The Picturesque Eye.
Framing Regionalist Art Forms in Late Empires (1900-1950)

International Conference, Vienna 3-5 December 2015

Cluster of Excellence “Asia and Europe in a Global Context” (Global Art History)
Heidelberg University

Austrian Museum of Folk Life and Folk Art

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Abstracts
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**Pictorialism in Service of Human Geography.**
On the role of the 'picturesque' within the autochrome archive
*Les Archives de la planète* (1908–1931)

Franziska Scheuer
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**Abstract**

On the eve of the First World War, the Jewish banker Alber Kahn (1860–1940) established the “Archive of the Planet Earth” – today the world's largest assemblage of autochromes consisting of around 72,000 colour transparencies. The diapositives were created during photographic campaigns and show ethnicities, their cultures, and habitats. It was the declared aim of the image archive to contribute to the understanding of 'foreign' cultures and thus to the stabilisation of peace. From 1912 onwards, the archives and the photographic campaigns were under the academic supervision of the human geographer Jean Brunhes (1869–1930). The remaining image material shows a remarkably large portion of 'picturesque' elements, i.e. pleasant-to-look-at themes rooted in occidental visual memory. For *Les Archives de la planète*, the question arises as to the role of the 'picturesque' both in terms of the intellectual anchorage of the collection in the theory of human geography and in terms of the significance of this discipline for the debates around French colonial policy in the first half of the twentieth century. Using selected autochromes from French colonies, I will first outline the characteristic features of so-called ‘picturesque’ transparencies, the extent to which they reflected French pictorialism, as well as the specific connections to this photo-artistic movement. Afterwards, I will explain in how far the 'picturesque' features of design can be traced back to Jean Brunhes and his theory of human geography, and to what degree they support the 'validation' of cultures and, in particular, of art production in the French colonies in the sense of an emphasis on the unity of the French colonial empire.

Léon Busy, *Without Title (opium smoker)*, Vietnam, July/August 1915, autochrome, 3.5 x 4.7 in.
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Territorializing Images.
Constructing Regions in the Late-Imperial Habsburg Period

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Abstract

At the end of the 19th century, Austrian ethnographers - seen in German as "Volkskundler" in the making - had a special interest in the so called "Hutsuls", a group of people living in the peripheral district of Galicia (in today's Ukraine). In Vienna, there is a specific narrative about this group, which is mirrored in the collections of the Volkskundemuseum. Artefacts, books and articles, as well as a certain number of photographs, all show this preoccupation of the researchers. Amongst those pictures which feature “Hutsul” characters, it is significant that a large number of the images originate from as few as two commercial photographers and a third academic photographer. They appear in several versions within the museum’s collections and in the publications of researchers working in Vienna and Galicia. Most of these are staged photographs, often taken in studios, posed in a typological manner - recalling the formats of bourgeois portraits – and featuring so-called "Volkstypen" [folk types]. Both the texts and the images present a primitivized, seemingly picturesque, conceptualization of these people. I therefore want to follow the traces of these images, which seem to have constructed a specific visual account of the “Hutsuls” which predominates amongst a certain number of publications and within the museum’s collections. Via the widespread networks of the early “Volkskunde” this account seems to be influential not only within the scientific realm.

Julius Dutkiewicz: Ruthenischer Bursch, Eastern Galicia (today Ukraine) Photograph with historical retouch. 1880s
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Crossing Thresholds, Making Borders:
Regionalism and Aesthetics in Post-Frontier America

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Abstract

This paper discusses the topic of regionalism and aesthetics by addressing the concept of the Culture Area which came to prominence in Cultural Anthropology in the first decades of the 20th century. The closing of the American Frontier at the end of the 19th century and the subsequent opening-up of boundaries were followed by a thorough conceptual remapping of America. This was also the time when cultural evolutionism gave way to diffusionist models in anthropology, and the culture area concept replaced older hierarchical stepladder models of cultural evolution. A culture area in anthropology usually denotes a large geographical region whose inhabitants share similar or related culture traits, such as locally specific subsistence patterns, material culture, social organization and religion. It goes back to American anthropology’s search for concepts that would facilitate representations of the indigenous cultures of North America in exhibition spaces after the closing of the frontier. The concern of anthropologists around the turn of the 20th century and into the next two decades was to move anthropology away from evolutionist armchair speculation and turn it into an academic discipline firmly positioned in universities and museums. However, the Culture Area concept also made it into the neighboring discipline of sociology. It even resurfaced at the beginning of the 1950s and the onset of the Cold War in the new academic configuration called “Area Studies”.

The Kwakiutl hamatsa ceremony, as shown in a diorama in the U.S. National Museum in 1895.
Abstract

The Soviet Union was established as a multinational federation. The elaboration of the Soviet nationality policy took place in close cooperation of authorities with filmmakers, whose travel films, today classified as documentaries, made in the most remote parts of the new state contributed lasting visual formulae for the abstract categories of ethnicity, nationality and tribe applied by state policies. With its broad outreach, cinema was the medium that could most convincingly answer a troubling question ‘how should a multinational socialist federation look like?’ Soviet kulturfilms, short-lived precursor to the documentary, to a great extent defined the way the Soviet space is framed and remembered. Focusing on the shaping of the Soviet visual legacy, my presentation addresses the following questions: How did film-makers present ethnicities and nationalities, and inscribe culturally heterogeneous communities within the homogenizing project of Soviet modernization? What were the reasons behind the disappearance of both the concept of kulturfilm and the genre of expedition films in the second half of the 1930s? And finally, how can the history of Soviet kulturfilm be inscribed within the broader debates on colonial imagery and the Russian imperial legacy?
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From Claude Glass to Camera Lucida:
Optical Instruments to Frame the World as Picturesque

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Abstract

This conference aims to consider how the visual field was defined, divided up and framed by the various optical instruments that artists used during the great explorations from the late 18th century to the eve of the Great War in 1914. More precisely, it will identify the different framing methods that created the picturesque and regionalism in the context of discoveries and colonialism, not so much from the perspective of political history than anthropological history.

What mechanisms prevailed for the instruments to make the landscape “picturesque”? Was it the same for rendering architecture and people picturesque? Were there dangers for the artist-explorer? But, first of all, who were those artists? Who did they work for? For a government (Army, Navy, Museum, Institute of Geography, etc.) or for a shipbuilder, a banker, etc.? What cultural and stylistic differences existed between the work of French, British, German and Italian artists? Has such a colonial aesthetic contributed to redefining the theory of the picturesque itself? Can we know to what extent the artist-explorers decided to reveal certain aspects and leave others in the dark? What was the degree of technical determinism in the devices used? Can we know the context, the environment from which the images were framed and taken? In which collections are the images to be found? How are they mounted? Who uses these images in Europe? To what purpose? In what type of publication and by which medium are the original works reproduced and published? What is the level of interpretation from one medium to another?

Illustration from George Dollond, Description of the Camera Lucida.
London 1830.
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The State as a Work of Art?  
Regionalism and Imperial Politics in the late Habsburg Empire

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Abstract

Recent scientific literature has assigned crucial importance to Austrian schools of arts and crafts as well as to museums in constituting a specifically Austrian synthesis – as Diana Reynolds has called it. The tenor of her argument is that a network of such schools of arts and crafts – with the “Austrian Museum for Art and Industry” in Vienna in pride of place – helped promote the education of artistic taste and also special forms of a distinct aesthetic patriotism. The paper should address the problem of the way in which regional forms of art that had been categorised and ultimately exhibited in the late phase of the Habsburg monarchy were adopted in political discourse – either in a supranational-imperial or regional-emancipatory way. Basically, the remarks of the presentation are directed at a problematic history of the (political) functionalisation of regional art forms in contrast to more aesthetically argumentative approaches.

A Tale of Two Museums in the 1930s: Ethnographic Politics in Paris and in Hanoi

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Abstract

The Musée de l’Homme at Hanoi (MHHan) was created in 1938, a year after the opening of the Musée de l’Homme in Paris (MH). It was also in 1937 that an Ethnological Service was created at the École Française d’Extrême-Orient under the direction of P. Lévy who founded the Institut Indochinois pour l’Étude de l’Homme also in 1937 and was the MHHan’s director. These three institutions were part of a general plan conceived by P. Rivet to establish the MH as the coordinating centre of an institutional network of museums and research institutes operating in French Indochina. The ways in which collections were gathered, ordered and circulated between the MH and the MHHan testified to the reciprocal interactions of these practices which, although structured by the dominance of the MH, nonetheless complicate the centre-periphery model.
Monarchic and Kaisertreu National Patriotism.
The Establishment of the Arts and Crafts Movement in the Croatian Lands of the Habsburg Monarchy until the End of WWI

Igor Vranic
European University Institute, Florence

Abstract

In 1879 the Arts Society was established in Zagreb. The main aim of the society was to popularize art and the general taste of the public, and to stimulate arts and craft production. Soon after, the Arts Society established the Museum for Arts and Crafts and a Crafts school, with the help of local government. Although the museum served to prove distinct Croatian culture and talent, its other goal was to construct common multinational culture of the Monarchy. The main idea behind the whole project was to educate general public in good taste and new class of artisans and craftsmen who would help country to prosper in art and economy. The Museum and the School were also to help peasants to preserve rapidly disappearing folk arts due to modernization. Similarly, the Crafts school was seen as an institution which would alter modernization characterized by large factories and the proletariat by making a wealthy middle-class of craftsmen.

Vlaho Bukovac (1855-1922): Long live the king
Abstract:

At the beginning of the 20th century, the first art schools organised by the French colonial government in Indochina intended to renew regional art forms around the colony. The purpose of this cultural politics was mainly to enhance craft industry, revaluing local traditions and traditional methods. After the First World War, from 1917 onwards, Albert Sarraut with his new association policy introduced colonial higher education to Indochina. Its objective was to import Western higher education model in order to promote French culture as well as strengthen Indochinese traditions. The Fine Art School of Indochina opened in 1925 in Hanoi and was part of the Indochinese University. It deferred from the previous art schools as its aim was to train artist and no more craftsmen. Mixing Western pedagogy as taught in the Fine Art School of Paris and Asian traditions, it was a perfect product of this new “association politics”, leading to political consensus. I propose to focus on different topics: How did this school participate to a “re-valuing” of Indochinese tradition? What was the specific role played by the Fine Art School of Paris? Who were the teachers/actors and in which way did they get involved in the school? What did Vietnamese artists draw from it, how some of them were quite despair at the end of their curriculum and how it led some of them to nationalism?
Abstract

Like many intellectuals of his time, the eminent politician and antiquary Zhu Qiqian (1872-1964) searched for the underlying causes of China’s political and military weakness. One explanation he found for Western dominance in the field of technology was a level of awareness in the West for craft traditions that was lacking in China. For this reason, he founded the Society for the Research in Chinese Architecture in 1930, launching several research projects on the history of Chinese crafts, its terminology, actors and its immutable principles. This paper focuses on the conceptual framework of Zhu’s research initiative. It explores Zhu’s struggle to meet international standards of research and to demonstrate the relevance of Chinese traditional crafts for a global history of technology. To this end, he combined the methodological approaches of pre-modern Chinese writings on architecture and Western methods of measurement, visual documentation, and knowledge categorization.

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Picturesque India. Changes of an Aesthetic Paradigm in a Colonial and Postcolonial context

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Abstract

The paper suggests to differentiate between two modes of reception of the picturesque in the colonial and postcolonial context of architectural historical writing as well as architectural production: the first can be described as pictorially-static while the second one affirms the temporally-dynamic moment inherent in the conception and aesthetic of the picturesque.

The aim is to exemplify these two moments of the picturesque by means of historical material and to elaborate on the thesis that the “colonial gaze” of the British, in terms of historiography and design premises in the architectural practice, applied a rather static view of India which has as its effects a paralyzing or freezing hold on India’s cultural heritage.

"Great temple at Bhubaneswar."
Lithography of Fergusson and Dibdin, from Picturesque illustrations of ancient architecture of Hindostan, ca.1850.
Abstract

A group of Russian intellectuals led by the writer Semen An-Sky engaged in the project of a genuinely Jewish ethnography of Russia. They relied on the powers of aesthetic persuasion of folklore, handicraft, and photographic imagery, collected during extensive expeditions in the pale of settlement, in order to overcome antisemitism and constitute a non-territorial Jewish nation within the existing frontiers. Thus, a vivid rural tradition was transformed into a collection of museum objects and a medium for an imaginary ethnography of a people yet to be discovered. New media, photography and phonography, were a means of ‘bottom-up’ nation-building. Turning away from a mostly biographic perspective on this chapter of Jewish history, my project focuses on images and museum objects as self-sufficient actors in a complex historical setting.
Abstract

The “Musée d’Ethnographie et de Préhistoire” of Algiers, called Le Bardo, was established in 1930, during the celebration of the centenary of the French conquest, and a few years before the reform of the old Parisian “Musée d’Ethnographie” located at the Palais du Trocadéro (1878), replaced by the Musée de l’Homme (1937, Palais Chaillot). The study of the objects exhibited in the museum of Algiers favored the formation of a library and a research laboratory, giving it a scientific perspective, a place where researchers, academics and curators have developed the disciplines of anthropology and prehistory, simultaneously at the university and the museum. If the scientific practice of Maurice Reygasse and Lionel Balout, the successive directors of the museum, showed a parallel evolution between Paris and Algiers, it also included the museum of Algiers in an international approach. Reygasse has participated in October 1925, to the Franco-American expedition at the Sahara, led by the Byron Khun Prorok and the Logan Museum of Anthropology (Beloit College, Wisconsin), represented by W Bradley Tyrell (administrator), Alonzo W. Pond (assistant curator), accompanied by the New York Times reporter Harold Denny. The result on the display at the Museum of Algiers is a contrast of various atmospheres, offering a Room of Prehistory with a similar typological classification than the Logan Museum, whereas the Room “Women of Algiers” is a recreation of the Work of Art of Delacroix (1834, Louvre) and a modern variant of the French Orientalist painting.
Empowering the Regions:
The Cultural Policies of Austria-Hungary and Imperial Britain

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Abstract

A particularly noticeable feature of late colonial empires was the phenomenon of what Maximilian Hartmuth has termed ‘supervised cultural empowerment.’ Local cultures – including art practices – were encouraged and supported from the cultural and political ‘centre’ in order to foster loyalty by subject peoples to the political status quo. Hence, while anti-colonial narratives often tend to stress the role of local cultures (and nationalisms) in challenging colonial rule, it can be argued, conversely, that they were often the product of colonial policy – even if later they came to challenge it. Tensions arose primarily out of the fact that central administrations often failed to supervise and hence control the forms that such local empowerment would eventually take. This paper explores this phenomenon in relation to the policies of Austria-Hungary towards its ‘fringe’ crownlands and imperial Britain towards India and Rhodesia. It looks in particular at the ways in which art schools and art museums were used as a means of local empowerment. It asks the questions: what were the successes and failures of such institutions? what do they tell us about the dynamics of cultural policy of imperial states in the late 19th and early 20th centuries?

Josef Hlávka, Residence of the Bukovinian and Dalmatian metropolitans in Czernowitz (1864-1882). Postcard from the 1930s.
Abstract:

In the last decades of the 19th century, modernity made its way also into the classical ballet at the Viennese Court Opera. Part of this 'trend' was the endeavour to bring to the stage different parts of the world as well as various regions of the Monarchy with as much accuracy as possible. This paper is analysing the ballet *A wedding in Bosnia*, performed in 1893, as one example of how the staging of the region was accomplished. The costumes for the ballet were designed by the Court Opera’s chief costume designer Franz Gaul, who not only collected pictures of national and regional costumes from all over the world, but who furthermore supervised the production of the most famous and wide-spread collection of photographs of the Monarchy’s regional costumes. The paper will examine how the images and the real costumes circulated between Bosnia, the Viennese Opera, and finally the Volkskunde Museum in Vienna.
Abstract

The drama theatre in Central Asia is a soviet import that was part of the modernization plan of Stalin. The theatre was used to educate the proletariat and take it out of the “dark superstitions” that characterized local Islam. Consequently theatre plays that ridiculed local religious authorities were repeated in each political epoch. The theatre was not meant to provide a social critic but to display backward mind and give advice how to get out of this “tradition-trap”. In other words, the theatre was a performative guide to modern life and thus crucial for installing a society with shared values, many far away from Central Asian everyday cultural experiences. The choice of clothing and behaviour set the standard of the new performative modernity imagined by the soviet leadership. Today, theatres continuous to function as political substitutes yet with a national agenda and anti-Islam/terrorism agenda.
Abstract

This talk focuses on two exhibitions that took place in Prague during the late Habsburg monarchy – the 1891 Jubilee Exhibition and the 1895 Czechoslavic Ethnographic Exhibition – and contrasts them to an exhibition organized in interwar Czechoslovakia in 1928. It explores the varied exhibiting strategies of organizers and exhibitors and focuses on exhibitions as means of promoting ideas of nationhood based on the political context in which they occurred. It pays particular attention to the displays of ethnographic material and its use in the context of the spectacle of a great regional exhibition.
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Pasar Gambir in Batavia (1921-1939).
A Vernacular Heterotopia for the Capital of the Dutch East Indies
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Abstract
Probably no other fair in the first half of the 20th century was more spectacular in the Dutch East Indies (today Indonesia) than the Pasar Gambir. With earlier test versions on the spot, the annual fair was staged for two weeks on the giant empty space of the King’s Square in the centre of Weltevreden, the 19th-century urban extension of colonial Batavia (today Jakarta), and reached its peak between 1921 and 1939. Its ‘regionalist’ appearance of ephemeral buildings in a physical disguise of bamboo material and dried palm leaves was made of shallow style quotations of vernacular house constructions from the colony’s various islands. This scenario was lately interpreted as a means to facilitate a temporary, peace- and playful contact zone between the indigenous urban society and the colonial ruling class.

However, this paper votes for another interpretation. Contrary to other creative projects by Dutch-colonial architects like Henri Maclaine Pont or Thomas Karsten, Pasar Gambir was rather a vernacular heterotopia in the Foucauldian sense: a late-colonial strategy to combine a temporary deviation from the colonial realities of social fragmentation with undamped consumerism – altogether backed by an aesthetic and structural misunderstanding, and decadent commodification of the country’s indeed astonishing legacy of vernacular architecture.

Entry pavilion of the Pasar Gambir in Batavia/Weltevreden in 1923, built after the Minangkabau-style in Sumatra
Tourism, Art History, and the War: the Adria-Exhibition 1913 in Vienna

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Abstract
The paper is going to analyze the so called “Adria-Ausstellung”, which was opened on May 3rd 1913, and being one of the biggest exhibitions that ever took place in pre-war Vienna. Planned by the “Österreichischer Flottenverein” – an organization close to the Austrian Government – and located in the Vienna Prater, this exhibition was a monstrous endeavor to represent Dalmatia en miniature. From the Prater Rotunda southwards an enormous 300 m long hole was dug out and filled with water – the Adriatic Sea. At the coast some of the most famous Dalmatian buildings were reconstructed, among others Zadar’s City gate (Kopnena vrata) and the Rector’s palace in Dubrovnik. My paper will try to explore the historical background of this somehow bizarre theme park. Far from being just a representation of Dalmatian art and architecture, the “Adria-Ausstellung” obviously had several goals. First, it was intended to enhance the tourism by showing the beauty of Dalmatia. And second, the exhibition was a welcome means to demonstrate the military force of the Austro-Hungarian armada. This political aspect especially has become important in summer 1913, when the Scutari-crisis and the Second Balkan-war destabilized the whole Habsburg Monarchy.
Abstract

Exhibitions of artifacts, art and crafts have played an important role for Japan’s modernization in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as they were crucial for the definition of a Japanese national culture and artistic tradition of a modern, unified and centralized nation-state. As the presentation of cultural products were part of Japan’s ambitions in “competing the West” (Hedinger 2011), they also gained importance for the country’s colonial project and imperialist politics in Asia, e.g. in Taiwan, Korea (Chosen) and Manchuria.

My paper deals with Japanese colonial exhibitions on Korea, particularly with the “Chosen exhibition (Chosen hakurankai)”, organized by the Japanese General Government of Korea in 1929, in the context of Japan’s politics of tourism. I will examine visual and experiential means and techniques, which were used with regard to architecture, the display of objects, as well as printed media, such as travel guides and leaflets. As I will argue, visual techniques such as the panorama were central to Japanese colonial politics in order to strengthen the link between Japan and its colonies.