

Report

Munich as a European Center of Artistic Education

A conference was held on the exportation from Munich of artists to the southeast and North of Europe from the mid-19th to the early 20th centuries in Munich on 7–10 April 2005, in anticipation of the 200th anniversary of the Munich Akademie der Bildenden Kunst, to take place in 2008. Organized by the Akademie.¹ Its intention (explained by Prof. Dr. Walter Grasskamp of the Akademie der bildenden Künste, Munich) is to take a fresh look at the 200-year history of the Academy from a broad European perspective, and to form a network of specialists interested in the history of the Munich Academy's German and foreign students.² Fourteen speakers from twelve countries explored the history of the Munich Academy, national developments and individual artistic careers, esthetics, and reception histories. The larger part of the speakers was from eastern Europe, where a majority of the former students came from: Among these, Hungarian and Polish groups were by far the largest, followed by Czechs, Greeks, Bulgarians and Norwegians. There were noticeably fewer students from Lithuania, Latvia, Trieste, Sweden, Romania, Finland, Slovenia and Denmark. Male and female artists working in artist colonies outside the Academy would have increased their numbers.

Prof. Dr. Frank Büttner of Munich, in his paper on "The Academy and Munich's Reputation as an Art City," explored the many factors that motivated art students from throughout Europe as well as the USA to study in Munich. Ever

since Ludwig I's love of the arts turned the small residence city into 'Athens on the Isar', Munich enjoyed an unusually prestigious reputation as an art city, derived from the Academy, public collections, and frequent exhibitions in the exhibition building on the Königsplatz and later in the Glaspalast (Munich's Crystal Palace), and at the Kunstverein. All these were extensively covered by the press: publicity was further generated by reproductions of Munich art. Its citizenry cultivated a certain nonchalance in its dealings with artists, and last but not least the cost of living was relatively low. All this furthered not only Munich's international prestige but proved also to be economically advantageous for a profitable art market and growing tourism. Ludwig I's great engagement as a patron of the arts over several decades until academic and avant-garde art tendencies merged in the 1860s. As his successors Max I and Ludwig II barely supported this tradition, public and private art began to drift apart.

The main attraction of the 'Art City Munich' for foreign students was the Academy, which enjoyed an outstanding reputation. At the beginning of the second half of the 19th century history painting was central. In particular, the successful Piloty-School, famous for its technically brilliant, dramatic stagings of historical events, attracted students from all over the world. Prof. Dr. Jan von Bonsdorff (Uppsala), in his lecture "Munich's Role for Scandinavian Painters—a View from Outside," explored why the Munich approach to history painting was so important. Bonsdorff explained that in the new European nation states their real or in

many cases still-imagined political independence resulted in a strengthening of national consciousness, which sought expression in the works of artists and poets. Since art traditions were generally not so developed in their own countries the artistic manifestations of the new states were often imported adaptations of foreign art. Young artists studied at the academies in Rome, Paris, Vienna, St. Petersburg, Venice, Antwerp or in one of the German cities. In the first half of the century they preferred Düsseldorf, in the second, Munich. It was only after the 1880s that the majority began to go to Paris. In Scandinavia the Swedes looked to history painting as an important instrument of forging national identity, while the Norwegians preferred landscape and genre as carriers of national character.

Finnish painters also often visited Munich on their way to Italy, as described by Prof. Dr. Annika Waenerberg (Jyväskylä) in his paper on "From Springboard to Bridge: Munich's Importance for Finnish Art." Knowledge of Bavarian landscape painting influenced the representation of the native landscape in a National Romantic style after the merging of the cultures of the Swedish ruling class and the Finnish population in the 1880's and 1890's. Finnish artists of the so-called 'Red Room', who brought the influence of early German Expressionism from Munich into Finnish modernism were denigrated as "Turku Münchners" by their competition, Helsinki artists trained in Paris.

Prof. Dr. Halina Stępień of Warsaw, who has already edited three encyclopedic volumes on Polish artists in Munich,

gave an overview of "The Polish Artist Enclave in Munich, 1828–1914." Poles in the Russian occupied lands fled oppressive conditions that did not allow for the development of national art institutions. Financially they depended on private patrons and the sale of paintings, so they were particularly keen on participating in foreign exhibitions. With their painterly celebration of a glorious feudal past (particularly beloved were battles and hunting scenes in flat landscapes with melancholic moods) they sought to contribute from the diaspora to the national sentiment of a country that did not exist in real political terms. It is worth noting that a smaller group of painters from Cracow, a city which was subject to the less restrictive Austrian occupation, was more strongly attached to conventional history painting. Barbara Ciciora (Cracow) presented "Matejko and Munich," about the then highly regarded history painter, Jan Matejko, who not only studied from the antique and from nature in classes at the Academy in 1858–59, but also avidly collected architectural and costume study materials and compositional sketches that decades later still provided him with source material. After the 1870s artists from Lithuania, which was also occupied by the Russians, had close contact with the Polish colony, and, as presented by Dr. Ausrine Slavinskiene (Kaunas) in a paper on "Lithuanian Painters in Munich," with their similar love for the hunting and horse genre, influenced 19th century Lithuanian painting with neo-Romantic interpretations of Munich Realism.

Bohemia, which then still belonged to Austria-Hungary, was oriented towards both Vienna and Munich. Prof. Dr. Jindřich Vybíral (Prague) spoke about "Prague architects in Munich", who were not very numerous, due to the small architecture school at the Academy, and also about some "Bavarian Architects in Prague," such as the architectural historian and teacher Bernhard Grueber. The most interesting group of Bohemian painters studied at the Academy in the 1880s, a time when stylistic developments in painting represented outside the

Academy, especially in the Glaspalast exhibitions, were more important. Dr. Roman Prahel (Prague) in his paper on "The Art Students' Community in Munich around 1885 and the Beginnings of Czech Modernism," talked about the founding of the Skreta Club, which outlined a program in Munich that, after its members' return to Prague, developed into an independent modern movement.

No city played as large a role as Munich in the history of modern Hungarian art. Dr. Agnes Kovács (Budapest), in "Facets of the Munich Academy in Hungarian Art Historical Practice," described research problems in Hungary, where until recently 19th century academic art lay outside the canon of Socialist realism determined by the communist regime. She introduced some major Hungarian teachers in Munich, such as the Piloty students Sandor Wagner, Sandor Liezenmayer and Gyula Benczur who, after their studies, taught for many years at the Academy, and Simon Hollósy, who mainly propagated the principles of the Leibl circle and Parisian influences in his private school in Munich. Hungary supported selected artists with scholarships that enabled their foreign study, which was also seen as a form of political resistance against Austria. The desire for the development of Hungarian history and genre painting was fulfilled, as a view into the collection of the National Museum today confirms. Dr. András Zwickl (Budapest) in "Major Show Place Munich: Hungarian Artists in Munich—Art from Munich in Hungary" traced as exemplary the careers of painters Mihály Munkácsy, Gyula Benczur und Pal Szinyei Merse, who in the 1860s received further education in Munich—Munkácsy in the Leibl circle, Benczur and Merse at the Munich Academy. In the 1880s they showed successfully at the Glaspalast and in later years supported their younger compatriots. The first institution for exhibitions in Budapest, the Kunsthalle, opened in 1879; the Salon paintings shown there had been created in Munich and their style was somewhat disparagingly labeled 'Kunsthalle-Painting.' However the

Hungarian art market remained largely undeveloped, until in 1903 Kálman Könyves opened his Salon and in 1909 Miklos Rószas his Artists' House, the latter modeled on its Munich namesake. In 1896, upon their return from Munich Simon Hollósy and students from his private Munich school founded the artists' colony at Nagybánya (1896), which is considered the initial spark for the development of a Hungarian modernist style of painting.

Nagybánya has remained an artists' colony, although it is called Baia Mare today and located in Romania, which is why Romanian art historians consider it to be at the root of modern Romanian art. In "The Education of Romanian Artists at the Munich Academy of Fine Arts," Dr. Stelian Mandrût (Cluj-Napoca / Klausenburg) talked about this education as an important factor in the Europeanization and Latinizing of Romanian art around the end of the 19th century, at the time that the movement of Romanian artists to Munich reached its peak. Dr. Tiberiu Alexa (Baia Mare) offered a schematic overview of the main tendencies in Romanian art of the 19th and 20th centuries.

The influence of the Munich School on Bulgarian painting of the 19th and 20th centuries was not as decisive, in that it was influenced by trends from all over Europe. But it was long-lived, as the matriculation books include Bulgarian students from the 1850s into the 1940s. "The Connection between Bulgarian Art and Munich" was traced by Dr. Vessela Christova-Radoeva (Sofia). A forerunner was Nikolai Pavlovic, who after studying in Vienna came to Munich in 1856. Forty years later he founded the Bulgarian Art Academy in Sofia, and hired Austrian and Czech colleagues from Munich to teach. Nikola Michaloff was in Munich from the late 1890s, Kiril Zoneff became an exponent of New Objectivity there in the 1920s, and Konstantin Ganef came to stay in the 1920s. Together they organized exhibitions of Bulgarian art in Munich, and at home were considered pioneers of Bulgarian modern art. Contact between

the countries continued even in the era of National Socialism. In Germany many exhibitions from totalitarian Bulgaria could be seen, especially of folk art.

In the 19th century Greece and Bavaria had a particularly symbiotic relationship, as discussed by Dr. Marilena Cassimatis (Athens) in "The Munich Academy and the Athens School of Art: (Not) a Paradoxical Symbiosis." The Philohellenic Ludwig I, obsessed with antiquity, transformed Munich into "Athens on the Isar," while after the Wars of Liberation his son Otto as King of Greece adapted Bavarian models for the new state. In 1837 an art school was founded that turned away from the Orthodox-Byzantine tradition and followed the example of romantic painters from Bavaria such as Leo von Klenze and Peter von Hess. Its students began creating the first Western-oriented works dealing with the just finished Wars of Liberation. Some of the first and most important artists to seek appropriate further study in Munich were Theodoros Vryzakis, Nikiphoros Lytras and Konstantinos Volanakis. Nikolaus Gyzis, a student of Piloty and longtime Academy professor, was highly regarded for his sentimental genre paintings and orientalist works both in Munich and in Greece. Generations of his students up to the turn-of-the-century brought Munich School art to Greece.

The percentage of foreign students reached a peak of about 60% in the 1870s. But this enthusiasm was short-lived as a younger, more eclectically oriented student generation after short stays transferred to Paris or elsewhere. In the 1880s students came from states that until this point had hardly been represented. Donovan Pavlinec (Ljubljana) in

"Slovenian Painters and Munich" presented one such group. In Slovenia up until the turn of the century there was next to no art infrastructure, so emigration presented the only chance for advanced art education. For decades Vienna was the most important intellectual center, but when in the 1880s the atmosphere there grew increasingly conservative younger Slovenian Realists began turning to the more diverse Munich scene. Anton Ažbe was among them. After his study at the Academy he opened his own very successful and progressive Munich school, which many Slavs attended, among them Wassily Kandinsky and Alexej Jawlensky.

Between the 1880s and World War I a string of Trieste artists came to Munich, tired of the conservative atmosphere in Italy and at the academies in Venice and Vienna where they traditionally studied. Munich's reputation came to Italy primarily through the Glaspalast exhibitions. The first of these students, Isidoro Grünhut, enrolled in 1883. He and the 20 painters who followed made the most of their short stay by absorbing as many stylistic influences as possible so that there is little trace of the Munich school in their works. However, through this contact Trieste's art scene opened up and rejuvenated, and enabled integration into an international context.

The conference offered an introduction to some aspects of eastern, southern and northern European art history. It became clear that these early examples are regarded as valuable expressions of their nations' own art spirits and not as foreign or imported. Perhaps that is why 'National Identity' was treated more fully than the 'International Avant-garde' in the conference. However, some potential

for conflict was noticeable among speakers from countries where political borders have shifted since the 19th century, which at times made it difficult to keep national and ethnic points of view apart. Despite this it was largely agreed upon that the question of national identity cannot be replaced by assuming that individual artists exist beyond all borders.

At the close of the conference there was a clear call for collaborative work encompassing a wider range of artistic disciplines, applied art and private schools. Munich's influence on the visual culture of Europe is the planned subject of a large exhibition at the Munich Haus der Kunst in 2008.

A complete list of the speakers and their themes can be found at the conference's website:

www.zikg.lrz-muenchen.de/main/veranst2005.htm#akad.

SUSANNE BOELLER

Staedtische Galerie in Lenbachhaus

TRANSLATED BY PETER CHAMETZKY

Notes

1 The conference, supported by the Hanns-Seidel-Stiftung of the Akademie für Politik und Zeitgeschehen, was organized by the Akademie der bildenden Künste (Prof. Dr. Walter Grasskamp, Prof. Dr. Florian Matzner, Dr. Birgit Jooss, Dr. Cornelia Gockel), the Zentralinstitut für Kunstgeschichte, Munich (Prof. Dr. Wolf Tegethoff, Dr. Christian Fuhrmeister), the Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität Munich, Institut für Kunstgeschichte (Prof. Dr. Frank Büttner, Prof. Dr. Hubertus Kohle) and the Institut für Kunstpädagogik (Prof. Dr. Wolfgang Kehrl), as well as the Architekturmuseum der Technischen Universität Munich (Prof. Dr. Winfried Nerdinger) in collaboration with the Hanns-Seidel-Stiftung

2. To aid in the research, a digital version of the student register is being made, and an academic archive has also been initiated.

ERRATA:

Joanna Vlasiiu is affiliated with the Institute of Art History 'G. Oprescu', and not with the National Art Museum in Bucharest.