

## Faith and Religion in Central European Art & Architecture (Vienna, 24–25 Sep 20)

Belvedere Gallery, Vienna, Sep 24–25, 2020

Deadline: Mar 20, 2020

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One of the most marked aspects of 20th century modernism was the search for the spiritual. Figures such as Kandinsky, Mondrian, Kupka and Feininger all saw their practice as a quest for forms that might give visible form to mystical and spiritual absolutes.

This has long been a recognised part of the landscape of modern art and architecture. A much less examined feature has been the involvement of organised religions, particularly churches, in modernist practice, after the First World War. Indeed, between 1918 and 1939 churches acted as one of the most powerful ideological and cultural-political forces in central Europe. Not only the Catholic Church, but also the various orthodox and evangelical churches, gave impetus to the demand for a revival of 'spiritual' values, or helped mobilise 'spiritual' values in furtherance of political and ideological ends.

In Austria, Czechoslovakia and Hungary, faith-driven intellectuals had a powerful voice in the cultural and philosophical arena, while in both Austria and Hungary, the idea of a 'Christian' nation became official government policy. In Czechoslovakia, too, President T. G. Masaryk may have been critical of Catholicism, but nevertheless saw the state as a spiritual and religious mission.

Histories of interwar modernism have been reluctant to address the creative practices that emerged out of this set of concerns. Dismissed as largely reactionary – Joseph Rykwert famously referred to the 'dark side of modernism' – they have been generally ignored, in favour of intense interest in avant-garde practices. Yet although often informed by deeply conservative cultural and political values, some of the most prominent interwar artists and architects in central Europe, such as Josef Gočár, Josef Sudek, Carry Hauser, Aladár Árkay, and Clemens Holzmeister, were involved in religiously motivated projects.

A collaboration between the Belvedere Gallery and the Department of Art History of Masaryk University Brno, this workshop considers how we might analyse such works.

Confirmed keynote speaker: Cynthia Paces

Speakers will be encouraged to consider the following questions:

- How should we approach religious works of art and architecture in the twentieth century - especially in central Europe?
- What is their place in the narrative of central European modernism?
- Does their association with sometimes reactionary social and aesthetic visions entitle us to dis-

miss them, or do they merit more extensive consideration?

- If they are taken seriously, what is the impact of their inclusion on the larger map of modernism, not only in central Europe but more generally?

Proposals (up to 300 words) for a 30-minute paper should be sent to: [craace@muni.cz](mailto:craace@muni.cz)

Reference:

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