placed the hall and the kitchen in the rear part of the house that stood at a higher level. A number of steps led down to the living room, which therefore had the greatest ceiling height. The staircase, which was integrated in the living room, also served to separate the dining from the living area. For reasons of cost only the front part of the house had a basement. In both the houses the first floor contained three rooms and a bathroom. The top floor had a studio and a terrace and was designed to be fitted out

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<sup>186</sup> As he was born in Olmütz/Olomouc Groag opted for Czechoslovakia after the end of the First World War, even though Vienna was his main place of residence. Adolf Loos, who was born in Brno, also decided to take Czech citizenship. These examples demonstrate the problem of nationality that confronted many people after the collapse of the monarchy.

<sup>187</sup> Jacques Groag designed a pair of houses in 1929 for the original site near the ‘Spinnerin am Kreuz’. It is possible that, for the site in Lainz, he did not have to change much in his design. The planning application drawings for the house as built date from January 1931 (MA 37/E. Z. 1012).

later if required. The exterior of these flat-roofed houses is clearly articulated, with a rhythm that is emphasised by different types of windows. The closed, cubic quality of the volume is mitigated by the recessed terrace level at the top. By means of a small pergola and a paved area at the front of the house Groag achieved the flowing connection to the garden that is typical of his work.

The ideal exploitation of space in these relatively small houses and the aesthetic form that reflected the spirit of the times made Groag's pair of houses among the most highly praised buildings in the Werkbundsiedlung. 'Groag's houses with the lovely terraces delight through their cleverly calculated impact, one awaits his next works with great interest', was the enthusiastic assessment in the *Neue Freie Presse*.<sup>188</sup> Even the anti-Semitic *Die Reichspost*, which, as outlined earlier, was in general hostile to the idea of the Werkbundsiedlung and to Josef Frank's concept in particular and delivered crushing criticism of most of the houses, felt obliged to praise the 'excellent plan and disposition of spaces'.<sup>189</sup>

Groag himself designed the model interior – intended for the period during which the Werkbund was on show to the public – down to the last detail. He was influenced here not only by the teaching of Adolf Loos but also by Strnad's theories, as formulated in his essay *Neue Wege in der Wohnraumeinrichtung* (1922). Walls are not seen as boundaries but are designed to be as transparent as possible. Most of the furniture can be moved around; the built-in furniture generally takes the form of window seats or shelving and is characterised by a minimalist slenderness (illustration 71). Curtains are often conceived as separating elements and, in terms of colour, harmonise with the Japanese mats used as floor covering. In contrast the wall hangings designed by Hilde Blumberger introduce powerful notes of colour.

Although the construction costs of the two houses, 40 000 and 41 000 Austrian shillings, were in the upper range of the price levels that had been initially fixed, Groag's houses were among the few to find a private buyer. The buyers were a couple, called Eva and Stefan Schanzer. They knew Adolf Loos, as he was married to

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<sup>188</sup> *Neue Freie Presse*, 15.6.1932.

<sup>189</sup> *Reichspost*, 19.6.1932.

Schanzer's sister, Claire Beck, and they had been in contact with him about designing a house for them. This project never came to fruition and so the couple acquired one of Groag's Werkbundsiedlung houses and had him make some adaptations to suit their needs. Following the *Anschluss* Eva Schanzer committed suicide because of the discriminatory Jewish racial laws, while her husband managed to flee the country with their two children.<sup>190</sup> This entire episode shows once again just how closely Jacques Groag was linked with Adolf Loos and his circle.

Despite his personal successes within the context of the Wiener Werkbundsiedlung, Jacques Groag was unable to obtain any major building commissions. Apart from a small single-family house for a doctor in Perchtoldsdorf near Vienna, he was limited mostly to conversions and interior design.<sup>191</sup> In his native Moravia things were better and the relatively good economic climate in what was at the time Czechoslovakia led to him finding a considerable amount of work there. Alongside a number of villas of a very high quality in his home town Olmütz/Olomouc and in Skotschau/Skoczow in Poland (formerly Austrian Silesia), in the 1930s large housing developments, industrial buildings and other projects were erected to his plans in Brünn/Brno and in Mährisch-Ostrau/Ostrava (both CZ).

Jacques Groag finally achieved a widespread response to his design work with a house in the country that he built in Ostravice (CZ) in 1935/36. At that time this charmingly situated small town in the Beskid Mountains was being developed as tourist location. The client was an industrialist from Mährisch-Ostrau, who wanted to build himself a retreat in this picturesque region. Using a complex combination of orthogonal structures with organic forms Groag achieved an ideal economy of space while also harmoniously integrating the building in the surrounding landscape. The slender *pilotis* on which the wide projecting roof rested and the subtle use of colour gave this small house in the country a maximum degree of lucidity and harmony. This remarkable project, which in the following year, 1937, was published in numerous foreign architecture journals and

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<sup>190</sup> B. Sauer, 'Licht, Luft, Sonne im modern eingerichteten Eigenheim', in: *Werkbundsiedlung Wien 1932* (exh. cat.), Vienna 2012, p. 260ff.

<sup>191</sup> Dr. Gustav Stern House, Perchtoldsdorf, Lower Austria, Franz-Josef-Straße 28, published in: *Moderne Bauformen 1934*, p. 321f. Despite various changes this building, which was taken from its owners in 1938 and given back after the war, has essentially survived.

attracted the interest of the international expert world, might have enabled Groag to join the ranks of the great European architects, had fate not taken a different turn.<sup>192</sup>

After the so-called *Anschluss* of Austria in March 1938 Groag, as a Jew, found himself in a situation in which his very existence was threatened and he hastily left Vienna with his wife and moved to Prague. As he was a Czech citizen this did not involve him in any serious bureaucratic difficulties and he was thus more fortunate than many of his Viennese colleagues who during these dramatic times were forbidden entry at the Czech border. Because of his situation Groag was able to take part of the contents of his household and his professional documents with him. He set up an office in the old town in Prague and was initially able to continue his work there. But despite this his forced emigration meant that, as far as the international architectural world was concerned, he seemed to have vanished, as from this time onward he could no longer publish his projects. From around 1935 (the year in which the Nuremberg race laws were introduced), and from 1938 also in the *Ostmark*, no reports about the activities of Jewish artists were published, which meant that their existence was no longer registered and they fell victim to *damnatio memoriae*. Their paintings and books were destroyed, their pieces were not performed, and their buildings were ‘Aryanised’ and often altered so as to be unrecognizable. This explains why so many Jewish artists from this time have fallen into oblivion.

Groag was able to work for about a year in Prague but it has not proved possible to identify the projects he worked on. He may, quite possibly, have continued working on a number of building projects in Brno and Ostrava that he had started earlier. We only know with certainty of a single-family house in Prague-Smichov.<sup>193</sup> When Nazi Germany occupied Czechoslovakia in spring 1939, the Groags were again forced to flee. In a risky journey via Paris and Holland – shortly before the borders were closed – they reached England without a visa. For emigrants times were hard and it was only the assistance they gave each other that enabled many of them to survive. As well all the shortages and dangers that the war brought with it – especially during the Blitz –

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<sup>192</sup> Published, for instance, in *Innendekoration 1937*, p. 12ff.; *Domus 1937*, p. 1ff.; *Architectural Review* 1938, p. 172.

<sup>193</sup> Prokop (above, n. 179), p.102f.

building up a new existence was extremely difficult. Although, because he was a Czech citizen, he was not classified as an ‘enemy alien’, Groag, who had problems with the language, found it difficult to build up a career. Immediately after the end of the war his qualifications in the area of furniture design led to him being entrusted with the design of several exhibitions about furnishing domestic interiors. He was also included in the team of the state-sponsored ‘utility furniture’ project, which focused on the design of simple and inexpensively produced furniture. In the aftermath of the destruction caused by the war the aim was to build and furnish reasonably priced living space as quickly as possible. Groag was later involved in several important post-war English exhibitions, often working together with his wife, Jacqueline.

After he had obtained British citizenship and become a member of the relevant professional bodies, he was able to gradually build up an existence. While relatively successful in the area of interior and furniture design, he did not manage to work again in his own specialist field, architecture. A lectureship at a furniture design school, which led to the publication of a text book on the history of furniture, could never entirely compensate him for this.<sup>194</sup> The fact that he was closely integrated in the émigré scene certainly helped to mitigate the trials of living in exile. The couple lived in a house in Clifton Hill that they furnished themselves, very close to Sigmund Freud’s son, Ernst. He, too, was an architect and student of Adolf Loos but left Vienna immediately after finishing his studies and had lived in England since 1933.<sup>195</sup> As they were the same age it seems very likely that Groag and he knew each other from their student days in Vienna. For years Groag maintained his friendship with other Viennese architects, such as Franz Singer and the brothers Josef and Arthur Berger, or the sculptor Georg Ehrlich. In the 1950s he made a number of trips to Israel and continental Europe, on one of which he is said to have visited Vienna. However – despite the post-war building boom – he received no commissions from his former home. Jacques Groag died, completely unexpectedly, from heart failure in January 1962. The authors of a number of obituaries

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<sup>194</sup> J. Groag/G. Russel, *The Story of Furniture*, Ipswich no date. [around 1950].

<sup>195</sup> Ernst Freud (1892–1970), a son of Sigmund Freud, had studied in Vienna at the *Technische Hochschule* and at the private *Bauschule* of Adolf Loos. Around 1920 he went to Berlin and in 1933 emigrated to London, where he worked as an architect. Ernst was the father of painter Lucian Freud.



published in England were unaware of his former importance as an architect and consequently paid tribute only to his work as a furniture designer. In Vienna no notice was taken of his death.

## 6.2 Felix Augenfeld and Ernst Schwadron – other protagonists of *Wiener Wohnraumkultur*

Another important student of Adolf Loos and a member of the group of friends around Jacques Groag was **Felix Augenfeld** (1893–1984, illustration 72). Only one year younger than Groag, he was born in Vienna in 1893, the son of a well-off merchant. After completing his secondary schooling in the Realschule on Schottenbastei he began to study at the Technische Hochschule in 1910, where he attended lectures by Karl König, who was shortly to retire and was certainly no longer completely in touch with the themes of the times. It is therefore hardly surprising that the young Augenfeld, dissatisfied with his teacher's conservative direction, continued his training in the *Bauschule* of Adolf Loos, which, however, as has already been mentioned, did not have any kind of official recognition. Consequently, after his military service in the First World War Augenfeld completed his studies at the Technische Hochschule by taking the 2nd state examination. After a period spent acquiring practical experience he set up his own office in 1922, together with his fellow student **Karl Hofmann** (1890–1960?).<sup>196</sup> Like most of their professional colleagues initially they had concentrated on interior design, however they were fortunate enough to obtain commissions from a number of very prominent clients. As they had studied together with Ernst Freud in the *Bauschule* of Adolf Loos they became, more or less, the 'house architects' of the Freud family. As well as various jobs for Anna Freud, such as the interior of her practice and the conversion of her farmhouse in Hochrotherd/Lower Austria, they made a desk chair for Sigmund Freud with a highly original, anthropomorphic design which was adapted

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<sup>196</sup> Karl Hofmann, born in Vienna in 1890, graduated from the *Technische Hochschule* in Vienna and worked together with Augenfeld until he emigrated. After the *Anschluss* of Austria he fled first of all to Brno and then most probably went to Australia. His date of death is not known (see M. Tscholakov, Karl Hofmann, in: *Architektenlexikon* (above, n. 13).

to the unconventional way in which Freud liked to sit.<sup>197</sup> These two architects included other intellectuals and writers such as Gina Kaus, Dorothy Burlingham, the friend of Anna Freud, and Hans Weigel among their clients. As a representative of *Wiener Wohnraumkultur* Augenfeld was naturally also a member of the Österreichischer Werkbund and regularly took part in the association's exhibitions. For the show in 1930 he designed a curvilinear 'day bar' built of chrome and glass that was one of the most fashionable and elegant interior designs of the interwar period (illustration 59).

Despite the difficulty in finding commissions, Hofmann and Augenfeld were able to carry out a number of remarkable large building projects. As well as various industrial complexes in Czechoslovakia, in 1925, in collaboration with the architect Adolf Vetter, they built a large housing development as part of the programme of 'Red Vienna' (Vienna 21, Prager Straße nos. 56–58). For the time it was erected, this building is extremely plain and functional and derives much of its character from its relatively complicated topographical situation, which the architects handled very cleverly by organising the complex around two courtyards.

In impoverished Austria private clients were rare. The 'weekend movement', which has been referred to earlier and which led to the erection of many modest weekend houses on the Danube between Vienna and Tulln, offered one of the few (limited) opportunities to design a building that was not dependent on public funding. In 1928 Augenfeld and Hofmann designed a simple wooden house for the decorative arts designer Maria Strauß-Likarz (who will be referred to further below) in Kritzensdorf/Lower Austria. In view of the constant danger of flooding and in accordance with the local traditions this building was raised above the ground on columns. The small closed volume of the building closely reflected the principles of the *Neue Sachlichkeit*, while the railings that surrounded it and the little porthole windows suggested nautical associations (illustration 60).<sup>198</sup> The design made extremely economic use of space and the

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<sup>197</sup> R. Hanisch, 'Die unsichtbare Kunst des Felix Augenfeld', in: *Visionäre und Vertriebene* (above, n. 10), p. 227f.; L. Fischer/R. Köpl, *Sigmund Freud. Wiener Schauplätze der Psychoanalyse*, Vienna et al. 2005.

<sup>198</sup> This house (Kritzensdorf, Donaulände 10, P. 321) still exists today but in a somewhat altered form; see: *Klosterneuburg. Geschichte und Kultur* (above, n. 109), p. 104f..

furnishings consisted of space-saving built-in and folding furniture, generally very functional and Spartan in design.

Their most important building commissions in Vienna were the Villa Dos Santos (Vienna 18, Sternwartestraße no. 57D) and the Soffer furniture store (Vienna 1, Singerstraße no. 4). In terms of its aesthetic quality this remarkable villa, built around 1930 in the Cottage district in Währing, was in the tradition of Adolf Loos. However, the volume was strongly articulated, which allowed terraces to be made in front of most of the rooms. The highly intelligent layout of the spaces enabled the various functional areas to be separated from each other and sensitively takes account of the different lifestyles of the residents. Albert Esch laid out the garden, which complemented the sophisticated nature of architecture.

The Soffer commercial and residential building was erected in 1935/36, during the Austro-fascist era. The client was the furniture firm of the same name (illustration 61). Here, too, the pair of architects employed a much reduced, decidedly functionalist idiom that reflected 1930s modernism. This style was underlined by the coupled steel windows in the shape of horizontal rectangles set flush with the façade. This building was financed with funds from what was called the *Assanierungsfonds*,<sup>199</sup> which had been set up by the authoritarian regime to ‘renovate’ the old town – a policy that was not uncontested as it often led to the demolition of valuable historic buildings. The new buildings, which were emphatically ‘modern’ in style and met the housing needs of a more well-to-do clientele, were also intended as propaganda and an antithesis to the ‘red housing fortresses’, as the housing complexes of ‘Red Vienna’ were disparagingly termed.<sup>200</sup> The Soffer building was one of the last big projects in Vienna to be carried out by a Jewish architect. In retrospect it seems slightly ironical that Augenfeld had the opportunity to erect a so-called *Assanierungsbau*. Just a short time earlier, in 1934, he had been in contact with prominent representatives of the socialist resistance such as Muriel Gardiner and Josef Buttinger, for whom he had built a country home in a remote

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<sup>199</sup> *Österreichische Kunst* 1937, issue 5, p. 16.

<sup>200</sup> St. Plischke, ‘Der Assanierungsfond und die Wohnbaupolitik in Wien 1934–1938’, in: *Kunst und Diktatur* (exh. cat.), Baden 1994, p. 216ff.

location in Sulz-Stangau/Lower Austria that was used as a meeting place for conspirators.

As well as running his own studio, from 1931 Augenfeld also worked as an assistant and stage designer for Oskar Strnad in Vienna and London, although whether he took on this kind of work purely out of interest or due to a shortage of other work has never been clarified. It seems likely that the contact was made in the context of the Werkbund where – as described already above – Strnad played an important role. In general the boundaries between interior design, exhibition architecture and set design were blurred and flowing. The lively theatre scene of the time, in particular the circle around Max Reinhardt, offered several architects a further area in which they could find work. Following the so-called *Anschluss* of Austria Augenfeld fled to England and from there later emigrated to the USA. While still in London he published an important article about contemporary Austrian architecture.<sup>201</sup> Originally intended as a way of helping his Austrian colleagues who had been forced to emigrate by introducing them and their work to an English-speaking public, today this text serves as a most important source of information about building activity in Austria in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Having settled in New York, Augenfeld obtained his license to practice as an architect in 1940, but later worked mostly as a designer of interiors and furniture. Many of his clients were also émigrés, most of whom knew him from his time in Vienna.

Alongside various beach houses Augenfeld's most important building project from these years was the Buttinger town house and library, which was commissioned by Josef Buttinger and erected in 1956/57. A social democrat who came originally from Upper Austria, Buttinger had emigrated to the USA and married Muriel Gardiner. As already mentioned above, around 1930 Augenfeld had built a weekend house for Gardiner in the Vienna Woods, to where Buttinger had fled during the upheavals of the civil war. As well as containing a town apartment the New York building, which has a plain, clearly structured street front, also housed a public library that contained the Buttingers' extensive collection of books.<sup>202</sup> To provide the workplaces with the ideal

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<sup>201</sup> F. Augenfeld, 'Modern Austria. Personalities and Style', in: *The Architectural Review* 83.1938, p. 165ff.

<sup>202</sup> This building is no longer used as a library; the books were left to Klagenfurt University.

amount of light, the library rooms opened through a glass wall onto a planted garden courtyard, which gave the spaces both lightness and transparency. At the advanced age of seventy-three Augenfeld married the applied artist Anna Epstein-Gutmann in 1966 and during this period of his life made several journeys to Europe. However, he never visited his native Vienna again. The circumstances under which he had been forced to leave the country and the fact that, despite his good contacts to numerous former fellow-countrymen, he had received no commissions from the Republic of Austria after the war, left a deep-felt sense of hurt that he could not get over. Augenfeld died in New York at the age of ninety-one.

Although it seems very likely that he was not a student of Adolf Loos, **Ernst Schwadron** (1896–1979) should also be mentioned here, as he was very close to these circles – in particular to Felix Augenfeld and Jacques Groag – both personally and as regards the direction of his work. One of the difficulties in dealing with Schwadron is that neither his training nor his work can be concretely reconstructed. All that is certain is that he completed the Staatsgewerbeschule in Vienna. Apart from this his name is not to be found in the student registers of either the Technische Hochschule or the Academy of Fine Arts<sup>203</sup> nor is he listed as a Loos student. However, the Staatsgewerbeschule was also a fully recognised educational institution which, once he had acquired the necessary practical experience, qualified him to practice the profession of ‘architect’, as he always described himself. Whatever the case, Ernst Schwadron came from a well-known master builder’s family and this may explain why he seems not to have attached any great importance to an academic training. His father, Viktor Schwadron (1865–1942), a master builder who originally came from Galicia, was co-founder of the construction and tiling company known as Bau- und Keramikfirma Brüder Schwadron, which, as well as erecting buildings, also carried out numerous civil engineering projects and was an extremely successful business around the turn of the previous century.<sup>204</sup> Given that his father’s firm specialised in tiling for façades, vestibules and bathrooms it is not surprising that, after completing the Staatsgewerbeschule,

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<sup>203</sup> Information provided by the TU Vienna (Dr. Ebner) and the Academy of Fine Arts, Vienna (Mr. Gutsch).

<sup>204</sup> See T. Zickler (ed.), *Brüder Schwadron. Call to mind*, Vienna 2014.

Schwadron attended Michael Powolny's ceramics class at the Kunstgewerbeschule. Although he later discontinued working in this area, initially he often collaborated with the ceramic artist Vally Wieselthier. It seems likely that Schwadron worked for the first few years in his father's business, after which, at the end of the 1920s, he set up his own office. Like most of the architects at this time he was forced to specialise in interior design and focussed principally on fitting-out shops and apartments.<sup>205</sup> His space-saving furniture, which was in a mitigated modern style and could be used in a variety of ways, allows us to number him among the protagonists of the *Wiener Wohnraumkultur*. While his interiors were published in various specialist journals, he produced only a very limited amount of architectural work which has been poorly documented. That having been said, however, one of his first projects, a beach house for the Lederers in Greifenstein, Lower Austria soon brought him much recognition. In formal terms this small strand house, which belongs to the context of 'Kritzendorf weekend house architecture' that has already been mentioned several times (the public baths that were being redeveloped at the time were nearby), adheres largely to the canon of such buildings. But as well as the cubic building volume and the ribbon windows, Schwadron consciously invoked the image of a ship – after all the building did stand on the Danube – by adding a vertical, tower-like element at one side (illustration 62).<sup>206</sup> An interesting detail, is that in the course of this job, Schwadron had an affair with his client's wife, who subsequently left her husband and married the architect, but the marriage ended a short time later in divorce. Be that as it may, it seems that by the 1930s Schwadron had established himself as an architect. Other single-family houses that he is said to have designed around Vienna and in what was then Czechoslovakia are only very vaguely described and so far it has not proved possible to locate them precisely – it may well be that Schwadron was responsible only designing the interiors of these buildings.<sup>207</sup> Following the *Anschluss* in 1938, Schwadron left Austria in March of the same year without an official exit permit. As he had not paid the *Reichsfluchsteuer* a tax warrant was issued and his property was seized in 1941. His younger brother Walter, who had

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<sup>205</sup> See I. Meder, *Offene Welten*, phil. diss., Stuttgart 2003.

<sup>206</sup> *Bau- und Werkkunst* 5.1928/29, p. 39ff.

<sup>207</sup> Meder(above, n. 205).

worked in the father's firm, also managed to flee. However their elderly father, who had remained in Vienna, suffered the full and brutal impact of the Nazi's Jewish policy. After the firm *Brüder Schwadron* had been 'Aryanised' his apartment was taken from him. The elderly man died in Vienna in 1942 before he could be deported. Ernst Schwadron managed to escape to the USA and settled in New York, where he worked for the furnishing firm Rena Rosenthal. He had a wide range of interests and towards the end of the war investigated subjects such as adapting the US Army gas tanks for peace-time purposes. A few years later he set up his own firm, Ernst Schwadron Inc. with headquarters on Madison Avenue in Manhattan, which concentrated on fitting-out offices and apartments. Several of his projects were published in American specialist journals. In New York Schwadron worked mostly with other Viennese émigrés, for instance the architect and journalist Leopold Kleiner (1897–1985), the ceramic artist Vally Wieselthier, or the painter and graphic designer Emmy Zweybrück (1890–1956). Schwadron also often wrote journalistic pieces and worked for the Jewish German language newspaper *Aufbau*.<sup>208</sup>

Ernst Schwadron offers a particularly clear example of the tragically ambivalent feelings that many emigrants felt towards their 'old home'. Not only did he move almost exclusively among émigré Viennese in New York, in his home, which he built at the beginning of the 1950s, he observed an almost bizarre cult of Austrian things. He called his house *Klein Österreich* and filled it with Austrian memorabilia. After the war he showed no reluctance about visiting his 'old home' again, where he was drawn principally to Bad Aussee. He made persistent efforts to obtain compensation for his property that had been seized. However, the Austrian authorities approved only part of his application. Schwadron died in New York at the advanced age of eighty-three.

### **6.3 The architectural partnership of Josef Berger and Martin Ziegler – buildings of 'Red Vienna'**

The architects Josef Berger (1898–1989) and Martin Ziegler (1896–1940?), who also came from the school or circle around Adolf Loos, worked in partnership in Vienna

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<sup>208</sup> See *Visionäre und Vertriebene* (above, n. 10).

from the early 1920s onwards. Roughly the same age, they were linked by their similar social backgrounds as well as by their studies at the Technische Hochschule, which they attended at the same time. Martin Ziegler, who was slightly older, was born in Vienna, the son of a merchant who had come to the capital from Galicia. Immediately after completing the Realschule he had to enlist in 1914 and consequently could only commence his studies in 1917, finishing them in 1921. Josef Berger, who was two years younger and came from a middle-class Viennese Jewish family, also began his studies after finishing military service in 1917 and also graduated in 1921. At this time Berger also attended the *Bauschule* of Adolf Loos, as is documented by a group photograph taken on the roof of the *Schwarzwaldschule*.<sup>209</sup> It is somewhat surprising that the pair formed a partnership and set up their own office so soon after completing their training. At the beginning of the 1920s the Austrian economy was still in an extremely poor state and Berger, in particular, was still very young. In the first years of their practice they obtained no commissions to design buildings and had to focus on the design of furniture, structures for various exhibitions, and interiors. Just how dependant they were on projects in the general area of design and the applied arts is illustrated by the fact that in 1923 Josef Berger, together with his elder brother Arthur (1892–1981) and his brother-in-law, the journalist and applied artist Fritz Lampl,<sup>210</sup> founded the ‘Bimini-Workshops’, which specialised in the production of decorative glassware and acquired a reputation for its delicate glass figurines. Arthur Berger, who had studied at the Kunstgewerbeschule under Josef Hoffmann and Oskar Strnad, seems to have run the firm, while Josef designed the exhibition spaces, for instance.<sup>211</sup>

Like many other architects in these difficult times Berger and Ziegler obtained their first building commissions in the mid-1920s, when ‘Red Vienna’ launched its social housing programme. While their 1923 competition entry for a housing development on Lasallestraße in the 2nd district was unsuccessful, in 1926 they finally had the

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<sup>209</sup> Rukschcio/Schachel (above, n. 175), p. 251; see also Meder (above, n. 205).

<sup>210</sup> Fritz Lampl, who worked as an applied artist and also as a writer, was married to Josef Berger’s sister, Hilde. The fact that Franz Lampl also wrote several articles about Jacques Groag indicates just how closely interwoven this artistic-intellectual circle was.

<sup>211</sup> Arthur Berger is also mentioned as having worked on some of the architectural projects by Josef Berger and Martin Ziegler, the precise nature of his involvement has not been clarified.



opportunity to carry out a *Volkswohnpalast*, as these large residential blocks were commonly known, on Schlachthausgasse in the 3rd district – and in the years that followed they designed four further such buildings. Measured against the overall involvement of Jewish architects in the building programme of ‘Red Vienna’ they therefore obtained a relatively large number of such commissions.<sup>212</sup> Significantly, even their first project on Schlachthausgasse (illustration 77) differs clearly from the expressive pathos that generally characterised such housing complexes at this time. They employed a rational stylistic idiom, articulating the building solely by means of stepped bay windows and balconies. They continued to follow this unpretentious direction up to their final project, the Grassinger-Hof (Vienna 15, Brünhildengasse), which they built in 1932/33. Around this time the economic crisis and the political situation put an end to the housing construction programme of the social democratic municipal government. In the *Ständestaat* era Berger and Ziegler erected three small, privately commissioned dwelling houses in the mid-1930s, one of which, the Schur House at Formanekgasse no. 32 (Vienna 19), displays special architectural qualities (illustration 78). True to the direction indicated by Adolf Loos, they designed a strictly cubic building volume with a flat roof; the fenestration is determined by the functions of the different rooms. A number of small architectural details, such as a stepped window that lights the staircase, are the only decorative accents used.

In 1934 due to the increasingly difficult economic situation and the change in the political climate introduced by the *Ständestaat* Josef Berger left Austria. With his wife, the applied artist Margarete Hammerschlag, he emigrated to Palestina where he hoped to erect a large hotel complex in Haifa. When the project failed to come to fruition and his various designs for houses and synagogues remained paper architecture, he went to London in 1936. Little is known about his activities in England during his first years there; given the restrictive regulations that applied to foreign architects in England it seems unlikely that he was able to set up a branch of the practice Berger & Ziegler in London.<sup>213</sup> When the war broke out he was interned on the Isle of Man. In London he

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<sup>212</sup> Most of those who designed the housing complexes of ‘Red Vienna’, whether as public servants or self-employed architects, had been students of Otto Wagner.

<sup>213</sup> See I. Scheidl, ‘Josef Berger’, in: *Architektenlexikon* (above, n. 13).

later became involved in the emigrant group *Deutsche Erneuerung*.<sup>214</sup> Despite the numerous difficulties he encountered Berger succeeded in building up a professional career again after the war. As a continuation of the ‘Bimini Workshops’ he founded the firm ‘Orpid Glass’ together with his brother-in-law, Fritz Lampl, who had also emigrated to London. He also worked for London County Council where, in the framework of the reconstruction work following war-time destruction, he was involved in various urban planning projects and in the erection of schools and housing until he retired in 1963. He died in London at the advanced age of ninety-one. His brother Arthur, who in Vienna had been one of the co-founders of the *Institut für Tonfilmkunst* [Institute for Sound Film] in 1933, had gone to the Soviet Union in the mid-1930s, where under the name Artur Semenowitsch he worked for Meschrapom Film Studios in Moscow and designed sets for numerous films. After the war he remained in the Soviet Union and died a much acclaimed state artist in Moscow in 1981.<sup>215</sup>

Martin Ziegler, who had remained for the time being in Vienna and continued to run the office alone, was able to build a number of dwelling houses in the late 1930s. However the so-called *Anschluss* of Austria and Nazi Germany in 1938 put an end to his work. As he was prevented from practicing his profession he had nothing to live on and was forced to emigrate, going initially to London, where he hoped to set up an office again with Josef Berger. When Berger was interned all his hopes were dashed and Ziegler then emigrated with his family to the USA, where all trace of him was lost.

#### **6.4 Heinrich Kulka and his services in promulgating Loos’ work**

Of all Adolf Loos’ students it was without doubt Heinrich Kulka (1900–1971) who most ardently promoted the work of the ‘master’, both through the many years he worked for Loos as well as by his publications, which made an important contribution to the reception of Loos. Somewhat younger than Jacques Groag or Felix Augenfeld,

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<sup>214</sup> Ch. Benton, *A different world. Emigre architects in Britain 1928–1935* (exh. cat.), London 1995, p. 140.

<sup>215</sup> Arthur Berger (1892–1981) had studied at the Kunstgewerbeschule under Oskar Strnad and Josef Hoffmann. He worked mostly in the applied arts, making his career in the area of film set design, initially for Österreichische Sascha-Film, from 1936 for the Meschrapom Film Company in Moscow, for which he worked until the early 1970s. See Ch. Dewald, ‘Arthur Berger’, in: *Österreichisches Biographisches Lexikon* – online, 2013.

Kulka, like Josef Berger, belonged to the generation of architects who first attended Loos' *Bauschule* after the First World War.<sup>216</sup>

Born the son of a merchant in Littau/Litovel in Moravia (CZ), Heinrich Kulka studied at the Technische Hochschule in Vienna from 1918 to 1923 but did not complete his studies. At the same time he attended the *Bauschule* of Adolf Loos and subsequently worked as a draughtsman and assistant in Loos' studio. He was of enormous help to Adolf Loos in producing the book *Ins Leere Gesprochen* (1921). When Loos went to Paris in 1926, Kulka provisionally took a job in Stuttgart in the building office of Ernst Otto Oswald and also worked for Josef Frank, who at the time was involved in building a pair of houses in Stuttgart for the Weißenhofsiedlung, the model housing estate of the Deutscher Werkbund. Just a short time later Frank was to initiate the Wiener Werkbundsiedlung. This illustrates the closely interwoven connections between Frank, Loos and their staff and students at that time.

When Loos needed him again in 1928, Kulka gave up his job in Stuttgart. But this time he worked as office manager and equal partner. As Loos' health began to fail, Kulka had to work increasingly on his own. Up to Loos' death in 1933 Kulka was involved in carrying out projects such as Landhaus Khuner in Payerbach/Lower Austria (1929/33), Villa Müller in Prague (1928/30), and the twin houses in the Wiener Werkbundsiedlung (1932). As Loos relied largely on his partner, often giving only vague instructions, and Kulka was also generally responsible for the design of the interiors, his contribution in creative terms should not be underestimated. During this time he also worked on a number of shop interiors with Loos. This pair were responsible not only for the interior of the well-known gentlemen's outfitters Knize in Paris, but also for the shops of the well-known clothing firm Matzner (Vienna 1, Kohlmessergasse no. 8 and Rotenturmstraße no. 6), whose elegant shop fronts for years contributed to Vienna's urban flair. During his time in Vienna the only building that Heinrich Kulka designed entirely on his own was the Weizmann House in Vienna-Hietzing (Küniglberggasse no. 55). Built between 1930 and 1933, this single-family house with its rigid cubic structure and irregularly distributed windows naturally reflected the ideas

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<sup>216</sup> Meder, (above, n. 205); Plaisier, (above, n. 176).

of Adolf Loos (illustration 63). As in most of the other projects, Kulka also designed the interior.

As already mentioned perhaps his publications about Adolf Loos represent Kulka's most important contribution. In 1931, to mark Loos' 60th birthday, he published a monograph about his esteemed master.<sup>217</sup> As well writing a short biography and presenting the most important works, which were photographed by Martin Gerlach, Kulka also summarized Loos' ideas about architectural theory. For instance he introduced the term *Raumplan*, which he used to describe Adolf Loos' way of thinking about space. By this term he meant 'freethinking in space, [the idea of] planning rooms that are situated on different levels and not confined to continuous regular floors [...], the composition of an economical spatial whole'. Heinrich Kulka conveyed Loos' theories to wider circles and in this way significantly contributed to the understanding one of the 20th century's most important architects. Re-issued several times, this publication is still regarded as one of the key works about Adolf Loos.

From 1933, the year in which Loos died and the political climate in Österreich changed as a result of the establishment of the *Ständestaat*, Kulka began to work increasingly in Czechoslovakia, where he built several villas and single-family houses, although he still kept his Vienna office. Following the *Anschluss* of Austria in 1938, he was prevented from practicing his profession and moved with his wife to relatives in Königgrätz/Hradec Králové. One year later when 'rest Czechoslovakia' was also occupied by the Nazis, he fled to England and in 1940 emigrated with his family to New Zealand. In contrast to many of his older colleagues, Kulka, who was only forty at the time, succeeded in building a career as an architect in his new home. As an employee and later head architect of Fletcher Construction Ltd., a large Auckland construction company, up to 1960 he was responsible for numerous major projects in the areas of housing and industrial complexes and, in particular, also for several churches.<sup>218</sup> After this he worked as a self-employed architect until his death in 1971. It is embarrassing to

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<sup>217</sup> H. Kulka, 'Adolf Loos, das Werk des Architekten', in: *Neues Bauen in der Welt*, issue 4, Vienna 1931.

<sup>218</sup> See D. Herzner-Kaiser, 'Heinrich Kulka', in: *Architektenlexikon* (above, n. 13).

have to report that so far a proper examination of the papers in his estate has not been carried out.

## **7 Growing dissolution of Jewish identity – converts and partnerships with non-Jews**

This chapter is devoted to those architects who crossed boundaries in the prevailing social system, either by distancing themselves from Judaism or forming partnerships with non-Jews – a phenomenon that surfaced at a larger scale only during the interwar period and can possibly be seen as a highpoint, but also a crisis, of assimilation. It is interesting that those who detached themselves from Jewish circles generally built up other social networks, which led to the formation of a number of different positions among Viennese architects. Consequently, it seems legitimate, also in architectural terms, to treat this circle of people as a separate group.

### **7.1 Ernst Lichtblau**

The most prominent architect in this group is, beyond doubt, Ernst Lichtblau (1883–1963, illustration 80, who is numbered among Otto Wagner’s most important students.<sup>219</sup> As mentioned previously, the circle around Otto Wagner was regarded as somewhat anti-Semitic. This great reformer in the area of architecture had good contacts to the mayor, Karl Lueger, and during the Nazi era a number of his students were committed party members. Consequently, only very few Jewish students attended the Academy of Fine Arts. Those who did study at this institution were generally in the master schools of Viktor Luntz or Friedrich Ohmann, who were regarded as liberal. Despite this, however, Otto Wagner’s architectural avant-garde movement exerted a great fascination on Jewish architects, many of whom employed elements of this contemporary ‘modernism’ in their work, among them the convinced Zionist Oskar Marmorek. Lichtblau in contrast, who ventured into the inner circle of the Wagner students, was certainly one of the Jewish Austrians who, under the pressure of anti-

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<sup>219</sup> See A. Sarnitz, *Ernst Lichtblau, Architekt 1883–1963*, Vienna et. A.. 1994; O. A. Graf, *Die vergessene Wagnerschule*, Vienna 1969.

Semitism, were prepared to assimilate themselves completely. This is indicated, for instance, by his conversion to Catholicism shortly after completing his studies.<sup>220</sup> Born in 1883 in Vienna, Lichtblau came from a well-off middle class family and was the youngest of three brothers. After completing four years at the Staatsgewerbeschule he began to study architecture at the Academy of Fine Arts in the master school of Otto Wagner, completing his studies in 1905. There are several indications that he was quickly successful and was highly regarded in this circle. For example from 1905 to 1907 he was editor of the annual publication *Aus der Wagner Schule* and he was awarded the *Goldener Hofpreis*, 1st class for his design, while attending the Academy, of a forestry building. This award enabled him to take a lengthy study trip and the sketches he made during his travels in Bosnia and Dalmatia, which were published in the journal *Der Architect*, not only illustrate his talent as a draughtsman, but also reveal that the young student was influenced in formal terms by the ‘Wagner School’, an influence from which he was only later to free himself.<sup>221</sup> Interestingly, Lichtblau did not only publish the usual kind of travel sketches and studies of buildings, but also used the modern medium of photography, so that today his travel report still offers an interesting documentation of how the region looked at that time. Soon after completing his studies, in 1906 Lichtblau obtained a lectureship at the Staatsgewerbeschule – not in the immediate field of architecture, but in ‘drawing for cabinet making’, which, in a certain sense, seems to forecast his focus on furniture design in his later life. Although in 1913 he was even awarded the title ‘Professor’ for this function (which did not have the same status as a full university professorship), his teaching work ended with the outbreak of the war in 1914 and he was never to take it up again, for reasons that remain unknown. In these last years before the First World War, as well as teaching at the Staatsgewerbeschule Lichtblau also worked as a designer for the *Wiener Werkstätte*. He

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<sup>220</sup> IKG registration of leaving the Jewish community 24.9.1909 and baptismal register Schottenpfarre 26.9.1909 – at this point in time Lichtblau had already been teaching at the Staatsgewerbeschule for three years, so there was no immediate career reason for him to convert. However a certain internal conflict is indicated by the fact that in 1926 he left the Catholic Church, only to join it again around 1936 – during the *Ständestaat* era.

<sup>221</sup> *Der Architekt* 13.1907, plate 21 and 14.1908, p. 82ff.

concentrated on textile designs, with a strong and particularly attractive colourfulness. His architectural work during these years is also characterised by decorative tendencies that certainly betray the influence of Josef Hofmann. This is evident in the garden pavilion for the *Österreichische Kunstgewerbeausstellung* from 1912 and, in particular, in the apartment building at Wattmannngasse no. 29 (Vienna 13, illustration 81), which was erected just before the outbreak of the war. The building was generally known as the ‘Schokoladenhaus’ [chocolate house], as the façade was clad with large, dark brown ceramic tiles. Here Lichtblau produced a completely independent work that does not employ any kind of standard scheme, and in his use of ribbon windows he actually anticipates certain aspects of interwar architecture. The extremely original façade design was awarded a prize by the City of Vienna. Even during the First World War, when almost no construction work was carried out, Lichtblau obtained a commission to build the Orthopaedic Hospital (Vienna 5, Gassergasse no. 44), which was apparently needed for the treatment of war invalids.

But despite these early successes the interwar years were not easy for Lichtblau. In the first years after the war, when the building industry was practically at a complete standstill, donations from abroad enabled a number of competitions to be organised in order to offer architects at least some kind of income in the form of prize money.

Lichtblau was among those who took part in these competitions. In 1923 when his design for the *Denkmal der Auslandshilfe* [Monument to Foreign Aid] won 1st prize, the anti-Semites directed their full fury against him. Under the pretext of religiously motivated indignation – the intention to mount the design on the façade of the Capuchin Church was regarded in Catholic circles as a profanity – the polemics published in the *Reichspost* revealed an undisguised, highly invidious anti-Semitism.<sup>222</sup> When Lichtblau’s design for the monument was finally presented in an exhibition in the Künstlerhaus in Vienna the situation escalated dramatically and a scuffle ensued in the course of which the model, which was described as a ‘disgrace’, was destroyed.<sup>223</sup>

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<sup>222</sup> *Reichspost* 16.6. and 19.6. 1923.

<sup>223</sup> *Moderne Welt* 1923, issue 6, p. 13; F. Fellner v. Feldegg, *Ein Denkmalskandal. Epilog zum Wettbewerb um das Denkmal für die Auslandshilfe in Wien*, Vienna/Leipzig no date.

These circumstances made the situation doubly difficult for Lichtblau. The areas of furniture design and the applied arts offered him, too, some compensation for the slump in building activity. Much like Josef Frank, in 1925 Lichtblau set up his own furnishings workshop, whose name alone *Lichtblau Werkstätte Ges.m.b.H. für Gegenstände des täglichen Bedarfs in exakter Zweckbestimmtheit unter Verwendung von bescheidenen Werkmaterialien* [Lichtblau Workshops Ltd for objects in daily use, perfectly designed to suit their purpose and made from modest materials] offer some indication of the difficult economic climate at that time. Unsurprisingly the business soon ran into financial difficulties and it remained in existence for only three years. Lichtblau then took over the running of BEST, *Beratungsstelle für Innereinrichtungen der Gemeindebauwohnungen* (an advice centre for furnishing council apartments), which had been set up by the municipal authorities. The tight dimensions of the rooms in the new urban housing complexes called for small pieces of furniture that could be easily moved around. The advice centre, located in the Karl-Marx-Hof, offered residents information and advice in this area. During these years Lichtblau also designed the interiors of numerous shops and apartments but was able to erect only very few buildings. A relatively unambitious factory building was followed by a commission from 'Red Vienna' to design two housing complexes of real architectural quality that deserve special mention. In particular the 'Paul-Speiser-Hof' (Vienna 21, Franklinstraße no. 20, illustration 82, erected in 1929, is clearly structured and the lucid design of the façade with its rhythmically positioned bay window is very different to the monumental pathos expressed by most of the *Volkswohnpaläste*.

Lichtblau established a reputation in the Österreichischer Werkbund of which he was a founding member. For an exhibition held in 1930 and devoted to the theme of tourism he designed a 'tourism pavilion' in the exhibition grounds of the Museum für Kunst und Industrie. This open, white-painted steel frame building emanated a lightness and transparency that conveyed a contemporary 'modernism' of the highest quality. This was, of course, only ephemeral architecture, but Lichtblau was also involved in Josef Frank's Werkbundsiedlung project of 1932, for which he designed a pair of houses (Vienna 13, Jagdschloßgasse no. 88) that showed how comfortable living space could be provided at a reasonable cost. In design terms the building's plain cubic form reflects



the general unpretentiousness of the Werkbundsiedlung and it had a small terrace shaded by a pergola that compensated for the lack of a proper garden. As a specialist in furniture design and director of BEST Lichtblau furnished his own pair of houses in the Werkbundsiedlung as well as a number of the other houses designed by his colleagues, using functional furniture that was both easy to move around and also aimed at satisfying aesthetic demands.<sup>224</sup>

The collapse of the Werkbund as described earlier and the general hardening of the political fronts made things difficult for Lichtblau in the next few years and at the time of the so-called *Anschluss* in 1938 the only work he had was a number of interior designs. These included the famed ‘Promenaden-Café’ on Parkring (1934), which unfortunately is no longer in existence. His entries for a number of major competitions were all ultimately unsuccessful, although in 1933 he received a prize for his design for a restaurant on the Kahlenberg, which was described in the press as the ‘most imaginative’ and ‘most generous’ project.<sup>225</sup> Interior design was therefore the only option open to Lichtblau until, through the events of March 1938, the situation dramatically worsened. Despite having converted, he was classified as a ‘racial Jew’ and was therefore refused membership of the Reichskammer (chamber of architects), which meant the loss of his license to practice. In August 1939 Lichtblau fled to England where he worked as a graphic designer and struggled to survive by designing covers for books and magazines. As the prospects did not seem particularly promising, he left England and emigrated to the USA, arriving in New York with just a few British pounds in his pocket.

After a brief intermezzo as an instructor in textile design at the Cooper Union in New York, in 1947, having obtained American citizenship he secured a lectureship in interior design at Rhode Island School of Design. He remained in this position until his retirement in 1960 and was even temporarily Dean of the Faculty of Architecture. This was a most fruitful time for Lichtblau; he was a very successful teacher who shaped an

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<sup>224</sup> The fittings and furnishings in the interior, which had the character of models, so to speak, were only intended for the duration of the exhibition and after it closed they were removed.

<sup>225</sup> Eventually Erich Boltenstern’s design was carried out and the building still exists today, but in a much mutilated form.

entire generation of students and he also received several prizes for various exhibition buildings. Apart from a number of conversions, however, he carried out few building projects worth mentioning in the USA. It is therefore hardly surprising that in 1957 on his first return visit to Vienna, during which he applied for the restitution of his ‘Aryanised’ family property, Lichtblau was keen to secure the commission to build a primary school on Grundsteingasse in Vienna’s 16th district. Discussions on this matter extended over a period of several years with Lichtblau only obtaining the commission in 1962. As in the case of Walter Sobotka the authorities made wilful difficulties and refused to give him back his Austrian license so that he was obliged to involve an architect licensed to practice in Austria, in this concrete case Norbert Schlesinger.<sup>226</sup> Given this constellation it is quite difficult to say to what extent the completed building bears Lichtblau’s signature. Whatever the case, the group of buildings arranged around a planted courtyard had a transparent lightness that made it one of the most innovative school buildings of the time (illustration 83). But the emotionally turbulent background to this project clearly took its toll on Ernst Lichtblau, who was already in his eighties. Only a short time after the completion of the building – the formal opening ceremony was planned for April 1961 – in January of that year he died of a heart attack in the Parkhotel Hietzing. The fuss caused by a fire in the hotel – in which nobody suffered serious injury – was probably too much for the heart of the elderly gentleman.

## **7.2 Borderline cases – Karl Jaray, Siegfried Drach, Felix Angelo Pollak and Gustav Schläfrig**

Although all these architects also studied at the Technische Hochschule under Karl König, in terms of both their architectural position and their Jewish origins they occupy a special position in the Viennese architecture scene of the interwar period. Alongside his importance as an architect and technician **Karl Jaray** (1878–1947, illustration 84) is of particular interest in terms of cultural history, as he also moved in literary circles and was a very close friend of Karl Kraus. Born in Vienna, Jaray came from an old Jewish

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<sup>226</sup> The involvement of Norbert Schlesinger (1908–1980) was probably on the recommendation of Rudolf Baumfeld, who had been Schlesinger’s partner for a number of years in the interwar period and who also worked with Lichtblau on several occasions.

family, the Jeiteles, whose origins can be traced back to the Middle Ages. In the 19th century the family, who lived in Hungary at the time, ‘Magyarised’ the surname as Jaray. A branch of the Jarays came to Vienna around 1870 and founded an extremely successful furnishing firm, ‘Sandor Jaray’, which numbered the imperial court among its clients.<sup>227</sup> Karl Jaray’s father, however, was a chemist and businessman involved in the production of compressed yeast and in the wine trade. He, too, seems to have come to Vienna from Budapest some time in the 1870s, as Karl was born in Vienna, where he was also educated. After completing the Realschule he studied from 1895–1901 at the Technische Hochschule and subsequently took a position as construction assistant with the State Railways in Villach. He soon gave up this job, however, in favour of a lectureship at the Technische Hochschule in Prague. He completed his doctorate at the latter institution and, due to his particular brilliance, was able to habilitate only two years later. He lectured in the area of reinforced concrete construction and for a time worked in the editorial office of the journal *Technische Blätter*. During these years he married Margit Hirsch, a Viennese woman of Jewish origin, both converting to Catholicism on the occasion of their marriage. Alongside his teaching work at Technische Hochschule in Prague he also worked as a self-employed architect and erected a number of bank buildings, factory complexes, sanatoriums and apartment buildings in Prague and in the provinces in Bohemia. Although appointed full professor in 1918, shortly before the collapse of the monarchy, he took his retirement in the mid-1920s and returned to Vienna. There can be little doubt he was led to take this step by his doubly difficult situation as a ‘German’ in the young Czech Republic and as a Jew – despite his conversion – at the Deutsche Hochschule in Prague, which was regarded as extremely nationalistic and anti-Semitic. Nonetheless, he was later involved in a number of important building projects in what was, at the time, Czechoslovakia, and erected some very imposing bank buildings there.<sup>228</sup>

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<sup>227</sup>See [www.jarayfamily.net](http://www.jarayfamily.net) and G. Gaugusch, *Wer einmal war*, Vienna 2011, p.1260ff. Karl Jaray is often confused with his somewhat older cousin of the same name, Karl Hans Jaray (1844–1944), the son of Sandor Jaray, who, however, worked only in the field of interior decoration.

<sup>228</sup>The most important building from this period was the Böhmisches Escompte-Bank in Prague, which he built around 1932, working in collaboration with Gotthilf & Neumann, the Viennese specialists in bank buildings.

In Vienna Karl Jaray worked once more as a self-employed architect. His projects included industrial complexes in Vienna and Pernitz/Lower Austria for his friend, the paper manufacturer Hugo Bunzl, and he designed a number of villas for himself and his acquaintances. Interestingly, in formal design terms all these buildings display a remarkable independence from all contemporary tendencies. In particular the villa he built for himself in Grinzing at Langackergasse no. 22 (illustration 64) has an extraordinarily individual character: alongside its wood-clad façade, it was, above all, the tall hip-and-gable or gablet roof that gave the building a nostalgic charm. While working as an architect, Jaray also pursued his interest in literature during his years in Vienna. A member of the intellectual circle around Adolf Loos and Karl Kraus, he corresponded intensively with the latter and also promoted and explained his work. Together with Hugo Bunzl in 1930 he financed the re-sale of Brenner-Verlag in Innsbruck to Ludwig Ficker so that he could publish the writings of Adolf Loos. He then worked intensively on publishing an index of *Die Fackel* and played an important role in organising the celebrations for Karl Kraus' sixtieth birthday. Indeed in his will Kraus named Jaray as his executor. When Jaray's villa in Grinzing was seized by the Gestapo following the so-called *Anschluss* of Austria in 1938, a large amount of material and documents relating to Karl Kraus fell into their hands.<sup>229</sup> Together with his wife Jaray managed to flee in good time to Prague, but the last years of his life were marked by turmoil and upheavals. When the Germans occupied Czechoslovakia he emigrated to London, where his wife died. During the war Jaray left England and went to Argentina, where he married a second time and, for a short period, worked again as an architect. But only a few years later, after a lengthy battle with an infectious disease, he died in Buenos Aires in 1947.

The second personality to be mentioned in this context is **Siegfried Drach** (1881–1943) who – much like Karl Jaray – is today largely unknown, but who must be numbered among the most remarkable architects of the interwar period. Drach was born in 1881 in Vienna, the son of a Jewish merchant, but with a Catholic mother who converted to

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<sup>229</sup> Ch. Wagenknecht, 'Karl Jaray. Rundschreiben 1928–1934', in: *Kraus-Hefte* 52, October 1989 and information kindly provided by Mag. G. Hirschmann, Kärntner Literaturarchiv.

Judaism shortly before marrying. This fact was later to play an important role in his life. Drach studied at the Technische Hochschule, graduating in 1904 with the 2nd *Diplomprüfung*. In the same year he was baptized a Catholic – possibly so as not to hinder his career prospects. His dissertation about reinforced concrete structures ran into difficulties and was rejected due to an error in the calculations. He had to partly rewrite it before it was accepted in 1910. Later, however, he was to patent the results of this work as *Deckensystem Dr. Drach* [Dr. Drach's Ceiling Slab System] which simplified building construction and therefore helped to reduce costs. A qualified expert in the field of concrete – who regularly published articles on his subject – he went to Hamburg for two years where he worked as the manager of a reinforced concrete company. On returning to Vienna in 1912 he obtained the position of head engineer with the well-known construction firm Rella, becoming a partner in the company just one year later. He appears to have left this firm around 1930 in order to work as a self-employed architect and building contractor. Details of the circumstances or the reasons for this decision are not known. Possibly, however, it may have had to do with the contract Drach had signed with the Allgemeine Unfallversicherung insurance company in autumn of 1929 for the development of what were known as the 'Malfatti Gründe' in Vienna-Hietzing. The insurance company planned to erect a housing development consisting of around 74 single-family houses on this site.<sup>230</sup> Drach prepared a site layout plan for the project and developed various kinds of villas which were very traditional in style, with steeply hipped roofs and portico-like elements at the front. However, the housing subsidy committee rejected this concept as outdated and called for simple single-family houses. Siegfried Drach then very quickly revised his concept and drew up a project that was completely new, both aesthetically and in terms of content. The first phase envisaged the erection of one single-family house and fourteen pairs of houses, all in a functional, modern style. As this new project was approved by the housing subsidy committee in April 1932, we can assume it was designed at around the same time as the Werkbundsiedlung was being built in Lainz, and that Drach knew

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<sup>230</sup> See E. Bernard/B. Feller, 'Unbekannte Wiener Moderne. Die Malfatti-Siedlung von Siegfried Drach', in *architektur aktuell*, Issue 180, June 1995, p. 74ff.

about the rival project when undertaking the speedy revision of his initial plans. Be that as it may, detached pairs of two-storey single-family houses, laid out in a row, represented state-of-the-art modernism. Externally the appearance of the closed cubic forms was determined by the accessible flat roof and horizontal rectangular windows, while balconies and terraces established a connection to the surrounding greenery. Each of the twin houses had a floor area of 60m<sup>2</sup> on each floor and the use of lightweight partitions walls allowed considerable flexibility in the layout of spaces. The reinforced concrete ceiling slabs based on the 'Drach System' helped rationalise the entire construction process and made it more economical. In contrast to the difficulties experienced in finding buyers or tenants for the houses in the Werkbundsiedlung, in the development known as the Malfatti-Siedlung (Vienna 13, Franz-Schalk-Platz nos. 1–15, illustration 65) by 1933, the year in which it was completed, more than 80 per cent of the dwellings had been rented. Despite this success, however, the original plans to develop this housing estate further had to be dropped due to the economic crisis. Nonetheless, these two projects, Werkbundsiedlung and Malfatti-Siedlung, are today still numbered among the most innovative building projects of this time, although, unfairly, architectural historians have devoted little attention to the latter project. For Siegfried Drach this project was certainly a major personal and financial success, which enabled him to continue working as a building contractor despite the difficult times. Together with his business partner, Alexander Osterberger, he acquired two plots of building land at Modenapark in the 3rd district, a smart residential area. This park had been created in 1926 from part of the grounds of the old Palais Modena, whereas other parts were zoned for building. In the following years a small residential district of a higher standard was built here, which in design terms fully reflected the modern trend of the times. The apartment houses erected by Siegfried Drach between 1931 and 1937 (Vienna 3, Neulinggasse nos. 50–52, illustration 87), in which the differentiated design of the façades and the use of French windows suggests interiors that offer a higher standard of domestic comfort, also followed this trend. Until the fateful year 1938 Drach was able to build a number of villas but the seizure of power by the National Socialists completely changed the situation. As a baptized 'half-Jew' who was married

to an ‘Aryan’,<sup>231</sup> he was relatively unaffected in that he was not obliged to wear a Star of David and was not deported – unlike his sisters, who had remained members of the Jewish religious community. However, on account of his partly Jewish origins he was stripped of his membership of the chamber of architects which *de facto* prevented him from working in his profession. Siegfried Drach died from cancer in Vienna in 1943. This case illustrates the difficulty in defining the term ‘Jew’. From a Jewish perspective Drach was not a Jew, as his mother was a Christian and he had converted to Catholicism. However, for the Nazis, who employed highly problematic definitions such as ‘half-Jew’, he remained a ‘racially inferior’ outsider.

Conversion and assimilation also characterize the biography of **Felix Angelo Pollak** (1882–1936), whose architectural oeuvre in Vienna is relatively small. Curiously, on account of his close contacts with a Catholic religious order he was even given the nickname ‘Herz-Jesu-Pollak’ (Sacred Heart Pollak). Born in Baden near Vienna, he received his training at the Technische Hochschule in Vienna and in Graz, completing his studies in 1911. During the First World War he enlisted as a reserve officer and as well as serving at the front he also taught at the famous Military Academy in Wiener Neustadt / Lower Austria and was awarded a number of military decorations. When the war ended he worked as a self-employed architect, designing a number of dwelling houses. At the end of the 1920s he converted to Catholicism and became involved in various charitable Christian associations. This brought him into close contact with a Roman Catholic religious order known as the *Dienerinnen des heiligsten Herzens Jesu* (Servants of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus), for whom he built a hospital in Berlin and a school and nurses’ home in Vienna. The latter building, which occupies a prominent corner position, is still a striking architectural feature of this district (illustration 66). In the mid-1930s, working in partnership with Leo Kammel, Pollak, who had begun increasingly to specialise in the construction of concrete roads (particularly abroad), erected one of Vienna’s first progressive high-rise buildings (Vienna 1, Laurenzerberg no. 3).<sup>232</sup> A short time afterwards, in 1936, he died as the result of a stroke.

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<sup>231</sup> Siegfried Drach had been married to Hermine Maria Hafkesbring since 1907.

<sup>232</sup> *Österreichische Kunst* 7.1936, issue 7/8, p. 30. This building was also financed by the *Assanierungsfonds*.

The fate of **Gustav Schläfrig** (1881–1950, illustration 67) also represents a special case. He was most probably the only Jewish architect who remained in Vienna during the Nazi era and survived. Born in the same year as Siegfried Drach, he studied at the Technische Hochschule at the same time as Drach, allowing one to assume that they knew each other. In contrast to Drach, however, Schläfrig came from an emphatically Jewish background. His father, Dr. Jonas Schläfrig, was head of the Jewish community in Mistelbach/Lower Austria and the local medical officer and was therefore an important person in the town. Consequently all his three sons were able to study. While the eldest, Albert, followed in his father's footsteps and became a doctor, the other two, Friedrich (1875–1953) and Gustav, both studied architecture. After completing his studies Friedrich Schläfrig found a position with the österreichische Staatsbahnen [Austrian State Railways], where he was responsible for erecting a number of buildings and rose to the position of Ministerialrat. Gustav, in contrast, worked only briefly for the railways and set up his own office around 1912. After serving as a reserve officer during the First World War, when the war ended he managed to obtain a position with the *Wohnbaugenossenschaft der Eisenbahner* (EBG) – a railway workers housing cooperative.<sup>233</sup> During this period – around the start of the 1920s – as he married a Christian Schläfrig converted to Catholicism and later he also had his daughter baptized. In his position as head architect of the cooperative he planned numerous housing complexes in Vienna and the Austrian federal provinces (WHA Vienna 5, Gassergasse, illustration 90). He also obtained a number of commissions from 'Red Vienna', as he was an acknowledged expert in the field of social housing. Together with his partner Hans Reiser he planned several blocks of council flats, which generally follow the scheme used for workers' housing estates and dispense with any form of monumentality or pathos. One example is the Brettschneiderhof housing complex in the 21st district, which was built in the mid-1920s. Up to the end of the 1930s this practice had no shortage of work, but gradually it, too, began to be affected by the economic crisis. After the *Anschluss* of Austria, due to his Jewish origins Gustav Schläfrig lost his license to practice his profession but his 'mixed marriage' and the fact that his daughter

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<sup>233</sup> Weihsmann (above, n. 13) and information from Mag. Helga Schläfrig (daughter of Gustav Schläfrig).



had been baptised a Catholic, protected him and saved him from being deported. Living half underground and working secretly for other construction offices he was able to have food parcels sent to relatives who had been deported to Theresienstadt, which enabled them to survive. After the war he was given back his license and was able to work for a few years as a self-employed architect. However, despite the post-war building boom the only commissions he obtained were for small conversion works and he and his family had to live very modestly. Schläfrig died in Vienna at the age of sixty-eight.

### **7.3 Partnerships with non-Jews**

A further phenomenon that developed in society during these years was that Jewish architects began to form office partnerships with non-Jews – an arrangement that, up to the First World War, was anything but usual. Often economic considerations and the need to establish contacts to other social groups played a role in forming such partnerships. While a number of them are described below, it would be impossible to mention them all.

#### **7.3.1 Paul Fischel and Heinz Siller – traditional tendencies in housing**

The studio partnership of Paul Fischel (1885–1942, illustration 91) and Heinz Siller (1884–1946), both of whom came from very well-to-do bourgeois families, offers an excellent example of this new development. While Fischel, the Jewish partner, had very good contacts in industrialist circles as he was related to the owner of the white spirit factory, M. Fischel's Söhne, Heinz Siller's father was a partner in a large construction company. Thanks to this constellation they had a very wide range of clients and even during these economically difficult times they suffered no shortage of commissions and were, in fact, among the busiest architects of the time. Fischel and Siller were almost the same age and knew each other from their student days at the Technische Hochschule in Vienna, which they attended from 1904 to 1911 and where they were among Karl König's last students before he took retirement. After his studies Fischel left his Jewish

roots behind him, becoming a Protestant in 1906.<sup>234</sup> Both architects first completed their military service and then, after a number of work placements, had to enlist during the First World War. Consequently, it was only from the beginning of the 1920s that they could concentrate on their careers and set up their office partnership. They subsequently erected a series of villas, factory complexes, shops and other buildings in the Vienna area and, in particular, in the successor states of the Danube Monarchy. As well as the Fischel family their list of clients included such important names as the mineral water company Mattoni, the paper industrialist Spiro, the Lederer family and others. Their architecture followed a fairly traditional direction, which probably contributed to their success and acceptance. One of their first commissions, a house in the country for the paper manufacturer Hans Spiro, built around 1924 in Krumau/Česky Krumlov (CZ), was in a cleverly modernised national romantic style, sensitively designed to fit into its rural setting (illustration 92). The decoration of the interior, for instance the plasterwork ceilings, show echoes of the neo-Baroque which clearly met the client's need for a certain degree of representation.<sup>235</sup> Not surprisingly these architects' skilfully modernized adaptation of a rather conventional idiom was immensely popular and helped them obtain several further commissions for country houses. In Vienna they built a series of villas in the more elegant outlying districts of the city, almost all of which either no longer exist or have been much altered.<sup>236</sup> Despite the bad situation of the Austrian economy climate at the time one of the main focuses of their work was the design of industrial complexes, mostly for the food or textile industries. Although they had numerous large contracts they also worked in the area of interiors, designing furniture and lamps and furnishing shops and apartments for clients that included prominent contemporary artists such as the German painter Christian Schad and the fashion photographer Kitty Hoffmann.

Given the extent and range of their architectural work it is not surprising that they had little involvement in the building programme of 'Red Vienna'. They built only one,

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<sup>234</sup> See I. Scheidl, 'Paul Fischel', in: *Architektenlexikon* (above, n. 13); the name is written both Fischel and Fischl.

<sup>235</sup> See E. Erbanova et al., *Slavné vily, jihočesko kraje*, Prague 2007, p. 103f.

<sup>236</sup> See H. Siller, *Wiener Architekten – Paul Fischl, Heinz Siller*, Vienna/Leipzig 1931; I. Meder, 'Sachen wie sie eben geworden sind. Der Architekt Paul Fischl', in: *David* 21.2009, issue 83, p. 48ff.

relatively small housing complex in the 18th district at Köhlergasse nos. 1–3 around 1930. Here they allowed themselves to be influenced by contemporary modernism and their building, which is horizontally structured by cornices, uses the idiom of the *Neue Sachlichkeit*. While social housing was not one of their main focuses, they worked on a remarkable project that offered people who were less well-off the opportunity to acquire a reasonably priced weekend house. In the context of the weekend movement and the development of the extensive Danube colonies around Kritzendorf and Klosterneuburg /Lower Austria, they were commissioned by the *Klosterneuburger Wagenfabrik* (Kawafag) to design a series of standardized timber-built houses. These ranged from a bathing hut for two people to a house that could be lived in permanently. These reasonably priced, prefabricated timber houses were extremely popular and, for the first time, made a weekend house affordable for a far wider sector of the population. Some of these houses designed by Fischel and Siller, which were built on columns because of the danger of flooding, are still lived in today (illustration 68). It is interesting to note that, particularly in Kritzendorf, a high proportion of the weekend house owners was Jewish, which strongly suggests that Fischel's contacts may have helped them secure this commission.<sup>237</sup>

In general the 1930s were extremely fruitful years for this partnership; with regard to the two partners it should perhaps be said here that it is almost impossible to determine which one was responsible for which buildings. In 1935 Paul Fischel, at quite a mature age, married the almost twenty years younger Maria Lacerta Kammerer, the daughter of the well-known reptile expert Paul Kammerer who committed suicide after it was revealed that the results of his experiments with toads had been falsified. When the office partnership was dissolved in 1938 following the *Anschluss* of Austria and Nazi Germany, Fischel fled with his wife to Australia, where he changed his name to Finton and worked as a painter and photographer, but died a short time later in 1942.

Heinz Siller remained in Vienna and came to terms with the Nazis simply by disowning his Jewish partner in a list of the works by the partnership that was drawn up for the chamber of architects. In the years that followed, working with a number of different

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<sup>237</sup> See Fischer (above, n. 107); Klosterneuburg, Sonderband 2 (above, n. 109).

partners, he erected a series of industrial buildings and in 1944 his 60<sup>th</sup> birthday was celebrated accordingly. After having withdrawn from public life, Siller died shortly after the end of the war in 1946.

### 7.3.2 Fritz Judtmann and Egon Riss – contemporary modernism

The partnership between Fritz Judtmann and Egon Riss was yet another ‘mixed architectural practice’. Although certainly not as financially successful as Fischel and Siller and with far fewer completed buildings to their credit, the architectural quality of their work is probably higher. In particular Egon Riss, who today is practically unknown, can be seen as one of the most innovative architects of the interwar period. These two architects also knew each other from their studies at the Technische Hochschule, which, however, they only completed after the war. They came from very different social backgrounds: Fritz Judtmann (1899–1968) was the son of a senior civil servant and on his mother’s side came from a Viennese master builder’s family.<sup>238</sup> Egon Riss (1901–1964), in complete contrast, was the son of a merchant in Lipnik at Bielitz-Biała/Bielsko-Biała (at that time in Galicia) and had so-called East European Jewish roots. At the time they formed their partnership in 1924 Judtmann already enjoyed at least basic social security through his position as an assistant at the Technische Hochschule, whereas Riss had just completed the necessary practical training in Vienna and Bielitz.

One of their first projects was later to be described as ‘one of the most interesting examples of interwar architecture in Vienna’.<sup>239</sup> It has never been clarified how this young and completely inexperienced team managed to obtain the sizable commission to design the outpatient clinic for the *Arbeiterkrankenkasse* [workers’ health insurance provider], which was part of an infrastructure planned to provide better health care for the workers. There is no doubt, however, that this highly individual building erected in 1926/27 at Strohgasse no. 28 in Vienna’s 3rd district (illustration 94) is among the most remarkable projects of its time. Alongside the avant-garde horizontal ribbon windows,

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<sup>238</sup> See B. Sauer, ‘Fritz Judtmann’ and P. Schumann, ‘Egon Riss’, in: *Architektenlexikon* (above, n. 13).

<sup>239</sup> *WEB – Lexikon der Sozialdemokratie*, www.dasrotewien.at, ‘Arbeiterkrankenkasse Vienna 3, Strohgasse 28’.

the dynamic lines of the semi-cylindrical projecting corner element suggest ties with international modernism, in particular with buildings by Erich Mendelsohn that date from the same time. It is not entirely inconceivable that during his practical training in Bielitz at the start of the 1920s the young Egon Riss may have worked, or at least made contact, with this great Berlin architect, who around this time carried out a number of projects in this region (for instance in Gleiwitz). The health insurance provider building on Strohgasse is marked by a highly functionalist approach that is also legible in the building's external appearance. The clinics and the medical areas, in which the most outstanding feature was the large, glass-roofed waiting rooms, were in the lower, recessed part of the building, while the offices for the administration occupied the upper floors and are clearly visually distinguished from the storeys below.<sup>240</sup>

It seems that the client was satisfied with this building, as in the following years the partnership was commissioned to carry out a series of projects in the area of hospital and health care. As well as building a few smaller hospitals for workers from different trades, with their 'tuberculosis pavilion', which formed part of the development of *Lainzer Krankenhaus* (today Krankenhaus Hietzing), they built what Achleitner has described as 'one of the best hospital buildings in the city'.<sup>241</sup> Erected in 1929/30, the clear rhythm with which the building volume is articulated and the transparent lightness of the façade that results from the large windows and terraces are most impressive. During this time Judtman and Riss also erected a number of residential buildings, including a small municipal housing block in the 5th district (Diehlgasse no. 20), as well as office buildings for various trade associations. But in 1934 the partnership was dissolved, supposedly due to the difficult economic situation. This does not seem entirely credible, as in the next few years each of them – working alone – was able to carry out a number of projects. Possibly the increasing political radicalisation of the time played a role here, too. Judtman subsequently devoted himself mostly to stage set design, worked extensively for the Burgtheater in Vienna and carried out only a few individual projects as an architect. Until into the 1960s he was one of the most important set

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<sup>240</sup> *Österreichische Bau und Werkkunst* 5.1927/28, p. 277ff.

<sup>241</sup> F. Achleitner, *Österreichische Architektur*, issue III/2, Vienna/Salzburg 1995, p. 19.

designers in Austria. Egon Riss, in contrast, who made a study of the theory of urban planning,<sup>242</sup> continued to work on a number of very different housing projects. As well as a series of single-family houses, whose exact locations are unknown due to the limited knowledge about Riss' work (vague mention is made of Vienna and Silesia),<sup>243</sup> he worked on an apartment building in Vienna-Döbling that was regarded as highly progressive at the time. Erected in 1935/36 at Heiligenstädterstraße Straße no. 95, this building amazed contemporaries through its highly individual façade in which the loggias are arranged in a checkerboard pattern (illustration 69) to avoid problems with light. The rhythm of the façade also reflects the highly unusual staggered arrangement of the apartments in the building, possibly inspired by the interlocking system that Le Corbusier introduced in his apartment buildings to make more economic use of space. There was even a cinema in the courtyard of this very innovative building. The Jewish client who made this apartment house possible was Schmuël Pasternak, who indicates the importance for an architect of having a client who is open to new ideas. Ironically, this building was published in an Austrian journal in March 1938,<sup>244</sup> but only a short time later, as a consequence of the *Anschluss*, Riss was forced to emigrate. Travelling via Czechoslovakia, he managed to reach England. Given his birthplace Riss may possibly have held Czech or Polish citizenship and in wartime Britain he was not classified as an 'enemy alien' but served as an officer in the Royal Navy. A letter written by Egon Riss in 1946 as a longstanding member of the *Künstlerhausvereinigung* to the president of that association illustrates his emotional ties to his old home – despite all that had happened.<sup>245</sup> In this letter he not only describes his situation as an emigrant but also asks the president for information about former colleagues, in particular his old partner Fritz Judtmann. Egon Riss was fortunately young enough to build up a life for himself in his new home. Shortly after the end of the war he obtained British citizenship and moved to Scotland, where he worked as head architect of the Scottish Coal Board

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<sup>242</sup> E. Riss, *Die Raumverteilung – Die neue Stadt Wien*, Vienna 1936.

<sup>243</sup> H. Weihsmann (above, n. 13).

<sup>244</sup> *Österreichische Kunst* 1938, issue 3, p. 16.

<sup>245</sup> W. Aichelburg, *Das Wiener Künstlerhaus, 150 Jahre, 1861–2001*, issue 2, p. 65.

until his death in 1964. In this position he was responsible for designing numerous engineering and mining buildings.

### **7.3.3 Wilhelm Baumgarten and Josef Hofbauer – innovative school construction**

The partnership of Wilhelm Baumgarten (1885–1959) and Josef Hofbauer (1875–1936), who made important contributions to the development of the urban infrastructure at a high architectural level, was somewhat similar. As with Siegfried Drach, the case of Wilhelm Baumgarten illustrates the difficulty of defining a ‘Jewish identity’.

Baumgarten, too, had been baptized and was possibly only partly of Jewish origin, but in 1938 he was nevertheless banned from practicing his profession and thus forced to emigrate. Originally from Mährisch-Schönberg/Šumperk (CZ) he attended the Staatsgewerbeschule in Vienna.<sup>246</sup> After serving as volunteer for one year he studied at the Academy of Fine Arts under Friedrich Ohmann and then worked as a self-employed architect in the years leading up to the First World War. When the war ended he took a position as assistant to Peter Behrens at the Academy. Together with Josef Hofbauer, who was a university assistant to Friedrich Ohmann and later deputised for Ohmann as head of the building school, Baumgarten began to take part in competitions. In 1919 their competition entry for a medical centre in Vienna was awarded first prize (although the building was never erected), which probably encouraged them to set up the practice of Hofbauer & Baumgarten. Hofbauer was ten years older than his partner and came from an old Viennese family of master builders so that their social contacts were quite wide-ranging. They seem also to have complemented each other ideally; Hofbauer appears to have concentrated more on the construction details and the technical side in general, while the younger Baumgarten was responsible for the modern touches – probably reflecting the influence of Peter Behrens – in the formal development of their projects.<sup>247</sup>

Despite the difficult economic situation, in the years that followed they were able to carry out a series of relatively large projects. While they built housing estates and apartment blocks for the Vienna Council, their particular focus was on schools, where

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<sup>246</sup> See *Visionäre und Vertriebene* (above, n. 10).

<sup>247</sup> See *J. Hofbauer/W. Baumgarten, Projekte und ausgeführte Bauten*, Vienna 1931.

as well as designing the buildings they supervised the construction and fitted-out the interiors. This allowed them to give their projects a very personal stamp. After completing the large school complex of the Gewerbliche Fortbildungsschule at Hütteldorfer Straße no. 7 in the 15th district, in which the highly functional work spaces represented a pioneering achievement (illustration 96), they appear to have acquired such a reputation that they became the ‘house architects’, as it were, of the Komensky-Verein, a Czech school association. Although this association had been active in Vienna since the 1870s, for a long time Czech schools had to be run privately. As a result of the Brünn/Brno Agreements of 1920 the association’s schools were granted official recognition, which then led to an enormous interest in these schools among Vienna’s Czech population. For a few years this new situation created a minor building boom in the area of Czech schools in Vienna. How these architects obtained the commission has not been clarified. It was certainly an advantage for both of them that Baumgarten, who was born in Mährisch-Schönberg (CZ), had, like Adolf Loos and Jacques Groag, opted for Czechoslovakia after the collapse of the monarchy and was therefore a Czech citizen.

In the next few years Hofbauer & Baumgarten erected a series of schools and kindergartens for the Komensky-Verein, which in architectural terms can be described as almost avant-garde for Viennese circumstances. In particular the buildings erected around 1930 for the Czech kindergarten in Vienna 16, Arltgasse and the school in Vienna 12, Erlgasse (illustration 97) were state-of-the-art examples of European modernism of the time. This is shown, for example, by the flat-roofed cubic volume articulated by projections and recesses and structured only by narrow cornices and ribbon windows. The very positive reaction in various specialist journals indicates that these architects enjoyed a high level of recognition.<sup>248</sup> However the partnership was dissolved in 1933. This may have been because Hofbauer, who was to die at the end of 1936, was already ill. Whatever the case Baumgarten, working alone, erected the last in the series of schools for the Komensky-Verein in Vienna 3, Sebastianplatz no. 3 in

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<sup>248</sup> *Österreichische Baukunst* 4.1933, p. 19f.



1934/35.<sup>249</sup> This was his last documented project in Vienna. His planned redesign of Herzmasky's department store, which would certainly have been immensely interesting, was never carried out.

For Baumgarten, whose Jewish origins had apparently played no role up to this point, the consequences of the so-called *Anschluss* in 1938 were a brutal blow. As he could not produce 'Aryan' identification he was not allowed to join the Reichskunstkammer, which made it impossible for him to continue working as an architect, and he was also immediately expelled from the *Genossenschaft bildender Künstler* [association of visual artists]. This was particularly perfidious as he had belonged to this association since 1920 and had taken part in many of its activities. As well as sitting on various committees he had at times been the 'house architect' and was even vice-president from 1936, the year in which he was awarded the association's Gold Jubilee Medal.<sup>250</sup> These incidents led Baumgarten to look immediately for a position abroad. Through his international contacts he soon found a post with the State College of North Carolina and in August of the same year applied for a travel permit, but he was first of all put on a waiting list for Czech citizens and it was only in March 1940 that he was able to emigrate to the USA via Italy. In North Carolina Baumgarten began work at the college in 1941, initially teaching architectural history and perspective drawing. After the end of the war he received American citizenship and was granted a license to practice as an architect. Baumgarten was appointed professor in 1953 and continued to teach in the college until his retirement in 1958. He died just a year later. As well as his teaching work he published numerous articles in specialist journals. As with most of the emigrants, however, his work as an architect more or less came to a standstill. He was able to build just a single school in Robeson County in 1950.<sup>251</sup>

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<sup>249</sup> This building is today still a Komensky-Verein school, but it has been much altered.

<sup>250</sup> Aichelburg (above, n. 245), issue 2, list of members.

<sup>251</sup> *Visionäre und Vertriebene* (above, n. 10), p. 329.

### **7.3.4 Rudolf Baumfeld and Norbert Schlesinger – shop premises that left their stamp on the city**

In this context a further partnership that should be mentioned is that between Rudolf Baumfeld (1903–1988) and Norbert Schlesinger (1908–1980), which lasted for only five years (from 1932 to 1937) and specialised mostly in interior and shop design. This pair had met each other as fellow students at the Academy of Fine Arts in the master school of Clemens Holzmeister. They came from very different social backgrounds. Norbert Schlesinger came from a master builder's family from northern Bohemia, whereas Baumfeld was born into a bourgeois Viennese Jewish milieu. When they formed their office partnership at the start of the 1930s Rudolf Baumfeld, who was several years older, had already completed a lengthy period of practical training – in particular with Ernst Lichtblau and his furnishing consultancy BEST, where he had been able to acquire a considerable amount of experience in the area of interior design. Together they designed a number of well-known inner city shops whose shop fronts and entrances still shaped the appearance of downtown Vienna well into the 1960s and 1970s. The sportswear and traditional Austrian costume shop *Lanz* on Kärntner Straße, which was built in 1936, is the only one of these to have survived (although somewhat altered) and is an example of interwar architecture of some importance (illustration 70). This importance does not result from the formal qualities of the design alone, this commission should be also seen against the background of the value attached during the time of the *Ständestaat* to traditional costume as a way of defining Austrian identity and promoting tourism. Their monument in the Viennese Zentralfriedhof [Central Cemetery] to the fallen members of the police forces, designed by this partnership in 1935, is a further indication of an affirmative attitude to those in power at the time. In 1936 the partnership was dissolved, the increasing political pressure exerted by Nazi Germany on Austria could well have played a role here.

Rudolf Baumfeld continued to work on his own as consultant to the firm of Julius Meinl and in 1933/36 redesigned a series of shops for this grocery chain, whose characteristic

design was also a part of Austrian identity, in a certain sense.<sup>252</sup> After the so-called *Anschluss* of Austria Baumfeld immediately shut down his studio and fled via Czechoslovakia to Italy, where he was interned for a time. After escaping from the camp he reached the USA in autumn of 1940, where he initially found a position as a draughtsman with the US Navy. After working in several other jobs he went to Los Angeles in 1943, where he joined the office of Victor Gruen, who also came from Vienna and whom Baumfeld knew from his schooldays. Soon this small office began to expand as the result of commissions for commercial buildings and, in particular, the pioneering concept of the shopping mall. Baumfeld, who became Gruen's partner in 1950, worked with great success in the practice until shortly before his death and is therefore one of the small group of architects who were able to build a successful career after emigrating. During the Nazi era his former partner Norbert Schlesinger worked on the expansion of numerous prestigious companies, and was involved, for example, in designing the *Volkswagen* works in Wolfsburg. After the war he was one of the busiest architects of the time and held a professorship at what was known at the time as the Hochschule für angewandte Kunst in Vienna. Doubtless thanks to his former partner Baumfeld as intermediary, Schlesinger was also co-author of the school project by Ernst Lichtblau that has been mentioned above.

## **8 Women pioneers in the area of architecture**

This chapter is devoted to those Jewish women who worked as architects or designers. Dealing with them in a separate section of their own should not be understood as adopting a gender-specific viewpoint (separating modern women architects in this way would be regarded as unacceptable); this approach is taken simply because, at that time, women in this field were still an exception and, perhaps most significantly, generally received their training outside the usual institutions, which explains why they were outside the groups listed earlier. Despite these difficulties, a few of these women architects have in recent times entered our consciousness. This is thanks partly to

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<sup>252</sup> The Julius Meinl chain of foodstores no longer exists.

Sabine Plakholm-Forsthuber who has carried out pioneering work in this area and produced a number of publications.<sup>253</sup>

To begin with it should be said that women began to make their way into the qualified professions only towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, before that time most had worked in farming or as simple labourers. As women were not admitted to the universities or academies (for instance life drawing classes with naked models were regarded as ‘unsuitable’ for women) for a long time they were unable to practice any profession that required an academic training, and in any case many areas, including the building industry, were strongly dominated by men. In this context the Kunstgewerbeschule on Stubenring (today the University of Applied Arts) played an important role. After lengthy struggles, in 1900 it became the only third level public educational facility where women could also study (women were granted general admission to the universities only after the First World War). On this account almost all the women mentioned here attended this institution. However, even this opportunity was somewhat ambivalent, as the education there focussed primarily on the ‘applied arts’ i.e. the areas of handcraft or design, which in a sense served to foster certain gender-specific clichés. In this problematic area – enabling women to enter previously ‘male’ professions – middle-class Jewish women played a special role. Possibly, they may have been more willing to take risks, as in a double sense they themselves occupied a special position. Generally speaking, they tended to enter such areas ahead of their non-Jewish fellow women and therefore played a pioneering role. Despite their considerable courage, however, most of the women did not manage to achieve full equality in the period dealt with here, which extends up to the Second World War. Most of them – as has already been mentioned – were forced into the area of interior design or design in general. Broadly speaking, women were conceded a talent for ‘interior domesticity’. This is reflected in an article that appeared in February in the *Neue Freie Presse* under the title ‘Wie schaffen Wiener Architektinnen?’ [What Do Viennese Women Architects Do?]<sup>254</sup> Almost all the women mentioned here had to restrict themselves to the area of interior

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<sup>253</sup> In particular Plakholm-Forsthuber (above, n. 12).

<sup>254</sup> G. Urban, ‘Wie schaffen Wiener Architektinnen?’, in: *Neue Freie Presse*, 15.2.1933 (evening edition, p. 6).

design or else worked as the assistants to their male colleagues. A few, such as Lilia Pollak-Soffer, soon moved to a completely different branch.<sup>255</sup> This, then, was the extremely difficult situation at a time when only a few exceptional women were able to make a career. Given that they experienced double discrimination, both as women and Jews, who later, as emigrants, had to struggle to establish themselves, the tenacity and perseverance of some of these artists is quite incredible. Unsurprisingly the career of most of these women was linked with a strong commitment to feminism.

### **8.1 Ella Briggs and ‘Red Vienna’**

Ella Briggs (1880–1977) most certainly belonged to the few exceptions mentioned above and indeed occupied a very special position in several regards. To begin with she was the very first Austrian woman architect (it is widely believed that this honour goes to Margarete Schütte-Lihotzky but in fact she was still a student at the time Ella Briggs was presenting her first works), and Briggs was also one of the few women not to confine herself to the area of interior design, she actually ‘built’. Born in Vienna, she was the daughter of the lawyer Josef Baumfeld and came from an upper middle-class Jewish background that was very open-minded in both intellectual and artistic terms. Consequently, the young Ella attempted to acquire a training in specialised areas – in as far as that was possible at all for a woman – which forced her to make use of ‘alternative institutions’ such as the private painting school of Professor Adalbert Seligmann and, later, the Kunstgewerbeschule in Vienna, where during her training she was most likely confined to the area of applied art.<sup>256</sup>

After completing this school around 1906 the young Ella went to New York, where her brother was living at the time. There she married the journalist Walter Briggs who came from Vienna, but the marriage soon failed and around 1912 she returned to Vienna. Here, for the first time, she presented a number of interior designs at an exhibition organised by what was known as the *Frauenclub* [Women’s Club], one of the many

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<sup>255</sup> Ibid. Although Pollak-Soffer even acquired the title Diplom-Ingenieur, she soon gave up the profession and became an actor.

<sup>256</sup> H. Weihsmann and I. Scheidl, ‘Ella Briggs’, in: *Architektenlexikon* (both as above, n. 13). What we know is that she attended the painting class of Kolo Moser, whether she also studied architecture with Josef Hoffmann is not certain, but seems very likely.

women's associations that were formed and run around that time by committed feminists as an attempt to establish their own platform. The Frauenclub, which was mentioned previously in relation to Ludwig Schmidl's school buildings, had been set up in 1900 and organised discussions, lecture series, courses and exhibitions that gave women an opportunity for further education, enabled them to establish social contacts and to present themselves in the public realm.<sup>257</sup> The rooms of this association in the old Trattnerhof on Graben had originally been fitted out by Adolf Loos – an indication of the extent to which this association was a focus for modernism at that time.<sup>258</sup> It goes almost without saying that women from a Jewish upper middle-class background played a leading role here, among them Editha von Mauthner-Markhof and Clara Wittgenstein (an aunt of Ludwig Wittgenstein), who were among the co-founders.

Ella Briggs refused to be satisfied with her situation and knew that her only chance lay in obtaining further education. As well as taking an internship in a building office she therefore attended the Staatsgewerbeschule in Salzburg and, when women were finally admitted after the end of the First World War, went to the Technische Hochschule in Munich. She graduated from there in 1920, which entitled her to use the title 'Diplom-Ingenieur'. In this respect Briggs, who by this time was already forty, set new standards. In 1921 she became the first woman member of the elite organisation Österreichischer Ingenieur- und Architektenverein.<sup>259</sup> Because of the dire economic situation in Austria at the beginning of the 1920s she again went to the USA and worked for a short time in the building office of Kahn & Gregory. In 1923/24 she returned to her native country, where she worked as a journalist and finally obtained two commissions in the framework of the social housing programme of 'Red Vienna'. In 1925/26 she built a housing block with a kindergarten and a residence for single people in Vienna-Döbling, both at practically the same time and in close geographical proximity to each other. Most of the buildings of 'Red Vienna' from this time – the mid 1920s – displayed an expressionistic pathos, but her two projects, in sharp contrast, are marked by a great

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<sup>257</sup> See [www.2onb.ac.at/ariadne](http://www.2onb.ac.at/ariadne).

<sup>258</sup> Rukschcio/Schachel (above, n. 175), p. 421. The old Trattnerhof on Graben in Vienna was demolished around 1910.

<sup>259</sup> Membership form of the Österreichischer Ingenieur- und Architektenverein from 1921.

clarity of the forms, entirely at variance with the usual cliché of ‘feminine playfulness’.<sup>260</sup> The housing complex known as the Pestalozzi-Hof (Vienna 19, Philippovichgasse nos. 2–4) is particularly bright and friendly and turns its main front towards Währinger Park, which lies opposite (illustration 71). The kindergarten is emphasised by being placed centrally in the set-back middle section of the main façade, and offers a symbol of the workers’ hopes for the future.<sup>261</sup>

Ella Briggs also planned what is known as the Ledigenheim (home for single people) at Billrothstraße no. 9. This building also dispenses with decorative elements and employs plain forms that show some influence of a Bauhaus aesthetic. Whereas most social housing apartments were intended for families, this building offered small dwelling units for unmarried persons, a highly progressive idea for the time. Here, too, the façade is articulated by recessing certain parts of the building and stepping others forwards, producing a balance of proportions that is highly impressive. Despite the high quality of both these buildings Ella Briggs was unable to continue working in Vienna. The economic crisis that began towards the end of the 1920s caused her to leave the city yet again. This time she went to Berlin, where conditions were somewhat better. There she worked again in the area of social housing and published a number of articles on specialist themes. The Nazi seizure of power forced her to leave Germany in 1936 and to go to England, where she settled in London. Although it was still peacetime and, unlike many other emigrants, she had a good command of the language, initially she encountered serious difficulties, as her application for a license to work as an architect was turned down.<sup>262</sup> It is uncertain when, precisely, she was able to work again as an architect. Whatever the case, she obtained British citizenship only after the end of the Second World War, which enabled her to become a member of the Royal Institute for British Architects (RIBA), a requirement for working in England as a self-employed architect. Immediately after the war she was also involved in a reconstruction project, in which she served on the committee for ‘Housing and Planning’ and in this function built

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<sup>260</sup> See U. Prokop, ‘Jüdinnen als Pionierinnen der Frauenemanzipation’, in: *David*, 23.2011, issue 89, p. 22ff.

<sup>261</sup> On the Pestalozzi-Hof see *Festschrift zum Pestalozzi-Hof, Wohnhausanlage der Gemeinde Wien*, Vienna, no date.

<sup>262</sup> Benton (above, n. 214), p. 146.

a housing development in Bilston.<sup>263</sup> After the death of her brother Fritz, with whom she had shared a home in London, she moved to Ensfield in Middlesex (today part of London), where she died of leukaemia at the age of ninety-seven.<sup>264</sup>

## 8.2 Liane Zimbler – interior design for the upper middle class

In many of the details the biography of Liane Zimbler (1892–1987, illustration 100) is not dissimilar – also as regards the gaps. However, she worked for a very different clientele. More than ten years younger than Ella Briggs, she almost belonged to a different generation. Born in Prerau/Prerov in Moravia (CZ), she was the daughter of Otto Fischer, a senior railway official, and came to Vienna when still a small child because her father was moved there. In her case, too, it is impossible to reconstruct what kind of specialist training she received – partly because of the difficulties encountered by women that often forced them to take new, unorthodox paths.<sup>265</sup> She probably went to the Kunstgewerbeschule around 1912, but due to the inadequacy of the sources it is not clear exactly when and with whom she studied. It is often assumed that she attended the class of Oskar Strnad. Parallel to her training she worked as an illustrator and fashion designer for the well-known salon of Emilie Flöge.<sup>266</sup> While the First World War was still raging she married the lawyer Otto Zimbler in 1916, with whom she had her only child, Eva. Around the same time she took a position in a furniture factory, which suggests that she had already completed her training. We know that towards the end of the First World War she worked in an architect's office, but soon set up on her own. One of her first commissions was for a country house in Bad Aussee/Styria. Later the bad economic climate forced her to specialise in conversions and interiors. The country home referred to above and the rather conventional Wetzler single-family house in Vienna-Grinzing (Silbergasse no. 2) were to remain exceptions.

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<sup>263</sup> *Architects Journal*, 2.1.1947, p. 15ff.

<sup>264</sup> Information kindly provided by Cecilia Male (great-niece).

<sup>265</sup> See S. Plakolm-Forsthuber, *Ein Leben, zwei Karrieren*, in: *Visionäre und Vertriebene* (above n. 10), p. 295; Ch. Gräwe, *Liane Zimbler*, diploma thesis, TU Berlin 2003.

<sup>266</sup> Emilie Flöge was for years the life partner of Gustav Klimt, who painted several portraits of her. Her legendary fashion salon was designed by Josef Hoffmann and the Wiener Werkstätte.



One of her most important projects – perhaps also in terms of remuneration – was the adaptation of the Ephrussi bank building in Vienna 9, Wasagasse, on which she worked for around three years. Her office soon had a sufficient amount of work to allow her open a branch in Prague, which was run by Annie Herrnheiser with whom she had worked earlier. Her clients came largely from upper middle-class circles who found themselves obliged to run their households as economically as possible and without the domestic staff that were still usual at the time. Liana Zimbler, who exploited this market niche very cleverly, can be seen as one of the important protagonists of the *Wiener Wohnraumkultur* shaped by Josef Frank, Felix Augenfeld, Walter Sobotka and others. The success of her interior designs was based on friendly, light-coloured pieces of furniture that were functional and modern, but without showing too strong an influence of the sober Bauhaus aesthetic (illustration 101). The flowing way in which she laid out spaces was generally achieved with the use of mobile walls or curtains. Liane Zimbler also regularly took part in interior design exhibitions. She was a convinced feminist and one of her important strategies was to employ women staff as far as possible, as she wanted to ‘give female staff the opportunity to obtain a good position, which was far from easy at the time’.<sup>267</sup> In pursuit of this aim she collaborated with well-known women who worked in the applied arts such as Maria Strauß-Likarz, Herta Bucher and others, who were responsible for many of the details in her interiors. She also received journalistic support from Dr. Else Hoffmann, who occasionally worked as an interior designer herself and regularly published Zimbler’s interiors as part of her wide-ranging journalistic activity.<sup>268</sup> The artistic and personal relationships within this circle were tightly interwoven, as mentioned earlier Felix Augenfeld built a weekend house for Maria Strauß-Likarz in Kritzendorf.

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<sup>267</sup> Quoted from Plakolm-Forsthuber (above, n. 12), p. 254.

<sup>268</sup> Dr. Else Hoffmann (1893 Vienna – 1960 New York) held a doctorate in art history and made her name largely through her wide-ranging work as a journalist. She worked for the magazines *Wiener Tagblatt*, *Innendekoration*, *Kunst und Dekoration* and *Österreichische Kunst*, among others. In contrast her work as an interior designer is practically unknown. In 1928 her interior design for a weekend house was shown in an exhibition in the Warenhaus Zwieback (*Moderne Welt*, 1928, issue 28, p. 42). Among other pieces about Liane Zimbler she published the article ‘Die Arbeiten einer Innenarchitektin’, in: *Innendekoration* 42.1931, p. 290ff.

As part of her commitment to the feminist cause Juliane Zimbler, who was a member of a number of associations such as the *Wiener Frauenkunst*, the Soroptimist Club (a female version of the Rotary Club) and the *Verband berufstätiger Frauen*, gave lectures, wrote articles and taught at the Viennese adult education college.<sup>269</sup> In February 1938 she was the first woman in Austria to be granted a license as an architect, but a short time later saw herself compelled to leave her native country. In the first weeks after the *Anschluss* she left Austria with her family and, travelling via Holland, arrived in England, where she applied for an entry visa for the USA, which at the time was still neutral and – at least to some extent – was open to Austrian emigrants. In autumn of the same year the family reached New York. With the help of Ada Gomperz, the wife of philosopher Heinrich Gomperz who herself had worked as an interior designer and was part of Zimbler's female network, Liane Zimbler was able finally to settle in Los Angeles.

Showing remarkable tenacity Liane Zimbler managed to build up a new existence in the USA. After a short time spent producing designs for a parcel paper firm, around 1940 – the year in which her husband died in an accident – she took a position in the furnishing firm Anita Toor. When Anita Toor died a short time later, Zimbler continued to run the firm alone and in the following years was responsible for numerous conversions and interior designs. Here, again, she was able to apply the highly pragmatic criteria of contemporary modernism in a moderate way and to reconcile them with the middle-class demand for comfort. She was also involved in the design of a number of new buildings, always in collaboration with other architects. This may have been because she did not hold an architect's license in the USA. From the 1960s she worked together in the flourishing business with her daughter, Eva Huebscher, whose information is an important source. After a life which, despite many adversities, was a successful one, Liane Zimbler died in Los Angeles at the age of ninety-five.

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<sup>269</sup> The particular theme of Zimbler's articles was the housing situation of the modern woman (see Bibliography).

### 8.3 Friedl Dicker and Franz Singer – the utter simplicity of living

Friedl Dicker (1898–1944) was the youngest of the three architects looked at here and her fate was perhaps the most tragic. Despite its remarkable quality, almost all of her architectural work has been destroyed. A possible explanation is that, as both a Jew and a communist, she was doubly exposed to persecution. Because in the area of architectural design she always collaborated with her colleague Franz Singer he is included in this ‘women’s chapter’. In her last years Friedl Dicker devoted herself principally to painting.

Born in Vienna in 1898, the daughter of a shop assistant, Friedl Dicker came from a modest background (illustration 102). She began her training at the Graphische Lehr- und Versuchsanstalt, where she studied photography and reproduction technology.<sup>270</sup> She then attended the textile class at the Kunstgewerbeschule for a short time. However, for her the encounter with the charismatic and slightly esoteric Swiss art theorist Johannes Itten, who ran a private school in Vienna during the First World War, was of greater importance. Despite her extremely limited financial resources, she found access to a group of students who were open to everything new. Alongside Anny Wottitz, who was later to marry Hans Moller (the client of the eponymous villa by Adolf Loos), Friedl Dicker also became a close friend of Franz Singer, who was to become her life partner for years. Singer (1899–1954) was from an upper middle-class background and before coming to Johannes Itten had, somewhat untypically, studied painting and philosophy. After the end of the war the entire group, together with their teacher Johannes Itten, went to the newly founded Bauhaus in Weimar. At this centre of experimental modernism Friedl Dicker came into contact with some of the most important artists of her time such as Paul Klee, Oskar Schlemmer, Lyonel Feininger, Walter Gropius and others, who were also to influence her work. For the *Bauhäusler*, who the Viennese populace often decried as ‘Jews and Bolshevists’, the unity of architecture, painting, sculpture and other techniques played a major role. During her training at the Bauhaus Dicker worked with Franz Singer as a set designer. Although he had married the singer Emmy Heim, he maintained his relationship with Friedl Dicker.

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<sup>270</sup> E. Makarova, *Friedl Dicker-Brandeis* (exh. cat.), Vienna 1999.

Despite the permissiveness that generally prevailed in these circles, she suffered great emotional pain in this *menage à trois*.

After finishing their studies in 1923 Dicker and Singer went to Berlin where they ran the *Werkstätte Bildender Kunst*, which produced interior designs and handcrafted objects as well as stage designs. In 1925 they returned to Vienna where they set up the architecture office of Dicker & Singer. This practice was extremely successful and they designed furniture and textiles for numerous shop and apartment interiors, as well as a number of remarkable buildings. In the Viennese context they were among the very few artists who had studied directly at the Bauhaus. Friedl Dicker experimented with colours, patterns and textures and the pair complemented each other wonderfully, which certainly contributed to their success. However, whether, as is maintained in the literature, Franz Singer assumed sole responsibility for the area of building construction, is open to question. After all, both of them had essentially the same training and this interpretation may depend too strongly on standard clichés. This business focussed especially on the design of inexpensively produced, space-saving furnishings such as folding furniture or stackable chairs, which perfectly matched the trend of the time and responded to the shortage of space and money. Their political beliefs and social involvement brought them several commissions in the framework of the social programme of 'Red Vienna'. As well as working on a project called 'Jugend am Werk' [Young People at Work], which aimed at the resocialisation of young people, they fitted-out a number of kindergartens, a task for which Friedl Dicker's intensive study of children's furniture and toys made her seem almost predestined.<sup>271</sup> In 1930 they were commissioned to design the furniture for the Montessori kindergarten in the municipal housing complex known as the Goethe-Hof. With its child-friendly furniture and variety of educational facilities this institution was regarded as a milestone in the area of progressive education (illustration 103).<sup>272</sup> When the Goethe-Hof came under fire during the civil war in 1934, the furnishings of this kindergarten, which symbolised the detested progressive educational policy of the 'Reds', were destroyed.

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<sup>271</sup> She designed, for instance, a modular children's building block system called 'Phantasius'.

<sup>272</sup> *Österreichische Bau und Werkkunst* 8.1932, p. 65f.

Despite concentrating on interior design the studio Dicker & Singer carried out two extremely remarkable buildings. In 1928 they built the clubhouse for the Heller Tennis Club in Hietzing, which was extremely avant-garde in design terms: a daringly curved volume in which a cylinder is inserted, its roof carried by slender pilotis. Interestingly, the young Jacques Groag, who had just recently set up his own office, was responsible for supervising the construction work. This again confirms the existence of a Viennese social network made up of circles of intellectuals and artists, to which Adolf Loos, the journalist Max Ermers, the art historian Ludwig Münz, the Moller family, and many others also belonged. The Hériot house for guests, which Dicker & Singer carried out in 1932 on Rustenschacherallee, near the Vienna Prater, is equally avant-garde; in this case a glazed front gave the building a particular degree of transparency (illustration 104). Regrettably, both these buildings, which were among the most progressive to be erected in Vienna at the time, were later destroyed.

At the start of the 1930s the studio partnership was dissolved due to increasing tensions between the partners. Friedl Dicker then devoted herself mostly to painting and teaching art. In 1931 she had joined the Communist Party and following the establishment of the *Ständestaat* she was arrested in 1934 on account of her political activities. The picture *Das Verhör* [The Interrogation], which she painted under the impression left by these events, is among the darkest witnesses to this period. After her release she emigrated to Prague, where in 1936 she married Pavel Brandeis, a distant relative. In Prague she began to work again in the area of interior design. As well as running her own studio, she was also willing to work with Franz Singer on a casual basis. After the Nazi seizure of power she moved to the country and worked for a textile factory. In 1942 she was deported, together with her husband, to Theresienstadt/Terezin concentration camp, where their paths crossed with that of another member of the Groag family: together with Willi Groag, a nephew of Jacques Groag, Friedl Dicker gave drawing classes for the children in the camp.<sup>273</sup> The children's drawings from Theresienstadt, which Willi Groag was able to rescue, are today one of the most important and harrowing legacies of

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<sup>273</sup> Information kindly provided by Willi Groag †.

life in the camp. When the ghetto was broken up in October 1944, Friedl Dicker was deported to Auschwitz, where she was murdered.

As he had worked since 1934 for various London firms in the areas of precast building systems and social housing, Franz Singer (illustration 105) was able to flee to England after the *Anschluss* of Austria. When Great Britain entered the war he was interned for a time as an ‘enemy alien’ but when the war ended he was able to begin working again as an architect and designer. Child-friendly furniture and educational toys remained one of the main focuses of his design work. At the beginning of the 1950s Franz Singer returned to Austria temporarily, but died in Berlin in 1954.

The example of Friedl Dicker illustrates how difficult it is to draw a boundary between architecture and ‘pure’ interior design. As mentioned above the exact extent of her conceptual and intellectual involvement in the studio’s building projects has never been clarified. It is generally believed that Franz Singer was responsible for the architectural work, yet in the post-war period he also designed children’s furniture and toys. This might seem to suggest that the two of them moved back and forth between the different areas of design.

#### **8.4 Women from the arts and crafts who worked as interior designers**

With the three personalities listed above the area of ‘women architects’ who fit in this category, has been more or less outlined. However, there was also a series of women artists who did not ‘build’ but worked almost exclusively as interior designers and who deserve at least cursory mention here.

In Vienna two personalities at the Kunstgewerbeschule played a special role in the training of students. One was Josef Hoffmann, whose class produced artists such as Maria Strauss-Likarz or Jacqueline Groag (alias Hilde Blumberger) who occasionally also produced furniture designs. **Maria Strauss-Likarz** (1893–1971), who was born in Przemyśl and who attended the Kunstgewerbeschule from 1908 to 1910, worked mainly as a graphic designer but also presented the interior of a fashion salon at the exhibition *Wiener Frauenkunst* in 1933. Up until 1931 she worked for years for the Wiener Werkstätte and, as already mentioned, she often designed furniture for Liane Zimmler. Reference has already been made to her contact with Felix Augenfeld, who designed her

weekend house in Kritzensdorf. She taught for some time at Giebichenstein Kunstgewerbeschule in Germany. In 1938 she had to leave Vienna quickly together with her husband, and, via Yugoslavia, reached Rome, where she worked mainly as a ceramic artist.<sup>274</sup>

Both the biography and work of **Jacqueline Groag** (1903–1986) are somewhat similar. While in Vienna she still called herself Hilde Blumberger, only changing her name when in exile in England. Although she worked mostly in the area of textile design, during her time in Vienna she decorated her own apartment and later, when in exile, she worked on the design of furniture with her husband Jacques Groag. She came originally from Prague, was widowed at an early age, and then attended the Kunstgewerbeschule in Vienna from 1926 to 1929 where she was taught by Franz Čížek and Josef Hoffmann. Although she, too, worked for the Wiener Werkstätte, she soon managed to establish herself in the international scene and worked for top salons such as Chanel and Schiaparelli. Both she and her husband had excellent contacts in Vienna's artistic circles. This slender, dark-haired woman with the green eyes was also much sought-after as an artist's model. The photographer Trude Fleischmann made several series of photographs of her (illustration 72)<sup>275</sup> and the artists Sergius Pauser and Josef Dobrowsky painted her portrait several times. Her husband Jacques Groag, whom she married in 1937, liked to use her highly original textile and carpet designs in his interiors (illustration 73), for instance in the houses he furnished in the Wiener Werkbundsiedlung. After emigrating to England in 1939 she became one of the most important textile designers of the post-war era and helped shape English interior design during this era. She died in London in 1986.<sup>276</sup> These two artists – Maria Strauss-Likarz and Jacqueline Groag – are mentioned here as representatives of the numerous women applied artists who trained with Josef Hoffmann and whose work has a close and fluid relationship to interior design. Interestingly, in this context right-wing conservative

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<sup>274</sup> Plakolm-Forsthuber (above, n. 12).

<sup>275</sup> Published in *Der Wiener Tag*, 2.8.1936, supplement 'Der Sonntag'.

<sup>276</sup> For the biography see G. Rayner/R. Chamberlain/A. Stapleton, *Jacqueline Groag* (cat.), Woodbridge 2009.

critics accused Josef Hoffmann of running a *Pupperlwirtschaft* [a ‘girly’ organisation or school], which was certainly not intended as a compliment.

Oskar Strnad was a further important personality in the education of women at the Kunstgewerbeschule. Two of his students, who for a time also worked for him, should be mentioned here as representatives: Ada Gomperz and Ilse Bernheimer. Although little is known about their life and work, it is certain that they worked as interior designers in the context of the Wiener Werkbundsiedlung – a project whose importance in numerous respects cannot be exaggerated. It is known that **Ada Gomperz** (1884–1954), who worked for Erich Boltenstern, furnished the interior of House no. 5 (Engelbrechtsweg 10), which was designed by the German architect Hugo Häring (illustration 74).<sup>277</sup> Whether the interior in the *Wiener Stil*, a kind of mitigated modernism, was designed exclusively by Ada Gomperz or by Erich Boltenstern himself or perhaps by both has not been clarified. Born Adele Stepnitz in Vienna, she was already relatively old when she attended the Kunstgewerbeschule from 1928 to 1932,<sup>278</sup> and was in fact a ‘kitchen specialist’ who equipped kitchens in hotels, restaurants and large businesses. Her theoretical reflections also extended to the furnishing of private apartments, in which she favoured the spatial separation of the ‘ideal kitchen’, but suggested that it be positioned in a way that allowed visual contact with the living area.<sup>279</sup> Clearly, such suggestions are directed more at a well-to-do clientele who could afford generously sized apartments. Her career in Vienna came to a quick end, as in 1935 she emigrated with her husband, the philosopher Heinrich Gomperz, to the USA where they settled in Los Angeles and for a time she worked again with Liane Zimmler. She died there in 1954.

**Ilse Bernheimer** (1892–1984) already had a somewhat longer career behind her when she furnished one of the Werkbund houses, also in 1932. The building in question was House no. 15 (Engelbrechtsweg no. 9), which was designed by Anton Brenner. In her

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<sup>277</sup> *Werkbundsiedlung Wien 1932* (exh. cat., edited by Wien Museum), Vienna 2012, p. 110.

<sup>278</sup> See Plakolm (above, n. 12), and Gaugusch (above, n. 227). Ada Gomperz (1884 Vienna – 1954 Los Angeles) was already forty-four when she attended the Kunstgewerbeschule and had been married to the philosopher Heinrich Gomperz for more than ten years. Before she began to study she may have worked in a production firm.

<sup>279</sup> A. Gomperz, ‘Die Dame kocht’, in: *profil*, issue 2, 1934, issue 2, p. 43f.



interior Ilse Bernheimer, who at the time worked as an assistant to Oskar Strnad, used metal furniture that was closely related to the Bauhaus aesthetic and completed the ensemble with a decorative built-in element.<sup>280</sup> Born in Vienna, Ilse Bernheimer attended the Kunstgewerbeschule before the First World War, but took mostly painting classes, and then worked for several years in Zurich and Paris. In the mid-1920s she taught at the Wiener Frauenakademie, before becoming Strnad's assistant. Her career in Austria also soon came to an end. Probably due to the restrictive policies of the *Ständestaat* she went to Italy as early as 1936, where she settled in Venice and taught at the Zanetti glass school in Murano. She died at an advanced age in Venice in 1984.<sup>281</sup> Mention should also be made here of **Regina Renata Wiener** (1871–1941), who has been almost completely forgotten. Practically nothing is known about her, but elements of her exotic design for the interior of the coffeehouse known as *Tirolerhof* have survived to the present day, at least in part, which is most unusual, as interiors generally have a particularly short life. She was the oldest of these artists, but we know nothing about her training; she ran her elegant studio at a 'good' address, Vienna 1, Parkring no. 20, and was regarded as a specialist for interiors *im Stile* [literally 'in the style'] which suggests a more traditional line of furnishing and decoration.<sup>282</sup> In 1924 she undertook the interior design of the *Tirolerhof* where, oddly enough, she introduced no references to the province of Tyrol, instead creating an 'Arab' and a 'Chinese' room, both with great aesthetic charm (illustration 75). Remarkably, in furnishing these interiors use was made of a number of original decorative elements.<sup>283</sup> Like all Jews Regina Wiener had to abandon her work in 1938. In November 1941, shortly before her impending deportation, she died in Vienna at the age of seventy.<sup>284</sup>

This overview of the group of Jewish women interior designers in Vienna lays no claim to being complete; the intention is only to illustrate the situation at the time. Without

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<sup>280</sup> See *Werkbundsiedlung* (exh. cat.), (above, n. 277), p. 137.

<sup>281</sup> Plakolm (above, n. 12); Meder (above, n. 159), p. 93f.

<sup>282</sup> 'Brücke von einst zum Heute. Zu den Arbeiten Regina Renata Wieners', in: *Moderne Welt*, 1931, issue 3, p. 56f.

<sup>283</sup> *Moderne Welt* 1929, issue 8, p. 34f. In the literature (*Dehio*, Vienna 1, 2003) the master builder Micheroli is listed, but he only carried out the construction work, while Regina Wiener was responsible for furnishing the interior.

<sup>284</sup> *Dokumentationsarchiv des Österreichischen Widerstandes* (henceforth *DÖW*), database of the Shoa victims.

doubt an entire list of further names could be added. In the case of women changes of name or profession often make research especially difficult. As a whole this chapter is intended to show how around this time women – in particular women of Jewish origin – began to enter this profession and, generally as a result of competition in a very tough economic situation, were forced onto the sidelines, as it were.

## **9 The victims**

In general the *Anschluss* in March 1938 meant that all Jews, whatever their further fate, had to cease practicing their profession, as has been mentioned numerous times in the biographies above. After Nazi law came into force in Austria, in order to continue practicing one's profession it was necessary to belong to the relevant *Reichskammer* [chamber]. However to join this chamber an *Ariernachweis* ['Aryan certificate']) had to be produced which meant that (without the need to introduce special legislation) Jewish architects were immediately excluded from professional life. This was then followed by dispossession, expulsion and, finally, murder.

This chapter is devoted to the victims; here the term is used in a very narrow sense to mean only those who were murdered in the holocaust. In a broader sense all Jews who were active in Austria at the time of the *Anschluss* were victims, even if they survived, as their expulsion – in German the euphemistic term 'emigration' is generally used – meant the loss of their native country and their family and was generally a major blow to their career. In contrast to the approach followed in the earlier chapters the architects named here cannot be grouped in particular schools of architectural design, placed in circles of persons, or related to specific architectural themes, the sole point of reference that they all share in common is their tragic death. A number of them, such as Theodor Schreier or Friedl Dicker, have already been mentioned in earlier chapters in a different context.

### **9.1 Transported directly to their death – Friedrich Schön, Stefan Fayans and Josef Sinnenberg**

This group should be headed by **Friedrich Schön** (1857–1941) as he is the oldest and, in terms of the relevance of his architectural work, probably also the most important

(illustration 110). Although in formal design terms a typical 'late historicist', he was extremely open to technical innovations. Little is known about Schön's origins. Born in 1857 in Lovasbereny in Hungary, he came from a poor family and was orphaned at the age of only twelve. Despite this (and probably thanks to a generous scholarship) he received his training from the best architects of his time: after completing the Polytechnikum in Budapest he studied for a short time at the Technische Hochschule under Karl König and later at the Academy of Fine Arts under Theophil Hansen – one of the most important Ringstraße architects – whom he greatly admired throughout his life. Not only was Schön a founding member of the famous *Hansen Club*, he even placed a bust of his esteemed teacher at a prominent position in his house. Schön and a colleague of the same age who also came from Hungary, Moses Löw (1857–?) were among Hansen's very few Jewish students.<sup>285</sup> Hansen headed the second architecture school at the Academy parallel to Friedrich Schmidt, and it is somewhat surprising that – in contrast to Schmidt – although he received numerous commissions from important Jewish families such as the Epsteins, Ephrussis and others, he tended to be avoided by Jewish students. A possible reason may have been that Hansen – who was generally regarded as somewhat distant – was a Dane and Protestant and therefore may have had contacts with German nationalist circles.

Be that as it may, after two years of practical training in Budapest with Miklos Ybl and Alajos Haussmann (the leading Hungarian architects of the time) Friedrich Schön finally settled in Vienna around 1885 where he worked as a self-employed architect. He soon ran a big office and employed a large staff and up to the outbreak of the First World War carried out a series of important projects, mostly in Vienna, but also in Hungary and other countries. As well as apartment houses and villas Friedrich Schön's extensive oeuvre included, in particular, department stores, industrial complexes, schools and much more. Schön remained a devout Jew throughout his life and carried out various projects for Jewish religious communities, for example a school building in

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<sup>285</sup> Moses Löw, born in 1857 in Szeged, son of the chief rabbi Leopold (Lipot) Löw, also studied at the Technische Hochschule and at the Academy under Theophil Hansen. He was active in Vienna from around 1880 to 1914. The buildings he erected include the Jubiläumsspital des Franz-Josef-Ambulatoriums. No buildings by him from the interwar period are documented. In autumn 1938 he left Vienna in the direction of Szeged, after which all trace of him was lost.

Stuhlweißenburg/Szekesfejevar (H) or the synagogue in Mistelbach/Lower Austria, which, having survived the Nazi devastation, was shamefully demolished in the mid-1970s.<sup>286</sup> He submitted a series of competition entries for other Jewish religious buildings, but none of his designs were built. As stated earlier, Schön specialised in the design of department stores, a building type that experienced its heyday in Vienna at a relatively late stage. In his *Warenhaus Zwieback* on Kärntner Straße in Vienna, which was erected in 1895, he introduced the very latest technology in the area of building with iron and this structure was regarded at the time as a model example. Although still strongly influenced by a historicist aesthetic, the design of the façade displayed great originality.<sup>287</sup>

While *Warenhaus Zwieback* has been much altered, at least the exterior of one of Schön's most remarkable buildings, known originally as *Warenhaus Pollak* (also a clothing business), has survived largely unchanged. It was erected in 1909 at Kohlmarkt no. 2 in Vienna on a difficult and extremely narrow site, but by making intelligent use of a concrete frame, Schön was able to give the building, which was just three window bays wide, ten floor levels.<sup>288</sup> It shows a synthesis of tradition and modernism that is typical of Schön's work: the combination of an open glazed front with a façade cladding of dark stone slabs on which decoration is used with great economy results in a most harmonious unity (illustration 111). This building still strikes a highly individual note today in the row of façades along Kohlmarkt. Schön designed a number of other commercial buildings in Vienna and abroad – even in Cairo – in particular for the firm Siegfried Stein's Söhne.<sup>289</sup> All of these businesses were Jewish-owned and were later 'Aryanised'. Indeed a look at the work of Friedrich Schön gives some idea of the wide range of Jewish businesses in the previous century. Perhaps Schön's biggest clients were the brothers Heinrich and Fritz Mendel, who in 1891 founded the bread company

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<sup>286</sup> U. Prokop, 'Friedrich Schön und die Synagoge von Mistelbach', in: *David* 22.2010, no. 84.

<sup>287</sup> The building at Kärntner Straße no.11 still exists although the lower zone in particular has been heavily altered. The famous fashion store Ludwig Zwieback & Bruder was 'Aryanised' in 1938. See Walzer (above, n. 74), p. 157.

<sup>288</sup> *Der Bautechniker* 30.1910, p. 402, plate 21.

<sup>289</sup> The owners of the firm, the brothers Isidor and Siegfried Stein, were also victims of the Holocaust. Isidor (born in 1869) died in Vienna in 1940 shortly before his planned deportation. Siegfried jun. (born in 1883) died in Maly Trostinec concentration camp. See Gaugusch (above, n. 227).

known as the 'Wiener Brot- und Gebäckfabrik'. This business in Vienna-Favoriten has entered the history books under the name *Ankerbrotfabrik*. After erecting the headquarters in Favoriten – an exposed brickwork building in a highly functional style that reflected the criteria of the time – due to the enormous success of the bakery and the need to expand rapidly, Schön was involved over the years in designing further additions and extensions.<sup>290</sup> The brand *Ankerbrot* still exists today but this business was also 'Aryanised' in 1938.

Schön's success in the world of architecture was reflected by his rise in Viennese society and in particular by his marriage to Eugenie Cahn (1862–1927), who came from a successful French Jewish family. In his elegant villa in the Cottage district in Währing (Vienna 18, Türkenschanzstraße no. 44), which in a quasi-aristocratic manner had a cartouche bearing his initials in the gable, he was able over the years to build up a collection of art and antiques. He passed on his feeling for art to his two daughters. His elder daughter Clara (1894–1941), trained with Tina Blau and became a painter, the younger, Margit (1888–1937), married the Italian art historian Leandro Ozzola. Schön's highly productive work was rudely interrupted by the outbreak of the First World War. There is no documentary evidence that he erected any buildings in the interwar period. In view of the bad economic climate and his advanced age he seems to have retired from the world of work, but continued to take part in Viennese cultural life. On the occasion of his 80<sup>th</sup> birthday in 1937 he was the recipient of numerous honours and many accolades were published paying tribute to his merits and services.<sup>291</sup>

Following the *Anschluss* in 1938 Friedrich Schön failed to leave Austria, probably on account of his advanced age, and remained in Vienna. When the deportations of the Jews began in autumn 1941 he was among the first to be taken away, along with his daughter Clara, who lived with him. A possible explanation for this is that, after the First World War, Schön may have opted for his native Hungary and therefore, classified as a 'Jew not belonging to the Reich', may have been taken at a particularly early stage – however this is only a hypothesis. It is also conceivable that his elegant villa attracted

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<sup>290</sup> See K. Dorn (ed.), *Favoriten, ein Heimatbuch*, Vienna 1928.

<sup>291</sup> *Volkszeitung*, 25.8.1937; *Neue Freie Presse*, 28.8.1937.

covetous interest. The events surrounding the deportation in which the eighty-four year old Friedrich Schön and his daughter found themselves are relatively well documented. On 23 November 1941 the transport of 1000 Jewish men, women and children left Aspernbahn in Vienna. For reasons no longer known the train, which originally was planned to travel to Riga, was diverted to Kowno (also Kaunas or Kauen, today in Lithuania) where, after their arrival in Fort IX, an old fortress dating from the era of the Tsars, the abducted persons were immediately murdered with the help of local forces. None of those deported from Vienna survived.<sup>292</sup>

The fate of **Stefan Fayans (1879–1942)** followed a similarly tragic course. Although he left just a small architectural legacy, on account of his numerous writings on theory he occupied an important position in the Viennese architectural scene. Born in Warsaw, which at that time still belonged to the Russian Empire, he began his studies at the academy for civil architects in St. Petersburg but finished them at the Technische Hochschule in Vienna. In 1904 he completed his doctoral studies under Karl König, entitling him to use the title ‘Dr.’ He then worked in the practices of Fellner & Helmer and Ludwig Baumann in Vienna, and worked for a short time for Alfred Messel in Berlin. Around 1907 he established his own practice and in partnership with Fritz Brettschneider erected a number of extremely decorative residential buildings. During these years he also wrote several essays about cemeteries and burial practice.<sup>293</sup> His interest in this theme was reflected in 1910 in his mausoleum for Menachem Elias in the old Jewish section of the Zentralfriedhof in Vienna (illustration 112). As the Elias family was of Sephardic origin Fayans built a magnificent small complex in a ‘Moorish’ style, which he crowned with a dome. In general in his writings Fayans defended the use of ornament – as long as it remained ‘a subordinate architectural element’ – and he was opposed to plain, engineering architecture.<sup>294</sup> Fayans’ fondness for rich decoration and colour is also evident in the numerous interiors that he designed in the years that

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<sup>292</sup> DÖW/list of those deported.

<sup>293</sup> St. Fayans, ‘Bestattungsanlagen’, in: *Handbuch der Architektur*, IV. part, 8th half-volume, issue 3, Stuttgart 1907; *Ibid.*, ‘Kunst und Architektur im Dienste des Totenkultes’, in: *Zeitschrift des Österreichischen Ingenieur- und Architektenvereines* 60.1908, p. 593ff.

<sup>294</sup> St. Fayans, ‘Betrachtungen über die moderne Baukunst’, in: *Zeitschrift des Österreichischen Ingenieur- und Architektenvereines* 4.1911, no. 6, p. 3ff.

followed; one of the main focuses of his work was the fitting-out of cinemas, hotels and restaurants. As well as the Schwarzenberg Cinema (1916), the Rathauskeller in Vienna's City Hall (1924), and the Schlosshotel Kobenzl (1928), his new design for the interior of the Kursalon in the Stadtpark in Vienna in 1930 was something of a social event. The last documented works by Stefan Fayans were the interior of the 'Roxy Bar' and an entry for the big competition for developing the Kahlenberg in the mid-1930s. After the *Anschluss* he was prevented from practicing his profession. Later he had to leave his apartment in the Josefstadt and to move into what was called a *Judenhaus* (literally 'Jews House', a term used for apartments where Jews were gathered before being deported) in the Leopoldstadt. In September 1942 he was deported with his wife to Maly Trostinec extermination camp, where after their arrival they were both killed immediately.<sup>295</sup>

**Josef Sinnenberg** (1881–1942), whose professional career shows certain similarities with that of Neumann Tropp who was mentioned earlier, experienced much the same fate. Sinnberg also came from an Eastern European Jewish family from Galicia, although he himself was born in Vienna.<sup>296</sup> His father Herschel, a small merchant, appears to have come to the capital in the 1860s or 1870s. Very little is known about his family circumstances but they seem to have been modest. Possibly this explains why, after completing the higher (4-year) Staatsgewerbeschule he was not able to continue his studies at the Technische Hochschule or the Academy. After a number of years of practical training he obtained a master builder's license and from around 1906 worked in Vienna as an architect and master builder. Much like Tropp, during the years leading up to the First World War he carried out a number of residential buildings. The range extended from rather unambitious apartment buildings to luxurious residences on the fringes of the city, but his particular focus seems to have been on generously sized *Mietvillen* [villas with just a few rented dwellings] for a well-to-do clientele. In design terms Sinnenberg's buildings usually employed a contemporary modern style and are often characterised by elaborately designed gables and elegant bay windows

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<sup>295</sup> They departed from Vienna on 14 September 1942, four days later, on the 18<sup>th</sup> (seemingly immediately after arriving) they were killed (DÖW/list of persons deported).

<sup>296</sup> IKG Vienna (registers).

(illustration 113), apartment building, Vienna 13, Weinzierlgasse no. 9). As he published many of his buildings in specialist journals he became quite well-known. For Sinnenberg, too, the outbreak of the First World War meant an end to his successful career. In the interwar period commissions were few due to the difficult economic situation and no buildings by him from this time have been documented. Presumably a number of smaller jobs enabled him to survive. When in 1938, following the *Anschluss* of Austria by Nazi Germany, he could no longer work in his profession, the basis for his livelihood was destroyed. Lack of funds may well explain why, despite the pressure exerted on the Jewish population, he could not emigrate. Like all the Jews who remained in Vienna Sinnenberg had no chance: in 1942 he was deported to Sobibor extermination camp where he was immediately murdered.<sup>297</sup>

## **9.2 Unusual fates in the inferno of the Nazi era – Erich Ziffer, Jakob Reitzer, Leopold Schulz and Fritz Keller**

This section is devoted to a number of men whose tragic and tangled fates were in a certain sense typical for what happened in the Nazi era. The series begins with **Erich Ziffer** (1883–1942?), whose limited oeuvre offers little basis for research. He was born in Petrwald near Ostrau/Ostrava (today CZ) in the Austrian part of Silesia. He came from a modest background and, as he was orphaned at an early age, had to be supported by his guardian, a prosperous wholesale merchant. Having completed the Realschule Ziffer came to Vienna and studied at the Technische Hochschule, where Karl König was his teacher. After spending a number years abroad gaining practical experience he set up his own office in Vienna around 1912, generally working together with his former fellow student Arthur Grünberger, who was mentioned in the chapter about synagogue building. Together they built a number of exclusive apartment houses in the villa districts of Hietzing and Döbling. Whereas nothing is known about Ziffer's activities during the First World War, we know that around 1920 he attended the *Bauschule* of Adolf Loos, whose courses at that time were given in the rooms of the school founded by Eugenie Schwarzwald. Ziffer's name is given below a group photograph from this

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<sup>297</sup> DÖW/list of persons deported.



time.<sup>298</sup> This indicates that, like so many Jewish architecture students at the time, he moved in the circles around Karl König and Adolf Loos.

This antagonism between tradition and modernism represented by the figures of Karl König on the one side and Adolf Loos on the other also shaped Ziffer's work. While his early villas tend to be very decorative in style, the house that he built in Vienna-Währing, Hockegasse no. 88 (illustration 76) in the mid-1920s is extremely purist and almost classical, typical of Loos and his followers. This is Ziffer's only documented building in Vienna from the interwar period. Given the difficult economic situation Ziffer most probably sought employment in one of the large construction offices. After the *Anschluss* in March 1938 Ziffer emigrated, together with his wife, to what was then Czechoslovakia, where he spent a short time in his native Silesia. He then embarked upon an incredible Odyssey, impossible to reconstruct in all its details. When Nazi Germany occupied the so-called *Resttschechi* [the remaining part of Czechoslovakia] in spring of the following year, Ziffer was first of all brought to a collection point in Mährisch-Ostrau. From there he was sent to Nisko am San, where Adolf Eichmann, one of the main perpetrators of the holocaust, had provisionally set up a collection point. Around 1942 Ziffer was deported to Theresienstadt and a short time later was brought to the extermination camp in Treblinka where, most likely, he was killed.<sup>299</sup> Details and his exact date of death are still not known. His widow had him declared dead in 1948. **Jakob Reitzer** (1880–1945?) experienced a similarly tangled fate, which it has never proved possible to reconstruct. Only a little older than Ziffer, he was among the many architects who had been attracted to Vienna by the building boom in the last years of peace before the First World War. While we know that he was born in Szegeed in Hungary, practically nothing is known about his family or education. However, the fact that he enlisted as a Landsturm Oberleutnant during the First World War, which required one year's voluntary military service and was reserved for those who had completed secondary level education, suggests that, at the very least, he completed studies at a Höhere Staatsgewerbeschule. Whatever the case, around 1906 he surfaces in

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<sup>298</sup> Meder (above, n. 205).

<sup>299</sup> DÖW/list of persons deported.

Vienna as a self-employed architect. Judging from his documented work he appears to have concentrated on dwelling houses and villas for the well-to-do. In design terms he catered to the taste and desire to impress of the upwardly mobile bourgeoisie, employing in his projects a mix of neo-Baroque and Secessionist forms. His often lavish use of decorative elements (which in many cases no longer exist today) was somewhat untypical for Vienna and may be an indication that he trained in Hungary (illustration 77, apartment building, Vienna 19, Vegagasse no. 21). During the First World War he appears to have worked in one of the many military construction departments, as he was involved, for instance, in making plans for the military cemetery in Arad. Although only few buildings by him are documented, during the interwar period he continued to work for a well-off clientele. After the *Anschluss* he fled with his wife to Budapest, as apparently he had retained his Hungarian citizenship. While his two sons were able to emigrate, he remained in the Hungarian capital, where, when deportations of the Jews began in summer 1944, he died under circumstances that have never been clarified. His wife, who managed to flee, returned to Vienna after the war where she ran a business for a short time. She then moved with her son to Innsbruck where descendants are still living today.<sup>300</sup>

Yet a further tragic case that should be mentioned in this context is the fate of **Leopold Schulz** (1883–1945), details of whose architectural work seem impossible to reconstruct. Born in Vienna, he was the son of a commercial agent who had come to Vienna from Pressburg. As he came from a poor background higher education was impossible and he was only able to attend the *Höhere Staatsgewerbeschule*. He set up his own office as architect and master builder shortly before the First World War. Presumably he had to enlist following the outbreak of the war, as it is only in the mid-1920s that we again find documentation of his work. As a master builder he seems to have concentrated on construction management and is named as designer only in the case of two housing complexes for ‘Red Vienna’. Interestingly, however, the residential block built in 1926 in Vienna 2, Taborstraße no. 94 shows remarkable architectural quality (illustration 78). The building occupies a corner site and colour is used to

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<sup>300</sup> P. Schumann, ‘J. Reitzer’, in: *Architektenlexikon* (above, n. 13); [www.centropa.org](http://www.centropa.org).

accentuate elements in the manner of romantic Expressionism, while the elegance of its proportions enables the building to make a striking urban statement. Like for many master builders and architects around this time the buildings erected by 'Red Vienna' provided Leopold Schulz with several of the few commissions he managed to obtain. Following the *Anschluss* in 1938 he was prevented from practicing his profession; however he did not emigrate but remained in Vienna. Possibly, he did not have the necessary financial resources to obtain a visa. When the first deportations of the Jews began in 1941 he hid himself in the apartment of his 'Aryan' life partner Lilly Hladisch and then lived as a so-called *U-Boot* (the term used for those who lived, illegally, in hiding). In autumn 1944 the house containing this apartment in the 8th district of Vienna was bombed and his hiding place revealed. He was denounced and was then arrested by the Gestapo who interrogated him under torture in the headquarters on Morzinplatz. In February 1945 he was sent to Mauthausen concentration camp where he died as a result of the questioning and general exhaustion – tragically only a week before the camp was liberated by the Allies.<sup>301</sup>

The circumstances under which architect **Fritz Keller** (1878–1938) died have not been clarified. He came from the area around Karlsbad (CZ) and arrived in Vienna towards the end of the 1890s to study architecture at the Technische Hochschule. During his studies he changed his original surname Kohn, which he may have found too obviously Jewish, to Keller.<sup>302</sup> A minor matter, perhaps, but it indicates how anti-Semitic pressure led some Jews to try to conceal their identity. Fritz Keller later worked for Karl Mayreder and also became his assistant at the Hochschule, until he completed his doctorate in 1905, earning the title 'Dr. tech.', which made him part of the first circle of those to complete their studies with a doctoral dissertation.<sup>303</sup> Following his studies he set up his own practice, working for a while with his fellow student Fritz Herzmanovsky-Orlando. Herzmanovsky-Orlando was later to abandon architecture and achieved fame as a writer and graphic artist. Following the trend of the time Keller & Herzmanovsky concentrated largely on the design of apartment houses. Their buildings

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<sup>301</sup> See Weihsmann (above n. 13); *Archiv des DÖW* (Akt Hladisch, Zl. 2000/H 437).

<sup>302</sup> *Studienbuch* of the Technische Hochschule Vienna, 1901.

<sup>303</sup> Keller's dissertation dealt with *Die römische Villenanlage von Val Catena auf der Insel Brioni*, 1905.

are characterised by a contemporary kind of modernism and make use of formal details borrowed from the Wiener Werkstätte. Like all other architects Fritz Keller experienced professional difficulties after the war and could carry out only a small number of projects. Interestingly, in the early 1920s – as mentioned already above – the young Jacques Groag worked in his office.<sup>304</sup> Keller's last documented project is a strand house in Kritzendorf, which he built in 1929. How he managed to survive the years of the economic crisis is not known. What we do know is that in December 1938 – that is several months after the *Anschluss* and after his family had succeeded in fleeing to London – Keller died in Vienna under unclear circumstances.<sup>305</sup>

### 9.3 The victims of Theresienstadt – Heinrich Kestel and Leopold Steinitz

From a cynical Nazi viewpoint being sent to Theresienstadt/Terezin was regarded as a 'privilege' reserved largely for those Jews who came from the territory of the *Reich*. Theresienstadt, which was depicted almost idyllically in the propaganda film *Der Führer schenkt den Juden eine Stadt* [The Führer Gives the Jews a City], was originally an old fortress city from the time of Emperor Joseph II and was transformed by Nazis into a ghetto where many elderly people, in particular, were sent. This was also the case with many of the architects living in Vienna. Whereas in many cases the younger ones were able to emigrate, the elderly often stayed, mistakenly believing that nothing would be done to those who were retired or that, because they had fought in the First World War, they would be protected. A number of the victims of Theresienstadt have been mentioned in earlier chapters, this section, however, is dedicated to two architects who died there, whose work is fairly standard for the time but whose lives are almost prototypical of the fate of the older generation of Jews in Vienna.

Typical of these biographies is that the persons dealt with were born in Vienna and were well over sixty years old when they were deported. Contrary to all the propaganda, Theresienstadt was hell for those sent there. Although not an extermination camp, most of those brought there died in misery within a short space of time as the result of

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<sup>304</sup> Letter from Jacques Groag (around 1925) to his brother Emo: 'I'm doing fine with Dr. Keller but unfortunately he doesn't let anyone work independently.' (Dr. Willi Groag †).

<sup>305</sup> I. Scheidl, 'Fritz Keller', in: *Architektenlexikon* and Weihsmann (both above, n. 13).

underfeeding, completely unsatisfactory hygiene conditions and the lack of medical treatment. The personal details of the victims speak for themselves. In addition, a number of people were sent from Theresienstadt to the extermination camps, as was the case with Friedl Dicker.

The older of the two architects is **Heinrich Kestel** (1864–1942). He was the son of a merchant and, as was typical for Vienna, received his training at the Technische Hochschule (under Karl König among others), for whom he worked briefly as an assistant. He then worked for a time in the planning office of the Stadtbauamt [Vienna City Building Office] and was editor of the well-known construction journal *Wiener Bauindustriezeitung*. Thus for many years he worked mostly in the field of theory and is hardly mentioned at all as a design architect. It was only after about ten years of working that he ventured to set up his own office, most likely encouraged by the building boom at the time. Like most of the architects working in Vienna around then he focused on housing. A number of industrial complexes that he built in the former Crown Lands of the monarchy are only poorly documented. The villas and apartment houses in Vienna that Heinrich Kestel designed in the years until the outbreak of First World War mostly reflect the standard design canon of those years and make moderate use of the modernism of the time as formulated by the Secession movement or the Wiener Werkstätte. A fine example is the Rochushof on Hintzerstraße in the 3rd district, which was erected around 1910. The harmonious proportions and elegantly restrained use of decoration respond to the upper middle-class desire to impress and to convey something about itself (illustration 79). As with many other architects no buildings by Kestel from the interwar period are documented. Whether he found a position with a large building firm or retired to private life is not known.

When the *Anschluss* took place in 1938 he did not leave the country, probably due to his advanced age, and remained in Vienna with his wife, the painter Malvine Bauer, who came from Hungary. He then experienced the inescapable fate: first he had to leave his apartment in the 9th district and move to a collection point in Novaragasse, and in April 1942 – by which time he was well over seventy – he was deported with his wife to

Theresienstadt. He died there in September of the same year; his wife survived him by just a few months.<sup>306</sup>

The life of **Leopold Steinitz** (1868–1942), who was a few years younger, followed a similar course. He, too, received his training at the Technische Hochschule.<sup>307</sup> The first years of his working life he spent in the practice of Fellner & Helmer, who were the leading architects of the time in the area of theatre building. He set up his own office around 1900 and concentrated on the field of residential architecture. Together with his wife he converted to Protestantism shortly before the birth of his first son and had his children baptized.<sup>308</sup> Unlike many other architects he managed to continue his career after the end of the First World War by concentrating on the area of commercial and industrial buildings, a field in which he also became an official expert. Although only rudimentary elements of most of these complexes have survived, the transformer building for the *Steirische Wasserkraftwerke* [Styrian hydro-electric power plants], which he built in the 1920s in Knittelfeld using a powerful Art Deco idiom, is today protected as an important industrial monument.<sup>309</sup> After the *Anschluss* Steinitz, despite his conversion, was categorised as a *Geltungsjude* [‘regarded as Jewish’] and as such was deported with his wife to Theresienstadt in August 1942, where, only a short time later, he died in November of the same year.<sup>310</sup> His wife survived him by only a few months.

## 10 *Emigranten* with a success story

The fate of those Jews who managed to escape (the embarrassing euphemism *die Emigranten* [the emigrants] rather than the more accurate *die Vertrieben* [those expelled or driven out] is commonplace today and on this account the term is used in the German version of this book), was in most cases extremely tragic. For many, being forced to leave their country meant an end to their career. Language problems and the difficulty

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<sup>306</sup> DÖW/list of persons deported.

<sup>307</sup> ‘Leopold Steinitz’ in: *Architektenlexikon* and Weihsmann (both above, n. 13).

<sup>308</sup> A. Staudacher, *Jüdisch-protestantische Konvertiten in Wien 1782–1914*, part 2, Vienna 2004.

<sup>309</sup> M. Wehdorn/U. Georgeacopol-Winischhofer, *Baudenkmäler der Technik und Industrie in Österreich*, issue 2, Vienna et. al. 1991.

<sup>310</sup> DÖW/list of persons deported.

in obtaining a license to practice their profession caused more than a few to concentrate on interiors or furniture design. In a number of cases the women, who were mostly younger, managed to cope better with the new situation and therefore bore the main burden of earning a living. An excellent example of this is offered by the Groags where – as has been outlined above – Jacqueline Groag built a career for herself in exile in England. Particularly for those who were older, entry to the profession in a new country was extremely difficult, many, such as Oskar Wlach or Erich Lindner for instance, were reduced to poverty and had to be supported by relatives or friends. Interestingly, the number of those who managed to continue their career abroad successfully was very small. In most cases those who did succeed had either emigrated at a relatively early stage – i.e. quite some time before the outbreak of the war – or were still very young. They were therefore able to exploit the great opportunities they had never been offered in Vienna. A number of these architects achieved international fame and their biographies are comprehensively detailed in the relevant literature. Consequently, they are mentioned here only for the sake of completeness and in a somewhat cursory fashion. Tracing their careers after they fled the country would go beyond the scope of this study, which concentrates primarily on what happened in Vienna. What unites the three biographies that follow below is that each of these architects presented projects in Vienna at the beginning of their respective careers. In general these success stories should not be used to play down the tragic fate of the others.

### **10.1 Friedrich Kiesler**

The oldest of the group is Friedrich Kiesler (1890–1965), who came from Czernowitz in Bukowina (today Ukraine), which was once part of the Austrian Empire. In 1908 he enrolled in the Technische Hochschule in Vienna but moved just a year later to the Academy of Fine Arts where rather than attending an architecture class he studied painting and graphic design with Rudolf Bacher and Ferdinand Schmutzer. This choice indicates how at a young age Kiesler already opted for a path that would take him far beyond the area of architecture. In 1913 he broke off his studies without obtaining a

degree.<sup>311</sup> During the First World War he enlisted in the army, worked in the k. k. Pressequartier, where relatively many artists were engaged, and was involved in organising war-time exhibitions. After the end of the war he continued to devote himself to exhibitions and, above all, stage design. He moved between Vienna and Berlin, where he came into contact with the artistic avant-garde of the time including Theo van Doesburg, László Moholy-Nagy and others.<sup>312</sup> In 1922 he was involved in preparations for the *Internationale Ausstellung neuer Theatertechniken* [international exhibition of new theatre techniques], which two years later was to be one of the most innovative events in Vienna in the interwar period. Kiesler left his stamp on this show like no other – alongside designs for the posters, tickets and the catalogue in a style that betrayed the influence of constructivism, he developed a structural system for the exhibition architecture that allowed free, flexible constructions for the presentation of the objects to be erected (illustration 80). In the context of the European avant-garde from Germany, Russia, France and Italy – including artists such as Doesburg or Fernand Léger –, all of whom presented their latest ideas, Kiesler himself showed his spiral *Raumbühne* in which he addressed the idea of endless space for the first time.<sup>313</sup> This was to be his last work for Vienna. On account of his great success, one year later, in 1925, Josef Hoffmann invited him to take part in the Exposition des Artes Décoratifs in Paris, where Kiesler presented his idea of endless space in the monumental hovering structure of the *Raumstadt*.

His innovative ideas soon attracted international attention and he was invited to the USA, where working with inexhaustible creativity he produced pioneering achievements in the area of theatre and cinema. Kiesler's activities covered a wide area that included exhibition architecture, furniture design, teaching and journalism. His friendship with numerous artists in Paris and New York made him a highly esteemed catalyst of modernism. After the war he renewed his contacts with the European Surrealists and in 1947, together with André Breton and Marcel Duchamp, he designed

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<sup>311</sup> Generally speaking at that time a formal degree was not absolutely necessary. Students went to a certain professor or artist to study with them for a certain time. Study courses were in no way as strictly organised as they are today.

<sup>312</sup> *Visionäre und Vertriebene* (above, n. 10), p. 335.

<sup>313</sup> D. Bogner, *Friedrich Kiesler*, 1998.



the Exposition International du Surréalisme.<sup>314</sup> The idea of endless space is a recurring theme throughout his life, which he finally managed to implement in his concept for the 'Endless House'. The commission for the 'Shrine of the Book' in Jerusalem is regarded as one of the highpoints of his work (illustration 81). Having worked for years together with architect Armond Bartos Kiesler carried this project out in the early 1960s. Conceived as a place to keep the Qumran Scrolls, which had been discovered a short time previously, Kiesler here created a magnificent apotheosis of Judaism as a culture of the written word. Only a short time after the opening ceremony Kiesler, whom it is impossible to tie down to any particular artistic direction or style, died of a heart attack.

## 10.2 Richard Neutra

In contrast Richard Neutra (1892–1970, illustration 120), who was two years younger, had a classic architect's career. He came from a Viennese family of business people but through his sister, the sculptor Josephine Weixlgärtner, during his youth he also had intensive contact with artistic and intellectual circles in Vienna. While a student at the Technische Hochschule, where his teachers included Karl Mayreder and Max Fabiani, he became friendly with this fellow student Ernst Freud, a son of Sigmund Freud, who later lived in London. As he was essentially open to everything that was new, as well as studying at the Technische Hochschule Neutra also attended the *Bauschule* of Adolf Loos, who awakened his enthusiasm for the architecture of the USA. Neutra therefore moved in an environment typical of Jewish architecture students at the time, between the twin poles of the Technische Hochschule and Adolf Loos.

He enlisted in the artillery during the First World War and consequently could only complete his studies after the war. For Neutra the years that followed were both extremely instructive and varied. To recover from tuberculosis after the end of the war he went to Switzerland and continued his training at the Technische Hochschule in Zurich, parallel to this he worked as a landscape gardener. In 1920 he moved to Berlin and through his friend Ernst Freud found a position in the office of the famous architect Erich Mendelsohn. However, the ambitious projects they planned for Palestine failed to

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<sup>314</sup> See M. Pressler (ed.), *Breton Duchamp Kiesler – Surreal Space 1947* (exh. cat.), Vienna 2013.

come to fruition and Neutra decided to go to the USA, where he settled in New York in 1923.<sup>315</sup>

In America he worked initially in various construction offices and eventually found a position in one of the best-known practices, Holabird & Roche, where he had the opportunity to study the highly developed building technology of the USA, about which he was later to write.<sup>316</sup> During a visit that he made in summer 1921 to Frank Lloyd Wright (whom he greatly admired) in Taliesin, Neutra drew up his competition entry for the synagogue in Hietzing. As already mentioned in the relevant chapter, although his extremely progressive, functionalist design received an honourable mention it was not carried out (illustration 82). This project makes it very clear how far Neutra had already moved from the Viennese scene which was still dominated by a late Secessionist, Expressionist direction. In the following year Neutra moved to Los Angeles, where he worked briefly in the office of Rudolph Schindler who also came from Vienna, and whom Neutra knew from his time in the *Bauschule* of Adolf Loos. Schindler, who had studied at the Academy under Otto Wagner, had lived in the USA since the start of the First World. In 1926 Richard Neutra obtained his architect's license to practice in the USA and set up his own office. One of his most important commissions was the Lovell Health House which was intended to reflect the ideas about a modern healthy lifestyle developed by the reforming physician Dr. Lovell. Through the use of prefabricated parts this steel frame building was erected in the incredibly short time of just forty hours. The building received enormous publicity and brought Neutra international fame. On account of the great interest in his work Neutra embarked on lecture tours and also wrote articles. In 1932 he took part in the legendary exhibition *Modern Architecture – International Exhibition* organised by Henry Russell-Hitchcock and Philipp Johnson and in the same year he received an invitation from Vienna to take part in the Wiener Werkbundsiedlung. Together with his colleague Arthur Grünberger, who was also living in the USA at the time, he represented the US American contingent in the Werkbundsiedlung. Neutra, who by that time already had an international reputation,

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<sup>315</sup> See *Visionäre und Vertriebene* (above, n. 10).

<sup>316</sup> R. Neutra, *Wie baut Amerika*, Stuttgart 1927.

built a plain single-family house at Woinovichgasse no. 9, which in general complied with the constraints of this housing project. It had a flat roof that you could walk on to and an external staircase with a Mediterranean flair. After this somewhat modest Viennese intermezzo Neutra continued working in the USA with great success and was able to carry out numerous large projects such as housing developments, schools, hospital and others. He also continued his intensive lecturing activity and his writing work. Although regarded as an important representative of the ‘international style’, in fact he was far ahead of his time. He argued that nature must form the basis of the way in which we live and rejected every form of dogmatic functionalism. In the 1960s Neutra, who received innumerable honours and awards, spent part of his later years in Vienna. While on a lecture tour he died of heart failure in Wuppertal in 1970.

### 10.3 Victor Gruen

However, perhaps the biggest international career was that of Victor Gruen (1903–1980, illustration 122), who, despite all the adversities he was confronted with, never completely lost contact with Vienna. Born in Vienna in 1903 as Victor David Grünbaum,<sup>317</sup> he is among the youngest of those discussed in the context of this work. Gruen attended the Staatsgewerbeschule, where he met Rudolf Baumfeld, with whom he became good friends and who for many years accompanied him along his path through life. At school he was confronted by the aggressive anti-Semitism of German nationalist fellow students.<sup>318</sup> In the master school of Peter Behrens at the Academy of Fine Arts, which he attended at the beginning of the 1920s he appears to have encountered a similar situation. Only a few years later Behrens set up an illegal Nazi cell at the Academy and when he went to Berlin worked there together with Albert Speer. It is therefore hardly surprising that Gruen left the Academy after only a year. He thought it far more important to acquire practical experience in a building firm that belonged to his guardian. He had many talents and was a co-founder of the *Politisches Kabarett* which existed from 1926 to 1934 and brought him a certain measure of fame.

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<sup>317</sup> It was only in the course of obtaining US American citizenship that he changed his name to Gruen.

<sup>318</sup> Victor Gruen, *Biografischen Notizen*, unpublished typescript, quoted by O. Kapfinger, ‘Victor Gruen und Rudolf Baumfeld’, in: *Visionäre und Vertriebene* (above, n. 10), p. 255.

It was there that he got to know his young colleague Felix Slavik who later, as Mayor of Vienna, was to play a role in Gruen's planning work in Vienna. He obtained his first commissions from the circle of the cabaret and its clientele. As was usual for this time these commissions were largely confined to domestic interiors and shop conversions but they helped Gruen to keep his head above water. Like most of the young architects of his time he was much influenced by Adolf Loos. In designing the tiny shop known as the 'Bristol Parfümerie' on Kärntner Straße he used areas of mirror in the manner of Loos to visually enlarge the space.

After the *Anschluss* in 1938 he managed to flee to Zurich from where, via Paris and London, he eventually got to New York. Once there he became involved in the theatre and founded the 'Refugee Artists Group', which focused in particular on Austrian literature and themes and was successful among émigrés. In terms of architectural work he was commissioned to design shop interiors, as he had done in Vienna. Their originality quickly attracted attention and soon brought him bigger jobs such as a chain of shops for a ladies wear firm. After moving to Los Angeles in 1942, where he again met Rudolf Baumfeld who was to become his business partner, his meteoric career really took off. As well as chains of department stores and large shops, in the mid-1950s he built 'Milliron's Department Store', the first ever shopping centre, and thus created a completely new building type, which was soon followed by numerous other shopping centres. Although Gruen is regarded as the inventor of the shopping mall, when economic pressure led this building type to acquire a dynamic of its own, he was unhappy with this development, as he had based his original concept on the model of the European city centre as a place for multi-cultural encounters. From this critical position Gruen moved to the area of town planning, becoming a specialist for city revitalisation, out of which the idea of an inner city without motor cars gradually developed. In order to meet the worldwide demand for his work, in 1965 he set up Victor Gruen International, which worked principally on projects for European and Asian cities. However in 1968 he withdrew from this business. He opened an office in Vienna in 1967, apparently in order to prepare a study for the construction of a new urban district at Wienerberg. Shortly afterwards, in 1969, he was commissioned to develop a concept for the revitalisation of Vienna's inner city, which the development

of the new metro had made necessary. However, only a fraction of his wide-ranging plans – for instance the pedestrian zone Kärntner Straße/Graben – was ever implemented. Not only were most of his plans for the inner city never carried out, despite his international success Gruen encountered the usual kind of resistance in Vienna. Although his design won first prize in the preliminary stage of the UNO City competition, he was soon eliminated and the Vienna Chamber of Architects even wanted to withdraw his architectural license on the basis of a formality. Despite the fact that Gruen was awarded the prize of the City of Vienna for architecture in 1971 and in 1978 received the ‘Goldene Verdienstzeichen der Republik’ [Gold Medal of the Republic] for his life’s work, a bitter after-taste remained. Only two years later Gruen died in the city of his birth.

## **11 The final obliteration**

The Jewish policy of the Nazi regime was applied with greater vehemence in Vienna than perhaps anywhere else on the territory of the *Reich*. As early as 1943 the *Reichsstatthalter* [Reich Governor] Baldur von Schirach was able to report with pride that Vienna was ‘free from Jews’. Following this Adolf Eichmann and his team, who had organised the deportations, closed their Vienna office and moved to Berlin to continue their barbaric work there. Of around 180 000 Jews in Vienna only a few hundred survived, alongside a few members of the IKG and a number of *U-Boote* (the term used to describe those who lived in hiding), these were mostly people who were protected because they were in a ‘mixed marriage’ (the Nazi term for a marriage between a Jew and non-Jew). But despite this, following the collapse of the Third Reich and the ending of the war there was no new beginning – on the contrary the discrimination continued unabated. The first years after the war were chaotic but gradually conditions began to stabilise, and in December 1947, as part of the currency reform, the *Reichsmark* was abolished and the shilling was reintroduced. Financial aid from the Marshall Plan could then flow to Austria and within a relatively short space of time a building boom started. In Vienna initially the main focus was on reconstructing bomb-damaged buildings and alleviating the old evil of housing shortage by building new housing. As quite a number of architects had died in the war, there had been no

graduates in architecture for several years, and, in particular, Jewish architects had been driven out of the country, there was a serious shortage of qualified architectural staff. In response to this situation a number of retired people who were still in good health took up their profession once again. Those architects who had been involved with the Nazi regime were able to complete the de-nazification process very quickly and easily; often membership of the Nazi Party was denied using the flimsiest of arguments. And so people who had worked intensively for various Nazi organisations such as the Reichsnährstand [the body that regulated food production], the organisation Todt and others, or even some of those who had designed concentration camps and held professorships soon held important positions again and were able to secure major commissions for each other. In the 1950s several architecture offices in Vienna had more work than had been the case for decades.

Given this continuity of persons it is not all that surprising that, despite the shortage of qualified staff, no one thought of bringing the architects who had been expelled back to Vienna. On the contrary: obstacles were deliberately placed in the way of those few who did attempt to establish themselves in Vienna again. Although this has been mentioned in the individual biographies it is only right to summarise these shameful occurrences here once more. The first to suffer this kind of deplorable experience was Josef Frank. In the context of an urban reconstruction programme, towards the end of 1948 plans were made to restructure Stephansplatz, which had been badly damaged. The liberal Austrian CIAM group invited Frank to contribute his ideas, as in the early part of the year he had examined this theme in a newspaper article – an indication of his ties to his native city. Frank prepared three proposals, not one of which was pursued any further.<sup>319</sup> Although around fifteen years earlier he had been one of the leading architects in Vienna, Frank was gently but decisively pushed to the sidelines. Formal and legalistic arguments were produced as pretexts; it was pointed out that the exiled architects were no longer Austrian citizens and therefore could not be granted an architect's license for Austria. There was no sense of injustice and not the slightest idea of making reparation in non-material terms. Walter Sobotka, who corresponded

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<sup>319</sup> See Welzig (above, n. 11), p. 229.

regularly with Frank and also undertook efforts to re-establish contact with his native city, was confronted with a similar experience. At the beginning of the 1950s he came to Vienna for a few months and took over the planning of the Veitscher Magnesitwerke office building on Schuberting. However, he was unable to exert any influence on the detailed construction of this building and his name is not mentioned in the building authority files relating to it.<sup>320</sup> This undertaking remained an intermezzo and Sobotka returned to the USA without any real success. For Ernst Lichtblau, who was commissioned to design a school around 1960, things were little different. He, too, was forced to take on an Austrian partner. Tragically, Lichtblau, who was already elderly, died of a heart attack in his hotel shortly before the building was completed, so that this undertaking, too, had no further impact. The approach taken by the Chamber of Architects, which in 1970 (!) wanted to deny international star architect Victor Gruen his license, was utterly ridiculous and shameful. Similarly, the restitution of property and estate in Austria was made – if at all – only very slowly and reluctantly. The case of Oskar Wlach can be cited as just one example. At the beginning of the 1950s he applied for the restitution of the firm ‘Haus & Garten’, which he had run until 1938, but this application was rejected. In a number of cases Viennese architects even lived in the ‘Aryanised’ apartments of their former Jewish colleagues.<sup>321</sup> After having expelled, robbed and murdered people, efforts were undertaken to erase any memory of Jewish life in Vienna and to destroy any surviving cultural heritage. Whether this was motivated by anti-Semitism or the result of mere thoughtlessness is difficult to say. After the war the last remnants of the synagogues and Jewish cultural facilities, almost all of which had been destroyed in the pogrom in November 1938, were painstakingly cleared away. Even where parts of the building fabric had survived, no thought was given to preserving them as a monument, as was done with Christian churches in Coventry and Dresden, for example. In addition to this, other buildings with Jewish connotations were demolished at a great rate, although here a number of different factors were involved. Often such buildings had been damaged in the war, the

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<sup>320</sup> Erich Boltenstern was officially registered as author of the plans.

<sup>321</sup> See Walzer (above, n. 74).

owners had been driven out of the country, the lack of a Jewish community meant the building no longer had any real function etc. etc. In a number of cases, however, the principal motivation seems to have been a wish to erase unpleasant or embarrassing memories. Seemingly it did not occur to anyone that here part of Viennese cultural history was being eradicated and that a number of these buildings were worth preserving for their immaterial value alone. The name Rothschild, which was closely linked with the history of the Jews in Vienna, and had a great symbolic importance for anti-Semites, was erased with particular thoroughness. Both of the Rothschild palaces in Vienna, located in an elegant district close to Schloss Belvedere, were demolished, even though the Palais Albert Rothschild at Prinz-Eugen-Straße 20 had been devastated but far from completely destroyed. After it had been ‘Aryanised’ in 1938, this building acquired a particularly negative symbolism, as it was there that the Nazis set up the central office for Jewish emigration, which was headed by Adolf Eichmann, along with a number of other Nazi offices (illustration 83). After the war the ruinous building was restored to the Rothschilds, who however quickly sold it off. The palace was demolished in 1954 apparently without any objections from conservationists despite the fact that it had been erected in 1880 in the style of a French castle by the Parisian architect Hyppolite Destailleur and was therefore of considerable importance in architectural historical terms.<sup>322</sup> The Arbeiterkammer (1957 built by Franz Mörth as well as Heinrich and Kurt Vana) now occupies the site. The other palace (built in 1871 by Jean Girette), which was owned by Nathaniel Rothschild and was located at Theresianumgasse no. 16, had been massively damaged by bombing. After restitution and the sale of this property to the federation of trade unions the Franz-Domes apprentices’ home was built here by Roland Rainer in 1951. This building no longer exists and the site is today occupied by the Adolf-Czettel-Bildungsheim (built in 1986 to plans by Rudolf Jarosch). Those buildings that housed various charitable institutions established by the Rothschilds experienced a similar fate, among them the famous hospital known as the Rothschild-Spital on Währinger Gürtel, in which medical history

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<sup>322</sup> Hyppolite Destailleur (1822–1893) also designed Waddesdon Manor in England for the Rothschilds, which is still in existence.



was written. Built in 1870/71 to plans by Wilhelm Stiassny the hospital was later extended several times so that in medical terms it was always state-of-the-art. Distinguished medical experts who worked there included the cholera specialist Leopold Oser, the urologist Otto Zuckerkandl, and the young Viktor Frankl. Despite massive restrictions after the *Anschluss* the hospital continued to operate until 1942. After the war the building was used for a number of years as a transit camp for Jewish emigrants and was demolished in the 1950s. The large complex that houses the Wirtschaftsförderungsintitut today occupies the site.

In the Belvedere district other elegant, formerly Jewish-owned palaces were demolished without further thought, such as the Palais Wittgenstein on Alleegasse, where the young Ludwig Wittgenstein grew up, or the former Palais Castiglioni on Prinz-Eugen-Straße.<sup>323</sup> It could be argued that many buildings in this area, which due to its proximity to the Südbahnhof train station had been very heavily bombed towards the end of the war, were so badly damaged that there was no real alternative to demolition, however this argument does not apply to those villa districts that were hardly affected by war such as Währing or Döbling. This applies in particular to the Palais Kuffner (Vienna 19, Peter-Jordan-Straße no. 1), which survived the war practically undamaged (illustration84). As mentioned above the building was erected in the French Renaissance style in 1905 by Karl König and can be regarded as one of the highpoints of his creative work.<sup>324</sup> The client Wilhelm Kuffner was a member of the famous brewing dynasty that successfully ran the Ottakring Brewery for almost one hundred years. His father Ignaz, one of the founders of the business, was even mayor of Ottakring in the 1870s – before Ottakring was incorporated in the city – and was a great benefactor of the community. Wilhelm's elder brother Moritz, who ran the business until it was 'Aryanised', was an amateur astronomer and financed the construction of

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<sup>323</sup> The Palais Wittgenstein (formerly Alleegasse, today Argentinierstraße 16) was erected in 1872 for Count Nako by Friedrich Schachner, today a modern apartment building occupies the site. The Palais Castiglioni (originally Miller-Aichholz, Prinz-Eugen-Straße 36) was built in 1877 to plans by Andreas Streit.

<sup>324</sup> Karl König's main work, the Philipp-Hof on Albertina-Platz, which was largely destroyed in a bombing raid in March 1945, is also no longer in existence.

the Kuffner Observatory – one of last architectural memorials to this famous family.<sup>325</sup> The brewery was sold in 1938 for the ridiculously low sum of 14 million shillings and the family emigrated to Switzerland and the USA. After the villa had been restored to the heirs the property was sold to the City of Vienna, which had the elegant palace demolished in 1960 and erected a student residence in its place.

A further architectural gem once in Jewish ownership which fell victim to the wrecking ball, was the Villa Regenstreif (formerly Vienna 19, Starkfriedgasse no. 15), which the *Jugendstil* architect Friedrich Ohmann (1858–1927) built for the timber industrialist Fritz Regenstreif around 1914.<sup>326</sup> Ohmann, who was responsible for a number of spectacular *Jugendstil* buildings, particularly in Prague, and who was in charge of the development of the Hofburg in Vienna for a time, was one of the leading architects of his day. The Villa Regenstreif, which also had a completely landscaped and designed garden, was regarded as one of the highpoints of his creative work. Despite this a fire that broke out in the roof space during renovation work was used as a pretext to demolish the property. Surviving elements, such as the entrance gateway (illustration 85) or the small gate lodge on Pötzleinsdorfer Straße, still indicate something of this vanished magnificence.

In terms of its architectural and cultural-historical importance the Villa Beer-Hofmann (Vienna 18, Hasenauer Straße no. 85) can be regarded as a key work. After it was ‘Aryanised’ and following several changes of ownership it was left to decay and was demolished in 1970.<sup>327</sup> Erected in 1905/06 by Josef Hoffmann for the poet Richard Beer-Hofmann (1866–1945) it was, for a time, one of the centres of Viennese fin-de-siècle culture, where writer friends of Beer-Hofmann, among them Hugo von Hofmannsthal, Arthur Schnitzler and Herman Bahr, were regular visitors (illustration 86).<sup>328</sup> Built during Josef Hoffmann’s most creative period, when he was at

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<sup>325</sup> See P. Habison, ‘Der Brauherr als Bauherr – Moriz von Kuffner und seine Sternwarte’, in: *Astronomisches Mäzenatentum* (edited by G. Wolfschmidt), Norderstedt 2008, p. 131ff.

<sup>326</sup> Although he came from Galicia Friedrich Ohmann, who often worked for Jewish clients and also had a number of Jewish students (including Oskar Strnad), was not Jewish, contrary to what is sometimes asserted in the literature.

<sup>327</sup> See E. F. Sekler, *Josef Hoffmann*, Vienna/Salzburg 1982, p. 298f.

<sup>328</sup> In 1999 the Jewish Museum Vienna dedicated an exhibition with the title *Zu Gast bei Beer-Hoffmann* to this theme.

the highpoint of his career, this villa was certainly worth preserving as an important architectural and historical legacy. Although there was some resistance to the planned demolition, eventually the demolition crew prevailed.

It was not only important buildings from the age of Historicism or *Jugendstil* that were wiped off the face of the city, part of the legacy of classic modernism, such as the Hériot house for guests on Rustenschacherallee – one of the most progressive projects of the interwar period in Vienna and the principal work of the partnership Dicker & Singer – no longer exists. Despite a gradual change in social awareness, the thoughtless demolition of buildings with Jewish connotations has continued until recent times. In 2000 the building known as the ‘Kai Palast’ was demolished. Erected in 1911 by Ignaz Reiser and an architectural symbol of the Jewish Textile District, the use of a reinforced concrete frame and its extremely functional external appearance made this building a pioneering work on the path to the modernism of the interwar period.<sup>329</sup> Although a citizens’ action group campaigned for its preservation and the media published numerous objections to the demolition, the building, allegedly in a ruinous state, was torn down to make way for a new design. The question of maintaining Jewish cemeteries in Vienna, which has still not been clarified, also forms part of this theme in the broadest sense.

## 12 Conclusion

Looking back from a present-day perspective at the period when Jewish architects were deeply involved in building activity in Vienna, the time span, which amounts to around seventy years, seems relatively short. It extends from the early ‘Ringstrasse era’ of the 1860s to the so-called *Anschluss* in 1938. But it was precisely during these years that much of Vienna’s appearance as a city was formed. Still today a large number of all buildings in the city date from this time. Around three generations worked during this era. The characteristic of the first generation is that it was made up largely of immigrants, most of whom came from the area around Pressburg or the Crown Lands Bohemia, Moravia and Galicia and therefore, as subjects of the Danube Monarchy, were

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<sup>329</sup> U. Prokop, ‘Zur architekturhistorischen Bedeutung des Kai-Palastes’, in: *Steine sprechen*, XXXIX/3, June 2000, no. 118.

internal migrants.<sup>330</sup> They often became integrated very rapidly and most of the next generation were born in Vienna. This is not, of course, a specifically Jewish phenomenon, it is also evident – although to a lesser degree – among non-Jewish architects and master builders who were attracted by the imperial capital's economic power.

In a certain sense the way in which their position in the Viennese architecture scene quickly changed reflected the situation of Viennese Jews in general: starting with a number of lone individuals, such as Wilhelm Fraenkel who came from Berlin, moving then to the formation of the group of König students who contributed to shaping the modernism of the time, and then to the important personalities – above all Josef Frank and Oskar Strand – whose importance and relevance extends far beyond the Jewish community. The influence of personalities such as Friedrich von Schmidt and Adolf Loos on this development should be emphasised, as non-Jews in a predominantly anti-Semitic society they had a certain role as mediators in that they were unprejudiced teachers and intellectual fathers and functioned in a sense as catalysts in the Viennese architecture scene.

It would be extremely interesting to know more about the difficulties and animosity encountered by Jewish architects who lived and worked in what was a rather hostile environment. Astonishingly, the sources offer relatively little information in this regard. At first glance several biographies appear to have taken a fairly 'normal' course. In publications from that time the works of Jews and non-Jews are illustrated beside each other. In several anthologies Christians write – apparently free of any prejudices – about synagogues and Jews about churches.<sup>331</sup> A superficial look reveals only collegial co-existence. Only a closer analysis exposes the problems and conflicts. For instance it was practically impossible for Jewish architects to join the civil service, whether in state authorities or municipal institutions.<sup>332</sup> Similarly, it was difficult for a Jew to obtain a

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<sup>330</sup> Although the name was widely used a state called 'Austria' did not actually exist at the time. In contrast to Hungary, after the *Ausgleich* [compromise] of 1868 what existed in constitutional terms was the 'Crown Lands represented in the Imperial Council' – often known for short as Cisleithania.

<sup>331</sup> M. Paul, *Technischer Führer durch Wien*, Vienna 1910.

<sup>332</sup> In the Wiener Stadtbauamt (city building office) even during the era of 'Red Vienna' there were hardly any Jewish architects, the few to be found there worked temporarily as interns.

professorship. In the chapter about Karl König his lengthy long waiting time and the need to leave the Jewish religious community has been mentioned. Without doubt this situation led most Jewish architects to remain among their own kind and explains, too, why they worked mostly for Jewish clients.

Whether and to what extent this situation improved in the interwar period is a question that must remain unanswered. The evidence here is very contradictory. While it is true that Oskar Strnad and Josef Frank obtained professorships at the Kunstgewerbeschule, in the hierarchy of academic institutions this school certainly ranked lower than the Academy of Fine Arts or the Technische Hochschule.<sup>333</sup> During these years assimilation went so far that Jews partnerships formed with non-Jews, not to mention the numerous conversions and the so-called 'mixed marriages'. On the other hand individual incidents illustrate the hostility – in particular from their colleagues – to which Jews were exposed. This was especially the case when the economic situation was particularly bad. In his memoirs Viktor Gruen describes the anti-Semitic outbursts of fellow students at the Staatsgewerbeschule at the beginning of the 1920s. The atmosphere at that time is illustrated by the ugly dispute in 1923 about the monument to foreign aid, in the course of which Ernst Lichtblau was verbally violently attacked and his model that was presented in an exhibition was ultimately destroyed. The internal rivalries and confrontations reached a highpoint in 1932 with the collapse of the Österreichischer Werkbund, which a number of people – in particular Josef Hoffmann – obviously believed to be dominated by Jews. The founding of the Neuer Werkbund in which there were no Jewish architects signalled the beginning of the end, which came only a few years later with the *Anschluss*.

A further problem is the question about a specifically 'Jewish architecture'. The extent and the intensity with which this question was debated are illustrated, for instance, by the discussion about a genuinely 'Jewish' style in the context of synagogue building. Although today we no longer think in terms of styles and have not done so for quite some time, it would nevertheless be interesting to discover whether it is possible to

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<sup>333</sup> At the beginning of the 1930s the Kunstgewerbeschule actually lost its authorisation to teach architects and Strnad's students had to complete their studies at the Academy – a situation that greatly annoyed him.

identify certain tendencies or positions that differ from those taken by the majority of non-Jewish colleagues.

But this is yet another question that is almost impossible to answer. In looking at the development of modernism one can only note that some Jews were numbered among the representatives of the conservative direction and that, equally, many proponents of modernism were Jewish. Paradoxically, often both groups contained students of Karl König, but the scales tended to dip increasingly towards the modern tendencies. In particular in the interwar period Josef Frank and his circle were pioneers of modernism in the Austrian context. Frank was also one of the few to demonstrate an openness to the international movements (which soon made him a target for criticism). But seen in the overall European context Frank was more of a conservative, whose interior in the Stuttgart Weißenhofsiedlung was regarded as typically 'Viennese'. This all goes to show just how complex and difficult the situation is. In the area of the buildings erected for 'Red Vienna' we can possibly identify a certain restraint in those housing complexes designed by Jewish architects – in contrast to the monumentalism and tendency towards pathos evident in the buildings by many Otto Wagner students, almost none of whom were of Jewish origin. The housing developments designed by Frank, Wlach, Strnad, Ella Briggs, Leopold Schulz, Berger & Ziegler and others all have in common a functional plainness and simplicity that avoids any form of demonstrative gesture. This applies also to the work of Ernst Lichtblau, although he represents an exception and studied under Otto Wagner! In many cases architects who took much the same architectural direction had trained at very different institutions, so that any attempt to attribute the direction taken to the influence of a particular school seems very questionable. If one surveys a range that extends from Stiassny's richly decorated synagogues to the hermeticism of the Wittgenstein House identifying any culturally determined iconoclastic tendencies appears highly problematic. Every conclusion can ultimately be disproved and always remains just a hypothesis.

Be that as it may, Vienna owes these personalities a series of extremely remarkable buildings and, despite all the destruction that has taken place, a large number of them still survive today. They surround us in our daily lives, and, while we may generally

register them, we rarely reflect much about them. Those who designed and built them deserve that their names should not be allowed to sink into oblivion.

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Allgemeine Bauzeitung

The Architectural Review

Architects Journal

Der Architekt

Architektur aktuell

der aufbau

Der Baumeister

Der Bautechniker

Berliner Architekturwelt

David. Jüdische Kulturzeitschrift

Dr. Blochs Wochenschrift

Das Interieur

Menorah

Moderne Bauformen

Neue Freie Presse

Österreichische Kunst

Die Presse

profil

Die Reichspost

Volkszeitung

Wiener Bauhütte

Wiener Bauindustriezeitung

Zeitschrift des österreichischen Ingenieur- und Architektenvereines

Zeitschrift für praktische Baukunst

## **Internet links**

[www.2onb.ac.at/ariadne](http://www.2onb.ac.at/ariadne) (women-specific database of the Austrian National Library)

[www.architektenlexikon.at](http://www.architektenlexikon.at) (lexicon of architects Vienna 1770–1945)

[www.centropa.org](http://www.centropa.org) (database on Jewish history)

[www.dasrotewien.at](http://www.dasrotewien.at) (lexicon of the social democratic movement)

[www.doew.at](http://www.doew.at) (database of the Dokumentationszentrum des Österreichischen Widerstandes, cited as DÖW/list of persons deported)

[www.jarayfamily.net](http://www.jarayfamily.net) (history of the Jaray family)

### **Archives and their abbreviations**

Archiv der Technischen Universität Wien (TUWA)

Archiv der Akademie der bildenden Künste

Archiv der Universität für angewandte Kunst

Archiv des Österreichischen Ingenieur- und Architektenvereines (ÖIAV)

Archiv der Baumeisterinnung

Archiv der Genossenschaft der bildenden Künstler Wiens

Israelitische Kultusgemeinde Wien (IKG), Matrikenstelle

Archiv des Dokumentationszentrums des Österreichischen Widerstandes (DÖW)



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Foto: S. Jackwerth

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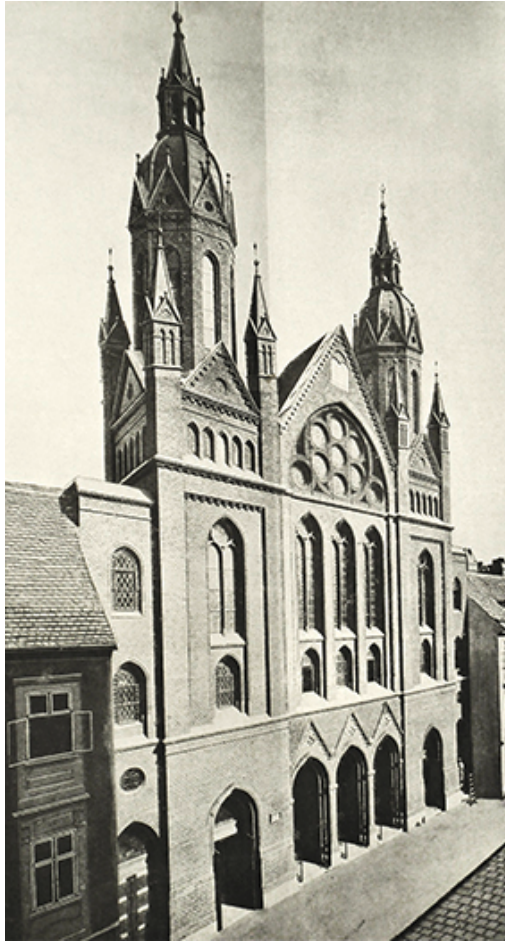
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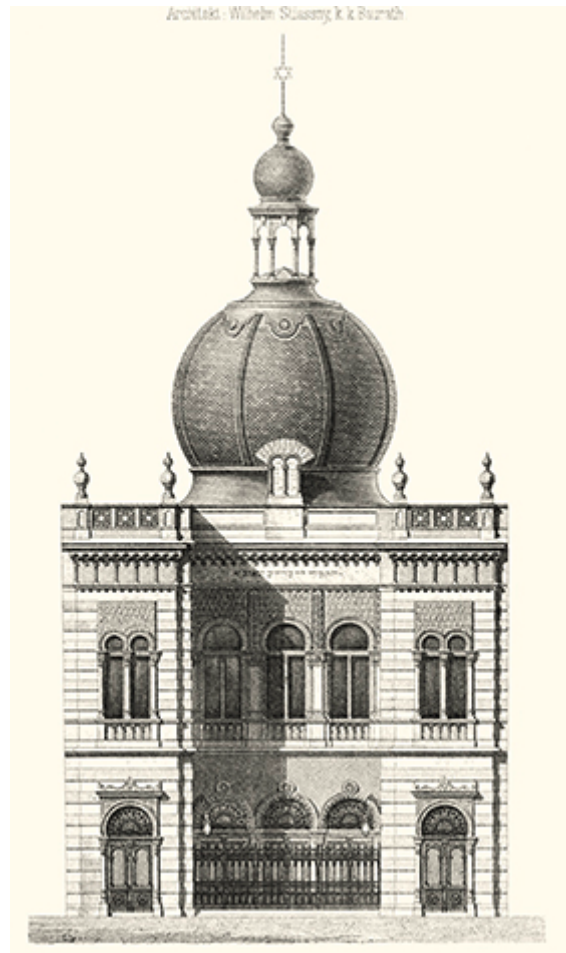
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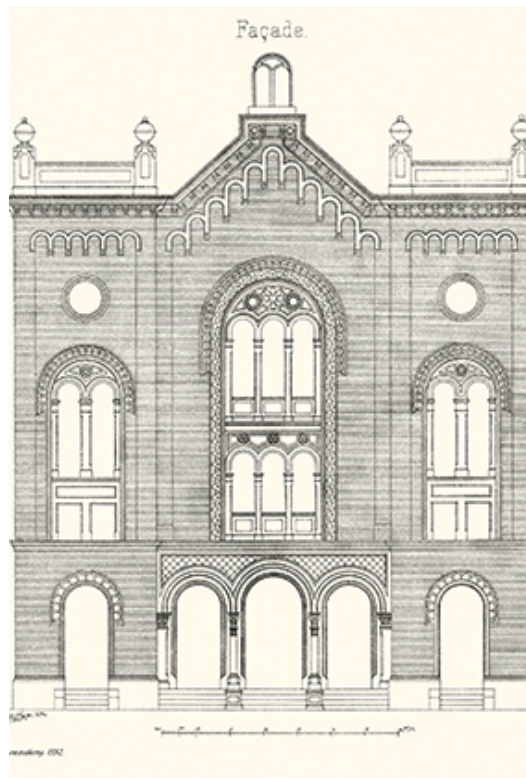


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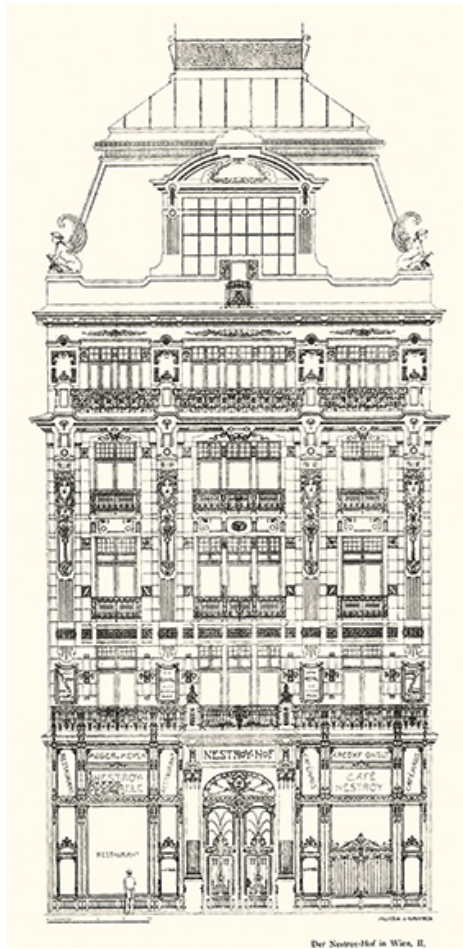
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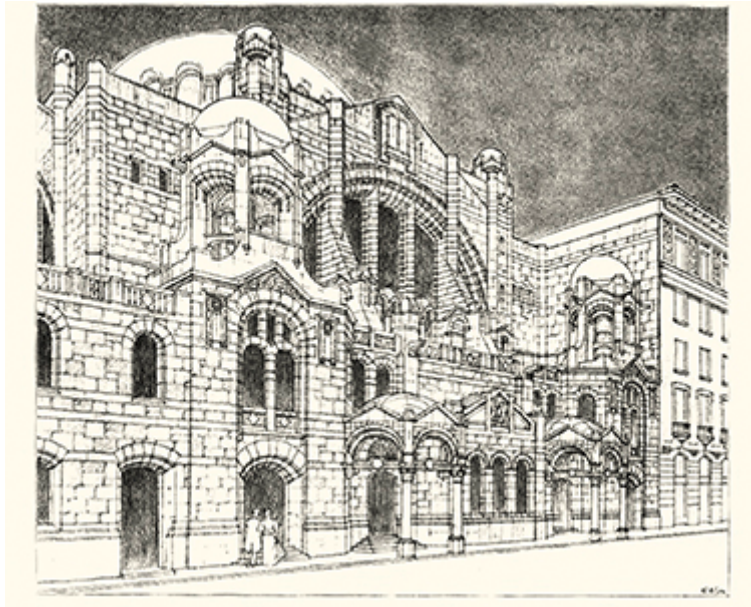
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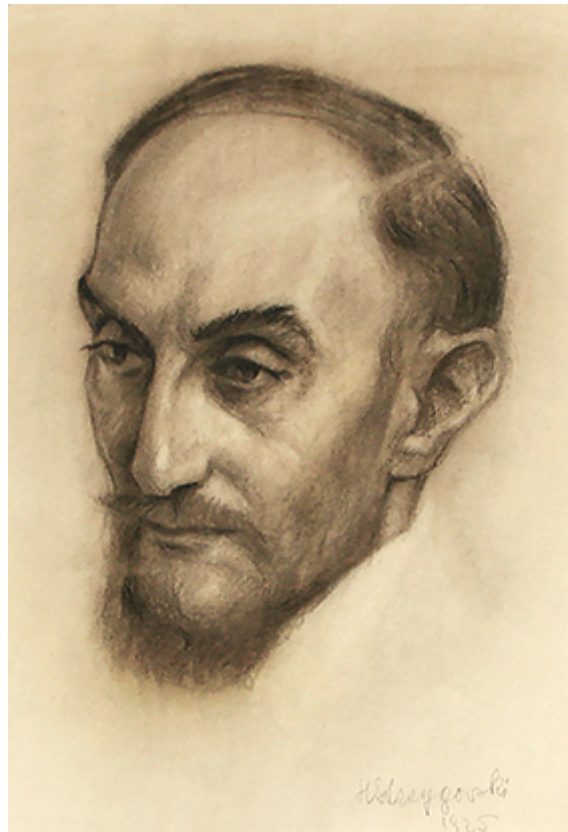
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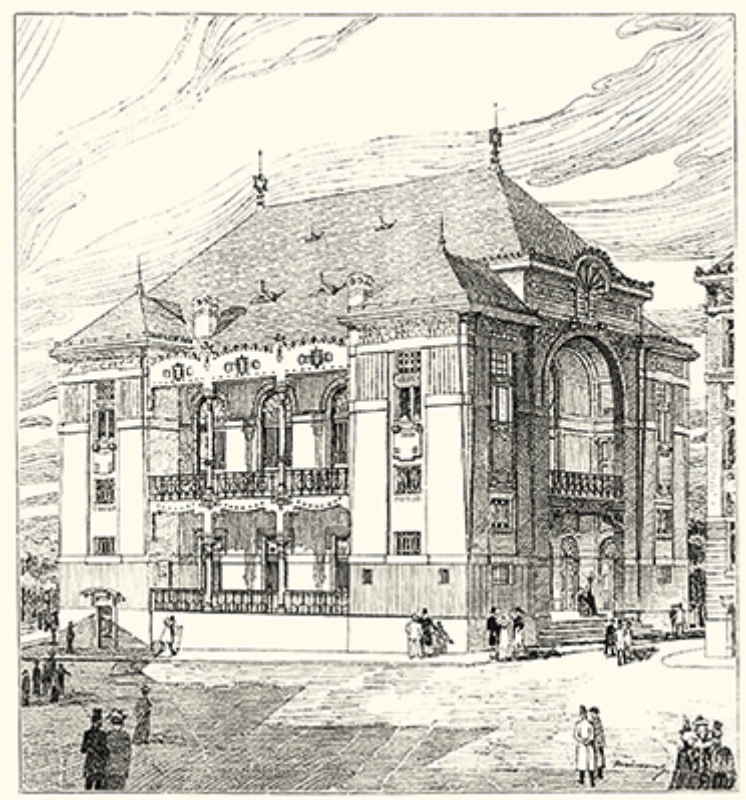
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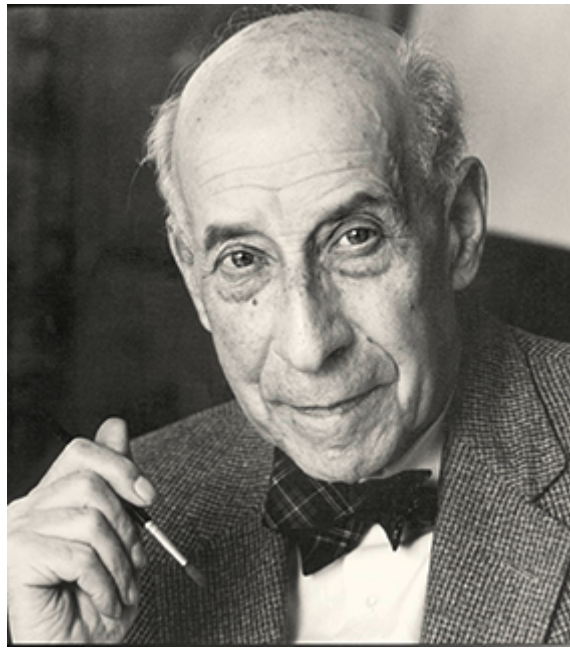
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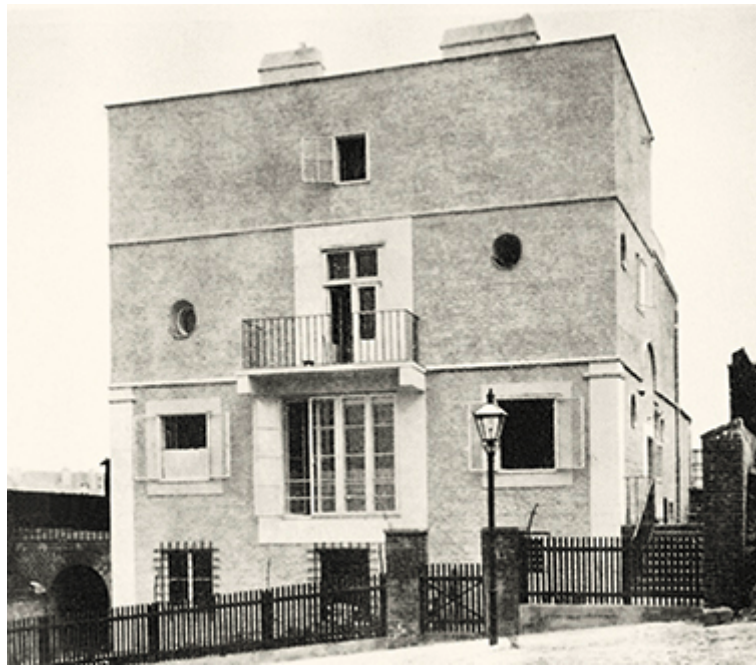
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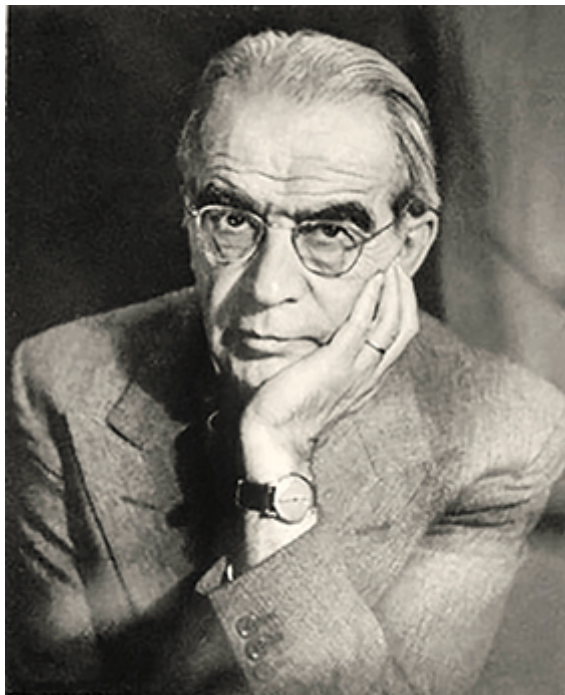
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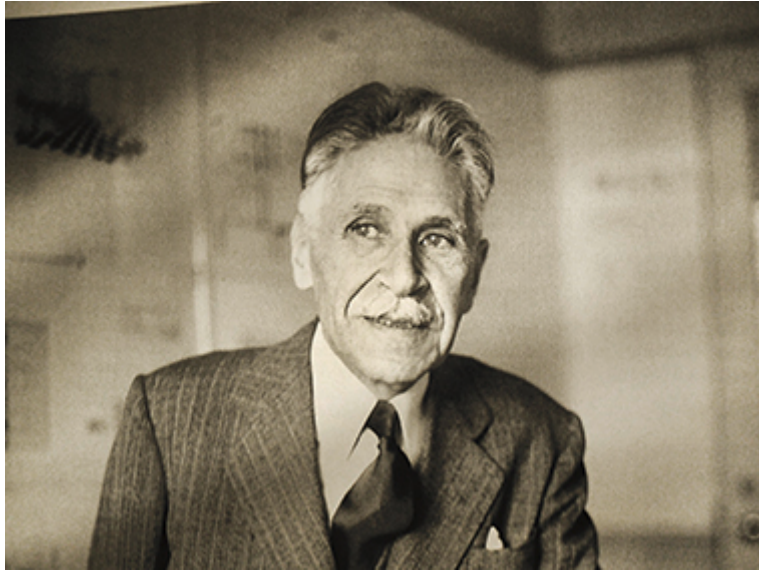




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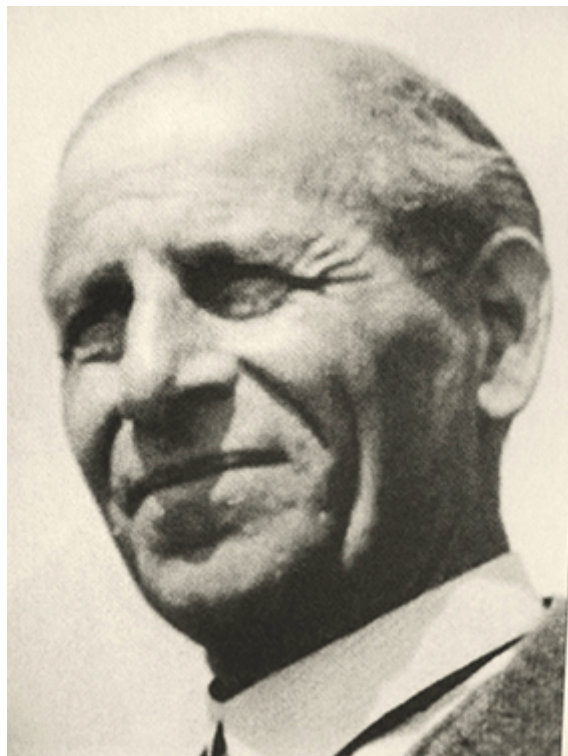
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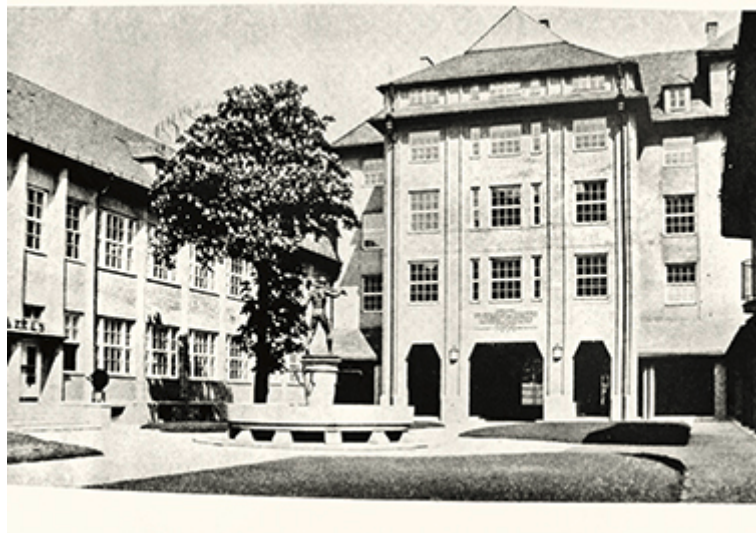


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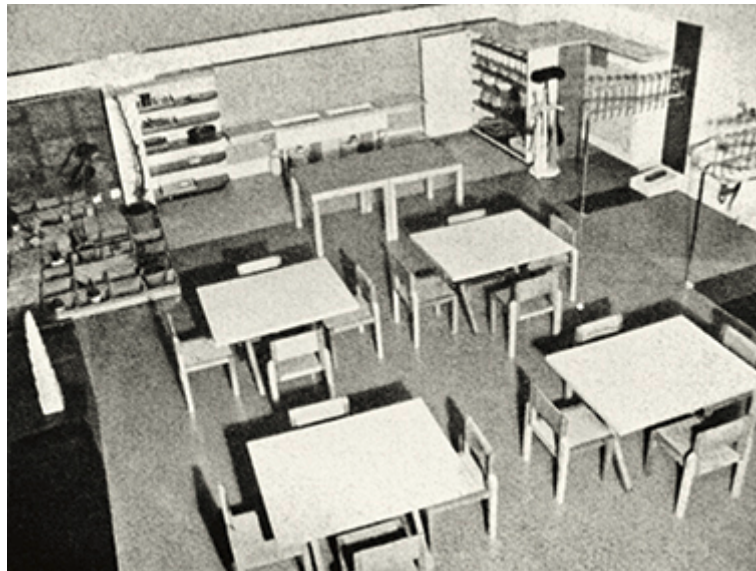
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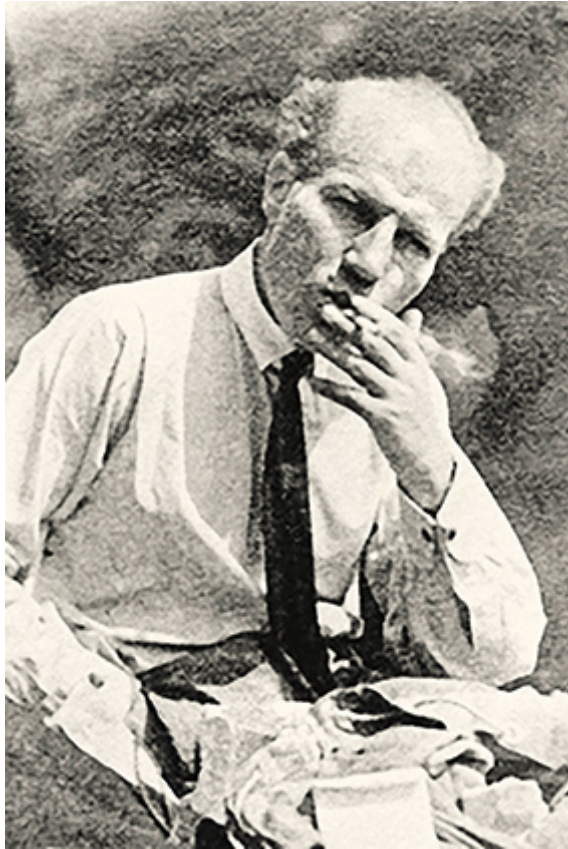
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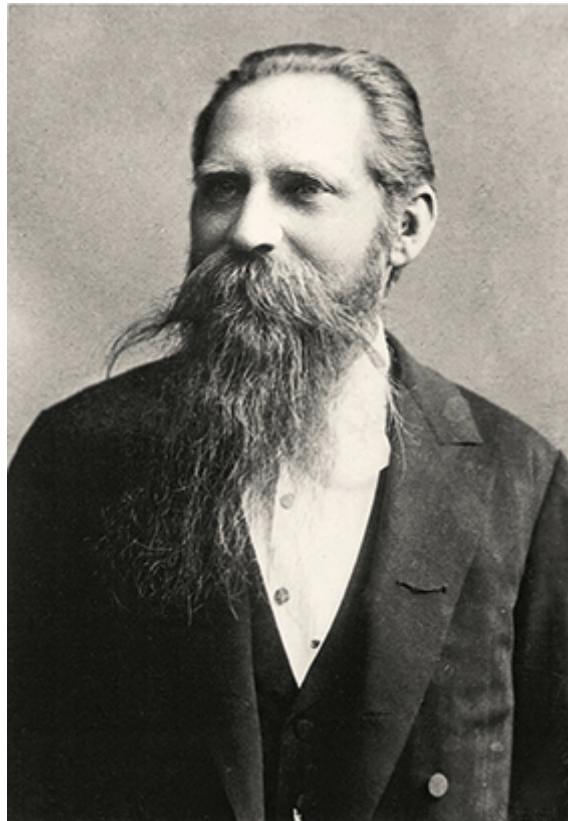
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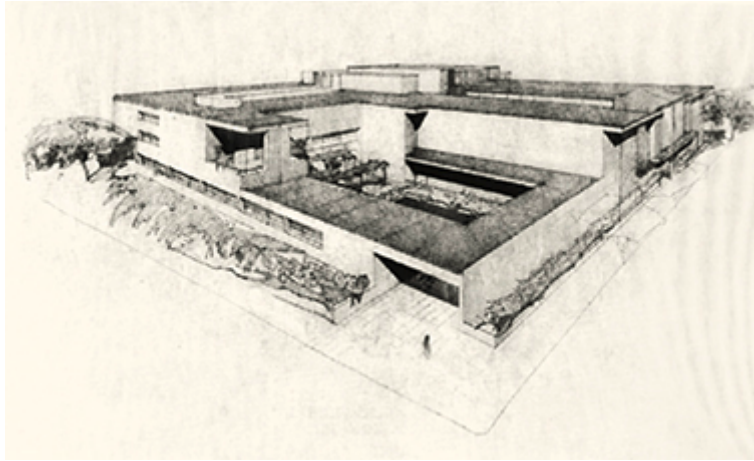
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