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ART, MARGINALISATION AND THE MAKING OF THE WESTERN CANON – HOW CENTRAL EUROPEAN PAINTING FELL INTO OBLIVION

The history of the international reputation of 19th-century Hungarian painting, which is to say, its omission from the international art historical canon, is not unique among nations, but is inextricably linked to the general reception of Central European painting. This process played out relatively rapidly, as can be ascertained by surveying the early synoptic texts that claimed to offer a comprehensive international history of painting and were largely responsible for the eventual consolidation of the canon. For many decades, these handbooks set the direction for study and research not only in tertiary education, but also in the broader field of art history. They established the values which tacitly implied that only those artists, schools and styles that were included in the handbooks were worthy of historical recognition. Furthermore, the aura of exceptional aesthetic quality came to be reserved mainly for the works that featured in these volumes, not only by those within the profession, but also among the associated disciplines, as well as that indefinable, abstract concept of wider, cultural public opinion.[1]

These major summaries of art, which were based on a narrow and more or less constant set of pictures, long held sway over art historical discourse. It was not until the early 1980s that this overarching power was seriously challenged, initially by feminism, and then by a variety of movements fostering social democratisation, which brought about new perspectives and a paradigmatic shift. Contributions to this change were made by cultural diversification and the radical expansion of mass culture, of course, but other important factors included the flourishing of international exhibitions in the more affluent countries and the explosive development of the art market, which in turn engendered a kind of cultural globalisation.[2]

The small states of Central Europe did not have the chance to join the flow of events until after 1989, and even then they did so without being fully prepared and mostly without financial backing or properly organised cultural-political support. Networks of connections were built up haphazardly, and although some partial results were achieved, their successes within the globalising profession of art history tended to be short-lived. The emphasis soon shifted from European diversity to post-colonial questions, and any aspirations nursed by the marginal nations of Europe to make themselves historically visible in the international canon of art were nipped in the bud by the ensuing anti-European sentiment.[3]

The situation is exacerbated by the fact that the politico-cultural sentiment prevalent in Europe today too often tends to regard specifically national claims in the cultural sphere as suspiciously nationalistic, which makes it even harder for the achievements of any nation’s 19th-century artistic heritage to be acknowledged beyond national borders.

In the 1980s, a far more favourable time for such endeavours, the Scandinavian countries joined forces and launched a touring series of exhibitions (*Nordic Light*), which led to the reintegration of the most outstanding figures of 19th-century Northern European painting into the international canon.[4] For the countries of Central Europe, however, such a concerted effort was impossible and entry to the canon was limited to a few exponents of art nouveau/Jugendstil, such as the Czech artists Mucha and Kupka, who had lived in Paris and had attained celebrity status in their own lifetimes. The canon issue may appear on the surface to be one of geography, but it is in fact fundamentally political. In what follows, I will expose the roots of the problem, with all its dramatic twists and turns, by following a single thread of narrative argument. However in a brief study such as this, the activity of the art market itself, which is the other main contributory factor to the omission of the Central European region from the “pan-European” (“Western”) canon of painting, can be alluded to only in passing.[5]

THE DISCOURSES OF THE HANDBOOKS

The canon of 19th-century European painting only began to take shape in the last decade of that century. Its sources were the great international exhibitions (Paris, Munich, Berlin) and the analyses and synopses of contemporary critics or art historians basing their overview on the same sources. The great shows represented a new phenomenon: the drivers of social modernisation, transport (the railway network) and communication (telegraphy, newspapers), made it possible in the second half of the 19th century – for the first time in history – to learn about contemporary art practices in other parts of Europe (and later the world), and to make comparisons between them.[6]

The first summaries of the 19th-century art of individual countries were also written in the 1880s, for art history itself was a young discipline, and still concentrated less on recent times than on the ancient past.

The first compendium of European painting, the massive, three-volume work by Richard Muther entitled *The History of Modern Painting*, was pioneering in its own way, a bold attempt to be truly comprehensive.[7] The young art historian, who lived in Munich and wrote daily reviews alongside his scholarly research,[8] embraced the entire continent in his overview, including Russia, Scandinavia and Southern Europe. He even extended his scope beyond the so-called great nations and traditional art centres to include the painting of smaller states and peoples. Within two years, this monumental achievement was translated into English, so Muther presumably exerted some influence on Anglo-Saxon art criticism.[9] His unconventionally graceful and essayistic style proved a roaring success among writers, critics and the public, but it was initially disdained by envious members of the profession; the latter, having industriously uncovered a few inaccuracies in the footnote references, launched an ultimately successful campaign to undermine Muther's career as a ground-breaking, scholarly author.[10]

In the 1890s, it was an almost impossible task to outline, with scientific rigour and in nuanced depth, the fruits of every national school of painting in Europe in a way that also provided insight into aesthetic values and stylistic processes. Muther not only travelled far and wide, visiting as many major exhibitions and public and private collections as he could, he also supplemented the still rather limited specialist literature by scanning the press for exhibition reviews; he relied on the criticism in both the specialist journals and the daily papers in order to present the very best of the century's artistic output in even greater detail.[11] However the achievement of structuring the art historical narrative and of comparing national schools of art, of plotting changing currents in style and underlying intellectual developments, were Muther's alone. Those who followed in his wake would find it far easier to refine or reorganise the overall picture.

For Richard Muther, the concept of modernity was not confined to the continuous stream of formal innovations; like Baudelaire, he believed that reflecting on modern-day themes was another crucial criterion of contemporaneity. He accepted narrative in painting, and although he devoted substantial space to French painting, he did not regard Paris as the exclusive, unchallenged centre of modernity. In his view, England and Germany also played a key role in the construction of modern painting.[12] What is more, he also acknowledged the contributions of modern Scandinavian, Russian and American art, which he did not see as peripheral at all.

Muther, perhaps because he depended to a large extent on information provided by critics and experts from the individual countries, recognised the leading painters of every nation as autonomous artists producing authentic, modern works under the aegis of their respective national schools. He regarded the assimilation of influences and inspirations as part of the creative process, not as a lack of inventiveness or a sign of mediocre quality. Of particular importance is the fact the Muther did not treat the style of the most famous French masters as the *non plus ultra*, and therefore regarded deviations from this style among the artists of other nations as indicative of independence, not of inferiority. As was the case with earlier artistic periods, in the 19th century major artists could be found in all the main centres of art simultaneously, each representing a unique style. Muther was disinclined to establish any form of hierarchy among the different nations.

One exciting challenge the author faced while writing his history was the evolution taking place in art as he wrote, evidence for which abounded at the annual international exhibitions held in Munich. Year by year, the modern type of realism that Muther himself championed was gradually being supplanted by Symbolism. He enthusiastically welcomed these new developments as something of intrinsic value, while never renouncing naturalism, which by then was beginning to look somewhat *vieux jeu*.

Muther had an inestimable influence on the German artistic world, especially on writing aimed at popularising art. He was the first to show that it was possible to write about paintings for the general reader in a way that was elegant, attention-grabbing and perceptive. In the period leading up to the First World War, throughout all the countries of Europe that were directly influenced by German culture (German was still the *lingua franca* in the region at the time), Muther's vivid "*feuilleton*" style, rich in cultural historical associations, became standard practice in writing about art history for the wider public.[13]

After 1900, another German publisher, Seemann of Leipzig, launched a series of books dealing with 19th-century art nation by nation, providing greater detail and deeper insight, and bringing the information completely up to date.[14] In these handbooks, all 19th-century painting was deemed modern (as opposed to the periods of the *Altmeister*). More often than not, the cutting-off point was the age of Neoclassicism and the Napoleonic Wars, so Turner and Constable, for example, were considered modern artists. The practice of demarcating artistic periodisation according to specific political turning points (such as the French Revolution) did not come about until later.

Muther's "panoramic experiment" was emulated, albeit on a much smaller, yet still respectable scale, in Volume Six of the series of handbooks published by Wilhelm Lübke (1904), which was intended to present the entire horizon of 19th-century European painting.[15] This handbook was reissued four times, and on each occasion its author, Dr Friedrich Haack (Professor of Art History at the University of Erlangen), added substantially to the text and illustrations.[16] Haack broadly followed the parameters marked out by Muther, but he had to be more selective than his forebear, owing to space limitations, and he also discussed the latest developments in art after 1893, extending the narrative as far as the year of publication with each successive edition.

Haack divided the century chronologically according to stylistic categories: after Classicism and Romanticism, he applied the name "*Renaissancismus*" to historic revivalism, and whatever came afterwards was discussed under the umbrella term of "*die Moderne*". Alongside the French and the English, he also naturally dedicated ample space to the Germans, while the artists of the "other nations" were only briefly touched upon (but at least he still mentioned them!). Vienna, as a centre of German art, was summarised in just two pages, and the only Hungarian painter who evidently was of any significance to Haack was Munkácsy, although even he was classified as German.[17] On the other hand, Haack listed all the Hungarian painters who taught at the Munich Academy.[18]

In his introduction to the chapter on Modern Painting, he indicated he was using the phrase for want of a better alternative; however he regarded the period, despite the superficiality of fashionable trends, as the age of spiritual and intellectual contemplation. In Haack's view, the hitherto unheard-of eclecticism was positioned at one extreme, while at the other lay an unquenchable thirst for independence. As he saw it, the modern creative method stood in opposition to the historical one, and forms had acquired a new significance; all the while, however, Haack transmitted the assumptions of his own times.[19]

From a philosophical perspective, Haack regarded socialist ideas and the liberation of the individual as the most important achievements wrought by the modern age, and Tolstoy and Nietzsche as their chief protagonists. Between the two poles they represented, he opined, lay the trajectory of modern art. He considered "*Armeleutemalerei*" [the painting of the life of the poor] to be just the beginning, since *fin-de-siècle* notions of reform had democratised the selection of themes considered acceptable in painting, while individuality had become the most important principle of all. Within modern art he distinguished between three movements: firstly the Naturalist, followed by a new decorative movement, and then the Symbolist one, which had returned fantasy and dreams to their rightful place. He combined the latter two movements into what he termed "*Neuidealismus*".[20] Ruskin, in Haack's estimation, was the pioneering theorist of modernity in painting, while Turner and Constable clearly belonged, in his view, to modern art. He revered Jean-François Millet as the father of modernity[21] and placed him alongside Corot as the most important early modern French painters, with Courbet trailing behind them in terms of significance. The greatest modern German artists, as Haack saw it, were Böcklin, Leibl, Liebermann, Uhde and Klinger. While he acknowledged the leading role of Paris, he noted with satisfaction that the culture of Germany, compared with that of France, was still multi-faceted and had not suffered from centralisation.

Manet and the Impressionists were prominent in Haack's summary (credit for which was due to Julius Meier-Graefe), although other modern artists also featured, such as Eugène Carrière, Albert Besnard and Alfred Roller.

When it came to the subsequent period in the history of painting, he adopted *en bloc* the painters Meier-Graefe had highlighted in his synopsis of 1904, to which Haack almost cursorily added the Nabis, Cubism and Futurism. He differed radically from later summaries by casting his eye over a whole series of other national schools of painting, namely those of Italy, Spain, Belgium, the Netherlands, all the Scandinavian nations, and last but not least, Russia. An entire chapter was devoted to the modern masters from England, Scotland and America, beginning with the Pre-Raphaelites, but also including Naturalists and specialist portraitists (such as Sargent). In brief "vignettes", Haack presented a number of masters who were still famous at the time, but who were subsequently neglected for a long period; slowly but surely many of these names are now being rehabilitated.

In Haack's writings, modern German painting was treated with as much weight and detail as the French, and filled even more pages (pp. 430–550). He did, of course, include the painting of Vienna here, although in his list of names, only Klimt merited a brief elucidatory analysis. One of the most important modern artists, in Haack's view, was Max Klinger, to whom eighteen pages were dedicated, as well as many illustrations; among the printmakers, he rightly drew attention to the art of Käthe Kollwitz. (Later, in the English-language summaries of international art written after the war, almost all these German artists were left out.)

The third popular art history written by a German, Karl Woermann's multi-volume handbook, also devotes space to the painters of many other European nations besides France.[22] This series was bravely intended as a global summary that also encompassed the art of continents outside Europe. As a result, less space was set aside for 19th-century European painting, although Northern, Southern and Eastern Europe did not suffer completely as a result, since Scandinavia, Spain, Italy, the Baltic states, Poland and Russia were all featured, although Hungary was not included in this publication.

All the synoptic works described above were based on a broad cultural historical perspective, and they all interpreted art as a socio-historical phenomenon, even if they did also ascribe great significance to the history of styles.

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The ever-decreasing focus of canon creation that came about in the early 1900s can be attributed to a number of reasons, some of which are theoretical, while others resulted from the social changes that pervaded artistic life.

Around the turn of the century, reform-minded art historians formulated the main systems of formal, psychologising style history – the methodologies of Alois Riegl, Heinrich Wölfflin and August Schmarsow became popular at this time. Attention was diverted to so-called "nameless", style-based art history writing, which resulted in diminishing roles for regions and nations.

Besides privileging style above all other considerations, an even more spectacular change in approach was prompted by the aesthetics and art philosophy of Benedetto Croce, who rejected the traditional historical and social interpretation of art and concentrated on formal and aesthetic qualities. This implied not only that artists were now duty bound to maintain artistic autonomy, but also that art theorists working on establishing the canon were expected to adopt a new, more "objective" and scientific attitude, which stood aloof from social milieu and systematically confined attention to the purely formal aspects of visuality. The style-based approach of the early 20th century thus left no room for the earlier, more differentiated perspective that was grounded in social history.

The other decisive factor behind the paradigm shift in framing the modern canon of 19th-century painting was that of Gallocentric superiority. It arose with dramatic rapidity after the Expositions Universelles in Paris in 1889 and especially in 1900, as previously mentioned. Another contribution was made, of course, by the emergence of the international network of commercial art galleries, which made its presence felt almost within a decade.[23]

The change essentially meant that the majority of young painters across Europe (but not architects) soon regarded Paris as the unrivalled, standard-setting artistic centre. This not only "homogenised" the stylistic experiments conducted by the coming generation of painters in all the nations of Europe as they practised the painting of their age; retrospectively too, for the whole of the 19th century, it marked out the normative path of development, based on stylistic change, and paid attention almost exclusively to formal innovations in painting techniques. The decisive underlying change in approach called for artists to be as fully autonomous as possible, which negated all the earlier social duties that had long been integral to art (e.g. state institutional representation or political didacticism).[24] Exponents naturally came up against ideological opposition from official state cultural policy, and it was therefore only to be expected that they joined the radical wing of civil society's intellectual elite.

On the other hand, as one of the groups belonging to the Bohemian world of art, they also were obliged to pursue whatever opportunities were available on the ever-changing art market.[25] This art critical and art historical approach, which concentrated on easel paintings and treated the permutations of the Parisian art market as the litmus test of what was current and contemporary, gradually whittled away at the erstwhile canon of painting: in the name of the cult of independent genius and artistic freedom, art was stripped of its other social functions, while experiments in form came to be seen as the only authentic means of development and of modernity. This message was proclaimed in every public forum.

The most influential early proponent of this approach was the German Julius Meier-Graefe (1867–1935), an art dealer turned critic and art writer.[26] In the reviews he wrote about the Exposition Universelle of 1900, he placed the Impressionists at the very centre of the modern painting movement that emerged in the second half of the 19th century.[27] In his opus magnum *Modern Art*, published in 1904, Meier-Graefe interpreted 19th-century painting as a story of linear development.[28] He trimmed the broad, pluralistic field of art down to a narrow path, along which art could be driven forward only by innovation, in particular formal innovation, since that was seen as the essential value governing the autonomy of visuality. In this way, he reinforced the elite consciousness among experimental, marginalised artists, and laid the theoretical foundations for the practice of dividing painting into opposing poles of so-called official art (that is, state-sponsored styles and artists) and the avant-garde. Soon, in almost every national culture of Europe, in a panoply of variants that depended on the given time and place, the ideological and political rivalries between conservatives and progressives were applied theoretically to the scheme put forward by Meier-Graefe. In the hastening torrent of experiments in style, the artistic and political struggles of the up-and-coming generations took place beneath the banner of innovation, modernisation and improvement, whereby each individual's stylistic approach became self-justifying.

The most influential English-language synopses of the history of painting of the 20th century – the writings of Clive Bell, Herbert Read, John Rewald and Clement Greenberg – now began to deploy this criterion when selecting not only contemporary works, but also the 19th-century masters looked upon as the precursors to 20th-century modernism. Their approach was kept alive in later summaries, written after the Second World War. The primacy of stylistic and formal experiments as the sole artistic yardstick was accompanied by the ineradicably central role of Paris, which was reinforced by the art market. In the early 1950s, the eminent German art historian Werner Haftmann also discussed modern painting from the Western European perspective.[29] Up until the end of the 1980s, virtually all the leading authorities who wrote grand summaries of the history of art continued to regard only the western half of Europe as worthy of their attention, the only exception "from the East" being the Russian avant-garde. The classical narrative of the history of 20th-century painting was woven around the threads of artistic autonomy and stylistic evolution, and the developmental path taken in the 19th century was also reconstructed in accordance with the same concept.

The one author who swam against the current was Werner Hofmann, who in 1959 wrote the following lines about 19th-century painting: "The authors of the handbooks published at the turn of the century – Springer, Lübke, Woermann and Muther – still depicted the entire spectrum of the century, but as the distance of time has increased, so has the distortion arising from the selection of facts. Movements that dealt with reproducing the perceived world – such as realism and impressionism – have been studied extensively and lifted from their historical connections, while thought-motivated art, salon painting, idealism and historicism have been discredited as embarrassing aberrations. Those chapters of history that were declared to be avant-garde have distorted the entire image of the century, yet at the same time they have been discounted as uniform and formally consistent. […] The seizure of reality by the impressionists thus becomes a necessary preparatory step for Cézanne's autonomous pictorial structure, from which every twentieth-century movement dealing with formal speculation has deduced its own programme. This is true in itself, but it accounts for only part of our own century and only part of the preceding one: the picture of art in both centuries is quite different in reality."[30]

As indicated above, besides the style-based approach, the practice that imposed even further limitations on the tradition of art history writing was the isolation of just one centre of painting as *the* centre of painting. The existence of a centre inevitably presupposes a periphery. If the visual culture of the world has one capital, then all the other cities are by definition provincial; whatever is provincial is less valuable, backward even, eventually growing conservative and insignificant. This, at least, was implied in practice, and eventually this conviction became self-evident among ("mainstream") art historians. Cultural openness has only been selectively applied since the end of the First World War.

If a given peripheral region spends several decades outside the regular exchange of exhibitions and excluded from the international art market and bilateral or multilateral scientific forums, then it loses its sense of breadth and proportion, so that its past and present artistic achievements become increasingly ignored and underappreciated. This happens even if the quality of the art happens to depend not on the level of technical accomplishment, nor even on international familiarity, for the key is to be found in the "human factor", the (locally determined) singular, inimitable individual and destiny, the manifestations of which are indelibly linked to the mind and the soul. If indeed, in line with the European image of humanity inherited from Hellenism, Christianity and the Enlightenment, every person born is equally precious and deserving of protection (not to mention the sacrosanct nature of individual liberty), then in a utopian, global culture, every creative artist has the right to be judged according to the same criteria.

FATEFUL POLITICAL CHANGES AND THE MAINSTREAM VISUAL CANON

In addition to the changes in aesthetics and approach within the art history profession, as outlined above, there was another pivotal factor that contributed to one half of Europe (the Central and Eastern states) disappearing completely from the mainstream canon of (Western) European art history. This factor was the First World War, which brought a halt to European convergence, not only with regard to the latest advances in art, but also retrospectively, stretching back almost through the entire 19th century. At the end of the war, after the Paris peace negotiations, it was extremely difficult for the economically weakened Central European region to claw its way back into international professional circles, for example into the exchange network of international exhibitions, and, particularly, into the international art market. (As far as the latter was concerned, the region was merely a passive participant, and ended up losing whatever internationally relevant artworks it had ever had, as illustrated by the fate that befell Hungarian private collections in the 20th century.[31])

The process of intellectual isolation began at this time, and 18 years of peace proved insufficient for the artistic achievements of 19th-century Hungary (and of Austria) to achieve an international profile.[32] The predominance in Central Europe of German art history and German publishing only exacerbated the region's isolation from English and French scholarship. Even in the 1920s, an intellectual iron curtain was drawn around the region, rendering its culture, including 19th-century painting, invisible to the victors of the war. One limited exception was Czech art, thanks to the strong political and cultural connections between Paris and Prague. Polish and Southern-Slavic art, likewise due to political reasons, also fared somewhat better. After the Second World War and the divided world order that ensued, this *status quo* was cast in concrete for four more decades.

Logistically, at this time it was immensely difficult to write a summary of pan-European painting, especially a synthetic one. The selection was determined not only by the author's knowledge, but also by the prevailing historical, geographical and political situation. When it comes to the 19th-century schools of art of the different national cultures of Europe, their inclusion in or omission from the European art canon depended on which side of the Iron Curtain they found themselves after 1945.

The History of Art (1950), by Ernst H. Gombrich, is the best-selling work of art history writing in the world;[33] in line with German cultural historical convention, it tells a "grand narrative" that runs from the very beginnings of art until the middle of the 19th century, and for more than 30 years it defined the history of art, and the values underpinning the canon. It was against Gombrich's work (or what it symbolised) that the gender-based and post-colonial schools of art history rebelled.

In Anglo-Saxon and European culture, even before the paradigm shift, the end of the sixties saw the "second golden age" of art history writing, at a time when, despite the arrival of contemporary Pop Art, there was still a powerful cult of elite culture. This materialised in an upsurge in both research and publishing in Western Europe and the USA, resulting in ever more beautiful and nuanced series of popular art history volumes, now all illustrated with increasingly high-quality colour reproductions. In addition there were many new monographs on different periods in art, summaries written for the lay reader, and a new-found fashion for "blockbusting" mega-exhibitions. Due to the mass exodus of intellectuals from Europe before the Second World War, art history experts of Jewish origin helped the profession to flourish in Great Britain and the United States.[34] They set up scholarly workshops and schools, and reshaped local art history practice, which had hitherto been in thrall to connoisseurship.

The next generation reconstructed the historical past with increasing differentiation, but still with geographical limitations concerning the schools included in the canon. It was rare for Central European experts with an interest in the 19th century to be offered the chance to write for one of the key series of reference books. One such *rara avis* was the Austrian Fritz Novotny (who originally specialised in Cézanne), who wrote the 19th-century volume for the highly esteemed *Pelican History of Art*.[35] Since English art was given its own separate volume in the series, Novotny had plenty of space in which to concentrate on the other national schools of Europe, and he arranged his exposé of painting according to different stylistic periods, beginning around 1780 with Neoclassicism and the painting of Jacques-Louis David.

Novotny was no different from his peers in regarding stylistic development, in particular the French examples, as the high-water mark in art history, but coming from Austria he was also familiar with German and Austrian painting; what is more, some of his students at the university where he taught were from Hungary (such as János Dobai), and they provided him with a wealth of information, in the hope that he would write a few words about Hungarian painters in his forthcoming book. This bore fruit: in the chapter on Realism, Novotny mentioned both Mihály Munkácsy and Pál Szinyei Merse, and even included one picture by both of them.[36] Overall, however, Novotny's summary was still a classical, Gallocentric work on style history, albeit an elegantly written one.

In the 1960s it was customary for authors of handbooks about painting in the 19th century to take all their examples from the French, German and English schools (and on rare occasions, the Austrian). This was true even among the most brilliant, analytical minds living close to the Iron Curtain, such as the Austrian Werner Hofmann, a passionate devotee of French culture, who was the first to break away from the form- and style-centred narratives of the period. The illustrations chosen for his thoughtful, ground-breaking book of 1959, *The Earthly Paradise*, could not make it plainer that for art historians at that time, Europe ended in Vienna.

Hofmann's work, which was derided by fellow art historians for being so pioneeringly different, featured instances of 19th-century painting in the following proportions: 164 French paintings, 52 German, 21 English, 5 Italian, 11 Spanish (all Goya), 8 Dutch (all Van Gogh), 10 Norwegian (all Munch), and 3 from the USA. Hofmann also "strong-armed" into the narrative a few fellow Austrians (2 works by Rudolf von Alt, 2 by Waldmüller, 3 by Makart and 1 by Romako). In this way, Central Europe appears in his book, but the successful international reception of Austrian painting would have been unimaginable if the Soviet occupation of Austria had not come to an end in 1955 and the country had not managed to align itself with the Western world. The countries stranded behind the iron curtain remained off the European horizon. Even Hofmann, from the relative proximity of Vienna, cast not a single look towards the painters from the East, even ignoring the illustrious Jan Matejko.

It was some time before English-language art historians began to integrate aspects of Hofmann's fine-spun philosophical and intellectual historical analysis into their own writings, which only came about towards the end of the 1980s, when the new art historical approach, informed by feminism, sociology and Marxism, finally inspired interpretations that paid greater attention to social context and turned away from the conventional canon, constructed around style criticism.[37] This period also saw the publication of new, extensive summaries of 19th-century European painting, which analysed the history of the schools and styles of painting with greater flexibility, although politically and geographically they still did not reach out to areas of Europe beyond Germany (see, for example, Lorenz Eitner's voluminous monograph of the period).[38]

THE DECISIVE IMPACT OF THE MUSÉE D'ORSAY ON THE CANON

The radical change in the general approach to the values of 19th-century painting came about with the establishment of the Musée d'Orsay in Paris,[39] which was an immediate success among professionals of art history and the public alike. The French national canon was now itself expanded with the rehabilitation of Realism, the official academic masters and the Symbolists. This indirectly affected the international canon as well, fostering a re-evaluation of artists from Scandinavia, Belgium, Holland, and so on. Central Europe, however, was still excluded from this development and also from the increasingly important international exhibitions.

The first work to reincorporate several important German, Scandinavian, Polish and Russian painters into the narrative of European art was the richly illustrated monograph, *Nineteenth Century Art*, by the Americans Robert Rosenblum and H. W. Janson, published in 1984. Although this volume also omitted Hungarian art and upheld the central supremacy of Paris, it did provide a new reading of the different periods in the century by relating events in art to happenings in the world of politics.[40] The text and the illustrations not only included North American artists, but also brought those from Germany back in from the sidelines, while mention was also made of painters from Italy, Spain, Denmark, Finland, Poland (Matejko) and Russia (Kramskoi).[41]

Even during today's period of decline in the book-publishing industry, perhaps owing to the enduring success of Gombrich's *The History of Art*, it is not unknown for new sprawling, comprehensive, English-language summaries of world art to hit the shelves from time to time. From the 1970s onwards, in the spirit of cultural equivalence, enterprising authors began to broaden their geographical horizons, although the main emphasis was towards other continents, with little or no attention paid to greater differentiation within Europe.[42]

The last major summary that deserves to be accorded the status of a "textbook", as well as a document of its age, was the 1999 volume entitled *Modern Art 1891– 1929*, the work of the American professor Richard R. Brettell, which formed part of the forward-thinking and unquestionably innovative series, the *Oxford History of Art*.[43] The unconventional periodisation is explained by the second part of the title: *Capitalism and Representation*. Brettell was the first author to give credit to painting from the nations of the Central European region. As he wrote in the introductory chapter: "No true history of modern art can exclude the contributions of the many different nationalities such as British, Germans, Russians, Italians, Scandinavians, Czechs, Spaniards and Americans".[44] The fact that, besides German pictures, Brettell predominantly chose examples from Polish painting to illustrate his point can probably be put down to his personal connections, but he also included two works by Hungarians. One of them, *Boys on the Danube* by Károly Ferenczy, was selected because the author felt it shared compositional affinities with Seurat, although the description of the painting refers, quite surprisingly from a Hungarian perspective, to the (actual or imagined) social status of the boys. The contextualisation of the other Hungarian painting is even more astonishing: Tivadar Csontváry Kosztka's painting of the Sicilian town *Taormina* (p. 208) is placed among the illustrations of the sub-section entitled "Nationalist landscape painting".

Brettell's terse, pensive style of writing may frequently appear enigmatic to experts who have grown accustomed to local art historical conventions, but it offers a refreshing challenge. He reassesses Naturalism, rehabilitates narrative painting outside of Impressionism, and is willing to acknowledge the artistic achievements of some of the major masters from the so-called "minor nations" even if they deviated from the Parisian model (such as Malczewski, Wyspiański, Repin, etc.). As he begins his discussion of modern painting in 1851, the year of the Great Exhibition in London, he shines his new light only on the second half of the 19th century (and into the 20th century as far as 1929), although there is no guarantee that his approach will attract followers.

One of the most daring and thorough works to deal concisely with 30,000 years of global art, offering an abundance of new insights, is the outstanding *New History of Art (Mirror of the World)*, a *tour-de-force* by the English painter and art historian Julian Bell, who is well versed in the historical and philosophical background.[45] Bell's reflective text on 19th-century painting differs from those by earlier authors only in that, alongside French artists, it expounds in uncommon detail on English painters; but it also features German masters (Caspar David Friedrich, Adolph Menzel) and even the Russian *Peredvizhniki* (Ilya Repin, *Barge Haulers on the Volga,* 1870–73).[46] Nevertheless, the only artist from the Central European region to be honoured with a passing mention in this monumental overview is Gustav Klimt.[47]

Bell's stylish and compellingly told masterwork is a "global" history of art in the best sense of the word, ingeniously piecing together the traditional, chronological, Eurocentric narrative with the artistic periods of other continents, be they the origins of Chinese art or the output of tribal cultures.

However, this open and sensitive author still leaves the art of Central Europe out of his equation, perhaps because he finds it overly similar to the Western European tradition, or – more likely – because he is not familiar with it.

What happened to the region politically after 1989 is, in a way, symbolic. Central Europe remained interesting to the "West" for barely a couple of years, as its "otherness", in the eyes of the academic and intellectual world, was simultaneously too close and too irritating. The only purpose to which the region's artistic achievements are put is to augment the case studies of hackneyed or even fashionable discourses and to demonstrate preconceived conclusions. The possibility that the art of the region could be aesthetically valuable to the rest of the world has not been substantiated by the international art trade, and even the *chefs d'œuvre* have remained "invisible" both at international exhibitions and in publications.

Here it is worth reminding ourselves of that other crucial determinant of wider recognition: ever since the start of the 20th century, and especially in the decades after the Second World War, the creation of the art historical canon has been strongly influenced not only by international politics, but also by the art market, in particular the publicity and price constructions produced by international auction houses. This complex process, driven by a tangled web of interests, had virtually no space for Central European painting, other than a narrow selection from the avant-garde. The artists singled out were virtually all advocates of international Communist ideology, who were talked up by art-market players.

Turn-of-the-century Central European art was first summarised in a separate volume by Elisabeth Clegg, published by Yale University Press in 2006. Twenty years of tenacious research culminated in a comprehensive survey of the history of art in the region as it developed between 1890 and 1920. The book grouped the artworks and the œuvres of individual painters around the exhibitions held during that period.[48] Clegg also discusses architecture and applied art. Leaving aside some problems with periodisation,[49] the book's unassailable virtue is its wealth of material: it enables researchers who do not speak the languages of the region to delve into some well selected facts from the period, the timeline of events, and the way in which art institutions and art life were structured. Clegg, who reads in the Slavic languages of the region but not in Hungarian, as far as her use of sources and historical contextualisation are concerned, adopts the narrative propounded by Slavic authors. The hallmark of this is the view that it was entirely justified for the historic political entity of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy to be broken apart. More recently this question has been tackled in substantially more nuanced terms by several historians, for example, by Pieter M. Judson in his monumental tome of 2016, entitled *The Habsburg Empire. A New History*.[50] As Clegg's data-rich textbook was not connected to an exhibition, it sadly failed to reach a wider audience. The only action that could have been taken to ensure lasting interest in turn-of-the-century Central European art would have been a heavily advertised series of international exhibitions in the 1990s, after which time the attention of the cultivated public was already drifting towards different regions and different periods.

On two occasions in art history, an intellectual iron curtain has been drawn around Central Europe. At the end of the First World War, Europe was split in two halves, also in respect of exhibition exchanges and the art market; the Eastern half became increasingly marginalised. Then the same thing happened after the Second World War, as a consequence of the new world order that emerged in its wake. A hundred years have passed since the selective canon was born, and a quarter century has elapsed since the fall of the Berlin Wall, yet the 19th-century art of the Central European nations (apart from Austria) has still not managed to become reintegrated in the great, pan-European art narrative. Of all the schools of painting from the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, only Austrian art managed, after 1985, to wedge itself into the collective memory of the so-called "North Atlantic culture".[51] Hungarian art did not. Nor did the art of the rest of the region.

Among those of us who come from this part of the world, we are inclined to ask ourselves what else we could have done – what else we could yet do – to forestall or reverse the marginalisation described above. The challenge that faces us now is to prevent any further political and cultural iron curtains from ever being drawn across the region.

Translation by Steve Kane

Notes:

[1] The literature on canon creation could fill a whole library. Here I refer to just a few works that illuminate the background to the issue at hand, namely the omission from the international canon of Central European schools of painting. The internal crisis of art history writing, including the problem of creating the canon, is covered by Donald Preziosi, *Rethinking Art History.* New Haven – London, Yale University Press, 1989. Among the schools of painting in Central Europe, only Anna Brzyski has touched upon this issue, dealing with the development of the canon of Polish painting from the turn of the century around 1900. See Anna Brzyski, "Making Art in the Age of Art History, or How to Become a Canonical Artist". In: Anna Brzyski (ed.), *Partisan Canons.* Durham, Duke University Press, 2007, 245–266.

[2] From the mid-1980s on, Japan also joined the USA in hosting "blockbuster" exhibitions of works by the canonised masters of Western Europe (primarily the painters); the only movement from the Central European region to be featured in such shows, however, was the Vienna Secession, led by the *chefs d'œuvre* of Klimt.

[3] For more about the relationship between artists from outside Europe and the canon-creating tradition of the 20th century, Eurocentric art history, see Anna Brzyski (ed.), *Partisan Canons.* Durham, Duke University Press, 2007.

[4] Debuting in Oslo, the exhibition *(1880 årene / Nordisk Maleri)* first travelled to Stockholm, Helsinki and Copenhagen, before being invited to London in 1986, where it was retitled *Northern Light: Realism and Symbolism in Scandinavian Painting 1880–1910*, and continuing in 1987 to Düsseldorf and Paris and in 1988 to New York. The exhibition focused on the main works by Norwegian, Swedish, Finnish and Danish artists, and subsequently prompted many of the world's leading museums (such as the National Gallery in London) to acquire pictures by leading Scandinavian masters for their own permanent collections.

[5] A different aspect of the canon constructed out of 19th-century painting is discussed by Robert Jensen, “Measuring Canons: Reflections on Innovation and the Nineteenth-century Canon of European Art”. In: Anna Brzyski (ed.), *Partisan Canons*, 27–54.

[6] It is widely known that the key role in this was played by the World Expos, but we should not ignore the significance of national exhibitions and, later, international art shows (Munich Glaspalast, Venice Biennale).

[7] Richard Muther, *Die Geschichte der Malerei im 19. Jahrhundert*, 3 Bde., München, Georg Hirth 1893/1894.

[8] Richard Muther (1860–1909) was curator of the Kupferstichkabinett in Munich and a young expert in the Renaissance, who regularly wrote reviews of the exhibitions in the Glaspalast for specialist journals and Munich dailies. Encouraged by the publisher and art aficionado Georg Hirth, Muther embarked on writing a chronological history of 19th-century European painting. He later became professor of art history at the University of Breslau (now Wroclaw, Poland). For a few years beginning in 1899, he wrote reviews for the Viennese newspaper *Die Zeit*. His last major work, published in English as *The History of Painting from the Fourth to the Early Nineteenth Century* (1907), ends in the age of Napoleon, and effectively omits most of the 19th century. (The work was translated into Hungarian by Géza Lengyel and published in 1920, supplemented with a 35-page study by Károly Lyka entitled *Hungarian Painting*, which was the first, albeit brief, canonising summary of the history of Hungarian painting, ending with the artists of the Nagybánya school. Budapest, Révai, 1920.)

[9] The English edition was translated by Arthur Cecil Hillier, published by Henry and Co., London, 1896.

[10] Although the errors in the footnotes were negligible compared with the overall achievement, and were often merely of a grammatical nature, professional jealousy and rivalry led some fellow art historians to question the value of the author’s fantastic undertaking. Consequently, the book was not republished.

[11] In areas where Muther did not understand the language, he asked a collaborator to compile the works and write the relevant section. In the case of Russian painting, for example, he worked with the major Russian painter Alexander Benois. Muther naturally always credited the co-authors by name.

[12] See the foreword to volume III, where he emphasises the social sensitivity of naturalism and quotes Zola. In his opinion, the new artistic spirit is never the work of a single nation, and is present not only in painting, but in every other area of intellectual life. Alongside Zola, therefore, other examples he mentions are Dostoevsky, certain Scandinavian writers and the Italian Giovanni Verga, while he regards naturalism as the liberation of the individual temperament.

[13] In Austria, beginning with Hofmannsthal, the critics of the *Jung Wien* literary group were inspired by his method of writing, and his example was also followed in Hungary, not only by Károly Lyka, who enthusiastically attended Muther’s lectures in Munich, but also by other critics. He even exerted a powerful influence on the art critics of *Nyugat* magazine, such as Géza Lengyel, Aladár Bálint, and so on.

[14] Also published as part of this series was the two-volume work by Lajos Hevesi on 19th-century Austrian art and a volume on French sculpture. Hungary was also to be part of the series, and Gábor Térey was asked to write the text, but the project ultimately fell through.

[15] As the sixth supplementary volume of the series handbooks published by Lübke entitled *Grundriss der Kunstgeschichte*, it was published in 1904, and had reached its sixth edition by 1918.

[16] In the second edition, Friedrich Haack incorporated new information about German painting acquired from the Jahrhundertausstellung in Berlin in 1906, as well as the latest literature, including Julius Meier-Graefe’s evaluation of impressionism and the post-impressionist masters.

[17] He emphasised that his birth surname was Lieb, which in fact meant he was German, and that Munkácsy was just the alias he used as an artist; the tone of his analysis is also rather negative. For the section on Munkácsy see pp. 278–279.

[18] Haack mentioned all the Hungarian painters who taught at the Royal Bavarian Academy in Munich, as well as two Polish painters, Matejko and Siemiradzki (p. 246).

[19] Among the intellectual movements of the 19th century, he regarded social thought and philosophy as the most modern and influential (p. 335).

[20] Ibid. 339.

[21] He dedicated eight whole pages to the art of Millet, but only five to Courbet.

[22] Karl Woermann, *Geschichte der Kunst aller Zeiten und Völker*. Leipzig – Wien, Bibliographisches Institut, 3. Bd. 1900–1911 (2nd edition: 1922).

[23] The ground-breaking and perspective-changing work on this topic is by Robert Jensen, *Marketing Fin-de-Siècle Modernism in Fin-de-Siècle Europe*. Princeton, 1994.

[24] Even exponents of French painting, held up as the model of development, were excluded from this new perspective if they stuck to visual narrative, and only painters who concentrated on innovations in optical and formal effects were accepted as modern. Only a small group of stylistic experimenters escaped the label of “conservative”.

[25] The history of how this process unfolded in the Hungarian art world between 1900 and 1919 was examined in unprecedented sociological, philosophical and political detail by Zoltán Rockenbauer in the book entitled *Apache Art* (*Apacs művészet*, Budapest, Noran Libro, 2014), who also placed great emphasis on the psychological aspect of the process.

[26] Meier-Graefe’s first critical piece on Edvard Munch was published in 1894 in a volume edited by Przybyszewski. As a devotee of the German Jugendstil, he went to Paris, where he came across the latest French experiments in style and the work of impressionist, and later post-impressionist masters, which led him to form the view that the key to modern artistic development, and therefore to the evolution of style, lay in the constant innovation taking place in formal solutions.

[27] Julius Meier-Graefe, *Die Weltausstellung in Paris 1900: mit zahlreichen photographischen Aufnahmen, farbigen Kunstbeilagen und Plänen*. Paris – Leipzig, Krüger, 1900; *Manet und sein Kreis*. Berlin, Bard, Marquardt, 1902. (Die Kunst: Sammlung illustrierter Monographien. 7); *Der moderne Impressionismus: mit einer kolorierten Kunstbeilage und 7 Vollbildern in Tonätzung*. Berlin, Bard, 1903. (Die Kunst: Sammlung illustrierter Monographien. 11).

[28] *Entwicklungsgeschichte der modernen Kunst: vergleichende Betrachtungen der bildenden Künste, als Beitrag zu einer neuen Aesthetik*. Stuttgart, Verlag Jul. Hoffmann, 1904. (English translation: *Modern Art: being a contribution to a new system of aesthetics*. Heinemann, London; Putnam, New York 1908. Translated by Florence Simmonds and George W. Chrystal.)

[29] Werner Haftmann, *Die Malerei im 20. Jahrhundert*. München, Prestel Verlag, 1954.

30 Werner Hofmann, *Das irdische Paradies: Kunst im 19. Jahrhundert.* München, Prestel Verlag, 1960. (In English: *The Earthly Paradise. Art in the Nineteenth Century.* Faber & Faber, 1961.)

31 A similar process about the historico-political evaluation of the Austro-Hungarian Empire is discussed in detail by John Deak, “The Great War and the Forgotten Realm: The Habsburg Monarchy and the First World War”. In: *The Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 86, No. 2 (June 2014), pp. 336–380. The first scholars to write mainstream summaries on the dissolution of the Empire were those who, as journalists or diplomats, actively contributed to its dissolution.

32 As far as the Hungarian painted heritage is concerned, there is one exception that proves the rule: in 1927, the medievalist Henri Focillon, the most influential French art historian between the wars, published a book on 19th-century painting, in which he mentioned Munkácsy, László Paál, and even Pál Szinyei Merse (Henri Focillon, *La peinture au XIXe siècle: Le retour à l’antique, Le romantisme.* Paris, H. Laurens, 1927). Focillon’s broad perspective may be partly due to the fact that he specialised mainly in medieval art, which tends to encourage a view of Christian Europe as a single entity.

33 Ernst Hans Josef Gombrich, *The Story of Art.* London, Phaidon, 1950. By the start of the new millennium, this work had reached its sixteenth edition and had been translated into 32 languages. In later editions, the scope expanded towards civilisations and cultures from outside Europe.

34 Interestingly, these experts tended to specialise primarily in pre-19th-century art, so they did not incorporate the artistic heritage of their homelands into the universal canon.

35 Fritz Novotny, *Painting and Sculpture in Europe 1780–1880.* London, Penguin Books Ltd., 1960, 1971.

36 See Novotny, *op. cit.*: on Munkácsy: pp. 255–256, fig. 189 (*The Smoker,* 1874); on Szinyei: p. 256, fig. 190 (*Picnic in May,* 1873).

37 Here I refer to the books of T. J. [Timothy James] Clark, Linda Nochlin and Griselda Pollock.

38 Lorenz Eitner, *An Outline of 19th Century European Painting (from David through Cézanne).* New York, Harper & Row, 1982, 1987, 1992.

39 The museum opened in December 1986, following a decade of preparation, in which Robert Rosenblum played an active part. The results of his research were published in a monograph of the period entitled *19th Century Art* (1984). Rosenblum also wrote the luxury illustrated volume of the museum’s collection.

40 See Rosenblum’s foreword in: Robert Rosenblum and H. W. Janson, *Art of the Nineteenth Century. Painting and Sculpture.* London, Thames & Hudson, 1984. The starting date for 19th-century painting was agreed upon by the two American authors as 1776, the year of the American Declaration of Independence, and the first period continued until the end of the Napoleonic Wars. The second, third and fourth periods were dated 1815–1848, 1848–1870 and 1870–1900.

41 This interpretation is double-edged, however. Matejko’s painting of Báthory was exhibited in Paris in 1872, as though simply to provide a contrast against which Manet’s modernity would truly stand out.

42 Hugh Honour and John Fleming, *A World History of Art.* London, Macmillan, 1982.

43 Richard R. Brettell, *Modern Art 1851–1929. Capitalism and Representation.* Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1999.

44 Brettell 1999, 3.

45 Julian Bell, *A New History of Art – Mirror of the World.* London, Thames & Hudson, 2010. 267 of the 372 illustrations are in colour. The author taught art history for decades and is also a painter.

46 Here I refer only to the chapters dealing with 19th-century art, which also devote space to the painting of the USA, Denmark and Norway.

47 See Bell 2010, 368–369; and, by way of illustration, the *Judith II* from 1909.

48 Elisabeth Clegg, *Art, Design and Architecture in Central Europe 1890–1920.* New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 2006.

49 See the criticism in the review: “Art, Design and Architecture in Central Europe 1890–1920 by Elisabeth Clegg”. *Centropa [New York]*, vol. 8, no. 2 (May 2008).

50 Pieter M Judson, *The Habsburg Empire. A New History.* Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA, 2016. The historical reassessment of the First World War that has taken place in recent decades has also softened the negative judgement of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy.

51 The political and socio-cultural reasons for this are beyond the intended scope of this study, but the fact that Austria was no longer occupied by Soviet forces after 1955 certainly meant that its culture was not cut off from the West by the Iron Curtain. The reintegration of Austrian art began with an exhibition of Vienna at the turn of the century, held in 1984 in the Palazzo Grassi in Venice; in 1985, the enormous success of the *Traum und Wirklichkeit* exhibition at the Vienna Künstlerhaus convinced the Viennese and Austrian political leadership that here was an opportunity on which to build an appealing image of Vienna, as a cradle of modernity alongside Paris. What followed was an international tour of works by Klimt, Schiele and Kokoschka, with the city of Freud and Mahler forming the backdrop to the whole show, which travelled to Paris, New York, Japan and even St Petersburg. Today, thanks to modern marketing, Klimt is an essential element of the historical narrative of world painting (whereas he played no part in it before the end of the 1970s).

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