

Intellectual History Review, German Art and Visual Culture, 1848–1919

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[x-post H-Ideas]

Special Issue (2 / 2007)

Intellectual History Review

"An Empire of Vision: German Art and Visual Culture, 1848-1919"

New journal to Routledge, Intellectual History Review, marks its second issue of the current volume by publishing a special issue titled 'An Empire of Vision: German Art and Visual Culture, 1848-1919'.

Volume 17, issue 2, 2007 contains the following articles:

Portrait of the Artist as an Arabesque: Romantic Form and Social Practice in Wilhelm von Schadow's *The Modern Vasari*

Cordula Grewe

Abstract:

In 1854, the German painter Wilhelm von Schadow published *The Modern Vasari: Reminiscences of an Artistic Life*, which mixes hagiography, historiography, art theory, and reflections on aesthetics, with comments on the social, political and economic conditions of modern art production. The choice of this Romantic form of writing was congenial to Schadow's purpose, as reflections on the relationship between word and image are crucial to his autobiographical art history. To this end, the essay first elucidates how Schadow's novel is indeed Romantic in the Schlegelian sense and was understood in this way by his contemporaries. It then proceeds to Schadow's conception of poesy and visual imagination, and examines the interaction of word and image in his notion of painting as language. A third step contrasts Schadow's art theory with artistic practices popular among Düsseldorf artists, notably the arabesque in Düsseldorf's print culture and the staging of 'living pictures.' Although Schadow considered these practices minor, he made them central to the plot and structure of *The Modern Vasari*. This cross-examination of Schadow's text reveals internal contradictions between his theory of painting, which argues from

a traditional position of genre hierarchy, and the support he granted to lower and newer artistic practices out of consideration for economic necessity.

The Modernity of History Painting: The Case of Adolph Menzel

Hubertus Kohle

Abstract:

In the context of the rise of modernism in the nineteenth century, history painting has consistently been denounced as backward and old-fashioned in two respects: as a genre that derives its subject matter from the past and as one that no longer acts in accordance with the spirit of its time. The avant-garde has always been construed as a thoroughly French phenomenon, and while the German contribution had certainly found acceptance as important in the area of Romanticism, subsequent developments in German art tended to be viewed as predominantly provincial by comparison. But by studying more closely artistic discussions and practices in Berlin during the post-Romantic period, it can be shown that Germans, too, addressed important problems of artistic modernization and ultimately worked through those aspects central to the phenomenon of history's temporalization and thus key to the modern period *per se*.

Eduard Grützner's Munich Villa and the German Renaissance

Sabine Wieber

Abstract:

In 1884, Germany's leading illustrated weekly magazine, the *Leipziger Illustrierte Zeitung*, published an article on the genre painter Eduard Grützner's recently completed residence in the Bavarian capital of Munich. The article opens with a set of seven xylographic vignettes that presented the building's historicist façade as well as six of its interior spaces, and the opulent nature of these interiors indicates Grützner's elevated status in the socio-economic fabric of late nineteenth-century Munich's art world. Any discussion of the complex interactions between late nineteenth-century design practices and modern identity must take into account Germany's social, political and economic landscape, and placed within this specific context, the visual and textual representation of Grützner's interiors in the *Leipziger Illustrierte Zeitung* elucidate some of the often-veiled mechanisms that contributed to the politicization of German culture during the first two decades of the young German Empire. The revival of a Renaissance past in German design practices should thus be understood as an active reworking of this past to accommodate particular forms of self-representation anchored in Germany's new social, political and economic realities.

Popularizing The Orient In Fin De Siècle Germany

Suzanne Marchand

Abstract:

There is a fundamental question underlying the whole conception of 'orientalism': namely whether there was - even within the bounds of one European nation - a unified 'discourse on the Orient'. Taking Germany as a case study, it turns out that orientalists' attempts to create and dominate a 'discourse on the Orient' ultimately failed, due to internal contradictions in their plans, and to an understudied aspect of German cultural history, the flourishing of the fin de siècle cultural marketplace. But it is also the case that one does not in fact need to have either a unified discourse, or a generalized 'culture', to prove that German studies of and entanglements with the Orient were a significant part of fin de siècle cultural politics. Even if German 'Orientalism' is not reducible to one coherent set of images and discursive acts, we can learn a great deal about the Wilhelmine world by focusing attention on it.

Royally Entertained: Visual Culture And The Experience Of Monarchy In Wilhelmine Prussia

Eva Giloi

Abstract:

In 1877, Emperor Wilhelm I opened the Hohenzollern Museum, an exhibitionary space dedicated to the history of the Prussian monarchy, intended to highlight the Hohenzollerns' military and political prowess. But the public's experience of the Hohenzollern Museum did not coincide directly with the monarchy's self-conscious representation of itself. In investigating this question, four basic types of 'visuality' must be distinguished: the didactic, the panoptic, the kaleidoscopic, and the mesmeric. The 'slippage' of the Hohenzollern image out of the monarchy's control was ultimately encouraged by the Hohenzollern Museum, because in choosing the mesmeric visuality over all others in their descriptions of the museum, the writers of the popular press invited their readers to share in, identify with, but also appropriate the monarchy as their own. Rather than a straightforward example of a deep-seated subservient mentality, the popularity of the museum is an example of the friction and negotiability inherent in its displays. It shows that the monarchy's appeal depended on the extent to which it allowed its meaning to be determined by a subjective projection of the public's own identity. In appropriating the image of the monarchy as its own, the public participated in defining, and circumscribing, the monarchy's exercise of power. In this way, the cultural practices and habits encouraged by the

museum contributed to the subterranean, but significant, basis for overt political action.

Reference:

TOC: Intellectual History Review, German Art and Visual Culture, 1848-1919. In: ArtHist.net, Oct 2, 2007 (accessed Dec 24, 2025), <<https://arthist.net/archive/29700>>.