

# UMĚNÍ 2 ART

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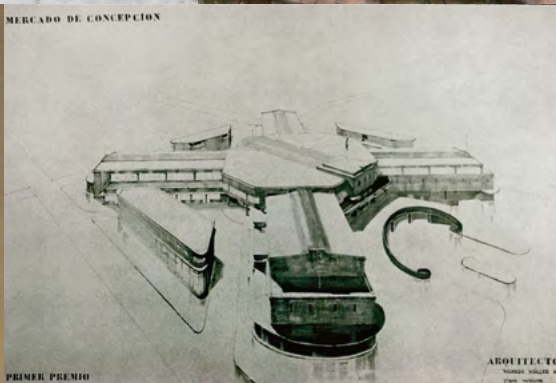
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## ÚVOD EDITORA / EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

**143 Steven Mansbach, Methodological Frameworks for a Defiant Region**

Metodologické rámce pro vzdorovitou oblast

## ČLÁNKY / ARTICLES

**145 Matthew Rampley, Networks, Horizons, Centres and Hierarchies: On the Challenges of Writing on Modernism in Central Europe**

Sítě, horizonty, centra a hierarchie: výzvy psaní o modernismu ve střední Evropě

**163 Beáta Hock, Is there Life after Canonical Certainties?**

Existuje život po kanonických jistotách?

**168 Marie Rakušanová, Writing on the History of Modern Art: From Particularism to a New Universalism**

Dějepis moderního umění: od partikularismu k novému universalismu

**175 Milena Bartlová, From which Vantage Points Does an Art Historian Look? The History of Central European Art and the Postcolonial Impulse**

Odkud se dívá historik umění? Dějiny umění střední Evropy a postkoloniální impuls

**184 Magdalena Radomska, What Isn't Orthodox Horizontal Art History**

Co nejsou ortodoxní horizontální dějiny umění

**188 Jeremy Howard, MINCE Words: For and Against Writing on Modernism IN Central Europe**

MINCE: Pro a proti psaní o modernismu ve střední Evropě

**195 Raino Isto, Towards a Weakened History of Modernisms**

Oslabené dějiny modernismu

**198 Claire Farago, A Very Different Kind of National Art History: Looking to the Future from the Past**

Odlišné národní dějiny umění: pohled z minulosti do budoucnosti

**203 Timothy O. Benson, Writing About and Exhibiting Central European Modernism in North America Then and Now**

Psaní a výstavy o středoevropském modernismu v Severní Americe dříve a dnes

**209 Éva Forgács, Notes on Matthew Rampley's 'Networks, Horizons, Centres and Hierarchies: On the Challenges of Writing on Modernism in Central Europe'**

Poznámky ke článku Matthewa Rampleyho Sítě, horizonty, centra a hierarchie: výzvy psaní o modernismu ve střední Evropě

## RECENZE / REVIEWS

**216 Tomáš Pospiszyl, Richard Biegel – Roman Prah – Jakub Bachtík (edd.), Století Ústavu pro dějiny umění na Filozofické fakultě Univerzity Karlovy****218 Ivan Gerát, Kateřina Kubínová – Klára Benešová (eds), Imago Imagines. Výtvarné dílo a proměny jeho funkcí v českých zemích od 10. do první třetiny 16. století****222 Thomas Rainer, Petr Voit, Kostbare Bucheinbände der Stiftsbibliothek Strahov in Prag. Von der Gotik an die Schwelle des Barocks****225 Tadeáš Kadlec, Marcela Vondráčková (ed.), Norbert Grund. Velký mistr malých formátů****227 Naomi Hume, Marta Filipová, Modernity, History, and Politics in Czech Art****230 Martin Horáček, Jan Michl, Co Bauhaus dal – a co VZAL. Kritické úvahy o modernistickém pojetí designu a architektury****234** Anotace / Annotations**238** Česká resumé / English summaries

## PŘEDNÍ STRANA OBÁLKY / FRONT COVER:

István Farkas, *The Madman of Syracuse* / *Blázen ze Syrakus (detail)*, 1930  
 tempera, cardboard / tempera, lepenka  
 Hungarian National Gallery Budapest  
 Photo: Hungarian National Gallery

## Vážení čtenáři,

dostává se vám do rukou v pořadí druhé editované číslo časopisu *Umění/Art*. Je výjimečné tím, že vzniklo jako ohlas na podnět, který poskytl svým kritickým textem Matthew Rampley. Zabývá se v něm otázkou, zda a jak teorie horizontálních dějin umění či transnacionality přispěly k posunu v současném hodnocení a interpretaci modernismu ve střední Evropě. Rozhodli jsme se oslovit několik historiků umění, aby se k tomuto tématu vyjádřili, a jejich reakce otisknout společně s původním textem. Potěšil nás zájem, jaký tato výzva vzbudila a z něž je patrné, že uvažování o národních významech a nadnárodních kontextech (nejen moderního) umění je velice živé. Doufáme, že tato pomyslná debata o prezentaci, kontextualizaci i kritickém hodnocení vývoje modernismu ve střední Evropě obohatí záběr časopisu nejen o důležité téma, ale zaujme také diskusním formátem, odhalujícím různá východiska jednotlivých účastníků. Za úvodní text a editorské hostování náleží tentokrát díky Stevenu Mansbachovi, jehož kritické poznámky a pečlivé čtení významně přispěly k podobě čísla.

Za redakci vám inspirativní čtení přeje

Pavla Machalíková,  
šéfredaktorka časopisu

## Dear readers,

You have received the second edited issue of *Umění/Art* magazine. It is unique in that it was created as a response to the impulse provided by Matthew Rampley in his critical text. It deals with questions of whether and how have theories of horizontal art history or transnationality contributed to the shift in the current evaluation and interpretation of Central European Modernism. We decided to invite several art historians to comment on this topic and publish their reactions together with the original text. We were pleased that this challenge aroused great interest, demonstrating that thinking about national meanings and transnational contexts of (not only modern) art is a topical subject. We hope that this debate on the presentation, contextualisation and critical evaluation of the development of Modernism in Central Europe will not only enrich the scope of the magazine with an important topic but also be of interest to our readers for its discussion format, revealing different viewpoints of individual participants. Special thanks to Steven Mansbach for participating as a guest editor and writing the introductory text — his critical observations and attentive reading significantly contributed to this issue.

On behalf of the editors, I wish you an inspiring reading.

Pavla Machalíková,  
editor-in-chief

STEVEN MANSBACH

UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND AT COLLEGE PARK

# Methodological Frameworks for a Defiant Region

Reflections on methodology are at the forefront of today's humanistic endeavours. Indeed, they are not only reshaping the practice of the humanities and social sciences, but imaginatively redefining disciplinary boundaries. At the same time, and as a direct consequence, matters of methodology necessarily prompt a critical reexamination of the humanities' historical and social responsibilities, while engaging new audiences. This is a heady and expansive enterprise that is not limited to a single field. Methodological reconsiderations affect every discipline, admittedly somewhat differently in each case.

Not since the late 1960s and early 1970s has methodology been so insistently prominent in humanistic discourse, academic practice, and public debates as in the last decade when critical racism and postcolonialism, among a host of innovative perspectives, have shaped the practice of art history and allied disciplines. It is in this charged intellectual context that questions of periodisation, spatiality, and the body (as site and agent) have challenged so many received principles and practices, as well as informed considerable contemporary political discourse about their place and purpose. This special issue of *Umění/Art* is therefore timely both for its wide implications for the humanities and for the practice and place of the history of art specifically.

Many scholarly journals have recently focused attention on the role of new methods and approaches to various fields of inquiry. *Umění/Art*, too, has published articles on artists, monuments, and periods that advance new ways of thinking about art, its audiences, and its purposes. But the current issue is the first time the Institute of Art History of the Czech Academy of Sciences has intentionally invited, gathered, and organised a corpus of journal articles that collectively, but variously, engage with a major methodology problematic. And I thank the editors for inviting me to play a decisive role.

Having read Matthew Rampley's submission, I was persuaded that it had the rich potential to engage the interests and stimulate the kind of debate that would be not just timely, but would help chart how our shared commitment to studying the visual culture of our region of interest might be reconsidered, reconfigured, and ultimately revitalised. I capitalised on the invitation to organise a special issue based around a set of methodological issues central to our scholarly engagement.

As the following selection of essays suggests, colleagues were chosen to represent different points of view, divergent methodological commitments, and various backgrounds. It was the editors' hope that a composite portrait of the state of the study of the modern (and contemporary) art of this part of the globe might be revealed in all its complexity and contradictions. In no manner does this collection aspire toward agreement or uniformity. Rather, it is through intellectual contestation that more profound pathways, more searching perspectives, and more procedural possibilities can be outlined. The initial essay therefore provides the intellectual touchstone around which colleagues have productively and creatively engaged with issues of critical consequence for approaching and assessing the Modernisms that have emerged in the contested geography of the region.

As many of the authors have acknowledged, even the choice of terminology is characterised by controversy and challenge. Slippage rather than fixity typifies the names we invoke to describe the geography (and periodisation) we study. This instability of terminology is itself rooted in the methodologies one embraces. As several essays presented here have shown, East-Central, Eastern, and Central Europe each carries significations that emerge from relativising one 'place' vis-à-vis other

places; and these, in turn, are affected by temporal, historiographical, and ideological perspective. Thus, the geographical ground we study cannot be separated from larger contexts, and given these 'outer' — as well as 'internally' generated — bases methodological variety is not only inevitable but desirable. It was with an eye to this objective of expansiveness rather than narrowness, disputation rather than consensus, that the authors were invited to ponder the themes that Rampley set forth — and then to engage with them.

The opening essay serves as an ideal armature on which to adapt or construct new approaches for engaging with the Modernisms from East-Central Europe. The author's considerations are both broad and specific; his familiarity with historical, philosophical, and critical sources is impressive; and his perspective is shaped by his 'outsider/insider' academic background as a British subject long and seriously engaged with primarily Czech subjects. From the guest-editor's point of view, however, the overarching attraction of Rampley's essay is that the topics he addresses in his methodological ruminations are ones that necessarily inspire thoughtful and creative responses — many averse, and others to some extent supportive.

As guest-editor and, even more, as a scholar who has published on the modern art from this region for almost fifty years, I am tempted to comment on each of the invited essays. Yet, I have had ample opportunity to register my views on methodology, in numerous publications as well as in editorial dialogue with most of the essayists represented here. Hence, it will be sufficient just to advance a few brief thoughts, some of them more obvious than others.

Clearly, the *spiritum viventum* present throughout the following exchange is Piotr Piotrowski, and specifically his theory of a 'horizontal art history', which, appropriately, was published as a set of theoretical postulates in the present journal.<sup>1</sup> Although not limiting himself to discussion of this seminal theory, Rampley has explicitly addressed it as an appropriate point of departure for his further considerations. The other contributors have all engaged with Piotrowski's methodological approach as well: some to defend it; some to alter and refine it; and others to critique and mostly reject it. As those of us who knew Piotrowski well would acknowledge, he himself would have relished such impassioned and thoughtful debate. But as he would have also wanted, none of the interlocutors are constrained in their horizons to his theory alone. Indeed, he himself had already begun revising his stance during the two years before his early death.

A horizontal art history is, then, an instructive way to reconsider the charged, but also frequently creative, interaction between centres and peripheries. But as Piotrowski advocated, it is but one theory that might productively open the path to further inquiry and methodological approaches, which is just what

the contributors to this volume have inventively done. Several have questioned the nature of a presumed hierarchal relationship — or even the methodological utility — of the conventional opposition between centres — 'cracked' or otherwise — and 'marginal' locales. As a result, some authors have opted for a more complex network of exchanges, interactions, and entanglements. Such alternatives can lead one to recognise the realities, and confront the implications, of the 'multiplicities' rather than 'uniformities' of Modernism and its variant responses to local impulses, expectations, and social conditions. What the array of essays presents, then, is a wide and creative range of ways to think about, effectively analyse, and ultimately to come to grips with the complex and entangled Modernisms that were created in a broad and diverse region.

In many instances and in many places, as the contributors to this journal suggest, the Modernisms manifested in Central Europe, a term necessarily loosely invoked here, revealed stylistic affinities with advanced art that appeared elsewhere, although their referents, intentions, and audiences may have been specific and even singular. The reflections advanced in the following essays thus encourage us to think afresh about how to treat the artefacts of Central European modern art specifically, and modern art as a whole, in terms of their 'objecthood', as well as in view of their generation and reception. To do so will likely require new methodological, critical, ideological, and curatorial strategies akin to those advanced in this issue — and being published in volumes edited by many of the contributors here. Moreover, such a monumental task may necessitate a new vocabulary, one that is free from the limiting gravitational pull of the past terminology that was mostly (and originally) articulated to address Modernisms in the 'West' but has often been invoked to engage with modern expression in other geographies — spatial, epochal, and political. Yet, one does not need to wait in order to register one's gratitude to Matthew Rampley and one's profound appreciation of all the contributors to this special issue for providing inspiring and constructive guideposts for a productive pathway forward.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Piotr Piotrowski, 'On the Spatial Turn, or Horizontal Art History', *Umění/Art* LVI, 2008, pp. 378-383.

MATTHEW RAMPLEY

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# Networks, Horizons, Centres and Hierarchies: On the Challenges of Writing on Modernism in Central Europe

In 2008 the Polish art historian Piotr Piotrowski published an article in *Umění/Art*: 'On the Spatial Turn, or Horizontal Art History.'<sup>1</sup> One of a number of essays he wrote on issues in the history of central and Eastern European Modernism, it has become a much cited text, the metaphor of horizontal art history frequently recurring in writings on the subject.<sup>2</sup> The article was the culmination of some 30 years of intense reflection on the historiography of the art of Eastern and Central Europe that followed the collapse of the Soviet Union and its client regimes in 1989–1991. This has involved not only re-writing narratives previously shaped by the cultural politics of successive Communist regimes, or 'rediscovering' previously inaccessible and unknown art, but also trying to reconceptualise the relation between this region of Europe and wider European and global contexts. For Piotrowski, despite the enormous growth of international interest, art historians still struggle to integrate the art of Eastern and Central Europe into larger contexts. As a result, he argued, it still tends to be forced into an art historical framework devised around the major centres of Modernism in Western Europe and North America: Paris, Berlin, New York and London. Inasmuch as Eastern and Central Europe are seen as responding to innovations generated elsewhere, such a structure also depicts the region as backward. As Hans Belting stated: *'Eastern European art viewed in retrospect was, compared with the art of the West, delayed most of the time.'*<sup>3</sup>

The scope and meaning of 'eastern' or 'central' Europe have been much discussed, but this article is not concerned with revisiting that particular debate; rather, its interests lie in historiographical questions raised by writing on the modern art and architecture of

Eastern and central Europe (i.e. those territories lying between Germany and Russia). In recent years East-Central Europe (for the sake of convenience the article will use this formulation) has been somewhat eclipsed by the increasingly *global* preoccupations of art historians, particularly in relation to the history of Modernism. The recent publication of three important anthologies of writings on its art suggests, however, that the issues Piotrowski raised are far from resolved.<sup>4</sup> The geography of art he critiqued remains broadly the same as before. Research on the modernist practices of Prague, Budapest or Belgrade, for example, is still mostly left to scholars based in the countries concerned; major international museums and galleries in Western Europe and North America seldom stage exhibitions of the art of East-Central Europe, and few have examples in their collections.

Piotrowski highlighted an issue of continued importance, therefore, and it was in recognition of this fact that, following his death in 2015, the Piotr Piotrowski Centre for Research on East-Central European Art was established at the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań. But what did he envisage with the notion of a 'horizontal art history'? Why did he believe it would provide a challenge to traditional art historical practice, and *how* was it meant to be a solution?

This article is, initially, an attempt to answer these questions, but the discussion goes beyond the individual arguments put forward by Piotrowski and considers the broader debate about the place of East-Central Europe in histories of Modernism. While in agreement with much of Piotrowski's diagnosis, it nevertheless suggests that 'horizontal art history' may not be the solution many have taken it to be. This is

due in part to certain inconsistencies in the concept, but also — I shall argue — the structural asymmetries he identified may well not be overcome until external pragmatic issues that impede writing about the history of art in East-Central Europe are also addressed. Given the institutional location of the author of this article, most of the examples will be selected from the Czech Republic, but it will touch on themes that have a wider pertinence.

### Verticality: Hierarchies and Centres

Piotrowski's original article was prompted by the publication of *Art since 1900*, a survey of twentieth-century art that in many respects encapsulated the view of Modernism promulgated by the American magazine *October* since the mid-1970s.<sup>5</sup> While its authors, Rosalind Krauss, Benjamin Buchloh, Yves Alain Bois and Hal Foster, have often been seen as some of the most important progressive art historians writing in English, their collective volume (and, by extension, the broader project of *October*) displayed a notable blind spot inasmuch as they left many long-standing assumptions about the geography of modern art untouched. In particular, the historical narrative focused on the traditional centres of Modernism: Paris, Berlin, Moscow, New York and (to a degree) London.<sup>6</sup>

*Art since 1900* is the most notable and prominent example of a more general problem, Piotrowski stated. Even when the Modernisms of, for example, Bucharest, Belgrade or Kaunas, are explored, they are often treated as objects of exotic interest operating within a framework shaped by Western Europe and North America.<sup>7</sup> If discussed at all, the modernist art practices of East-Central Europe are usually described in terms of the reception of ideas and practices flowing from elsewhere. A much-discussed example of this problem was Steven Mansbach's *Modern Art in Eastern Europe*.<sup>8</sup> Despite its considerable merits in turning the attention of anglophone art historians eastwards and beyond the Elbe, it was stymied not only by its problematic assumptions of what 'eastern Europe' even meant, but also by a focus on certain stereotypical topics, such as the Czech reception of Parisian Surrealism, the influence of Cézanne in Hungary, dada in Romania, or Estonian responses to Expressionism. When it attempted to describe the character of this transfer of ideas and practices, the book was drawn into a treacherous debate over the *influence* of Western Modernism.<sup>9</sup>

At the heart of Piotrowski's critique lay the problem of hierarchy, which operates on two levels; first the institutional hierarchy of art history writing as a discipline and, second, the cultural hierarchies that historically governed the relations between artists in East-Central Europe and their peers in, for example, Paris and Berlin. The accumulation of economic and cultural capital in institutions, particularly in the United

States, Germany, France and Great Britain, has created overwhelming inequalities. Universities, museums and galleries have access to resources — artworks, publications, research grants — that are unmatched elsewhere. In comparison, even the prestigious national academies and institutes of East-Central Europe are left wanting. Aside from the historical legacy of the economic mismanagement of Communist rule, its censorship policies and restrictions on travel and exchange of ideas, other factors also contributed to maintaining the hierarchy in question, of which the most important is undoubtedly language. With the exception of Russian, most languages of East-Central Europe are little known elsewhere. This automatically creates a boundary between, for example, Czech, Polish and Hungarian art, and basic primary and secondary sources are inaccessible. A reflection of this is the fact that most international scholars writing in English or German on the art of East-Central Europe continue to be either originally from the countries in question or descended from emigrés.

Language has further consequences, too, for it creates a limited community of scholars. Scholars in France, Germany or Spain, for example, can rely on a large cadre of fellow academics in their field, (both native- and second-language speakers) as well as a large potential readership, their peers in East-Central Europe can count on many fewer. In some cases, such as Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, scholarly communities can be vanishingly small. This compounds the issue of linguistic inaccessibility and limits the range and diversity of voices as well as impeding their ability to establish an international voice. It is no coincidence, perhaps, that the two scholars from East-Central Europe who have achieved the highest international profile, Piotrowski and Jan Białostocki, are both Polish, i.e. from the most populous state of the region.

In order to combat this basic difficulty, many scholars have turned to using English as a *lingua franca*. This has had some impact on the situation described by Piotrowski, although it does not circumvent one basic problem, namely that historical and important secondary sources remain inaccessible. In addition, the effect has not been as significant as one might hope, primarily because language is just one of many factors that have contributed to the scholarly marginalisation of the Modernism of East-Central Europe. Certain ideological positions have proven hard to shift, of which the most stubborn has been the reliance on the notion of centres and peripheries. It is a truism that the narrative of art history has been constructed around this ideological binary which, to cite Beáta Hock, '*naturalises the political and symbolic power of the key academic institutions from where art historical discourse is defined and disseminated.*'<sup>10</sup>

This pertains to the geography of art, too, and the second type of hierarchy. Enrico Castelnuovo and



MATTHEW RAMPLEY  
NETWORKS, HORIZONS, CENTRES AND HIERARCHIES

Carlo Ginzburg first brought the question of centres and peripheries to critical attention when challenging the traditional focus of Italian art historiography on Rome, Florence and Venice.<sup>11</sup> Italy, they argued, should be thought of as pluricentric, and it was mainly due to the enormous influence of Vasari and his emulators that other cities had been eclipsed. Challenging this traditional conception also meant dismantling a structure that conceived of ‘peripheries’ as merely belatedly receiving innovations generated in the centre. Instead, their agency was to be restored to them. In the 1980s Piotrowski’s fellow Pole Jan Białostocki had, entirely independently, sketched out a similar argument, drawing on the work of the Croatian art historian Ljubo Karaman on the art of peripheries.<sup>12</sup> His untimely death only two years later prevented him from amplifying and developing his thoughts further. In certain respects Piotrowski’s article was picking up the baton, responding to the historically dominant position of Western Europe and North America in histories of Modernism. His solution was to invert the relation between ‘western’ and ‘eastern’ Europe.

‘Horizontal’ art history involves taking the position of the periphery as a starting point, in order to provincialise the centre. Yet before examining its implications in more detail — including Piotrowski’s problematic tendency to talk in essentialising terms of ‘eastern’ and ‘western’ Europe — it is worth exploring the question of centres and peripheries a little further. For against the common argument that this binary opposition is nothing more than an ideological construct, the starting point of this article is that talk of centres and peripheries cannot simply be excised from art historical discourse, for the reason that they have been and continue to be more than just discursive constructs of the art historian’s imagination.

This is a provocative claim that obviously demands clarification. In one sense it is merely confirmation of Piotrowski’s own assertion that there are imbalances of power and symbolic capital, and that this very imbalance is an important subject of inquiry. Acknowledgement that art produced in certain locations had a normative function that was absent elsewhere does not involve unquestioning commitment to a canon of Modernism; nor does it entail omission of ‘*avant-gardes born in remote areas*’ or justification of ‘*the international domination of a small Parisian elite who are seen as the model of cultural, ethical, and political progress in the history of modern art and culture*’.<sup>13</sup> In other words, as baleful as the reduction of East-Central Europe to the margins has been, challenging it does not necessarily mean delegitimising talk of centres and peripheries *per se*.

Castelnuovo and Ginzburg described an artistic centre as ‘*a place characterised by the presence of a large number of artists and of important groups of patrons who, moved by various motivations — be it their family or self-pride, their wish for hegemony, or their quest for eternal*

*salvation — are ready to invest part of their wealth in works of art*’.<sup>14</sup> They were clear that such a definition may not apply at all times — the quest for eternal salvation has little relevance when speaking of Modernism — but some variation on it can still be employed in contexts other than the Italian Renaissance. This is especially the case given their emphasis on the dependence of artistic centres on other, extra-artistic factors, beginning with the presence of surplus wealth, to which can be added, for the modern period, an institutional infrastructure, a dynamic art market, and the professional organisation of artists.

What might be a periphery in this context? A useful summary formulation is provided by Steven J. Campbell, who suggests that a periphery may be, among other things, (1) a region that generally imports its art from elsewhere; (2) a centre ‘*supporting a longue durée of artistic practice not strongly motivated by imperatives of progress or modernisation*’; (3) a town ‘*supporting a local workshop tradition, from which art and artists may be exported to a major centre*’; (4) ‘*a major city which has been subordinated by a large territorial state, often with a flourishing artistic culture of its own*’.<sup>15</sup> Each of these is contentious, primarily because they bear the kinds of negative connotations which Piotrowski and so many others have criticised. Nevertheless, they are not so easily dismissed, since much hangs on how the relation between centres and peripheries is characterised. For Castelnuovo and Ginzberg the relation between them was one of competition for symbolic domination, one example being the response to the kind of artistic innovation that was ‘*not only new, but so prestigious that it established itself as the norm and exerted a kind of inhibitive action on those who, for one reason or another, are excluded from it*’.<sup>16</sup> Where such a norm did not manage to exercise ‘inhibitive action,’ i.e. where other, older, practices were maintained, this was not necessarily due to their being backward; rather, they argue, it could equally be a form of resistance.

Using the idea of symbolic domination, Castelnuovo and Ginzberg circumvented the criticism that talk of centres and peripheries necessarily relies on stereotyped binary of progressiveness and backwardness. Caution is nevertheless necessary, for symbolic capital does not always accumulate in political centres and vice versa, and hence the processes of cultural exchange cannot always be accounted for in these terms. London, a political centre with a vast accumulation of economic, political and cultural resources, was often an artistic periphery, if we consider either its dependence on migrant artists or the artistic establishment’s entrenched scepticism about contemporary art in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. And this is despite the fact that in *certain* respects London was central to the international world. From the nineteenth century onwards, for example, the value of the London art market far exceeded that

of Paris.<sup>17</sup> Nevertheless, there were few 'imperatives to innovation' and a much documented aspect of British Modernism is the decisive role of immigrants, from Jacob Epstein and Wyndham Lewis to Francis Bacon and Ernő Goldfinger.

### Networks against Centres

Despite the reformulation by Castelfnuovo and Ginzburg, the duality of centres and peripheries has been subject to extensive criticism. This has frequently focused on the dismissive attitudes towards art from the peripheries expressed by art historians in institutions of the 'centre'.<sup>18</sup> Some have attempted to use the exposure of such attitudes as a means of dismantling hierarchical value systems. Beáta Hock, for example, has suggested that the chauvinistic attitude of French artists during the 1920s towards art from elsewhere means that it was interwar Paris that was parochial, rather than the central European cities that looked towards her.<sup>19</sup> It is difficult to determine the meaning of the term 'parochial' in this context, however, other than as a way of expressing understandable disapproval of narrow-minded attitudes. Criticism of this type does not address the basic methodological and conceptual issues that are raised by the question. Historical errors can also be generated by a determination to provincialise Paris. Hock approvingly cites the work of Csilla Markója, who has argued that we should see Parisian Impressionism as a provincial variant of a wider European phenomenon: *Stimmungsimpressionismus*.<sup>20</sup> The problem with this argument is that it takes an interpretation of the meaning of Impressionism (and Modernism more generally) that was common in central Europe — one might mention here Alois Riegl's essay on atmosphere and modern art — and generalises it. Certainly, the idea that Impressionism was predominantly about evoking an atmosphere was widespread, and it also informed the work of many artists in Hungary, the Czech lands, Germany and Austria, but it had little to do with the painting that developed in Paris in the 1860s and 1870s.<sup>21</sup> The notion privileges a formalist reading of Impressionism as a *style* and overlooks the political and ideological relations between artistic language and social meaning that have been examined in such close detail by scholars such as T. J. Clark, Hollis Clayton or Tamar Garb.<sup>22</sup>

Attempts to invert hierarchies in this manner are thus not always convincing or successful. A more promising critique is advanced by attention to networks and the mobility of art and artists. Béatrice Joyeux-Prunel, for example, has argued that if we map the movement of avant-garde artists in the 1920s, focusing 'on the circulation of avant-garde artists and their works, as well as the social, economic, financial, geopolitical, and colonial bases of these circulations, and on the cultural transfers and resemanticizations that took place,' the traditionally central role of Paris

comes into question.<sup>23</sup> This contention relates not only to its historical position, but, more broadly, to the methodologies and values governing studies of Modernism, for the centre / periphery dualism is part of a much larger framework dominated by 'the monograph, nationalism and ethnocentrism, and evolutionist formalism.'<sup>24</sup>

Studies of the avant-garde have made particular use of the idea of the network as a means of revising the geography of art. In the last 30 years the avant-gardes of central Europe have become a prominent subject of this kind of analysis precisely because they illustrate the decline of the geopolitical order of the long nineteenth century. The modernist art-world of East-Central Europe before 1918, dominated by the old imperial capital, gave way to a fragmented landscape marked by new sites. These ranged from new capital cities, such as Kaunas, Prague, Belgrade, to regional cities emerging as important artistic centres in their right, such as Zagreb, Brno, Salzburg, Poznań and Košice. Historical ties between 'peripheral' centres and capital cities diminished and new networks were established that bypassed the old routes connecting them.

Some research projects have sought to illustrate this changed geography; Timothy Benson's ground-breaking exhibition of 2002 on the *Central European Avant-Gardes* tried to do so with diagrammatic maps indicating links between groups of cities.<sup>25</sup> A large-scale exhibition at the Belvedere on the Hagenbund pursued a similar project with maps indicating personal connections between artists and events.<sup>26</sup> In relation to contemporary art, the much lauded EAST ART MAP project by IRWIN on the contemporary art of Eastern Europe took a similar approach.<sup>27</sup> These and other similar projects serve the important strategic function of helping to visualise an alternative art historical geography, but they have drawbacks given by the inherent epistemological limitations of the map and of the network metaphor. As an instrument of art historical representation, the map is limited by its positivistic character. Critical cartography has long recognised that maps are ideological representations serving specific ends, but even so, a distinction has to be drawn between the epistemology of the map and object choice, i.e., *what* can be mapped and *how*.<sup>28</sup> The diagrammatic mapping of avant-garde networks, noting *that* certain relations existed between individual artists, groups, institutions and cities, says little about their *qualitative* character. The same observation applies more generally to the metaphor of the network, since the question as to whether these connections were ones of friendly rivalry, co-operation and exchange, emulation or hostility, is left untouched, due to the limitations of the medium. A brief discussion of one or two examples illustrates the kinds of problems that can arise when the metaphor is taken as a substitute for historical analysis.

MATTHEW RAMPLEY  
NETWORKS, HORIZONS, CENTRES AND HIERARCHIES



1 / Josef Fuchs – Oldřich Tyl, Prague, The Trade Fair Palace, 1925–1928  
Archival photography – V. Gotsche, around 1940  
Prague City Archives, Collection of Photographs, sign. I 9661  
Photo: Institute of Art History, Czech Academy of Sciences, Prague

Modernist and avant-garde magazines have increasingly become a major subject of study, and they have been used to strengthen the claims regarding the operations of networks.<sup>29</sup> Publications such as *Volné směry* and *ReD* in Czechoslovakia, the Hungarian journals *MA* and *Munka*, *Zdrój* based in Poznań or the Romanian *Contimporanul*, acted as important conduits for the international exchange of ideas and dissemination of artworks across borders. A more detailed reading of the publications, however, reveals familiar asymmetries. While magazines in Poland, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia and Romania, for example, were full of translations of texts by French and German authors, this enthusiasm was seldom reciprocated.

The Berlin-based critic and gallerist Herwarth Walden, for example, is often credited with playing an important role in encouraging the emergence of a transnational avant-garde network. In fact, however, aside from a few reproductions of artworks, the pages of his magazine, *Der Sturm*, published between 1910 and 1932, contain almost nothing on contemporary art from central Europe until the final few issues of the very late 1920s and early 1930s. Thematic issues with essays on Bulgaria, Slovenia and the Soviet Union, for example, are the exception rather than the norm.<sup>30</sup> A parallel case can be seen in French magazines; for all the intense

interest shown in French art by the Prague art-world either side of the First World War, the sentiment was not reciprocated. The pages of *L'Ermitage*, *La nouvelle revue française* and *L'esprit nouveau*, rarely feature discussions of the art and culture of 'peripheral' regions. The debate in the late 1920s between Le Corbusier and Karel Teige, in which Le Corbusier saw fit to write an extended reply to the Czech theorist's criticisms of his Mundaneum project, is remarkable precisely because it was atypical.<sup>31</sup> Le Corbusier had a particular interest in Czechoslovakia — his visits to Prague and Zlín, and his praise for Josef Fuchs and Oldřich Tyl's Trade Fair Palace (Veletřní Palác) in Prague, built between 1925 and 1928 [1], attest this. Teige had a level of international engagement that few of his compatriots enjoyed and was a highly visible participant in the discussions and events of CIAM.<sup>32</sup> Nevertheless, whereas the writings of Le Corbusier were translated into Czech, starting with the purist manifesto, which was published in *Život* in 1922, the honour was not repaid: none of Teige's writings was translated into French during his lifetime.<sup>33</sup> The same can be noted of his reception in Germany where, despite his invitation by Hannes Meyer to teach at the Bauhaus in 1929–1930, none of his texts were published in German.<sup>34</sup> Likewise, while Toyen and Vítězslav Nezval may have been prominent in Paris, there is little evidence that Breton and Bataille were interested in including them in Surrealist magazines such as *Minotaure* or *Acéphale*.

It is likewise worth considering the example of Lajos Kassák and the group of Hungarian artists around the magazine *MA* based in Vienna. They are often seen as exemplifying the new transnational avant-garde that emerged after the First World War.<sup>35</sup> As Krisztina Passuth notes, however, while *MA* was international in its reach, its audience was primarily the Hungarian diaspora in Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia and Romania; the listing on its front cover of prices in the currencies of various states, far from demonstrating participation in an international avant-garde network, indicated instead a concern to reach Hungarian communities around central Europe.<sup>36</sup> Although the first edition of *MA* featured work by Czech and Slovak artists, Kassák made no efforts to develop meaningful relations with them. He emigrated to Vienna in 1920 and enjoyed some limited contact with artistic circles there, such as Franz Čížek and his students at the School of Art and Design, but this was not pursued in a purposeful manner. The first issue of *MA* to be published after moving to Vienna may have contained a bi-lingual German-Hungarian editorial appeal 'To artists of all lands' [2] but the contributors to *MA* were almost exclusively Hungarian writers.<sup>37</sup> Hence, rather than being





2 / Lajos Kassák, Appeal 'To Artists of All Lands!', 1920

Reproduction: MA VI, 1920

such as the Academy of Art and Design in Prague, likewise attracted international students from Germany, France or the Netherlands.

## Horizontal Art History

Piotrowski's metaphor of a horizontal art history sought to relativise 'western' art history by a change of perspective. In particular, he argued, we need to consider: 'How is the centre perceived, not from the centre itself — the place usually occupied by the historian of modern art — but from a marginal position?'<sup>41</sup>

This is an important question and is motivated by insistence on the potentially disruptive effect of that view for, he states, 'the marginal observer sees that the centre is cracked. If the centre perceives itself as homogeneous, then the periphery, in the process of its reception and transformation of the centre for its own use, will spot inner tensions which are, as it were, essential.'<sup>42</sup> Once ideas and practices travel outward across borders, they are reinterpreted locally in ways that bring out aspects not evident to artists in the centres. Yet more is at stake, he argues, than emphasis on difference alone, for if we adopt the horizontal perspective, he claims, the ideology of a single, universal, Modernism will be taken apart and the distinction between the putatively universal, international, Modernism of Paris and Berlin, and the 'local' Modernisms of, say, Prague and Budapest will be overcome. This is because when viewed from the periphery, Parisian and Berlin Modernism are themselves revealed to be 'local,' too. In other words, their character is a function of the specifics of their place of origin.

Much hangs on Piotrowski's initial claim that the 'marginal observer' sees that the centre is 'cracked' in ways that the observer in the *centre* does not perceive. This idea, that the art historian at the periphery knows the centre better than his or her counterpart in the centre, that his or her gaze is capable of *destabilising* the centre, is a commonplace in postcolonial criticism. Indeed, Piotrowski himself made this connection.<sup>43</sup> Yet on what theoretical grounds is it warranted? Its philosophical basis is, of course, pure Hegel, for here Piotrowski is invoking the dialectic of the master and servant.<sup>44</sup> He does so, however, without following through the full implications of Hegel's position.

This issue will be considered in due course, but first of all it is worth exploring its art historical pertinence, for there are, *prima facie*, historical instances that bear out his claims and that may allow for a re-reading of the history of art. The primary concern of this article is with the historiography of Modernism, but one can take the fraught cultural politics of the late Habsburg Empire,

at the centre of a transnational network, Kassák was rather more at the heart of a diasporic *national* network that was internationally distributed. This situation poses interesting questions of its own, but it does little to challenge the traditional art historical distinction between centres and peripheries.

Finally, it is instructive to consider the case of the Bauhaus. Since the large-scale exhibition of 1986, *Wechselwirkungen* (Mutual Effects), on the Hungarian avant-garde in Weimar Germany, there has been a growing interest in the involvement of central European designers and architects from outside Germany in the Bauhaus.<sup>38</sup> Interest in the involvement of artists and designers from central Europe was taken up again in the 2010 exhibition in Pécs and Berlin, *Art to Life: The Hungarians at the Bauhaus*, as well as Markéta Svobodová's more recent study of Czechoslovak students at the Bauhaus.<sup>39</sup> Yet such examples, while important for casting the school in a new light, also *confirm* its status as a centre due to its magnetic appeal to young men and women across Europe. They are essentially stories about Hungarians, Czechs and Slovaks in Germany. Despite its title, *Mutual Effects*, for example, did not mention the work of any German artist, designer or architect, or discuss any *mutual* effects.<sup>40</sup> To underpin the claim regarding the transnational basis of the avant-gardes, one would have to demonstrate that important schools,

MATTHEW RAMPLEY  
NETWORKS, HORIZONS, CENTRES AND HIERARCHIES

in which art practices became intimately bound up with questions of national identity, as apparent confirmation of Piotrowski's argument.

A major impetus driving the search for national art forms amongst Czechs, Poles and Croats in the late nineteenth century, for example, was the fact that whereas elites in Vienna and Budapest regarded German and Hungarian culture as *international* cultures of science and art, other minority cultures saw them as just one more national culture, albeit one that was particularly powerful. As Piotrowski notes, *'The subject occupying the centre tends to forget that it is situated there, in a place precisely located on the map of the world.'*<sup>45</sup> It was this ideological difference that caused many Viennese observers to react to the development of national cultures in the various crown lands of the Empire with incomprehension.

In this context, Hungarian social and cultural elites occupied a somewhat complicated position. On the one hand, they regarded themselves as the bearers of a *universal* culture and consequently had much in common with Austrian Liberals in the imperial capital, but on the other, they were highly conscious of their cultural, political and linguistic specificity in relation to the Habsburg administration in Vienna. Hence, Hungarian elites saw themselves as having a civilising mission in regard to the minorities in Hungary but, at the same time, a central thrust of much Hungarian design and architecture towards the turn of the century was the elaboration of visual languages, such as the folklore revival of the 1890s, that were believed to express their particular national identity. Already, therefore, the binary opposition of centre and periphery is complicated by their status as being central but *perceiving* themselves to be on the periphery.

All the same, it is one thing to state that the view from the margin is *other* and merits equal attention, but quite another thing to suggest that such a position provides a privileged perspective on the centre, or that it destabilises traditional hierarchies. Indeed, the view from the 'margins' in Austria-Hungary, for example, was often blind to the 'cracks' in the centre. Nowhere is this more evident than in the ambiguous status of Austro-German culture. On the one hand, it was hegemonic, and Austrian Liberals saw this as reflecting its 'universal' character. Yet after 1866, when the Habsburgs were expelled from German affairs by Prussia, the imperial administration in Vienna adopted a feudal cosmopolitanism to shore up the legitimacy of the ruling dynasty. This led it to view expressions of nationalism amongst its German-speaking population with considerable suspicion, since these could challenge its authority just as much as could Czech, Magyar or Polish nationalism.

Not only was the imperial government concerned with balancing the respective interests of its various subject peoples, but they, too, often jockeyed with each other for status and recognition. There was therefore

a tension in the 'centre' over the status of German culture, yet such nuance was frequently ignored in the tense transnational encounters within the Empire, and Vienna was often treated as a single, monolithic, alien centre of power.

This opens up the wider question of the applicability of broader postcolonial approaches to central and Eastern Europe, the initial object of Piotrowski's interest. The authors of the *Habsburg postcolonial* project, for example, argued that the attitude of policy-makers and intellectuals in Vienna and Budapest towards non-Germans in the Habsburg Empire — Serbs, Romanians, Roma, Croats, Slovaks — bore structural similarities towards those in Paris and London towards subjects in their far-flung colonial possessions.<sup>46</sup> The designation of the Empire as the 'prison of nations' has a long history, and there may indeed have been certain parallels — a civilising mission, paternalistic attitudes, linguistic marginalisation, opposition to national cultures — but there were equally significant differences. For while national groups in the Habsburg Empire bemoaned the lack of legal recognition *qua* collective bodies, all individuals had the same legal rights.<sup>47</sup> This situation was completely different from that in France, Britain, Belgium or the United States, for example, where a vast legal gulf stood between recognised citizens and colonial subjects or, even worse, slaves. Similar arguments have been marshalled with regard to the Ottoman Empire, which does not fit easily into the framework of postcolonial analysis either.<sup>48</sup>

Power was clearly distributed unequally, but whether this means that peripheral observers were — and are — more sensitive to the fractures in the centre than vice versa requires interrogation and not mere assertion. We may question, for example, the assertion that the hegemonic cultures in Paris, Berlin or Vienna saw themselves as singular and universal. Attention to the ferocious internal arguments between protagonists of different Modernisms *within* the centres of 'western' Europe should be sufficient to indicate the flaw in such a conception. Piotrowski claims that the historian of modern Czech or Romanian art 'knows very well where he or she is,' in contrast to the historian of 'western' European Modernism, who will make assumptions about their place and about the universality of their subject. Yet if we take one example, Vienna, there has been just as much recognition of its specific characteristics. Already in the 1960s Carl Schorske's cultural analysis of the Habsburg capital sought to explain the peculiarities of Austrian modernity.<sup>49</sup> Why was it, given similarities with Paris including, most notably, massive urban development, population growth and rebuilding, that there was no artistic engagement with the new forms of social experience in Vienna comparable to that of Impressionism? Such a question alone registers the presence of diverging modernities and Modernisms, and this difference between Paris and Vienna was

a major fault line identified by Jean Clair in the major exhibition on the Viennese fin-de-siècle. For Clair, the Vienna Secession was a form of inner retreat that was totally at odds with the intervention in public life by the *Salon des Indépendants*.<sup>50</sup> For the present discussion the point is not to debate his interpretation, but rather to question the assertion that artistic centres — and the subsequent historiography — were blind to their own specificity.

If we turn from such historical considerations to the theoretical frame, other difficulties emerge. For if we are to invoke the philosophy of the subject, we might conclude that the marginal subject is as blind to their own inner tensions and ‘cracks’ as the subject in the ‘centre.’ This flows from the model espoused by Hegel, for in *Phenomenology of Mind* he argues that neither master nor servant achieves full self-consciousness because of the imbalance of power. As Habib has recently noted, for Hegel, the ‘consciousness of oneself that comprises our humanity cannot possibly arise in isolation. Nor can it arise in a relationship of subordination. It can emerge only through mutual recognition. And recognition can only be exchanged between equals, between two subjects, not between two objects, nor even between a subject and an object. If I treat someone as an object, that person’s recognition of me will be inadequate for me to attain the status of subject, of humanity.’<sup>51</sup> This point was central to Fanon’s argument, too, in *Black Skin White Masks*: neither the colonial master nor their servant were fully self-conscious.<sup>52</sup> There are cracks in both the margin and the centre; each has its blind spots and neither is fully transparent to itself.

An episode from the late Habsburg Empire casts instructive light on the pertinence of these considerations to the art history of East-Central Europe. This was Alfred Woltmann’s controversial lecture on ‘German Art in Prague.’<sup>53</sup> Its basic claim, that the cultural heritage of Prague was mostly German, was explosive, especially when he argued that even the Czech National Theatre was German, pointing out that its principal architect, Josef Zíték, had been trained in Vienna and had pursued his

early career in Germany — with the Grand Ducal Museum in Weimar as his first major commission. [3]

Woltmann was not a Habsburg subject; he had been born in Berlin and had studied in Berlin, Munich and Breslau. His comments could therefore be interpreted in the light of the triumphalism accompanying the creation of the German Reich only five years previously. This undoubtedly fuelled the severe reactions in Prague to the lecture, which ranged from lengthy denunciations in the press to civil disturbances in the streets. Opposition was intense and he was eventually hounded out of his position, moving to Strasburg in 1878.

The objections to his lecture were entirely understandable, and the discourse of race and ethnicity that framed his understanding of ‘German’ only added to their fury, but they did not necessarily refute his claims. Zíték was a product of the Habsburg educational system, and he enjoyed close links to the architectural and education establishment in Vienna. Woltmann’s emphasis on the deep artistic, social and economic ties between Prague and other cities of the Holy Roman Empire is a commonplace and was already being proposed anew in the interwar period: in his 1929 book *The Idea of Czech History* the Prague historian Josef Pekař, for example, argued that historical German influence had led the Czechs to ‘higher forms of life in spiritual and material culture, in legal and social relations and in the economy.’<sup>54</sup> Moreover, while Woltmann’s conception of the Holy Roman Empire as ‘German’ was a late nineteenth-century anachronism, this was no different from his opponents’ emphasis on the ‘Czech’ character of Bohemia. The arguments of both parties were rooted in contemporary discourses of nationalism. As Jindřich Vybíral has noted, the Woltmann affair also revealed the pathological insecurities of the Czech intelligentsia, for the German scholar’s assertions were answered with equally one-sided grandiose claims.<sup>55</sup>

The dispute occurred at a time when art historians were immersed in sterile debates on the national origin of individual artists and architects, projected back to a medieval period when nineteenth-century notions of national identity had no meaning. Not all German-speaking art historians adopted a position as emphatic as Woltmann’s, but Czech-speaking authors treated scholarship in German as a single homogeneous whole. Those whose writings questioned the Czech nationalist claim to Bohemia were dismissed as ‘German’ (ignoring the difference between Germany and Austria), or as Viennese agents.<sup>56</sup> It would be misleading to describe the toxic debates between Czech- and German-speakers in Prague as a conflict between the blindness and insight of centre and periphery. Rather, one can



3 / Josef Zíték, Weimar, The Grand Ducal Museum (Neues Museum), 1864–1869  
Archival photography — Louis Held, 1903  
Photo: Wikimedia Commons



MATTHEW RAMPLEY  
NETWORKS, HORIZONS, CENTRES AND HIERARCHIES

speak of both sides being riven by cultural pathologies that underpinned mutual suspicion, resentment and misunderstanding.

By the end of the nineteenth century many voices sought to dismantle the entrenched hostility that marked the Woltmann affair. The collective manifesto of 'The Czech Modern' ('Česká moderna') published in 1895, called for co-operation between Czechs and Germans, and dismissed nationalist sentiment on the part of either.<sup>57</sup> Yet its assertion that '... we condemn the brutality that is perpetrated by the Germans under the battle cry of nationalism, just as we would condemn it if it were perpetrated by Czechs' [my emphasis] is, with its use of the conditional voice, revealing. It distinguishes arbitrarily between the two nationalisms, one already deemed to be guilty, the other only potentially so, ignoring the equally problematic status of both. Moreover, while 'The Czech Modern' and later, comparable, declarations, such as Stanislav K. Neumann's 'Open Windows' of 1913, appear to put nationalism behind them, mutual suspicion and neglect continued to be the norm. Indeed, contemporaries criticised Neumann for his inability to entirely relinquish the nation as the basic framework for understanding art.<sup>58</sup>

The short-lived artistic group The Eight (Osma) that operated in 1907 and 1908, was exceptional in that it comprised Bohemian German-speaking as well as Czech-speaking artists, whereas the norm was for artistic associations to be formed in keeping with linguistic differences. Artists such as Bohumil Kubišta may have developed friendships and artistic relations with German artists such as Ernst Kirchner, but this did not translate to a breaking down of such barriers *within* Bohemia.<sup>59</sup> Hence when the Modern Gallery of the Bohemian Kingdom opened in 1902 to promote contemporary art, the work of German and Czech-speaking artists was exhibited in separate sections as belonging to separate traditions. Likewise, in Moravia, SVUM, the Society of Moravian Artists (Sdružení výtvarných umělců moravských) was founded in the provincial town of Hodonín in 1907 by Czech-speaking artists from Brno as an alternative to the artistic societies dominated by German-speakers in the city.

Neumann may have called for an openness to art from elsewhere, but with this he was primarily referring to Paris, and not Vienna, and it was the French capital that provided an alternative centre of gravity for Czech-speaking artists in Prague. This was due not only to its artistic importance around the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, but also because it served the political purpose of providing a counterweight to Vienna.

It would be misleading, of course, to suggest that there was no artistic traffic between Vienna and Prague, for even the Mánes Society of Artists, founded in 1887 to promote the interests of Czech artists, exhibited work by

artists from the Habsburg capital. Nevertheless, Vienna was seen in an ideologically charged way as the seat of Austrian power, and it was its symbolic importance as such that shaped the attitude of Prague-based artists. This situation continued after 1918. In 1923, for example, the Modern Gallery in Prague greatly expanded its collection of international artworks, but it was to France that it turned, and not Vienna, thanks to a state-funded purchase of paintings displayed at an exhibition of *Modern French Art of the 19th and 20th Century* organised by the Mánes Society at the Municipal House in Prague.

A parallel dynamic can be observed in Budapest, in which political frictions over Habsburg rule, culminating in the failed War of Hungarian Independence in 1848–1849, coloured views of Vienna as an artistic centre, too. Hungarian artists from the final decades of the nineteenth century onwards consistently tried to turn Budapest into an art centre by bypassing Vienna and following the lead either of London or Paris.<sup>60</sup> Motivations were similar, too, to those in Prague: envy and resentment at the pre-eminence of Vienna (including the fact that the Vienna art market was more internationally connected and fetched higher prices than in Budapest). In recent years there has been considerable interest in the connections between Hungarian and French artists. Some even made close personal friendships such as József Rippl-Rónai, who enjoyed a strong artistic and personal relationship with Aristide Maillol.<sup>61</sup> The term 'Hungarian fauves' has also been coined to describe artists such as Dezső Czigány (1883–1937), Béla Czóbel (1883–1976) and Róbert Berény (1887–1953) who, like their Czech contemporaries, were drawn to Paris where they studied and exhibited work at, for example, the Salon d'automne.<sup>62</sup> The same fascination with Paris held for collecting practices, too; important collectors such as Marcell Nemes (1866–1930) built up a substantial collection of contemporary French art, but acquired almost nothing by Vienna-based artists.<sup>63</sup>

Rather than bearing out Piotrowski's notion of horizontal art history, such examples suggest rather more a struggle for symbolic domination of the kind identified by Ginzburg and Castelnovo. Connections were cultivated with Paris in part because of its prestige but in part, too, because it provided artists with a tool for contesting the normative status of Vienna as an artistic centre. Yet even though this picture may grant agency to peripheries, it does not challenge their status as peripheries. To illustrate this we might consider Rodin's visit to Prague in 1902. Hailed as a crucial event in the history of Czech Modernism — the Rodin exhibition in the Mánes Pavilion that prompted his visit was a watershed for many artists in Prague — it nevertheless underlines the asymmetries between Paris and the Czech lands.<sup>64</sup> For Rodin was not just one more visiting artist; the gushing praise of his work by the art critic František Šalda in the pages of *Volně směry* indicates his elevated



4 / Auguste Rodin visiting the village of Hroznová Lhota in 1902, 1902 archival photography  
Museum of Czech Literature Literary Archive, Prague, Fotoarchiv Fund  
Photo © 2021 / Museum of Czech Literature

status.<sup>65</sup> He was treated like a royal dignitary, his presence conferring recognition and legitimacy on his hosts, in keeping with his role as ‘bringing civilisation.’ Even his guided trip through the Czech Lands, including an excursion to the village of Hroznová Lhota [4] in Eastern Moravia, home of the painter Joža Uprka, was reminiscent of the tours of the Emperor that even minor municipalities eagerly sought to accommodate. Even if, as Catherine Giustino argues, the Rodin exhibition contributed to establishing the place of Czechs in ‘expanding global networks of communication,’ the terms of the encounter were set by others.<sup>66</sup>

### Entangled and Transnational Art Histories

Certain theoretical weaknesses thus emerge in the notion of a horizontal art history; the view from the margin may be just as prone to ideological blindness as the centre. A more promising alternative is the related idea of *entangled history*, an approach that aims at ‘replacing the central place that nations held in historiography with a concentration on the transfers and entanglements taking place between them—nations ... are not pre-existent to these multiple encounters, but constituted by them.’<sup>67</sup> As such, it is a variant on the model of networks and transnational history, although the metaphor of entanglement is perhaps more vivid and better illustrates the idea at work.

Here socio-cultural relations are stripped of the drama of the *struggle* for mutual recognition; rather than trying to overcome hierarchy by inverting its terms, ‘entanglement’ stresses the interdependence of two or more actors. No longer simply concerned with the gaze exchanged between centre and margin, it examines the ways in which that exchange is mutually constitutive of their identities. This model presents considerable

challenges for scholars, for it demands substantial changes to existing art historical practices. Specifically, it requires that *all* parties of an entangled relation, centre and periphery should be examined together, with attention to the mutual effects of *each on the other*. The difficulties posed by this requirement become apparent when one examines scholarship devoted to such transnational and entangled histories.

The voluminous literature on the interwar avant-gardes illustrates the problem clearly, for although transnational and entangled histories are invoked, the result often amounts to parallel national histories rather than the kind of in-depth study that would be necessary. Benson’s *The Central European Avant-Gardes* exemplifies the problem, for while its guiding image is of East-Central Europe as a transnational artistic space, it mostly consists of parallel stories of avant-gardes in individual states. This can also be seen in those few chapters that purport to address thematic topics. The discussion of Constructivism, for example, for all its aspirations, falls into separate sections on Russia, Berlin, Hungary, Poland and the Czechs (with the familiar omission of Slovakia).<sup>68</sup> A recent ambitious study on Expressionism in a ‘Transnational Context’ likewise presents a similar sequence of parallel histories of Expressionism in Slovakia, Poznań, Latvia, Denmark, Iceland and Portugal, to name just a few examples.<sup>69</sup> But beyond the question of how Expressionism was absorbed in different countries and how they adapted and interpreted it, the national paradigm remains the governing framework. As a final example, the 2014 Hagenbund exhibition explored the involvement of Hungarian, Czech and Polish artists, but these were treated as entirely separate topics. The relationship *between* them remained unexamined.<sup>70</sup>

The call to treat Modernism and the avant-garde as a transnational field of entangled practices is thus seldom answered in practice, and research continues to be shaped by national frameworks and canons. Hungarians mostly write about Hungarian art, Czechs about Czech art, Estonians about Estonian art, and so forth. At international conferences and in collaborative research publications, scholars are frequently expected to be representatives of and authorities on the art of their country of origin.<sup>71</sup> In certain respects, this can be explained in terms of practical barriers; a scholar wishing to examine the entanglements of Polish, Hungarian and Austrian Modernism, for example, would have to possess considerable linguistic versatility. But there are other reasons why so little research exemplifies this approach. A key factor is the motivation for the emergence of art

MATTHEW RAMPLEY  
NETWORKS, HORIZONS, CENTRES AND HIERARCHIES

history in many countries and the way it has imprinted itself on the subsequent course of the discipline. For it has often served as a tool of self-definition and assertion, especially in relation to a hegemonic culture that was indifferent or even hostile to surrounding cultures. This is why national histories continue to be prestigious projects with considerable resources supporting them.<sup>72</sup> It is a phenomenon not unique to East-Central Europe; few Italian art historians write about art outside of Italy; Spanish art historians have mostly concerned themselves just with the art of Spain and the Spanish colonial world; creeping monolingualism means that British art historians increasingly focus on art in Britain and the English-speaking world. Nevertheless, this is of particular significance in East-Central Europe, when seen in light of the project of mobilising the idea of entanglement as a way of undermining traditional hierarchies and *overcoming* national boundaries.

Even if, in purely methodological terms, it is possible to construct an 'entangled history' of the avant-gardes, it is also important not to be insensitive to the problems that can emerge when we consider the question of choice of object, for at this point we run up against the ideological investment involved in writing histories of Modernism and the avant-garde. Studies of the avant-gardes of East-Central Europe are themselves prone to confirmation bias, and this is a function of their ideological dimension.



The focus on those avant-garde practices that are most obviously part of an international network confirms the prior image of a geography of art subversive of the older hierarchical map of the landscape. In this context, émigré artists occupy an especially privileged position. In addition, and conversely, the presence of an active avant-garde is often a sign of national validation; the most notable instance of this phenomenon is the interwar Czechoslovak avant-garde, which has performed the ideologically charged role of confirming the broader image of the Republic as the only modern progressive state of central Europe.<sup>73</sup>

What is also notable about choice of object is what is omitted. The place of Slovak Modernism in the larger narrative of Czechoslovak art illustrates the point. The 2005/6 exhibition at the Slovak National Gallery on *The Slovak Myth*, covering the period between 1918 and 1948, displayed works such as Janko Alexy's *Players of the Fujara Flute* [5] which disappears in general histories of interwar Czechoslovak art, since it largely comprised pastoral images of peasant figures that functioned as a central *lieu de memoire* of Slovak identity.<sup>74</sup> In the case of Hungarian art, too, conservative interwar artistic groups in the provincial towns of Szentendre and Kecskemét, for example, are all but invisible in art history because of their failure to fit into pre-existing avant-gardist narratives.<sup>75</sup> To point to such examples is not to offer a counter-history, or to be embroiled in the '*distracting arguments over who and what is or is not, should be or should not be in which canon.*'<sup>76</sup> It is simply to note the need to recognise that the focus on entangled histories and transnational artistic practices involves investment in an image of history that is just as ideologically motivated as any that it purports to dismantle. The only difference is the extent to which that motivation is shared by art historians.

### What is to be done?

The article so far has been concerned with the various problems that arise in relation to the art history of East-Central Europe and the attempts to challenge its marginalisation. Given its sceptical stance towards some interventions into this field, it is only fair to expect that it should outline what alternatives it envisages. The remainder of this discussion, therefore, offers some reflections on what might be involved.

### A) Identify the problems and the *different kinds of challenges they present*

This article has been contending with the difficulties created by two separate, although interlinked, problems. Unfortunately, many of the authors discussed tend to

5 / Janko Alexy, *Players of the Fujara Flute*, 1931  
pastel, paper, 58 × 43 cm  
Slovak National Gallery, Bratislava  
Photo: Slovak National Gallery



conflate them and then try to solve them with a single answer. Piotrowski's horizontal art history is an attempt to get over both the marginal place of East-Central European Modernism on the landscape of art history and the tendency to view it as a derivative version of French and German Modernism. These are not, in fact, quite the same problems, even though one might conclude that the tendency to view the art of East-Central Europe as of secondary importance is, ultimately, responsible for its absence from the map of Modernism. Demonstrating the entanglement of the art of East-Central Europe with that of the rest of Europe (and beyond) will not, in itself, address the problem of marginalisation, nor will challenging the implicit value judgements that relegated it to a subordinate position.

An example can illustrate the point. In *Globalizing East European Art History* Tomasz Grusiecki provides a very fine and highly convincing account of the role of Poland-Lithuania as a conduit for the movement of Ottoman and Persian art and culture into Europe in the early modern period. The old Commonwealth was an important agent in the entangled history of Christian European and Islamic art, especially because long held beliefs about the eastern 'Sarmatian' origins of the Polish nobility meant that Islamic artworks were sometimes held to be Polish.<sup>77</sup> Grusiecki's essay amply demonstrates the gains to be made from an emphasis on entanglement, but its impact is limited because it is framed as a case study about Poland-Lithuania. Although I am speculating here, I think it is unlikely to persuade scholars of European art of the early modern period to include Poland-Lithuania. This is simply because it does not put their concerns at the centre of the inquiry. It demonstrates an important theoretical and historical point, but only for those already committed to serious engagement with Polish art and culture. Overcoming the marginalisation of the Commonwealth from wider narratives of European art would require framing the discussion in a different way, in a wider analysis of the entanglements of Islamic and Christian European art, in which the Polish example would be just *one* of many. Implicit in this comment, therefore, is the notion that art historians should focus less on the *productivist* question of the potential for devising new art historical frameworks and methods and attend more to the task of identifying audiences and readerships, and engaging productively with their horizons and expectations.

### **B) Pay more than lip-service to the idea of entanglement and transnational art history**

In many cases the idea of entangled and transnational art histories may be irrelevant. There are innumerable instances of art practices that were little affected by wider processes, networks and events. Nevertheless, the idea is of central importance, for it holds the potential for demonstrating ways in which East-Central Europe Modernism has impinged on practices elsewhere and

therefore establishing for it a more equitable place on the wider map of modern art. At the same time, if the idea is to be more than a rhetorical gesture, its implications have to be followed through. Entanglements function at different levels. On the one hand there are those between capital cities and major regional centres within single countries. In relation to East-Central Europe there are infra-regional entanglements between centres of different countries and then, finally, entanglements between East-Central Europe and centres elsewhere, involving not only Europe but also cultures further afield. It is also important to emphasise that the notion of entangled histories demands more than merely noting the participation of individuals in exhibitions or personal links between artists and architects, since it is premised on the idea that cultural encounters are mutually defining. This transforms cultures from being subjects admired from afar, into agents that shape the observer in return. We might cite certain kinds of postcolonial criticism as exemplifying this issue. Edward Said's *Orientalism* is known for examining the way in which the representation of Islamic societies was framed by the colonising relation, but his subsequent work *Culture and Imperialism* is more relevant in terms of his exploration of the ways in which British culture was *in turn* shaped by the colonial experience.<sup>78</sup> Homi Bhabha's study of colonial mimicry also argued how *emulation* of dominant cultures by colonial subjects could destabilise the identity of the former, by creating a certain ambiguity where once the hierarchy was unquestioned.<sup>79</sup>

Translated to East-Central Europe, this would amount to more than merely observing the polite and approving reception of Czechoslovak, Hungarian or Polish art and architecture in Paris, Berlin, Zagreb or Belgrade, even though many scholars have dwelt on this. Instead, it would consist of analysis of how the former *transformed* and *defined* the latter, and vice versa. Very quickly, unless limited to the perception of superficial visual resemblances and 'influences,' this might demand a linguistic and cultural competence beyond the scope of any individual researcher. Writing entangled histories, therefore, may well necessitate a collaborative mode of research by multinational teams. Yet it would not be one where, for example, the Hungarian researched Hungarian case studies, the French scholar French instances and the Polish art historian the work of Polish artists and architects. Such an approach would merely be a falling back into the problem of parallel histories outlined earlier. Instead, it would require a genuine collaborative authorship and a pooling of knowledge and insight that is alien to research traditions in the humanities.

### **C) Change the Conceptual Frame**

It is hardly novel to state that the understanding of the Modernism of East-Central Europe has been disadvantaged by the kinds of narratives used to present it. The debate over its supposedly derivative and belated

MATTHEW RAMPLEY  
NETWORKS, HORIZONS, CENTRES AND HIERARCHIES

nature is an example of this problem. Steven Mansbach's history of Eastern European art illustrates the problem well, for it employed an approach that could not help but present the modern art of Eastern Europe as mediocre and derivative. His discussion of the migration of Surrealism, Cubism, Expressionism and other modernist practices eastwards was bound to show figures such as Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, Edvard Munch and Max Pechstein as originators, with their peers in Prague, Budapest and Warsaw being 'followers.' Mansbach himself was searching for some way of avoiding this danger, arguing that the 'wholesale application of the iconographic categories developed to assess Western modern art may be inadequate to explicate the meanings and analyse the themes favoured in the East ... an impressionist painting of the bridge at Mostar made in the early twentieth century did not incarnate the same symbolic content as a slightly earlier impressionist depiction of the bridge at Argenteuil.'<sup>80</sup> Yet he evidently found it difficult to avoid; his discussion of the Czech painters Bohumil Kubišta and Emil Filla, for example, is organised around the painters' putative use of an 'expressionist palette' and 'expressionist morbidity' derived from Munch, which inevitably invites comparison both with the Norwegian painter and with German Expressionism.<sup>81</sup> In adopting this perspective he was in fact only following the lead of scholars in East Central Europe. Just a few years before



Mansbach's book was published, the National Gallery in Prague staged a large-scale exhibition on *Expressionism and Czech Art* that raised similar questions, since it presented and discussed artists in terms of the differences from and similarities to, amongst others, their peers of Die Brücke, Der Blaue Reiter.<sup>82</sup>

This approach has been surprisingly tenacious, even in studies of the avant-gardes, which, for all their concern with trans-national exchange, still privilege certain concepts and practices, such as Constructivism, dada, and Futurism, which once again invite comparison between Western and East-Central Europe with an outcome all too predictable. Indeed, even unquestioned categories, such as Czech 'Cubism' are problematic, since the work of artists such as Antonín Procházka, Pavel Janák and Bohumil Kubišta had little in common with Picasso and Braque, and to draw comparisons can be misleading. In this context it is worth mentioning Vincenc Kramář, one of the leading promoters in Prague of French Modernism, who was renowned for a collection of Cubist art, that was facilitated in no small part by his friendship with Daniel Henri Kahnweiler. In 1920 Kramář published a short book, *Cubism*. He could look back not only to the wide interest that Picasso and Braque had aroused in Czech art circles, but also to a decade of so-called Cubist art, design and architecture in the Czech Lands. Yet his book makes no reference to 'Czech' cubism. Instead, it encouraged interest in the two French artists as part of the goal of instilling in Czech artists an openness to art in general beyond national borders.<sup>83</sup> In relation to architecture Jindřich Vybíral has argued that, historically, there is very little to justify the use of the term 'Czech cubism' and, further, has pointed out the counter-productive results of relying on imported categories in this way. Specifically: The canonisation of the creative work of the group around [Pavel] Janák under the label of 'Cubism' had a paradoxical consequence: it diminishes the originality and intellectual depth of Czech 'modern art' to just an interesting but obscure expression of the convergence between the Prague periphery and Paris centre. Western, concrete, French forms are taken as the modern forms *par excellence* and the evaluation of art close to home is grounded in its proximity and similarity to this model.<sup>84</sup>

Two responses to this situation are possible. One is entirely to jettison these kinds of stylistic labels, not only because they are weighted towards the old centres of European Modernism, but also because they are hardly of any use in the case of many artists. The work of artists such as the Polish designer and graphic artists Zofia Stryjeńska (1891–1976), the Hungarian-Slovak painter Eugen / Jenő Krón (1882–1974) [6] and Zdeněk Pešánek (1896–1965) [7], who built sculptures out of electric

6 / Eugen Krón, *Man of the Sun*, 1925  
lithography, paper, 48.8 × 34 cm  
Šarišská Gallery, Prešov  
Photo: Stanislav Veselovský



7 / **Zdeněk Pešánek, Male and Female Torso, 1936**  
 plastic, paint, neon tube, stone, light bulb, electrical wiring, 136 × 64 × 39 cm  
 National Gallery Prague  
 Photo © National Gallery Prague 2021

lights, cannot be fitted easily into any of those pre-existing categories, and clearly demand an alternative. However, such emphasis on incommensurability would inadvertently add to the process of marginalisation, producing an atomised picture of Modernism deprived of any basis for meaningful comparison. It would also imply a questionable view of cultures as hermetically sealed, which no serious cultural theorist or historian would endorse. Pragmatically, it is unlikely that art historians are going to be persuaded to jettison the idea of Czech Cubism, Expressionism or Impressionism, if only because of the heuristic purposes they serve. In addition, as the American philosopher Kendall Walton suggested, aesthetic judgements *depend* on categories: we can only perceive something as an artwork if we have a prior sense of the *kind of thing it is*.<sup>85</sup> Nevertheless, embracing such artists *and foregrounding* the problems of categorisation they raise may be an important strategy to adopt, especially if its ability to impinge on and problematise the ready-made categories of western Modernist art history writing can be explored and amplified. One model for this approach can be found in the 'associative art history' of the Czech art historian Tomáš Pospiszyl.<sup>86</sup> Pospiszyl takes the work of prominent Czech and Slovak artists of the post-1945 era that, at first sight, indicates the influence of contemporary ideas of

artists in Europe and North America. Yet he demonstrates that despite superficial similarities to minimalism, fluxus, situationism and other contemporary art movements in Western Europe and North America, the work of Jiří Kovanda, Jiří Kolář and Milan Knížák, for example, has its own genealogy and is the product of very specific circumstances. An interpretation that pays insufficient heed to this may misconstrue their work in significant ways.

The second possibility is to adopt entirely different kinds of analysis, using alternative framing concepts that make no reference to aesthetic concepts or stylistic labels. Examples of this kind of research include Matthew Witkovsky's exhibition and book *Foto*, and Elizabeth Clegg's overview of late Habsburg art and design.<sup>87</sup> Each uses extra-aesthetic thematic foci, such as landscape, technology and gender, which then underpin trans-national analyses. Hock has indicated that such approaches are problematic inasmuch as they conflate history of art with sociology.<sup>88</sup> There may be some truth to this observation, although the scholar concerned with the social history of art will be little troubled by it. Nevertheless, a non-aesthetic framework of this kind may be the only viable *tertium comparationis* that avoids reiterating some of the problems to do with aesthetic comparison and judgements about respective artistic merit outlined earlier.

#### **D) Work with hierarchies rather than against them**

The pragmatic solutions explored above will be rejected by some since they are based on implicit *acceptance* of hierarchies. Nevertheless, criticism levelled at discursive hierarchies will arguably achieve little on its own, since they are a product of wider geo-political and institutional factors. As Tomáš Pospiszyl has noted, '*the worldwide system of exhibitions and art markets ... is a single, all-embracing whole. If art from the other regions is to succeed quickly and unproblematically within such a system, it must submit to the imposition of the system's categories ...*'<sup>89</sup> A similar sentiment was also voiced by Dipesh Chakrabarty, in the name of a 'politics of despair.' Specifically he argued, since "*Europe*" cannot after all be provincialised within the institutional site of the university whose knowledge protocols will always take us back to the terrain where all contours follow ... *Europe*, 'the best one can hope for is a history 'that deliberately makes visible ... its own repressive strategies and practices ...'<sup>90</sup>

What might this mean in practice? A first step is to return to the question of audiences, and in this context the comments by the literary and cultural critic Stanley Fish on change in literary interpretation are pertinent. Fish famously coined the notion of



MATTHEW RAMPLEY  
NETWORKS, HORIZONS, CENTRES AND HIERARCHIES

the 'interpretative community' in recognition of the fact that cultural criticism and interpretation is a social enterprise that binds together both the critic and their readers in a shared horizon of norms and values.<sup>91</sup> Somewhat provocatively, Fish argued that change *within* interpretative communities never comes from outside; there is no empirical 'outside,' for the boundary is itself constructed by interpretative communities themselves. Writing in the late 1980s about deconstruction, for example, Fish argued that *'deconstruction is no more or less than a particularly arresting formulation of principles and procedures that have been constitutive of literary and other studies for some time. Indeed, deconstruction would have been literally unthinkable were it not already an article of faith that literary texts are characterised by a plurality of meanings and were it not already the established methodology of literary studies to produce for a supposedly "great text" as many meanings as possible.'*<sup>92</sup> In other words, deconstruction was not fundamentally at variance with the broader conceptions already held by literary critics of the goals and parameters of literary criticism. Consequently, he argued, whether an innovation succeeds in compelling a community to revise its assumptions and procedures *'depends on the extent to which the members of the community see the event in question as one that has a direct bearing on their conception of what they do.'*<sup>93</sup>

If we translate this to the issue of the Modernism of East-Central Europe, a possible conclusion would be that its marginalisation in art historical discourse will only begin to be dismantled if its art can be seen to have a *bearing* on the history of Modernism elsewhere. This would entail strategic forms of analysis that offer more than parallel histories or, indeed, case studies demonstrating the ingenuity or significance of individual countries. Rather, it would necessitate engaging with and impinging directly on the interests and conceptions of historians of the Modernism of the canonical centres of Western Europe. Here, again, entanglement provides a useful metaphor for thinking through what forms this might take.

### E) Define the audience and adjust

Fish was a controversial figure, above all due to his relativist epistemology and his refusal to appeal to some grounds for critical judgement outside a particular community. It is, however, his analysis of the *pragmatic* aspects of scholarly practice as an institution that is of interest here. Fish's assumed 'interpretative community' comprised scholars of literature in North America, and if we wish to resolve the basic issue raised by Piotrowski, we need to identify what those communities are in respect of East-Central European art. In fact, there are many such communities, and how one addresses the problem of marginalisation depends on recognising the implied readership of individual publications. An ideal-typical description of central Europe might result in the following typology: At one level, the audience for

scholarly research may be entirely local; this is a striking aspect of the landscape of central European art history. In the Czech Republic, for example, local art histories proliferate, written by trained professional scholars. They are often substantial publications, devoted to the art and architecture of specific cities, such as Brno, Hradec Králové and Plzeň.<sup>94</sup> Such works, usually published in Czech, are nevertheless seldom written for a national readership; they provide extensive analysis of subjects and issues that are of mostly local interest, and even when published in English, little reference is made to wider national or international contexts. This should not be taken as a criticism; they perform an important function, especially as their implicit readership is not only scholars but informed general readers and culturally engaged visitors and tourists. It would be absurd to demand that such publications occupy anything other than a subordinate place on the international landscape of art history, since they themselves make no attempt to do more.

In addition to such local scholarship, a large literature is also devoted to art and architecture on a national level; it is written in the national languages, and the implicit audience is again a national one reflected in the manner in which the narratives are constructed. The large-scale national histories published by state academies mentioned earlier are prominent examples, as are major monographs on individual artists and architects. Such publications may provide contextual overviews in which the wider European background is examined, but, written for a national readership (or interpretative community), the historical and geographical framework (the nation and its identity) may often go unexamined, based on assumptions tacitly shared with the readership. Topographical studies remain a prominent genre, as is positivistic documentation, continuing the genre of *Kunsttopographie* that was central to nineteenth-century art history. Much of this literature also relies on the unspoken commitment of its readership to the intrinsic value of the art and architecture of the state in question. In other words, its significance is not articulated because it is not in doubt.

In recent years, in contrast, efforts have been made, at considerable expense, to appeal to an international audience by publication of material in English, German and French. Bi-lingual exhibition catalogues are common at major museums and galleries, and scholarly journals publish articles in English. It is also increasingly taken as axiomatic that researchers should publish at least some work in English as a condition of professional preferment. This shift, however, has yet to be accompanied by a corresponding change of approach that takes into account the differing horizons of that larger readership. On the one hand this involves practical considerations, such as recalling that an international readership does not have the same shared background knowledge and understanding. But, equally, it poses challenges for

assumptions that scholars may make about their subject, for it requires a more self-critical approach when dealing with issues of significance. Why is the work of this or that artist significant and how might it speak to an expanded readership? Why is a particular event or set of ideas of importance? What is involved when value is attributed to a particular practice, especially for a readership that may not already be immersed in the art and culture of central Europe? Not all genres of art historical writing have the same currency internationally, either. Although one of the most famous examples of art topography is Nikolaus Pevsner's architectural guides to Great

Britain and Ireland, the genre now has few exponents in the anglophone world and does not have the prestige it once had.

The suggestion here is that if the problem of being on the margins is to be addressed, that marginality cannot be dismissed as solely a function of structural inequalities — important as they undoubtedly are. Rather, it is indicative of a need, for new ways of making the history of art and architecture speak in compelling ways to other audiences whose proximate interests may, in the short term, lie elsewhere.\*

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MATTHEW RAMPLEY  
NETWORKS, HORIZONS, CENTRES AND HIERARCHIES

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- 54 Josef Pekař, 'Smysl českých dějin', in idem, *O smyslu českých dějin*, Praha 1990, p. 396.
- 55 Jindřich Vybíral, 'What Is "Czech" in Art in Bohemia? Alfred Woltmann and defensive mechanisms of Czech artistic historiography', *Kunstchronik* LIX, 2006, pp. 1–7.
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- 59 See Eleanor Moseman, 'At the Intersection: Kirchner, Kubišta and "Modern Morality" 1911–1914', *Art Bulletin* XCIII, 2011, No. 1, pp. 79–100. — Jörg Deuter, *Zweimal Prager Frühling*, Buchholz in der Nordheide 2019.
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71 In the extensive catalogue accompanying the exhibition *Years of Disarray*, for example, György Várkonyi and Éva Forgács write on Hungarian art, Natalia Žak and Paulina Kurc-Maj on Polish art, Irina Subotić on Croatia, Steffen Eigl on Berlin, and Karel Šrp on the Czech avant-garde.

72 See, for example, the multivolume *Dějiny českého výtvarného umění* [History of Czech Art] published between 1984 and 2007, or the more recent single volume, Taťána Petrasová and Rostislav Švácha (eds), *Dějiny umění v českých zemích 800–2000* [History of art in Czech lands 800–2000], Praha 2018. — József Sisa (ed.), *Motherland and Progress: Hungarian Architecture and Design 1800–1900*, Basel 2016. — József Sisa and Júlia Papp and Erzsébet Király (eds), *A magyar művészet a 19. században: Képzőművészet* [Hungarian art in the 19th century: fine art], Budapest 2018. — Krista Kodres and Mart Kalm (eds), *Eesti kunsti ajalugu* [History of Estonian art], Tallinn 2012–2020, 6 volumes.

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92 *Idem*, 'Change', in *ibidem*, *Doing What Comes Naturally: Change, Rhetoric and the Practice of Theory in Literary and Legal Studies*, Durham 1989, pp. 154–155.

93 Fish, 'Change' (note 92), p. 149.

94 Brno is the subject of a particularly rich body of scholarly work. In relation to the modern period alone one might cite: Zdeněk Kudělka and Jindřich Chatrný, *For New Brno 1919–1939*, Brno 2000. — Rostislav Koryčánek, *Česká architektura v německém Brně: město jako ideální krajina nacionalismu* [Czech architecture in German Brno: the city as an ideal site of nationalism], Šlapanice 2003. — Jan Sedlák, *Brno Secesní: Deset kapitol y architektury a umění kolem roku 1900*, Brno 2004. — Jan Sedlák and Libor Teplý, *Ve znamení moderní architektura 20. století v Brně*, Brno 2004. — Jindřich Chatrný and Dagmar Černoušková, *Brněnské stopy Adolfa Loose*, Brno 2010. — Petra Hlaváčková, Rostislav Koryčánek, and Šárka Svobodová et al., *Brno Architecture Manual: A Guide to 1918–1945 Architecture*, Brno 2012. — Jindřich Chatrný and Dagmar Černoušková (eds), *Nový dům Brno — New House Brno 1928*, Brno 2018. The Civic House Society of Brno (Obecní Dům Brno) also publishes monographs on notable twentieth-century architects associated with the city, such as Arnošt Wiesner, Bohuslav Fuchs and Jindřich Kumpošt, and on thematic topics, such as Jewish architects in Brno, and German architects in the city.

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# Is there Life after Canonical Certainties?

It is both an inspiring and challenging task to respond to an essay offering a comprehensive overview of recent methodological attempts and theoretical debates on how to deal with Modernism in (East-)Central Europe. The task becomes both weightier and more delicate when the respondent finds herself personally implicated as someone whose contribution to these methodological debates is also being surveyed. Delicate inasmuch as some of my own views are partially misrepresented in the kick-off essay. At the same time, organising my response around a redress of these misinterpretations might just offer a productive way to take the debate further.

In my reading, Matthew Rampley's incisive article is both implicitly and explicitly concerned with seeking out scholarly strategies that might create a wider resonance and salience for east-central European art and its history. Phrased as a more prosaic question: why should, and how could, modern art from east-central Europe have pertinence for audiences elsewhere? The various components of this *Fragestellung* serve as the structuring points of my text: 'should', 'could', and 'audiences elsewhere'.

## 'should': an underlying aspiration to be of 'equal value'

Although the following distinctions are not spelled out and are not always made very clear in the manuscript, Rampley's study has to do both with the (*historical and contemporary*) appreciation of east-central European modern art itself and with ways to overcome the marginalisation of narratives related to this subject. What methodological devices have been employed to this end and what are the chances of East-Central European (counter-)narratives being integrated in the larger study field?

Rampley very rightly establishes that the binary notion of centres and peripheries or, more precisely, the unequal value assigned to these two geographical (or geopolitical) positions has been an enduring dilemma for revisionist art histories. I cannot agree more that, no matter what adverse effects this lopsided relation has produced over the centuries, its existence cannot be simply thought away by the force of mental magic. I firmly believe, however, that the existence of unjust geopolitical givens need not be reproduced in historical scholarship. (Succeeding in the global art market might well be a different issue, and I am ready to side with Rampley pragmatically asserting that ranking and other hierarchical rules of the game are especially tenacious in that domain.) Scholars, including art historians, have been working towards dismantling this vertical value system—not *in reality* (that would be certainly beyond their powers) but in *representing or relating reality*: in writing the world's history.

One important paradigm change within the broader discipline of history has been the turn towards the history of everyday life, a.k.a. microhistory or 'history-from-below'. Rather than concentrating on the deeds of 'great men' (kings, presidents and the like: the protagonists of traditional political history), these narratives explore the experiences and history-making power of ordinary or marginal(ised) people; to preserve voices and stories missing from the grand (historical) narrative. In sum, history-from-below seeks to recover *how history happens*: history, without a capital letter and neon signs. The disbelief in master narratives was further buttressed by post-structuralism, while post-colonialism similarly sought to take as its subjects the so far unknown experience of history's various 'Others'. Specifically concerning our theme here, the concepts of multiple modernities and alternative geographies of Modernism



1 / **László Mednyánszky, Landscape in Lapály Region**, 1905  
oil, canvas, 66 × 99 cm  
Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest  
Photo: Museum of Fine Arts 2021

have been offered,<sup>2</sup> encouraging awareness that the West does not offer the sole model of social, political organisation or cultural development. The Western European script is only one among many, rather than something universally seen in all societies, and generalisations arising from this script do not necessarily hold up when tested against distinct smaller units.

Although none of this is now particularly new, I wish to underline here that the renewal of art historical scholarship came about in relation to these intellectual agendas. The art historical equivalent of traditional political history and its objects (rulers and important political events) would be the succession of art movements and the genius paradigm glorifying the individual artist and his masterpieces. The canon with its linear developmental line is indeed art history's grand unifying narrative—and as such, it is built on false universalisms: on the assumption that the development of Western European art history should be a universally relevant blueprint.

Nevertheless, holding on to the 'West' as a pre-given point of reference for all scholarly exercise may turn out to be a mental habit hard to unlearn. As suggested at various points of Rampley's text, the appreciation and integration of East-Central European modern art and art history would be indicated by factors such as the presence of this art 'in major international museums and galleries in Western Europe and North America', contemporaneous Western European colleagues' reciprocated interest in the output of regional art worlds (expressed for instance in the translation of publications), or Western European students' (past) attendance of the art schools of the region.<sup>3</sup> The focus on reciprocated interest, mutual effects, and reverse influence as prerequisites for the achievement of wider relevance betrays, in my view, a relentlessly lingering Western-centric perspective,

despite an awareness of various theoretical propositions on the deconstruction of such structural biases. As Pedro Monaville, a historian of modern Africa asserts, looking out for reverse flows from periphery to centre or emphasising impact made on 'universal history' (read: Western thought) should be of secondary importance for a de-hierarchised view in the strong sense.<sup>4</sup>

Rampley himself also notes the resilience of Western-centric perspectives and illustrates the case through the example of the *October*-group, a bunch of US-based art historians, proponents of post-structuralist and deconstructivist theory, and their dishearteningly conventional take on the geography of modern art, despite all their progressiveness. I myself have been similarly and repeatedly afflicted by James Elkins's incapacity to digest some logical consequences of opening up art history to account for historically marginal or non-European cultures.<sup>5</sup> Elkins has been intensely inquiring into the possibilities of a Global Art History, yet it is apparently difficult for him to accept that the discipline will have to change *qualitatively* once its scope expands quantitatively (geographically).<sup>6</sup> For art history's preoccupations and key terms will have to be renegotiated; the primarily aesthetic value criteria and other canonical certainties of modernist art history will have to be supplemented (or replaced?) by other analytical categories. Elkins, but also Michel Espagne (celebrated for his work on the phenomenon of cultural transfer) or Kendall Walton (cited in Rampley's essay), however, are concerned that giving up the unifying force of those canonical certainties will result in incommensurability or cultural relativism/particularism, 'deprived of any basis for meaningful comparison', where the latter words reflect Rampley's own similar doubts.<sup>7</sup> The worry is whether the integration of art from outside Europe (and centres) will still be recognisable as art history (as we have known it). This protectionist



BEÁTA HOCK  
IS THERE LIFE AFTER CANONICAL CERTAINTIES?

approach to the globalisation of art history seems to be diametrically opposed to more inclusionary demands urging equal recognition for divergent developmental paths.

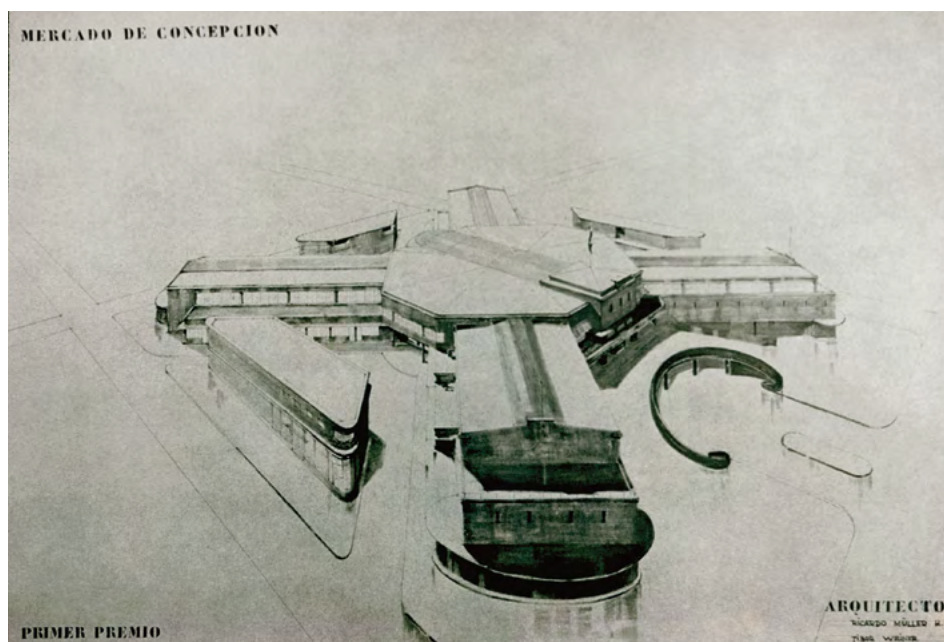
### 'could': getting methodological propositions right

I agree with Rampley on the futility of a strategy that assumes the historically dominant position of Western Europe and North America can be suddenly wished away. I take issue with him, however, over his presentation of certain other strategies as merely switching the gaze between centres and peripheries.

Here I would like to recall Linda Nochlin's widely read essay from 1971, *Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?* Even as Nochlin set out to explore the female contribution to art's history, the gist of her enterprise was not in asserting that the women artists discovered were just as *great* as their male contemporaries. Rather than holding onto purportedly objectifiable quality claims, Nochlin chooses to sidestep these, giving an account instead of the various sorts of institutional obstacles that prevented women from succeeding in the arts. By shedding light on this other side of the coin, her contribution led to a fuller picture of artistic *production* (as opposed to blessed unhindered creation) than the limited categories of a greatness-fixated art history had been able to capture. Besides being nested in the social history of art, Nochlin's undertaking echoes the aspirations of history-from-below, the insights underlying the talk about multiple modernities, and the approach that the editors of a recent volume, *Circulations in the Global History of Art* call a materialist perspective.<sup>8</sup>

Having said that, I would suggest that it is a similar desire to create a more differentiated picture

of a given historical moment that has driven revisionist east European art historians' efforts to 'provincialise the centers'—or, in the cases that Rampley dismisses as mere inversions of the centre-periphery relation, 'to provincialise Paris'.<sup>9</sup> Rather than symbolically overturning hierarchies, the methodological operation of 'provincialising'<sup>10</sup> aims to work against erroneous universalising tendencies in that it discloses the fact that cultural metropolises, too, are rooted in specific contexts, and hence are just as particular as any other location.<sup>11</sup> It is in this sense and in an effort to present a fuller and historically *more correct* picture that Csilla Markója 'provincialises French Impressionism.' Her point is *not* to re-interpret Impressionism but to problematise the art historiographical mechanism through which French Impressionism came to overshadow other stylistic tendencies that, at the time, were just as widely practiced throughout Europe (including east-central Europe). These other tendencies later came down in art history as 'national variations' *derived* from a 'parent' French Impressionism; an assessment arguably distorting historical reality in that it ignores the past heterogeneity of modern art. Markója proposes to amend this misrepresentation by acknowledging that French Impressionism itself was also one of those '*local, if you wish "provincial" versions, a logical but after all particular outgrowth*' of a more widespread artistic style of its time.<sup>12</sup> Part of the historical error is generated by the compulsion to retrospectively apply seamless labels to periods in which the meaning of the terms was not yet clearly defined. Writing about the various -isms of the historical avant-garde, Hubert van den Berg reminds us that, back in the first decades of the 20th century, practically any new emerging trend was routinely called Expressionism (or Futurism), and these volatile labels were used to denote



2 / Tibor Weiner – Ricardo Muller,  
Design for a market hall,  
Concepción, Chile, 1940  
archival design photo  
Hungarian Museum of Architecture  
Photo © HMA MPDC Hungarian Museum of  
Architecture

a complex assortment of supranationally-emerging styles. Only a subsequent process of canonisation fixed their definition.<sup>13</sup>

I almost hear you ask, but why should we bother about those *lesser* phenomena if they did not make it to the canon?! This question would drive us back to the comfort of canonical certainties (originality, innovation, fame, market success) and greatness; it certainly remains one possible way to go. The alternative route is less glamorous: it is about accounting for art historical phenomena that have been previously dismissed as deviant or derivative.

A second relevant case of revisionism has been driven by a similar impulse of revealing a historically more accurate geopolitics of the *avant-garde*.<sup>14</sup> Paris, the undisputed art centre emerges from this assessment as *parochial* because modernists in the French capital turned out to be, in a Europe-wide comparison, the most reluctant to engage in cross-border networking. ‘Parochial’ here is not used to point to just any unspecified inferior quality; dictionary definitions and the one operationalised in the *Globalizing East European Art Histories*-volume take it to denote people(s) whose outlook is ‘restricted to a narrow or local range of matters’. In the case of early-20th century Paris, this limited scope is measured against the *avant-gardist* ‘will to cosmopolitanism’, for this cosmopolitan drive can be taken as an historically equally valid indicator of progressive spirit as being the bulwark of a canonical art movement, Surrealism. In my view, in this context Béatrice Joyeux-Prunel and her team have been developing a truly alternative framework—one that no longer focuses on aesthetic concepts or stylistic labels as primary analytic concerns.

Even if Rampley does not seem to appreciate this particular ‘parochialising’ endeavour, he does acknowledge that shifting the conceptual framework away from what I call canonical certainties, and more in the direction of less aesthetically-bound concepts, might eventually provide fertile ground for incorporating East-Central European Modernisms within a shared larger context, rather than considering them as many isolated regional/national ‘specificities’. Crucially, a ‘larger context’ here does not only refer to the wider European or global art scene, but to insights and scholarly agendas associated with the social and spatial turn of both history at large and art history as a subdiscipline, as well as with the rise of post-structuralist and post-colonial critique.

#### **‘audiences elsewhere’: epistemic communities**

At this point I should disclose that I have been borrowing the term ‘canonical certainties’ from Monica Juneja, professor for Global Art History at the Heidelberg Centre for Transcultural Studies. While exploring practices of visual representation and the trajectories of art history in South Asia, she has quite evidently

had no qualms about discarding those ‘certainties’ or having to tackle incommensurability—issues that, as I have shown above, worry some of her colleagues working on or in core areas of the world: Michel Espagne, James Elkins, Kendall Walton, or the *October*-group. On the other hand, Pedro Monaville, whom I have also referenced above, or the (east) European scholars whose theoretical propositions both Matthew Rampley and myself have reviewed, appear to be more willing and ready than their North Atlantic peers to overcome the fixation (affirmative or critical) on the ‘West’ as a constant point of reference. This fleeting observation leads me to surmise that the appreciative audience for analytical efforts to flatten out the inherent hierarchies of (art) history may be more likely to be located in ‘*geographically and economically small part[s] of the world*’<sup>15</sup>—or anywhere, where the need to flatten out these hierarchies is recognised.

An obvious sign of the gradual decline of the analytical gaze fixed on the ‘West’ is found in the emergence of inquiries, intellectual encounters and scholarly collaborations that replace the former East-West axis with an East-South, East-East or South-South orientation. Alpesh Kantilal Patel, a contributor to *Globalizing East European Art Histories*, uses the concept of minor transnationalisms to make a productive sense of these preoccupations that might have seemed improbable just a couple of years or decades ago.<sup>16</sup> At the same time, a minor transnational perspective shows a way out of the tired centre—periphery dyad. Connections taking place through a minor to minor engagement can do without the centre: transnationality here is not the result of establishing contact with dominant, Western metropolitan locations, nor does it emerge through a vertical relationship of power between dominant and minority cultures.

Given the growing size of the epistemic community of ‘minor transnationalists’, proponents of ‘transmodernity’ or a transperipheral network, I cannot share Matthew Rampley’s complaint that the ‘*landscape of modernism is still little changed, dominated by Paris, Berlin, London, New York and Moscow.*’ Where I heartily agree with him again is in his eager quest for themes, methodologies and frameworks capable of telling east-central European (hi)stories in ways that do more than merely add hitherto unknown facts.<sup>17</sup> His tireless appeal for narratives to be built on specific local empirical material that can also be revealing for a readership outside national or regional borders has already inspired, and will continue to inspire, many colleagues towards this goal.

BEÁTA HOCK  
IS THERE LIFE AFTER CANONICAL CERTAINTIES?

## NOTES

1 On history-from-below, see e.g., Carl Grey Marin and Modhumita Roy, 'Narrative Resistance: A Conversation with Historian Marcus Rediker', *Workplace* XXX, 2018, pp. 54–69, esp. pp. 56–58 and the definition provided by the Institute of Historical Research London, [https://archives.history.ac.uk/makinghistory/themes/history\\_from\\_below.html](https://archives.history.ac.uk/makinghistory/themes/history_from_below.html), 9. 4. 2021.

2 See e.g., Schmucl N. Eisenstadt, 'Multiple Modernities', *Daedalus* CXXIX, Winter 2000, No. 1, pp. 1–29. — Andreas Huyssen, 'Geographies of Modernism in a Globalizing World', *New German Critique* XXXIV (C), Winter 2007, No. 1, pp. 189–207.

3 Matthew Rampley, 'Networks, Horizons, Centres and Hierarchies: On the Challenges of Writing on Modernism in Central Europe', *Umění/Art* LXIX, 2021, pp. 145–162.

4 Monaville cited in Beáta Hock, 'Cultural Actors within Imperial Structures: Managing Trans/Nationality', in Beáta Hock and Anu Allas (eds), *Globalizing East European Art Histories: Past and Present*, New York and Abingdon 2018, p. 49, n5.

5 Similar concerns about the definitional monopoly of dominant academic research have been voiced in a recent talk by József Böröcz 'Can Western Sociology See Societies Outside Western Europe?' at Tampere University, Finland. Böröcz's disciplinary area is sociology but the dilemmas he addresses have a broader purchase for the humanities in general, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VYpDUvY5vq8>, 24. 6. 2021.

6 See e.g. James Elkins, 'Afterward', in Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann, Catherine Dossin, and Béatrice Joyeux-Prunel (eds), *Circulations in the Global History of Art*, New York and Abingdon 2015, pp. 203–230.

7 Rampley (note 3), p. 158. See also Michel Espagne, 'Cultural Transfers in Art History', in DaCosta Kaufmann, Dossin, and Joyeux-Prunel (note 6), p. 105.

8 In the book's Introduction this perspective is contrasted with an 'idealist' outlook that equates the subject of art history with images, styles, and texts about these. See DaCosta Kaufmann, Dossin, and Joyeux-Prunel (note 6), pp. 1–2 and 12–15.

9 For the sake of brevity, I am not recapitulating the cases here; they are mentioned in Matthew Rampley's essay in question (see Rampley, note 3, p. 158), drawing on my own presentation of the cases.

10 The strategy was originally proposed by post-colonial scholar Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*, Princeton 2000.

11 Beáta Hock, 'Introduction: Globalizing East European Art Histories', in Hock and Allas (note 4), p. 3.

12 Markója cited in Hock, 'Cultural Actors' (note 4), p. 48. Nota bene, 'provincialising Paris' was not the exclusive goal of Markója's monograph. There, this operation nests in a more comprehensive re-reading of the art of László Mednyánszky (1852–1919), a locally famed, yet under-researched painter of the Habsburg period. Markója's research and publishing activity on the artist fed into an exhibition shown in Bratislava, Budapest and Vienna in 2003, successfully attracting a (nationally) heterogeneous audience.

13 Canonisation, the author adds, also posthumously disintegrated transnational phenomena into national bits and pieces. Hubert F. van den Berg, 'Expressionism, Constructivism and the Transnationality of the Historical Avant-Garde', in Hubert F. van den Berg and Lidia Gluchowska (eds), *Transnationality, Internationalism and Nationhood*, Leuven 2013, pp. 23–42, esp. pp. 31–35.

14 The case in question (the work of Béatrice Joyeux-Prunel and the Artl@s project) is briefly presented in Hock, 'Cultural Actors' (note 4), pp. 48–49.

15 This is how James Elkins referred to art historians working outside Western institutions. Elkins (note 6), p. 210.

16 Alpesh Kantilal Patel, 'Artistic Responses to LGBTQI Gaps in Archives: From World War II Asian America to Postwar Soviet Estonia', in Hock and Allas (note 4), pp. 202–203. Another fascinating example of a comparative transnational and transperipheral study from outside the field of art history is Lenny Ureña Valerio, *Colonial Fantasies, Imperial Realities: Race Science and the Making of Polishness on the Fringes of the German Empire, 1840–1920*, Athens 2019.

17 Allow me, in a final footnote, to briefly refer to an essay of mine trying to accomplish such a task: foregrounding the involvement of central European men and women, it retells the history and legacy of the Bauhaus as a transnational story — predominantly, but not only, for a German audience who still predominantly regards the Bauhaus as an essentially German phenomenon: Beáta Hock, 'Bauhaus — A Laboratory of Modernity and Springboard to the World', in Beate Störckuhl and Rafał Makala (eds), *Nicht nur Bauhaus — Netzwerke der Moderne in Mitteleuropa*, Oldenbourg 2020, pp. 223–245.



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# Writing on the History of Modern Art: From Particularism to a New Universalism

## The Centre and the Periphery – Level Them Out Rather Than Inverting Them

There can be no doubt about the importance of the texts by Piotr Piotrowski (1952–2015) for current writing on the history of modern art in East-Central Europe. It is a tribute to his legacy that a whole series of art historians from this region from the middle and younger generations refer to him in their critical reflections.<sup>1</sup> His importance, however, is also confirmed by the fact that even today his texts still provoke interesting polemical discussions and adverse reactions.<sup>2</sup> Both these types of response are accompanied by paraphrases and developments of some of Piotrowski's views and theses. In order to make the arguments more persuasive, however, these paraphrases and developments are sometimes distorted or even misrepresented. In his polemical article, Matthew Rampley alters the meaning of some of Piotrowski's theses in this way, and in so doing not only distorts the intellectual legacy of the Polish scholar, but also weakens the credibility of his own suggestions for methodological innovations in writing the art history of Central Europe. I therefore consider it useful to point out specific cases of Rampley's mistaken reading of Piotrowski's texts, especially of his article 'On the Spatial Turn, or Horizontal Art History',<sup>3</sup> which appeared in the journal *Umění/Art* in 2008. Variants of this text, however, appeared at that time in other publications, too — Rampley repeatedly quotes from a form of the text published in 2009.<sup>4</sup> Rampley takes as his starting point Piotrowski's alleged thesis that *'the historically dominant position, in histories of modernism, of western Europe and North America [can be resolved by inverting] the relation between "western" and "eastern" Europe'*.<sup>5</sup> This paraphrase, however, is a considerable departure from

Piotrowski's real thinking. In his article, Piotrowski proposed new, or updated and expanded, instruments of critical analysis: critical geography, the horizontal paradigm, and the concept of transnationality. But it was certainly not his aim to 'invert' the hierarchical relationship, as Rampley supposes. According to Piotrowski, the *'horizontal paradigm'* does not attempt to *'abolish Western art history'*, but simply to call this type of narrative by its proper name. It is a *'Western narrative'*, which, thanks to this identification, can be relativised and placed side by side with other art-historical narratives.<sup>6</sup> It is remarkable that Piotrowski's peaceful call for a 'horizontal', non-hierarchical levelling out of positions between the historiography of modern art in the centre and in the margins can be retrospectively seen as a militant appeal for the provincialisation of the centre and the marginalisation of its importance in favour of the former periphery. Rampley, however, evidently interprets it in this way when he writes, *"Horizontal art history involves taking the position of the periphery as a starting point, in order to provincialise the centre"*.<sup>7</sup> The explanation for this mistaken interpretation may perhaps be due to Rampley having read Piotrowski via the texts of other art historians, specifically for example Beáta Hock, a Hungarian art historian working in Germany and England, who develops Piotrowski's ideas in a more radical direction in her texts. In her introduction to the book *Globalizing East European Art Histories. Past and Present?* Hock summarises Piotrowski's interpretation into three notions: *'horizontal art history'*, *'close other(s)'*, and *'provincializing the centres'*.<sup>8</sup> But the last of these three phrases was not used by Piotrowski in any version of the text from 2008–2009 that Rampley was examining.<sup>9</sup> It is true that he made use of it in an interview which he gave in 2015 in the journal *Artmargins online*, but

MARIE RAKUŠANOVÁ

WRITING ON THE HISTORY OF MODERN ART: FROM PARTICULARISM TO A NEW UNIVERSALISM

even here he did not propose the ‘provincialisation of the centre’ as an inversion of the power relationships between the centre and the periphery, but as a localisation and contextualisation of a particular place to which a universalist position had previously been ascribed. He emphasised that every place is in fact a periphery, because it is rooted in a certain context. If we are aware of this in the case of the Western centres, then we will be able to rid them of their universality and to deterritorialise them. Piotrowski even expresses an aversion to the term periphery, which indeed — like the term province — he only uses in a context of critical reflection.<sup>10</sup>

In removing the radically sounding phrase ‘provincializing the centres’ from its context, Hock is taking a conscious and deliberate step which helps her to formulate her viewpoint in a more sharply-defined way. When she continues in her text by using a critical analysis which does partly aim at provincialisation, and the marginalisation of the centre in the sense of an inversion of hierarchies, this represents her own theoretical initiative, or refers to the intellectual output of other art historians who think along similar lines.<sup>11</sup> In his article, therefore, Rampley is primarily polemicising with this discourse, which develops Piotrowski’s reflections and goes beyond them.

### ‘The centre is cracked’

One result of this misunderstanding is Rampley’s attempt to show that Piotrowski is mistaken in his conviction that ‘*the marginal observer sees that the centre is “cracked” in ways that the observer in the centre does not perceive*’. Rampley sees the source of this assertion as lying in the inspiration that Piotrowski drew from postcolonialism, and refers to a text written by Piotrowski in 2014, which has the term ‘postcolonial theory’ in its title.<sup>12</sup> Of the thesis put forward by Piotrowski in 2008 and 2009 Rampley writes, ‘*This idea, that the art historian at the periphery knows the centre better than his or her counterpart in the centre, that his or her gaze is capable of destabilising the centre, is a commonplace in postcolonial criticism*’. But in pointing out that the centre was cracked Piotrowski did not want to bring about its destabilisation. On the contrary, he believed that this would give the art history writing cultivated in the centre the opportunity to revise its perception of itself and in this way to acquire new insights.<sup>13</sup> In the texts written in 2008–2009 that we are referring to, he developed his ideas about horizontalism and transnationalism primarily in relation to the ‘*institutional hierarchy of art history writing as a discipline*’. He was interested in the deconstruction of ‘*Western art history*’, the criticism of a reductive Modernist geography of art. It was this that he linked with the division between the centre and the periphery, which he intended to replace with a horizontal geographical reading. In his conception, ‘*art history written from the point of view of the centre*’ had on its conscience the marginalisation of the Modernisms created

and developed in the margins. He considered the principal instruments of this art history writing to be ‘*the canon and the style*’, in the sense of, for example, ‘*Cubism and Futurism*’.<sup>14</sup> The leading representatives of Western art history writing, if they paid attention to the modern art created in the margins of the Western cultural space, were unable to free themselves from the tendency to present it as fragments of the universal art history, originally formulated in the Western centres. Piotrowski came up with the proposal of cooperation between ‘*the historian of modern Czech or Romanian art who cannot forget his own location*’ and ‘*the historian of the centre*’. The latter would profit from this cooperation due to greater self-knowledge or self-awareness, for in the final analysis the centre, too, is only a place with specific local, legal, ethnic, and cultural parameters.<sup>15</sup>

Rampley, however, appears to be unaware of the immediate aim of Piotrowski’s critical analysis. He is evidently interested in the broadly-conceived ‘*cultural hierarchies that historically governed the relations between artists in east-central Europe and their peers in, for example, Paris and Berlin*’. He attempts to unmask the ‘*pragmatic factors that lie behind existing hierarchies*’, and in so doing to oppose Piotrowski and his successors, who allegedly ignored these factors, thus enabling them to present these hierarchies as a construct of the discourse. In the articles he wrote in 2008–2009, however, Piotrowski did not aim to create a methodological apparatus which could be universally applied to the issue of centres and peripheries in the broader cultural-historical framework which interests Rampley (although he was also well aware of the existence of that pragmatic background). But he was interested in the specific case of modern art and the avant-garde, and used his critical analysis for a retrospective assessment of the power mechanisms of the art-historical discipline. Rampley, by contrast, is looking for instruments for describing contemporary relationships and circumstances, and gives several examples which in his view show that Piotrowski’s statement that the cracks in the centre are more obvious when viewed from the margins can lead to a misrepresentation of the historical situation. But when he takes the example of late 19th-century Vienna and shows that, by giving the other national cultures of the Monarchy the same rights as its own Austro-German culture, it became a centre which was capable of consciously relinquishing its monolithic and power status, he misses the point of Piotrowski’s interests and theses.<sup>16</sup> It is as though he was contributing to a different discussion — albeit an extremely interesting one.

### Transnationality and horizontal art history writing

Rampley also poses quite different questions to Piotrowski in relation to transnationality. In the conclusion of his study, Piotrowski proposed that this should replace the failed utopian concept of modernist

internationalism. In his view, transnational art history writing would enable local narratives to be discussed on the transregional, in other words European, level.<sup>17</sup> This idea was again closely linked with the 'localisation' of the former centre, which would relinquish its universalist ideology of modernist internationalism. Rampley, however, makes the application of the transnational method conditional on an affirmative answer to the question whether the earlier situation of relationships between artists in the centre and in the margins could have been described as transnational. He demonstrates that in reality transnational exchange was not possible because there was no interest in it on the part of the centres. (The Prague Academy did not attract students from Germany as much as the Bauhaus attracted students from Bohemia and Slovakia.) But Piotrowski was not concerned with raising places on the margins to the level of centres such as Paris, London, and Berlin. On the contrary, he knew that contemporary relations between artists, institutions and associations across Europe were primarily determined by the logic of modernistic universalistic internationalism (and its pragmatic factors). He wanted to use the transnational analysis to deconstruct this system. On this point, too, Rampley fails to engage with Piotrowski. The provocative nature of Rampley's theses also seems as though it is directed against the politically correct academic discourse relating to formerly marginalised phenomena in general. Because Piotrowski himself pointed out the similarities between his method of critical geography and the revision of art history from the feminist position,<sup>18</sup> a parallel can be outlined to Rampley's critique of horizontal and transnational art history. Just as feminist art history did not attempt to assemble evidence that the works of female artists were of equal quality to the production of the male geniuses among their contemporaries, so Piotrowski's critical geography did not intend to raise the places on the margins to the level of the world cultural metropolises, or attribute to them qualities which, in view of the pragmatic background of contemporary hierarchies, they did not possess and could not have possessed. Rampley's scepticism of transnational art history, based on a deterministic pronouncement of the inadequacy of the peripheries as transnational partners, is similar to questioning the feminist critique from the position of essentialism, justifying the organisation of historical events, including artistic production, by the role of innate gender features.

As an alternative to Piotrowski's transnational art history writing, Rampley proposes 'entangled history'. He characterises this as *'an approach that aims at "replacing the central place that nations held in historiography with a concentration on the transfers and entanglements taking place between them — nations, their central thesis holds, are not pre-existent to these multiple encounters, but constituted by them."*' Rampley borrows the characteristics of this method from Margrit Pernau, specifically from a study which

she contributed to a discussion in the field of translation studies.<sup>19</sup> The concept of 'entangled history' has been applied in various historical works since roughly 1997.<sup>20</sup> At the same time, however, this method has also been adapted to the needs of art history, especially to the field of global art history.<sup>21</sup> It thus developed parallel to Piotrowski's concepts of transnationality and horizontalism, and is in agreement with them in some respects. In the conclusion to his study, Piotrowski also writes that transnational art history makes it possible to overcome not only the concept of universalistic internationalism, but nationalism as well.<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, at various points in his study Piotrowski places an emphasis on abolishing hierarchical one-sidedness and replacing it by a horizontal bilateral exchange of viewpoints between the former centre and the places on the margins.

### Language

Matthew Rampley is certainly right in saying that the language barrier has a crucial influence on research into the art of East-Central Europe and its possible transnational character. The linguistic diversification of national art history writing in Central and Eastern Europe makes access to the discourse of the whole region extremely difficult. For Anglo-American, French, and German researchers, only a small quantity of literature on Modernism in East-Central Europe is available in the major world languages (whether texts in the original or translations). Nor can local art historians be expected to understand all the many Slav languages, as well as German — not to mention the unique status of Hungarian.<sup>23</sup> The inaccessibility of primary and secondary sources is undoubtedly a key problem. It can be classified together with the many pragmatic factors which Rampley points out in his text and, as has already been said, declares them to be proof of the genuine existence of hierarchies. But language also has an impact on the reception, analysis, and interpretation of Central European and Eastern European art on much deeper semantic levels.

In his text, Rampley criticises *'Piotrowski's problematic tendency to talk in essentializing terms of "Eastern" and "Western" Europe'*. In a recent interview for the journal *Art and Antiques* he even speaks about the term 'the West' having become empty of meaning, and expresses the conjecture that people only use the term out of laziness and force of habit.<sup>24</sup> The meaning of the phrase 'the West' and terms with the attribute 'Western', however, vary considerably depending on where and by whom they are used. If, in February 2017, the moderator of the conservative American television channel Fox, Tucker Carlson, repeatedly used the phrase 'Western civilisation' to defend Trump's immigration policy, it was not only a sign of the lazy habit of an empty and vague expression, but a sign of direct lazy racism.<sup>25</sup> If the Polish art historian Piotr Piotrowski

MARIE RAKUŠANOVÁ

WRITING ON THE HISTORY OF MODERN ART: FROM PARTICULARISM TO A NEW UNIVERSALISM

spoke of 'the West', 'Western art history', 'the Western canon', 'the Western narrative', and 'the Western avant-garde'<sup>26</sup> in his theoretical texts from 1998 to 2015, then these terms had a quite specific content, and at the time and place he used them their message was clearly anti-racist and anti-supremacist. As has already been said, in Piotrowski's view 'localisation' is a key element in constructing meaning,<sup>27</sup> but his term 'the West' is deliberately not connected with a specific place. Although 20 years have elapsed since the formulation of Piotrowski's critical geography, the history written in the centres still very often attributes to its universe of modern art the qualities of an abstract space. They have not become individual territories with a specific local context giving its own particular colour to modern art-historical phenomena, and so they still remain a non-localised 'West'. This lack of reflection of the geographical position of the centres is related to the lack of reflection in the use of the dominant languages in which the history of modern art is written (French, German, and today predominantly English). For example, in the Western art-historical literature devoted to the modern art of East-Central Europe, the names of artists are often distorted, ignoring the specific local diacritics, and the titles of works, names of institutions, and local names are simply translated from the Slav languages into a Western language, only very rarely supplemented by the original form. Here, of course, we can only say that working with languages and respecting the different nature of various linguistic and cultural traditions should be a fundamental principle for art-historical research (and for other fields as well). The trite assumption that certain languages are generally known and others are not is evocative of the alibistic aspect of referring to pragmatic factors in the background of existing hierarchies. In the case of titles, names, and also for example the original version of quotations, the dominant languages should display at least a minimum attempt at reciprocity and give the original equivalent in the marginal language.

In Anglo-American literature we sometimes find researchers referring to the English translation of foreign-language texts, and thus substantially distorting the development of the discourse in question. (In the case of Rampley's article, this applies to the study by Enrico Castelnuovo and Carlo Ginzburg, which is cited in its English translation from the year 2009, although it had been published in French as early as 1981.)<sup>28</sup> Some Western art historians, using the excuse of the insurmountable barrier of Slav languages, mostly do not even try to penetrate into local discussions on the themes they are researching, and thus they are unaware of texts which, although published by local publishing houses, are written in one of the major world languages. For example, in 1969 the CIHA congress on *Evolution générale et développements régionaux en histoire de l'art* was held in Budapest, at which the Hungarian art

historian Lajos Vayer presented a paper — later published in German — arguing against the hegemonism typical of the concept of the universal development of art. He came to the conclusion that what is presented in the canon of art history as universal development is in fact the sum of regional lines of development.<sup>29</sup> For art historians from Central Europe, the conference in Budapest was of great significance. It is certainly commendable that Rampley mentions in his text Jan Białostocki's paper on 'Some Values of Artistic Periphery', presented at the CIHA conference in Washington in 1986 (*World Art: Themes of Unity in Diversity*), but it would have been desirable to map out the much older local discussion on this theme.<sup>30</sup>

The problems of the relationship between art history outside the centres and the language defining the canon of modern art have recently been pointed out by Éva Forgács.<sup>31</sup> In art-historical discussions about European Modernism, the Western canonical trends of Expressionism, Fauvism, Cubism, etc., overshadowed Hungarian Activism (Aktivizmus), Polish Formism (Formiści), and other forms. And yet a return to some of the original terms used at the time could tell us more about the modern art of East-Central Europe than labels that were attached to it later. The Hungarian expression 'tectonic' was indicative of a specific local interest in Adolf Hildebrand's book, which was of key importance for Central European painting and sculpture and how they resolved problems of the visual representation of space. To take another case, Prague Neo-Primitivism (Novoprimitivismus, 1911) is an interesting early example of a dialogue of equals between a Central European intellectual tradition and the artistic stimuli brought from Paris.<sup>32</sup>

### From postcolonialism to decolonisation

Matthew Rampley's article does, however, contribute many very valuable stimuli to art history writing in East-Central Europe. Above all, it challenges art historians from the region who take up Piotrowski's legacy to undertake a critical self-assessment. There can be no doubt that most collective publications professing transnationality that have appeared in recent years in fact offered a set of parallel national histories with a minimum of transnational interactions.<sup>33</sup>

Rampley's challenge to writers to look beyond the borders of their own milieu is valid generally, but it has a special relevance for art historians from East-Central Europe. Incidentally, Piotrowski had already pointed out that art history writing in the marginal parts of Europe, especially in the East-Central region, had managed to go beyond its own borders only in the direction of the centre, but mutual contact with other geographically marginal protagonists had not taken place. And in the few cases when it did, it was through the intermediary of the centre.<sup>34</sup> And therefore Piotrowski appealed to marginal art history writing, too,



to take a fresh look at itself and to redefine its position and the place from which it was speaking. For in the final analysis, one of the consequences of the relativisation of Western art history writing must be a similar process in art history on the margins.<sup>35</sup>

In the text 'East European Art Peripheries Facing Post-colonial Theory' referred to earlier, Piotrowski revised some of his ideas from the years 2008–2009 after a gap of five years. In particular, he adopted a critical stance towards postcolonial studies and the opportunities they offered for a critical revision of relationships between modern and avant-garde art in the Western centres and the marginal places in East-Central Europe. In his view, the situation in this region is too complicated for a classical postcolonial analysis, one reason being that at various times various types of 'colonisation' confronted each other there — in art and art history writing in the second half of the 20th century, for example, a cultural 'self-colonisation' in relation to the West was often counterbalanced by a political 'colonisation' coming from the East.<sup>36</sup> This insight of Piotrowski's is extremely interesting, because among other things it enables us to reflect on the Modernist and avant-garde Western forms of art in other contexts than Modernist universalist ones. It is evident that if artists or art historians in East-Central Europe in the second half of the 20th century operated using the Western apparatus of forms and terminology of Modernist trends, then their motivation had a very specific complexion in terms of place, time, culture, politics, and ideology.<sup>37</sup> Today it is increasingly obvious that when examining the art history of East-Central Europe it is necessary to take into account the qualities that are specific for the location of this region, which also have consequences for the differing time frame for local historical and cultural phenomena. As Piotrowski indicated in his text, this temporal disproportion has a different character than the diversity of time lines violently suppressed and unified by Western colonial policy, which was made visible by postcolonialism. East-Central Europe cannot lay claim to the status of a former colony of the West; it is a case that shows the hierarchical division in relationships of place and time within Western civilisation and culture as a whole. When Rampley makes an appeal to 'Change the Conceptual Frame' in writing the art history of East-Central Europe, this appeal fails to take these methodological problems into account, and it is not surprising that it results in another call to respect hierarchies ('Work with hierarchies rather than *against* them').

Piotrowski's critical art geography (as he called his method in the text 'East European Art Peripheries Facing Post-Colonial Theory') was able to draw attention to quite general facts about the specific position of East-Central Europe within the framework of the global history of colonisation and decolonisation. And this still appears to be a major problem for this region.

The main reason is that the universalism to which we related culturally for so long was in reality selective and exclusivist<sup>38</sup> — it was in fact a Western European particularism. It was the ultimate reference point, not only for art and culture, but also for forming a general worldview. When in the second half of the 20th century the Soviet Union, our coloniser from the East, criticised the West as imperialist and racist and sympathised with its former colonies and victims, we took the side of our enemy's enemy, in other words the former Western colonial powers. The revolution in East-Central Europe in 1989 was likewise accompanied by universalist rhetoric aimed at constructing the particularist project of the 'return to Europe'. The ultimate foreign-policy horizon of the post-communist successor states in the 1990s was the West alone, and the cultural situation copied this political trajectory. According to the Czech political scientist Pavel Barša, it was only with the refugee crisis in 2015 that it became fully clear that what we had regarded as universalism was in fact Eurocentrism: '*The Central Europeans returned to "their" Western civilisation, which through this return of theirs confirmed that it was the centre of the world. The rest of the planet and the human race was only a periphery for them, and they did not want to look at it...*' However, Barša pointed out that '*by successfully occupying our longed-for place among the former colonisers, we lost the alibi we had from being colonised. The decolonisation of our thinking can finally start.*'<sup>39</sup>

Piotrowski's texts were written before the crisis in 2015, but already they represented a strong appeal for the decolonisation of art-historical thinking and writing in East-Central Europe. They were a call for a new universalism, one that would liberate our thinking from the captivity of European particularism, long mistakenly regarded as the universalist, ultimate reference point of our Modernism. An ethical imperative like this could only have come out of our own milieu, and is important not only for art history writing in our region, but for society and culture in general. The proposals suggested by Rampley at the conclusion of his study are valuable ones, and if art history writing in East-Central Europe takes them to heart it will certainly profit from them. Nevertheless, this does not change the fact that Piotrowski gave the first basic stimulus for decolonising the thinking of art historians in East-Central Europe, and gave them the courage genuinely to start relating to the universal, not just to Europe and the West. His legacy therefore goes far beyond the boundaries of the art-historical methodological debate.

TRANSLATED BY PETER STEPHENS

MARIE RAKUŠANOVÁ

WRITING ON THE HISTORY OF MODERN ART: FROM PARTICULARISM TO A NEW UNIVERSALISM

## NOTES

1 See f.e. Magdalena Radomska and Agata Jakubowska (eds), *After Piotr Piotrowski: Art, Democracy and Friendship*, Poznań 2019. Here it needs to be emphasised that several art historians and theorists from Western centres have also declared themselves to be followers of Piotrowski in recent years — for example, Béatrice Joyeux-Prunel and Klara Kemp-Welch, the former working in Paris and the latter in London.

2 See for example: Raino Isto, 'Some Notes on the Apparently Mutually Exclusive Status of (M/m)odern (A/a)rt and Socialist Realism', *Afterart*, <https://afterart.org/tag/piotr-piotrowski/>, 28. 8. 2015.

3 Piotr Piotrowski, 'On the Spatial Turn, or Horizontal Art History', *Umění/Art LVI*, 2008, pp. 378–383.

4 Idem, 'Toward a Horizontal History of the European Avant-Garde', in Sascha Bru and Peter Nicholls (eds), *Europa! Europa? The Avant-Garde, Modernism and the Fate of a Continent*, Berlin 2009, pp. 49–58. In order to keep as close as possible to Rampley's reading of Piotrowski, I, too, will work with this version of the article, although I do not consider this to be entirely appropriate, in view of the fact that our texts will be published in the same journal in which Piotrowski published the very first version of his reflections on this theme in 2008. Fortunately, however, the various versions differ only slightly. See further also: Piotr Piotrowski, 'Towards A Horizontal Art History', in *Writing Central European Art History: PATTERNS Travelling Lecture Set 2008/2009*, Vienna 2009, <https://www.wus-austria.org/files/docs/Projects/PATTERNS/Patterns-Folder.pdf>, 17. 8. 2021. — Idem, 'Towards a Horizontal Art History', in Jaynie Anderson (ed.), *Crossing Cultures. Conflict, Migration, and Convergence*, Melbourne 2009, pp. 82–85.

5 According to Rampley, Piotrowski's 'solution was to invert the relation between "western" and "eastern" Europe'. See Matthew Rampley, 'Networks, Horizons, Centres and Hierarchies: On the Challenges of Writing on Modernism in Central Europe', p. 147.

6 Piotrowski consistently uses a capital W for the words West and Western. In this article, when referring to his texts or studies by his followers I will also use a capital W for these words. The passage I am referring to here reads: 'A critical analysis should reveal the speaking subject: who speaks, on whose behalf, and for whom? This is not to cancel Western art history, but call this type of narrative by its proper name, precisely as a 'Western' narrative. ... Western art history can thus be relativized and placed next to other art historical narratives — in accordance with the horizontal paradigm...' See Piotrowski, 'Toward a Horizontal History of the European Avant-Garde' (note 4), p. 54.

7 Beáta Hock and Anu Allas (eds), *Globalizing East European Art Histories. Past and Present*, London 2018.

8 Beáta Hock, 'Introduction — Globalizing East European Art Histories. The Legacy of Piotr Piotrowski and a Conference', in Hock and Allas (note 7), p. 2.

9 Piotrowski did, however, use the phrase 'to provincialise Western art history' in some texts, for example in the fundamental book *Awangarda w cieniu Jałty*, translated into English as *In the Shadow of Yalta*. See Piotr Piotrowski, *Awangarda w cieniu Jałty. Sztuka i polityka w Europie Środkowo-Wschodniej 1945–1989*, Poznań 2005. — Idem, *In the Shadow of Yalta: Art and the Avant-garde in Eastern Europe, 1945–1989*, London 2009. Here he was referring to Dipesh Chakrabarty's concept of 'provincialising Europe'. See Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*, Princeton and Oxford 2000. But even Piotrowski's

'to provincialise Western art history' does not include the idea of inverting power hierarchies...

10 In full, the passage reads: '... I prefer the notion of margins, instead of peripheries, which is not the same. ... "Provincializing centres" is what I prefer doing. Everything is a periphery, everything is rooted in a particular context. ... [A]rt that is located in a particular historical and cultural context would lose its universality and become deterritorialized. Therefore, I would say that the way to provincialize the centre is to locate it.' See Richard Kosinsky, Jan Elantkowski and Barbara Dudas, 'A Way to Follow: Interview with Piotr Piotrowski', *ARTMargins Online*, 2015, 29. 1., <http://artmargins.com/index.php/interviews-sp-837925570/758-a-way-to-follow-interview-with-piotr-piotrowski>, 18. 1. 2021.

11 Beáta Hock, 'Managing Trans/Nationality', in Hock and Allas (note 7), pp. 47–49. See also: Beatrice Joyeux-Prunel, 'Provincializing Paris. The Centre-periphery Narrative of Modern Art in Light of Quantitative and Transnational Approaches', *Artl@s Bulletin IV*, 2015, No. 1, pp. 40–64. — Csilla Markoja, *Egy másik Mednyánszky*, Budapest 2008.

12 Piotr Piotrowski, 'East European Art Peripheries Facing Post-colonial Theory', *Nonsite*, <http://nonsite.org/article/east-european-art-peripheries-facing-post-colonial-theory>, 12. 8. 2014. We will come to this text later, and reach the conclusion that in it Piotrowski in fact rejects postcolonial theory.

13 See Piotrowski, 'Toward a Horizontal History of the European Avant-Garde' (note 4), pp. 54–55: 'The art history of the centre ... have the opportunity to revise their self-perception as a result of studies focused on the margins, informed by a horizontal history of the avant-garde.' See also Éva Forgács, 'Whose Narrative Is It?', in Vojtěch Lahoda (ed.), *Local Strategies, International Ambitions. Modern Art in Central Europe 1918–1968*, Praha 2006, pp. 41–46.

14 Piotrowski, 'Toward a Horizontal History of the European Avant-Garde' (note 4), pp. 54–55.

15 Ibidem, p. 55.

16 Rampley also attempts to show that Piotrowski's statement is untrue by providing evidence that there are cracks not only in the 'contemporary Western centres', but also in the peripheries. But Piotrowski never denied this and it does not contradict his theses in any way.

17 Piotrowski, 'Toward a Horizontal History of the European Avant-Garde' (note 4), p. 58.

18 Ibidem, p. 58.

19 Margrit Pernau, 'Whither Conceptual History? From National to Entangled Histories', *Contributions to the History of Concepts VII*, 2012, No. 1, p. 4.

20 See e.g. Antoinette Burton, 'Who needs the Nation? Interrogating "British" History', *Journal of Historical Sociology X*, 1997, pp. 227–248. Margrit Pernau herself refers to this article.

21 See e.g. Matthias Weiß, Eva-Maria Troelenberg and Joachim Brand (eds), *Wechselblicke. Zwischen China und Europa 1669–1907*, Berlin 2017. In 2019, as part of a cycle of lectures at the Institute of Art History, Faculty of Arts, Charles University, Matthias Weiß held a lecture entitled 'Global Art History: Towards Entangled Art Histories?'

22 Specifically, he writes: 'Transnational art history, negotiating values and concepts along other lines than the opposition of the national versus the international, is now being written as well.' See Piotrowski, 'Toward a Horizontal History of the European Avant-Garde' (note 4), p. 58.

23 This fact is quite correctly recognised by Rampley in his text. At

this point, however, it may be worth pointing out the revealing history of linguistic diversity in East-Central Europe. Not only before the collapse of the Habsburg Monarchy, but also throughout the first half of the 20th century, this region was characterised by multilingualism — or at least mutual understanding. For most of the region the language of communication was German, although in some places it may also have been Polish or Hungarian, and in Bulgaria, for example Bulgarian and Turkish existed side by side. In the second half of the 20th century this multilingualism vanished. Jérôme Bazin, Pascal Dubourg Glatigny and Piotr Piotrowski, 'Introduction: Geography of Internationalism', in iidem (eds), *Art Beyond Borders. Artistic Exchange in Communist Europe (1945–1989)*, Budapest 2016, p. 7. In spite of the fact that the countries of East-Central Europe were satellites of the Soviet Union, Russian never became the new lingua franca. To use the language of the postcolonial critique, the noetic violence of Russia as a colonial imperialist power had its limits... At the same time, this case demonstrates graphically that postcolonial theory is not the most appropriate analytical tool for the history of East-Central Europe in the second half of the 20th century.

**24** Matthew Rampley, 'Česko je zajímavé místo pro život. Rozhovor s Milenou Bartlovou', *Art and Antiques*, Winter 2020, p. 62.

**25** See also: Adrian Horton, 'John Oliver on Tucker Carlson: "The most prominent vessel for white supremacist talking points"', *The Guardian*, <https://www.theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/2021/mar/15/john-oliver-tucker-carlson-fox-news>, 15. 3. 2021.

**26** Piotrowski, 'Toward a Horizontal History of the European Avant-Garde' (note 4), pp. 50–53.

**27** The very first journal in which Piotrowski presented an outline of his critical geography in 1998 was the Polish periodical *Magazyn Sztuki*: 'W stronę nowej geografii artystycznej' [Towards a New Geography of Art], *Magazyn Sztuki* IXX, 1998, No. 3, pp. 76–99. Ten years later, the article expounding this theory in detail, to which we have been referring [we quote another version of the same text — see note 4], was published in the Czech journal *Umění*.

**28** Enrico Castelnuovo and Carlo Ginzburg, 'Domination symbolique et géographie artistique dans L'histoire de l'art italien', *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales*, No. 40, November 1981, pp. 51–72.

**29** Lajos Vayer, 'Allgemeine Entwicklung und regionale Entwicklungen in der Kunstgeschichte. Situation des Problems in "Mitteleuropa"', in György Rózsa (ed.), *Evolution générale et développements régionaux en histoire de l'art. Actes du XXIIe Congrès International d'Histoire de l'Art*, Budapest 1969, part 1–3, Akadémiai Kiadó, Budapest 1972, pp. 19–29. Later, after 1989, a whole series of international symposia was held examining the relationship between centre and periphery, East and West. As an example we could mention the 26th AICA assembly in Vienna in 1992, at which Petr Wittlich presented an original vision for overcoming the hierarchy of 'centre' and 'periphery', inspired by the phenomenological conception of 'lived space' and chaos theory. See Petr Wittlich, 'Mimo centrum a periferii', *Výtvarné umění* XVI, 1992, No. 5–6, pp. 98–99.

**30** Rampley does mention the work *Problemi periferijske umjetnosti* by the Croatian art historian Ljubo Kamaran from the year 1963, but probably only because Białoostocki refers to it in his paper.

**31** Éva Forgács, 'Art History's One Blind Spot in East-Central Europe: Terminology', *Umění/Art* LXIV, 2016, pp. 19–28.

**32** Emil Filla, 'O ctnosti novoprimitivismu', *Volné směry* XV, 1911, pp. 62–70. — Idem, 'On the Virtue of Neo-Primitivism. Volné směry (1912)', in Timothy O. Benson and Éva Forgács (eds), *Between Worlds*.

*A Sourcebook of Central European Avant-Garde, 1910–1930*, Cambridge and London 2002, pp. 95–97.

**33** Here I would like to point out, however, that some of the projects mentioned by Rampley may have fulfilled the "transnational" role they aimed at, despite the fact that they were apparently collections of parallel art histories. In my opinion, the success of some "supranational" projects can be judged according to the degree of success of the editor or principal author in carrying out their role. As one of a 30-member team, I had the opportunity to follow from close up the work of the editor Isabel Wünsche on the publication *The Routledge Companion to Expressionism in a Transnational Context*. A genuine transnational exchange took place between art historians from centres and places on the margins during workshops organised by Wünsche over several years. In my view, the final, specifically defined theme (the migration of Expressionism on a global scale) could not have been treated otherwise than by parallel art-historical studies produced by art historians from the countries concerned. However, these cannot be described as "national", because in many cases they focused on individual cities, not on national states (which at the time did not yet exist), and did not look at either nationally or ethnically homogenous groups of artists. In addition, the editor motivated the members of the team to refer to each other's work and to have "transnational interactions". Wünsche's introductory study quite clearly has a transnational orientation. See Isabel Wünsche (ed.), *The Routledge Companion to Expressionism in a Transnational Context*, London 2019.

**34** Piotrowski, 'Toward a Horizontal History of the European Avant-Garde' (note 4), p. 57.

**35** Ibidem, p. 55. The passage in full: 'Relativization of Western art history in consequence of, among other procedures... must bring about similar processes in marginal art history. The latter must also take a fresh look at itself, define its position, and the place from which it speaks.'

**36** Piotrowski (note 12).

**37** Piotrowski's methodological frameworks are always exceptionally inspiring, one reason being that they can be applied very well to specific works of art. Because it is certainly possible to write a book which successfully applies the principles of 'entangled history' to cultural-historical phenomena, the history of institutions in East-Central Europe, etc. But it still remains to be seen whether these methods will also be effective in the case of studies oriented primarily to artistic output in own territory.

**38** Klara Kemp-Welch, Beáta Hock, and Jonathan Owen, 'Introduction: Towards a Minor Modernism?', in iidem (eds), *A Reader in Central European Modernism 1918–1956*, London 2019, p. 15, <https://assets.courtauld.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/10102119/A-Reader-in-East-Central-European-Modernism-1918%E2%80%931956.pdf>, 29. 1. 2021.

**39** Pavel Barša, 'Nulový stupeň kolonizace', *Artalk Revue* IV, Winter 2020, pp. 1–4.

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# From which Vantage Points does an Art Historian Look? The History of Central European Art and the Post-colonial Impulse

Sometime in the mid-2000s, I and two colleagues from Germany were taking part in a congress of medievalists in Kalamazoo, Illinois. The only restaurant that could be reached from the university campus without a car served what is known in America as pizza. Our colleagues from the USA and Canada, highly qualified researchers into the Middle Ages in Europe, enthusiastically discussed how this supposedly resembled original Italian pizza and how the local beer was just like German beer. ‘You are Germans and Pils is from Germany, so you can confirm that, can’t you?’ The three of us looked at each other and then we all nodded in agreement and politely chatted about how the beer was acceptable, but very, h’m, American. We had immediately realised that in the middle of the American prairie there was no point trying to explain anything about the Czechs and the Bohemian Germans, nor about the character of Central Europe, even to specialised medievalists. It was simply too far away, and from this vantage point the perspective was distorted. Is it possible to overcome this distortion? To do this, is it enough to show that the West is *really more* advanced than Central Europe?

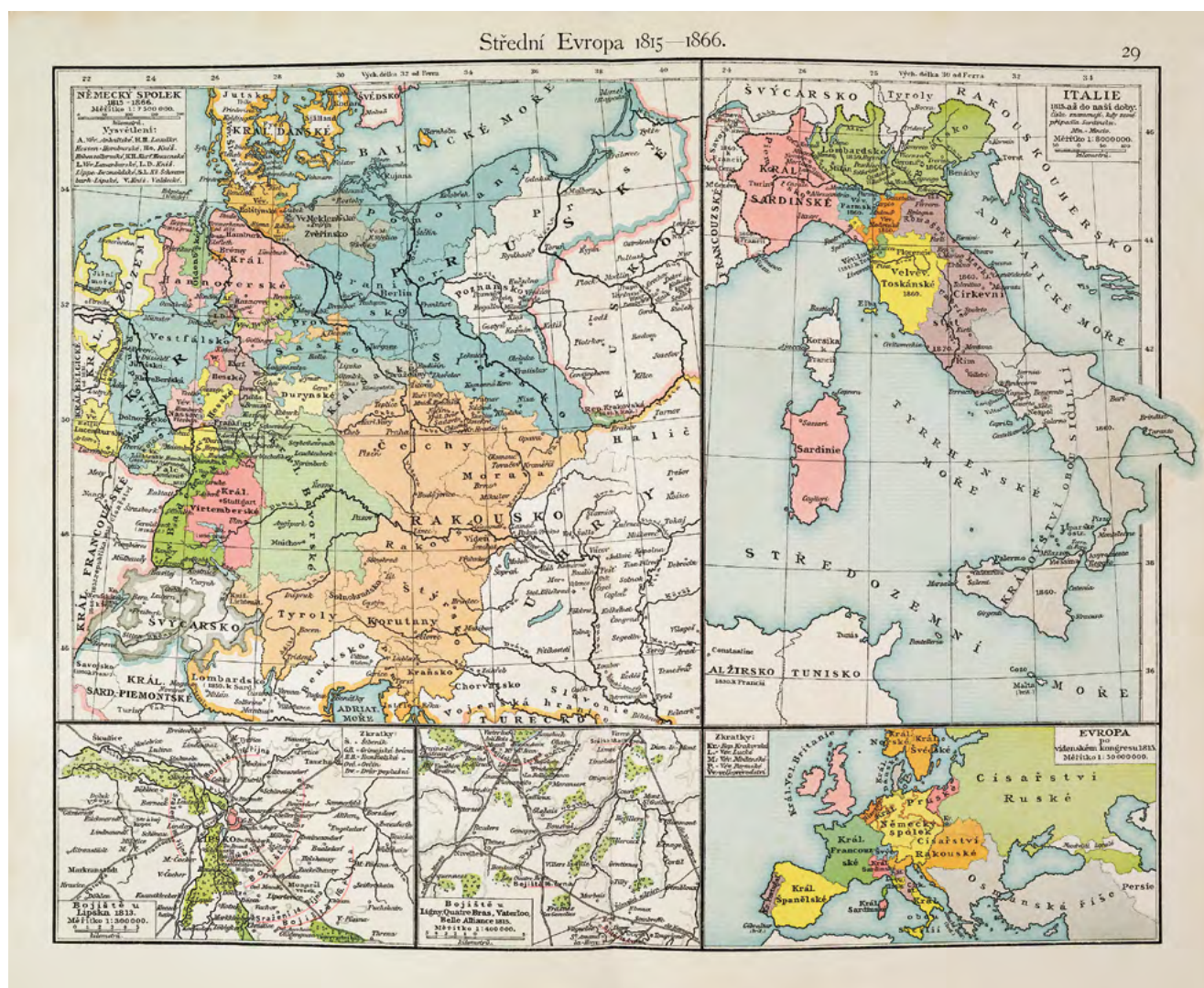
Matthew Rampley’s aim in critically examining Piotrowski’s proposal for a ‘horizontal history of art’ is a relevant one. I appreciate that in his article he does not think purely in terms of theories and methodologies, and does not confine himself to discursive analyses, but takes into consideration both the historical reality and various conditions in which art-historical practice takes place. However much we might wish it was not the case, the normative character of the West and a willingness to follow the changes in Western art are indisputable facts so far as 19th- and 20th-century Central European art is concerned. In my view, the key methodological problem is the assessment of the quality of art outside

the central Western European canon. Who decides what is of high quality, and is therefore important? And what arguments do they use? I am not sure whether Rampley’s analysis of the problem and his subsequent proposals successfully resolve the need for an adequate approach to the material that is being studied. In my opinion, a more radical analysis and deconstruction of the colonial approach may be necessary.

Linguistically, the English title of Rampley’s article could be referring either to scholarly writing about Central European Modernism or to scholarly works about Modernism which are written in Central Europe. This ambiguity becomes apparent when we try to translate it into Czech, and enables us to state more clearly a significant factor — perhaps the central one — in the whole issue: the difference between the view from within and the view from outside. The difference between vantage points is just as real as the respect which Modernist artists had for the normativity of the West, and I believe that a better understanding can be reached by critically deconstructing the difference rather than by suppressing it. Rampley concludes that art history will make sense if it is concerned with the essential. But who decides which artefacts are the genuinely important ones, and on the basis of which criteria? I am afraid that without a special attention, we would be led back to the objectivised, teleological idea of development and the part played in it by individual works.

To my mind, the convincing nature of Piotrowski’s conclusions about the art history cultivated in Central European countries is due not only to the size of Poland, as Rampley admits, but to at least two further circumstances. One of them was his vantage point from within Central Europe. For the Central European





### 1 / Map of Central Europe 1815–1866

from Putzger's historical school atlas of ancient, mediaeval and modern history, 1908

Reproduction: F. W. Putzgerův historický školní atlas, Vídeň 1908

intellectual elites, the renewed political connection with the West after 1990 represented the fulfilment of a great desire on their part, so that they were willing to accept without reflection the need to submit to the Western viewpoint. The fact that in this situation a self-colonising attitude prevailed and was consolidated does not mean that it expressed a 'historical truth'. The position in the centre or on the periphery is not simply determined topographically; perhaps more important are the qualitative characteristics of the places. Quality assessment is a basic paradigm in art-historical thinking. A transfer of quality is understood as a higher value acting on a lower value which submits to it passively. In order to overcome a distortion of the view of Central European art, it will therefore be insufficient to erase the limits of national art-historical narratives or to map out in detail the mutual interaction across political borders. Partly due to developments in

communication technology, borders had a much greater and more real significance in the 20th century than they have in the third decade of the 21st century, as they were much more strongly present in the personal identity constructs of artists and art historians, and this was still the case even when it was considered important to overcome them.

The second reason why Piotrowski was convincing lies in the situation of Polish art history and other humanities disciplines in the 1970s and 1980s, when they were considerably more open to the world beyond the Iron Curtain than were their Czechoslovak counterparts. Thanks to this the Poles were better prepared and were more successful in taking advantage of the short period of interest in Central and Eastern Europe on the part of the West in the first half of the 1990s. Unless we take into account what happened to art-historical thinking behind the Iron Curtain before



MILENA BARTLOVÁ  
FROM WHICH VANTAGE POINTS DOES AN ART HISTORIAN LOOK?

1990, we will not get below the surface of the problem. Here we come up against an ideological prejudice which without further reflection regards as trivial all art-historical thinking that came into being during the four decades of dictatorship by the Communist parties in the countries of the Soviet bloc.

Rampley explicitly chose not to deal with the question of the definition of Central Europe, simply referring to it as 'the territories lying between Germany and Russia'. Here, in my opinion, he missed a digression which would have led him to a more profound critique of the issue. The standpoint of political topography of necessity involves the factor of time: which borders between Germany and Poland does he have in mind? The delimitation of East-Central Europe which has been the most influential in art historiography came from the Pole Jan Białostocki, and brought together the Western countries of the Soviet bloc with the aim of liberating them culturally from the threatening hegemony in the East and restoring them to the context of the liberal-democratic West. With this purpose in mind, Białostocki did not mention how close his concept might have seemed to the idea of *Mitteleuropa* propounded by National Socialism in Germany, with its rhetoric of '*Lebensraum* for the nations'. The inclusion

or non-inclusion of the German-speaking countries is just as important for the nature of a certain delimitation of Central Europe as is a reflection on the ideological or political background of its origins. When studying a specific topic, it inevitably becomes clear that the periodisation of art and its history differs from country to country, which prevents us from labelling 'national' art history simply as an obstacle. Notice how the English term 'national' renders invisible the difference between a nation and a state, which is absolutely crucial for the understanding of any part of the modern history of Central Europe. What, then, is this feature, which determines that the supranational characteristic is the more essential, and thus the more correct one? Are we not here simply replacing one generalisation by another?

The text reflects on the problem of language right at the beginning, but it seems to me that again Rampley did not take this question far enough. He sees it as a problem of accessibility of art-historical scholarship produced in individual countries, that provide material for constructing a higher-quality, transregional interpretative framework. Does the lack of availability of research results in international languages mean that Czech, Polish, and Hungarian art-historical production

## 2 / Map of Europe with mean isotherms

from Geographical atlas for schools, 1930

Reproduction: Zeměpisný atlas pro měšťanské školy, Praha 1930





is restricted merely to a narrow local point of view? The publication of texts in the local language, specifically in Czech or the even less accessible Hungarian, is not necessarily due only to a methodological standpoint or being deliberately inward-looking, but is also dependent on the extremely limited access to the amounts of money that are necessary to produce a good-quality translation and international publication. And if researchers manage to be accepted in the environment of the main international languages, the editor, understandably, usually requires references limited to literature which is already available in these languages. The circle closes on itself.

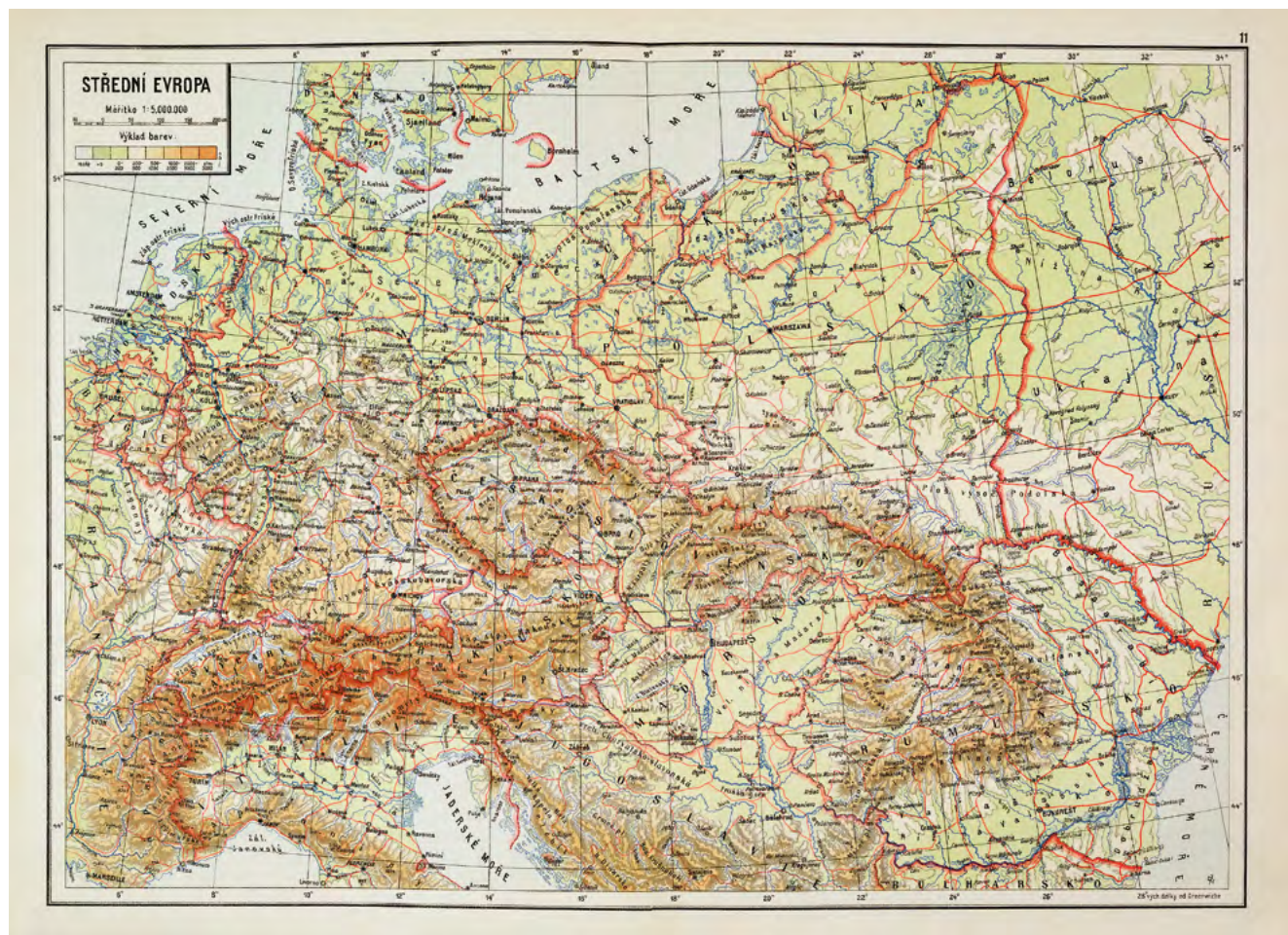
The question of canons, centres, and peripheries was raised by Enrico Castelnuovo and Carlo Ginzburg in their foreword to an overview of Italian art history in the early 1970s, and Rampley draws on this in his analysis. Italian art, however, is a specific topic, because a not inconsiderable part of it forms the basic core of the recognised European canon, and a problem first arises when explaining in art-historical terms how the country went in several

stages from being a centre to becoming a periphery. With the rise of neoliberal globalisation this question took on new urgency and scope. As Fredric Jameson puts it, this is a typical symptom of the post-modern shift to the conceptualisation of space, in contrast to the previous fascination with the temporal nature of 'development'. The term 'transnational' is linked primarily with the globalisation of corporations seeking to evade the control of local governments. In the 1980s and 1990s the art-historical version of this question was dealt with by a series of researchers, and was the theme of a CIHA international congress in 1986, where a major role was again played by Jan Białostocki. For Central European art history, however, it was more important to re-examine the question of centre and periphery in the local situation, where it had a significant prehistory in the concept of *Kunstlandschaft*, which, on the level of essentially or even biologically understood ethnicity, connected the territory with the formal specific nature of artistic production.<sup>1</sup> In addition to Białostocki, a significant contribution to this debate was made by the Slovak researcher Ján Bakoš with the concept of

### 3 / Map of Central Europe

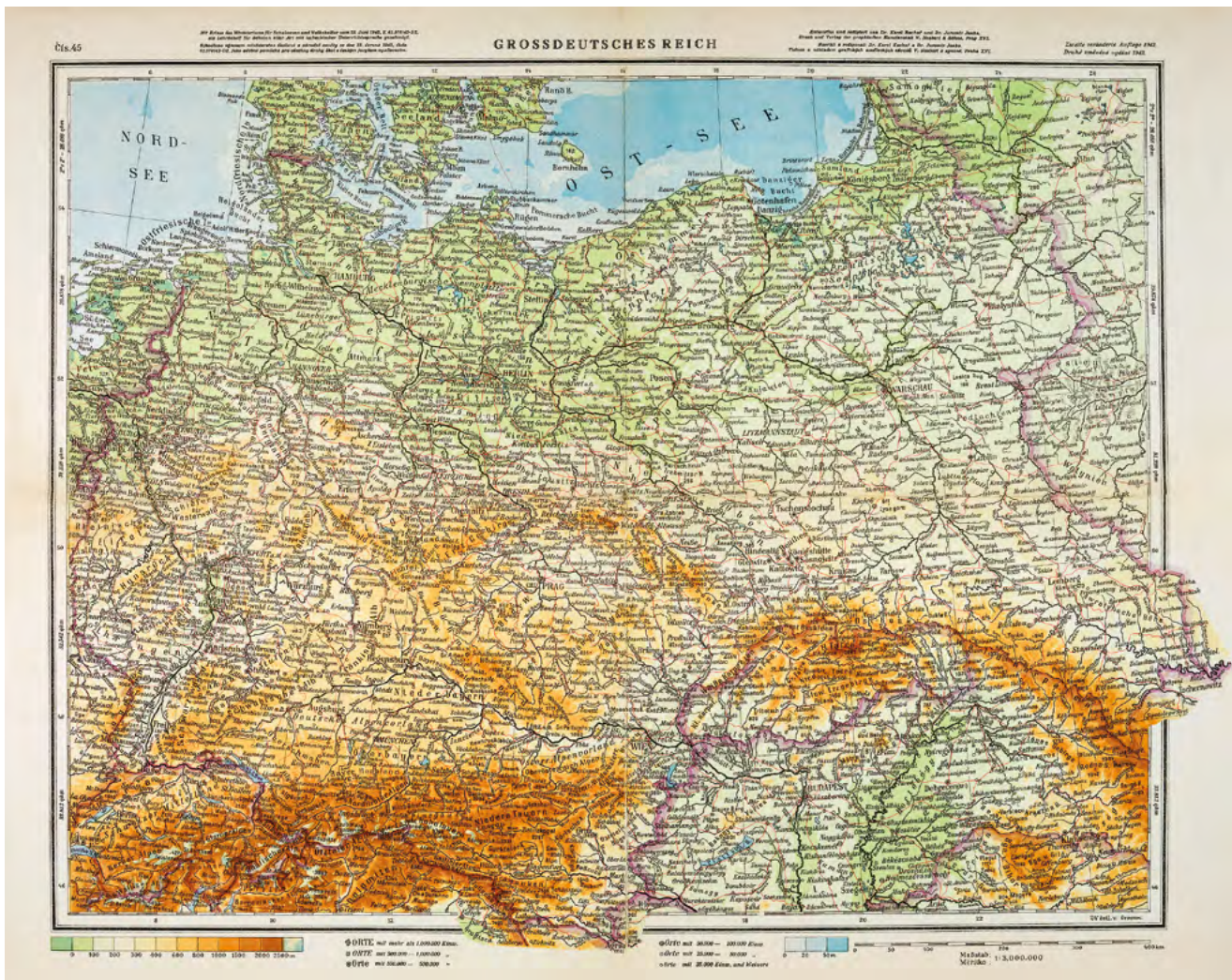
from Geographical atlas for schools, 1930

Reproduction: Zeměpisný atlas pro měšťanské školy, Praha 1930





MILENA BARTLOVÁ  
FROM WHICH VANTAGE POINTS DOES AN ART HISTORIAN LOOK?



#### 4 / Map of German Empire

inserted in Geographical atlas for schools, 1942 edition

Reproduction: Zeměpisný atlas pro městské školy, Praha 1942

the cultural crossroads as places of communication exchanges between centres and peripheries, where a new and specific quality may arise.<sup>2</sup> On the basis of a study of central Europe, Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann then proposed a 'geography of art', which aimed to revive the older concept of *Kunstgeographie* and do away with its ethnically essentialist and nationalistic aspects. His attempt to theoretically establish this 'geography of art' can justifiably be criticised for the vagueness of definition of the construct, and above all for neglecting current concepts of social geography.<sup>3</sup> DaCosta Kaufmann was more successful in his previous monograph, devoted to art in Central and Eastern Europe including Russia from the 15th to the 17th century, in which, in keeping with 'historical reality', he successfully captured the stylistic changes in art on this territory that he viewed as a network.<sup>4</sup> Piotrowski's 'horizontal art history' follows this discussion, and unless we consider it within this framework, our

understanding of it will be limited.

Did a problem arise when Piotrowski took the concept of a non-hierarchical, wide-ranging, transnational network which would take the place of the outwardly radiating and causally acting 'centre of innovation', and which was created for the interpretation of pre-modern art, and applied it to the art of classical Modernism? It may have been so. The visual art of the modern era differs from previous stages in one important aspect. It is the art of a society characterised by advanced industrialisation, well-developed capitalism, the development of technology (including communication technology), and the values of bourgeois science and culture. In terms of the present discussion, it is important that it is an art whose criteria are now determined also by the scholarly art history scene. One of the paradigmatic categories of this scene is, or was until recently, 'influence' — the long-distance transfer of energy from the higher-quality centre to





5 / Map of struggle of our people for freedom in years 1939-1945

from School atlas of Czechoslovak history, 1959

Reproduction: Školní atlas československých dějin, Praha 1959

the lower-quality periphery; the usual metaphor in classic German-language art history is *das Gefälle*, the gradient or slant. From the viewpoint of art history as an academic discipline the distribution of hierarchies differs from the map of art itself; in the former case the centre is in fact located in Central Europe, if we include Berlin as well as Vienna. The ideological construct which was created by art history, and which was situated in the tension between form, spiritual content, and national identity, encompassed also the artists (who studied art history at their academies), the critics, and the market. Within the framework of the Modernism discourse, the artists themselves could not do otherwise than think in categories of influence, originality as a value criterion, and the superiority of the masculine category of activity over the feminine category of passivity.

The spread of influence was conceptualised using metaphors from the fields of hydraulics or epidemiology, and thus it was assumed there would be a 'physically inevitable' delay. This time shift was not neutral, and the lower quality of the work that was influenced ensued from the paradigmatic position of the originality of the artistic gesture as the source of influence. It is no

coincidence that this 'time-space bias' is formulated as an effort and a requirement to catch up with a time lag; in other words, using the same terms which defined the situation of the post-communist countries after 1990 during their 'return to Europe'.<sup>5</sup> The construction and instrumentalization of the temporal category of delay in Central European art history have been well documented by Robert Suckale in his study on the oldest Gothic sculptures in Bohemia and Moravia.<sup>6</sup> If we do not try to derive a work of art from the world of ideas as an autonomous gesture by its creator, but consider the way in which it is rooted in specific social conditions, then the universalistic idea no longer has any sense, as has been demonstrated by Michael Baxandall. Then the problem of the centre and the periphery really does disappear, and not just rhetorically. At the same time, the production of artistic innovation is not falsified in any way.

If we attribute agency to the receiving side, which in this discussion is the periphery, then we are not simply inverting perspective, as Rampley criticises Piotrowski for doing. In fact, in my opinion, Piotrowski is referring rather to a mutual dependence of the centre and the periphery. Rather than being



MILENA BARTLOVÁ  
FROM WHICH VANTAGE POINTS DOES AN ART HISTORIAN LOOK?

linked to Hegel's philosophy, I understand this element of the discussion as being related to political economy. As Immanuel Wallerstein emphasised in his description of the relationship between the centre and the periphery, and as was graphically demonstrated by the decolonisation process after the mid-20th century, the centre is always dependent on the resources derived from the periphery.<sup>7</sup> It is not appropriate, however, to dismiss the network created in this way by labelling it as 'simply a metaphor'. This is no more the case than it is for other theoretical concepts. In Bruno Latour's 'actor-network-theory' the network represents a matrix which seems to me to be a tested and functional analytical term. Nevertheless, I agree with Rampley that a flat or horizontal network does not take sufficient account of the real existing hierarchies.<sup>8</sup> The new discussion on

Central Europe as a problem of centre and periphery would profit from accepting other than intuitive definitions of its topic. Wallerstein's classification may provide inspiration for the art-historical discussion with his category of the semi-periphery, which he describes as 'a combination of formal equality and dependent integration ..., which creates a characteristic tension with a typical combination of great ambitions and a feeling of inferiority'.<sup>9</sup> Similarly, the constructivist stimulus of political geography mentioned earlier would bring to the discussion a greater awareness that a geographical delimitation is not a given physical fact, but a social construct with an independent history and specific meanings. (A visual construct can be found in maps, which play a powerful role in shaping geographical concepts.<sup>10</sup> For this reason, I have used maps of Central

#### 6 / Map of Central Europe, Italy and Balkan Peninsula after the Vienna Congress

from Historical-geographical school atlas, 1921

Reproduction: Historicko-zeměpisný atlas školní, Praha 1921



Europe from Czech school atlases from the first half of the 20th century as illustrations to this article.)

When the vantage point is changed, the situation is disturbed, inverted, and re-evaluated. Instead of the metaphor of influence we think about selecting those artistic elements and possibilities which appear to the actively accepting side to be useful for its own expression. Taking e.g. the example of Cubism in the Czech lands it is possible to see what from the vantage point of the centre is 'a lack of understanding' as a creative appropriation forming new meanings, whose value is neither less nor greater than the original, but simply different. It is my belief that it is only through such paradigmatic turns that it would be possible to overcome the colonial point of view while avoiding replacement of one injustice by another; not to return to nationalism and conservatism, but instead to demonstrate the emancipating potential of the local.<sup>11</sup> It is my view that unless the importance of this form of approach to decolonialisation is recognised, a high-quality and innovative study of the issues relating to the history of Central European art will not be possible in the 2020s.

The post-colonial impulse came from outside Central Europe and it is only logical that it cannot be applied as a complete package from outside; this would only replicate the colonialist abuse of the intrinsic values of the countries lying outside the centre of Europe. It will be necessary to understand the concept of decolonialisation in a way that is appropriate to local conditions, created both in the past and in the present, to acknowledge one's own situation (including the linguistic aspect), and to analyse and take into account the local power relationships. The authority of the West is not based on an 'objectively higher' quality of art or scholarly argumentation, but on the context of power politics, which includes the economic situation. Is the economic and technological success of Western Europe a really irrefutable proof of the global superiority of its values? Who defines the quality of thought? And how? It is necessary to avoid both the universalistic debasement of the local, and of course a regression to conservative identitarianism.<sup>12</sup> The periphery cannot be satisfied with insufficiently informed art-historical thinking. At the same time, it is just as counter-productive to denigrate local values and not to recognise the periphery as a legitimate place from which to view the world.

To sum up: I believe that writing on Central European art from inside local scenes should not simply be rejected as nationalism, which can be overcome by an enlightened transnational approach across a larger geographical whole and by searching for supposed mutual relationships while maintaining the canonical values of the centre. The author himself mentions the limits to such a solution. The value of Rampley's article lies not only in its critique of 'horizontal

art history' in the form it had in the 1990s, but also in the fact that it has provoked discussion. This is admittedly taking place in English, but let us hope that as a result it will no longer be possible, even in our setting, to continue to avert one's gaze from the substantial fault lines in art-historical thought. It will no longer suffice to deconstruct and rethink the category of influence, something on which art history is already working. The same has recently begun to happen to the category of quality, which it will no longer be possible to identify with originality in the sense of an initiating role in a retrospectively constructed sequence of development. Even though the de-colonializing stimulus is relevant primarily for artistic cultures outside Europe, following David Summers it can serve in much broader perspective.<sup>13</sup> A new and more appropriate view of the history of art in Central and Eastern Europe will be more comprehensive than an attempt to replace one's own specific vantage point by a detached view from the fictitious higher position of a European observer.

In a way similar to feminism, the post-colonial discourse forces us to examine in greater depth the paradigms of art-historical scholarship. It is not enough to invert hierarchies or to disregard them; it is necessary to analyse, deconstruct, revise, and overcome them. In my opinion, it will only be possible to disturb the hierarchical model if we subject its premises, the art-historical categories of influence and value, to questioning and debate. Such a profound revision of basic paradigms, however would have to arise out of a feeling of acute necessity. But who needs this today? Not the individual countries, which are happy with national accounts of art history, nor the market, which, regardless of the 'death of the author', still clings to the idea of geniuses.<sup>14</sup> It was needed by the European Union (and that is a legitimate standpoint for Rampley as the Principal Investigator of a grant project supported by the ERC), but I am afraid that the right time, when there was a chance that this might be pushed through, has now passed, and that today we are facing other challenges. The answer might perhaps be to reverse the point of view: art history itself as an academic discipline needs a thorough revision of its own paradigms if it is to have at least a chance of surviving in a radically changing world and at the same time not to miss out on the task of helping to preserve those values from the European colonial past that deserve to be retained.

TRANSLATED BY PETER STEPHENS

MILENA BARTLOVÁ  
FROM WHICH VANTAGE POINTS DOES AN ART HISTORIAN LOOK?

## NOTES

1 On this, cf. my texts collected in the book Milena Bartlová, *Naše, národní umění*, Brno 2009; also in German translation: *Unsere 'nationale' Kunst*, transl. Anna Ohlidal, Ostfildern 2016, with further bibliography.

2 His earlier texts were collected in the book Ján Bakoš, *Periféria a umelecký skok*, Bratislava 2002.

3 Cf. Donat Grueninger (review), 'Toward a geography of art', *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* LXX, 2006, pp. 132–140.

4 Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann, *Court, Cloister and City: The Art and Culture of Central Europe, 1450–1800*, Chicago 1994.

5 Ondřej Slačálek, 'Postkoloniální střední Evropa? Kunderův "unesený Západ" v zrcadle postkoloniální kritiky', *Slovo a smysl* XVII, 2020, No. 34, pp. 105–130, esp. p. 123.

6 Robert Suckale, 'Beiträge zur Kenntnis der böhmischen Hofkunst des 13. Jahrhunderts', *Umění/Art* LI, 2003, pp. 78–98.

7 Stanislav Holubec, *Sociologie světových systémů. Hegemonie, centra, periferie*, Praha 2009. In English, see resources at <https://iwallerstein.com>, 4. 3. 2021.

8 For this reason, I have proposed that it would be better to use the concept of the stack, as put forward by Benjamin Bratton, for conceptualising the network.

9 Slačálek (note 5), p. 121.

10 Katarzyna Murawska-Muthesius, 'Mapping Eastern Europe: Cartography and Art History', *Artl@s Bulletin* II, 2013, pp. 14–25 (article 3), <https://docs.lib.purdue.edu/artlas/vol2/iss2/>, 4. 3. 2021.

11 In the current topical sense, a 'return to the earth', cf. Bruno Latour, *Down to Earth. Politics in the New Climatic Regime*, Cambridge 2018.

12 Slačálek (note 5), pp. 11–115.

13 David Summers, *Real Spaces: World Art History and the Rise of Western Modernism*, London 2003.

14 I discussed how practical circumstances prevent us from abandoning the national account of art history in a paper presented at a conference in Brussels in 2007, to which Matthew Rampley invited us as part of a project on writing a transnational history of art historiography. The text was published in Czech in 2009, and later in German, see Bartlová (note 1).

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ON EAST-CENTRAL EUROPEAN ART, ADAM MICKIEWICZ UNIVERSITY, POZNAŃ

# What isn't Orthodox Horizontal Art History

Horizontal art history, a concept developed by Piotr Piotrowski in a study published over a decade ago in *Umění* and the subject of numerous polemics, involves a method that is far from orthodox. As elaborated in Piotrowski's last book (still unpublished in English) into what he calls alterglobalist art history, the concept emerges as having Marxism as its essential but always inconsistent background. Although in my text, focused on the polemics with Matthew Rampley, but also — with Piotr Piotrowski, I refer to his last book, the current study has a restricted focus as regards the overall reception of horizontal art history and its aftermath. This is partially due to the character of the present text, written as a response to the text by Rampley, and partially because I discuss the whole complicated complicated problem subject extensively elsewhere: both in the afterword to the book by Piotrowski and in my text discussing limitations of horizontal art history which is about to be published in the book on horizontal art history by Routledge.<sup>1</sup>

Therefore, by quoting the famous essay by György Lukács *What is Orthodox Marxism*, I attempt to frame both the concept of horizontal art history and the critical standpoint of Rampley with Marxism, that affirms unorthodoxy of Piotrowski's method.

## On the class consciousness of periphery

While Rampley rightly refers to Piotrowski's misadaptation of Hegel, my concern here is his inconsistent relationship with Marxism. It is something that becomes evident in Piotrowski's last, unfinished book, which opens with a paraphrase of the *Communist Manifesto* — a call for the *Peripheries of the World* to unite. The Marxist background of Piotrowski's thought can be

traced in his earlier writings but emerges fully only in this book. With the seemingly playful call, Piotrowski activates the semantic tension between the notion of periphery(ies) and the proletariat, which — once addressed — reveals the core practical problems with Piotrowski's method noted by Rampley. Rampley argues that what Piotrowski perceives as the privileged position of the peripheries over the centre is in fact an oversimplification of the problem. He gives the example of Austrian-Hungarian margins' blindness to the "cracks" in the centre and shows that although 'there was a tension in the "centre" over the status of German culture ... such nuance was frequently ignored in the tense transnational encounters with the Empire.' Moreover 'Vienna was often treated as a single, monolithic, alien centre of power.' This opens up much wider debates related not only to the mere existence of the periphery within the centre, but also to the conditions and limitations of the allegedly privileged peripheral view questioned by Rampley. In order to approach the subject I would like to recall the widely discussed notion of the 'consciousness of proletariat' put forward by the Hungarian Marxist philosopher György Lukács (born 1885) in his famous 1923 essay on 'Reification and the Consciousness of the Proletariat', written only five years after the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. In this essay, included in his book 'History and Class Consciousness' (*Geschichte und Klassenbewusstsein*), Lukács develops the notion of reification embedded in Marx's *Capital*, deriving it from Marx's concepts of alienation and commodity.<sup>2</sup> Interestingly, what Rampley not unreasonably describes as the occasional blindness of peripheries to the internal incoherences of the centre, could also be interpreted as a result of the process of reification. The Hungarian Marxist describes the submission of the proletariat 'to

MAGDALENA RADOMSKA  
WHAT ISN'T ORTHODOX HORIZONTAL ART HISTORY

the “laws” of bourgeois society either in a spirit of supine fatalism (e.g. towards the natural laws of production) or else in a spirit of “moral” affirmation (the state as an ideal, a cultural positive).<sup>3</sup> Although for Lukács ‘reification is, then, the necessary, immediate reality of every person living in capitalist society,’ it also conditions the process of change. As he claims: ‘only when the consciousness of the proletariat is able to point out the road along which the dialectics of history is objectively impelled, but which it cannot travel unaided, will the consciousness of the proletariat awaken to a consciousness of the process, and only then will the proletariat become the identical subject-object of history whose praxis will change reality. If the proletariat fails to take this step the contradiction will remain unresolved and will be reproduced by the dialectical mechanics of history at a higher level, in an altered form and with increased intensity. It is in this that the objective necessity of history consists. The deed of the proletariat can never be more than to take the next step in the process.’<sup>4</sup> Moreover — the action, he argues, ‘does not need to become explicit as the plenitude of the totality does not need to be consciously integrated into the motives and objects of action.’<sup>5</sup> The class consciousness of the proletariat thus takes the form of a practice. ‘Proletarian thought is practical thought and as such is strongly pragmatic,’<sup>6</sup> asserts Lukács. What can this mean unless it is that the privileged, subject-object position of proletariat, does not — by necessity — involve an initial, ‘theoretical’ awareness, nor is it conditioned by an ability to immunise against the process of reification? How, according to the Hungarian philosopher, is it possible for the proletariat to be ‘the identical subject-object of the historical process, i.e. the first subject in history that is (objectively) capable of an adequate social consciousness?’<sup>7</sup> He argues that the process is ‘no single, unrepeatable tearing of the veil that masks the process but the unbroken alternation of ossification, contradiction and movement ... namely the tendencies of history awakening into consciousness.’<sup>8</sup>

Although Piotrowski himself neither draws nor elaborates on this parallel in his texts — I believe that when framed with Marxism, Piotrowski’s notion of the periphery is not so distant from Marxist understanding of the proletariat in the aspect of its self-consciousness. Contrary to Rampley’s claim, Piotrowski never aimed at the actual inversion of ‘the relation between “western” and “eastern” Europe’. Instead, what he proposed was a strategy of provincialisation of the West, which ‘requires one to deal with the culture of the West in the same way one would deal with the cultures of many global provinces or peripheries.’<sup>9</sup> While I agree with Rampley’s assertion that delegitimisation of the ‘talk of centres and peripheries per se,’ does not seem to be a solution to the problem of the mere existence of peripheries — i.e. — the marginalisation of non-Western parts of the globe, there is a certain drawback to his argument. What he proposes is a false choice between maintaining those binary notions and the possibility of their abolition.

At the same time Rampley infers that by declaring the privileged position of peripheries, Piotrowski is seeking to subject the West to provincialisation in order to raise the status of the periphery as a way of creating yet another unequal relation between peripheries and the (previous) degraded centres. However, attention to the Marxist background of Piotrowski’s thought justifies a significantly different claim, which is that Piotrowski’s sees the provincialisation of the West as the factor enabling it to gain a consciousness contingent on a marginal position. Piotrowski’s notion of periphery derives from the concept of the margin that appeared in the books of his teacher and colleague Art History Institute — Andrzej Turowski,<sup>10</sup> who taught Marxism filtered by French post-structuralism — i.e. — the notion of Derridian *Parergon*, but also — by the writings of Roland Barthes. Hence, the process of the provincialisation of the West seems to be structured on the one hand by the figure of the *death of the author*, who returns to the text as unprivileged object, and on the other by the Marxist claim on the dehumanisation of the class of owners as a result of class division.<sup>11</sup>

What Piotrowski proposes does not rely on simple inversion, but functions rather as a trigger to set binaries in dialectical motion, in awareness of the fact that peripheries create their own centres and that a centre is prone to certain omissions, so creating peripheries within itself. His shift of focus onto the peripheral view may be compared to the temporary dictatorship of the proletariat, leading to the abolition of the hierarchical, hegemonic narrative not so much by maintaining the notions of periphery and centre as by setting them in dialectical motion. Thus the privileged position of peripheries is practiced not by their awakening to theory, but by the very practice of their exclusion — marginalisation and exploitation.

### On the internal contradictions of modernity

In order to demonstrate the practical repercussions of my argument I need to elaborate on what Rampley, following Piotrowski, refers to as the ruptured centre, far from coherency. Although in his last book Piotrowski not only discusses the issue but frames it in the context of the applicability of the postcolonial narrative to East-Central Europe, he still fails to recognise the crucial problem with the adaptation of that narrative. He draws critical attention to the problem of the homogenisation of the culture of Europe from the standpoint of post-colonialism, indicating its oversimplifications as far as intra-European colonialism is concerned, although he chooses to ignore Marxist criticism of postcolonial narrative such as the book *Eurocentrism* by Egyptian Marxist Samir Amin, published in English in 1989.<sup>12</sup> Amin’s study not only provides adequate answers to certain questions raised by Piotrowski (the peculiar situation of East-Central Europe, Greece or Scandinavia),

but also approaches them from various different angles that could have expanded the possibilities of Piotrowski's method of horizontal art history to encompass a global class structure that cuts across the seemingly stable geo-political determinants. I argue that both horizontal art history and the alterglobalist art history derived from it can never be horizontal enough until they take into account the notion of a class. There is a need to refer issues discussed earlier such as the privileged awareness of peripheries to the very much related question of what — following the Marxist frame, can be addressed as the 'internal contradictions of modernity' — a question brought up in different ways by Rampley, Susan Buck-Morss, Walter Mignolo, but also reflected in the very structure of the book *Modern Art in Eastern Europe. From the Baltic to the Balkans, ca. 1890–1939* written by Steven Mansbach.

In *Dreamworld and Catastrophe*, Buck-Morss investigates the construction of mass utopia, describing the 'fall of Eastern Europe into the widely outstretched arms of the West,' when eventually what 'was advertised as a revolution proved an incorporation, not into the European Community but into ... a global capitalist system.'<sup>13</sup> Similarly decolonial narratives harshly criticise the project of modernity. Walter Mignolo, by following Aníbal Quijano in raising the issue of 'epistemic de-linking' or 'epistemic disobedience' recalls the notion of the subaltern introduced by Antonio Gramsci,<sup>14</sup> creating a crucial tension with the centre-periphery binary which is disruptive of the linkage of modernity with coloniality.<sup>15</sup> Mignolo claims that the 'ideology of modernity as supported by the very nature of the capitalist economy' is hardly ever questioned, even while the 'unfortunate consequences of modernity' such as poverty are discussed.<sup>16</sup> Decolonial narrative opens up the criticism of modernity (and potentially — Modernism) to the notion of the class and class struggle, which appears as paradigmatic. It is the very structure of the criticism that enables or disables this opening up. Thus Mansbach's book, by being structured according to national divisions, made it impossible for certain aspects of a comprehensive overview of Modernism to appear.<sup>17</sup> Similarly, when Rampley reflects on the factors that 'contribute to maintaining a hierarchy' of artistic narratives, he sees language as the most important factor, alongside the 'historical legacy of the economic mismanagement of Communist rule, its censorship policies and restrictions on travel and exchange of ideas,' but this ignores how the knowledge of a particular language is related to the whole sphere of the flow of capital — i.e. — how profitable it is initially.

When discussing the limitations of the subversive role of the study of networks in the context of Modernism and (by extension) criticism of the centre, Rampley rightly argues that 'diagrammatic mapping of avant-garde networks, noting that certain relations existed between individual artists, groups, institutions and cities,

says little about their qualitative character.' The criteria chosen by Rampley, such as whether the relations were friendly, rivalrous or hostile, might well be expressed as relations of production, which are usually excluded not only from art historical narrative, but also from the very practice of formal analysis. This applies particularly to their economic aspect, involving technical, political and social elements. The subversive application of the notion of networking would involve a major paradigmatic change — towards collectivity, comprehended as relative equality. As 'it is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but their social existence that determines their consciousness.'<sup>18</sup>

Rampley concludes his essay by identifying two different solutions to the problem, although both are grounded in what he calls 'the acceptance of existing hierarchies.' His initial proposition — to jettison stylistic labels, creates an interesting tension with the much more radical call of Piotrowski, who in his last book advocates for global studies 'to reject the dominance of West-centric formal analysis' in favour of a more 'material' approach.<sup>19</sup> Although he had no time to elaborate on this alternative, or put it into practice, it would have required him to reflect on inconsistencies in application of Marxism, Piotrowski managed to address the issue of peripheries in a global context, laying the foundations for what he called alterglobalist art history. He thus created an open construct that allows for questioning of his horizontal art history as not horizontal enough so long as it lacks a focus on the notion of class, which would allow us to discuss the possibility of rejecting the tradition of formal analysis in favour of an emphasis on the importance of a class struggle and relations of production. Furthermore, this would involve the definitive rejection of the division of labour that influences the art historical narrative by creating the impression of a binary of art and art history. We would then be able to see a work of art as a product contrary to art historical narrative and thus to see analysis as the process of both creation and reflection upon the relations of production that condition not only an art work, but also the art historical narrative. Those are the only conditions under which both artworks and the narrative of the periphery may be disentangled from the mediation of the West and cease to appear as indebted, instead of exploited within the existing relations of production.

MAGDALENA RADOMSKA  
WHAT ISN'T ORTHODOX HORIZONTAL ART HISTORY

## NOTES

1 Piotrowski's last book is to be published by Igor Zabel Association for Culture and Theory in Ljubljana. Book on horizontal art history [edited by Agata Jakubowska and Magdalena Radomska] accepted for publication by Routledge.

2 György Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness: Studies in Marxist Dialectics*, Cambridge 1972, p. XXIV.

3 Ibidem, p. 196.

4 Ibidem, p. 197.

5 Ibidem, p. 198.

6 Ibidem.

7 Ibidem, p. 199.

8 Ibidem.

9 Piotr Piotrowski, *Globalne ujęcia sztuki Europy Wschodniej*, Poznań 2018, p. 10.

10 Andrzej Turowski, *Wielka utopia awangardy. Artystyczne i społeczne utopie w sztuce rosyjskiej 1910–1930*, Warszawa 1990.

11 Karl Marx, *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*, *Estranged Labour*, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1844/manuscripts/labour.htm>, 24. 3. 2021.

12 Samir Amin, *Eurocentrism*, New York 2009.

13 Susan Buck-Morss, *Dreamworld and Catastrophe. The Passing of Mass Utopia in East and West*, Cambridge 2010, p. 229.

14 Walter D. Mignolo, 'Epistemic Disobedience and the Decolonial Option: A Manifesto', *Transmodernity*, Fall 2011, p. 44–45.

15 Ibidem.

16 Ibidem, p. 46.

17 Steven A. Mansbach, *Modern Art in Eastern Europe*, Cambridge 1999.

18 Karl Marx, *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1859/critique-pol-economy/preface.htm>, 24. 3. 2021.

19 Piotrowski (note 9), p. 23.

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# MINCE words: For and Against Writing on Modernism *IN* Central Europe

Like most articles in the current issue of *Umění/Art*, this essay is, upon the request of the editor, a 'reaction to the issues raised by Matthew Rampley's article'. Rampley's piece is an erudite and stimulating, if somewhat long-winded, consideration of subject, debate and strategy. As the editor suggested it is worthy of provocative dialectical retort. In our case, the acronym, MINCE, standing for 'Modernism in Central Europe', guides critical deconstruction of Rampley's argument. In order to consider the multivalency of MINCE, at the outset it should be stated that both Rampley and the editor in her invitation for a response, gave ambiguous formulations to the concept being investigated. They agreed it was Modernism and they posited it as being 'in' a region. Yet they could not give that region a single name nor identify its boundaries. In fact, they offered four variants of place, each being imagined geopolitical constructs: 1) Central Europe; 2) East-Central Europe; 3) central and Eastern Europe; 4) (East-) Central Europe. Thus a fog hangs over the fundamental terminology. Although definition/scope/meaning of 'eastern' and 'central' Europe, is eschewed, Rampley claims that his subject is 'writing on the modern art and architecture of Eastern and Central Europe (i.e. those territories lying between Germany and Russia)'. Elsewhere he implies that the concern is for 'Czechoslovak, Hungarian or Polish art and architecture' and that 'Berlin, Zagreb or Belgrade' fall beyond bounds. Therein lies a conundrum: i.e. how does one twist individual and national strains to conform to a regional narrative and at the same time stay committed to broader multipolarity and networks? Herein then, via text and three images, is what I can make of the problem, and it leads towards the practice that I consider tumbleweed enquiry, from which is derived, ironically, what we can conceive as art historical mince. [1]

It is worth adding, at the outset, that the editor's invitation to respond to Rampley was a difficult one to

accept, despite my having worked in 'the field' for a very long time. While I regularly do it in my work I am never particularly at ease writing about writing about writing. Worse, I am uneasy about writing about writing about writing about a concept (rather than a thing, even if a thing is a concept). With each step, to my mind, enquiry moves further away from the object. It is the object and its creative act that is my crux. The further removed from it we become the more we move into word play, and with that the realm of abstract rhetorical device. Whatever the attractions of distance without that crux to an argument or presentation it will be hard to bring the actual stuff of art to a wide audience, to reveal, probe and question its value, substance, place, context. The danger is also that text becomes posture and/or sophistry, and, thereby, a deflection from really informed, critical study of the creative acts/connections of art, architecture and design.

Of course it is helpful to break down concepts and structures, to expose the hindrances and limitations of frameworks, patterns and status quos, to propose alternatives. But, for me at least, the most effective way of doing this is via exploration of examples of the material, making and form, PLUS having that exploration informed by/developed alongside extant critical mass. This way significance, meaning, relationship, correspondence can be teased out with greater authority than argument based on argument. To fully understand the dynamic machine of art history we need to appreciate its cogs, mechanics and movements.

## 1. (D)Elusive Geographies

Rampley's 'territories... between Germany and Russia' is a nebulous construct inspired by Oskar Halecki's problematic conceptual division of Europe. The Polish



JEREMY HOWARD  
MINCE WORDS



1 / **Josef Váchal, World of Amoeba, from the cycle Meditations about Life**

(World of Individuals), 1915

coloured linocut, paper, 255 × 220 cm

Reproduction: Josef Kroutvor – Michal Ajvaz – Petr Hruška – Jan Pelánek, Josef Váchal, Praha 1994

Catholic activist designed this, as World War Two progressed and he emigrated to the USA, to exclude Turkey and Russia, along with many of their near neighbours and successor states, from a purported shared sense of community between what he perceived as 'east central' and 'western' Europe. Halecki's ambition was to orientalise Russia and Turkey, to make sure their cultures and peoples were regarded as non-European, i.e. as other. His evocation of an unhappy combination of the territorial and cultural claims of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and the Habsburg empire resonates with contentious imperial ambitions (including post-1945 Atlanticist aims of European carve-up). Excluding 'eastern' Europe, as well as the peninsula's northern (Scandinavian) peninsula and its southeastern (Balkan) peninsula, not only deliberately peripheralises the human ways of these large territories but it is also designed to exaggerate the 'westernness' of the lands and societies considered. In turn, regardless of the alternative secularities or spiritualities of the times and art, this means encouraging ideas of principal social fount for their denominations of Christian faith (Catholic and Protestant). In sum, 'east central Europe' lacks both dignity and humility, revealing by its clunky, assertive and spurious quality, a lack of confidence in the being and becoming of culture and place. I place it alongside 'Global North', 'Global South', 'Third World', 'Developing Countries' and 'The West' as a stultifying sociopolitical misnomer.

Furthermore, 'territories between Germany and Russia' (note that Germany comes first), assumes states

and borders are static and that both stretch across the Eurasian peninsula known as Europe from north to south. Plus, by adding east to central the suggestion is: 1) that there is a west central to its west, which presumably is considered Germany, most of Austria and Switzerland; 2) that an actual centre of Europe is a fault line or dot between these and east central (and therefore some thousand kilometres further west than the geographical centre); and 3) that you, following Halecki, are shrinking the so-called continent in an orientalist way contrived for othering vast parts, and cultures, of Turkish, Russian, Kazakh and Caucasian lands. Exclusion and geopolitical obfuscation therefore begin immediately. To take it at geographic face value this means of Austria, only the northeastern region may be included, and, to the east, anything south of Budapest, including the whole of the Balkans, is omitted. To the north, Czechoslovakia and Poland, for all their changing boundaries, can be regarded as just about fully inside the territories, but what shall we do with the Baltic and Soviet cultures? Essentially, exclude, because what is being conceived is a Greater Visegrád Group box, the right edge of which could be said to start near Kaunas and end near Cluj-Napoca (which the group would call Koložsvár or Klausenburg), while the other edges could be seen to comprise representations of the ragged and changing borderlines around territories sometimes regarded as Hungarian, Czechoslovak and Polish. This is absurdity. And the confusion created harkens to weakness, insecurity. The problem suggests to me we should abandon any claims to academic neutrality and admit that we are engaged in distortive geopolitical demarcation that constructs new regionalist boundaries where, for the period being investigated, cultural production and interaction happened in ways that run completely counter to those constructs.

Europe is not an entity and east central Europe less so. Far better, whenever possible, to abandon such clumsy, static, ringfencing formulation, and to forget inaccurate, subjective compass points. Provincialising Europe can certainly be healthy, but the concept of 'east central' Europe is so artificial and fraught that it makes the idea of the 'United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland' seem almost reasonable. Which is saying something, albeit because something collectively 'British' can be discerned in the archipelago off the northwest coast of the Eurasian landmass. Far better to think of communities and Europes, the plurality of which suggests multiplicity, mutability, correspondence and inclusivity.

## 2. (D)Elusive Modernisms

If spurious and evidently changeable compass points need to be rejected, perhaps we should consider treating 'modernism' the same way. After four decades of personally using and relishing 'modernism' it seems to me that the term is becoming increasingly meaningless and at the same time it is still its old politicised self, just with changing sets of clothes. Its attractions are multiple, with critics, artists and market manipulators from numerous camps consciously using the term to advance cause, reception and reputation. But remember the suffix -ism means taking sides, trying to bracket, to offer legitimation through incorporation into a master narrative. Modernism is a device invented by west-identifiers and promoters that signals club. It is a hegemonic conceit that divides rather than binds. By now it is a weary fetish that is all but a hollow shell which embeds difference and hierarchy. Thus it should be identified as institutionalised income stream that limits and should itself be limited.

As an imagined non-entity, the idea of Modernism is that of a vehicle for manufacturing systemic consent. Its cult is frequently reactionary dressed as radical, exclusive disguised as progressive, hierarchical posited as horizontal. In seeking to separate an elite corps of creative spirits and works from the rest it proposes an exceptionalism that furthers the abusive political power dynamics it supposedly challenges. Based on superiority complex its snobbery has inbuilt derisiveness. It would seem about time to try to abandon it, and instead simply deal with art and what is art. Even 'modern', when applied to the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, is anachronistic and should be jettisoned. For that modern, like Modernism, is certainly no longer modern. Rather, the call should be to elucidate inventiveness, craft, materiality, aesthetic and cultural assignation. Let us then, straightforwardly, explore relations to life and actual, contemporary modernity. In this way we can articulate creative and object biography and transference. My impulse would be to contextualise, decontextualise and recontextualise, particularly by



unpicking the language, idea, meaning of artwork and design. In a recent Q&A session conducted with students taking a survey course of nineteenth to early twentieth-century European art at St Andrews it was brought to staff attention that one colleague had confusingly indicated in a lecture that Modernism began in 1789 (the year, of course, promoting French leadership) while others had suggested a later date of birth. Other colleagues then proposed the following alternatives: 1848, 1860s, c. 1900, 1907. We did not, of course, get to the interwar period. Students were left to ponder (which may not be a bad thing).

## 3. Prejudice

Any interest in MINCE, or the early-twentieth century art of somewhere sometimes misleadingly called East-Central Europe, or something similar, should not be invested with a sense of competition, even though adding edge can always vitalise. Let methodologies and concepts vary, let networks and collaboration flourish, whether local, regional, international or transnational. If we are driven by a sense of injustice, that the art and cultures we find so significant are undervalued by others, then let us consider who those others, and ourselves, may be and what actually is the status quo. Rampley knows all this, but in his acknowledgment he misrepresents. Let our quest for recognition not be blighted by zealotry, sophistry or glib assertions of 'economic mismanagement... censorship... restrictions' for one political (i.e. socialist) system yet not for a catastrophic Ponzi-scheme-based other. Any study should beware of determining influence one-dimensionally, i.e. with the malign Soviet Union supplying repressive 'successive... client regimes' but benign Brussels (EU) and Washington (USA), through lack of mention, fostering creative and critical freedom among satellites not presented as such. It is well to remember bipartisanship is as oppressive as partisanship. Moreover, let us not latch on to seemingly iconic 'outsiders', be they individuals or institutions, for this smacks of soliciting recognition through the very hierarchical framework that should be undermined. Indeed, Rampley's summation of networking concludes with contact with Le Corbusier and the Bauhaus, and in so doing just perpetuates assumed master/underdog relations, while also conveniently ignoring: 1) that fascist- and anti-Semitic-inclined Le Corbusier, if he must be mentioned, was more moved by the Balkans than things Czech; and 2) that the Bauhaus can be considered behind the times by comparison with, for example, the Reimann Schule, where many MINCERS studied.



JEREMY HOWARD  
MINCE WORDS



3 / Václav Švec, *Don't Pull our Legs!*,  
the 'Allies in Siberia' comedy, 1919  
Reproduction: Houpačky IV, 1919

#### 4. Outside the Box

Thinking and working outside of the contrived regionalist MINCE box has many benefits. With a certain inquisitive anarchy a new quality of fairness may be brought to bear. It might be best to assume a *tabula rasa* and thereby set in motion a great reset in which the currency is changed. Rather than a new blend of art oil the world would be better served by developing a way of processing and refining resources that is sustainable. Rampley's five 'What is to be done?' steps are well-considered, if patronising and not radical enough. Let us signal a certain type of more beneficial change/interchange. The proud skeleton of Jan Letzel's eloquent modern exhibition hall in southern Japan can be regarded as a beacon of light in a world laid waste by a devastatingly destructive drive for power through division. We should view the Prefectural Commercial Exhibition Hall in Hiroshima before and

without the USA's atomic bomb, with its copper dome reflecting the sun. [2] Letzel was not restricted to MINCE: what he created built upon that which he learned and experienced both in his Czech and adopted homelands. In itself that suggests art, like life, is intercourse and, therefore, by implication, MINCE is one-sided tangle.

#### 5. From Tangled Truths and Tumbleweeds to Linking Learning Lexicons

Rampley, to give him credit, both advocates entanglement history and recognises that it is as ideologically driven as the histories it counters. Václav Švec visualised the problem while in Irkutsk with the Czechoslovak Legion in 1919, as seen in his drawing for the appropriately titled *Houpačky* (Swings). 'Don't pull our legs!' shows how allies and adversaries alike are caught in a web controlled by invisible and opposing masters. [3] The web is two webs, one red, one black.

The red foe, while enmeshed by a *mêlée* of opponents and waving his own enlacing red cords, is, just like his captors, a marionette whose simulation of life and individuality is equally subject to manipulation, by unseen hands, of the strings to which they are bound. The image is not modernist. It is not *MINCE*. But it is connected to those concepts, however spurious they may be. So with its Siberia-based inconvenient swings and questionable roundabouts it breaks the confines of *MINCE* conceptualisation. It reminds me that we should try practicing what I call tumbleweed art history. This is more appropriate than weighed-down, chaotic-allusive entanglement theory and transnationalism. For tumbleweed is a diaspora whose cycles of existence depend on an anatomical system developed for dispersal. Let it be the natural, wind-blown, art history plant which spawns new life through detachment from roots and opportunistic adaptation to disparate environments. Let tumbleweed art history uproot and disrupt old entanglements.

We may be puppets on multiple puppeteer-controlled strings, but let us snip away as many of these as possible — in order to blow and bond at least somewhat more freely. This is preferable to engaging in erudite navel gazing that picks out isolated, atypical examples of supposedly central European avant-garde magazines, and which uses the divisive conjunctive adverb ‘however’ multiple times. Such casual marking of opposition or contrariness is telling. Better would be to examine our parts of speech and create a new grammar for the art to which we are drawn, and to which we would like to draw others: a is for all, b for breadth, c for casting off canon, convention, capital and corporate chains in favour of conveying concrete correspondence and community...

## 6. The Dark Web of the Citation Index and Research Evaluation Programme

Art historians trying to grapple with and proselytise central or east European Modernism are whistling in the dark. The whistles might find echoes and even ostensible support from ‘high places’, but without fundamental changes in socio-economic power dynamics they will always be confined to a subordinate place. In his strategies for writing on *MINCE* Rampley avoids mention of the use of citation indexes and research evaluation programmes. He also ignores the pervasive influence of the project-based grant system, with its encouragement of a mercenary attitude. Many, if not most, of this system’s beneficiaries have to go with the flow of short-termist political tides. Does this neglect imply acceptance by omission, advocacy by silence, or fear of their power? Perhaps all three. He and we are bought agents with less room for independent manoeuvre than we generally accept. Or so it would seem. One only has to click on the home page of *Umění* to

find, right alongside its title in English, the flagging of its inclusion in the Web of Science, Scopus, etc. The striving for such assimilation requires great investment and comes at great cost. The result is, rather more than the intended broadening of the conception, perception and reception of *MINCE*, an advertisement for private, politically-motivated, thought control mechanisms. For this inclusion becomes a badge of subjugation, a symbol of compliance with a corrupt, non-academic, Western system of data- and profit-driven persuasive technology. Buck, or even just ignore, that system at your peril. Neo-imperialist by default, the programmes are designed to deny the local and creative, as well as anything deemed alternative, individual, non-mainstream, unofficial, i.e. non-corporate. The rise of the citation index is intrinsically linked to the spread of academic research evaluation programmes. From their British Thatcherite origins and Blairite elaborations, the overall effect is of globalist swamp. In my experience of these programmes over the past three decades, they have presided over and hastened the decline of recognised work on Scottish art (see below). For these hugely expensive exercises in the commodification of education lower the value of what is local to us in favour of raising the value of that considered international. One impact is that small or local presses are turned into ignored, dissident samizdat irrespective of the quality of their output. Such problematic auditing is being aped in central Europe and, from my experience of serving, for instance, on the Humanities Board of the Czech Academy of Sciences Research Evaluation Programme, it adds nothing to the development or outreach of writing on *MINCE*. I would go so far as to recommend rejection of the validity of both citation index and evaluation programme, for these humiliating, faux-liberal models of surveillance capitalism stultify genuine academic debate and knowledge sharing. Promoted as means for efficiency and expansion they are actually set up as invasive, bureaucracy-spawning, regulatory enterprises that cost far more to both state and science (including the humanities) than they save or generate. Let self-trust and natural networks lead the way.

Those who have taken it upon themselves to set the rules have decided we are in a competitive, professionalised sport, and the playing field is never going to be level. Remember Czechs rule the roost in terms of quantities of top women tennis players per capita, yet your average Anglophone pundit would struggle to name, let alone know the skills and triumphs of, more than one or two. Realise this is the Anglophone world’s loss and, however frustrating, it does not matter, for recognition in and by that world based on delusive punditry is hollow anyway. Talk of horizontal art history is as Utopian as it comes. We should accept that horizontality is flat and can be a dull levelling. Rampley sees this. Thus we should expect and encourage bumps, rises and falls, always being conscious that

JEREMY HOWARD  
MINCE WORDS

though the King might be dead, long lives the King. We are conditioned to accept that Picasso is God the Father and Duchamp God the Son. The pantheon might be slightly extended to include Josef Gočár and Toyen, but the divine order will remain... as long as the cult of celebrity and leader, of individual, and its construction of opposition to the humane collective, irrespective of claims to the contrary, remains a particularly insidious foundation of corporate society.

### 7. Compromises and Comparatives

Although I have laid down the gauntlet and identified objections to Rampley's conveyance of Modernism and place, compromise should not be ruled out. We could suggest that simply 'art' is better than 'modernism'; 'of' is more tumbleweed inclusive than 'in'; 'Central Europe' is more acceptable than 'East Central' (given the flaws outlined above). Furthermore, on occasion, dates or period could be added. In proposing a pragmatic way forward a somewhat sorry personal and institutional story may, for all its woes and warnings, offer glimmers of hope. Embedded in this story is the impact of the systems of peer review, grants, projects, citation index and research evaluation programme. It is based far away from MINCE in a small, old coastal town increasingly threatened by the waves of the North Sea. That provincial place on the edge of an island separated from the Eurasian landmass nurtured two art historians involved in this conversation. One Jeremy Howard. One Matthew Rampley. The first has stayed. The second has gone. In my (our) early years in St Andrews, the 1980s and 1990s, there were courses in Scottish painting, Scottish furniture, Scottish architecture, Scottish photography, Scottish Arts & Crafts. In fact there were almost as many Scottish courses as there were lecturers — this seemingly appropriate for Scotland's oldest university. However, by the 2020s there were no Scottish art history courses, and, despite a faculty around three times the size it was before, only two Scottish lecturers, both on part-time, non-research, contracts. Scottish students on the courses have also dwindled to a tiny fraction of the cohort. But there are now multiple courses on 'global' subjects, all only requiring English language (a foreign language was previously a requirement for admission). Unspoken rules of self-assimilation and marketing have been applied in the changing guises of the supposedly all-important British higher education research audits. So-called international students are recruited, places for non-tuition-fee paying locals are reduced. Our education is no longer parochial. With expansion and connection comes counterpart contraction and disconnect. At St Andrews this means that art history students receive an education in Scotland (or disseminated electronically from Scotland) but hardly of Scotland. That said, things Scottish, where they feature, are now blended in bigger

pictures (no bad thing in itself). Imagine if this was the case in, say, Prague or Brno for things Bohemian or Moravian: MINCE would be well and truly minced.

### 8. Building by Bit: A Teaching and Learning Way

For all the foregoing, we may start to conclude by alighting on the institutional structures around the St Andrews case and, thereby, the implications they have for MINCE. How much art history is there in the British Isles? How many art historians and in which areas? How many have jobs in education? How many are independent (which may include those having jobs)? A cursory glance at the offerings of scores of universities suggests there is a great deal of art history and that the vast majority of it is skewed away from MINCE. Besides St Andrews there might be a tiny bit of it in two or three other institutions. It used to be better, more widespread. From 2002 it was at the heart of the pioneering, and still very useable, interactive and collaborative web-teaching resource *Other Europes: Re-visioning Architecture and Design 1840–1940* run out of Glasgow, Aberdeen and St Andrews Universities, by Juliet Kinchin, Paul Stirton, Shona Kallestrup and myself. So, to counter canonic orthodoxy, we self-othered and pluralised Europe. Thereby, Juliet, for example, gave Lili Márkus's ceramics (whether produced in Hungary or England) an unprecedented platform. Plus MINCE was well represented in Edinburgh University's journal *Art in Translation* from 2009, not least due to the immensely valuable interventions of Vojtěch Lahoda and Piotr Piotrowski. Likewise it inspired a student and staff exchange between St Andrews and the *Instytut Historii Sztuki* of the Jagiellonian University, Kraków. Independently organised by enthusiastic tutors in Scotland and Poland, the exchange was remarkably successful during the years it ran in the early 2000s.

To see how embedded or otherwise MINCE might be, we should avoid turning to citation-index-approved publications and look instead to student outputs. Just about every year since the mid-1990s around twenty-five St Andrews students have written fifty-plus pieces of coursework, be they essays, visual analysis papers or exams, on aspects of MINCE, questioning and grappling with it. Alongside and sometimes out of these come dissertations and theses. Of the two thousand Honours, Masters and PhD dissertations presently recorded in the St Andrews School of Art History dissertation database about one hundred cover central, east and nordic European modern art, some of these being comparative studies or probes of canon that go beyond the regions. Essentially supervised by an evolving set of three academics over the last thirty-five years, some twenty of these have a central European essence. They range, for instance, from Lechner's, Kotěra's and Chochoł's architecture, to Csontváry's, Kádár's and Jasusch's painterly expressiveness. These works did



not rely on a set of approved publications in approved languages, alphabets and libraries, rather they trawled sources far beyond the strictures of officialdom. Their substance and arguments were informed by finding and interrogating the visual, assisted by all kinds of texts, with no hint of preference, from the handwritten to the citation-indexed. If a small, somewhat remote, university can offer this, surely it is a sign of rightful place for MINCE (or whatever we choose to call it). Let its example be built upon elsewhere.

### Towards a Conclusion

The quality and quantity of St Andrews 'MINCE' dissertations strike me as very reasonable, even if I would like more. Recent dissertations are digitised making widened availability to inform further enquiry a distinct possibility. They offer a real alternative to Rampley's noted and implied means of measurement of writing on MINCE. Not least because those twenty student authors, and the host of those who learned of MINCE and its context but did not proceed to writing

dissertations on it, are all now out in the world, spreading the word in their different ways. So if we can do our bit in and from this remote place, making space for central European nineteenth- and twentieth-century art in curricula and minds around the globe is achievable. Let our first illustration, Josef Váchal's *World of Amoeba*, from his linocut cycle *Meditations about Life (World of Individuals)*, made in the midst of *Mitteleuropean* shredding of Europe, signal the life-giving unison that our little world requires and that is ultimately its stuff. Look at how colour and line interact, how movement is free and osmotic, how form is formed, how edge is challenged. It is about organic cells changing and adapting within the network of correspondences that is all things. It is small and great combined while unfettered. It was created in 1915, the same year as Letzel's Hiroshima Exhibition Hall. Let these two distinctive works, plus Švec's example of tumbleweed web, as well as all the above, represent the tumbleweed way beyond MINCE. A St Andrews Masters dissertation is being written on Váchal's multi-perceptual art as this issue of *Umění/Art* is being prepared...

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# Towards a Weakened History of Modernisms

Matthew Rampley's article 'Networks, Horizons, Centres and Hierarchies: On the Challenges of Writing on Modernism in Central Europe' adeptly explores a key methodological challenge in the field of the history of modern art from Central and (former) Eastern Europe. The challenge, as Rampley succinctly puts it, is how to de-hierarchize modernist art history, addressing both *the 'institutional hierarchy of art history writing as a discipline and ... the cultural hierarchies'* that existed (and still often persist) between artists from the former East and their colleagues living and working in global 'centres.' This challenge is certainly not unique to the region — as Rampley acknowledges, it has become ever more ubiquitous as art historians from numerous other formerly 'peripheral' geographies move towards an exploration of *global* Modernism, as opposed to discrete and nationally-specific Modernisms. Rampley focuses his attention on the seminal contribution of art historian Piotr Piotrowski, whose influential proposal of a 'horizontal art history' has indelibly shaped the field of modern and contemporary art history in and about the region. Rampley problematises the uncritical reception of Piotrowski's ideas, questioning whether either 'horizontal art history' or Piotrowski's conceptualisation of the relationship between centres and peripheries actually accomplish what they set out to—namely, to provide compelling and accurate new models of art historical analysis. For Rampley, the answer is ultimately no—what are actually needed to de-hierarchize the field of Central and East European Modernism are not new conceptual models, but new pragmatic approaches to researching and writing the history of Modernism.

In this essay I will not attempt to reinforce or refute Rampley's conclusions about Piotrowski's

theories, except to say that I find his critique of 'horizontal art history' useful and his effort to bring historians' attention to the pragmatics of their investigations insightful. Here, instead, I would first like to point out some curious lacunae in Rampley's approach to the question of writing art history, and suggest how certain conceptual models have enriched and still can enrich the ongoing narratives presented by historians about modern and postwar cultural developments in the region. Specifically, the treatment of Modernism as a multiplicity—a methodological approach already evident in the turn towards the global—is a conceptual model that can productively enrich Piotrowski's horizontal art history. Second, attention to the 'translocal' (as opposed to just the inter- or transnational) might likewise solve some of the methodological challenges that Rampley finds in the reception of Piotrowski—and indeed contribute to new models of pragmatic cooperation, since the translocal privileges the specificities of situated knowledge. Ultimately, however, I suggest that perhaps the methodological model Rampley seeks can best be offered by recent investigations in the field of 'weak theory', a terminology largely applied in the fields of philosophy and literary criticism. I posit the idea of epistemological weakness as a useful counterpart to Rampley's efforts to be specific about questions such as intended audiences, and to parse out problems often grouped together, such as issues of marginalisation as well as belatedness or derivativeness.

My perspective on Rampley's approach is informed by my own identification primarily (although not exclusively) as a historian and critic of postwar and contemporary art from (or importantly related to) the same region. In some ways, I think, this

chronological distinction presents challenges that even Rampley does not fully acknowledge—but of course it is a much larger question, and well beyond the scope of the questions he hopes to raise. The significance of looking back at Modernism—or Modernisms—from the viewpoint of the contemporary derives in no small part from the fact that we increasingly encounter modernist artists from around the world in terms of their recovery by contemporary artists or their curatorial integration into exhibitions that also heavily feature ‘contemporary art’. In fact, I would add to Rampley’s observations on the pragmatics of writing of art history the necessity of deepening the involvement of artists in uncovering and narrating the history of Modernisms.

While it might seem a minor methodological point, I think that reframing the history of writing on Modernism in Central and Eastern Europe as a history of narrating *multiple* Modernisms is in fact an essential element of a full response to Rampley’s astute observations on the need for new practical methods of research. Speaking of many Modernisms frees us from the rather narrow implied structuralism (and teleology) present in formulations such as *Art since 1900*’s ‘modernism, antimodernism, postmodernism’. More importantly, however, it recognises the inherent ambiguities associated with Modernism (is it a style? is it a formal designation, or also a description of content? a way of producing art? a response to ‘modernity?’), and acknowledges that some of the conceptualisations of Modernism we might discover look totally different from others. The recognition of this multiplicity becomes essential in the postwar period if for no other reason than to understand the significance of various Socialist Realisms, which inevitably presented themselves in contradistinction to a frequently vague ‘modernism’, but which cannot simply be relegated to the category of ‘antimodernism’. Socialist Realisms present their own kind of challenge to Piotrowski’s model, since his own investigations tended to homogenise and sometimes dismiss Socialist Realism, and since the kinds of centres and margins inscribed by the socialist artworld were sometimes very different from those inscribed by earlier cultural configurations.

As a sort of corollary to pluralising the notion of Modernism, we might also enrich Rampley’s approach by noting the utility of the notion of the ‘translocal’ in understanding and writing the history of Central and Eastern European modern and contemporary culture. As Zanna Gilbert—building upon the ideas of Maja and Reuben Fowkes—argues, translocality is essential to understanding ‘circulatory practices’ that exceed the explanatory frameworks provided by either the merely local or the national or transnational.<sup>1</sup> For the Fowkeses, approaching art history through the lens of the translocal aims ‘to combine the comparative perspective of the global (in the spirit of counter-globalisation rather than corporate globalism) with the rooted knowledge

that comes from belonging to a specific place or community.’<sup>2</sup> Translocality would not seem to constitute the kind of theoretical model that Rampley would prefer to jettison: it is not a master narrative of Modernism(s), but a way of paying attention to the actual interaction of artists via networks that remain importantly situated in localised political situations, institutional contexts, and discursive exchanges. The virtue of the translocal is that it sidesteps at least some of the problems introduced by Piotrowski’s effort to de-hierarchise art history at the scale of what was ultimately still a nationalised geography, instead focusing on grounds for collaboration between artists whose practice cannot be helpfully defined in either nationalistic or regional terms.

Furthermore, speaking methodologically, I would argue that translocality tends to more helpfully describe the ways that pragmatic art historical and artistic investigations are already taking place. Are not the proliferation of artist residency programmes (and the corollary focus on research-based practice as a staple of contemporary art production) already evidence of translocality as a feature of artistic interpretation? And likewise, are not the proliferating postdoctoral research positions and visiting professorships that increasingly network Central and Eastern Europe with an (admittedly specific) broader geography evidence of translocality as a defining feature of how art history is currently being done? It seems to me that the pragmatic solutions Rampley offers at the conclusion of his essay are precisely calls for a more critically self-aware translocal exchange between scholars.

If the translocal would draw our attention to the specificities of local context without losing site of the comparative framework of globality, then I want to suggest a corollary theoretical approach (I hesitate to call it a ‘model’ for reasons that I believe will become obvious) that might indeed avoid some of the pitfalls Rampley identifies in horizontal art history, while simultaneously presenting a version of art history that is not as concerned as Rampley about ‘inconsistencies in ... concept’. This is the approach typically discussed under the moniker of ‘weak theory’ in the field of philosophy and literary theory, and it draws its primary inspiration from the writings of Italian philosopher Gianni Vattimo on the idea of *pensiero debole*—weak thought—and from Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick’s adaptation of psychologist Silvan Tomkins’ ‘weak affect theory’.<sup>3</sup> For the purposes of the present methodological discussion, I am primarily interested in Sedgwick’s insights, and particularly her analysis of ‘paranoid readings’ (based on ‘strong theories’) and ‘reparative readings’ (based on ‘weak theories’).<sup>4</sup> Paranoid readings, for Sedgwick, are those premised upon a ‘hermeneutics of suspicion’,<sup>5</sup> i.e. readings of phenomena that struggle at all costs not to be deceived or taken in. These are readings that aim to unmask or reveal the hidden workings of an ideology, but more importantly they aim at universal applications:

RAINO ISTO  
TOWARDS A WEAKENED HISTORY OF MODERNISMS

the historian or critic who is furnished with a paranoid reading is always armed against embarrassment, because they are always prepared to deploy their theory to unmask the hidden machinations of an ideological system. The effort to avoid 'belatedness' or 'derivativeness', and the corollary drive to de-hierarchise in the writing of art history in Central and Eastern Europe has become—in a way—just such a paranoid theory: these theoretical frameworks are as much about the affective avoidance of embarrassment as they are about the effort to describe history.

In contrast to such universalising or 'strong' theories based upon anticipating possible deceptions (in our case: anticipating any possible discussion of hierarchical geographic relationships present in modernist cultural production), Sedgwick proposes the utility of reparative readings based upon 'weak' theories. A weak theory is one that succeeds precisely in its specificity to the physical and emotional relationships between very particular phenomena in very particular situations, but goes no further.<sup>6</sup> Weak theories do not aim to be predictive, and they are not concerned with avoiding negative affects (such as shame or embarrassment). Instead, weak or reparative theories aim to discover joy, pleasure, escape, and hope in the objects, people, and stories that give our lives meaning. We might think here of the increasing turn towards 'microhistories' of art (which I would argue goes hand in hand with the multiplication of Modernisms), but reparative interpretations need not always be 'micro'. It suffices that they do not aim to universalise and project their discoveries.

This is, I think, not far from where Rampley's pragmatic observations land, although there is one

important difference. Sedgwick is concerned with *feelings*, not with the historical accuracy of any given interpretation, and I think that we might do well to pay closer attention to the emotional context of histories of Central and Eastern European art, particularly in those cases where the goal is to recover a way of making art or an artist who might easily be dismissed by broader, universalising narratives of Modernism's 'progress'. To take a single example: can we really imagine the productive historical examination—and claims for the relevance of—Socialist Realisms in the region without also understanding the emotionally entangled need to recover the histories of leftism, of collective artistic production, of worker solidarity? And indeed, can we imagine the nationalist art histories that have been written so far in Central and Eastern Europe without understanding them—as I think Rampley would acknowledge—in terms of their emotional appeal and the affective work that such specific histories do for certain populations (even as we might acknowledge their disturbingly ethno-nationalistic tendencies).

In my view these emotional appeals, intertwined with nostalgia, will only increase as our temporal distance from what might be considered the heyday of historical Modernisms increases. Rampley suggests the importance of understanding audiences and readerships, but I do not think this is only a question of disciplinary manoeuvring with the aim of identifying which art historians might find Eastern Europe 'significant'. It is also a matter of understanding which stories from the art of the region might produce an enriching affective encounter for specific audiences today. That is the question that should, I think, guide a 'weakened' history of Modernisms.

## NOTES

1 Zanna Gilbert, 'Something Unnameable in Common: Translocal Collaboration at the Beau Geste Press', *ARTMargins* 1, 2012, No. 2–3, p. 47.

2 Petra Feriancová, 'Translocal: Interview with Reuben and Maja Fowkes', *VLNA* XVI, 2010, qtd. in Gilbert (note 1), p. 47.

3 Paul K. Saint-Amour offers an overview of weak theory in 'Weak Theory/Weak Modernism', *Modernism/modernity* XXV, September 2018, No. 3, pp. 437–459.

4 Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity*, Durham 2003, pp. 123–151.

5 This phrase comes from Paul Ricoeur, in the context of his readings of Freud, Marx, and Nietzsche: see Paul Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation*, New Haven 1970, p. 34.

6 Sedgwick (note 4), p. 144.

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# A Very Different Kind of National Art History: Looking to the Future from the Past

Matthew Rampley's assessment of current efforts to re-write the history of Modernism in East-Central Europe in a transcultural framework articulates continuing challenges to such approaches following the influential interventions of a few exceptional art historians over several generations. Piotr Piotrowski, the leading voice in the first wave of postsocialist art history writing in the region, inverted the centre/periphery model, that is, he used it to recognise the dynamically active conditions of reception at the margins. Using the analytical tools of deconstruction to develop interpretative strategies that avoid the traps of an essentialising universalism, Piotrowski described his approach as discovering a 'genius loci' which turns out to be a research strategy rather than a metaphysics of space.<sup>1</sup>

Rampley notes that inversion of the centre-periphery model does not alter the structural principle, nor does it necessarily delegitimise the actual marginal situation of the region as a 'close other' in Piotrowski's terms, however Modernism is defined. With these qualifications, Rampley endorses a network model of distributed knowledge practices to study the many kinds of entanglements that emerge in regional settings at an intermediate scale between the local and the global. Piotrowski's 'horizontal art history' was a major intervention, though still riddled with 'essentialist' thinking. There are many ways to construe network models — the point is to imagine art history unbound from the teleological framework and the tyranny of periods, styles, canons, and the worn-out, Eurocentric idea of progress. Piotrowski's pioneering work to set the region within the context of a transnational approach to Modernism, or rather multiple sites of Modernisms, has already been developed further by his peers and younger colleagues, exemplified in Beáta Hock and Anu

Allas's volume, *Globalizing East European Art Histories* (2018), based on a conference organised by Piotrowski in 2014, shortly before his untimely death.<sup>2</sup> This conference opened up the topic of how to frame a global approach to a longer time span, bringing together researchers in a variety of time periods and drawing connections with colleagues around the world.<sup>3</sup>

In an earlier groundbreaking volume published in 2012, Rampley and his collaborators presented a compelling image of Europe as polycentric and diverse as they sought to recalibrate the historicist construction of art history and visual studies.<sup>4</sup> Rampley concluded that numerous parallels and commonalities 'afford a coherence which a global analysis of art history would never be able to attain.'<sup>5</sup> In his current essay, Rampley articulates the challenges to the historiography of Modernism in the region defined as central and Eastern Europe less optimistically. How do we reconcile the differences between these two accounts?

Piotrowski wrote extensively and well about the dangers of universalism. My brief remarks cannot come close to addressing his many perceptive arguments, but perhaps, in response to Rampley, I can provide a glimpse into a longer historical continuum that deserves further study regarding the discursive category of Modernism. There is, first of all, an ongoing communication problem in imagining what and how regional history should be brought to bear on the subject of world art, a slippery term that has been inconsistently defined.<sup>6</sup> For Dipesh Chakrabarty, Gayatra Chakravorty Spivak, and many others taking a de-colonial approach to the study of culture, 'universalism' is the heritage of Enlightenment metaphysics that demands scrutiny and reconceptualisation, while for others who wish to integrate past and present in accounts of world art on



CLAIRE FARAGO  
A VERY DIFFERENT KIND OF NATIONAL ART HISTORY

the basis of Enlightenment ideas about universal human values, those same categories and goals still appear to be self-evident. To take a leading example, James Elkins, one of the most widely published organisers of the discourse, in his introduction to *Art and Globalization* (2010), regards as ‘amnesiac’ the discipline’s neglect of “‘premodern’ forms of regionalism and globalism in art history.”<sup>7</sup> Elkins advocates each artistic tradition’s use of its own core concepts. One problem with this approach is that not every tradition of artmaking is accompanied by a textual tradition, and another is that cultural traditions are dynamic and rarely if ever completely distinct or homogeneous. Elkins juxtaposes ‘cultures’ in nineteenth-century terms as having parallel histories, terms that epitomise the charge of Eurocentrism, and he never questions ‘vision’ as involving culturally and socially constituted processes that require historical investigation. His simplistic understanding of cultural relativism in these two fundamental respects has understandably drawn the ire of extra-European specialists for assuming that indigenous writings directly offer normative principles for a range of indigenous artistic practices: a socially and historically embedded understanding of any tradition of texts is a primary requirement for research regardless of field.<sup>8</sup>

The methodological challenge is to theorise the complexities of cultural interaction without imposing ethnocentric categories. If texts such as German historian Franz Kugler’s *Handbuch der Kunstgeschichte* (1841–1842), the first autonomous history of world art based on empirical evidence, granted extra-European cultural products a form of aesthetic recognition, it was of a very patronising kind. His treatment of ancient Amerindian monuments as an intermediate stage between the ‘childhood’ of humanity and ‘true art’ signals the construction of hierarchical cultural boundaries in the new institutional setting of a systematic academic survey of ‘world art.’<sup>9</sup> The idea that ‘art’ is ‘visual’ is itself a European idea that evolved over several centuries. Nineteenth-century concepts of modernity are entangled with stylistic ‘modernism’ which is in turn entangled with the decline of the academic art system in Western Europe and coinage of the term ‘primitive art’ and its corollary that ‘art’ defined as an object of perception is a ‘universal’ human trait.

I am struck by Rampley’s pushback in this essay against current calls for the revision of disciplinary practices in a transcultural and transnational framework because they are ‘just as ideologically motivated as any that [they] ... purport to dismantle.’<sup>10</sup> As an art historian who has done so much to expose the racial (and sometimes racist) underpinnings of art historical accounts since the professionalisation of the discipline in the nineteenth century, Rampley is raising a fundamental issue here: how well do art historians understand what critical transcultural studies are trying to dismantle? Rampley describes a situation in East-Central Europe in which

the national paradigm remains the governing framework for a variety of conceptual and pragmatic reasons that are likely to continue for many if not most researchers in small academic communities. This is due to lack of funding, jobs, access to resources, linguistic barriers, and the existing structure of state and private institutions that support the arts, which includes the national focus of this esteemed journal.<sup>11</sup> What compels scholars who function within the national culture paradigm to change their ways if the new approaches are simply choices in the carousel of art historical possibilities?

Speaking at an international conference in Dresden in 2017, Monica Juneja, Professor of Global Art History at the University of Heidelberg, addressed the importance of considering national culture as part of a transcultural approach.<sup>12</sup> The challenge according to Juneja, is that, while scholars in older metropolitan nations strive to establish cosmopolitan credentials, their ‘enlightened’ point of view is understood as patronising by scholars working without the same resources, a position that Piotrowski himself articulated as one of the few art historians from east-central Europe to receive extensive support from American institutions.<sup>13</sup> I share not only Juneja’s caution and Rampley’s skepticism about over-arching global models and uniform methodologies, but also their advocacy for ‘entangled’ regional histories that are far more specific and less totalising. A de-territorialised model for organising modernist studies and the discipline of art history more generally according to networks of interaction has the advantage of producing numerous regional chronologies, rather than a single linear chronology tied to events in major urban art centres such as Paris, London, and New York.

More fundamental than transnational and transcultural approaches per se or the interpretation of complex objects that signify differently depending on their (coeval) context is the initial activity that art historians undertake to describe their objects of study. The process of classifying is itself a challenging activity if one wants to target the essentialising categories and deterministic assumptions in a traditional national culture approach to art history. Formal analysis developed alongside experimental Modernism and both valorise ‘form’ as the non-mimetic, visual element of art. Wölfflin and other neo-Kantian art historians who developed the procedure of formal analysis for describing works of art participated in the methodological debates of the day as to whether the evolution of the nervous system or a pre-conceived set of traits were responsible for sensations.<sup>14</sup> The fundamental question that they addressed through close study of the appearance of art objects was how to negotiate the terrain between the empirical evidence and abstract laws governing artistic production that they aimed to discover, the existence of which they did not question. ‘Style’, understood in this sense as non-mimetic ‘form’ present in all works of art, regardless of their culture of origin,

offered the possibility of writing a universal history of world art based on 'objective' criteria. The history of art came into existence as an intellectual discipline largely as a result of these new 'scientific' methods, as Rampley has studied in depth.<sup>15</sup>

These grounds are disputed today on the grounds that they apply exclusionary European criteria to the classification of extra-European objects, in the process recontextualising the function and value of the cultural setting in which the work was made. For similar reasons, style, form, and abstraction are also dominant considerations in assessing Modernism and one of the main reasons that Piotrowski objected to the neglect of local and regional artists in survey texts, research programmes, and exhibition venues based on a centre-periphery model of influence flowing from privileged art centres elsewhere. In 1963, E. H. Gombrich criticised the Wölfflinian idea of formal analysis as a 'physiognomic fallacy', by which Gombrich meant the mistaken assumption that the mentality of the artist or the group to which he belongs could be directly ascertained from the formal structure of a work of art.<sup>16</sup> While the meaning of Wölfflin's famous phrase, 'vision itself has its history', can be debated, the problematic connections he drew between interiority and exteriority are clear in the original German, where 'vision' refers to the process of perception and apprehension individually and collectively.<sup>17</sup> Wölfflin's adherence to German Idealism is detectable when he speaks of the primary 'representation' (*Vorstellung*), as denoting the continuous activity of mind (or spirit) encountering and interacting with the world of 'things in themselves'.<sup>18</sup> As the first step in classifying objects, it depends on the metaphysical model of higher form shaping lower matter (the work of art connotes the mentality of its maker), which is in fact not a universal truth but a culturally and historically specific way of conceiving the world.

Few contemporary art historians fail to grasp the sinister implications entailed in drawing direct connections between the forms of art and the mentality of individual artists or the 'spirits' of whole 'nations, races, and epochs' as Wölfflin famously described 'the primary task of art history'.<sup>19</sup> Yet many people inside and outside academia employ these physiognomic and psychological criteria without realising that they impose a certain understanding of the world on the work of art by assigning intentions and critical values to its formal features. Moreover, 'form' also has a prior history in theories of vision originating in ancient Greek optics.<sup>20</sup> At present there is a disjunction that deserves further study between this longstanding, Western understanding of 'form' as part of a theory of cognition (in which the immaterial 'form' of an object is perceptible to sense but is not visible) and its modern European reincarnation as a universal, visual element of design.<sup>21</sup>

Ideology has been defined as the political use of metaphysics in the domain of practice.<sup>22</sup> What is

the scholar's ethical responsibility to society today? It would be shortsighted to abandon a rich cultural heritage for writing about and making art, deeply problematic as its configurations might have become in certain respects today. Yet without an understanding of what makes this inherited discourse troubling, future generations will tend to reproduce the same problems in displaced form. The act of initial description needs to be rethought so that problematic Western metaphysical assumptions do not interfere with or preclude the ability to account for works of art, regardless of their cultural origins. With the specific task of avoiding the 'essentialist' traps of nineteenth-century German Idealist philosophy in mind, David Summers has developed a new set of universal terms for describing any of the 'spatial arts', a term intended to counter the culturally specific assumption that art is universally an object of perception.<sup>23</sup> Summers' vocabulary avoids the circular argument of directly connecting exterior appearances with interior states of mind.<sup>24</sup>

The ecological model of regional 'connectivity' developed by Peregrine Horden and Nicholas Purcell in their account of the Mediterranean (*The Corrupting Sea*, 2000) argues that the stability of regions in the Mediterranean is sustained by systems of local exchange based on shared environmental, biological, and anthropological factors that maintain a delicate balance between separation and connection. Such a model of interconnectivity can be organised at different scales depending on the objectives of study. This approach can further mitigate the limitations of institutional art histories organised by nation-state because it connects local perspectives with regional and ultimately globally interconnected systems of production and exchange without imposing binary structures on the material evidence.

The intellectual attractiveness of a transcultural approach to conceptualising the study of Modernism and world culture more generally stems from its ability to institute a more pluralistic historical vision that considers different signifying systems, world views, and contexts of use on equal footing. Transnational and transcultural approaches to planetary culture depend on accumulating many individual case studies for comparison in order to build a larger picture. Adopting a collaborative approach to research, as Rampley advocates in part due to linguistic, archival, and funding challenges, could greatly enhance the speed and quality of research outcomes, while integrating the efforts of local scholars and regional studies into a de-centred international network of scholarly exchange without imposing an overarching conceptual framework or a uniform methodology.\*

CLAIRE FARAGO  
A VERY DIFFERENT KIND OF NATIONAL ART HISTORY

## NOTES

- 1 Piotr Piotrowski, 'Framing of the Central Europe', in Zdenka Badovinac and Peter Weibel (eds), *2000+ Artest Collection. The Art of Eastern Europe: A Selection of Works for the International and National Collections of Moderna Galerija Ljubljana* (exh. cat.), Vienna 2001, pp. 15–22; citing Jonathan Culler, Norman Bryson, on the frame as a structural element of the text, derived from Derrida's concept of 'parergon', see pp. 17–19. — Idem, 'On the Spatial Turn, or Horizontal Art History', *Umění/Art* LVI, 2008, pp. 378–383.
- 2 Beáta Hock and Anu Allas (eds), *Globalizing East European Art Histories: Past and Present*, London 2018.
- 3 Beáta Hock, 'Introduction: Globalizing East European Art Histories: The Legacy of Piotr Piotrowski and a Conference', in Hock and Allas (note 2), pp. 1–22.
- 4 Matthew Rampley, 'Introduction', in Matthew Rampley, Thierry Lenain et al. (eds), *Art History and Visual Studies in Europe: Transnational Discourses and National Frameworks*, Leiden and Boston 2012, pp. 1–17.
- 5 Ibidem, p. 12.
- 6 Monica Juneja, 'Global Art History and the 'Burden of Representation'', in Hans Belting, Jacob Birken, Andrea Buddensiefen et al. (eds), *Global Studies: Mapping contemporary art and culture*, Ostfildern 2011, pp. 274–297.
- 7 James Elkins, 'First Introduction', in James Elkins, Zhivka Valiavicharska and Alice Kim (eds), *Art and Globalization*, Pennsylvania 2010, pp. 1–4, citing p. 3. Others who advocate the utility of nineteenth-century efforts to conceive of world art history include Ulrich Pfisterer, 'Origins and Principles of World Art History: 1900 (and 2000)', in Kitty Zijlmans and Wilfried van Damme (eds), *World Art Studies: Exploring Concepts and Approaches*, Amsterdam 2008, pp. 69–89. — Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann, 'Reflections on World History', in Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann, Catherine Dossin, and Béatrice Joyeux-Prunel (eds), *Circulations in the Global History of Art*, Farnham 2015, pp. 23–46; and Horst Bredekamp, 'Fanatics of Purity', *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 2021, 8. 3., on which see Matthew Vollgraff, 'A Response to Horst Bredekamp', Boasblog DCNtR, 2021, 17. 3., <https://boasblogs.org/dcntr/a-response-to-horst-bredekamp/>, 15. 6. 2021. My thanks to Bill Sherman for the references to Bredekamp and Vollgraff.
- 8 Juneja (note 6), pp. 279–280. See also, Parul D. Mukherji, 'Putting the World in a Book: How Global Can Art History Be Today?', in Jaynie Anderson (ed.), *Crossing Cultures: Conflict, Migration, and Convergence*, Melbourne 2009, pp. 91–96.
- 9 See further, Claire Farago, "'Vision Itself Has Its History": "Race," Nation, and Renaissance Art History', in eadem (ed.), *Reframing the Renaissance: Visual Culture in Europe and Latin America 1450–1650*, New Haven and London 1995, pp. 67–88; citing George Kubler's defense of Kugler's 'aesthetic recognition' of ancient Amerindian art; Dan Karlholm, *The Art of Illusion: The Representation of Art History in Nineteenth-Century Germany and Beyond*, Bern 2004; and, with further references, Stefan Muthesius, 'Towards an "exakte Kunstwissenschaft" (?): Report on some recent German books on the progress of 19th century art history, Part 1 and Part 2', *Journal of Art Historiography*, No. 9, December 2013, <https://arthistoriography.files.wordpress.com/2013/12/muthesius-report-1.pdf>; and <https://arthistoriography.files.wordpress.com/2013/12/muthesius-report-2.pdf>, 15. 6. 2021.
- 10 Matthew Rampley, 'Networks, Horizons, Centres and Hierarchies: On the Challenges of Writing on Modernism in Central Europe', *Umění/Art* LXIX, 2021, p. 25.
- 11 Rampley (note 4), p. 5.
- 12 Monica Juneja, 'Keynote Address', 34th Kunsthistorikertage, Dresden, March 8–12, 2017, published as "'A very civil idea...": Art History, Transculturation, and World-Making — With and Beyond the Nation', *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* LXXXI, 2018, pp. 461–486.
- 13 Juneja (note 12), p. 461. — Piotrowski, 'Framing' (note 1).
- 14 Mitchell Frank and Daniel Adler, *German Art History and Scientific Thought: Beyond Formalism*, Farnham and Burlington 2012, discuss elements derived from August Comte's *Cours de philosophie positive* (1830–1842) by Heinrich Wölfflin, credited as the instigator of formalist analysis. Wölfflin sought out Comte's ideas borrowed from racial science, in his aspiration to write a history of art 'without names'.
- 15 Matthew Rampley, *The Seductions of Darwin: Art, Evolution, Neuroscience*, Pennsylvania 2017; and idem, *The Vienna School of Art History: Empire and the Politics of Scholarship, 1847–1918*, Pennsylvania 2013, are essential reading.
- 16 Erns Hans Gombrich, 'On Physiognomic Perception', in idem, *Meditations on a Hobby Horse and Other Essays on the Theory of Art*, London 1963, pp. 45–55.
- 17 Heinrich Wölfflin, *Kunstgeschichte Grundbegriffe* [1915], München 1929, p. 12: 'Nicht alles zu allen Zeiten möglich. Das Sehen an sich hat seine Geschichte, und die Aufdeckung dieser "optischen Schichten" muss als die elementarste Aufgabe der Kunstgeschichte betrachtet werden.' For a more extensive analysis that reaches similar conclusions, see David Summers, 'Heinrich Wölfflin: Kunstgeschichtliche Grundbegriffe: Das Problem der Stilentwicklung in der neueren Kunst, 1915', in Richard Shone and John-Paul Stonard (eds), *The Books that Shaped Art History from Gombrich and Greenberg to Alpers and Krauss*, London 2013, pp. 43–53. By contrast, Tristan Weddigen, 'Approaching Wölfflin's Principles', in Heinrich Wölfflin, *Principles of Art History: The Problem of the Development of Style in Early Modern Art* [1915], ed. Evonne Levy and Tristan Weddigen, Los Angeles 2015, pp. 47–70, argues that Wölfflin implicitly rejects 'the evolutionary and teleological models of history introduced in the Renaissance and established by Hegelianism and Darwinism,' (citing pp. 49–50).
- 18 Summers, 'Heinrich Wölfflin' (note 17), p. 49; and idem, "'Form", Nineteenth-Century Metaphysics, and the Problem of Art Historical Description', *Critical Inquiry* XV, Winter 1989, No. 2, pp. 372–406.
- 19 Wölfflin, *Kunstgeschichte Grundbegriffe* (note 17), p. 12. I cite the older translation of Wölfflin, *Principles of Art History. The Problem of the Development of Style in Later Art*, New York 1950, based on the seventh German edition (1929).
- 20 Beginning with the medieval Latin Perspectivists including Roger Bacon, following Arabic sources and their ancient Greek precedents, immaterial 'forms' radiate in all directions from all objects and are received by all the senses. See A. Mark Smith, *From Sight to Light: The Passage from Ancient to Modern Optics*, Chicago 2015, esp. p. 309. — David C. Lindberg, *Theories of Vision from Al-Kindi to Kepler*, Chicago 1976.
- 21 To be developed in my book, provisionally entitled *The Future of Cultural Memory in the Era of Climate Disruption*, forthcoming from Routledge Press, 2022.

**22** Michael Ryan, *Marxism and Deconstruction: A Critical Articulation*, Baltimore and London 1982, p. 118. My thanks to Donald Preziosi for calling this definition to my attention.

**23** David Summers, *Real Spaces: World Art History and the Rise of Western modernism*, London 2003, p. 41.

**24** *Ibidem*, p. 27.

\* My warm thanks to Pavla Machalíková, Steven Mansbach, and Matthew Rampley for the invitation to contribute to this special issue of *Umění/Art*; to my dissertation advisor, David Summers, for providing the wherewithal to ask big questions; and to my husband, Donald Preziosi, and my colleague, Monica Juneja, for articulating complex issues and setting shining examples of ethical practice.

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# Writing About and Exhibiting Central European Modernism in North America Then and Now

Mathew Rampley's probing and comprehensive essay offers many insights into the promise and pitfalls of writing about the Avant-Garde culture of Modernism of Central Europe over the past thirty years. My venture eastward from German culture began in Prague in 1994,

at the time of the 'Cold War-era hangover' as Eastern Europe began to explore its own modernist history in earnest,<sup>1</sup> just when it was becoming accessible to the West.<sup>2</sup> If exhibitions in the West benefitting from Eastern Bloc collections had been rare,<sup>3</sup> with 1994 came *Europa Europa*, the first comprehensive exhibition in the West to benefit from extensive loans from Eastern Europe.<sup>4</sup> 1994 also brought Larry Wolff's *Inventing Eastern Europe: The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment*, which argued that 'Eastern Europe' was an enduring ideological construct of the Other—at once a 'philosophical mapping' and an 'invitation to conquest',<sup>5</sup> resonating with Friedrich Neumann's 1915 colonialist-inspired *Mitteleuropa* written at the height of Modernism.<sup>6</sup> This distorted Western perspective prompted my observation in *Central Europe Avant-Gardes: Exchange and Transformation: 1910–1930* (2002) that 'it is ironic that a region long at the heart of European culture should now seem to us obscure, even exotic.'<sup>7</sup> With the global contemporary of today comes a further irony: the creatively subversive intentions of the avant-garde underlying Central European Modernism run the risk of being lost in the process of overcoming what Rampley terms the 'external pragmatic issues' of the institutional and geographic settings from which the discourse is conducted.<sup>8</sup>



1 / Stanislaw Kubicki, *Bunt (Uprising)*, 1918  
woodcut

Cover of *Die Aktion* VIII, 1918, no. 21–22, 1 June, with checklist of the seventh exhibition of 'Bunt'  
Los Angeles County Museum of Art, The Robert Gore Rifkind Center for German Expressionist Studies  
Photo: Los Angeles County Museum of Art



**De Styl**  
Weimar

**2x2**  
Wien

**ÇA IRA**  
Bruxelles

**UT**  
Novisad

**DER STURM**  
Berlin

**L'ESPRIT NOUVEAU**  
Paris

**BROOM**  
Berlin

**MECANO**  
Weimar

**LA VIE DES LETTRES ET DES ARTS**  
Paris

**DER GEGNER**  
Berlin

**DIE AKTION**  
Berlin

**CLARTE**  
Paris

**ZENIT**  
Zagreb

**MA**  
Internacionális aktyvista művészeti folyóirat = Szerkesztő: Kassák Lajos = Fellelősszerkesztő: Josef Kalmer = Szerkesztőség és kiadóhivatal: Wien, XIII. Bez. Amalienstrasse 26. I. H = Megjelenés dátuma 1922 október 15 = Előfizetési ár: EGY ÉVRE: 35.000 osztrák kor., 70 szokol, 100 dinár, 200 lei, 800 márka = EGYES SZÁM ÁRA: 3000 osztrák korona, 7 szokol, 10 dinár, 20 lei, 80 márka = VIII. évfolyam, 1. szám = A lapban megjelenő cikkekért a szerző felel.

Druckerei „Eibenöhl“, Wien, IX., Berggasse 31.

2 / Back page of MA advertising other periodicals, 1922

Reproduction: MA VIII, 1922, no. 1

### Towards a New Historiography

Rampley focusses on an intractable historiographic impediment with his statement that ‘*certain ideological positions have proven hard to shift, of which the most stubborn has been the reliance on the notion of centres and peripheries*’.<sup>9</sup> The durability of this concept is due in no small measure to its utility. It can be activated as a common ground that artists consciously resist through various strategies, but it can also frame questions for art historians. Isabel Wünsche, in her recent global survey of Expressionism, embraces the notion of peripheries as appropriate to study of how a movement understood as centred in German-speaking countries was transferred though avant-garde networks to myriad locations, in each case uniquely inflected, sometimes resisted but at other times becoming part of the ‘*hybrid modernism on the European periphery*’.<sup>10</sup> Such interchanges could be exceedingly complex, as Lidia Głuchowska shows in her chapter on multi-ethnic Poznań groups like Bunt,<sup>11</sup> for which the Berlin periodical *Die Aktion* served as a catalogue for its seventh exhibition. [1] If Berlin connoted colonial occupation hindering Polish national identity, the term ‘*Expressionism*’ evoked some ambivalence by affording a sought-after contact with the cosmopolitan avant-garde. Discussing Bunt, Piotr Piotrowski characterised this cosmopolitan tendency as a shared cultural ‘*episteme*’.<sup>12</sup>

A slightly different emphasis within Rampley’s ‘*networks against centres*’ could provide a response to his suggestion that, with Expressionism, ‘*the national paradigm remains the governing framework*’.<sup>13</sup> Expressionism was broadly cosmopolitan in its pre-war phase,<sup>14</sup> and, as Hubert van den Berg argues, Expressionism was transnational in the places of its origin (many outside of Germany employing German as the lingua franca), nationalities of its practitioners, and pre-war interpretations of its critics.<sup>15</sup> Only with the Great War does the movement yield so fully to the national paradigms that subsequent movements—especially Constructivism—would attempt to shed. Prior to being nationalised cosmopolitan Expressionism showed continuity as ‘*a kind of prehistory of constructivism*’.<sup>16</sup>

Neither nationalism nor the perspective of centres and peripheries is eliminated by networks or shared cultural epistemes, but these tensions can be considered a backdrop to evolving practices of transnationalism that reached a turning point in the aftermath of World War I when hitherto unimaginable notions of internationalism came to the fore. This was perhaps most pronounced in Dada and Constructivism. Without fully obviating centres and peripheries, Gerald Janecek and Toshiharu Omuka used the metaphor of ‘*orbit*’ in their survey of dada east of Western Europe.<sup>17</sup> Preceded by a kind of ‘*protodadaïsme*’ in Spain, Russia,<sup>18</sup> and Romania, Dada

TIMOTHY O. BENSON

WRITING ABOUT AND EXHIBITING CENTRAL EUROPEAN MODERNISM IN NORTH AMERICA THEN AND NOW

3 / Karel Teige, *Travel Postcard*, 1923

collage with halftone, letterpress, tempera, ink, 33.1 × 23.5 cm

Prague City Gallery

Photo: Franišek Krejčí

originated in Switzerland, flourished in Germany, France, and somewhat retrospectively in the U.S. The word 'Dada' occurred later in, for example, *Dada-Tank* in 1922 in Zagreb, in Warsaw with Schwitters' Dada essay in *Blok* (1924),<sup>19</sup> with echoes in Ljubljana with contributions by Tzara and Schwitters in *Tank* (1927).<sup>20</sup> If individually 'vertical' in Piotrowski's theory,<sup>21</sup> the Dada 'centres', first codified retrospectively by Hans Richter,<sup>22</sup> were already at the time deconstructed in a conscious self-indexing around the word 'dada',<sup>23</sup> where diagramming and mapping of the surrounding culture occurred along the lines of Henri Lefebvre's concept of the production of social space.<sup>24</sup> Dada artworks, periodicals and events were deployed as Dada cartography, as a kind of subversion of the hierarchies of place,<sup>25</sup> with the worldwide aspirations of the ill-fated *Dadaglobe* project.<sup>26</sup>

In *Central European Avant-Gardes: Exchange and Transformation, 1910–1930*, I sought to bring together a diverse array of vanguard artworks largely unknown in the U.S. by presenting a supra-national field of interacting locales between Paris and Moscow — hitherto often regarded as an array of 'margins'. As Piotrowski has pointed out,<sup>27</sup> this endeavour tacitly critiqued the aesthetic assimilation of *Europa Europa* by avoiding national schools or historical surveys and looking instead only at avant-garde groups that demonstrably interacted with each other, as implied in their own promotion of one another in

their periodicals, exemplified by the back page of an issue of *Ma* in 1922. [2] In this 'horizontal' array,<sup>28</sup> each exchange site manifested its current amalgam through exchange events (generally exhibitions) and situations (exchanges of longer duration such as periodicals and groups of artists and literati). The 'evolution' of avant-gardes becomes less a causal linear history than an episodic array of events and situations that could manifest itself momentarily across centres and peripheries, so ranked according to the position of the observer. As Modernism became increasingly nomadic due to political change and the resumption of travel after WWI, the localisation of 'centres' became more fleeting and momentary as Central Europe became what Andrzej Turowski called 'a region of constant migration, immigration and emigration, of people arriving, departing, and moving around'.<sup>29</sup> In the early twenties, especially with the birth of International Constructivism based on Soviet supranational models of revolution, the avant-garde itself began to see its very existence as dependent upon developing a nomadic *modus operandi*.<sup>30</sup> This led to one meaning of the term 'international' being swiftly replaced by another.

At the 'First International Exhibition' in May 1922 in Düsseldorf, members of many avant-gardes from across Germany, France, Holland, Hungary, Italy, and Poland exhibited and embodied the received idea of 'International' as a passive polyphony of far-flung styles from different nations (in this case including America, Egypt, and Japan) as well as sometimes moribund, sometimes active art movements, including Expressionism, Fauvism, Futurism, and Purism — and 'a whole range of variants of these movements'.<sup>31</sup> Dissatisfaction in some quarters led to a rival Congress of International Constructivists and Dadaists in Weimar in September 1922 unified around a reverence for the Third Comintern, Vladimir Tatlin's *Monument to the Third International* (known to them in name only), and the universally comprehensible art demanded in their manifesto, 'A Call for Elementarist Art'.<sup>32</sup> This unifying supra-national concept of 'internationalism' evolved in part through nomadic Modernism — what Rampley calls 'networks of mobility of art and artists' — carried out in congresses, exhibitions, and an autonomous flow of discourse in periodicals, increasingly independent of place.<sup>33</sup> As Turowski has suggested, the 'Modernist Other' of the formation 'Eastern Europe' was now 'being transformed into the postmodernist Other (of undulating expanse)'.<sup>34</sup> Somewhat different from Piotrowski's emphasis on place over space,<sup>35</sup> migration, immigration and emigration — along with the shuffling of economic, political, and cultural relations with the fall of the empires — led to what Turowski calls the 'phenomenon of blurring' of identity. The fragmentation inherent in the collapse

of the Hegelian assumptions underlying the avant-garde in the wake of failed political revolutions and a subsequent investment in the present, all created what Turowski terms a 'discursive field' that calls into question 'the epistemological paradigm that predetermines priorities in the order of places of artistic activity.'<sup>36</sup> Past and future were equally voided in Dada 'presentism', a particularly thoroughgoing version of a more widespread response to World War I in literature, here most directly expressed in the writings of Raoul Hausmann.<sup>37</sup> Moreover the Dadaists' application of chance, which, as Maria Stavrinaki notes paraphrasing Reinhart Koselleck,<sup>38</sup> 'as a historical explanation [chance] breaks the chain of determinism and makes room for the new and unexpected,' transformed Dada photcollage into a self-reflective discourse about time and space, as seen also in the Devětsil photcollages of Jindřich Štyrský and Karel Teige. The latter's *Travel Postcard* stating 'Greetings from a Journey' seems to evoke his 'international hieroglyphs' inspired by the optical 'sign-systems' of fellow Devětsiler Roman Jakobson,<sup>39</sup> while also conveying a displacement across time and space aided by a map and photograph of stellar constellations. [3] While maps can imply a grid of multiple centres as a kind of empirical framework of 'cultural transfer',<sup>40</sup> in Turowski's words, Modernism became concerned with 'the process of the map's formation', described by him as 'topography'.<sup>41</sup> With this relativism the 'entanglements' of relations between centres became self-reflective while presentism rendered time disjunct, suggesting that we consider a more episodic historiography.

### The Global Present

In the global present, episodes of encounter involving non-European self-identifying modernist movements have prompted many metaphors of interpretation. For example, the concepts of 'transmodernism' and 'microhistories' guided the 2018 'Museum Global' attempt to interpret the Eurocentric high modernist collection of the Nordrhein-Westfalen Museum in Düsseldorf in relation to modernist episodes in Tokyo, Shimla, Moscow, São Paulo, Mexico City, Beirut, and Zaria.<sup>42</sup> Christian Kravagna's concept of transmodernism seeks to repoliticise the previously critically-charged concept of 'transcultural modernism' by continuing transculturalism, syncretism, and hybridity as a means of countering the exclusiveness of Western Modernism.<sup>43</sup> *Museum Global* catalogue contributor Monica Juneja cautions against falling into artistic pluralism and another sort of presentism.<sup>44</sup> Artistic pluralism can portray centres like parallel lines that never meet, leaving the dominant West-European-North Atlantic axis intact as normative, a risk also evident when horizontal art history in Central Europe consents to boundaries that isolate centres as parallel phenomena without interaction. Presentism, as encountered in accounts of contemporary global art such as the exhibition *The Global Contemporary* (where it

is also critiqued),<sup>45</sup> risks suppression of the memory of past transcultural encounters so as to keep the novelty of the present alive to provide for global capitalism's constant need for new commodities. Remedies that expose entanglements in colonial and post-colonial asymmetrical circumstances include 'cultural mediation',<sup>46</sup> as applied by Piotrowski to the 1922 Bauhaus exhibition in Calcutta,<sup>47</sup> 'contextual modernism' (developed by R. Siva Kumar for the same situation),<sup>48</sup> microsociology,<sup>49</sup> micro-stories—which can counter microhistories that might impose outside or colonizing chronologies—and what David Joselit calls a 'reanimation' of heritage,<sup>50</sup> a concept similar to Rampley's 'critical heritage discourse'.<sup>51</sup>

### Becoming Pragmatic

In relating post-colonial theory to what Rampley calls the 'external pragmatic issues' in writing about Central European Modernism,<sup>52</sup> we might consider the global ideological shift identified by Boris Groys as a departure from the universalist utopias of Modernism, deemed to be 'too Western, too Eurocentric, too masculine', and an embrace of postcolonial and post-communist critiques leading to a rejection of modernist canons.<sup>53</sup> While efforts by artists and scholars to promote modernist and pre-1989 Central European avant-gardes may affirm Eurocentrism, in Groys' view, the postcolonial discourse in this region in the 1980s and 1990s sought to reject Eurocentrism in a world 'dominated by identity politics' where participants sought their 'own roots' and 'tradition'.<sup>54</sup> Moreover, scholars have considered postcolonialism within the metropole of European colonial countries or within European countries that did not have overseas colonies yet nonetheless engaged in colonial-style treatment of minorities, racial construction, and distorted or fabricated ethnic identities, sometimes involving the disciplines of ethnography and anthropology.<sup>55</sup> The push for visibility in the global contemporary is not dissimilar in its redressing decades of oppression, exploitation, and underexposure of disadvantaged groups in the broadest scope, while seeking to subvert current institutional structures and their traditional canons. Yet efforts to make Central European avant-garde circles more visible risk losing the crucial factor of their subversive strategies. Moreover, the infrastructure of museums — especially in Europe — has moved decisively into the realm of contemporary art. With this comes the much needed 'critical museum' hoped for by Katarzyna Murawska-Muthesius and Piotrowski (and which they were unable to realise at the National Museum in Warsaw). Now in full swing in most major institutions in the U.S. and Canada,<sup>56</sup> the even more aggressive scrutiny of the 'negative role of these institutions shaping certain artistic attitudes' envisioned in Piotrowski's more strident 1976 article 'Against Institutions' is perhaps most pronounced among indigenous communities whose former lands are now

TIMOTHY O. BENSON

WRITING ABOUT AND EXHIBITING CENTRAL EUROPEAN MODERNISM IN NORTH AMERICA THEN AND NOW

occupied by entities they may regard as coloniser-settler cultures originating in Europe.<sup>57</sup> Equally contentious in many North American locales is the heritage of slavery and the complex issues of racism and economic disparity in which many museums and universities are entangled in ways ranging from curricula—and for museums, acquisitions and exhibitions—to a lack of diversity and inclusion in staffing and promotion practices. These are among the factors that suggest we forgo a discourse based on influence in favour of consideration of the (often asymmetrical) infrastructure of cultural transfer, and that we recognise a general shift from post-colonial to decolonisation, audiences to communities, collecting to repatriation, and global to local as increasingly important factors in North American museums and universities.

One must consider how the Eurocentric, more racially homogeneous cultures of Central Europe might appear in this context. It may be productive to explore overlooked

issues of border crossing such as immigration, oppressed communities such as Jews, Muslims, Slavs, and Roma,<sup>58</sup> and underexposure of female artists and LGBTQ cultural agents.<sup>59</sup> Within the museum, the role of the curator becomes more entrepreneurial, as a facilitator who can draw together diverse objects in unexpected juxtapositions, not unlike Joselit's notion of a 'curatorial episteme'.<sup>60</sup> He suggests that such a curator might draw together 'underground' tendencies in Eastern Europe before 1989 with artistic production under authoritarian regimes in Latin America. In both cases artists were deploying formal innovation characteristic of European Modernism. The Modernism of Central Europe is rich in vanguard strategies for subverting the status quo that could invigorate contemporary discussions in smaller, more focused, more affordable, and ecologically sustainable exhibitions and publications where sweeping 'centre and peripheries' distinctions would be less intrusive.

## NOTES

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# Notes on Matthew Rampley's 'Networks, Horizons, Centres and Hierarchies: On the Challenges of Writing on Modernism in Central Europe'

Matthew Rampley's article marks an inspiring new beginning for study of the position, historiography, and significance of modernist art in Central Europe. Rampley's many books and articles have examined the theories, narratives and historiography of art in Central Europe. This time his starting point is Piotr Piotrowski's paper 'Toward a Horizontal History of the European Avant-Garde,' an emphatic statement prompted, as Rampley confirms, by the 2004 publication of *Art since 1900*, the new canonical modernist narrative constructed by the editors of the *October* magazine Rosalind Krauss, Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, Yve-Alain Bois and Hal Foster. The circumstance that gave high visibility to Piotrowski was the formation of EAM, the European Network for Avant-Garde and Modernism Studies, and its first conference in Ghent in 2008, where he gave the paper as keynote speaker. Focusing on the marginalisation of East-Central European art Piotrowski touched a nerve, and his points were enthusiastically received on the new platform. An insistence that there is life outside Alfred J. Barr's 1936 Chart, which had fleshed out and somewhat extended but was not quintessentially altered by *Art since 1900*, was long overdue.

Re-assessment of the modernist art of the twentieth century was particularly timely a decade after the Russian and East European archives had opened up, and there was no more censorship to paralyse the art history writing of the region.<sup>1</sup>

All things considered, Rampley's question whether Piotrowski was ultimately right in reversing the perspective is a legitimate one, and his answers to the question are very nuanced. The imbalance between the material, financial, and institutional might of the west and the relative weakness of the east in these

respects cannot be denied, but this hardly guarantees that judgment from the periphery is more truthful and authentic than judgment from the centre.

## The emergence and submergence of centres and peripheries

Artistic centres have emerged and submerged throughout history. The visual arts seem never to have been sufficient to elevate a city or a country into a centre, even in the era when they had much more of a monopoly on the culture than in the ages of cinema and television. Roger Shattuck describes the Paris of the last third of the 19th century as a 'vast stage set'<sup>2</sup> where every segment of the life and culture was a spectacle: the cafés, fashion, theatres, the opera, the boulevards and festivities as well as literature and the arts. The investment of the population in all these areas mythologized Paris in a way that has hardly found its equal. Yet as Beatrice Joyeux-Prunel examines in detail,<sup>3</sup> Paris lost its mythical position in the 1920s. A Bauhaus student, Ludwig Hirschfeld-Mack shares his tangible experience of this in his memoirs: meeting Fernand Léger in Paris in 1923 he asked the French artist, 'Why don't you develop a modern art school such as the Bauhaus? You have the best artists in the world, you have won the war, you have the means to develop such an institution.' Léger replied that 'the atmosphere in victorious France was chauvinistic, reactionary and conservative, that no new way of life could be the outcome of this situation.'<sup>4</sup> Paris, however, still lived in the mind of many foreigners as the art capital of the world, to which they would make pilgrimages, and it started a comeback at the end of the decade.

The unexpected rise of Berlin as the international cultural centre and new art capital in the wake of the First



1 / István Farkas, *The Madman of Syracuse*, 1930  
tempera, cardboard, 80 × 90 cm  
Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest  
Photo: Museum of Fine Arts 2021

World War, however, contradicted all theories of centre and periphery, especially those of historian Immanuel Wallerstein.<sup>5</sup> According to his definition a centre is a country with a strong central government, extensive bureaucracy, and powerful army, but Berlin was the capital of a defeated empire just turned into a fledgling and chaotic republic with neither political nor military power and a wretched economy. Berlin's new central role was in fact related to the mirage of a new internationalism and the ideal of a benign communism, following the 1917 Russian Revolution. Russia was not only geographically closer to Berlin than to Paris. Political connections and special relations between the two countries, including Lenin's prediction that Germany, the next 'weakest link in the capitalist chain' would be the second state to succumb to Communism, attracted an international crowd to Berlin, exemplified by what Peter Gay calls the 'Wahlberliner', who shared the excitement of the belief in an imminent world revolution expected to take off in Berlin. Russian, Scandinavian, Ukrainian, Hungarian, Romanian, Dutch, Polish artists, critics, and writers found or founded publication platforms, published and exhibited their works in Germany, studied and taught at the Bauhaus. The thriving cultural life of interwar Berlin, the regular meetings of progressive artists at Gert Cadet's and Erich Buchholz's studios, the passionate debates of the Russians in the cafés of Charlottenburg (dubbed 'Charlottengrad'), modern theatres, cabarets, and early German cinema are amply documented. A landmark event embodying the Russian connection was the First Russian Exhibition in the fall of 1922 in the Van Diemen Gallery in Berlin;

but prior to this event, the Der Sturm Gallery had already featured Russian and East-European artists.

The presence of expressionists had not been enough to turn Berlin into a centre before the First World War, let alone Dresden, home of the Die Brücke group. Munich, with its international community of artists, galleries, and the highly respected Academy of Fine Arts, was closer to being a tentative centre rivalling Paris, but had too little time. Berlin started to develop its own myth in the 1920s but did not have as long a peaceful period to cultivate it as Paris had enjoyed.

The fact that the west-east trajectory was not always one-directional is clearly indicated by the success of Russian constructivism in gaining ground in Berlin, the Bauhaus, and, subsequently, all over Europe and, later with 1970s Minimalism, in the United States. Stephen Bann coined the term 'international constructivism' in 1974,<sup>6</sup> denoting the integration of constructivism into the Western narrative. There was a difference, however, between Russian constructivism, an anti-art stance seeking a new function for the artist in a new society and the creation of three-dimensional model objects of future functionalist design articles, and the new geometric aesthetics that dominated Western and Central European paintings in the early 1920s.

Such misreading of concepts from other cultures was the rule rather than exception in both directions along the west-east axis. Ideologists of the 'Hungarian fauves', especially György Lukács<sup>7</sup>, had little understanding of the political implications of developments in French art, and misinterpreted impressionism as 'subjective', seeing

ÉVA FORGÁCS

NOTES ON MATTHEW RAMPLEY'S 'NETWORKS, HORIZONS, CENTRES AND HIERARCHIES'



2 / Lajos Vajda, *Szentendre Houses with Crucifix*, 1937  
tempera, collage, paper,  
46 × 62 cm  
Ferenczy Museum Center,  
Szentendre  
Photo: Ferenczy Museum Center

deep metaphysical meaning in the highly coloured or pathos-filled paintings of the artistically very diverse members of the Hungarian group *Seekers* (in 1910 re-named *The Eight*). Pre-World War I Budapest was regarded as a centre rather than a periphery. Even if Hungarian artists went to study and temporarily live in Paris or Munich, they always returned, with no doubt that Budapest was as good as any other place in Europe. A number of movements held out the promise of a great new cultural era. New journals such as *Huszadik század* (Twentieth century, 1900), *Nyugat* (West, 1908), *A szellem* (Spirit, 1911), societies and circles for self-education, and thriving city life with art and music as well as lively literary debates all contributed to one of the best periods in the city's history. Many theorists, writers and scientists were bilingual, having German as their first or second language, and traveled everywhere in Europe to take classes at various universities or just to visit. Budapest's position as a thriving cultural city was not questioned until the defeat of the Hungarian Soviet Republic in 1919, when most of the artists, scholars and scientists emigrated.<sup>8</sup>

Misinterpretations are inherent, as Rampley notes, in the very terms 'Czech cubism' or 'Czech surrealism', as well as the interpretation of post-1945 Czech art, which, as Tomáš Pospyszyl<sup>9</sup> notes, is to be understood in its own context and lineage, not in the terms of Western 'isms'. By applying Western terminology to themselves, the East-Central European cultures have greatly contributed to a situation in which they are considered derivative. As I argued in this same journal,<sup>10</sup> there is a contradiction between claims to the existence of a specifically East-

Central European art and the use of the terminology of Western and Russian Modernism to describe this art. Many artists, like the Polish-Lituanian Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz (1885–1939), the Czech Karel Teige (1900–1951), or the Hungarian painters István Farkas (1887–1944) [1], or Lajos Vajda (1908–1941) [2], to mention just a few, cannot be characterised using such terms. Gyula Pauer's (1941–2012) term 'Pseudo', a penetrating characterisation of 'existing socialism' [3] has remained internationally unknown, as well as the sarcastic photorealism of László Méhes (b.1944). [4]

### Interior marginality and discontinuity

One of the reasons for the marginality of the East-Central European avant-gardes and Modernisms was their inherently marginal position inside their respective cultures. For example, in the same year as the European avant-garde's introduction in New York City with the Armory Show in 1913, there was an international exhibition of futurism and other avant-garde trends in Budapest's Nemzeti Szalon (National Salon). The reception was condescending and deferential. Poet and essayist Béla Balázs considered it tactful to try to persuade other respected progressives that the futurists were not crazy or mentally ill, but if anything, then scary. Poet István Vas, one-time son-in-law of Hungarian avant-gardist Lajos Kassák, remembered that the term 'futurist' was widely used in Hungary to ridicule every kind of modernist art that was not generally understood.<sup>11</sup> Such suspicion about modern art speaks volumes



about its rejection by the Hungarian public and most of the intelligentsia. Not that futurism had, originally, a greater appeal in its own homeland. It emerged from one single person: Marinetti's anger over Italy's failure to modernise and hence its cultural marginalisation. In Italy the magic of words and the power of terms could counter marginalisation: while 'impressionism', 'cubism', or 'fauve' were originally meant to parody the art they referred to, 'futurism' was charged with a powerful appeal to all those who wanted to have a future, regardless of stylistic restrictions. No such energetic term originated in Central Europe.

Another possible reason for marginalisation was the discontinuity of Modernism. In Central Europe historical eras and political regimes changed too fast to allow modernist sub-cultures to solidify. As an idiosyncratic Hungarian poet and artist, Károly Tamkó-Sirató summed it up as an émigré in Paris in the 1930s, his 'planist' poems made much more sense in France than in Hungary, because 'As if a foundation, the similar poems of Apollinaire and Picabia were subconsciously associated with them, so that they appeared to be part of an ever-growing process of culture.'<sup>12</sup> This 'process of culture' was episodic rather than continuous in most East-Central European countries.

### Whose Central Europe?

Piotrowski's programme of a 'horizontal art history' as well as his later book *In the Shadow of Yalta*,<sup>13</sup> is informed by the experience of the post-1948 political and economic division of Europe and the world, when Central and Eastern European arts had been sidelined by the west both with regard to the master narrative of Modernism and, as a consequence, attention to the current art and art criticism of these countries had lapsed.

The bundling of these cultures together as a region rather than identification of the differences between

the arts of the various countries concerned is one of the problematic aspects of the Western approach. As Rampley notes, it is an inconvenient truth that knowledge of languages, history, and art history are required for comparative study of the art of these countries, and 'using of English as a lingua franca does not circumvent the problem ... that historical and important secondary sources remain inaccessible.'

Starting in the 1970s and especially after the 1975 Helsinki Accords, major survey exhibitions were arranged in Paris and Germany to make amends, but also as a sort of territorial competition for the central role of having supported East European and international art in the interwar period. After the exhibition *Paris-New York* (1977), *Paris-Berlin* (1978), *Paris-Moscou* (1979), and *Présences polonaises* (1980) followed in the Beaubourg, while *Aktuelle Kunst in Osteuropa* (Cologne, 1972), *Tendenzen der zwanziger Jahre* (West-Berlin, 1977), and a number of museum-level gallery shows featuring Russian and East European avant-garde art were organised in the Gmurzynska Galerie in Cologne. The next opportunity for integrating East-Central European art into the Western narrative came and went in the wake of 1989. Piotrowski's thesis reflects post-1989 disappointment that the 20th century art of Eastern Europe has ultimately failed to be integrated into the master narrative of Modernism.

Ironically, while many artists in Eastern and Central Europe sought to escape the mire of the politicisation of art and hoped for international recognition purely on the basis of their artistic achievements, the art of the region received fleeting recognition once it politically fell into place in the Western context — regardless of the issue of whether any art can exist without taking a political position. The sudden collapse of Communism and the Soviet Union in the fall of 1989 and the winter of 1991 created a situation in Central and Eastern Europe that was not unlike that of the post-World War I moment in 1918, when the newly minted nation states set out to construct their own particular, post-Habsburg cultural narratives at the same time as they sought integration into a new international cultural context. Another post-1989 difficulty was that while Westerners were eager to see the spectacular liberation story of Russia as well as Eastern and Central Europe, they were not prepared to learn a whole parallel art history complete with a new geography and a plethora of yet unknown, hard-to-pronounce names. What was in demand, in fact, at least on the level of immediate curatorial and critical interest, was a streamlined narrative that would quickly disclose basic information about Russian conceptualism and East-Central European art.



3 / Gyula Pauer, *Pseudo Cube (Pseudo I.)*, 1971  
aluminum, enamel, 24.5 × 24.5 × 29.5 cm  
Janus Pannonius Museum, Pécs  
Photo: Janus Pannonius Museum

ÉVA FORGÁCS

NOTES ON MATTHEW RAMPLEY'S 'NETWORKS, HORIZONS, CENTRES AND HIERARCHIES'



4 / **László Méhes,**  
**Lukewarm Water,** 1970  
 oil, cardboard, 60 × 80 cm  
 Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest  
 Photo: Museum of Fine Arts 2021

### Past moments of 'horizontality'

There have been moments in the history of art when no visible hierarchy was in place. For example, Katherine Dreier's *Société Anonyme*, started in 1920, was a unique collection, inasmuch as it included young, then unknown Polish, Cuban, Austrian, Swedish and Hungarian artists and many others as ranking with Klee and Kandinsky, since history had not yet subjected them to a hierarchy. Advised by Man Ray and Marcel Duchamp, Dreier collected a truly 'horizontal' body of artworks in Piotrowski's sense of the word. The Hagenbund circle in Vienna, mentioned by Rampley, was a similar experiment in a smaller geographic area.

Another such moment came in the wake of World War II, when the whole world seemed to open up and a new, all-inclusive internationalism was envisioned by many artists. Members of the international CoBrA group, for example, reached out to the Czech 'Ra' group, in order to establish initial contact with artists of the region. Prague-based painter Joseph Istler was invited to participate in CoBrA's 1949 exhibition in Amsterdam. As early as 1945, artists in Budapest formed the *European School* and published a Manifesto, stating that 'Europe and the old European ideal have been destroyed. The idea of Europe has, until now, entailed Western Europe. From now on, we have to reckon with the concept of a Whole Europe. This new Europe can emerge only as the synthesis of East and West.'<sup>14</sup> Plans for a united European culture, however, came to an abrupt end with the Sovietisation of Eastern Europe in 1948.

### Divided cultures

While the Western narratives have solidified more or less as a matter of consensus even allowing, for example, for Enrico Castelnuovo and Carlo Ginzburg's proposal to re-write Italian art history as pluricentric, the art histories of the East-Central European countries, as is well known, have been deeply divided along fault lines between nationalist-conservative and modernist views, as well as between officially supported and oppositional art during the communist decades and the interwar period. Artists, critics, and art historians developed a coded language to indicate their loyalties; and such coded expressions, used to indicate different outlooks, have still not disappeared. Integrating the national arts into the international canon is a two-fold task. What Polish curator and art writer Aneta Szylak wrote about post-1989 art in Poland is generally applicable to most of East-Central Europe: 'We are asked to define our "Polishness" when what is expected is a kind of universalism. ... Organisations are rewriting art history according to where they find legitimate antecedents. It is as if the past is being reinvented in order to control the future.'<sup>15</sup> Tackling the same problem, Slovenian art historian and museum director Zdenka Badovinac points out that 'One of the principal tasks of contemporary artists in Eastern Europe [is] to define the historical trends in their own traditions, independent of the canonised Western tradition,' while aspiring to a status on the global scene.<sup>16</sup>

### Cultural studies, interdisciplinarity

Not only is the master narrative owned by the west, but so is the invention of interdisciplinarity in academe. Cultural studies demand a critical approach and expertise in a number of disciplines, such as philosophy, sociology, anthropology, history, psychoanalysis, linguistics, aesthetics, art history, literary history, classical philology, gender studies — the list is far from complete — and the application of these disciplines to the interpretation of artworks and phenomena in the field of the arts. While many art historians have a multi-disciplinary education, few, if any, have an equal depth of knowledge in all these fields and the overview of art on the global scene that would validate judgments, interpretations and narratives. Multi-disciplinarity has been imported from the Western hemisphere into East-Central Europe where academic disciplines were traditionally rigorously separated. It has become relevant, however, as new fields in artistic practice have appeared since the late 1960s: happenings, performance art, installations, video, mixed media, digital works, and more. Many came to believe that the demands of cultural studies in Western academia had to be adapted to address the new genres and to avoid provincialism. Central European art historical and discursive language and thinking had to be adjusted to a methodology that originates from a different educational system, but this opened the way to much more complex thinking about art as well as the possible implications of an artwork in contrast with the traditional, mostly stylistic or thematic approaches.

### Paths forward

Logically, as well as pragmatically, Rampley proposes that researchers should pursue entangled and transnational art histories in an attempt to construct an all-inclusive narrative. All the five points of his programme are possible paths forward, even if it is somewhat utopian, as Rampley realistically admits, to expect scholars to acquire an in-depth appreciation of the artistic culture of more than one country. The problem is not only the variety of languages, but also the necessity of historical knowledge and understanding the local context with all its subtextual and meta-cognitive aspects. Nonetheless, cooperation among scholars may become reality.

Art historian Loránd Hegyi made a remarkable attempt at integrating Hungarian art into the Western narrative in the 1980s. He coined the brand name of Hungarian 'New Sensibility' and championed it as the counterpart of the internationally emerging *Heflige Malerei* and *Bad Painting*: postmodern new expressionism. Since he did not have the means to take Hungarian artworks to international exhibitions, he invited Italian, French and German artists to exhibit in Budapest along with their Hungarian contemporaries. The few such exhibitions left a lasting impression of

the seamlessness with which the artworks from different countries came together. Whatever Hans Belting meant by the arts of East Central Europe being delayed, there was no delay. In the 1980s the neo-expressionists seemed to convey a looming social chaos both in the west and in the east. At other times, rather than 'delayed', East Central European artists expressed a reality that was different from that of the west. Tadeusz Kantor in Poland or Milan Knížák in Czechoslovakia were not delayed with regard to the artists of any other culture. As a result of the political oppression in their respective countries, the discursive language for the interpretation of their work was heavily censored and suppressed. Art history writing is in the process of making up for *that delay*.

György Galántai had previously exhibited works of artists from various East European countries in 1970–1973 at Balatonboglár, where he rented an abandoned chapel for the purpose; and similar exhibitions had been organised by Hungarian textile artists during the 1970s as textile was not on the ideological radar of officialdom. Textile art, as the Basel Biennales showed, was truly 'horizontal' in the 1970s.

Exhibitions appear to have become increasingly important as the role of art history and art criticism has visibly decreased in recent decades. While until about the 1990s the printed word had great authority, and reviews of art critics and mentions of artists in books were photocopied and provided to visitors to gallery shows, market presence and curatorial concepts have gained more ground lately. Critical writings have almost disappeared. So much money is invested in any exhibition and the 'making' of an artist that critiquing the works would prompt doubts as to whether all that money had been put in the right place. In this situation editors and publishers have no incentive to challenge art dealers or museums. In such a climate, where, as Rampley quotes Tomáš Pospiszyl, '*the worldwide system of exhibitions and art markets ... is a single, all-embracing whole*,' presence in exhibitions and markets seems to be the most efficient path to international renown.

One encouraging feature of the world as a singular marketplace is that markets are always on the lookout for new products, although the market's judgment of quality might be volatile. Strong initiatives and strong artworks as well as strong arguments originating from East-Central Europe may — to repeat Rampley's closing words — 'speak in compelling ways' to otherwise disengaged audiences.

ÉVA FORGÁCS

NOTES ON MATTHEW RAMPLEY'S 'NETWORKS, HORIZONS, CENTRES AND HIERARCHIES'

## NOTES

1 Since some issues are relevant in the larger East European area, it is difficult to consistently talk about Central Europe only; my usage will oscillate.

2 Roger Shattuck, *The Banquet Years*, New York 1968, p. 6.

3 Béatrice Joyeux-Prunel, 'Peripheral Circulations, Transient Centralities. The International Geography of the Avant-Gardes in the Interwar Period (1918–1940)', *Visual Resources* XXXV, 2019, No. 1–2, pp. 185–192.

4 Ludwig Hirschfeld-Mack, *The Bauhaus: An Introductory Survey*, Croydon 1963, pp. 2–3. The incident is also mentioned by Joyeux-Prunel (note 3).

5 Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Modern World System: Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of the European World Economy in the Sixteenth Century*, New York 1974. He introduced the concept of 'semi-peripheries', too, for rising peripheries and declining centers.

6 Stephen Bann, *The Tradition of Constructivism*, London 1974, p. XXVII.

7 György Lukács, 'Az utak elváltak (The ways have parted)' (1910), in Timothy O. Benson and Éva Forgács (eds), *Between Worlds. A Sourcebook of Central European Avant-Gardes 1910–1930*, Cambridge 2002, pp. 125–129.

8 See Mary Gluck, *Georg Lukács and His Generation 1900–1918*, Cambridge and London 1985.

9 Quoted by Matthew Rampley; Tomáš Pospiszyl, *An Associative Art History*, Prague 2018.

10 See Éva Forgács, 'Art History's One Blind Spot in East-Central Europe: Terminology', *Umění* LXIV, 2016, pp. 19–28.

11 István Vas, *Nehéz szerelem* [Hard love], Budapest 1972, p. 308.

12 Tamkó-Sirató Károly, *A Dimenzionista Manifesztum története* [History of the Dimensionist Manifesto], Budapest 2010, p. 57.

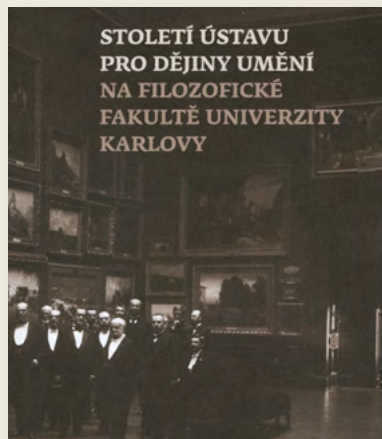
13 Piotr Piotrowski, *In the Shadow of Yalta. Art and Avant-Garde in Eastern Europe*, London 2009.

14 Manifesto of the *European School*, printed in the first brochure of the group, Budapest 1945.

15 Suzanne Cotter, Andrew Nairne and Victoria Pomery (eds), *Arrivals. Art from the new Europe*, Oxford 2007, p. 31.

16 *Ibidem*, p. 47.





TOMÁŠ POSPISZYL — AKADEMIE VÝTVARNÝCH UMĚNÍ V PRAZE

## Richard Biegel — Roman Prahla — Jakub Bachtík (edd.) Století Ústavu pro dějiny umění na filozofické fakultě Univerzity Karlovy

Praha, Filozofická fakulta, Univerzita Karlova 2020 (Opera Facultatis philosophicae Universitatis Carolinae Pragensis, vol. XIX), 942 s., čb. a bar. obr., jmenný rejstřík, seznam obhájěných kvalifikačních prací, angl. resumé

Jestliže jste delší dobu pracovali v nějaké instituci, pravděpodobně jste se s podobným úkolem již setkali: jak sobě a svému okolí připomenout vlastní kulaté výročí? U pracoviště, která se jako svou vedlejší, nebo dokonce hlavní činností zabývají produkcí textů o historii, se logicky vynoří nápad jubileum oslavit knihou. Jenže jak by měla podobná kniha vypadat? Jako almanach, soubor osobních vzpomínek nebo přísně vědecký sborník, demonstrující schopnost nezaujaté sebereflexe? Má být publikace přátelskou oslavou pro komunitu přátel, nebo je v ní místo pro veřejnou kritiku? Má knihu psát někdo zvenku, nebo o sobě budeme psát sami? Toto jsou v obecné rovině zásadní metodologické otázky, zvláště obtížné pak v případě Ústavu pro dějiny umění na Filozofické fakultě Univerzity Karlovy, jehož založení se váže k roku 1919. Snahu o zaujetí nezávislého pohledu totiž komplikuje dominantní, i když ne monopolní postavení pražského ústavu v domácí uměnovědě. V českém odborném prostředí se najde málokdo, kdo by s tímto ústavem nepřišel do styku a neměl s ním co do činění. Zdá se, že takové východisko téměř znemožňuje objektivní přístup jak k tvorbě podobné publikace, tak pochopitelně i k jejímu hodnocení.

Když mě redakce oslovila s žádostí o recenzi, ptal jsem se sám sebe, jak ji pojmut. Coby nemilosrdnou kritiku do určité míry nevyhnutelně sebeoslavného projektu, nebo nostalgický pohled na něco, s čím mám osobní zkušenost? Na pražské katedře jsem totiž studoval, byť jsem ji přes slib daný Petru Wittlichovi nikdy nedokončil. K úkolu jsem se nakonec snažil přistoupit podobně jako autoři samotného recenzovaného díla, knihy *Století Ústavu pro dějiny umění na filozofické fakultě Univerzity Karlovy*. Ti se do své práce pustili s odvahou, bez dlouhého rozmyšlení a vytáček, i když by k nim vhodné příležitosti jistě našli. Jak píší v úvodním slovu, hned na počátku se ukázalo, že rok 1919 není zdaleka jediným datem, k němuž se počátky Ústavu přirozeně váží. Ve hře byly i letopočty 1907, 1911, 1921, 1922, ale také už rok 1850. Je proto potřeba ocenit, že nejednoznačnost zakladatelského okamžiku se nestala záminkou ke zbabělému odložení obtíženého úkolu například o třicet

let, ale výročí samotné zavdalo kromě recenzované publikace také podnět pro výstavu, která vznik knihy předznamovala.<sup>1</sup>

Jakou koncepci editoři — Richard Biegel, Roman Prahla a Jakub Bachtík — tedy nakonec zvolili? Rozhodli se jít cestou širokého autorského týmu, zahrnujícího jak pedagogy, tak magisterské studenty a doktorandy jubilujícího Ústavu pro dějiny umění FF UK. Pod jednotlivými texty, jejichž strukturu si záhy popíšeme, najdeme dvacet šest autorských značek, přitom z obsahu knihy lze identifikovat šest hlavních autorů. Milena Bartlová a Eva Skopalová v recenzi pro *Artalk* tuto autorskou konstelaci popisují poněkud sarkasticky,<sup>2</sup> ale ať už je tomu jakkoli, i jejich text svým způsobem ukazuje nakolik je obtížné dosáhnout ve věci Ústavu pro dějiny umění na FF UK nezaujatého pohledu. Recenzi totiž Bartlová se Skopalovou psaly z pozice absolventky a studentky ústavu, navíc Bartlová měla právě vyjít zdánlivě konkurenční publikace.<sup>3</sup> Nejde mi zde pochopitelně o to obviňovat někoho ze zaujatosti — když jsem byl redakcí *Umění* vyzván k recenzi knihy, uvědomil jsem si kromě okolností svého někdejšího studia třeba i skutečnost, že jeden z editorů knihy Richard Biegel má pracovní úvazek na katedře teorie a dějin umění Akademie výtvarných umění v Praze, kterou vedu.<sup>4</sup> V našich podmínkách je „psaní o sobě“ nejen fakticky existujícím žánrem, ale zřejmě jednou z mála strategií, jak podobný úkol — vnímaný jako institucionální povinnost — vůbec uskutečnit.<sup>5</sup>

Rozsah i obsah knihy *Století Ústavu pro dějiny umění na filozofické fakultě Univerzity Karlovy* se ovšem podobě běžného výročního almanachu vymyká: tisícistránková publikace sleduje výuku dějin umění na pražské univerzitě již od poloviny 19. století a až po současnost. Činí tak prostřednictvím chronologických syntetických kapitol a rozsáhlých biografických medailonů všech kmenových pracovníků Ústavu od roku 1850 dodnes, doplněných o portréty významných externistů. Celkem je takto monograficky zpracováno padesát tři osob.<sup>6</sup> S ohledem na autorský tým museli editoři učinit jisté nejednoduché rozhodnutí, zda zahrnout do svazku

i nedávnou historii. Znamená to například, že se zde studenti dostávají do pozice autorů textů o vlastních učitelích. Charakter i funkce medailonů současných vyučujících se tak nutně odlišují od medailonů historických postav, ač formálně vypadají shodně. Editori část knihy po roce 1989 sami vnímají nikoliv jako kritickou reflexi, ale vidí v ní zaznamenání dění, které je důležité pro celek knihy. (s. 14) Je na ni vyčleněno proporčních 125 stran, přitom sedmáct vyučujících spjatých s touto etapou je výsledkem rozšiřování pedagogického sboru v posledních desetiletích. Osobně souhlasím s tím, že absence vzhledu do historie po roce 1989 by svazek učinila torzem. Její začlenění dalo editorům i autorům možnost ukázat proběhlé změny, ale paradoxně také dokumentuje silnou tendenci k zachování personálních, odborných i materiálních kontinuit popisovaného pracoviště.

To představuje základní rozdíl třeba od zmíněné knihy Mileny Bartlové, již nemá smysl považovat za plnohodnotně konkurenční podnik. Rozhodující se mi zdá skutečnost, že Bartlová píše dějiny českých dějin umění a navíc v relativně malém časovém úseku. Sestavovatelé *Století Ústavu pro dějiny umění na filozofické fakultě Univerzity Karlovy* si vytkli jiný úkol: primárně se zaměřují na dějiny dané instituce, nikoliv historii samotného oboru. Činí tak na základě terénního výzkumu: procházeli archivy, zpovídali dostupné aktéry historických dějů, bádání nekomplikovali předem formulovanými hypotézami. Dějiny stopadesátileté univerzitní instituce se tak v nezbytné časové kondenzaci jeví jako historie bojů o tituly, pracovní smlouvy, místnosti a v neposlední řadě peníze. Spíše než v říši idejí se proto odehrávají na poli žádostí, komisionálních posudků a úředních rozhodnutí, do kterých pravidelně vstupuje politika, ale v některých případech také osobní přátelství nebo naopak antagonismus či vzájemné soupeření. Vyjevují se období, kdy vzdělávání v oblasti dějin umění nebylo potřeba, přesněji nebylo prioritou. Svědčí o tom některé roky za Rakousko-Uherska, kdy místo profesora dějin umění zůstalo zcela neobsazeno, léta protektorátu, ale z pohledu mladší generace jistě trochu nepochopitelně také léta osmdesátá.

Podle recenze Mileny Bartlové a Evy Skopalové na *Artalku* kniha nechtěně popisuje sebereprodukcí oboru a legitimizační řetězce autority, aniž je však sama hlouběji zkoumá. Zvláště zvolený systém medailonů evokuje genealogii oboru, kde si velcí mužové oboru (a devět žen) hladce předávají pomyslnou štafetu. Je to však jen prvotní zdání. Při pozorném čtení všech textů se například dozvíme, že více než v jednom případě odborné aktivity pracovníků Ústavu přerostly v kriminální činy. Bezproblémový obraz nejlouběji narušuje kapitola o Ústavu pro dějiny umění na Německé univerzitě. Jeho šedesátiletá historie českým badatelům dlouho unikala, přestože není marginální a už vůbec ne mimoběžná s tím, co se odehrávalo v české části

univerzity či v českých dějinách umění obecně. Rozpaky naopak cítím nad způsobem, kterým je čtenář seznámen (či neseznámen) s členstvím jednotlivých poválečných pedagogů v KSČ, přesněji ze způsobu, jakým je toto členství podáno: někdy jako odsudek, jindy jako omluva. Osvěžující, ale pro výuku současně nepochybně klíčové jsou zdánlivě technické informace o zavedení diaprojekcí v roce 1912, akvizici prvního počítače v roce 1989 i o šíři a dosahu studijních cest, dobře vysledovatelných z obrazového doprovodu.

Kniha *Století Ústavu pro dějiny umění na filozofické fakultě Univerzity Karlovy* je důkazem snahy uspořádat dějiny, shromáždit a seřadit co největší množství informací. Nevím, do jaké míry lze očekávat soustředěné čtení tisícistránkové publikace od přední obálky k té zadní. Jde spíše o úložiště dat, vzpomínek a interpretací, v němž se bude spíše cíleně hledat, případně jednotlivé údaje konfrontovat (to naznačují dvě textilní záložky). V částech sepsaných rozdílnými autory se někdy opakují informace, což pro sestavovatele knihy nebylo důvodem k jejich eliminaci. Hned na třech místech se tak například dočteme o smrtelné nehodě Karla Gutha: v roce 1943 při povinném zatemňování oken svého bytu upadl a na následky zranění zemřel. (s. 199, 316, 321) Tragická historka, při přednášce nepochybně oživující výklad, však získává písemným opakováním zdání hlubšího významu. Je snad Guthův nešťastný pád čímsi, co pražské dějiny umění nějakým způsobem trvale poznamenává?

Pozorného čtenáře snad zaujmou i jiné rysy knihy. Třeba jedna podstatná, dosud nezmíněná součást publikace, jíž je téměř dvě stě stran příloh. Obsahuje seznam vyučujících na Ústavu pro dějiny umění FF UK, a především pak seznam absolventských prací vzniklých v letech 1918–2018. Ten je fascinující jak z hlediska měnících se témat prací, tak jejich celkového počtu. Většinu 20. století jejich množství zvolna stoupá z několika obhájených prací ročně k úrovni mezi deseti až dvaceti ročně. To se mění po roce 2010, kdy jich obvykle bývá kolem padesáti. Co podobný vývoj znamená pro budoucnost dějin umění a co vypovídá o naší společnosti?

Jsem proto přesvědčen, že podobné jubilejní knihy mají své důležité místo. Představují cosi jako výchozí variantu výkladu dějin. Nelze od nich očekávat formulaci požadavků na radikální proměnu, jsou spíše výpovědí o ustavování akademického kánonu a společenských pravidel jedné instituce z perspektivy těch, kdo se na nich sami podílejí. Až na základě podobných knih — přesněji toho, co v nich je, ale i toho, co v nich chybí — lze provést sebereflexi a věnovat se specificky zaměřeným výzkumům. Bude-li někdo chtít zkoumat nejrůznější aspekty historie výuky dějin umění v Praze, například zmíněné legitimizační řetězce autority Ústavu pro dějiny umění na FF UK, recenzovaná kniha mu jistě bude neocenitelným zdrojem.

## POZNÁMKY

1 Dějiny umění ve smyčkách doby, křížová chodba Karolina, 22. 1. – 23. 2. 2020.

2 Milena Bartlová — Eva Skopalová (rec.), Dějiny umění vynalézají své dějiny, *Artalk*, 15 .6. 2020, <https://artalk.cz/2020/06/15/dejiny-ume-ni-vynalezaji-sve-dejiny/>, vyhledáno 19. 7. 2021.

3 Milena Bartlová, *Dějiny českých dějin umění 1945–1969*, Praha 2020.

4 Pozn. redakce: Na tuto skutečnost jsme byli předem autorem upozorněni. Vzhledem k rozsahu autorského týmu recenzované publikace i skutečnosti, že angažmá stávajícího ředitele Ústavu pro dějiny umění na FF UK Richarda Biegla na AVU vnímáme spíše jako vedlejší a že je obtížné vyloučit všechny podobné vazby i v rámci dalších domácích pracovišť, jak ostatně sám recenzent konstatuje, rozhodli jsme se, že nadále stojíme o to, aby recenzi na knihu napsal právě Tomáš Pospiszyl.

5 Webová Bibliografie dějin Českých zemí Historického ústavu AV ČR za poslední půlstoletí eviduje okolo padesáti podobných titulů z velké části vzniklých metodou „psaní o sobě“, včetně toho, jenž připomenul výročí Semináře dějin umění Masarykovy univerzity v Brně, viz Jiří Kroupa — Lubomír Slavíček (edd.), *Almanach 1927–1997. Sedmdesát let Semináře dějin umění Masarykovy univerzity*, Brno 1997.

6 Který medailon jsem si přečetl jako první? Ten, jenž je věnovaný Aleně Alsterové. Je charakterizována jako méně výrazná osobnost Ústavu daného období, čemuž objektivně odpovídají i její nepočtené vědecké výstupy. Pro mě osobně však byla zásadní postavou. V osmdesátých letech jsem studoval na FF UK jiný obor než dějiny umění a byla to právě ona, kdo mě v rámci volitelného předmětu rozhodujícím způsobem povzbudila, abych se pokusil o přestup.



IVAN GERÁT — SLOVAK ACADEMY OF SCIENCES, ART RESEARCH CENTRE, INSTITUTE FOR ART HISTORY — BRATISLAVA

Kateřina Kubínová — Klára Benešová (eds)

## Imago Imagines

Výtvarné dílo a proměny jeho funkcí  
v českých zemích od 10. do první třetiny 16. století

Praha, Academia 2019, 619 and 807 pp., col. and b/w illus., text in Czech, index of names, index of places, English resumé

The juxtaposition of singularity and plurality in the title of this monumental two-volume book poses challenging questions to the reader. It is true that both words appear in relevant medieval sources, but that is hardly explanation enough. The terms are used in other grammatical forms in such texts but the issue is not one of grammar. Indeed, the tension between the one and the many images raises crucial theological, philosophical, and anthropological questions that arise in dialogue around the image and images between medieval and contemporary cultures.

The singularity can refer to *'the image and likeness'* (Genesis, I, 26), a tradition postulating the one image standing at the beginning of humanity. At the same time there are endless differences between countless human beings and the images created by them, and there is multiplicity in the history of images and in their interpretation. Art history, the professional domain of almost all the authors of the present collection of texts, does not confront this multiplicity alone. Its dialogue with the past uses insights and inspirations from various scholarly disciplines dealing with the legacy of medieval cultures.

Histories of medieval art have worked with the tension between the singularity and multiplicity (plurality) of medieval images in several ways. The group of distinguished authors led by Kateřina Kubínová, and Klára Benešová has undertaken a serious effort to include the art of Central Europe, with Bohemia and Prague at the centre of attention, in current international discussions on medieval art history. They have considered various methodological orientations of this broad field of research, but the subtitle of their monumental work indicates that they all share the approach of taking a closer look at the changing functions of *'the work of visual art'* (*'výtvarné dílo'*, in singular).

The content of the book is divided into two large parts according to dominant aspect of the function of the artwork. Almost six hundred pages mainly discussing the religious function (in the singular) of the image (again, in the singular), are followed by more than six hundred pages devoted to representative and mnemonic functions of the image



(in the singular). Sometimes, these words do not mean the same, for example when an image in the liturgy represents *'the heavenly sphere'* (vol. I, p. 183), this differs substantially from representation of earthly patrons, their wealth, or social standing. (vol. II, pp. 10–259) Alternatively, there are many cases when not the content of the images but their style takes on the representational function. (vol. II, pp. 540–636) The style is primarily a manifestation of individual ambitions, but there is also a possibility that it reflects the character of the whole culture. (vol. II, p. 623)

The choices made in the titles of the book and its parts are not always binding for the content of individual chapters. Based on their material, the authors sometimes offer their own perspectives. For example, when focusing on the image's religious function, they briefly mention the representational aspects (vol. I, p. 132; p. 161) and vice versa (repeatedly in the second volume). When defining the standard religious functions of a type of object, they list its secondary functions. (vol. I, p. 162) As the list of these functions reappears in the book several times in various forms, it seems that it is based on discussions in the team of authors. The relative importance of individual secondary functions could change. In historical development, some different functions could be associated with the same object (or object type). For example, the devotional Marian image could be transformed into a commemorative epitaph. (vol. I, p. 412) Textiles of forgotten origin were linked to the patron saints of the country, and thus integrated into a new memorial context. (vol. II, p. 393) The stories about miracles caused by an image appear in the Baroque sources, but they may have had medieval predecessors. (vol. I, p. 424) Alternatively, an illumination can serve as a visual document helping the present-day imagination to reconstruct vanished architecture. (vol. II, p. 286)

Somewhat surprisingly to any reader with a mechanical understanding of the title keyword, the image means not only pictures in various material media but also mental images as reconstructed mainly from textual documents. The volume also regularly presents architecture. Even if these parts occasionally treat architecture in the spirit of iconology as an image *sui generis* (for example, vol. I, pp. 52–62), the prevailing perspective focuses on the spatial organization that determined perception of the images. The reader is given the chance to imagine the spatial and social contexts of the pictures in the period, including the historical tensions accompanying their functions. The resulting set of insights is multidimensional. The authors do not limit themselves to written sources on the functions of images. For example, in the case of monastic architecture, the closer study of architecture opens a perspective in which *'the spirituality of nuns is projected into the content of paintings'*. (vol. I, p. 125)

Also studied are processes working in the opposite direction — the active influence of images on spirituality and religious life (vol. I, p. 213), with authors occasionally making insightful use of the *'topoi of visual didactics'*. (vol. I, p. 299)

The pictures on various media helped to create mental images (vol. I, p. 241) or *'a personal inner image'* (vol. I, p. 245), or even *'the actual image of God inside the believer'*. (vol. I, p. 247) In this light, the multiplicity of images presents a means to create the one image that matters. Indeed, *'imago'* or *'ymago'* in inventories (vol. I, p. 254; vol. II, p. 380) targeted a different semantic field than that of theological or philosophical treatises. The tensions between spiritual and material understandings return on many pages of this monumental work. While it might seem that the precious materiality of an artefact would fully absorb the reader's attention, the pictorial programmes lead him or her into a realm of typological parallels, addressing the subtleties of theological reflection on images. (vol. I, pp. 260–269) These subtle imaginations may have been an aid to exploration of the mysteries of a liturgical celebration, but could also become an exercise in sharp commentaries for competing theologians in the university milieu. (vol. I, p. 298) Various forms of Biblical typology in different media understood in rich contextual networks testify to the creative reception and further development of this approach in medieval Bohemia. (vol. I, pp. 532–553)

Many medieval images were meant as means to *'visualize the mystical essence of the eucharistic transubstantiation'*. (vol. I, p. 195) In late medieval Bohemia, the theological and social problems, debates, and conflicts associated with the eucharist were very intense. Logically, several chapters of the book focus on the multiple roles of images in these conflicts or the consequences of the conflicts for visual culture, including images. The subject was much broader than theological reasoning about transubstantiation. (vol. I, p. 298) Even before the Hussites, the political function of images was striking in the resurrection of the cult of *'Saint Charlemagne'* accepting his sword from heaven to fight the infidels (vol. I, p. 302) or the emulation of his way of dying seated on the throne. (vol. II, pp. 374–376)

A cross depicting suffering could also be a triumphal symbol. (vol. I, p. 353) As the triumphalism of the church and the mercantile practices associated with supposedly miraculous images were not the only problems provoking the reformers to criticism, their texts are relevant for other functions of images. For example, they raise the question of how far the pretty statues of saintly women provoked erotic associations. (vol. I, p. 449) It is a just observation that the viewers in our time, overloaded with much more voluptuous imagery, are more likely to notice their other emotional values, such as a *'melancholic look'*. (vol. I, p. 452) Nevertheless, even an undecorated crossbow could carry graphic erotic associations. (vol. II, p. 462)



The limits of images presented a severe problem: where does an image begin, and where does it end? For example, the image can *'culminate in the host'*, but such an understanding works only through belief. (vol. I, p. 222) A priest can enter into intimate physical contact with an illumination (kissing it in various places). Then, a series of kisses extend the intimate gesture into the community of believers. (vol. I, pp. 278–282) The influence of an image in the community spreads through physical contact and can eventually culminate in imitation of Christ. This emulation can mean a mystical self-identification. (vol. I, pp. 355) The change of identity was either verifiably imagined in the period or only imagined and not fully demonstrated by a modern interpretation, as between Sigismund of Luxemburg and the bust of Saint Ladislaus. (vol. II, p. 371) Sometimes, when extreme compassion resulted in human action, such images were performative. In other cases, the reference was to a similarity with an image that possessed a higher fidelity to its prototype because, according to legends, it originated in a miracle. However, even in the second case, the rituals and cult practices using the image could provoke an imitation. (vol. I, p. 430) One more liminal problem occurs between an image and its ornamental surrounding — where does a depiction of a dragon begin, and where does it end? (vol. I, p. 316) Similar questions are hard to answer because the mimetic functions of images could be limited to a loose evocation (vol. I, p. 340) or a puppet play within a liturgy. (vol. I, p. 358). On the other hand, medieval theatre could inspire new iconographies. (vol. I, p. 514) The unusual images on oriental textiles no longer understood in their original meaning appeared in religious paintings as something that added extraordinary decorative value, transcending any common experience of that time. (vol. II, p. 384)

Several studies in the volumes derive conclusions from detailed technological observations. Thus, the engraved Marian kerchiefs are diagnosed as the *'autochthonous motif'*, typical for medieval Bohemia (vol. I, p. 458), even if early exceptions to this new generalisation are also registered. (vol. I, p. 466)

The thoughts of influential medieval thinkers, thematising the functions of images, regularly emerge in the books, even if mostly indirectly, without extensive attention to the original system of thought. Thus Thomistic reflection appears as a target of Hussite criticism, but its role as inspiration for Jan Hus personally is also noted. Understandably, historical reports of practical actions of radical Hussites nourish the reader's imagination in a much more graphic way than the kind of learned scholarly speculation that remains interesting chiefly as a source of inspiration for the various ideological standpoints of the iconoclasts. Propaganda addressing the broad masses never works without simplifications, but it worked with vibrant images. (vol. I, p. 609) Overall, the text in this section offers a sound balance between theory and historical

narrative in a detailed and instructive description of the different grades of radicalism concerning images. It is not without irony that some radical Hussites produced new forms of idolatrous worship. (vol. I, pp. 480–503)

The Utraquist milieu seems to have been more inspiring, however, for the creation of complex iconographic programmes transgressing media boundaries (vol. I, p. 580) and the use of images to celebrate the Hussite martyrs. (vol. II, p. 621) Sepulchral sculptures were significant in constructing the memory of individuals, families, or dynasties through images that are becoming tools of power. Their ideological relevance could provoke destruction even after centuries. (vol. II, p. 478) Even if the Catholic side, maintaining more intense connections with the image culture of other European countries, tended to be less radical than the reformers, it did not escape such notorious turpitudes of medieval religious culture as Anti-Semitism. (vol. I, p. 605)

It is a pity that these large volumes do not offer more space for narrative hagiography. Medieval Bohemia has a lot to offer in this respect, but compared with a detailed treatment of several particular problems, the prominent pictorial legends of *Liber depictus* or the most extended pictorial life of Saint George in Jindřichův Hradec do not attract a deeper analysis. It is certainly an exciting possibility to see in a pictorial legend *'an allegory of monastic life'* (vol. I, p. 540) or a form of morality (vol. II, p. 520), but what does it mean for individual scenes of this legend? Also, the legends of St Wenceslaus and Ludmilla at Karlštejn are much more than just a *'genuinely Czech topic'* in the *'universalist'* decoration of the castle (vol. II, p. 87), and the saintly duke legend in his Prague chapel contains much more than his miraculous acceptance at the imperial diet. (vol. II, p. 448) The pictorial topoi with which these cycles work represent ideas and values shared in many places of medieval Christian Europe. When working with generalisations without a detailed analysis of individual scenes, there is a danger of slightly displaced accents or even misunderstandings. Is it really true that Saint James did not need miracles to persuade the representatives of pagan elites? (vol. II, p. 192) How far and for whom was Saint George a *'symbol of anti-Turkish fight'*? (vol. II, p. 616) These remarks are not intended as a defence of stereotypes of the hagiographic genre, since one can always meet unexpected developments. A seemingly topical scene's meaning could be transformed by the replacement of its hero — a wild man could take the usual place of Saint George killing the dragon. (vol. II, p. 548)

As we noted above, the second volume deals extensively with the substantial and complicated question of the relationship between image and representation, seen as a *'function of the image'* (again, in the singular). However productive this approach,

the question remains: which kind of image carried this function in individual cases? ‘Representation’ is a powerful concept, and it seems that in several essays of the volume, it could work without an ‘image’ in the narrower sense. The castle could undoubtedly function as an ‘image of power’, but the edifices in their mutual relations with the countryside would remain important manifestations or symbols of power even without ‘*imago*’ or ‘*imagines*’. (vol. II, pp. 10–35) The exquisite material (a hard granite) and the quality of the masonry (or even of its prefabricated imitations — vol. II, p. 511) could signal the importance of the building and the wealth of its owner (vol. II, p. 434) but did they always need images? These cases are substantially different from the church facade consciously operating with images to produce ‘*a manifesto of divine and worldly power*’. (vol. II, p. 292)

A different case is the analysis of architecture that interprets the church as ‘*a place for liturgy and images that were necessary for liturgical performance*’. (vol. II, p. 282) It remains open how far these images performed other functions, but attention to the topology of images within an architectural space is a productive approach. Moreover, the images could mark precisely the now-vanished liminal zones of original spatial arrangements that determined their functions. (vol. II, p. 290) The multiplicity of images was even more remarkable if we remember the lost decorated furniture (vol. II, p. 300) or the mostly only poorly preserved decorations of profane spaces. (vol. II, p. 514)

The late medieval transformation of imagery (vol. II, p. 522) that included a shift from heavenly to earthly love (vol. II, p. 530) spurred further dynamism. Ultimately secularisation destroyed a major part of the evidence for the roots of this continuing process. It inspired changed attitudes to images that are sometimes hard to prove for medieval situations, for example, ‘*a difference between illusion and reality*’ (vol. I, p. 200), ‘*aesthetic distance*’ (vol. II, p. 580), or ‘*the unity of space and time*’. (vol. II, p. 408) How far these concepts are anachronisms will surely be a subject of continued scholarly debates.

Buildings as images or with images require analytical methods different from those applied to smaller objects, such as coins that used images to represent the ruler, even if it is not clear how far these images resonated in their original audiences. (vol. II, p. 36–47)

The codices could be fascinating representational objects or artworks without images, but they regularly included images with a dominant representational function either on their cover or inside. A particular codex, carried in a procession, could even represent Christ. (vol. II, p. 59)

The erudite chapter on astrological manuscripts discusses many unusual images and diagrams with purposes more didactic than representational centuries before the luxurious codices of Wenceslaus IV reversed the balance of these functions. (vol. II, p. 223) Even so, more sophisticated forms of representation — an actual visual identity building — took place in the grey zone between manifest heraldic signs and enigmatic expressions of self. (vol. II, pp. 224–257) Sometimes the symbols represented individual and collective identities simultaneously. (vol. II, p. 406) The complexity of images linked with textual evidence in illuminated manuscripts makes it possible to study representation as a kind of dialogue between an image and its intended viewers. (vol. I, p. 400) All the same, who was the original percipient? If an image manifested the new self-confidence of town council members (vol. II, p. 418), it was probably a tool to build this confidence in readers of the codex.

In principle, monumental paintings addressed broader audiences, but they could retain their representational function even in the semi-private spaces of castle chapels. In this respect, Charles IV was the greatest patron of representational images in medieval Bohemia. He was able to build on older dynastic representation traditions evident, for example, in the rotunda in Znojmo (vol. II, pp. 70–74), and in this way clearly wanted to stress dynastic continuity (vol. II, pp. 77–87). After the loss of the imperial crown, his son Wenceslaus IV developed a new form of representation, focusing on a private use (vol. II, pp. 183–185), which shifted his focus from monumental paintings back to the manuscript illuminations.

A major work of this kind on medieval images in Bohemia must inevitably adopt a standpoint on the local heritage of iconological research from the second half of the twentieth century, which has been genuinely creative in many respects. The most extensive treatment of this tradition appears in a discussion of the symbolism of the Old town Bridge Tower in Prague. Based on precise historiography, these parts manage to combine respect with a sound dose of scepticism. (vol. II, pp. 144–152)

These short remarks can hardly cover the rich content of these new volumes and the merits or faults of their learned authors. Their work includes many more hidden treasures than those mentioned here. The impressive bibliography alone counts 118 pages, and, despite this length, it is not complete. Nevertheless, different as they are from many items in this long list of publications, these two volumes will become a valuable and necessary companion for any researcher who wishes to delve into discussions about the art production of medieval Bohemia.



THOMAS RAINER – KUNSTHISTORISCHES INSTITUT DER UNIVERSITÄT ZÜRICH

Petr Voit

## Kostbare Bucheinbände der Stiftsbibliothek Strahov in Prag

### Von der Gotik an die Schwelle des Barocks

Prag, Královská kanonie premonstrátů na Strahově 2020 (Bibliotheca Strahoviensis. Series monographica IX), 409 S., Schwarzweiß- und Farbbilder, Register der Buchbinder, Sachregister, Namensregister, erschienen in einer tschechischen, deutschen und englischen Fassung

Eine Bibliothek gleicht einem Edelstein, der in vielen unterschiedlichen Facetten glänzt, so beschreibt Petr Voit, Autor des rezensierten Bibliothekskatalogs, in dem 2013 erschienenen Sammelband *Knihy a jejich lidé. Čtenářské životopisy* seine früheste Begegnung mit der Bibliothek seines Großvaters.<sup>1</sup> In diesem bibliographischen Lebenslauf erzählt Voit, dass es weniger die Texte der dort gesammelten Bücher waren, die ihn als gerade erst des Lesens fähigen Jungen interessierten, als vielmehr ihre optische Erscheinung, die Bebilderung und zuallererst die mit Vergoldung versehenen Einbände, mit denen der Großvater die französischen Klassiker des 19. Jahrhunderts aber auch die tschechische Legionärliteratur von Rudolf Medek und anderen Autoren — ein bisschen anmaßend, wie Voit meint — ausstattete.<sup>2</sup> Diese Beobachtung und ihre leicht ironische Pointe bietet einen Fingerzeig, welche Kräfte den Doyen der historischen Buchwissenschaften in Tschechien veranlasst haben mögen, nach Jahrzehnten der professionellen Beschäftigung mit Büchern und Bibliotheken sein jüngstes *Oeuvre* exklusiv dem Medium des Bucheinbands zu widmen.

Seit 2004 betreut Voit als Kurator die Inkunabelsammlung der Stiftsbibliothek des Prämonstratenserklusters Strahov in Prag, nach der Nationalbibliothek und der Bibliothek des Nationalmuseums die bedeutendste Sammlung von Erstdrucken in der Tschechischen Republik, die der Autor 2015 in einem umfassenden Katalog auf 1335 Seiten erschloss.<sup>3</sup> Die detaillierte Betrachtung der Inkunabeln erweitert er im nun rezensierten Band um eine Vorstellung der kostbaren Bucheinbände der Stiftsbibliothek. Es ist eine Facette der Bibliothek, die in ihrer Bedeutung für die Geschichte des Buchwesens in Böhmen und Mähren nur ungenügend erforscht wurde. Wie Voit im Vorwort darlegt, hat sich bislang einzig der gemeinsam von Pavlína Hamanová und Bohumil Nuska erstellte Ausstellungskatalog aus dem Jahr 1966 diesem

Aspekt der Strahover Büchersammlung gewidmet.<sup>4</sup> Dabei geht Voits Anspruch über den seiner Vorgänger der 1960er-Jahre weit hinaus. Standen bei Hamanová und Nuska Zuschreibungsfragen und die Identifikation von Buchbinderwerkstätten und Supralibros im Vordergrund, ist es Voits erklärtes Anliegen anhand der Einbände der Strahover Bibliothek einen Grundstein für eine Sozial- und Kulturgeschichte des tschechischen Buchwesens aus dem Blickwinkel der Einbandkunde zu legen.

„Don't judge a book by its cover“, warnt ein bekanntes englisches Sprichwort, das man freilich auch umkehren kann: Der Einband erzählt von wesentlich mehr als nur vom Inhalt der damit ausgestatteten Bücher, er öffnet den Blick für eine materielle Biographie der Buchobjekte. Die Einbände verorten die Bewegungen der Buchexemplare in Zeit und Raum. Sie können helfen jene Kräfte zu bestimmen, denen wie Ursula Rautenberg in dem 2017 erschienenen Sammelband *„Biographien des Buches“* ausführt, das „kommunikative Angebot“ der Bücher, ihre, um einen Begriff von Alfred Gell und Bruno Latour zu gebrauchen, „agency“ an unterschiedlichen Orten ihrer Geschichte, von jeweils verschiedenen Akteuren ausgesetzt war.<sup>5</sup> In diesem Netzwerk spielen die Autorinnen und Autoren der Texte und der Inhalt der Bücher eine häufig nachgeordnete Rolle. Zentral für die „agency“ des Bucheinbands war zunächst, wie Voit betont, der Wunsch der Produzenten bzw. Auftraggeber und Besitzer der Buchobjekte die beschriebenen Pergament- oder Papierseiten mittels einer Hülle zusammenzuhalten, einzuschließen und zu schützen. Der Einband lässt sich in diesem Sinn als Gewand beschreiben — ein Begriff den David Ganz jüngst ins Zentrum einer grundlegenden Studie zum mittelalterlichen Prachteinband stellte.<sup>6</sup> Das Kleiden des Körpers ist aber untrennbar mit dessen Schmuck verbunden und es ist dieser „ästhetische Effekt“ des Einbands, der Voit vor allem interessiert — technische



Aspekte der Buchbindung bleiben dagegen weitgehend ausgeklammert.

Dabei differenziert der Autor zwischen hochwertigen und weniger anspruchsvollen Erscheinungsformen des Einbandschmucks, die er eng mit unterschiedlichen sozialen Milieus der Auftraggeber verbunden sieht. Dieser Beobachtung folgt die Warnung, dass eine Zusammenstellung der hochwertigsten Exemplare keineswegs repräsentativ für die Gesamtheit der gebundenen Bücher einer Epoche steht. Voit bemüht sich daher, die Entwicklungslinien vom Spätmittelalter bis ins 17. Jahrhundert nicht nur anhand eines Best-offs der Einbände der Strahover Bibliothek nachzuzeichnen. Dabei ist er sich nur allzu bewusst, von welchen Zufällen der Sammlungsgeschichte die Auswahl beeinflusst bleiben muss. Es liegt in der Natur des Sammlungskatalogs, ja macht gerade dessen eigentliche Qualität aus, dass die grosse Erzählung hinter die „Biographie“ der Einzelobjekte zurücktritt und sich erst in der vergleichenden Zusammenstellung ihrer singulären Eigenschaften übergreifende Erzählstränge herauskristallisieren.

Voit folgt dabei einem streng chronologischen Aufbau. 50 nach dem Entstehungsdatum der besprochenen Einbände hintereinander gereichte Stichworte gliedern den Katalog, wobei die Stichworte sowohl einzelnen Einbänden, einzelnen Buchbinder-Werkstätten, aber auch generellen Zusammenhängen gewidmet sind. So folgt dem ersten Stichwort, das den Luxuseinband des Strahov-Evangeliars vorstellt, eine wohl im 17. Jahrhundert angefertigte Assemblage älterer, z. T. hochmittelalterlicher Goldschmiede- und Emailarbeiten für das berühmte karolingische Evangelienbuch mit nachträglich eingefügter Buchmalerei vom Meister des Registrum Gregorii (ca. 980)<sup>7</sup>, ein Stichwort zum spätmittelalterlichen Beutelbuch, eines zu den weichen Bucheinbänden mit Klappe, zu den Anfängen des Blinddrucks und Einfluss der orientalischen Buchbinderei sowie zur Werkstatt des von Voit neu benannten Kaadener Meisters. Es folgen 11 Stichworte zu Beispielen einzelner Werkstätten des späten 15. und beginnenden 16. Jahrhunderts, die anhand der Einbände der Strahover Bibliothek einen guten Überblick über die Entwicklung der spätgotischen Blinddrucke ermöglichen. Stichwort 17 behandelt schließlich das Aufblitzen des böhmischen Bucheinbandes der Frührenaissance am Beispiel der in Strahov verwahrten Einbände der Werkstatt des sogenannten Meisters der Böhmisches Rechte, Stichwort 18 den Monogrammist MN — einen anderen Vertreter der Frührenaissance — Stichwort 19 den grossen Abschnitt zur Reformationsikonographie. Es folgen Stichwörter zum modernen Flächenornament der Bucheinbände des 16. Jahrhunderts aus Frankreich und Italien und zum sogenannten Fanfarenstil, der in Frankreich im höfischen Umkreis zur Hochblüte kommt. Die dagegen konservative Entwicklung der

Prager Werkstätten in der Mitte und im 2. Drittel des 16. Jahrhundert zeichnen die Stichwörter 23–25 nach, das böhmische und mährische Buchbinderhandwerk mit Beispielen des ausgehenden 16. Jahrhunderts — unterbrochen von Importeinbänden aus den deutschen protestantischen Ländern sowie aus Frankreich und Spanien — die Stichwörter 26–36. Der letzte Abschnitt des Katalogs setzt den Schwerpunkt auf Beispiele höfischer Werkstätten und hofnaher Auftraggeber aus der Zeit um 1600, wobei eigene Stichwörter die für Petr Vok z Rožmberka aus dem südböhmischen Adelsgeschlecht der Rosenberg tätigen Buchbinder sowie die Bucheinbände aus dem Umkreis Rudolfs II., u. a. auch jene für den Astronomen Tycho Brahe behandeln.

Allen diesen Stichworten sind detaillierte Katalogeinträge der in der Strahover Bibliothek verwahrten Bucheinbände zugeordnet, die mit grosser Akribie die diverse Provenienz und materielle Veränderungsgeschichte der jeweiligen Buchobjekte rekonstruieren und fast immer mit ganzseitigen Farbabbildungen guter Qualität und in einigen Fällen Details und Vergleichen illustriert werden. Man merkt diesen Katalogeinträgen die langjährige, auch durch seine Tätigkeit im Antiquariatshandel erworbene Kennerschaft von Voit an. Die Einträge profitieren von dem interdisziplinären Herangehen des Autors, das komplexe historische Zusammenhänge mit einer enzyklopädischen Kenntnis der mitteleuropäischen, und darüber hinaus auch italienischen und französischen Buchbinderwerkstätten verbindet. In häufig innovativen Zuschreibungsdiskussionen gelingt es Voit so nicht selten die Ergebnisse seiner Vorgänger Nuska und Hamanová und auch den Kenntnisstand der elektronisch erschlossenen Einbanddatenbank des 15. und 16. Jahrhunderts (EBDB) — ein unentbehrliches Hilfsmittel jeder Beschäftigung mit den Buchbinderwerkstätten, das auf den Sammlungen der Einbanddurchschreibungen der wichtigsten deutschsprachigen Einbandforscherinnen und -forscher des 20. Jahrhunderts basiert — zu revidieren. Genannt sei hier nur beispielhaft die Neuentdeckung einer in Kaaden (Kadaň) tätigen städtischen Werkstatt des späten 15. und beginnenden 16. Jahrhunderts, die eine ganze Reihe heute in Strahov verwahrter Einbände für das Franziskanerkloster der Vierzehn Nothelfer in Kaaden schuf.

Auch in Voits Einschätzung der Entwicklung der böhmischen Einbandkunst der Mitte und zweiten Hälfte des 16. Jahrhunderts kommt es entsprechend dem vom Autor konsequent verfolgten sozialgeschichtlichen Ansatz zu einer Neubewertung. Die tschechische Fachliteratur der Nachkriegszeit habe, so Voit, „den einheimischen Bucheinband der Zeit vor der Schlacht am Weißen Berg ziemlich überbewertet“. (S. 111) Die Einbände blieben selbst in der 2. Hälfte des 16. Jahrhunderts bis auf wenige Ausnahmen dem aus der spätgotischen Tradition übernommenen Rahmensystem



verpflichtet und es ist ein erklärtes Anliegen des Katalogs diese konservative Tendenz der böhmischen Buchbinderwerkstätten, die nur zögerlich Innovationen aus Italien oder Frankreich — zunächst vermittelt über Krakau und Schlesien, später vermehrt auch über Sachsen und andere protestantische deutsche Länder — aufzunehmen, zu erklären. Lähmend wirkte sich, nach Voit, der im Glaubenskonflikt bewusst kultivierte Isolationismus der ultraquistischen Gesellschaft aus, deren Festhalten an bewährten Traditionen einem weltoffenen Mäzenatentum entgegenstand, sodass die Serienproduktion der Verlagseinbände mit einem „Verlust persönlicher Invention“ und einer „deutlichen Sterilität“ einhergegangen sei. (S. 111) Erst mit der Etablierung einer Klientel zum kleineren Teil bürgerlicher, vor allem aber aristokratischer Büchersammler im späten 16. Jahrhundert, die im wahrsten Sinn des Wortes den Buchexemplaren ihren individuellen Stempel in Form von Supralibros aber auch exquisiter Materialien und internationale Mode rezipierender Mauresken-Ornamentik aufdrücken wollten, sei dem konservativen böhmischen Buchbinderhandwerk eine auch ökonomisch potente Auftraggeberschicht erwachsen. Die Bucheinbände aus dem Umkreis Rudolfs II., wie das für die Privatbibliothek Tycho Brahes wahrscheinlich von einem Prager Buchbinder mit einem Pergamenteinband versehene Exemplar der Trigonometrie aus der Zeit um 1601 legen Zeugnis davon ab (Kat.-Nr. 44, S. 251).

Wie Voit selbst zugibt, bedarf dieses Modell an vielen Stellen weiterer Differenzierung in Form einer detaillierten Grundlagenforschung zu Auftraggebermilieus und Herstellungsbedingungen. Hinter seinem mit Verve vorgetragenen Plädoyer für die Schönheit der aus dem „überladenen“ spätgotischen Rahmensystem ausbrechenden freien Flächen der späteren Renaissanceeinbände, die stark durch Vorbilder der italienischen und französischen Einbandkunst beeinflusst waren, lässt sich Voits Bewunderung für eine kosmopolite Ästhetik erkennen, die das Individuum und den individuell gestalteten Einband über ideologische Schranken stellt.

Auf dem für Brahe gestalteten Einband der Trigonometrie wird das Porträt des Besitzers ins Zentrum einer nur von einer einzelnen Raute begrenzten Freifläche gestellt, ein Schema, das an die

berühmten Renaissance-Buchleinbände für Pfalzgraf Ottheinrich erinnert. Umgeben ist das vergoldete Porträt mit folgender Aufschrift „HIC PATET EXTERIOR TYCHONIS FORMA BRAHEI PULCHRIVS ENITEAT QVAE LATET INTERIOR“. (S. 244 und 251–252) In der paraphrasierenden Übersetzung nach Voit: Hier, vor den Augen aller, glänzt [außen] die Erscheinung Tycho Brahes, um die Helligkeit der darin versteckten Pracht weiter zu verbreiten. Schöner lässt sich das Verhältnis äusseren Schmucks des Bucheinbands und individueller Glanzsteigerung nicht formulieren. Es ist dieser Goldglanz der Einbände der Petr Voits Ausbruch aus den Engen der großväterlichen Bibliothek zu einem umfassend gebildeten Enzyklopädisten der tschechischen Buchgeschichte begleitet hat, und ihn nun mit dem Katalog der Einbände der Strahover Stiftsbibliothek eine trotz ihrer Prominenz auf der Aussenseite der Bücher häufig übersehene „versteckte Pracht“ präsentieren und reflektieren lässt.

#### ANMERKUNGEN

1 Jiří Trávníček (ed.), *Knihy a jejich lidé. Čtenářské životopisy*, Brno 2013. Eine polnische Übersetzung von Voits Beitrag ist in dem Aufsatz von Grzegorz Nieć, Petr Voit — czeski bibliolog, autor Encyklopedii książki... w świetle swego życiorysu czytelniczo-zawodowego, *Studia ad Bibliothecarum Scientiam Pertinentia (Annales Universitatis Paedagogicae Cracoviensis)* XV, 2017, S. 286–308 erschienen.

2 Nieć (Anm. 1), S. 292.

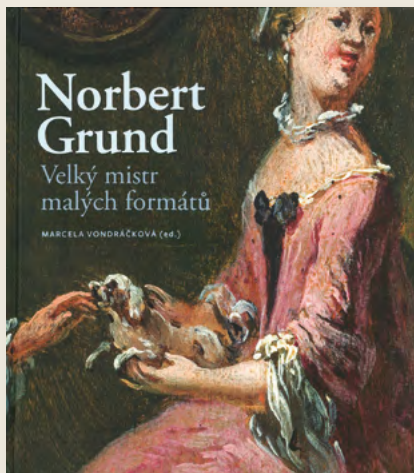
3 Petr Voit, *Katalog prvotisků Strahovské knihovny v Praze*, Praha 2015.

4 Pavlína Hamanová — Bohumil Nuska (edd.), *Knížní vazba sedmi století z fondů Strahovské knihovny*, Praha 1966.

5 Ursula Rautenberg, Das Buch als Artefakt und kommunikatives Angebot. Die Exemplargeschichte des Herbarius Latinus (Mainz: Peter Schöffer. 1484) aus der Bibliothek des Christoph Jacob Trew, in: Ulrike Gleixner — Constanze Baum — Jörn Münkner — Hole Rößler (edd.), *Biographien des Buches*, Göttingen 2017, S. 39–87.

6 David Ganz, *Buch-Gewänder. Prachteinbände im Mittelalter*, Berlin 2015.

7 Von Voit nicht erwähnt wird der jüngste Aufsatz zum Strahov-Evangeliar von Doris Oltrogge, Aneignung und „Neuinszenierung“ von Evangelien in institutionellem und liturgischem Gebrauch — drei Fallbeispiele, *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* LXXX, 2017, S. 201–218.



TADEÁŠ KADLEC – NÁRODNÍ PAMÁTKOVÝ ÚSTAV

Marcela Vondráčková (ed.)

## Norbert Grund

### Velký mistr malých formátů

Praha, Národní galerie Praha 2019, 455 s., bar. obr., angl. a něm. resumé

Norbert Grund (1717–1767), malíř proslulý svou působivou obratností při práci s barvou na velmi malém formátu, nepochybně nepatří mezi umělce, které by bylo širšímu publiku třeba blíže představovat. Odborný i sběratelský zájem o Grundovu tvorbu sahá až do doby bezprostředně následující po jeho úmrtí, a je proto s podivem, že — s výjimkou dvojice nepublikovaných studentských prací z poloviny 20. století — nepřesahoval zatím rozsah vydaných textů věnujících se jeho dílu objem časopiseckých statí a v zásadě stručných výstavních katalogů. Kolektivní monografie *Norbert Grund: Velký mistr malých formátů*, na které se pod vedením Marcely Vondráčkové v jednotlivých studiích podílelo celkem devět dalších autorů — výhradně současných pracovníků Národní galerie Praha nebo badatelů spjatých s pražskou Národní galerií v minulosti —, tak bezesporu představuje zatím nejobsáhlejší pokus o co možná nejkomplexnější uchopení Grundova díla a s ním spojených otázek. Více než polovinu stránkového rozsahu knihy zabírá výběrový katalog malířského díla Norberta Grunda, čítající celkem 50 hesel, zahrnujících zpravidla pro malíře obvyklé obrazové pandány. Katalog navíc doplňuje přívěsek sedmi dalších hesel představujících lepty Jana Jiřího Balzera provedené podle Grundových předloh, v některých případech dnes neznámých.

Úvodní studie Marcely Vondráčkové shrnuje základní data malířova života a ve stručném výčtu připomíná dosavadní příspěvky uměleckohistorické literatury a předestírá odpovědi na otázky dotýkající se východisek Grundova malířského projevu a přitom nebyvale zdůrazňuje možné návaznosti na krajinářské dílo Václava Vavřínce Reinera (1689–1743). V dalších podkapitolách Vondráčková zároveň charakterizuje Grundův způsob práce s předlohami a uvádí příklady konkrétních citací a parafrází. Prostor věnuje i těžko uchopitelné problematice chronologie a periodizace Grundovy tvorby, stejně jako jeho okruhu a následnosti. Za vyzdvihnutí stojí zejména upozornění na technologickým průzkumem prokázanou spolupráci Norberta Grunda s neznámým malířem, konkrétně při

vzniku dvojice velkoformátových olejomalb na plátěné podložce pro Grunda spíše netypické (*Krajina s troskami okrouhlého chrámu a Zřícenina s fontánou a figurální stafáží*, obě Národní galerie Praha) — lze ji však nejspíše předpokládat i v dalších případech.<sup>1</sup>

Navazující čtveřice statí představuje v rámci struktury knihy *gros* uměleckohistorické analýzy malířova díla, které nahlíží — s ohledem na Grundův všeobecně zdůrazňovaný tvůrčí eklekticismus — perspektivou stylových a motivických souvislostí se soudobou malířskou tvorbou vídeňskou (Martina Jandlová Sošková) a italskou (Marcela Vondráčková a Petr Příbyl). Stranou zájmu autorů knihy nezůstal ani francouzský žánr galantních slavností (Martina Jandlová Sošková), a především starší holandská a vlámská malba (Andrea Steckerová).

Předpoklad Grundova pobytu ve Vídni, nepřímou podložený historickými prameny, se pro umělcovu formaci jeví jako zcela zásadní. Vedle odedávna zvažované návaznosti na tvorbu Franze de Paula Ferga (1689–1740), uvažuje Martina Jandlová Sošková především o blízkém kontaktu s dílem Karla Josefa Aigena (1685–1762) či Franze Christopa Jannecka (1703–1761). Upozorňuje přitom, že spíše než konkrétní předlohy načerpal Grund „... z vídeňského malířství poučení zejména ve způsobu, jakým tamní umělci tlumočí oblíbenou vlámskou a holandskou malbu“. (s. 63) K dříve zvažované možnosti Grundovy italské cesty se naproti tomu Marcela Vondráčková spolu s Petrem Příbylem staví spíše odmítavě, nepopírajíce ovšem význam recepce děl italské provenience. I zde však zdůrazňují především práce v Itálii působících Nizozemců; Grundovo obeznámení se s benátskou malbou pak — vzhledem k uvažovanému vývoji jeho individuálního malířského stylu — kladou až do období po roce 1750. Malíř se s tímto druhem prací podle nich seznámil nejspíše až prostřednictvím děl ze šlechtických kolekcí, k nimž měl tehdy nejspíše přístup.

Bližší analýza souvislostí s francouzským žánrem *fêtes galantes* svědčí o překvapivě malé míře přímých návazností na konkrétní díla francouzských autorů a zdá

se, že i v tomto případě Grundovo obeznámení silně determinovala míra recepce francouzských děl tvůrčím vídeňským prostředím. Zásadnější se proto zdá být Grundova znalost holandských a vlámských maleb, které mu mnohdy posloužily jako přímé ikonografické předlohy, jak o tom ve svém textu pojednala Andrea Steckerová. Bližší pohled na převládající strukturu soudobých uměleckých sbírek přitom autorce dovoluje předpokládat, že za tímto Grundovým sklonem stála, vzhledem ke všeobecné oblibě nizozemských námětů, především vůle po zajištění odbytu vlastní produkce.

Trojice dalších statí se spíše než Grundova malířství dotýká jeho více či méně bezprostředního ohlasu, a to jak u jeho tvůrčích nástupců, tak i u uměnilovného publika. Dalibor Lešovský blíže představuje grafickou tvorbu Jana Jiřího Balzera, jehož bohatá produkce, reprodukcující na dvě stovky Grundových děl, jednak dokládá všeobecnou oblibu malířova díla, respektive poptávku po daném žánru napříč soudobou společností, jednak dokumentuje podobu řady jeho dnes ztracených děl. V některých případech dokonce zaznamenává i jména jejich tehdejších vlastníků.<sup>2</sup> Také materiálními daty nabitá stať Lubomíra Slavíčka o sběratelích a sběratelství Grundova díla poukazuje na odvěkou a neutuchající popularitu Grundovy tvorby mezi společenskými stavy. Navazující příspěvek Víta Vlnase následně poskytuje obezřetné zhodnocení — slovy autora — „nijak zásadního“ (s. 161) vlivu Grundovy tvorby na malířství 19. století.

Výsledky archivního výzkumu soustředěného nejen na Norberta Grunda, ale také na jeho otce, kolowratského dvorního malíře Christiana (1686–1751), v knize shrnul Tomáš Sekyrka. Třebaže nepřináší mnoho nových nebo v souvislosti s malířskou tvorbou zásadních objevů, představuje jeho text přehledné resumé životopisných a materiálních dat. Řadu studií konečně uzavírá přínosná stať Adama Pokorného a Radky Šefců, shrnující nejrůznější poznatky o Grundově pracovním postupu a jeho malířské technice, které vyplynuly z výsledků plošného technologického průzkumu rozsáhlejšího souboru Grundových maleb.<sup>3</sup>

Na rozdíl od většiny monografických prací z knižní produkce Národní galerie, věnovaných v době více či méně nedávné velkým malířům 17. a 18. století, nezpracovává ke knize připojený katalog umělcovo dílo v celé jeho šíři. Představovaná díla byla volena tak, aby ilustrovala „... tematickou šíři a problematiku tvorby, respektive různé stylové polohy obou umělců tak, jak jsou popsány v jednotlivých statích“. Cílem přitom „... bylo prezentovat jak malby a grafiky známé, ba ikonické, tak díla obtížně dostupná nebo neznámá“. (s. 9)

První případ ovšem převládá — více než polovina hesel představuje díla chovaná pražskou Národní galerií, větší část Grundových maleb zároveň tvořila součást nedávné monografické výstavy, uspořádané ve výročním roce 2017 v paláci Kinských.<sup>4</sup> Vůbec poprvé je zde publikována pandánová dvojice obrázků *Disputujících rabínů* ze soukromého majetku, dosud známých právě

jen z Balzerových leptů a Grundem úzce odvozených z pandánových *Židovských učenců při rozmluvě* Jacoba Toorenvlieta ze sbírky hraběte Františka de Paula Antonína Příchovského (1767–1814), které již roku 1801 přešly do Obrazárny Společnosti vlasteneckých přátel umění. Řada hesel katalogu navíc zahrnuje reprodukce dalších Grundových verzí stejných námětů i příslušných grafických listů Jana Jiřího Balzera.

Kvalitu reprodukcí, v celé knize bez výjimky barevných, a to v řadě případů vůbec poprvé, je ostatně třeba ocenit. Barevně je zde čtenářům prvně zprostředkována také *Scéna z commedia dell'arte* (Universität zu Köln) — signovaný pandán jediného Grundem datovaného díla, bádání dnes však nedostupného, *Jarmareční zpěváci na náměstí o posvícení* (soukromá sbírka). Samotným autorem poznamenaný rok 1750 zůstává jediným skutečně pevným bodem v Grundově rozsáhlém malířském díle, pomíneme-li ranou kresbu, sice signovanou a datovanou (1736), v rámci Grundova *œuvre* ovšem vzhledem k téměř úplné mediální a žánrově ojedinelosti marginalizovanou a do katalogového výběru nezahrnutou podobiznu litoměřického malíře Františka Ignáce Steinského (Národní galerie Praha).

Není tak příliš překvapivé, že oprávněně obezřetnosti, plynoucí z bytostného nedostatku pevných dat, úplně ustoupila dosavadní snaha o přesnější datování jednotlivých děl.<sup>5</sup> Bádání Marcely Vondráčkové ostatně prokázalo, že starší úvahy, odvozující z námětů některých děl — především *Sochařské dílny* (Národní galerie Praha), dříve považované za volné zobrazení sochařské dílny Františka Ignáce Platzera (1717–1787) — nelze považovat za hlavní opory datace. V záležitosti periodizace Grundova díla tak editorka pouze konstatuje, že „[s] výjimkou vymezení skupiny raných děl není možné stanovit jejich přesnou posloupnost. Lze jen uvažovat vývoj od uzavřené obrazové formy k otevřené, od kompaktní modelace k uvolněnému rukopisu ...“. (s. 31) Výše zmiňovaný rok 1750 pak při analýze proměn Grundova malířského rukopisu slouží jako orientační bod *post a ante quem*, kolem kterého jsou jednotlivá díla volně přiřazována do skupin dle stylové příbuznosti.

Takový náhled na malířovu tvorbu však překvapivě příliš nereflektuje řazení jednotlivých hesel katalogu, což vůbec nepřispívá ke srozumitelnosti jeho struktury. Limity předložené interpretace vývoje Grundova rukopisu zde zároveň naznačuje případ obrazového pandánu *Zastávka a Na cestě do města* (Národní galerie Praha), ve kterém Grund úzce parafrázoval dvojici krajin Francesca Zuccarelliho (1702–1780). Styl Grundovy parafráze podle editorky odpovídá spíše malířovu ranému období, což je ale v rozporu s předpokladem vzniku Zuccarelliho předloh v šedesátých letech 18. století, pročez nezbylo než konstatovat nutnost dalšího studia zaměřeného na italské malířství. Právě s ohledem na časovou neukotvitelnost Grundovy tvorby se lze tázat, zdali zvolený katalogový formát představuje optimální způsob jejího uchopení. Přes tuto výhradu se ovšem nedomnívám, že jednotlivé,



úžeji zaměřené studie nepřispěly k přehodnocení některých zažitých představ a nepřinesly celou řadu nových poznatků i postřehů o Grundově díle. Naopak. V knize nashromážděné úvahy — byť i v rovině pracovních hypotéz — jistě poskytnou řadu podnětů pro další bádání.\*

#### POZNÁMKY

1 Srov. Marcela Vondráčková — Radka Šefců — Adam Pokorný, Norbert Grund, Josef Platzer or Christoph Seckel? New Findings about Paintings Depicting Ancient Ruins from the Collection of the National Gallery in Prague / Norbert Grund, Josef Platzer nebo Christoph Seckel? Nové poznatky k obrazům s antickými ruinami ze sbírek Národní galerie v Praze, in: *Bulletin of the National Gallery in Prague XXV*, 2015, s. 84–98, 191–200.

2 Srov. v rámci téhož grantového projektu Dalibor Lešovský, Edice grafických listů podle Grundových předloh, *Ars linearis VII*, 2017,

s. 111–118. Marcela Vondráčková, Čtyři roční doby: Jan Balzer a Norbert Grund, *Ars linearis VI*, 2016, s. 148–151.

3 Srov. též Radka Šefců — Marcela Vondráčková — Václav Pitthard — Adam Pokorný, Technika malby na plátěné podložce v díle Norberta Grundy a jeho následovníků, *Fórum pro konzervátory-restaurátory 2015*, s. 23–30.

4 Norbert Grund (1717–1767): Půvab všedního dne (NGP, palác Kinských, 1. 12. 2017 — 18. 3. 2018). Srov. stejnojmenný průvodce: Marcela Vondráčková, *Norbert Grund (1717–1767): Půvab všedního dne*, Praha 2017.

5 Toto nikoliv nežádoucí rozhodnutí je zřejmým výsledkem nedávného přehodnocení: ještě průvodce výstavy z roku 2017 u jednotlivých děl orientační dataci uvádí.

\* Příspěvek vznikl jako součást vědecko-výzkumné činnosti NPÚ v rámci Institucionální podpory na dlouhodobý koncepční rozvoj výzkumné organizace (DKRVO), financované Ministerstvem kultury ČR, jako výstup výzkumného cíle Tematické průzkumy památek.



NAOMI HUME — SEATTLE UNIVERSITY

## Marta Filipová Modernity, History, and Politics in Czech Art

New York, Routledge 2020, 224 pp., 31 b/w illus., index

Marta Filipová's book, *Modernity, History, and Politics in Czech Art*, explores shifting relationships between art, modernity and national identity in the Czech Lands in a refreshingly direct way. Art historical narratives themselves are central to her argument that Czech writers nationalised modern art and local manifestations of nationalism were reinterpreted in a modernist way. She does not set out to write a comprehensive history of Czech Modernism, but to show how modern art was crucial to the development and articulation of a modern Czech identity both before and after the 1918 founding of Czechoslovakia. (p. 18) Filipová's training at Masaryk University in Brno and at the University of Glasgow ideally situates her to examine not only the history of modern Czech art, but how its narratives have been written. She brings to her study a thorough knowledge of Czech traditions of art writing but also enough distance

to allow her some perspective on the relationship between nationalism and Czech art history. She is deeply familiar with the primary sources and uses the tools of Anglo-American social art history to situate them in their cultural, political and national context.

Modern art and nationalism mutually shaped each other in the Czech context, Filipová argues, because major modern developments in urban infrastructure coincided with an intensification of the Czech national movement. The modernisation of society became closely associated with the successes of Czech nationalism, culminating in the creation of Czechoslovakia in 1918. Other parts of Central Europe experienced similar modernisation, Filipová remarks, but because this was accompanied by a loss of territory or economic struggles or the weakening of a coherent national identity, there was less cross-association between modern and national developments. (p. 3) The interplay of Modernism and nationalism



produced a distinctive modern Czech culture and narratives of modern art reinforced national ideologies. Together, Filipová argues, Modernism and nationalism provided the framework for collective identity.

Filipová clearly lays out the context for her own study. She points to the brevity of the *'surge of interest'* in Central European Modernism in the 1990s and into the 2000s and its disappearance from art historical literature during the past decade. More recent interest in de-colonising and globalising art's histories, she writes, has once again marginalised or left out consideration of Central European art because it fails to fit neatly into the categories of Western or non-Western art. In contrast to this macroscopic approach, her study focuses in detail on a single context with the goal of showing *'how modernism is constructed ... in the interplay of locally specific concerns and agendas.'* (p. 5) However, because 19th- and 20th-century Central Europe was shaped by tensions between nationalism and internationalism in politics and art, Filipová suggests that her hyper-local study could offer insights into why *'identity politics continues to animate debates'* about art in the region today. (p. 5)

English-language books about art in Central and Eastern Europe have tended to approach the topic either with a broad historical or broad geographical scope, encompassing a long history of a single region's art or looking at how a particular movement manifested in centres across the region. Each of these tends to distort modern art. The monographic historical approach reinforces a romanticising and historicist understanding of modern art as necessarily shaped by centuries of tradition. The broad geographical survey of modern developments in Central and Eastern Europe tends to gloss over the contexts and details for local manifestations of Modernism, thereby magnifying the importance of Western models as sources, simplifying the complexity of regional modern cultures, and casting each as relatively belated and differently derivative. Filipová acknowledges the international sources to which Czech artists responded, but also describes the contexts that shaped how artworks reached Czech audiences. She discusses local works and artists' goals on their own terms. Czech artists brought references to modernist ideas from Western European sources into their works in conversation with what they saw as local or national elements. What is important about both of these aspects of modern Czech artists' works is how artists and their publics *understood* what they made and what they saw. Filipová unpacks vehement debates over which internationally recognised artists' works were relevant to Czech art and whether one could signal Czechness through content, style, colour or something else. Filipová's study offers social, political and cultural context, deep dives into artistic debates and critical responses, and discussions of how art and its histories were politically deployed, enabling the reader to see the purposes modern art—Western or local—was made to serve in the Czech context.

Each of the book's chapters introduces successive modern art movements to show how art and the shaping of its history played a profound role in constructing and shoring up the concept of Czechness as an identity distinct from that of other European peoples. The introductory chapter, 'Modernity—History—Politics', clearly lays out the book's structure based on five thematic chapters: 'Modernism', 'The People', 'Society', 'Identity' and 'Traditions'. The thematic approach coincides with a rough chronology to show the shifting articulation of nationalist goals and how art writers used contemporary and past art in the service of the changing needs of the present.

In each chapter Filipová touches on the ideas and arguments of the artists, artist associations, journals, art critics, and exhibitions who usually form the focus of scholarly histories of Czech art. But she also introduces lesser-known examples to deepen our contextual understanding. Scholars rightly emphasise the importance of the exhibitions of Auguste Rodin (1902) and Edvard Munch (1905) for the development of modern art in Prague. Filipová discusses both, focusing on the critical responses and what they reveal about the Czech art world. But she precedes this with a close look at the 1896 exhibition of German artist Anna Costenoble, containing apparently expressionistic paintings of nude women that were both erotic and stylistically innovative—one critic likened her to Munch. When censors removed one painting, Costenoble's supporters lamented their cultural backwardness and the controversy prompted a range of critical responses. Filipová uses the Costenoble exhibition to bring women's critical voices into her account of debates that are usually recounted as all-male. (pp. 29–33)

Filipová focuses on deliberate actors in the Czech context to show how local artists transformed or adapted Western and vernacular sources to make both nationalist and modernist claims, and also how art historians, politicians, art critics and theorists understood those references. Her approach demonstrates that artists and writers from across the political spectrum deployed nationalist ideas. In the first chapter, 'Modernism', for example, she relates how conservative critic, Karel Mádl, called for an art to serve the Czech nation in 1904 and 1905. (p. 36) The more politically and artistically progressive writer Karel Čapek also called on artists to produce a national modern art in 1913. (p. 48) Mádl identified particularly Czech traits in art and architecture, a *'softness and tenderness'*, for example, in medieval Bohemian architecture. (p. 36) Čapek dismissed the idea that particular subject matter, artistic or architectural style could be identified as inherently Czech. He also rejected the idea that peasant traditions constituted a national art. But he did believe in what he called a *'national spirit'*, something that developed continuously and was compatible with an awareness of international developments. Despite their ideological differences, both

Mádl and Čapek thought that local contemporary artists had a responsibility to express 'Czechness' in visual form. Pre-First World War art writers '*modernised the nationalist discourse of art writing*' and thought that being modern and being national were not mutually exclusive.

(p. 49) In the chapters that follow, Filipová shows how the definitions of 'national' and 'modern' shifted over time and how writers used them in defence of both progressive and conservative ideologies.

In the second chapter, 'The People', Filipová focuses on the European modernist use of folk traditions and shows how Czechs conceived of these in explicitly nationalist terms. Modernists in other parts of Europe romanticised folk art as raw, untrained and supposedly 'primitive', as the polar opposite of an urbane or decadent 'high culture'. In addition, Czechs claimed vernacular traditions as evidence of the persistence of an authentic Czech identity preserved only in the rural countryside after the Holy Roman Empire and the Catholic Church wiped out Czech elites for their religious dissent during the Counter-Reformation, installing German-speakers in their place. In this context, the peasant represented the '*prototype of Czechness*' portrayed in the arts and ethnography as '*plain talking, skilled and naturally wise*.' (p. 62) Filipová traces the ways in which vernacular culture was constructed and deployed for both national and artistic purposes by different actors—'*appropriated by academicism, nationalism, or historicism*,'—rendering it politicised. She shows how peasants and their culture were brought out as part of '*a showcase of Czech arts, industries and national culture*' for the 1891 Jubilee exhibition and to display '*original Czech traditions and heritage*' for the 1895 Czechoslovak Ethnographic Exhibition and as primitivist and exotic examples of Czechness for Rodin when he visited in 1902. Each event projected a construction of vernacular culture and peasants themselves as evidence of the preservation of an authentic Czech heritage, independent of German influence. (p. 65)

In 'Society', Filipová focuses on the period after the foundation of the Czechoslovak Republic, the interwar years. Rather than borrowing authentic markers of Czechness from 'the people', avant-garde artists conceived of art and architecture as responsible to the urban proletariat, which did not carry the contested associations that had grown up around the rural peasantry. (p. 87) Artists and politicians celebrated the uniformity of '*the common man*' as transcending local and ethnic identities to de-emphasise divisions between the numerous minority cultures—German, Slovak, Hungarian, Jewish, Polish and Ruthenian—that had been incorporated into the new Czechoslovak state. Filipová deftly summarises the ironies of the cultural elite setting a new goal of creating an art for the proletariat.

Chapter four, 'Identity', addresses the issues raised by the need to broaden Czechness into a Czechoslovakness to justify the creation of the Czechoslovak state and to unify the different peoples who would inhabit the new

country. However, the new state also wanted to cement its relationship to the Western powers that had made its creation possible. Art writers in Prague constructed a narrative of Czechoslovak culture and identity as '*economically and culturally advanced*' and played down what they saw as the backward, '*more primitive*' cultures that now constituted Eastern Czechoslovakia. (p. 138)

The relatively small number of images reproduced in the book (none in colour) will disappoint the art historical readership for the book, given the broad scope of visual material discussed. Some image choices also seem surprising. The postcard depicting President Masaryk on an official visit to Brno (fig. iv), for example, does not enhance Filipová's discussion of his 1895 treatise, 'The Czech Question.' (p. 11) When she refers to the 1905 exhibition of Edvard Munch's works in Prague, Filipová appends Jan Preisler's poster for the show (fig. 1.1), without referring to the artist or image. She reproduces a few modern works of art in traditional media—architecture, paintings, prints—but she does not explain the stylistic terms that they seem intended to illustrate. For example, how does Josef Gočár's House of the Black Madonna (fig. 1.2) exemplify 'Cubist buildings'? And what features of the Municipal House (fig. 1.3) characterise 'Secessionist architectural language'? (p. 43) Nor does she describe the images, even when a visual analysis could clarify her argument. Filipová refers to the building depicted in 'The Czech Village House' (exhibited at the Jubilee exhibition of 1891, fig. 2.3), but does not explain how its features constitute a '*fusion and imitation of real village buildings*' from across Bohemia and Moravia. (pp. 61–62) Nor does she mention the decorative pattern enlarged below the village house, even though an explication of its characteristics might help the reader understand her later reference to Pavel Janák's '*use of vernacular decorativeness*' in an image of his Czechoslovak pavilion (fig. 4.3) for the 1922 Centennial exhibition in Rio de Janeiro. (pp. 130–131) That said, the paucity of images and of visual analysis in the book serves to reinforce the unconventional nature of Filipová's argument. She is more concerned with the ways in which art historians, art theorists and critics, and artists themselves discussed modern, Czech, and national art and how they used these ideas politically, than she is with making a visual argument about how a particular work of art creates meaning and why it looks the way it does.

The final chapter explores how various Czech art writers defined the concept '*tradition*', and why they kept returning to it throughout the period from the late 19th to the mid 20th century. (p. 145) Here, Filipová reinforces the claim that artists and writers from a variety of political standpoints used the concept of a '*national culture*' informing modern Czech art. (p. 145) Writers of the time and later scholars of interwar art associated '*tradition*' with reactionary and conservative ideologies in contrast to the progressive tendencies of the avant-garde. But most Czech art writers in the modern period assumed that

national culture ‘inevitably formed the basis of modern art’ alongside ‘international stimuli’. (p. 172) Czech artists and theorists saw markers of tradition as signs of the Czechness that constituted their particular contribution to the larger, international movement. Filipová shows that we cannot separate the narrative of modern Czech art from the ways in which that tradition was used to forge a national culture.

In 1998, at the height of Anglo-American interest in the region, Tony Judt warned of the dangers of what he called ‘the usual self-serving national illusions’ that had undermined cultural histories of Central and Eastern Europe. Filipová steers refreshingly clear of this pitfall by treating the construction of national illusion as itself an object of study. Judt also warned against the tendency, in Central European cultural narratives, to ‘overcompensate for centuries of foreign persecution or neglect’.<sup>1</sup> Filipová deliberately lays bare some of the origins of and motivations for writing cultural and art history in this defensive manner.

Ultimately, Filipová produces a nuanced account of how Czech art writers conceived of art as national expression and how modern art was understood and deployed politically and ideologically in the Czech context from the late 19th century through the 1930s. Her close analysis shows how Czechs conceived the goals of modern art for their context at different moments in response to shifting relationships and associations between national art, traditions and Modernism. Her very local history invites engagement from scholars of other contexts to contribute to a more nuanced taxonomy of modern art in Central Europe as shaped by on-going negotiations between the forces of modernisation and nationalism.

#### NOTES

1 Tony Judt, ‘Freedom and Freedomia’, *The New Republic*, 1998, Sept. 7, pp. 31–32.



MARTIN HORÁČEK – UNIVERZITA PALACKÉHO V OLOMOUCI

Jan Michl

## Co Bauhaus dal – a co VZAL

Kritické úvahy o modernistickém pojetí designu a architektury

Brno, Books & Pipes 2020, 300 s., čb. obr., jmenný rejstřík

Recenzovaná kniha představuje třetí výbor z teoretických studií Jana Michla, vydaný v českém jazyce.<sup>1</sup> Této sérii předcházela ještě jedna drobnější samostatná knížka *Realizace a projekty v současné architektuře* z roku 1978.<sup>2</sup> Několik let po jejím vydání se autor, tehdy zaměstnaný v Ústavu dějin umění někdejší Československé akademie věd, odstěhoval do Norska, kde vyučoval na tamějších vysokých školách architektury a designu dějiny a teorii těchto oborů. S přednáškami a statěmi se do českého prostředí zčásti vrátil teprve po změně politické situace po roce 1989. Souběžně publikoval a nadále publikuje v norštině, angličtině i jiných jazycích: množství Michlových textů najde každý zájemce o jeho dílo přímo na autorových webových stránkách [janmichl.com](http://janmichl.com), někdy ve vícero jazykových variantách nebo v podobě, která

je „historickou“ verzí některé ze studií zveřejněných v uvedených knižních výběrech.

Na tyto okolnosti zde předem upozorňuji zejména ze dvou důvodů. První je ryze formální. Akademický čtenář může v knize *Co Bauhaus dal – a co VZAL* postrádat anglické shrnutí anebo se může podívat nad tím, že statě nejsou otištěny ve světovém jazyce, ačkoli mají — všechny — obecný záběr a obracejí se k publiku nikoli výlučně lokálnímu. Důležité studie však byly již anglicky zveřejněny dříve a lze je dohledat *online*, třebaže se jejich podoba v předloženém českém výboru z nejrůznějších důvodů, především vzhledem k bibliografickým aktualizacím, svým obsahem mírně odlišuje. S tím souvisí druhá záležitost, a sice autorovo dlouhodobé zaměření na fundamenty většinového pojetí nedávné a soudobé „filozofie



navrhování“ (citace z přední záložky knihy) a na jejich kritickou analýzu. Jan Michl zařadil do nového výboru dvanáct článků, přednášek a recenzí z let 1979–2020 a jejich aktualizace směřoval také k tomu, aby se tyto texty daly číst jako kapitoly jedné knihy. Podobně postupoval rovněž ve svých dvou předchozích výběrech. Taková metoda vyhovuje polemickému charakteru příspěvků a představuje i jistý autorův vzkaz čtenářům: ty chce zjevně přesvědčit, že závažné problémy identifikované už před čtyřiceti lety stále existují. Zároveň zamýšlí ukázat, jakou cestu sám urazil od pojmenování nedostatků přes analýzu jejich zdrojů až po návrhy nápravy.

Jaké jsou však ony zmíněné závažné problémy? V podstatě všechny vyplývají z rozporu mezi realitou moderního designu a architektury a odbornou rozpravou, jež má moderní (ve sledovaném kontextu rozuměj současný) design 20. a 21. století a architekturu vysvětlovat a ukotvit pomocí nástrojů teorie designu a teorie a dějin umění. Tato rozprava si, v podobě praktikované na vlivných školách a pracovištích a popularizované médií, nárokuje univerzální platnost, ve skutečnosti však reprezentuje uzavřený a autoreferenční postoj, který Jan Michl (spolu s myšlenkově spřízněnými autory) označuje jako „modernismus“. Modernisté se opírají o několik tezí, které autor shledává velmi vratkými a postupně je dekonstruuje, primárně tak, že v nich odhaluje logické rozpory nebo obsahovou prázdnotu. V předchozích knihách autor poukázal na neudržitelnost představy o tvorbě coby odrazu nebo výrazu „Doby“, stejně jako funkcionalistického dogmatu o „formě následující funkci“ nebo modernistického pojetí originality. Jeho cílem však nebylo a není nahradit modernismus jiným -ismem. Jde mu primárně o korektnější argumentaci a adaptivnější výstupy profesionální akademické produkce i samotného navrhování — v tom smyslu, že budou věrohodněji a udržitelněji „zasítovány“ ve světě, jaký je.

V nynější knize se důraz posouvá k fenoménu stylu, tedy k záležitosti výsostně umělecko-historické. Pojem stylu tradičně spojoval svět vizuální produkce s jeho umělecko-historickou interpretací — do té doby, než ho modernisté vytěsnili ze svého programu a z diskusí o vlastní tvorbě. Jan Michl zde dokazuje, že tak učinili pouze verbálně: „Pojem stylu ... zůstává ve skutečnosti ústředním bodem činnosti architektů a designérů.“ (s. 9) Geneze této zvláštní hry na schovávanou se dá stopovat v příběhu německé avantgardní školy Bauhaus a v tom, jak byl tento příběh později rozvíjen a vykládán. Proto se text Co Bauhaus dal — a co vzal z roku 2020 ocitl v knize na prvním místě a současně též v jejím názvu — s věcným i grafickým důrazem na slovo druhé: „VZAL“. Druhá studie, Vážná mezera ve vyučování architektury a designu (původně z roku 2018), zkoumá negativní důsledky absence stylového narativu v rozpravě o navrhování. Třetí, čtvrtý a pátý text (Krátce o americkém automobilovém designu 20. let minulého století, evropském funkcionalismu a pojmu styling, 2006; Průmyslový design a společenská rovnost, 1989;

Zešíroka o designu a obchodu, 2020) poukazují kromě jiného na fakt, že konkurenční tržní prostředí má pro designové inovace a celkovou úroveň navrhování reálně mnohem větší význam než ideologické zásady zděděné po avantgardních školách a vštěpované studentům na školách současných. V šestém a sedmém textu (Je na čase zdolat bauhausovský zátaras, 2013; Na cestě k chápání stylových idiomů jako vynálezů bez data spotřeby, 2015) Jan Michl předkládá návrhy, jak by mohli umělecko-historicky a obecně humanitně vzdělaní intelektuálové přispět k „nalezení alternativy k pustošivé modernistické fascinaci posloupností historických epoch“ (s. 11), tedy k nápravě škod, k jejichž vzniku přispěli jejich modernisticky založení předchůdci. Jelikož jde v rámci výboru o zásadní studie, přinejmenším z pohledu historiků umění, tato recenze se k nim vrátí v dalších odstavcích. Poslední třetina knihy zahrnuje pět recenzí knih a konferenčních sborníků a rozhovor šéfredaktora nakladatelství Books & Pipes (umělecko-historicky činného) Františka Mikše s autorem o jeho životě, zkušenostech a ideových inspiracích. Z uvedených recenzí by čtenáře *Umění* mohly nejvíce zajímat první a poslední: obsáhlý komentář *Jazyka postmoderní architektury* od Charlese Jenckse, otištěný v *Umění* v roce 1979, a polemika s implicitně modernistickým východiskem jinak vysoce ceněné knihy Lady Hubatové-Vackové z roku 2012 *Tiché revoluce uvnitř ornamentu*. Časový oblouk mezi dobou vzniku obou textů představuje jeden z důkazů setrvačnosti myšlenkových schémat, vůči nimž se celá kniha Jana Michla vymezuje.

Historikové umění jsou v knize vzpomínání často — jak ti, kteří přispěli k petrifikaci modernistických klišé (Sigfried Giedion, Nikolaus Pevsner), tak ti, kteří se je pokoušeli rozbít (Ernst Gombrich). Modernistická vize unifilovaného „slohu naší doby“ se však netýká pouze situace ve 20. století, popřípadě 21. století. Vychází ze zjednodušeného obrazu výtvarného dění v minulosti (s. 121), a ten zase vyplývá z filosofie dějin jako posloupného střídání epoch s výlučnými ekonomickými, kulturními, či dokonce transcendentálními determinantami (typicky vyjádřené v učení Georga W. F. Hegela). Jan Michl, inspirován Ernstem Gombrichem, zavádí označení „epochismus“ pro názor, že „Moderní Epoque má nárok na svůj vlastní, unikátní estetický výraz stejně jako všechny předchozí epochy, a že je proto historickým úkolem modernistů, tj. přívrženců tohoto názoru, takový moderní výraz přivést na svět“. (s. 144) Modernisté by se k epochismu neupnuli, nebýt epochismu zdánlivě potvrzovaného v předmodernistické tvorbě — proto úvahy Jana Michla míří nejen na vyznavače epochismu z řad modernistických tvůrců a jejich teoretických apologetů, ale i na badatele specializované na starší umění. Se slohovou nejednotou (tedy pluralismem) si vlastně náš obor pořád moc neumí poradit. Vymýšlíme kostrbaté pojmy jako „Nachgotik“, „barokní gotika“, „novogotika“ nebo obecně „historismus“ pro slohy, které se jaksi objeví v nesprávnou dobu,<sup>3</sup> a v „dějinách umění“ se nedaří najít místo pro „neoficiální“ výkony — třeba



dřevěné kostely z 15. až 18. století v kontextu architektury českých zemí.

Epochismus podle Jana Michla škodí jak dějepisu umění, tak soudobé tvorbě: zkresluje poznání minulosti a ochuzuje tvorbu v současnosti, poněvadž ji podřizuje diktátu toho, kdo se za reprezentanta epochy prohlašuje nejhlasitěji a nejagresivněji (a pokaždé neverifikovatelně). Prostředkem nápravy se podle autora má stát radikálně odlišné chápání stylových idiomů — nikoli jako „výrazů epochy“ odsouzených k zániku s epochou samotnou, ale jako „estetických vynálezů“, které lze podle potřeby použít kdykoli. (s. 124–125, 178) Konstrukci a dopady takového obratu autor podrobně rozebírá v textech 6 a 7. Zatímco epochistický postoj tak či onak souvisí s hegelovským pojetím dějin, antiepochohistické východiště nabízí podle Jana Michla filosofie Karla Poppera (1902–1994). Popper ve svých pozdějších spisech (zhruba v šedesátých a sedmdesátých letech 20. století) roztřídil vše, co existuje (či správněji: vše, co je člověk schopen pojmut), do tří „Světů“: Svět 1 je říší materiálních fyzických jevů a stavů, Svět 2 je světem psychických pocitů a subjektivních zážitků a Svět 3 světem zvnějšněného, a proto „objektivního“ vědění, tj. jakási encyklopedie všeho, co lidé vymysleli, co existuje mimo jejich hlavy a co si jiní lidé (na rozdíl od obsahu Světa 2) mohou osvojit, napodobit, revidovat, dále rozvíjet apod. Ve Světě 3 existuje všechno současně. To historikům nebrání ve zkoumání toho, kdy a proč se která položka objevila, avšak pro všechny uživatele (včetně historiků) je tento svět lidské kultury primárně zásobníkem podnětů, nápadů a inspirací pro jejich vlastní tvůrčí výkony a činy. „Ve Světě 3 je tedy minulost stále přítomná a právě tato neustálá přítomnost minulosti je východiskem lidské tvořivosti.“ (s. 172) Ne-epochistické chápání dějin výtvarných stylů vrací dějepisu umění pozitivní roli v rámci školení architektů, designérů i reprezentantů volného umění: namísto kázání o tom, jak se věci nesmí dělat, protože se doba změnila, poskytnou poučení o tom, jak se jindy nebo jinde dařilo navrhovat tak, aby výsledek fungoval, vydržel a ladil.

K přesvědčivým detailům autorovy argumentace nechť čtenář proniká sám. Nejen coby recenzent jsem si ovšem musel položit alespoň dvě otázky: První se týká toho, jak je možné, že se sto let od vzniku Bauhausu pořád nedaří prolomit jeho „zátaras“, a to navzdory svazkům poctivě odvedených kritik, k nimž dlouhodobě a významně přispívá též autor recenzované knihy? Jan Michl v závěrečném rozhovoru přiznává: „... není mi jasné, zda a do jaké míry modernisté balamutili sami sebe, a tím i ostatní vědomě, či nevědomky.“ (s. 281) Porůznu v textu naznačuje, že modernistická nesnášenlivost má hodně společného s totalitními ideologiemi na jedné straně a marketingovými snahami na straně druhé. Zde se projevuje autorův přiznaný antikomunismus, stejně jako jeho obdivuhodně podrobné znalosti liberalistických národohospodářských koncepcí. Důvodů pro zmíněnou odolnost bude nepochybně vícero. Jan Michl ji dokládá bohatou bibliografií, zůstává však

zdrženlivý, pokud jde o konkrétní doklady v českém prostředí. (srov. s. 106) Tomu lze rozumět: dokazovat kolegům a často též přátelům jejich pomýlenost není vděčná práce. Počítá se spíš s tím, že čtenář zná situaci v oborové rozpravě z vlastní zkušenosti, a pokud ne, coby *pars pro toto* má kritizovanou pozici zastoupit Lada Hubatová-Vacková se svým hodnocením ornamentu. Ty, kdo by stále pochybovali o aktuálnosti autorova zaujetí (speciálně v Česku), si recenzent dovolí odkázat na několik nedávných medializovaných kauz plánovaných novostaveb, kde se jejich architekti, stavebníci nebo další podporovatelé jako obvykle vymezují vůči svým oponentům pomocí modernisticko-epochistické argumentace.<sup>4</sup> Pokud jde jmenovitě o Bauhaus, jeho mýtický statut, v povědomí autorit málo dotčený dosavadní kritikou, potvrzuje nová strategie evropské komise pojmenovaná „New European Bauhaus“ a paradoxně zacílená k posílení krásy, udržitelnosti a pospolitosti v přetváření obytného prostředí.<sup>5</sup>

Druhý otazník se týká Michlovy jistoty, že Karl Popper zapůsobí na publikum přesvědčivěji než Georg Hegel. Můžeme podpořit racionální a pluralitní smýšlení tím, že jednoho gurua nahradíme jiným? Nežádá se pouze namísto víry v absolutního „Ducha“ jiná víra, a to v existenci „Světa 3“? Autor si dává velký pozor, aby jeho argumentace takto nevyzněla. Nejsilněji však v jeho prospěch hovoří analogie, kterou Karl Popper neměl po ruce, zatímco dnes je srozumitelná prakticky každému: Svět 3 od nedávné doby reprezentuje obsah webových stránek a s ním související koncepce autorských práv Creative Commons. (srov. s. 171)

Lze shrnout, že recenzovaná kniha *Co Bauhaus dal — a co VZAL: Kritické úvahy o modernistickém pojetí designu a architektury* poskytuje znamenité podněty všem, kdo se zabývají výtvarnou stránkou předmětů od bot přes obrazy až po urbanistické celky. Vedle obsahového poselství čtenáři ocení rovněž argumentační přesnost a vybroušený jazyk, pro autora ostatně příznačný. Nechybí odlehčení a humor, propojující někdy odtažitě působící teorii s každodenností. Pobaví autorovy fotografie z terénu a jejich popisky, jakož i občasné popíchnutí protivné strany: „... modernistický minimalismus [je] jedině ‚povolené‘ historické tvarosloví dneška.“ (s. 262) Úhrnem jde o vzácný přírůstek do chudobné domácí diskuse o teorii navrhování a teorii dějin umění, cenný také proto, že je organicky svázaný s rozpravou zahraniční.

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5 [https://europa.eu/new-european-bauhaus/index\\_cs](https://europa.eu/new-european-bauhaus/index_cs), vyhledáno 25. 7. 2021.



**Ludvík Hlaváček**  
**Kachna, nebo králík?**  
**Spekulace o sociální roli výtvarného umění**

Ústí nad Labem, Fakulta umění a designu Univerzity Jana Evangelisty Purkyně a Nadace pro současné umění Praha 2020, 191 s.,  
 čb. a bar. obr., bibliogr., angl. resumé

Předkládaná publikace vzešla z potřeby poskytnout studentům magisterského oboru kurátorských studií Fakulty umění a designu Univerzity Jana Evangelisty Purkyně v Ústí nad Labem text, který by jim pomohl s lepší orientací v problematice sociální role umění. Kniha vychází z přednášek Ludvíka Hlaváčka, které opakovaně přednesl mezi lety 2007–2018. Text je ovšem podstatně rozšířen a doplněn nad rámec přednášek. V úvodních kapitolách se autor věnuje vymezení značně problematického pojmu socializace, snaží se najít neméně problematickou definici toho, co je vlastně umělecké dílo, a stručně se zamýšlí nad dějinností. V následujících devíti kapitolách referuje o dějinných proměnách sociální role umění od antiky až po postmodernu a její dědictví. Neusiluje při tom o psaní jakýchsi dějin umění, namísto toho hledá dějinné příklady jeho sociální role a z nich se pak pokouší odvodit jeho roli současnou.

**Ivan Foletti – Jan Galeta – Ondřej Jakubec – Radka Nokkala Miltová (edd.)**

**Emoce v obraze**  
**Od středověku po současnost**

Brno, Books & Pipes a Masarykova univerzita 2021, 129 s.,  
 čb. a bar. obr., bibliogr., angl. resumé

Kniha, kterou připravil Seminář dějin umění Masarykovy univerzity v Brně k životnímu jubileu Ladislava Kesnera, se zabývá tématem emocí v umění. Nesoustředí se však výhradně na explicitní zobrazování emocí v obrazech prostřednictvím exaltovaných gest a pohnutých výrazů ve tvářích. Hlavním aktérem emočního prožitku uměleckého díla je především divák, který tváří v tvář uměleckému dílu může zažívat celou škálu pocitů, vycházejících z jeho

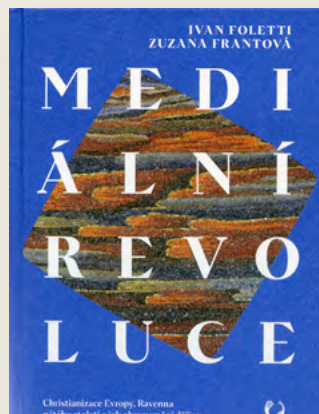


subjektivní zkušenosti, momentálního rozpoložení a dalších okolností, a ne vždy nutně korespondujících s intencí autora. I relativně neutrální zobrazení či anikonické umělecké předměty (například monstrance) dokáží zprostředkovat silné emoce za předpokladu, že budou kontemplovány „správným“ způsobem. K tomu mohou dopomoci doprovodné texty, nápisy, případně rituály, ve kterých daný artefakt hraje určitou roli. Nad těmito otázkami se z různých úhlů pohledu v krátkých statích zamýšlí padesátka autorů. Každý se ve svém textu věnuje vybrané památce — od architektury, obrazů, soch a uměleckého řemesla až po konceptuální umění. Nejstarší materiál zahrnuje antické a středověké památky a poslední kapitoly jsou věnovány současnému umění, což umožňuje sledovat postupné proměny v zobrazování emocí.

**Ivan Foletti – Zuzana Frantová**  
**Mediální revoluce**  
**Christianizace Evropy, Ravenna pátého století**  
**a jak obrazy mění dějiny**

Brno, Books & Pipes a Masarykova univerzita 2021, 166 s.,  
 čb. a bar. obr., bibliogr., rejstřík, angl. resumé

V antické společnosti měla vizuální kultura mimořádně důležitou roli a významně se podílela na formování myšlení lidí všech společenských vrstev. Předkládaná publikace se ptá, jakou úlohu sehrála materiální a vizuální kultura konkrétně v procesu christianizace Evropy. Ve sledovaném období se Evropu šíří nové výtvarné médium — skleněná mozaika. Šikmo kladená barevná sklíčka odrážející mihotavé světlo olejových lamp jistě dokázala v interiérech sakrálních staveb vytvořit nadpozemskou atmosféru. Měla však potenciál stát se jedním ze zásadních prostředků christianizace středomoří? Kniha je rozdělena do dvou částí. První sleduje šíření skleněné mozaiky jako uměleckého média v období 4. a 5. století napříč Evropou, popisuje tedy jev, ke kterému odkazuje název publikace, onu „mediální revoluci“. Ve druhé části je tato obecná problematika zkoumána na konkrétním příkladu, prostoru takzvaného baptisteria



ortodoxních v Ravenně, které nechal biskup Neon v polovině 5. století vyzdobit skleněnou mozaikou. Velkou pozornost autoři věnují analýze křesťanských iniciačních rituálů, pokouší se rekonstruovat, jak probíhaly a jak mohly být vnímány jednotlivými účastníky. Uměleckou výzdobu baptisteria pak interpretují právě v kontextu těchto rituálů.

Olga Kotková (ed.)

**Hans Holbein Starší / Hans Holbein the Elder  
Hohenburský oltář / Hohenburg Altarpiece**

Praha, Národní galerie v Praze 2020, 125 s., čb. a bar. obr., bibliogr., souběžný anglický text

Dvě oboustranně malovaná křídla takzvaného Hohenburského oltáře od Hanse Holbeina staršího patří k prvotřídním mistrovským dílům Národní galerie Praha. Malba vyniká nejen uměleckou kvalitou, ale i netradičním užitím grisajové techniky na obou stranách oltářních křídel. Příprava nové prezentace sbírky starých mistrů poskytla vhodnou příležitost k vystavení oltáře důstojným způsobem, který odpovídá jeho charakteru a výjimečnosti a který jej divákovi ukáže v co nejčitelnější podobě, pod antireflexním sklem. U této příležitosti se také podařilo desky komplexně prozkoumat, konzervovat a restaurovat. Předkládaná publikace v několika samostatných kapitolách připomíná život a dílo Hanse Holbeina staršího, shrnuje nové poznatky umělecko-historického průzkumu, prezentuje detailní informace o technice malby, stavu díla před restaurováním a charakteristice použitých materiálů a přináší i detailní popis postupu při jeho posledním restaurování.

Jan Ivanega

**Hluboká**

**Lovecký zámek Ohrada a schwarzenberská sídla na panství Hluboká nad Vltavou**

Praha, Národní zemědělské muzeum 2014, 162 s., čb. a bar. obr., mapy, plány, faksim, bibliogr., rejstřík, angl. resumé

Publikace sleduje fungování třech vrchnostenských sídel na schwarzenberském panství Hluboká nad Vltavou v první třetině 18. století. Mezi vybrané objekty patří zámek Hluboká nad Vltavou, zámek Ohrada a lázně v Libníči. Autor sleduje stavební vývoj jednotlivých objektů, zamýšlí se nad jejich specifickými funkcemi a nad způsobem využívání a na základě inventářů, korespondence, plánové dokumentace a dalších archivních dokumentů rekonstruuje možné každodenní fungování těchto barokních sídel. Zámek Hluboká nad Vltavou představuje jako místo bohatých společenských aktivit, ale i sídlo vrchnostenské správy a obranyschopnou pevnost. Jádrem práce je kapitola o zámku Ohrada, který sloužil jako letní sídlo a centrum loveckých zábav. Knihu uzavírá kapitola o Libníči, jejíž lázeňský areál byl šlechtici využíván k regeneraci těla i duše. Autorovým záměrem však nebylo pouze sledování fungování jednotlivých objektů jako solitérních staveb, ale především vymezení jejich vzájemného poměru a nakonec vyvození obecnějších závěrů o postavení vybraných staveb i celého panství Hluboká nad Vltavou v rámci rozvětvené schwarzenberské residenční sítě. Kniha také připomíná osudy soudobých uživatelů těchto objektů, přibližuje jejich mentalitu a umožňuje nahlédnout do všedního života barokní vrchnosti.

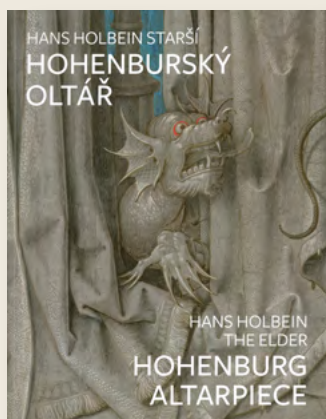
Eva Bendová – Zdeněk Hojda (edd.)

**Od práce k zábavě**

**Volný čas v české kultuře 19. století**

Praha, Academia 2021, 435 s., čb. a bar. obr., portréty, bibliogr., rejstřík., něm. a angl. resumé

Sborník příspěvků přednesených na plzeňském sympoziu k problematice 19. století v únoru 2020 je zasvěcen volnému času. Zrození tohoto fenoménu spadá do 19. století a je obvykle spojováno s procesem urbanizace a industrializace, kdy s pevnou pracovní dobou a jejím postupným zkracováním získával stále větší počet lidí přesně vymezený čas pro práci v zaměstnání a možnost svobodně nakládat s časem zbývajícím. Jak ale přesně de-







finovat volný čas? Lze jej chápat jako opak pracovní doby, tedy včetně času věnovaného rodinným povinnostem a osobním potřebám, nebo jej omezit na dobu, kdy jedinec nepodléhá žádným závazkům a s časem může zacházet zcela svobodně a ideálně ho naplnit aktivitami, které mu přinášejí potěšení. Jak dokládají některé příspěvky sborníku, ani tento čas nemusí být vnímán jako zcela „volný“ a svobodný, neboť určité činnosti jsou vnímány jako společensky žádoucí, zatímco jiné nikoliv, jako je tomu například v případech nicnedělání a zahálky. S tématem zahálky (a často související nudy) pak vyvstává zajímavá otázka, nakolik je člověk vůbec schopen volný čas nějakým smysluplným způsobem využít a „užít“ a zda pro některé z nás nakonec volný čas není spíše břemenem.

Eva Bendová – Václav Hájek – Vít Vlnas

### Já a oni

#### Jedinec a společenství v umění 19. století

Plzeň, Západočeská galerie v Plzni 2021, 79 s., čb. a bar. obr., portréty, bibliogr., angl. resumé, publikace k výstavě 8. června – 26. září 2021, výstavní síň „13“, Západočeská galerie v Plzni

Tématem letošního ročníku mezioborového plzeňského symposia k problematice 19. století byla individualita a vztah jedince ke společenství. Doprovodná výstava Já a oni si klade za cíl ukázat různé projevy individualizace člověka v 19. století ve výtvarném umění. Sleduje ho ve dvou rovinách — nejprve jako subjekt, „já“, které se vymezuje vůči sobě, přírodě či světu obecně; později jako individuum, které se vymezuje vůči společnosti. Těmto dvěma polaritám odpovídá i struktura katalogu. Úvodní studie pojednává o dílech zaměřených výhradně na vnitřní svět jedince. Jsou to obrazy poustevníků a poutníků, opuštěné ženské hrdinky či do sebe zahloubané partnerské dvojice. Stranou nezůstává ani sám umělec. Do jeho vnitřního světa můžeme proniknout prostřednictvím skic, studií a náčrtů, které nebyly určeny k prezentaci před diváky. Specifický typ umělecké sebereflexe samozřejmě představuje autoportrét. V protikladu pak stojí pomníková tvorba, s kterou pracuje druhá studie a která

reprezentuje konkrétního jedince ve veřejném prostoru. Toto téma představuje vhodný materiál pro sledování způsobů uměleckého vyjádření vztahu individuality ke společnosti.

Xavier Galmiche (ed.)

### Krajiny umění

#### Švýcarský kritik William Ritter a střední Evropa

Brno, Books & Pipes 2020, 238 s., čb. a bar. obr., portréty, bibliogr., rejstřík, angl. resumé

William Ritter (1867–1955), švýcarský kritik, novinář, grafik, spisovatel, estét, dandy a cestovatel, představuje typickou svéráznou figuru přelomu 19. a 20. století. Patřil zřejmě k nejproduktivnějším kritikům tohoto období. Zanechal na pět stovek článků v časopisech a odborných revuích, monografiích a předmluvách k beletristickým dílům. Vyjadřoval se nejen k výtvarnému umění, ale i k literatuře, hudbě, divadlu a dalším kulturněhistorickým událostem. Sám se aktivně věnoval výtvarnému umění a snažil se prosadit i jako spisovatel — vydal několik románů a povídek a jeho nevydané dílo tvoří několik desítek svazků. Pro nás má ovšem zásadní význam především jako „objevitel“ umění střední Evropy (kterou Ritter chápal jako široký prostor Německa, tehdejšího Rakouska-Uherska, Rumunska a části Balkánu) pro frankofonní prostředí. Střední a východní Evropu vnímal jako poněkud primitivní exotický „Orient“, kam rád cestoval, kde snil, tvořil, a o jehož kultuře a umění pak referoval v domácím tisku. Ritter po sobě navíc zanechal ohromné množství korespondence, poznámek, diářů, fotografií, náčrtů a deníků, díky nimž máme možnost nahlédnout do Ritterova osobního života a myšlení a zprostředkovaně zakusit atmosféru Evropy na přelomu století, včetně některých jejích opomíjených aspektů, jako je například tehdejší homosexuální subkultura.

**Tomáš Pospiszyl**  
**Posledních padesát let**

Hradec Králové, Galerie moderního umění 2020, 106 s., čb. a bar. obr., portréty, rejstřík, angl. resumé, publikace k výstavě 27. listopadu 2020 – 1. října 2023, Galerie moderního umění v Hradci Králové

Umění posledních padesáti let vznikalo v několika diametrálně odlišných historických etapách, zahrnuje obrovské množství různorodých technik od tradiční malby, přes fotografii, video, performance až po nová média a je dílem autorů a autorek z různých generací s velmi rozmanitými postoji k životu i k tvorbě. Není proto překvapivé, že porozumění současnému umění představuje pro běžného diváka určitou výzvu. Celkové uchopení této heterogenní „směsice“, ke které zatím nemáme patřičný odstup a která ještě nemá své dějiny, a její zpřístupnění tápajícímu divákovi pochopitelně vyžaduje specifický přístup. Publikace Tomáše Pospiszyla, vydaná jako katalog a průvodce expozicemi současného umění v Galerii moderního umění v Hradci Králové, se nesnaží „vyprávět příběh“ současného umění a ukazovat jeho chronologický vývoj. Namísto toho představuje přibližně desítku témat, která se autorovi v rámci současného českého umění jeví jako stěžejní. Jde například o vztah k tradici, práce s již existujícími obrazy (koláž, postprodukce), gender, interaktivita a další. Tyto tendence v současném umění publikace dokládá konkrétními příklady děl ze sbírek královéhradecké galerie.

budovy však měly jen jedinou vadu — tu, že stály v cestě komerčně výhodnému využití prostoru. Řadu demolic provázely velké památkové kauzy, jiné zmizely téměř bez povšimnutí a několik objektů se bouralo s neskrývaným uspokojením. Publikace pojednává o čtyřiceti vybraných objektech, které byly demolovány mezi lety 1990–2020 a jejichž ztráta výrazně poškodila náš památkový fond. Patří k nim řada obytných domů, veřejné budovy, továrny a další industriální objekty. Texty doprovází bohatý obrazový materiál zahrnující archivní fotografie, které zachycují původní stav budov i snímky pořízené těsně před jejich zánikem. Závěrečná kapitola je věnovaná stavbám prozatím stojícím, leč s nejistou budoucností — Zlíčovskému lihovaru, Libeňskému mostu, Odkolkovým mlýnům, SANOPZu, Ústřední telekomunikační budově na Žižkově a dalším.

**Kateřina Bečková**  
**Zbořeno**  
**Zaniklé pražské stavby 1990–2020**

Praha, Paseka, 2021, 255 s., čb. a bar. obr., bibliogr.

Za posledních třicet let přišla Praha o desítky budov. Některé z nich již nebylo možné zachránit kvůli jejich špatnému technickému stavu, jiné představovaly zdravotní riziko z důvodu použití závadných materiálů při výstavbě, nebo již dosloužily původnímu účelu a vhodné nové využití se pro ně nedařilo najít. Některé



STEVEN MANSBACH

## Metodologické rámce pro vzdorovitou oblast

Do popředí zájmu současných humanistických oborů vystupují úvahy o metodologii. Nepřetvářejí jen postupy humanitních a společenských věd, ale také nápaditě přehodnocují hranice mezi obory. V tomto ohledu mi pracovní verze studie Mathewa Rampleyho byla motivací, abych využil výzvu redakce a uspořádal zvláštní číslo *Umění*, v němž se budou oslovení badatelé reprezentující různé perspektivy, národnosti a profesní závazky zabývat metodologickými otázkami stěžejními pro naši akademickou disciplínu. Úvahy rozvinuté v následujících článcích vybízejí k novému zamyšlení nad tím, jak přistupovat k artefaktům, kritickým kontextům a různým významům středoevropského moderního umění i moderního umění jako celku.

STEVEN MANSBACH

## Methodological Frameworks for a Defiant Region

Reflections on methodology are at the forefront of today's humanistic endeavors. They are reshaping not only the practice of the humanities and social sciences; they are imaginatively redefining disciplinary boundaries. In this regard an early version of Mathew Rampley's essay motivated me to capitalize on the editors' invitation to organize a special issue of *Umění/Art* to which invited scholars representing an array of perspectives, nationalities, and professional commitments might productively engage methodological issues central to our academic discipline. The reflections advanced in the following essays thus exhort us to think afresh about how to treat the artifacts, critical contexts, and multiple meanings of Central European modern art specifically, and modern art as a whole.

MATTHEW RAMPLEY

## Sítě, horizonty, centra a hierarchie: výzvy psaní o modernismu ve střední Evropě

Místo modernismu středovýchodní Evropy v širším kontextu moderního umění se v posledních třiceti letech opakovaně stávalo námětem diskusí. Dlouhodobé strukturální nerovnosti a ideologicky ovlivněné navyklé způsoby myšlení způsobily, že vědecký zájem o projev modernismu ve státech střední a východní Evropy je v mezinárodním měřítku stále jen okrajovou záležitostí. Přes intenzivní snahu o překonání zakořeněných nerovností se scéna modernismu stále příliš nemění a nadále jí dominuje Paříž, Berlín, Londýn, New York a Moskva. Článek zkoumá několik nedávných pokusů, které se v rámci širšího projektu překreslení mapy moderního umění snažily přístup k modernismu přehodnotit. Tyto pokusy často vedly k pozoruhodným závěrům využívajícím teze propojenosti, horizontality a transnacionální analýzy. Zároveň si článek klade následující otázky: Nakolik je jejich koncepce koherentní a nakolik jsou účelné jako základ pro alternativní narativy? Nakolik jsou konkrétní případové studie z dějin moderního umění v Čechách, Československu a Maďarsku přesvědčivé? Článek naznačuje, že takové modely mohou historickou situaci zkreslovat. Pokud se však mají stávající hierarchie rozbít, je nezbytné se zabývat spíše pragmatickými faktory v jejich pozadí než se zaměřovat pouze na nové teoretické modely interpretace.

MATTHEW RAMPLEY

## Networks, Horizons, Centres and Hierarchies: On the Challenges of Writing on Modernism in Central Europe

The place of the Modernism of East-Central Europe in the wider landscape of modern art has been a recurrent topic of debate in the last 30 years. Long-standing structural inequalities and ideologically-shaped habits of mind have ensured that international scholarly interest in the modernist practices of the states of central and eastern Europe is still often a marginal activity. Despite concerted efforts to overturn long-established inequalities, the landscape of Modernism is still little changed, dominated by Paris, Berlin, London, New York and Moscow. This article examines some of the recent attempts to rethink writing about Modernism, as part of a project of redrawing the map of modern art. Such attempts have often resulted in striking formulations, drawing on metaphors of entanglement, horizontality and transnational analysis. Yet the article asks: How conceptually coherent are they, and how effective are they as the basis for counter-narratives? Moreover, when concrete case studies from the history of Modernism in Bohemia, Czechoslovakia and Hungary are considered, how convincing are they? The article suggests not only that such models may misrepresent historical situations, but that also, if existing hierarchies are to be broken down, then it is necessary to address the pragmatic factors that lie behind them, rather than focusing on new theoretical models of interpretation alone.



BEÁTA HOCK

## Existuje život po kanonických jistotách?

Moje odpověď se připojuje k Rampleyho hledání možností, jak začlenit dějiny umění středovýchodní Evropy do širšího společného rámce. Proč a jaký význam by mělo mít moderní umění středovýchodní Evropy pro publikum v jiných částech světa? I když s Matthewem Rampleym souhlasím, že vztahy centra a periferie jsou stále důležité a jejich závažnost se nerozplyne pouhou silou sugesce, zároveň se domnívám, že věda (včetně dějin umění) nemusí nerovné geopolitické podmínky reprodukovat. Krása našeho povolání spočívá právě v hledání a vytváření potenciálně transformativních znalostí. S tímto přesvědčením jsem Rampleyho pátrání nasměrovala na intelektuální agendy, které před několika desetiletími přispěly k obnově vědeckých dějin umění: „dějiny zdola“, poststrukturalistickou a postkoloniální kritiku, sociální a prostorový obrat, koncepty mnohočetných modernit a alternativních geografí modernismu a především na feministickou epistemologii a dějiny umění. Tyto narativní projekty, které odhalily zdánlivý univerzalizmus dřívějších přístupů, požadovaly větší inkluzivnost a zabývaly se také logickými důsledky otevírání dějin (umění) vůči marginálním a mimoevropským kulturám. Dalším aspektem společného alternativního rámce pak je pokles důrazu na čistě estetické pojmy a stylová označení jako hlavní analytické problémy. Předpokládám také, že tvůrci a zapálení příznivci inkluzivnějších narativů se objeví v rychle rostoucím intelektuálním společenství „menšinových transnacionalistů“ a zastánců „transmoderny“ nebo dialogu mezi periferiemi.

BEÁTA HOCK

## Is there Life after Canonical Certainties?

My response engages with Matthew Rampley's quest for fertile ways to incorporate east-central European art history within a shared larger framework: why should, and how could, modern art from east-central Europe have pertinence for audiences elsewhere? While I agree with Rampley that the materiality of center/periphery-relations cannot be simply thought away by the force of mental magic, I insist that (art historical) scholarship need not reproduce unjust geopolitical givens. Indeed, a beauty of our profession is the pursuit and production of potentially transformative knowledge. In this conviction, I (re-)directed Rampley's quest towards intellectual agendas that contributed to the renewal of art historical scholarship a couple of decades ago: 'history-from-below', post-structuralist and post-colonial critique, the social and spatial turns, the concepts of multiple modernities and alternative geographies of Modernism and, perhaps most importantly, feminist epistemology and art history. Exposing the false universalism of earlier approaches, these narrative projects put forth more inclusionist demands and followed up the logical consequences of opening up (art) history for marginal or non-European cultures. A further aspect of a shared alternative framework appears to be a reduced emphasis on aesthetic-only concepts or stylistic labels as primary analytic concerns. I also estimate that both the producers and the most eager audience of these more inclusive narratives will be found in a quickly growing intellectual community of 'minor transnationalists' and proponents of 'transmodernity' or a transperipheral conversation.

MARIE RAKUŠANOVÁ

## Dějepis moderního umění: od partikularismu k novému universalismu

Na Piotra Piotrowského se dnes ve svých úvahách odvolává řada (nejen) středoevropských historiček a historiků umění. Jeho texty ovšem dodnes provokují také zajímavé polemiky. Oba tyto jevy jsou pak doprovázeny parafrázováním některých jeho názorů. Ty mohou být ovšem pro potřeby údernosti argumentace také dezinterpretovány. Matthew Rampley ve svém polemickém článku podobným způsobem posouvá význam některých Piotrowského tezí. Text Marie Rakušanové se pokouší prokázat, že tím nedochází pouze ke zkreslení myšlenek polského badatele, ale také ke znevěrohodnění Rampleyho vlastních návrhů metodologických inovací v psaní dějin umění Střední Evropy. Rampleyho mylné čtení Piotrowského se týká především článku *On the Spatial Turn, or Horizontal Art History*, který vyšel v roce 2008 v časopise *Umění*, a jeho varianty se objevily i v dalších publikacích. Rakušanové text ovšem připomíná nejen skutečnou podobu Piotrowského tezí z tohoto článku, ale také jeho myšlenky ze studie o šest let mladší *East European Art Peripheries Facing Post-colonial Theory*. Piotrowského koncepce horizontalismu, transnacionismu a kritické geografie umění se vymezovala nejen vůči (partikularistickému) universalismu Západního dějepisu moderního umění, ale také vůči mechanickému transferu principů postkoloniální kritiky do prostoru Středovýchodní Evropy. Piotrowski anticipoval význam prostorových, časových a jazykových specifík, určujících povahu modernity této oblasti i jejího uměleckohistorického zkoumání. Časová nesouměřitelnost umění Západní a Středovýchodní Evropy má jiný charakter, než postkolonialismem zviditelněná diverzita časových linií různých kultur, původně násilně potlačovaná Západní koloniální politikou. *Středovýchodní* Evropa si nemůže nárokovat status někdejší kolonie Západu, její případ ukazuje rozpolcenost prostorových a časových vztahů uvnitř Západní kultury jako celku. Jedině schopnost reflektovat toto rozštěpení by v psaní středoevropských dějin umění mohla vést od partikularismu k novému universalismu. Když Rampley vyzývá ke změně konceptuálního rámce v psaní dějin umění Středovýchodní Evropy, jeho apel málo zohledňuje tyto problémy, a nepřekvapivě ústí v nabádání k respektování hierarchií.

MARIE RAKUŠANOVÁ

## Writing on the History of Modern Art: From Particularism to a New Universalism

A number of art historians, both from Central Europe and elsewhere, currently refer to Piotr Piotrowski in their reflections. Even today, however, his texts also continue to provoke interesting polemical discussions. Both types of response are accompanied by paraphrases of some of his views. In order to strengthen the force of the argument, however, these views can also be misinterpreted. In his polemical article, Matthew Rampley alters the meaning of a number of Piotrowski's theses in this way. Marie Rakušanová's text attempts to show that this not only distorts the Polish scholar's ideas, but also undermines the credibility of Rampley's own suggestions for methodological innovations in writing the art history of Central Europe. Rampley's mistaken reading of Piotrowski relates primarily to the article 'On the Spatial Turn, or Horizontal Art History', which was published in the journal *Umění/Art* in 2008, with variant versions also appearing in other publications. Rakušanová's text reminds us not only of the true form of Piotrowski's theses in this article, but also of his ideas expressed in the study 'East European Art Peripheries Facing Post-colonial Theory', published six years later. Piotrowski's concepts of horizontalism, transnationalism, and critical art geography were opposed not only to the (particularist) universalism of Western writing on the history of modern art, but also to the mechanical transfer of the principles of postcolonial criticism to the setting of East-Central Europe. Piotrowski anticipated the significance of the specific regional, temporal, and linguistic features which determine the nature of modernity in this part of the world and art-historical research into it. The differing time frame of the development of art in Western and in East-Central Europe has a different character than the diversity of time lines made visible by postcolonialism, which was originally violently suppressed by Western colonial policy. East-Central Europe cannot lay claim to the status of a former colony of the West; it is a case that shows the division in relationships of place and time within Western culture as a whole. A shift from particularism to a new universalism in writing on Central European art history can only be achieved through the ability to reflect on this division. When Rampley calls for a change in the conceptual frame in writing the art history of East-Central Europe, this appeal does not take sufficient account of these problems, and it is not surprising that it results in another call to respect hierarchies.

MILENA BARTLOVÁ

## Odkud se dívá historik umění? Dějiny umění střední Evropy a post-koloniální impuls

Vyzvaný diskusní příspěvek se zabývá definicí střední Evropy v dějinách umění a diskursem centra a periferie ve střeoevropské uměleckohistorické tradici. Autorka se domnívá, že Matthew Rampley ve výchozím textu diskuse opomenul dostatečně důkladnou analýzu a dekonstrukci koloniálního a sebe-kolonizačního diskursu týkajícího se střední Evropy. S odkazem na práce Jana Białostockého, Jána Bakoše a Thomase DaCosty Kaufmanna zasazuje Rampleym kritizovanou studii Piotra Piotrowského do kontextu uměleckohistorické debaty osmdesátých let 20. století a zkoumá klíčové termíny, jako je „opozděný vývoj“. Diskutuje také s odmítnutím Piotrowského z důvodu přetrvávajícího hegelianismu a v této souvislosti navrhuje, že by bylo vhodné překonat intuitivní vymezování tématu centra a periferie a pracovat například s politicko-ekonomickou analýzou Immanuela Wallersteina či s aktuálními koncepty sociální geografie. Za stejně potřebnou pro další debatu považuje i hlubší analýzu účinků post-koloniálního impulsu, s nimiž přišel před dvěma desetiletími David Summers. Podstatné bude obrácení perspektivy agenta vlivu (ve smyslu Michaela Baxandalla) stejně jako nová diskuse o kritériích kvality umění.

MILENA BARTLOVÁ

## From which Vantage Points does an Art Historian Look? The History of Central European Art and the Post-colonial Impulse

This contribution to the discussion deals with the definition of Central Europe in art history and the discourse relating to the centre and the periphery in the Central European art-historical tradition. In the author's view, Matthew Rampley, in the text that initiated the discussion, failed to analyse and deconstruct sufficiently thoroughly the colonial and self-colonising discourse relating to Central Europe. Referring to the work of Jan Białostocki, Ján Bakoš, and Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann, the article places Rampley's study of Piotr Piotrowski in the context of the art-historical debates of the 1980s, and examines key terms such as 'delayed development'. It also takes issue with the rejection of Piotrowski on the grounds of lingering Hegelianism, and in this connection suggests that it would be appropriate to go beyond an intuitive definition of the theme of centre and periphery, and, for example, to work with Immanuel Wallerstein's politico-economic analysis or with current concepts of social geography. It also considers as equally necessary for the ongoing debate the more profound analysis of the effects of the postcolonial stimulus presented by David Summers two decades ago. It will be of fundamental importance to invert the perspective of the agent of influence (in the sense that Michael Baxandall proposed), and to have a new discussion about the criteria of the quality of art.

MAGDALENA RADOMSKA

## Co nejsou ortodoxní horizontální dějiny umění

Koncept horizontálních dějin umění, který Piotr Piotrowski rozvinul ve studii publikované v časopise *Umění* před více než deseti lety a který se stal předmětem mnoha polemik, zahrnuje neortodoxní metodu. Piotrowski ve své poslední knize (v angličtině dosud nevydané) koncept rozpracoval do tzv. alterglobalistických dějin umění. Marxismus v ní vynikl jako nezbytné, ale zároveň vždy rozporuplné zázemí. I když ve studii zaměřené na polemiku s Matthewem Rampleym, ale také s Piotrem Piotrowským, odkazují na jeho poslední knihu, zabývám se celkovou recepcí horizontálních dějin umění a jejich dopadem jen v omezené míře. Důvodem je částečně charakter článku, který vznikl jako reakce na Rampleyho text, a částečně fakt, že se tomuto komplikovanému tématu obšírně věnuji jinde — v doslovu k Piotrowského knize a v pojednání o limitech horizontálních dějin umění v publikaci věnované horizontálním dějinám umění, již připravuje nakladatelství Routledge. Citací slavného eseje Györgye Lukácsa *Co je ortodoxní marxismus?* se proto pokouším vytvořit rámec jak pro koncept horizontálních dějin umění, tak pro Rampleyho kritické stanovisko k marxismu, který potvrzuje neortodoxnost Piotrowského metody.

MAGDALENA RADOMSKA

## What Isn't Orthodox Horizontal Art History

Horizontal art history, a concept developed by Piotr Piotrowski in a study published over a decade ago in *Umění* and the subject of numerous polemics, involves a method that is far from orthodox. As elaborated in Piotrowski's last book (still unpublished in English) into what he calls alterglobalist art history, the concept emerges as having Marxism as its essential but always inconsistent background. Although in my text, focused on the polemics with Matthew Rampley, but also — with Piotr Piotrowski, I refer to his last book, the current study has a restricted focus as regards the overall reception of horizontal art history and its aftermath. This is partially due to the character of the present text, written as a response to the text by Rampley, and partially because I discuss the whole complicated complicated problem subject extensively elsewhere: both in the afterword to the book by Piotrowski and in my text discussing limitations of horizontal art history which is about to be published in the book on horizontal art history by Routledge. Therefore, by quoting the famous essay by György Lukács *What is Orthodox Marxism*, I attempt to frame both the concept of horizontal art history and the critical standpoint of Rampley with Marxism, that affirms unorthodoxy of Piotrowski's method.



JEREMY HOWARD

## MINCE: Pro a proti psaní o modernismu ve střední Evropě

V kritické odpovědi na otázky, které nastolil ve své úvaze Matthew Rampley (Sítě, horizonty, centra a hierarchie: výzvy psaní o modernismu ve střední Evropě), slouží jako příznačný motiv akronym *MINCE* (Modernism IN Central Europe). Jeho prostřednictvím se článek vypořádává s nejednoznačným vymezením konceptu, tématu a místa, které se objevuje jak u Rampleyho, tak v úvodní výzvě redakce. Článek nejprve zpochybňuje uvedenou představu o území, poté aktuálnost pojmu „modernismus“ a nakonec také Rampleyho „pragmatiku vědy“. Zároveň prosazuje alternativní způsoby, jak se zabývat a porozumět situaci volně vymezené oblasti. K Rampleyho zúženému standardu vzorové publikace doplňuje další metody srovnání akademického ohlasu, tj. zohlednění univerzitních kurzů a jejich výstupů, díky nimž spatříme bohatší a příznivější stránku problému, než jakou umožňuje jeho jednostranný přístup. Nedílnou součástí rozšiřování prostředků k hodnocení současného stavu představuje výzva využívat jako základ konkrétní umělecká díla a jejich vzájemné vztahy či korespondence. Článek proto namísto nevýrazných struktur horizontálních dějin umění nebo *entangled art history* navrhuje výzkum, pro jehož formy nalézá analogie u stepních rostlin a fraktálů. Díky nim a poté také pomocí vizuálních příkladů Josefa Váchala, Jana Letzela a Václava Švece a nakonec prostřednictvím přístupu k výuce na univerzitě v St Andrews ve Skotsku pochopíme, jak problematičtější a omezující je anglická předložka „in“ v akronymní zkratce *MINCE*.

JEREMY HOWARD

## MINCE Words: For and Against Writing on Modernism IN Central Europe

This essay adopts the acronym, *MINCE* (for Modernism IN Central Europe), to guide its critical reaction to the issues raised by Matthew Rampley's article ['Networks, Horizons, Centres and Hierarchies: On the Challenges of Writing on Modernism in Central Europe']. Through this it tackles the ambiguous formulations of concept, subject and place in Rampley and the editor's invitation to respond. From questioning their ideas of region it moves to doubt the currency of 'modernism'. Thereafter it challenges the 'pragmatics of scholarship' offered by Rampley and asserts alternative means of engaging with/comprehending the status of his loosely defined field. By adding extra ways of measuring academic resonance to Rampley's narrow standard of exemplar publication, i.e. by consideration of university courses and their products, we come to see a richer, and healthier, side to the problem than his one-dimensional approach allows. Integral to this broadening of the means of evaluation of the status quo is the call to utilise, as foundational, actual artwork and interrelations/correspondences. As such this paper posits a form of tumbleweed enquiry, rather than bland structures of horizontal or entangled art history. Through this, and the given visual and learning paradigms of 1) Váchal, Letzel and Švec; 2) the University of St Andrews, we gain insight into how problematic and limiting is the 'IN' of *MINCE*.

RAINO ISTO

## Oslabené dějiny modernismu

Tento článek je odpovědí na úvahy Matthewa Rampleyho o pragmatice psaní dějin moderního umění ve střední a východní Evropě a předkládá metodologický přínos „slabé teorie“, kterou využívá jako rámec pro porozumění jak dějinám umění samým, tak psaní regionálních dějin umění v současnosti. Článek představuje některé aspekty „oslabených“ dějin modernismu: pojetí modernismu jako mnohosti hnutí, stylů a ideologií, fenomén translokality a význam afektivních aspektů při psaní dějin umění střední a východní Evropy. Navrhuje, abychom se nevyhýbali afektivním faktorům a nepřecházeli každou poznámku o opožděnosti nebo hierarchických kulturních vztazích a namísto toho přijali emoční hodnotu psaní diferencovaných dějin umění této oblasti.

RAINO ISTO

## Towards a Weakened History of Modernisms

This article responds to Matthew Rampley's comments on the pragmatics of writing an art history of Modernism in Central and Eastern Europe by positing the methodological utility of 'weak theory' as a framework for understanding both art history itself and the writing of regional art history in the present day. The article puts forward some aspects of a 'weakened' history of Modernisms: the notion of Modernism as a multiplicity of movements, styles, and ideologies; the phenomenon of translocality; and the importance of affective considerations in writing the history of Central and Eastern European art. It suggests that we embrace the emotional valences of writing a nuanced history of art from the region, rather than attempting to avoid such affective elements, and rather than seeking to explain away any references to belatedness or hierarchical cultural relationships.

CLAIRE FARAGO

## Odlišné národní dějiny umění: Pohled z minulosti do budoucnosti

Matthew Rampley popisuje situaci ve středovýchodní Evropě, kde z řady koncepčních a pragmatických důvodů zůstává rozhodujícím rámcem národní paradigma. Zřejmě přetrvá i nadále pro mnoho, ne-li pro většinu badatelů z malých akademických komunit. Pojetí „stylu“ jako nemimetické „formy“ přítomné ve všech uměleckých dílech bez ohledu na kulturu, z níž pocházejí, poskytovalo v 19. století možnost sepsat univerzální dějiny světového umění založené na „objektivních“ kritériích. Tyto předpoklady jsou dnes zpochybňovány, protože při klasifikaci mimoevropských předmětů a v procesu rekontextualizace funkce a hodnoty jejich původního kulturního prostředí uplatňují evropská diskriminační kritéria. Z obdobných důvodů jsou styl, forma a abstrakce také hlavními hledisky při hodnocení modernismu a zároveň jedním z hlavních důvodů, proč polský historik umění Piotr Piotrowski vystupoval proti opomíjení lokálních a regionálních umělců v přehledových publikacích, výzkumných programech a výstavních projektech založených na modelu centra a periferie, v němž vliv vychází z privilegovaných uměleckých center v zahraničí. „Forma“ má také svou historii v teoriích vidění, které vyšly z antické řecké optiky. Další průzkum si zaslouží současný rozpor mezi zakořeněným západním pojetím „formy“ jako součásti teorie poznání a jejím znovuzrozením v moderní Evropě v podobě univerzálního vizuálního prvku designu. Materialistické přístupy k popisu a klasifikaci uměleckých děl ve spojení s ekologickým modelem regionální interkonektivity mohou zmírnit omezení, kterými trpí institucionální dějiny umění uspořádané podle národních států, aniž by na hmotné doklady uplatňovaly binární konstrukce. Kolaborativní přístup k výzkumu, který obhajuje Rampley, by také mohl integrovat práci místních badatelů a regionální výzkum do decentralizované mezinárodní sítě vědecké výměny, a to bez společného konceptuálního rámce nebo jednotné metodologie.

CLAIRE FARAGO

## A Very Different Kind of National Art History: Looking to the Future from the Past

Matthew Rampley describes a situation in East-Central Europe in which the national paradigm remains the governing framework for a variety of conceptual and pragmatic reasons that are likely to continue for many if not most researchers in small academic communities. In the nineteenth century, 'style', understood in the sense of non-mimetic 'form' present in all works of art, regardless of their culture of origin, offered the possibility of writing a universal history of world art based on 'objective' criteria. These grounds are disputed today for applying exclusionary European criteria to the classification of extra-European objects, in the process recontextualizing the function and value of the cultural setting in which the work was made. For similar reasons, style, form, and abstraction are also dominant considerations in assessing Modernism and one of the main reasons that the Polish art historian, Piotr Piotrowski, objected to the neglect of local and regional artists in survey texts, research programs, and exhibition venues based on a center-periphery model of influence flowing from privileged art centers elsewhere. 'Form' also has a prior history in theories of vision originating in ancient Greek optics. At present there is a disjunction that deserves further study between this longstanding, Western understanding of 'form' as part of a theory of cognition and its modern European reincarnation as a universal, visual element of design. Materialist approaches to the description and classification of works of art, coupled with an ecological model of regional interconnectivity, can mitigate the limitations of institutional art histories organized by nation-state without imposing binary structures on the material evidence. Adopting a collaborative approach to research, as Rampley advocates, could also integrate the efforts of local scholars and regional studies into a de-centered international network of scholarly exchange without imposing an overarching conceptual framework or a uniform methodology.

TIMOTHY O. BENSON

## Psaní a výstavy o středoevropském modernismu v Severní Americe dříve a dnes

V Severní Americe došlo k mnoha změnám týkajícím se psaní o středoevropském modernismu a jeho vystavování. Ačkoliv perspektiva center a periferií stále může být pokládána za východisko pro pochopení vývoje transnacionalismu a kulturní výměny, v současném diskurzu se otevírají nové možnosti. Útvar „*východní Evropa*“ pojatý jako „*moderní Druhý*“, zčásti vzniklý díky nomádského modernismu — viz „*sítě mobility umění a umělců*“ Matthewa Rampleyho, se ve dvacátých letech 20. století „*proměňoval v postmoderní Druhý (v neurčitém prostoru)*“ (Andrzej Turowski). Náhoda a fragmentace ve fotomontáži dále narušovaly linii determinismu a přispívaly k sebereflektující úvaze o času a prostoru, jež se objevuje v dadaismu i v kolážích Jindřicha Štyrského a Karla Teigeho z období Devětsílu. Vše tedy naznačuje, že bychom měli uvažovat spíše o historiografii epizodních jevů. Epizody setkání s mimoevropskými, sebeidentifikujícími modernistickými hnutími inspirovaly v globální současnosti mnoho přínosných přirovnání, která poukazují na vazby mezi asymetrickými koloniálními a postkoloniálními podmínkami, včetně „*transmodernismu*“ (Christian Kravagna), mikrohistorie, „*kulturní mediace*“ (Piotr Piotrowski), „*kontextuálního modernismu*“ (R. Siva Kumar), mikrosociologie (Thomas Hauschild), mikropříběhů a myšlenky „*reanimace*“ kulturního dědictví Davida Joselita podobné Rampleyho „*kritickému diskurzu kulturního dědictví*“. Navíc ve Spojených státech a Kanadě se již naplno prosazuje velmi potřebný koncept „*kritického muzea*“, v nějž doufali Katarzyna Murawska-Muthesius a Piotr Piotrowski, a podněcuje další posuny priorit od postkolonialismu k dekolonizaci, od publika ke komunitám, od sbírání k repatriaci a od globálního k lokálnímu. Kurátoři a badatelé se mohou stát iniciativními zprostředkovateli, kteří vytvářejí nečekaná spojení různých objektů a myšlenek, podobně jako v Joselitově představě „*kurátorské epistémé*“. Bohatství avantgardních strategií středoevropského modernismu by pak současný diskurz mohlo oživit v menších, úzce zaměřených, dostupnějších a ekologicky udržitelných výstavách a publikacích.

TIMOTHY O. BENSON

## Writing About and Exhibiting Central European Modernism in North America Then and Now

Much has changed in North America affecting the practicality of writing about and exhibiting Central European Modernism. While the perspective of centres and peripheries can still be considered as a backdrop to understanding evolving practices of transnationalism and cultural exchange, new possibilities are suggested in the current discourse. Evolved in part through nomadic Modernism— Matthew Rampley's '*networks of mobility of art and artists*' — the '*Modernist Other*' of the formation '*Eastern Europe*' was '*being transformed into the postmodernist Other (of undulating expanse)*' in the 1920s (Andrzej Turowski). Chance and fragmentation in photomontage further disrupted the chain of determinism, contributing to a self-reflective discourse about time and space seen in dada, as well as in the Devětsil photocollages of Jindřich Štyrský and Karel Teige—all suggesting that we consider a more episodic historiography. In the global present, episodes of encounter involving non-European self-identifying modernist movements have prompted many useful metaphors that expose entanglements in colonial and post-colonial asymmetrical circumstances including '*transmodernism*' (Christian Kravagna), microhistories, '*cultural mediation*' (Piotr Piotrowski), '*contextual modernism*' (R. Siva Kumar), microsociology (Thomas Hauschild), micro-stories, and what David Joselit calls a '*reanimation*' of heritage, a concept similar to Rampley's '*critical heritage discourse*'. Moreover, the much needed '*critical museum*' hoped for by Katarzyna Murawska-Muthesius and Piotrowski appears to be in full swing across the U.S. and Canada, prompting a further shift in priorities from post-colonial to decolonization, audiences to communities, collecting to repatriation, and global to local. Curators and scholars may become entrepreneurial facilitators drawing together diverse objects and ideas in unexpected juxtapositions, not unlike Joselit's notion of a '*curatorial episteme*'. Central European Modernism is rich in vanguard strategies that could invigorate contemporary discourses in smaller, more focused, more affordable, and ecologically sustainable exhibitions and publications.



ÉVA FORGÁCS

## Poznámky ke článku Matthewa Rampleyho Sítě, horizonty, centra a hierarchie: výzvy psaní o modernismu ve střední Evropě

Inspirativní článek Matthewa Rampleyho vyvolává řadu závažných otázek souvisejících s minulým i současným postavením umění středovýchodní Evropy v mezinárodním kontextu.

Moje zamyšlení nad Rampleyho studií zahrnuje stručnou analýzu vznikání a zanikání center a periferií ve 20. století, změny geografického a kulturního konceptu střední Evropy, historický příklad všestranné umělecké sbírky a nedávné zavedení „kulturálních studií“ ve střední Evropě. Obsahuje také několik příkladů strategií z posledních let z Maďarska, které představují protiváhu k nevýhodám situace umění střední Evropy.

ÉVA FORGÁCS

## Notes on Matthew Rampley's 'Networks, Horizons, Centres and Hierarchies: On the Challenges of Writing on Modernism in Central Europe'

Matthew Rampley's inspiring article raises many relevant questions related to the past and current position of East-Central European art in the international context. My reflections on his essay include a brief survey of the emergence and submergence of centers and peripheries in the twentieth century; the changes of the geographic and cultural concept of Central Europe; a historical example for an all-inclusive art collection; the recent adaption of 'cultural studies' in Central Europe, and a couple of Hungarian examples from the recent years for possible strategies to counterbalance the disadvantages of the position of art in Central Europe.

## **Die Villa Bertramka**

### **Facetten der Geschichte einer Mozart-Gedenkstätte in Prag**

## **The Villa Bertramka**

### **Facets of the History of a Mozart Memorial in Prague**

Milada Jonášová – Manfred Hermann Schmid (eds)

The publication deals with the small Bertramka estate in the Smíchov district of Prague, highly regarded as an important Mozart memorial site in Prague, and with the long history of its construction. The oldest historical record is of a hut in a vineyard, which during the course of the centuries was gradually transformed into a summer residence. In 1783 it was purchased by the singer Josefa Dušková. In the 19th century, two rooms where the composer was supposed to have stayed were furnished as 'Mozart rooms', but this was on the basis of quite mistaken ideas which did not correspond to the historical facts. A major reconstruction was undertaken after the destruction of the original shingle roof in a fire in 1872. Further extensive building alterations took place during the Second World War, when the Reichsprotektor's Office decided to make use of the 150th anniversary of the death of the 'great German genius Mozart', which occurred in 1941, to demonstrate 'how strongly the region of Bohemia and Moravia was dominated by the German spirit'. Evidence of the difficulties involved in opening an exhibition in

the 'Bertramhof' on the eve of the anniversary of the world premiere of Don Giovanni (which took place in Prague) on 27 October 1941, has been provided by a newly discovered contemporary film report 'on the reconstruction of the Bertramka'. For a long time, virtually no documentation of the building work that took place at that time was known to have existed. It was not until June 2018 that the leading German musicologist Manfred Hermann Schmid (University of Tübingen) made a very valuable discovery, thanks to studying the correspondence between his father, also a musicologist, and the latter's fellow musician in an amateur quartet, the professor of architecture in Munich Georg Buchner. In the material left by Buchner on his death, preserved in the Museum of Architecture of the Technical University in Munich, Schmid discovered more than 100 hitherto unknown drawings and building plans of the Bertramka from 1925 and 1941/1942. The music lover Buchner created them as part of his long-term project Mozart and Beethoven Sites in Salzburg, Prague, and Vienna, in which he also involved his architecture students. On the basis of this discovery, Schmid launched a research project in cooperation with Milada Jonášová from the Institute of Art History, Czech Academy of Sciences, which was supported by a Strategy AV21 grant. The outcomes of the project were an exhibition held in the Bertramka villa in cooperation with the Mozart Society in the Czech Republic, and a one-day international academic conference on Die Bertramka – ein deutscher Blick (1942), which took place in the Bertramka on the opening day of the exhibition. The results of all these activities are brought together in this book.

First Edition in German and English, Prague: Artefactum 2020



## Sudek a sochy

Hana Buddeus (ed.)

Josef Sudek (1896–1976) zachytil na fotografiích Prahy jedinečnou atmosféru města a také díky nezaměnitelným fotografickým zátiším se už za svého života stal uznávaným autorem jak v českém, tak mezinárodním kontextu. V jeho celoživotní fotografické práci lze i dnes objevovat dosud neznámé kapitoly, k nimž patří početné zakázky na fotografování uměleckých děl. Kniha se zaměřuje na Sudekovo milované téma – sochy. Tematické eseje doprovázejí celostránkové reprodukce, bohatě ilustrované jsou i medailonky nejdůležitějších zakazníků (umělců, spolků či nakladatelů), které odhalují nečekanou provázanost Sudekovy práce s dobovými uměleckými okruhy a tendencemi. Kniha odkrývá podstatné otázky spjaté s dějinami fotografie a sleduje proměňující se napětí mezi schopností fotografických reprodukcí přibližovat umění lidem a potenciálem fotografie obstát jako svébytné umělecké dílo.

*„Plastika je živá a musí být fotografována jako živá.“*

Josef Sudek (1957)

Texty: Hana Buddeus, Katarína Mašterová, Mariana Kubištová, Zuzana Krišková, Kateřina Doležalová, Martin Pavlis, Fedora Parkmann

První vydání v české a anglické mutaci, Praha 2020

# Sudek a sochy

## Sudek and Sculpture

Hana Buddeus (ed.)

From his panoramic views of Prague to his enigmatic still lifes and reflections in the misty window of his studio, photographer Josef Sudek captured the unique spirit of the Czech capital between the 1920s and 1970s. Already in his lifetime, Sudek enjoyed a worldwide reputation—and yet a substantial part of his practice, dedicated to photographing works of art, has remained largely unknown until now. This book shines a light on Sudek's most beloved topic—sculpture—which acted as a bridge between his fine art photography and his commercial work. Sumptuous full-page reproductions of Sudek's black-and-white photographs illustrate a series of thematic essays, focusing on the scope and legacy of his work; while cameos of the key people and institutions supporting his career reveal Sudek's rich connection to the artistic circles and tendencies of his day. Together, they uncover the shifting tension between the ability of photographs to bring art closer to the people and their potential as works of art in their own right, raising important questions for the history of photography.

*‘Sculpture is a living thing and must be photographed as if alive.’*

Josef Sudek (1957)

Texts: Hana Buddeus, Katarína Mašterová, Mariana Kubištová, Zuzana Krišková, Kateřina Doležalová, Martin Pavlis, Fedora Parkmann

First edition, in Czech and English, Prague 2020



## Obrazy nenávisti. Vizuální projevy antisemitismu ve střední Evropě

Jakub Hauser – Eva Janáčková (edd.)

Kolektivní monografie *Obrazy nenávisti* přináší jedenáct studií zabývajících se vizuálními projevy antijudaismu a antisemitismu ve střední Evropě od středověku po současnost. Publikace na základě dosud převážně neznámých materiálů hledá z různých perspektiv odpovědi na otázku, jaká byla role vizuality v rozvoji antisemitských nálad a v politických agendách podněcujících nenávist vůči Židům. Pole vizuálního antijudaismu a antisemitismu bylo a je velmi široké: od stereotypních zobrazení, které mohou své poselství skrývat za humoristickými obsahy, po jasně formulované útoky s cílem eskalovat nenávist vůči imaginárnímu kolektivnímu nepříteli – v obou případech s cílem vyloučit Židy z pomyslně monolitické majoritní společnosti a upevnit dělicí linii na „my“ a „oni“. Přes tematickou a metodologickou různorodost nabízí kniha souhrnnou představu o fenoménu vizuálního antijudaismu a antisemitismu a poskytuje bohatý komparativní materiál pro celý středoevropský region.

První vydání česky, 271 s., bar. obr., Praha: Artefactum 2020  
Kniha vychází zároveň česky a anglicky v nakladatelstvích Artefactum a De Gruyter

## Imagery of Hatred. Visual Antisemitism in Central Europe

Jakub Hauser – Eva Janáčková (eds)

In eleven contributions, *Imagery of Hatred: Visual Antisemitism in Central Europe* deals with visual manifestations of antisemitism in Central Europe from the Middle Ages to the present day. The publication, which presents heretofore largely unknown materials, seeks responses from diverse perspectives to the question of the role of visibility in the development of antisemitic moods and political agendas that encouraged hatred towards Jews. The scope of visual anti-Judaism and antisemitism always was and still is very wide: from stereotypical depictions that can conceal an underlying message through humorous content, to clearly formulated assaults that aim to escalate animosity towards an imaginary collective enemy. The goal in both these cases is the exclusion of Jews from the majority society imagined as a monolithic whole, and the reification of a dividing line between „us“ and „them“. With its wide thematic and methodological range, this book offers a comprehensive image of the phenomenon of visual anti-Judaism and antisemitism and provides rich comparative material for the entire Central European region.

First edition in Czech, Prague: Artefactum 2020  
This book was published in Czech and English versions in Artefactum publishing house and De Gruyter



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## V PŘÍŠTÍM ČÍSLE / IN NEXT ISSUE

**ČLÁNKY / ARTICLES** Ján Bakoš, *The End of Style?* | Anežka Mikulcová, *The Gravedigger by Josef Mánes: Personal Sorrow, Graveyard Reportages and Landscape of Mood in 19th Century Painting* | Ondřej Táborský, *Krásky v mlžném oparu. Erotický akt v pozdně socialistické reklamě*

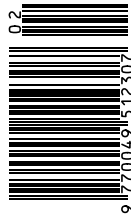
**ZPRÁVY / REPORTS** Filip Srovnal, *Das Eligiusfresko in der Nürnberger Moritzkapelle* | Jana Zapletalová – Martin Krumholz, *Newly Uncovered Wall Paintings by Carlo Innocenzo Carloni in the Main Staircase of the Clam-Gallas Palace in Prague*

**ARCHIV / ARCHIVES** Simona Binko – Marie Fiřtová, *„Aby ten náš mladý průmysl nezahynul!“ Josef Binko a jeho podpora Pražských uměleckých děl za První světové války*

**ROZHOVOR / INTERVIEW** Marie Rakušanová, *„Době její umění, umění jeho svobodu.“ Rozhovor s Petrem Wittlichem při příležitosti nového vydání knihy Česká secese*

**RECENZE / REVIEWS** Tomáš Gaudek, *Pavol Černý, Středověké a raně novověké iluminované rukopisy ve sbírkách Olomouce a Kroměříže* | Aleš Mudra, *Pavel Kroupa, Rostlinný dekor na českých stavbách 13. století* | Kateřina Kubínová, *Jiří Fajt, Nürnberg als Kunstzentrum des Heiligen Römischen Reichs. Höfische und städtische Malerei in der Zeit Kaiser Karls IV. 1346–1378* | Šárka Leubnerová, *Zuzana Štěpanovičová – Petr Tomášek, Fenomén / Phänomen Charlemont. Eduard, Hugo, Theodor* | Jitka Šosová, *Lenka Merglová Pánková – Jan Mergl, Jan Koula. Novorenesančník a vlastimil. Užité umění v tvorbě architekta 19. století* | Alexander Jeništa, *Jakub Hauser, Sans retour. Výtvarníci ruské emigrace v meziválečné Praze* | Marie Klimešová, *Pavlaína Morganová – Terezie Nekvindová – Dagmar Svatošová, Výstava jako médium / České umění 1957–1999*

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