

Anthology – Expressionist Art History

Kimberly Smith

Recent years have witnessed a growing interest in the history of art history as a discipline, particularly in the work of German-speaking founders such as Alois Riegl. There is now a solid corpus of scholarship in which the texts of Riegl, Erwin Panofsky, and members of the Vienna School of art history have been thoughtfully considered both on their own terms and in relation to the subsequent development of the discipline. Occasionally in the literature, one finds passing references to a so-called expressionist art history tradition, evidenced in certain German language art historical texts published between approximately 1905 and 1925. While the rationale behind this descriptor is rarely pursued, the term seems to be used to indicate the explicitly subjective stance found in such writing.

However, whereas we are familiar with the heightened emotions and formal liberties taken by expressionist painting, poetry, and theater during this period, the notion of an expressionist scholarship remains unfamiliar to most, particularly those working in the English language. Art historians such as Max Dvorák, Fritz Burger, Ernst Heidrich, Friedrich Rintelen and Wilhelm Worringer worked at a moment in which the foundations of art history as a discipline were laid by intellectuals working in German and Austrian academies. Yet even though the "expressionists" were active during this crucial formative period, and all had successful academic careers with positions in respected art history programs, their work has been virtually ignored by current scholars interested in art history's own history. The exception is Worringer, who has received quite a bit of attention, yet even he is usually regarded as a deviant figure, of interest more because of the impact his writing had on contemporary artists than for any value inherent to his scholarship itself. Rintelen, Burger, and Heidrich have never been translated and are unknown to most English-speaking art historians. Even Dvorák, who played such a significant role in the Vienna School, has, with one or two exceptions, hardly registered in recent historiographic accounts.

This oversight remains puzzling, if only because historiography has become such a popular subject of study in recent years. Perhaps this neglect stems from a sense that the expressionists' analyses seem too personal and effusive to be considered legitimate examples of art history. We ignore these texts to our own detriment, however, in part because they seem to

derive their methods from many of the same sources which informed more normative practices of art history, and thus this marginalized branch of art history has something to teach us about the development of the discipline and its defining ideologies. This projected anthology intends to enrich our understanding of art history's development as a discipline, by including translations by all five authors which have never before appeared in English, and accompanying these primary texts with critical analyses of each scholar's work. In addition, the goal of the anthology is to function in the tradition of the best historiographic analyses which, by investigating the history of art history, encourage us to reflect thoughtfully on its practice today. It is also hoped that this project will open up new perspectives on the general intellectual history of the period as well. Close analysis of these authors' writings within their historical and theoretical contexts will likely reveal that expressionist art history texts register key conceptual trends of the era and, thus, lend insight into the intellectual preoccupations of Central Europe before and after World War I.

Those interested in contributing an essay on one of the five expressionist art historians considered in this project are encouraged to submit 500 word proposals, along with a curriculum vitae and brief bio. Please also include a cover letter explaining your interest in the project and your background in this subject. Ideally, each essay will in some way address the accompanying translated pieces, so essays are especially encouraged which either focus on or include references to the following texts:

Fritz Burger, *Einführung in die moderne Kunst* (1913)
Max Dvorák, "Tintoretto," in *Studien zur Kunstgeschichte*
Ernst Heidrich, *Vlämische Malerei* (1913)
Friedrich Rintelen, *Giotto und die Giotto-apokryphen* (1912)
Wilhelm Worringer, *Die altdeutsche Buchillustration* (1912)

Abstracts in English and German are welcome, but all final contributions will be translated into English. Due date for proposals: April 4, 2008.
Notification of inclusion in anthology: April 25, 2008. Completed papers of 5,000-8,000 words due January 16, 2009.

Initial inquiries are welcome. Abstracts may be sent by email or as hard copies. Please direct questions and all materials to:

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<<https://arthist.net/archive/30061>>.