

The Gödöllő Artists' Colony, Hungary

Aims, Organization and Artistic Style Compared to the Darmstadt Artists' Colony

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The aim of this paper is to examine two artists' colonies – the ones in Darmstadt, Germany and in Gödöllő, Hungary, which had a similar life-span, and which met occasionally in neighbouring pavilions at various international exhibitions – and to compare and contrast various aspects of their founding, organization and output.

First, let us examine the foundation of the colonies and their organization by looking at table 1. The Darmstadt Colony was founded two years earlier than Gödöllő, the idea of a Grand Duke who wanted to encourage the best contemporary arts, design and the manufacture of quality products in his region of Hesse.

It was backed by him financially, and he sought the highest quality artists, architects and designers to join the Colony. The Gödöllő Colony, on the other hand, was the idea of the painter Aladár Kriesch-Körösfői, in discussion with his friends and associates, particularly Sándor Nagy. They had as their model the sort of British Craft Guilds idealized by William Morris and set up by C. R. Ashbee in Chipping Camden, and so they moved to Gödöllő, a village some thirty kilometres outside the Hungarian capital, Budapest. They also had a strong social aim underlying their enterprise: to help Hungarian peasants re-learn the traditional folk crafts which were dying out, and thereby enable them to escape the

Table 1

	DARMSTADT	GÖDÖLLŐ
Dates	1899 – 1914	1901 – 20
Founded by	Grand Duke Ernst Ludwig	Aladár Kriesch-Körösfői
Sponsor & Terms	Grand Duke Ernst Ludwig A three-year contract: stipend, plus studios	Hungarian government and Hungarian Applied Arts Society
Darmstadt: Original Members until 1902 Gödöllő: Key early members	Joseph Maria Olbrich (architect/designer); Ludwig Habich (sculptor); Peter Behrens (architect/designer); Paul Bürck (graphic artist/designer); Patriz Huber (interiors/furniture); Hans Christiansen (designer); Rudolf Bosselt (metalwork/jewellery)	Sándor Nagy (artist/designer); Laura (Kriesch) Nagy (artist/designer); Aladár Kriesch-Körösfői (artist/designer); Ede Toroczka-Wigand (architect/interior designer); Leo Belmonte (weaver); Ferenc Sidló (sculptor); Jenő Remsey (artist)
Darmstadt: Members from 1903	Olbrich; Habich; Johann Vincenz Cissarz (painter/book artist); Paul Hausteine (designer); Daniel Greiner (sculptor/illustrator)	Associates: Géza Maróti (sculptor); Miksa Róth (stained glass designer); István Medgyaszay (architect); István Zichy (graphic artist); Árpád Juhász (graphic artist); Mariska Undi (designer); Carla Undi (weaver); János Vaszary (carpet/tapestry designer); Mihály Rezső (graphics)
Darmstadt: Members from 1906	Ernst Riegel (gold and silver smith); Heinrich Jobst (sculptor); Albin Müller (architect/designer)	
Darmstadt: Later Members	1909: Bernhard Hoetger (sculptor); 1909: Hanns Pellar (artist); 1911: Emanuel Josef Margold (architect/designer); 1911: Edmund Körner (architect/designer)	



1 Joseph Maria Olbrich, Large Glückert House, Darmstadt, 1901 (status 2009)

grinding poverty of the feudal system that still operated in Hungary. However, they also aimed to use these folk elements in their own work, thereby creating a modern Hungarian style based on the country's design traditions. These aims were endorsed by the state, and so they received both moral and financial support from the Hungarian government to carry out their ideas.

Whereas the Darmstadt Colony was run almost like a business contract, with the artists, architects and designers being employed for three-year periods, the Gödöllő Colony was a loose band of associates, living close to each other, and often working together on the same project. As can be seen from table 1, those present on Mathildenhöhe were constantly changing. The Gödöllő group was relatively stable, and associates from outside were used as and when necessary. Miksa Róth, for example, was the main producer of high-quality glass in the art nouveau period, working for many designers and on projects throughout the country, and

collaborating with the artists of the Gödöllő Colony as required.

Next we need to examine the influences on the artists working in the two Colonies. Table 2 gives the most important of them. The basic ideas of John Ruskin and William Morris in Britain of the importance of the craftsman and woman, and of the beauty of the artefacts that were produced, were well-known and widely followed everywhere. In the period under discussion, 1898-1920, artists, architects and designers were able to be very aware of what was going on around them from the magazines which were in wide circulation during that period, for example "The Studio" (England), "Art et Décoration" (France), "Magyar Iparművészet" (Hungary), "Deutsche Kunst und Dekoration" (Germany), "Innen-Dekoration" (Germany). These illustrated and discussed not only the latest artistic products from their own countries, but also from elsewhere around Europe. Darmstadt was perhaps more intimately aware of what

Table 2

	DARMSTADT	GÖDÖLLŐ
Influences	John Ruskin; William Morris; English Arts and Crafts; M. H. Baillie Scott; C. R. Mackintosh; The Vienna Secession; Munich; Henry van de Velde; Nancy	John Ruskin; William Morris; English Arts and Crafts; Hungarian folk art; Vienna Secession

Table 3

	DARMSTADT	GÖDÖLLŐ
Some Major Exhibitions	1898: Darmstadt Arts and Crafts Exhibition; 1900: World Fair, Paris: <i>Darmstadt Room</i> ; 1901: The First Exhibition of the Artists' Colony; 1902: First International Exhibition for Modern Decorative Art, Turin: <i>Hessian Department</i> ; 1904: The Second Exhibition of the Artists' Colony; 1904: World Fair, St. Louis: <i>Summer Residence of a Friend of the Arts</i> ; 1908: Hessian State Exhibition for Free and Applied Art; 1914: Darmstadt Art Year	1900: World Fair, Paris: Nagy/Kriesch carpets; 1902: First International Exhibition for Modern Decorative Art, Turin: <i>Hungarian Pavilion</i> ; 1904: The Circle of Friends in Art; 1904: World Fair, St. Louis: <i>Székely Pavilion</i> ; 1906: Milan Exhibition; 1909: Venice Biennale; 1909: Budapest National Pavilion: Collective Exhibition

Table 4

	DARMSTADT	GÖDÖLLŐ
Artists' Houses	7 designed by Olbrich; 1 designed by Behrens	2 designed by István Medgyaszay
Ernst Ludwig House	Designed by Olbrich: 6 artists' studios; 2 flats; communal area; sculpture and ceramics studios and workshops designed and set up	
Factories	1906: The Grand Duke's Ceramics Factory; 1907: The Grand Duke's Precious Glass Factory; 1907: The Ernst Ludwig Press	1905: Weaving Workshop, designed by Ede Toroczka-Wigand
School	The Grand Duke's Teaching Workshops of Applied Art (1907)	Weaving Workshop: in 1907 attached to the National Royal School of Applied Arts, Budapest

was going on in Vienna, through Olbrich, and because of that also of the work of Mackintosh and Baillie Scott, which was widely admired by the artists and designers of the Vienna Secession. And there is a sense in which, for political reasons, most Hungarian designers of the period shunned what went on in Vienna, although, because they were part of the same Empire, it was difficult to ignore. The Darmstadt group were probably also more aware of what was going on in Paris, Brussels, Munich and Amsterdam than those in the Hungarian Colony.

However, the major difference in influence between the two colonies is the study and use of folk elements by the Gödöllő Colony. While Darmstadt artists were intensely forward-looking in their search for new design styles, the Gödöllő artists researched the designs of their ancestors, particularly those in Transylvania where traditional crafts had been maintained at a higher level than elsewhere in the country. Members of the group were, for example, heavily involved in the

production of the enormous five-volume "A Magyar Nép Művészete" (Hungarian Folk Art), overseen by Dezső Malonyay, 1907–22, which surveyed every aspect of folk art throughout the territory of Hungary, and was beautifully illustrated with hundreds of examples. Aladár Kriesch-Körösfői, the founder of the Gödöllő Colony, wrote the "Hungarian Peasant Art" section in the special volume of "The Studio on Peasant Art in Austria and Hungary" (1911). We will see this key distinction when we examine some of the products from the two Colonies.

Both of the Colonies were active in displaying and presenting their work, both nationally and internationally. Here is table 3 of some of the main exhibitions they were involved in. As can be seen, works by the artists from the two Colonies were present together at the 1900 Paris and 1902 Turin exhibitions, although the Gödöllő Colony had not actually been founded at that point. One important difference is that the Mathil-



2 István Medgyaszay, Sándor Nagy House, Gödöllő, 1904–06 (status 2006)



3 István Medgyaszay, Sándor Nagy House, porches and balconies, Gödöllő, 1904–06 (status 2006)



4 Peter Behrens, Wertheim, dining room, Darmstadt, 1901/02



5 Aladár Kriesch-Körösfői, bedroom, Gödöllő, 1909

denhöhe Colony was intended as an exhibition itself, where interested buyers could come and see the complete range of works displayed and used in the houses of the artists, whereas the Gödöllő Colony never had such unity of either space or purpose. Table 4 gives an indication of the big differences in the infrastructure and organization of the two Colonies. The big push at Gödöllő was with the weaving studios, and tapestries were one of the major products of the Colony, whereas Darmstadt was much wider in what was set up, and also more commercially oriented.

We will now examine some particular examples of the products which came out of the two colonies, and compare and contrast them. The architecture is the obvious place to start, and it goes without saying that the Ernst Ludwig House and seven dwellings designed by Olbrich as well as the Behrens House designed for himself were some of the most modern examples of art nouveau architecture to be found anywhere in Europe at that time. The Darmstadt Colony was certainly leading the field on that front. Olbrich's Large Glückert House (1901) shows the kind of clean lines, white plastered



6 János Vaszary, The Fair tapestry, Budapest, 1908



7 Aladár Kriesch-Körösfi, Cassandra tapestry, Budapest, 1908

facades and minimal decoration which was typical for his Mathildenhöhe houses. (Fig. 1, Ill. IX and X) In contrast, István Medgyaszay's two studio houses for Leo Belmonte and Sándor Nagy at Gödöllő (1904-06) appear much less sophisticated, although they are still quite radical in their design. The use of unplastered pale brick aids that perception. Medgyaszay was actually a pupil of Otto Wagner's in Vienna, which can be seen in the overhanging roof of the Sándor Nagy House. (Fig. 2) However, the construction of the porches and balconies in carved wood come straight out of the decorative features of traditional Transylvanian village building. (Fig. 3) So

there is something of a fusion of the modern and the traditional here, which is the essence of what the artists of the Gödöllő Colony were trying to do.

The situation is rather similar with the design of interiors. In the Behrens Wertheim dining room (1901/02) for example, everything shows the modern abstract linearity of Darmstadt's Jugendstil and the Vienna Secession, while Kriesch-Körösfi's bedroom (1909) reflects the curved 'wings' of traditional Hungarian furniture and the designs on the upholstery and carpet flow straight from the folk versions of the same. (Figs. 4 and 5)



8 Sándor Nagy, The Kádár Kata window (production: Miksa Róth), Marosvásárhely (Târgu Mureş, Romania), 1912

Some of the applied arts were more important at Darmstadt than at Gödöllő. Much more was produced in the way of furniture, ceramics, glass, metalwork and jewellery. On the other hand, the Gödöllő Colony produced more in the way of tapestries and stained glass windows. Their tapestry was very varied, with several artists producing the designs. One designer who worked mainly for tapestry and carpets was János Vaszary, who had an interesting simplified style of presenting rustic scenes; shows his take on a village fair with men and women buying and selling cattle and other produce. (Fig. 6) In a radically different style, Aladár Kriesch-Körösfői presents us with a scene from the classical story of Cassandra, an interesting mixture of vertical and horizontal lines, and movement in several directions. (Fig. 7) The Gödöllő Colony produced a number of very important and beautiful sets of stained glass windows for major buildings, such as the Cultural Centre in Marosvásárhely (now Târgu Mureş in Romania) and the Town Hall in Szabadka (now Subotica in Serbia). In Marosvásárhely, Sándor Nagy and Ede Toroczkai-Wigand each designed three large three-light windows. Nagy took three traditional folk ballads to illustrate, for example the story of Kádár Kata in which the boy's mother disapproves of his courting Kata and has her drowned. (Fig. 8) Nagy uses a style which comes out of the British Arts and Crafts traditions started by William Morris and continued by designers such as Christopher Whall and Douglas Strachan. Toroczkai-Wigand produced three historical scenes, one of which shows the Cradle of the Royal Prince Csaba (Fig. 9) – all three are set in ornate traditional folk surroundings like this.

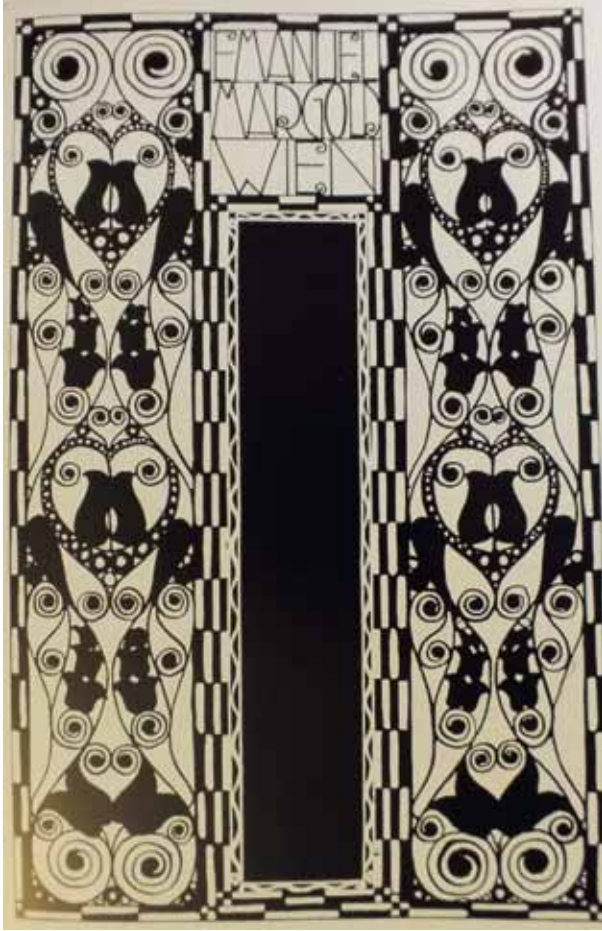


9 Ede Toroczkai-Wigand, The Cradle of the Royal Prince Csaba window (production: Miksa Róth), Marosvásárhely (Târgu Mureş, Romania), 1912

Whilst the Gödöllő Colony artists – in particular Aladár Kriesch-Körösfői, Sándor Nagy, Laura (Kriesch) Nagy and Jenő Remsey (artist) – produced a large number of easel paintings as well as murals, Hans Pellar was almost the only artist who came to the Darmstadt Colony. On the other hand, both colonies had a number of good graphic designers, producing work in a range of styles. To illustrate these, there is a title page of 1908 by Emanuel Josef Margold with an abstract pattern, perhaps influenced by Vienna Secession graphics, and an illustration by Mihály Rezső of 1910 which is undoubtedly influenced by the work of Aubrey Beardsley. (Figs. 10 and 11) Both colonies had sculptors producing good work: Daniel Geiner and Bernard Hoetger in Darmstadt and Ferenc Sidló in Gödöllő. It is not possible here to go into detail about all areas of the applied arts, but suffice it to say that clothing, carpets, wallpaper, posters, mosaics, books and magazines were all produced by both colonies.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is fair to say the Darmstadt and Gödöllő Colonies ran along similar tracks, but were founded on different bases: Darmstadt as an overtly commercial enterprise, and Gödöllő with more educational leanings. While the designs and artefacts produced in Darmstadt were generally very modern and forward-looking, those in Gödöllő usually sprang from or were related to traditional Hungarian folk design, with a modern element fitting in well.



10 Emanuel Josef Margold, A book title page, Vienna, 1908



11 Mihály Rezső, The Blessing book illustration, Gödöllő, 1910

Zusammenfassung Die Gödöllő-Künstlerkolonie, Ungarn – Ziele, Organisation und künstlerischer Stil im Vergleich mit der Darmstädter Künstlerkolonie

Die Gründung der Künstlerkolonie in Gödöllő (30 Kilometer von Budapest) war kein einzelnes Ereignis, sondern vielmehr ein Zusammentreffen von Künstlern und Designern, Architekten, Handwerkern und Handwerkerinnen, die ähnliche Vorstellungen über den Stellenwert der angewandten Kunst im Alltag hatten. Die beiden Hauptakteure – Aladar Körösfői-Kriesch und Sándor Nagy – waren stark beeinflusst von John Ruskins und William Morris' Ideen. Körösfői-Kriesch zog 1901 nach Gödöllő und andere folgten. Die beiden wichtigsten Quellen für ihre Arbeit waren traditionelles ungarisches Volksdesign und ungarische Mythen und Legenden. Sie benutzten diese für die meisten Produkte, die sie herstellten: Glasmalerei, Wandteppiche, Grafik, gemalte Illustrationen, Stickereien, Möbel und vieles mehr. Sie waren

eng mit dem Budapester Museum für Kunstgewerbe verbunden. Von ihm und der Regierung empfingen die Künstler Hilfe, vor allem wegen ihrer gesellschaftlichen Ziele, aussterbende Handwerkskünste durch Bildung wiederzubeleben.

Die Vergleiche mit dem, was in Darmstadt passierte, sind aufschlussreich. Der Gödöllő-Kolonie fehlte die Unterstützung eines reichen und begeisterten Adligen, aber sie gewann dennoch wichtige Unterstützung von außen für ihre Arbeit. In der gleichen Weise, wie die Darmstädter Kolonie das Denken und Arbeiten in der angewandten Kunst in Deutschland beeinflusste, gelang dies der Gödöllő-Kolonie in Ungarn. Die Arbeiten der Designer in Darmstadt und Gödöllő wurden international ausgestellt und fanden in den wichtigen zeitgenössischen Zeitschriften weithin Beachtung: „The Studio“ (London), „Magyar Iparművészet“ (Ungarische Angewandte Kunst, Budapest), „Deutsche Kunst und Dekoration“ (Darmstadt), „Art et Décoration“ (Kunst und Dekoration, Paris) und anderswo.

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