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The Österreichische Werkstätten present Olga Kronsteiner's

The History Encyclopedia

1864 A MUSEUM FOR ARTS AND CRAFTS..... 1

MAK (MUSEUM OF APPLIED ARTS) COLLECTION.....2

1867 VIENNA SCHOOL OF ARTS AND CRAFTS.....3

OTTO WAGNER 1841-1918.....3

JOSEF HOFFMANN 1870-1956.....4

KOLO(MAN) MOSER 1868-1918.....7

ADOLF LOOS 1870-19338

1880-90S SECESSIONS..... 9

1892 MUNICH SECESSION9

1897 VIENNA SECESSION.....9

1900 Arts and Crafts in the Secession 10

1907 WERKBUND ("ASSOCIATION OF CRAFTSMEN")..... 10

1912 AUSTRIAN WERKBUND 10

GERMAN WERKBUND..... 11

1864 A Museum for Arts and Crafts

The history of arts and crafts in Austria is closely linked to the history of the Österreichisches Museum für Kunst und Industrie ("Austrian Museum of Art and Industry"), which was established following an event in London. Rudolf von Eitelberger, Professor of Art History at the University of Vienna, visited the South Kensington Museum (the present-day "Victoria and Albert Museum"), which had been financed privately, during the 1862 World Exhibition. He described his impressions enthusiastically to the Prime Minister, Archduke Rainer, and was requested by the Emperor to design a Museum of Arts and Crafts. In 1864 Austrian

arts and crafts moved into the Museum (Collection) - in 1867 the opening of the adjoining Vienna School of Arts and Crafts followed.



View of the pillared hall of the former Museum für Kunst und Industrie ("Museum of Art and Industry"), now renamed Museum für angewandte Kunst ("Museum of Applied Arts").

© MAK Österreichisches Museum für angewandte Kunst

MAK (Museum of Applied Arts) Collection

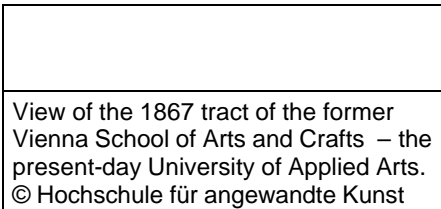
When it was opened in 1864 the museum had no collections of its own; so exhibits from various sources had to be collected over the years. In line with its claim of being an exemplary collection of art and industry, articles of arts and crafts in the form of manufacturers' estates, sample collections, graphic pattern books as well as the results of direct commissions arrived in the museum. Collections and bundles of paper that have been donated as gifts form the museum's basic stock of exhibits. The inventory of the present Museum für angewandte Kunst ("Museum of Applied Arts") encompasses a total of 200,000 to 300,000 objects.



The collection of the Museum of Applied Arts today – the Wiener Werkstätte ("Viennese Workshops") Room.
© MAK Österreichisches Museum für angewandte Kunst

1867 Vienna School of Arts and Crafts

The present-day Universität für angewandte Kunst ("University of Applied Arts") was founded in 1867 as the Vienna School of Arts and Crafts attached to the Österreichisches Museum für Kunst und Industrie ("Austrian Museum of Art and Industry"). Its aim was to train specialists both in crafts as well as in art, which was gaining in importance. The study of historic examples was to help contribute to the development of new forms. It ran the danger, however, of turning out mere stylistic imitations. The situation changed when, in 1899, at the initiative of Otto Wagner, new progressive artistic personalities such as the members of the Secession Josef Hoffmann, Kolo Moser and Adolf Roller were appointed as teachers at the school.



View of the 1867 tract of the former Vienna School of Arts and Crafts – the present-day University of Applied Arts.
© Hochschule für angewandte Kunst

Otto Wagner 1841-1918

Was a pupil of the architects van der Nüll & Sicardsburg (Vienna State Opera House, Arsenal), a member of the Vienna Secession (1897) and from 1894 on artistic advisor of the Vienna Transport Commission.

Around 1900 Vienna became a European metropolis; the number of inhabitants had nearly quadrupled since 1840 (1.6 Mio.). Urban planning problems, hygiene problems and traffic problems resulted. In addition to villas, office buildings and apartment buildings (e.g. Linke Wienzeile 1898-1900) Wagner also designed the buildings of the Vienna City railway (1894-1901, now the U6 line). Wagner's ideas were also

taken up by his most important pupils Josef Hoffmann and Adolf Loos, whereby their interpretations could not have been more different.



Portrait of Otto Wagner 1841-1918.
Photo: Christies New York,
Masterworks 1900-2000, 8th June
2000



1902 Otto Wagner furnished
the Vienna offices of the
newspaper "Die Zeit"; this
armchair by J. & J. Kohn was
fitted with aluminium.
Photo: Christies New York,
Masterworks 1900-2000, 8th
June 2000

Josef Hoffmann 1870-1956

The pupil of Otto Wagner was a founder member of the Vienna Secession (1897), of the WW ("Viennese Workshops") (1903), of the Austrian Werkbund ("Austrian

Association of Craftsmen") (1912) as well as of the Österreichische Werkstätten ("Austrian Workshops") (1948).

As a professor at the Kunstgewerbeschule ("Vienna School of Arts and Crafts") he encouraged the creative-intuitive talents of his students. Hoffmann was an untiring pioneer in the use of geometrical shapes and he characterised the Vienna style, a style ahead of its time, like no other architect of his era. We find the artistic refinement of the minutest details both in Hoffmann's architecture and also in his works for the WW. His nickname "Quadrat'l" ("square") stems from the most frequently used element in his designs; his critics claimed that he got inspiration for his specific style from the squared paper he drew on.



Portrait of Josef Hoffmann
1870-1956.
Photo: Christies New York,
Masterworks 1900-2000, 8th
June 2000



Josef Hoffmann seated in a
chair designed by himself,
about 1898.
Photo: Christies London, The
Chair, 29th October 1997



This silver net basket with an ivory handle was made by the Wiener Werkstätte in 1905 from a design by Hoffmann. Photo: Christies New York, Masterworks 1900-2000, 8th June 2000



Hoffmann's foible for geometric design can be seen in this "Seating machine" made about 1908 by J.& .J. Kohn. Photo: Christies New York, Masterworks 1900-2000, 8th June 2000



A 24-piece tea service designed by Hoffmann in 1914/15 and made by the Wiener Werkstätte.
Photo: Dorotheum Wien, Jugendstil, 10th April 1997

Kolo(man) Moser 1868-1918

The painter and graphic artist and designer was a co-founder of the Vienna Secession (1897), the WW (1903) and taught at the Vienna School of Arts and Crafts from 1899 on. In his painting Moser used rich ornamentation but moderately; this is reflected in the marquetry and mother of pearl or brass inlay work in his furniture designs.

Moser is stylistically linked to Josef Hoffmann by his tendency towards a rectilinear style. Kolo Moser designed a series of extraordinary interiors, which are now scattered throughout the world and can only be reconstructed using contemporary magazines.



Kolo Moser 1868-1918.
Photo: Dorotheum Wien, Wien
um 1900, 28th March 2000



: Kolo Moser and Gustav Klimt
1902. Photo: Dorotheum Wien,
Wien um 1900, 28th March
2000



A chair designed by
Moser and made by
the wickerwork
manufacturer Prag-
Rudniker in 1902.
Photo: Quittenbaum
München,
Angewandte Kunst,
11th May 1998

Adolf Loos 1870-1933

"Art is something that has to be overcome"; this quotation characterises the architect's work and also distances him from the doctrine preached by Josef Hoffmann.

The tale is told that Adolf Loos was given some of his commissions to reduce his tailors' bills. Among his best-known buildings are the gentlemen's outfitters Goldman & Salatsch (1898-1903), the present day "Loos Bar" (Kärntner or American Bar, 1909) and the house at Michaelaplatz (1909-11). Loos also designed the furnishings of the Cafe Museum (1899), described by critics as "Cafe Nihilism", bentwood chairs and bentwood marble-topped tables, made by "Jakob & Josef Kohn".



In 1898 Adolf Loos designed these bentwood chairs made by J & J. Kohn for the Café Museum. Photo: Christies London, Important 20th Century Decorative Arts, 16th May 2001

1880-90s Secessions

The very word comes from Latin and contain the idea of "splitting off". As an organisation of artists the Secession, as the antithesis of traditional institutions, was to find imitators in many European capitals in the 80s and 90s. These groups were new, most of them private and they were able to react flexibly to the needs and tastes of a section of the bourgeoisie open to culture and were simultaneously able to awaken them and drive them forward. The earliest group was formed in 1884 in Paris, followed by the Munich Secession in 1892, the Vienna Secession in 1897 and the Berlin Secession the following year.

1892 Munich Secession

Franz von Stuck, Lovis Corinth and Peter Behrens were at the head of the Munich Secession, founded in 1892; in 1893 Max Liebermann initiated the " Association of XI", out of which, together with the "Freie Künstlervereinigung" ("Free Association of Artists"), the Berlin Secession developed in 1898. It is thanks to them that German Impressionism won through against the art policy of the Wilhelminian imperial family. These two movements also helped the breakthrough of a new humanistic bourgeois and modern art style. In 1910 the younger Expressionists split off as the New Functionalism. Until its prohibition in 1933 the association divided into the Berlin Secession and the "Free Secession" (1914).

1897 Vienna Secession

In Vienna the Secession developed from a protest movement against the predominantly conservative conditions in the operations of the institutional Künstlerhausvereinigung ("Association of Austrian Artists Künstlerhaus"). The group of young artists - with Gustav Klimt as President – soon had an exhibition hall – laughingly called the "Mahdi's monument" - and their own journal "Ver Sacrum". They kept themselves informed about international developments in art and presented the works of their most important members in exhibitions. As far as quality, inventiveness and formal wealth were concerned, the Vienna Secession became the leading secession movement; particular importance was attached to the enhancement of arts and crafts, as was proved in the Secession Exhibition.

1900 Arts and Crafts in the Secession

The eighth Secession exhibition was held in the autumn of 1900. It provided an overview of major developments in the world of arts and crafts. The Viennese artists were impressed by the furniture produced by English colleagues, as a co-operative, the Austrian public, however, was not impressed. The works of Josef Hoffmann and Kolo Moser, on the other hand, were well received due to their usefulness, their lack of decoration and therefore their clear rejection of historicism, as expressed in the floral Art Nouveau style so popular in France.

At the same time, the idea of establishing an arts and crafts movement similar to the English Arts & Crafts movement took on a concrete shape (Wiener Werkstätte ("Viennese Workshops")).

1907 Werkbund ("Association of Craftsmen")

The Austrian Werkbund developed amid the strain between German perspective and Austrian tradition. From an organisational and historical point of view the German Werkbund, dating from 1907 was the model for the founding of the Austrian group. Personalities and institutions of the Austrian style such as Josef Hoffmann and the Wiener Werkstätte ("Viennese Workshops") were integrated as members in the German Werkbund within the programme "Refinement of commercial work in co-operation with art, industry and crafts". The Austrian Werkbund was founded in 1912.

1912 Austrian Werkbund

The aim of the Werkbund movement was to link infrastructure and experience. In Austria this tradition reached back to the 19th century. (Museum für Kunst und Industrie ("Museum of Art and Industry"), Vienna School of Arts and Crafts). Unlike the German Werkbund, which grew from a small circle of artists and patrons, the Austrian Werkbund had 178 founder members.

Vienna, with its artists' movements and workshops (Wiener Werkstätte ("Viennese Workshops")) was considered to be a city for which aesthetics had been of prime importance since the turn of the century. The contrast between modern and traditional styles became unified in an Austrian style that found international recognition.

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: The poster of the Werkbund estate exhibition in Vienna in 1932.
Photo: Christies East (New York), Important Design, 27th November 1999

German Werkbund

Handcrafted furniture was the declared ideal of the artists' workshops, but socio-economic considerations were soon to lead to an about-turn. Mass-produced furniture was to come into its own and the designers had to come to terms with industrial production methods.

With this in mind, the German Werkbund was founded in 1907 in Dresden. With the exception of a compulsory interval during the Second World War the Werkbund continued to exist until 1970. One of the founder members was Hermann Muthesius, who was one of the most vocal proponents of the new alliance between art and industry.



View of a sitting room during the German Werkbund exhibition in Paris in 1930.
Photo: Christies London, The Chair, 29th October 1997