

Download Part 4

The Österreichische Werkstätten present Olga Kronsteiner's

The History Encyclopedia

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Peter Behrens 1868-1940

Together with Franz v. Stück he initiated the Munich Secession, was a co-founder of the Vereinigten Werkstätten ("Workshops for Arts and Crafts"), made a name for himself in the Darmstadt Artists' Colony and became one of the first members of the German Werkbund.

In 1907 Behrens became artistic advisor to AEG, the electrical appliance company which was expanding rapidly at that time. He introduced a uniform graphic presentation for the company, designed brochures, posters and magazines, and, for the first time gave products and machines a sober shape suitable to industry. In this manner a whole branch of industry was freed from the ballast of historicism; Behrens is thus regarded as the inventor of corporate identity.

Architects, who were later to become famous such as Le Corbusier, Walter Gropius and Ludwig Mies v.d. Rohe worked for him in Potsdam.



A suite designed by Behrens in about 1900 of poplar wood, originally upholstered in red leather. Photo: Quittenbaum München, Angewandte Kunst, 11th May 1998

Joseph Maria Olbrich 1867-1908

A pupil of Wagner, he was a founder member of the Vienna Secession and of the Darmstadt artists' colony. The exhibition hall the "Secession" (1897/98) and its clear, strict, cubic shape, latticed metal cupola and details rich in fantasy, designed by Olbrich made him a pioneer of modern architecture.

In line with the ideas of Art Nouveau (the environment as a Gesamtkunstwerk) he also worked on the decorative furnishing of interiors, on designs for glasses, posters, book decoration, even on the design of household utensils. As far as style is concerned, he adhered to the geometric trend typical of Vienna, which he contrasted to flowing ornaments.



An exhibition hall by Olbrich on behalf of the Darmstadt artists' colony – postcard dated 1908. Photo: Quittenbaum München, Jugendstil – Art Deco, 18th November 2000



A 5-piece tea service from a design by Olbrich dated 1904.
Photo: Quittenbaum München, Angewandte Kunst, 10th May 1999

Richard Riemerschmid 1868-1957

Providing the decisive artistic drive behind the German workshops, Richard Riemerschmid produced hundreds of designs covering all areas of home décor (utensils of glass, ceramics, metal; furniture; lamps; textiles, wall coverings; floor coverings).

As far as style was concerned he modelled his work on peasant handicrafts; many of his chairs are solidly built, the surfaces appear almost untreated in order to allow the natural grain of the wood to act decoratively. At the climax of the Art Nouveau period (1899-1906) the furniture displays ornamentation typical of the time which is applied with restraint to the frames or the backrests. His repertoire of shapes also formed the basis for the furniture that had been produced by machine since 1906, handsome low-cost items for smaller rooms.



Chair from Richard Riemerschmid's prize-winning dining room, about 1900.
Photo: Quittenbaum München, Jugendstil – Art Deco, 20th May 2000

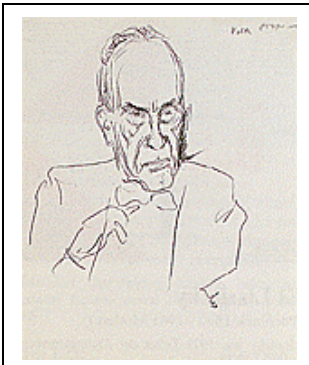


A typical Riemerschmid 1901 interior depicted in a contemporary art magazine.
Photo: Christies London, The Chair, 29th October 1997

Walter Gropius 1883-1969

After studying architecture in Munich, Walter Gropius worked with Behrens and then set up his own office. In 1919 he founded the Bauhaus in Weimar, of which he was director until 1928.

For Gropius, state of the art technology and the new aesthetic conceptions developing therefrom had to be at the forefront of architectural development, urban planning and industrial design. In 1934 Gropius had to emigrate to England, in 1937 he was offered a chair at Harvard University in Cambridge. His buildings are scattered throughout the world (e.g. PAN-AM building, New York 1952; Rosenthal porcelain factory, Selb 1966/67).



Caricature of Walter Gropius (1883-1969) by the Austria graphic artist Benedikt F. Dolbin dated 1950.

Photo: Quittenbaum München, 80 Jahre Bauhaus Design, 10th May 1999

Ludwig Mies van der Rohe (1886-1969)

From 1908 to 1912 he worked as an employee of the industrial architect Behrens; his first designs for skyscrapers made of steel and glass date from this era. His steel frame and glass wall buildings (Seagram Building, New York, 1950s; Berlin National Gallery, 1960s) are among the major works of modern architecture.

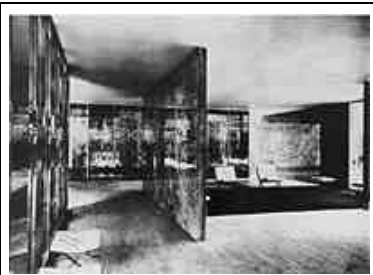
Between 1930 and 1933 he was director of the Bauhaus in Weimar. His furniture designs – without any "trivial decoration" were a by-product of building contracts. The work carried out for the Weißenhofsiedlung (1927) project in Stuttgart, which he directed, made a lasting impression, as did the German Pavilion for the world exhibition in Barcelona which was designed and furnished by him.



Mies van der Rohe designed this free-swinging chair for the Werkbund exhibition in Stuttgart in 1927. It was also called "Weissenhof Chair".
Photo: Quittenbaum München, Modernes Design – Kunsthandwerk nach 1945, 9th June 2001



Mies van der Rohe's most famous lounge chair, designed in 1929 for the world exhibition in Barcelona and available today as a re-issue.
Photo: Christies London, The Chair, 29th October 1997



Contemporary view into the German pavilion at the 1929 world exhibition in Barcelona.
Photo: Christies London, The Chair, 29th October 1997

Marcel Breuer 1902-1981

Breuer, born in Hungary, was one of the first Bauhaus graduates; in 1924 he became director of the Bauhaus furniture department. Instead of using wood, the young designer experimented with steel. In 1925, after numerous attempts with models, the first tubular steel chair in the history of furniture was finally constructed – the club chair "Wassily" (for Kandinsky's house in Dessau); later variations on this design were fold-up models or models without back legs, all were covered in hard-wearing two-cord yarn.

All Breuer's designs are characterised by simple, clear shapes; they are light and elegant and, despite the chilliness of the material used, radiate harmony.



Marcel Breuer (1902-1981) sitting in one of his designs, 1936.

Photo: Christies South Kensington (London), Modern Design, 26th March 1997



Wassily: Breuer designed this chair in 1925 for the house of Wassily Kandinsky, the painter – the chair was made by Thonet.

Photo: Christies London, The Chair, 29th October 1997

Quotations: Marcel Breuer

"I didn't see only symbols of technology in these burnished and sweeping lines, but rather technology itself." (Marcel Breuer)

"If 'International Style' is equated with mechanical and impersonal severity, then down with International Style. The choice of expression is unfortunate – as is 'Functionalism'. The 'human component' should mean more than mere obliging tolerance in the face of routine and imperfection, it should be precise thinking, high quality planning and its resulting consequences for materials, details and construction." (Marcel Breuer, 1948)

Wilhelm Wagenfeld 1900-1990

Today, he is still considered to have been a designer at heart. The tablelamp he designed in the mid-1920s together with Karl J. Jucker in the Bauhaus with a glass base and a white lampshade of opal glass made him famous. It was as simple as a street lamp and still a symbol of early functionalism. When Wagenfeld said that the best characteristic of objects was their "unpretentiousness", he meant by this useful, low-price and yet appealing everyday objects.

Thus the silversmith created many consumer durables out of glass and metal: such as his legendary cube-shaped china (1938) and other press glass designs for Jena Glas (Vereinigte Lausitzer Glaswerke) or his work for WMF, Rosenthal and Braun.



The famous cube-shaped china, here one model with jugs and storage jars, designed in 1938 by Wilhelm Wagenfeld for the Lausitz Glassworks.
Photo: Quittenbaum München, Modernes Design – Kunsthandwerk nach 1945, 9th June 2001



Conical, funnel-shaped and spindle-shaped inner walls for Wagenfeld vases designed for WMF.

Photo: Quittenbaum
München, Modernes Design –
Kunsthandwerk nach 1945,
20th May 2000

1895 Charles Rennie Mackintosh 1868-1928

He is considered to be the founder of the so-called Glasgow Style. His chairs, in particular, are among the most unusual turn-of-the-century designs; they are architecture in miniature, alone because the decorative element outweighs the practical value. Long chair backs, geometric inlay work, chessboard patterns and latticework are characteristic of his furniture. The astonishing similarity to the designs of the Wiener Werkstätte ("Viennese workshops") is obvious. It is no longer possible to determine who influenced whom. The first direct confrontation of the two took place at the Secession Exhibition in Vienna; Josef Hoffmann travelled to Glasgow to visit Mackintosh soon after.



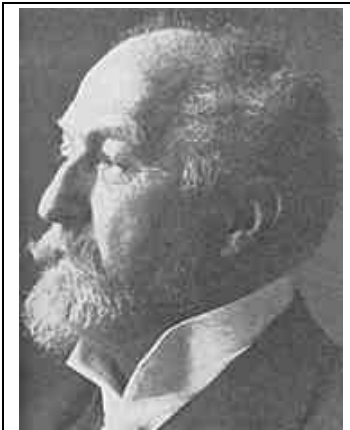
Charles Rennie Mackintosh
1868-1928.
Photo: Christies New York,
Masterworks 1900-2000, 8th
June 2000

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

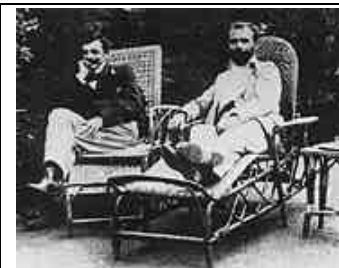
Kolo(man) Moser 1868-1918

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

