

Erasures and Eradications in Viennese Modernism

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Deadline: Sep 15, 2020

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During the last three decades Viennese Modernism has exploded in popular culture and academia: in countless exhibitions dedicated to painting, architecture, and the applied arts, in myriad books on every well-known Viennese designer, and in the “Klimtomania” that covers umbrellas, scarves and shopping bags. Yet the popularity of Viennese Modernism and the commercial “Vienna 1900” industry simultaneously obscures a problematic series of historical erasures and gaps. All too often, the glittering culture of “Vienna 1900” is studied in isolation from the political exigencies of 1938 and thereafter. This volume interrogates the neglect and repression of specific figures, organizations and movements that have faded in the shadow of larger Viennese superstars and a now familiar narrative. *Erasures and Eradications in Viennese Modernism* therefore seeks to widen the field of artists, exhibitions and interpretive issues surrounding the heyday of Viennese modernism, from 1890 to the Anschluss and beyond.

This volume departs from the well-worn chronological contours of Viennese Modernism, moving beyond the now iconic narrative of “Vienna 1900”—largely focused on the story of the holy trinity of Klimt-Schiele-Kokoschka as intrepid geniuses who challenged a conservative artistic-cultural status quo—to examine lesser-known artists, exhibitions, and movements connected to the Vienna Secession, Klimt Group and other modernist leagues. Taking inspiration from the Klimt Group’s ideal of “All Those Who Appreciate and Enjoy Art”—a radical redefinition of art and art-making defying conventional definitions of active and passive creation—our volume positions collectors, patrons and the interested public as active co-producers in shaping fin-de-siècle Vienna’s vibrant cultural scene. Our volume forges connections between the fin-de-siècle and interwar Vienna, which continued to be marked by experimental, avant-garde movements (such as Kineticism, a synthesis of formal developments in Expressionism, Cubism, and Futurism through which practitioners visualized inner experiences and emotional states through abstract ornamental forms) and intense contacts with other urban centers in the successor states and beyond. In the applied arts, the volume probes the dynamic output of the postwar Wiener Werkstätte, commercial design workshops predominated by women during and after the Great War, as well as other lesser-known workshops in which practitioners experimented with expressionist, cubist and primitivist principles of design.

The collected research of this volume argues that the popularity of the “Vienna 1900” industry so central to museum bookstores and the Austrian tourist industry until today is deeply connected to the political exigencies of 1933, 1938 and 1945. Indeed, the

seemingly safe, apolitical image of high culture and art so central to the postwar Austrian identity — a land of mountains, music, art, and Sachertorte — was carefully retouched to remove references to Vienna's troublesome Nazi past. After the Anschluss, Austria's annexation into the Third Reich, leading members of the Vienna Moderns presided over the Nazification and "de-Jewification" of Viennese artistic institutions like the Secession, Austrian Werkbund, Künstlerhaus and art academies. In the past decade there has been a welcome re-examination of these issues in German-language scholarship, including numerous books, exhibitions and symposia. These include, for example, texts addressing the "buried history" of institutions like the Künstlerhaus, scholarship on popular exhibitions of less lauded artists, and monographs on neglected and exiled artists. We hope our contributions will build on these important revisions, while illuminating other areas and artists for both the English speaking and global readership. The image of Viennese Modernism still promoted in many museum exhibitions today must come to terms with its disturbing Nazi connections and the erasure of Secessionist Vienna's significant Jewish roots, to make room for other artists, institutions, and histories of Viennese Modernism that are at once challenging, exhilarating, surprising and heartbreaking.

Erasures and Eradications in Viennese Modernism welcomes contributions from scholars representing a variety of disciplinary backgrounds and methodological approaches but, above all, seeks essays centering on the visual arts, design, and architecture. Unlike previous edited volumes on Vienna 1900 — interdisciplinary studies of developments in literature, philosophy, café culture, psychology — the present volume focuses exclusively on developments in painting, sculpture, and the decorative and applied arts from an inter- and multidisciplinary perspective.

Potential topics might include, but are not limited to:

- Understudied artists (particularly women and/or those of Jewish descent) and/or movements (such as Kineticism and the child art movement)
- Alternative or contested historiographies of Viennese art from the fin-de-siècle to the present
- Viennese artistic institutions (including artist leagues, exhibitions and schools) and cultural life under Austro-Fascism, National Socialism, and in the immediate postwar period
- Artists suffering persecution and/or exile under National Socialism
- Cultural patronage and dealer networks/ male and female patrons as active 'co-producers'
- Relationships between Vienna and other urban centers under the monarchy and successor states
- The 19th-century "prehistory" of Viennese Modernism (including points of continuity between historicism and Secessionism; the re-discovery of the Biedermeier period as a predecessor to modernist values and aesthetics; and connections to other painters/movements appropriated as precedents; and/or other neglected sources of influence)
- the largely Jewish background of the Josef Frank circle and their distinctly Viennese variant of interior design, Wiener Wohnkultur
- Application to the visual arts of new theories and approaches which challenge Schorske's interpretations
- Art historical erasures and postwar Austrian "amnesia" surrounding the first victim myth
- Interpretations or use of the art of Vienna 1900 in the context of current Austrian politics
- Other areas of eradication or obliteration

Potential contributors should send a 300 word abstract, brief bio and curriculum vitae as a single pdf document to Megan Brandow-Faller mmf34@georgetown.edu and Laura Morowitz laura.morowitz@gmail.com by September 15 2020.

Final essays are limited to 6,000 words and may include up to four black-and-white images. Completed essays will be due June 1 2021. Pending acceptance of the final project, the volume is slated to appear with a leading academic press with a strong reputation in visual studies.

Please direct any inquiries to Megan Brandow-Faller, Associate Professor of History at the City University of New York/Kingsborough, at mmf34@georgetown.edu and Laura Morowitz, Professor of Art History at Wagner College, laura.morowitz@gmail.com

Reference:

CFP: Erasures and Eradications in Viennese Modernism. In: Arthist.net, May 31, 2020 (accessed Apr 26, 2024), <<https://arthist.net/archive/23167>>.