

MOOD, MODERNISM, AND THE MUSEUM FOR ART AND INDUSTRY

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Who is Riegl? you ask. [...] Riegl, who was General Conservator for the Central Commission for the Research and Preservation of Art Monuments, died in 1905, after serving eleven years at the Austrian Museum [for Art and Industry]; he was destined to become its leader, which is why it did not come to pass. Hermann Bahr¹

It is difficult to imagine what might have become of the Museum [...] if [Riegl] had become its Director and had been able to create what he envisioned. No one understood this. After he left the Museum [1897] I had the opportunity to talk with him almost daily. He did not complain, but he was as unhappy as anyone can be, in spite of his successes as a scholar. "I have no more profession", he said to me regularly. Max Dvořák²

Who was Alois Riegl? The question posed by Hermann Bahr has always been difficult to answer. When Riegl died in 1905, he left few personal traces behind. No stash of correspondence, no memoirs; only some boxes of lecture notes for his courses at the University of Vienna. As a result, Riegl's legacy as one of the seminal art historians of the twentieth century has been founded upon his rich body of scholarly work; his path-breaking books, articles, and lecture notes need no discussion in this forum. Yet this symposium expands upon the answer to that question, and we now have a better understanding of how Riegl's influence in the cultural sciences extended far beyond his work as an art historian. Three examples suffice: Georg Vasold and Reinhard Johler have described Riegl's influence in the formation of European ethnology, and Eva Maria Höhle has demonstrated how Riegl contributed to the emerging theories and praxis of historical preservation.³ Clearly, Riegl's professional life had many dimen-

sions. From museum curator, to university professor, to the Commission for the Preservation of Historical Monuments, Riegl's career trajectory was outwardly a picture of both academic productivity and bureaucratic success in service of the Habsburg Empire.

But who was Riegl? The accounts by two people who knew Riegl personally, Hermann Bahr and Max Dvořák, raise some questions. What did Riegl mean by telling Dvořák that he "had no more profession" after leaving the Museum for Art and Industry in 1897? Why did Bahr believe that Riegl should have been the Museum's director? Why do both men suggest that Riegl was somehow deprived of a position at the Museum?⁴

A document in the Austrian State Archives helps answer these questions.⁵ In July 1900 Alois Riegl submitted a lengthy report to the Ministry of Culture and Education in Vienna. This report was intended to be an assessment of the "needs of the University Chair", yet the contents of this 15-page document probably surprised his superiors. The needs of his university chair, according to Riegl, involved nothing less than his return to the Austrian Museum for Art and Industry. This document lends credence to the claims

1 Hermann BAHR, *Expressionismus*, München 1916, 75f.: „Wer ist Riegl? fragt man da [...] Riegl, der 1905 [...] als Generalkonservator der Zentralkommission für Erforschung und Erhaltung der Kunstdenkmäler starb, nachdem er erst elf Jahre lang am österreichischen Museum gewirkt (dessen geborener Leiter er gewesen wäre, weshalb er es nicht wurde)“.

2 Max DVOŘÁK, Alois Riegl, in: Max DVOŘÁK, *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Kunstgeschichte*, München 1929, 289: „Man kann sich kaum ausdenken, was aus dem Museum geworden wäre, an dem er angestellt gewesen ist, wenn ihm vergönnt gewesen wäre, als Leiter dieses Museums das zu schaffen, was er schaffen wollte und konnte. Man hat es nicht verstanden. Ich hatte nach seinem Ausscheiden aus dem Museum Gelegenheit, fast täglich mit ihm zu reden. Er klagte nie [...], doch war er, einer der erfolgreichsten Forscher seiner Wissenschaft, damals so unglücklich und unzufrieden als nur möglich. „Ich habe keinen Beruf“, sagte er oft.“

3 Please consult the essays by Höhle, Johler and Vasold in this volume.

4 One of the very few discussions of Riegl's work at the Museum for Art and Industry can be found in Jan BIALOSTOCKI, *Museum Work and History in the Development of the Vienna School of Art History*, in: *Wien und die Entwicklung der kunsthistorischen Methode. Akten des XXV. Internationalen Kongresses für Kunstgeschichte* (Wien, 4.–10.9.1983), Wien/Köln/Graz 1985, Bd. I, 9–15.

5 Austrian State Archive, Allgemeines Verwaltungs Archiv, Ministerium für Cultus und Unterricht (AVA.CUM) Fasz. 4g (Universität Wien), 19887 (July 1900), „Dr Alois Riegl, a.a. o. ö. Professor der Kunstgeschichte an der Wiener Universität, berichtet über die Bedürfnisse seiner Lehrkanzel.“ Hereafter cited as Riegl, 19887.

of his friends: Riegl wanted to be named director of the Museum. More importantly, it allows us further insights into his emerging thinking about the relationship between museums and the state at the beginning of the twentieth century.

On the basis of this document I make three claims today. First, Riegl actively sought the position of Director of the Museum for Art and Industry in 1900. Although he chose a moment of crisis at the Museum to put himself forward, it is likely this had been his ambition since 1894, when he was first named to Rudolf von Eitelberger's chair of Art History at the University of Vienna. Second, Riegl wished to develop a more comprehensive approach to art history that combined the fine and the applied arts. He called this type of art history "practical art history", which he contrasted with the "theoretical" instruction at universities elsewhere in German-speaking central Europe. For Riegl, a practical art history was an empirically based alternative to the histories of "style" that dominated so much of art historical instruction. This too, was part of a set of ideas that Riegl had begun to articulate as early as 1894, when he began to complain about the excesses of scholarly art history. In addition, a practical art history addressed the total range of human creativity, not just the fine arts. Finally, Riegl's proposal addressed a third, highly unusual theme, the politics of aesthetics. By this I mean the increasingly important political and cultural functions of art institutions (such as museums) in the modern state, a phenomenon that Hermann Broch would later describe as the "museumish" (*das Museale*) in *fin-de-siècle* Vienna.⁶ Broch dismissed the museumish as a symptom of the value vacuum and the vegetative wealth of the declining Habsburg empire; Riegl made a strikingly similar observation three decades earlier here. This essay evaluates Riegl's ongoing preoccupation with the cultural vacuum created by the increasingly secularized scientific worldview. In an era of cultural crisis, Riegl understood the significance of art as a secular religion. For Riegl, work in the Museum was a potentially redemptive vocation that linked the spiritual crises of modernity with the needs of the modern state.⁷

Riegl hoped to channel the power of the state into deeper involvement in the *aesthetic education* of the modern man. His proposal in 1900 documents how he had be-

gun to develop a set of ideas surrounding his vision for the Museum for Art and Industry. Using terms he had developed in several essays before 1900 – affective value, historical value, and mood – he fashioned an argument that addressed the spiritual and political vacuum of modern life and the duty of the state to create new opportunities for spiritual renewal through art. Riegl understood the aestheticization of mass politics at the beginning of the twentieth century; he could not, however, have foreseen its consequences.

Crisis at the museum

Riegl submitted his proposal to the Ministry of Culture and Education in July 1900. The timing of this submission was significant, for in the summer of 1900 the Museum was at the center of a controversy surrounding its director, Arthur von Scala. Appointed as the Museum's third director in 1897, Scala had received the mandate to modernize the institution. The subsequent "Scala Affair", immortalized by Adolf Loos' essay of the same name (*Der Fall Scala*), centered on the debate between Secessionists, traditionalists, and other modernists concerning both the new aesthetic and the emergence of a uniquely Austrian style in Vienna.⁸ As Gottfried Fliedl has demonstrated, Arthur von Scala's "bureaucratic imposition of modernism" at the Museum was not quite modern enough for the Secessionists at the Museum's school of applied arts (*Kunstgewerbeschule*).⁹ Indeed, the controversy was so acrimonious that the museum and school, which had operated together since 1867, were separated in 1900. We know the contours of this debate fairly well; what might come as a surprise, however, is that Riegl took advantage of the Scala controversy to put himself forward as a solution to this crisis. He did this by suggesting that, as the occupant of Rudolf von Eitelberger's Chair of Art History at the University of Vienna, he was also entitled to the position of Director of the Austrian Museum for Art and Industry. This was in keeping with the precedent set by Eitelberger himself.

Riegl based his claim to the leadership of the Museum upon his appointment to Rudolf von Eitelberger's chair of Art History. Eitelberger died in 1885. The chair had been vacant for several years when Riegl was appointed to it as *extraordinarius* in 1894. When Riegl was promoted to *ordinarius* in 1897, however, he left the Museum. Now, three years later, Riegl claimed he had not left the Museum willingly and attempted to return as Eitelberger's legitimate successor.

6 Hermann BROCH, Hofmannsthal und seine Zeit, Frankfurt am Main 2001, 49: „Das Museale ist Vegetieren im Reichtum [...]“

7 For a discussion of the institutional infrastructure of Viennese modernism and the avant garde see Steven BELLER (ed.), Rethinking Vienna 1900, New York 2001, and Jeroen Bastiaan van HEERDE, Staat und Kunst: Staatliche Kunstförderung 1895–1918, Wien 1993.

8 Adolf LOOS, Der Fall Scala, in: Adolf Loos, Die Potemkinsche Stadt. Verschollene Schriften 1897–1933, Wien 1983, 29 ff.

9 Gottfried FLIEDL, Kunst und Lehre am Beginn der Moderne. Die Wiener Kunstgewerbeschule 1867–1918, Salzburg/Wien 1986, 136: „Die bürokratische Durchsetzung der Moderne“.

Eitelberger and “practical” art history

Rudolf von Eitelberger (1817–1885) was appointed to the first chair of Art History at the University of Vienna in 1853.¹⁰ As an adviser to the Emperor, Eitelberger was also an active participant in the emerging “exhibitionary complex” that had begun at the Crystal Palace in 1851.¹¹ After Eitelberger was named the first director of the new Austrian Museum for Art and Industry in 1863, he combined his university duties with museum work. For Riegl this was a distinctive characteristic of Eitelberger’s position that had created unique opportunities for “practical” instruction in art history at the University of Vienna. After 1863, Eitelberger’s students, including Riegl, had easy access both to works of fine art from the Imperial collections and the rapidly growing collection of applied arts at the Museum.¹² In Riegl’s opinion, Eitelberger’s unique status was confirmed in 1873, when a second chair of Art History at the University was established at the Austrian Institute for Historical Research.¹³ The occupant of this chair, Moriz von Thausing, had no corresponding museum duties.¹⁴ At that time, Riegl maintained, “theoretical and practical instruction in art history went their separate ways”.¹⁵ After 1873, therefore, Eitelberger modeled a unique applied art history that combined the educational missions of the Museum and the University. This, however, became increasingly difficult, even for an energetic and gifted man like Eitelberger:

In Eitelberger’s time the two assignments were as good as identical: contemporary production did not need anything more from the Museum than discovering and making the past accessible. In his later years, however, this changed; meeting the needs of artisans (and industrialists) became much harder.¹⁶

For Riegl, this explained why the University chair remained vacant after Eitelberger’s death in 1885: at the time there was a lack of qualified art historians able to combine these skills. Indeed, the Ministry of Education had specifically chosen Jacob von Falke, whom Riegl disdainfully described as a “non-professor” (*Nicht-Professor*), as Eitelberger’s successor at the Museum.¹⁷ Falke devoted his energies entirely to Museum affairs and, in Riegl’s opinion, instruction at the University suffered accordingly.

But this situation changed in 1894 when Riegl was appointed to Eitelberger’s

chair. Riegl interpreted this appointment to the “orphaned chair” (*die verwaiste Lehr-kanzel*)¹⁸ as proof of his ability to follow in Eitelberger’s footsteps:

Only in 1894 was the chair [of Art History], which had been empty since 1885, filled once more with the writer of this report, and this was the result of the nearly unanimous support of the philosophical faculty. [...] This same person [Riegl] had, since 1886, served as adjunct curator at the applied arts collection of the Imperial-Royal Austrian Museum for Art and Industry. As a result of this preparation and experience, it finally seemed possible once more to begin to systematically rebuild the practice of creating practical instruction on the basis of exposure to the original collections, a process that had been interrupted since 1885.¹⁹

Riegl argued that his appointment to Eitelberger’s chair included a specific mandate to reunite university instruction with the Museum’s collection.

Riegl clearly believed that he was entitled to greater respect at the Museum after 1894, but this attitude created problems with Jacob von Falke. Despite his professorship, Riegl received no corresponding promotion at the Museum and for the next three years he was involved in a number of conflicts with Falke. From Riegl’s point of view, Falke blocked him at every turn:

The writer [Riegl] of this report did his best to fulfill this assignment, and would have probably had substantive successes to report had he not, on one hand been deprived of a wider sphere of influence due to his low rank-

¹⁰ For Eitelberger and the formation of the Museum, see Kathrin POKORNY-NAGEL, Zur Gründungsgeschichte des k.k. österreichischen Museums für Kunst und Industrie, in: Peter NOEVER (Hrsg.), *Kunst und Industrie. Die Anfänge des Museums für Angewandte Kunst in Wien*, Wien 2000, 52–89.

¹¹ Tony BENNETT, *The Birth of the Museum*, London 1995. Bennett describes the exhibitionary complex as the institutions of exhibition, education, and display that emerged as forms of “soft” state power in the mid-nineteenth century. Both the new public museum and the disciplines of art history were part of this nexus of state power and public display.

¹² AVA.CUM; Riegl, 19887, 4.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 4 f.

¹⁴ For a discussion of Thausing’s role in the development of art history at the University of Vienna, see Artur ROSENAUER, Moriz Thausing und die Wiener Schule der Kunstgeschichte, in: *Wiener Jahrbuch für Kunstgeschichte XXXVI* (1983), 135–139.

¹⁵ AVA.CUM; Riegl, 19887, 5.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 6.

¹⁷ „[...] wurde auch seitens des hohen k.k. Unterrichts-Ministeriums ein Nicht-Professor zum neuen Director des genannten Museums bestellt“, *ibid.*, 6.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 7: „Erst im Jahre 1894 erfolgte die Besetzung der seit 1885 erledigten Lehrkanzel, über fast einstimmigen Vorschlag der philosophischen Fakultät, mit dem Gefertigten [...] Derselbe war seit 1886 als Custosadjunct an den kunstgewerblichen Sammlungen des k.k. österreichischen Museums für Kunst und Industrie thätig gewesen. Auf Grund solcher Kenntnisse und Vorarbeiten schien es schon damals möglich die praktische Unterweisung an der Hand der Originalsammlungen, die an der Universität seit 1885 [...] unterbrochen war, wieder planmäßig aufzunehmen.“

ing position as adjunct-curator and, on the other hand, been actively opposed and handicapped by the decidedly negative behavior of the leadership at that time.²⁰

Riegl believed himself to be Eitelberger's rightful heir. Falke had not only failed to respect this mandate, but had actively opposed Riegl's work. The feud between the two men was only resolved when Riegl resigned from the Museum in early 1897.²¹ For Riegl this was a serious setback:

[...] in the very moment in which he [Riegl] was on the verge of becoming enabled (from the perspective of the University) to assume his natural responsibilities [...] he was forced out of the fellowship of the Museum and obliged to sever the living relationship with his previously established research and instructional expertise.²²

This was a forced separation (*gezwungene Kaltstellung*) from the Museum. It was not only inconsistent with his position as Eitelberger's successor, but also a grave blow to his scholarship.²³

Riegl's report provides new evidence to support Dvořák's claim that Riegl had great ambitions for the Mu-

seum for Art and Industry. His attempt to secure control of the Museum for Art and Industry in 1900 took advantage of the ongoing "Scala Affair" as well, for in this report he positioned his claim within the immediate context of the Secessionist revolt at the Museum's School.²⁴ For him, the separation of museum and school had come as no surprise. As early as 1895, he had begun to claim that the Museum's efforts to shape contemporary production were misguided.²⁵ Scala's failure to maintain control of the school now begged the question: what would become of the Museum and its collections?

Riegl took advantage of this situation to promote himself. This was another reason to reunite the Museum with the University under Riegl's direction:

As long as the primary mission of the [...] Austrian Museum was based upon the man-date to influence contemporary production the merging of leadership with the University instruction might have been disadvantageous to both functions. Now, however we can take it a step further: the administration of the so-called "old collections" is difficult to unite with the needs of modern production.²⁶

Now that the Museum no longer had a man-date to influence public taste, its collections of applied arts could be used for instruction.

Although Riegl claimed the legacy of Eitelberger's dual role, he now admitted that the two tasks were fundamentally irreconcilable, a situation that had been resolved by the separation of museum and school in 1900.

Riegl now urged the Ministry of Education to correct the remaining problem of art historical instruction at the University: the separation between practical and theoretical training. Riegl asserted that "theoretical" art historians, who could recite the litany of successive styles (*theoretische Stilbegriffe*), still had very little experience with art objects. Riegl argued that practical instruction was now the most neglected aspect of art history. New generations of art historians were completing their university courses full of theoretical knowledge but lacking in practical connoisseurship. At a time when art historians were in more demand than ever, they were poorly trained. These new "theoretical" art historians perpetuated the excesses of scholarly culture Riegl mistrusted so thoroughly.²⁷ It was time, Riegl argued, to return Eitelberger's university chair to the basis of its

- 20 Ibid., 8: „Der Gefertigte hat auch diesen Aufträge nach bestem Können [...] Folge geleistet, und hätte darin wohl noch greifbarere Erfolge aufzuweisen gehabt, wenn er nicht einerseits durch den höchst bescheidenen Wirkungskreis, der ihm am österreichischen Museum in der untergeordneten Stellung eines Custosadjunkten gezogen war, andererseits durch eine entschieden ablehnende Haltung der damaligen Direction [...] in seiner Thätigkeit wesentlich behindert und eingeschränkt worden wäre.“ Cf., Margaret OLIN, *Forms of Representation in Alois Riegl's Theories of Art*, University Park, 1992, fn. 3, 195. Olin describes a letter from Riegl protesting his designation of "custos-adjunct" in 1895 (Archive of the MAK, 1895/720).
- 21 Riegl's correspondence with Otto Benndorf chronicles several years of conflicts with Falke and describes the final insult that precipitated his resignation. In December 1896, Falke had not invited Riegl (as custom dictated) to the annual Christmas party with the Museum's aristocratic patron, Archduke Rainer, cf. *Austrian National Library, Handschriftensammlung, Nachlaß Otto Benndorf*. Riegl, Alois, an Otto Benndorf: H 82/54 Nr. 21. 657/3–14, Letter dated 25 February 1897.
- 22 AVA.CUM; Riegl, 19887, 9.: „[...] in dem Augenblicke, da er [der Gefertigte, i.e. Riegl] durch eine Ernennung zum Ordinarius [...] von Seiten der Universität erst recht in die Bedingungen zur Erfüllung seiner natürlichen Aufgabe eingesetzt worden ist, aus dem Verbanne des österr. Museums und damit zugleich aus dem lebendigen Zusammenhange mit dem von ihm bis dahin ausschliesslich gepflegten Arbeits- und Unterrichtskreise ausscheiden musste.“
- 23 Riegl does not mention Scala by name in his report, but refers to the separation of museum and school as the end of the museum's mandate to influence contemporary manufacturing. Cf. *ibid.*, 9 f.
- 24 For Arthur von Scala (1846–1909) see Johannes WIENINGER, *Er brachte viel Eigenartiges und Notwendiges mit*, in: NOEVER (footnote 10 above), 164–174.
- 25 In other locations I have described this as Riegl's rejection of monumentalist art history in the tradition of Nietzsche. See Diana REYNOLDS, *Vom Nutzen und Nachteile des Historismus für das Leben*, in: NOEVER (footnote 10 above), 20–29.
- 26 AVA.CUM; Riegl, 19887, 14: „Solange der Hauptaufgabe des k.k. österreichischen Museums in der Einflussnahme auf die aktuelle Produktion im Kunstgewerbe besteht, würde eine Vereinigung seiner Leitung mit dem Kunstgeschichtlichen Unterrichte nur zum Nachtheile beider Functionen ausschlagen. [...] Man wird aber noch weiter gehen dürfen: [...] die Verwaltung der sogenannten ‚alten Sammlungen‘ ist mit der Aufgabe einer überwiegenden Beschäftigung mit der modernen Production schwer vereinbar.“
- 27 Cf. Alois RIEGL, „Late Roman or Oriental?“, in: Gert SCHIFF (ed.), *German Essays on Art History*, New York 1988, 190. Cf. REYNOLDS (footnote 25 above). Riegl's description of academic excess was similar to Nietzsche's critique of Apollonian science in "The Birth of Tragedy".

existence as the chair for *practical* Art History in all of Austria.²⁸

But what did Riegl mean by practical art history? He defined it in part as an expansion of the art historical canon. In particular, Riegl wanted to expand the definition of the art object to include the applied arts. Practical art history, in his view, meant a rigorous analysis of both the “fine” and the “applied” arts. His proposal of 1900 documented his ongoing concern for inverting the hierarchy of art historical scholarship, which was dominated by the scholars who concentrated on the fine arts. Thus, in addition to his claim to be Eitelberger’s rightful heir, Riegl’s attempt to take over the Museum also developed out of his expertise with the ornamental and applied arts.

The applied arts had enormous untapped potential for the future of art history. For many years Riegl had suggested that the scholarly separation between the fine and applied arts was a serious methodological error. In some of his earliest university lectures on the History of Ornament (1890), he argued that the false separation between the high and the applied arts was one of the most “deeply-rooted mistakes and misunderstandings that had originated in the teaching of art history”.²⁹ The scholarly and institutional separation between a painting of the Madonna (regarded as “fine art”) and a majolica vase (“applied art”) was a linguistic convenience, but inadequate for both understanding the problem of art in the human experience and developing a scholarly and empirical art history.³⁰ He criticized the practices that assigned the Madonna to an art museum and the majolica to the applied arts museum, “even though both might have been painted by the same [...] artist”.³¹ In these lectures Riegl argued that the artistic impulse (*Kunsttrieb*) for both objects was the same, only scholars’ way of looking at them was different.³² In 1890, the *Kunsttrieb* was a protean formulation, but in this instance, Riegl used it as a device to bridge the gulf that separated the fine arts from the applied arts in the minds of scholars. He would continue to use this heuristic device to push beyond the constraints of accepted scholarly norms; the *Kunsttrieb* of 1890 eventually developed into his famous neologism *Kunstwollen*.³³ Indeed these neologisms (*Kunsttrieb/Kunstwollen*) were Riegl’s attempt to create a unified approach to the fine and applied arts. What matters in this context, however, is Riegl’s attempt to challenge scholarly art history as practiced among “theoretical” scholars in the 1890s. He

reminded his students that the apparent division between high and applied art was a fiction embedded in the discipline.³⁴ Riegl wanted nothing less than to invert the linguistic, mental, and institutional structures that shaped art history. His position as Eitelberger’s heir and his vision for a more comprehensive art history were two justifications for his bid for control of the Museum for Art and Industry in the summer of 1900.

Riegl argued passionately on behalf of his ability to administer the collections. Now that the Museum was free from its burden to shape contemporary production its resources could be used in other ways. With an outstanding record of publications, thirteen years’ of experience at the Museum, and the authority of Eitelberger’s chair, Riegl asserted that he was the best-qualified candidate in “all of Germany and Austria” to take control of the Museum.³⁵ The time had come to regain the losses incurred since 1885 by placing the Museum’s collections under one hand, a hand that was freed from the burdens of contemporary production and able to create a centralized location for art historical instruction.³⁶ These ideas were never realized, and as Dvořák later wrote, we can “only imagine” what might have become of the Museum if Riegl had been able to do what he wanted.

Yet in concluding his report Riegl went beyond his project for a practical art history. In the final pages of the document he ventured into new territory and began to describe the value of the collections from a contemporary political and spiritual point of view. Here he began to articulate the themes that Margaret Olin has described as the formulation of a quasi-religious stance, or “state religion”, in the cult of monuments.³⁷ Control of the Museum was not only about better training for art historians, it was also about political and cultural values. Riegl framed his plea for a “practical” art history within the wider phenomena of the growth of historical consciousness in the nineteenth century and the political and economic significance of art to the

28 AVA.CUM, Riegl, 19887, 12.

29 Alois RIEGL, Nachlaß (Institut für Kunstgeschichte der Universität Wien); Karton I, Geschichte der Ornamentik I (1890), 1.

30 Ibid., 8.

31 Ibid., 9.

32 Ibid., 6.

33 Elsewhere I have discussed the possible origin of the word “Kunsttrieb” in the work of Arthur Schopenhauer. For a discussion of the “Kunstwollen” in relationship to Riegl’s feud with Jacob von Falke, see Diana REYNOLDS, *Semper, Semperianismus und Stilfragen. Riegls “Kunstwollen” als Beispiel der “Wiener Mitte”*, in: Rainald FRANZ/Andreas NIERHAUS (Hrsg.), *Gottfried Semper und Wien. Die Wirkung des Architekten auf Wissenschaft, Industrie und Kunst*, Wien 2007, 117–134.

34 Alois RIEGL, Nachlaß (Institut für Kunstgeschichte der Universität Wien); Karton I, Geschichte der Ornamentik I (1890), 21.

35 AVA.CUM, Riegl, 19887, 12.

36 Ibid., 12–14.

37 See Margaret OLIN, *The Cult of Monuments as a State Religion in late 19th-century Austria*, in: *Wiener Jahrbuch für Kunstgeschichte* XXXVII (1985), 177–198.

masses.³⁸ Riegl was clear about the political importance of art history and had begun to articulate this theme in his small book on the folk arts in 1894, where he outlined two principles that he believed should direct state policy in museum affairs.³⁹ These he called “historical value” and “affective value”. The categories he developed for the folk arts in 1894 carried over into his program for the Museum in 1900.

Historical value, affective value, and mood

In his small book on the folk arts (1894), Riegl had already proposed that “historical value” applied to all aspects of peasant material culture.⁴⁰ Insofar as all art objects were also historical objects, the folk arts were also remnants of more primitive economic and technological conditions in Europe. They were valuable as evidence of discrete and unrepeatable historical phases in human history. For him this meant that – aesthetic value aside – the folk arts served as testimonies to human development. They documented both the evolution of human modes of production and the continual variation of ornament. While others had begun to celebrate the aesthetic qualities of the folk arts in the early 1890s, Riegl dismissed many of those enthusiasms as passing fashions. Riegl believed that it was the historical value of the folk arts, and not the dictates of fashion, that merited state attention and intervention. His sense of urgency on this point was palpable. Writing in 1895, he warned that the folk arts were on the brink of extinction in the face of expanding industrial and capitalist modes of production. He lamented that too much had been lost already, particularly through the “misguided” and “deceptive” efforts of some of his colleagues at the Museum to revive the rural folk arts through regional craft schools.⁴¹ Despite the widespread enthusiasm for the folk arts, he lamented, “up until this point practically nothing has been done to preserve their many forms through [scholarly] literature or reproductions”.⁴² Government intervention in this realm was absolutely necessary. Riegl suggested that it was the state’s “duty to its peoples” to “erect a monument” to their pasts

before they disappeared completely.⁴³ This was particularly true in the multi-national Habsburg Empire. Riegl called for state support in the form of non-partisan scholarship for all the peoples of the Dual Monarchy and reminded his superiors that there was a political benefit to this as well as a scholarly one.

In contrast, the “affective value” of the folk arts was not scholarly at all. Riegl described affective value as an emotional state, similar to a religious or national feeling. Affective value was that which evoked emotions of piety and reverence.⁴⁴ But for Riegl, affective value contributed to what he called the “moral capital” of humanity. Moral capital gave human life and social structures shape and meaning, “one of the imponderables of human existence that, like religion and nationality, dwells in the hearts of men and whose possession shapes their moral direction”.⁴⁵ Riegl’s turn to moral values was a surprising approach for a rigorous scholar. Even more surprising was his pessimism about the present state of this “moral capital”. “Every day”, he wrote, “another portion of this moral capital crumbles and disappears without a trace in the tidal wave that is engulfing western culture.”⁴⁶ Although his thoughts were not yet fully developed, we see a trajectory beginning to take shape: the duty of the state to provide moral direction and spiritual reflection (*Andacht*) through its ability to control institutions of art scholarship and display. Historical value and affective value were therefore both important to the state, but for different reasons.

The relationship between historical and affective value continued to preoccupy Riegl. In 1899, his essay on “mood” considered the problem of reverence in modern life.⁴⁷ In this essay Riegl described a “spiritual pessimism” in western culture that was an outcome of the scientific world view. This new world view represented a general loss of spiritual comfort through the triumph of materialist and causal philosophy: a disenchantment of the natural world. In this condition, with no hope in outside redemption, moderns sought solace in new forms of inwardness that Riegl described as “mood”. Riegl now theorized that the new significance of mood in modern art was a substitute for the religious feelings of old.

In this way he championed the modernist aesthetic with its impressionistic style, and emancipation from categories of beauty.

This short meditation on *mood/Stimmung* is one of the most important and most underrated of Riegl’s essays. He is deeply concerned about the spiritual condition of modern man, which finds expression in the need for mood. The modern *Kunstwollen* was conditioned by this need. In addition, histori-

38 AVA.CUM, Riegl, 19887, 11.

39 Alois RIEGL, *Volkskunst, Hausfleiß und Hausindustrie*, Berlin 1894.

40 For a comprehensive discussion of this book, see Georg VASOLD, *Alois Riegl und die Kunstgeschichte als Kulturgeschichte*, Freiburg im Breisgau 2004.

41 RIEGL (footnote 39 above) 58, 73.

42 *Ibid.*, 72.

43 *Ibid.*, 82.

44 *Ibid.*, 78–79.

45 *Ibid.*, 79.

46 *Ibid.*

47 Alois RIEGL, *Die Stimmung als Inhalt der modernen Kunst*, in: Alois RIEGL, *Gesammelte Aufsätze*, Wien 1996, 27–37.

cal value and age value both served to elicit a similar sense of mood. In his report of 1900, Riegl linked these ideas to his new vision of the role of the Museum in modern life. True, its “old collections” were no longer relevant to contemporary production. Neither was their relative beauty (or lack thereof) an important issue. What did matter, however, was how they could continue to provide the masses with an experience of history, reverence, and mood:

If the old art monuments have lost their significance for contemporary production, our generation is nevertheless fully conscious that reflection on previous stages of human culture is an unavoidable necessity and the characteristic need of our time; historical contemplation is both an intellectual motivation and, at the same time, it provides a means of greater moral and personal improvement.⁴⁸

Riegl's social and moral agenda

Riegl's vision for the Museum combined the realms of the moral, spiritual, and political. His overarching scholarly ambition aside forming a basis for practical instruction in art history at the University of Vienna included all the art objects in the Museum. They had no immediate utilitarian use but they could still inspire contemplation and contribute to human refinement. The Museum was more than a repository for old objects and an instructional tool; it was a place that created space for affective values: mood and reverence. Riegl understood how politics, aesthetics, and mass culture were merging at the beginning of the twentieth century. The objects in a Museum still called out to the observer, and the art historian was the one to mediate their power (*werbende Kraft*)⁴⁹ to the public. This was what Riegl understood as his true profession and the responsibility attached to Eitelberger's chair.

This insight into Riegl's passion is a healthy correcture to our received notions of Riegl as a sober, neutral, and disinterested scholar. Here we see a man who not only appreciated the crisis of European culture at the beginning of the twentieth century, but also envisioned history, art, and politics as components of a state religion for the masses.

The Ministry of Culture and Education declined Riegl's proposal. While Riegl had carefully avoided mentioning Scala by name (his argument had not been with Scala anyway), his readers were disturbed by his “indirect criticism” of Scala and the scholarly apparatus already in place at the Museum.⁵⁰

Because Riegl based his claim on the need for greater practical instruction, his superiors, rather than fulfill Riegl's request, granted some additional funding for materials and instructional supplies, thereby making his instruction “more practical”.

While Riegl's attempt to gain control of the Museum was unsuccessful, his proposal provides some new insight into his career at the Museum for Art and Industry. His rivalry with Jacob von Falke was shaped by his belief that, as heir to Eitelberger's chair, he was entitled to more influence in Museum affairs and more respect. Rejected, humiliated, and forced out of the Museum in 1897, Riegl was never completely happy at the University of Vienna either. Despite his prestige as a university professor, Riegl's report described his work at the university in terms of victimization and disappointment.⁵¹ This archival material now supports the claims of Bahr and Dvořák: Riegl wanted to be reinstated at the Museum for Art and Industry. While venerated by successive generations of scholars as one of the finest academic art historians of his age, Riegl's report in 1900 suggests that, given the choice, he would have preferred being remembered as the Director of the Austrian Museum for Art and Industry.

Riegl never obtained his heart's desire, the leadership of the Austrian Museum for Art and Industry. Why did he want it so? Because he viewed the exhibitionary complex as a set of institutions in which the spiritual, intellectual, and political challenges of his time came together. The historical culture of the nineteenth century had created a public interested in both art and history and supported the formation of new institutions and new academic disciplines such as art history. The new mass enthusiasm for old things reflected a shift away from a theological universe. A museum was one location where objects from the past contributed to feelings of devotion and piety, not only as a repository with antiquarian value, but also as source for affective value in the present. The Museum had an important political and social function that now made its old mandate of 1863, to improve manufacturing, seem irrelevant by comparison. For a brief period of time at the beginning of the twentieth century, a

48 AVA.CUM; Riegl, 19887, 11: „Haben die alten Kunstdenkmäler an Interesse für das aktuelle Kunstschaffen verloren, so ist unsere Generation zu desto klarerem Bewusstsein darüber gelangt, daß die Reflexion über die bisherigen Entwicklungsstadien der menschlichen Kultur ein unentbehrliches und charakteristisches Bedürfnis unserer Zeit ausmacht, und daß in der historischen Betrachtung allein schon ein geistiges Reizmittel und zugleich ein veredelndes Bildungsmittel gelegen ist [...]“

49 Ibid.

50 AVA.CUM; Riegl, 19887; Einsichtsbogen, 1, dated July 1900.

51 AVA.CUM; Riegl 19887; 9: “gezwungene Kaltstellung”. Riegl also suggests that Wickhoff took the more popular courses on the Italian Renaissance for himself, leaving the less popular courses (such as the Baroque) for Riegl.

museum director could be the high priest in the emerging religions of history and art.

Who was Riegl? Among other things, Riegl understood the museum impulse of his time and, for a while at least, he was disappointed that the Museum Directorship eluded him. Perhaps his appointment to the Commission for the Preservation of Historical Monuments in 1902 compensated for this loss. More importantly, however, Riegl was fully aware of the new influence of the public museum in modern life; he described the “museumish” in Vienna as a new manifestation of an ancient human need. Finally, Riegl recognized the influence and power of the exhibitionary complex. These new institutions merged aesthetics and politics in an age of cultural crisis. Riegl wanted to be at the center of that world.