

Somit findet sich im Zentrum dieses ansonsten meisterlichen Bestandskatalogs ausgerechnet zu dem komplexesten Werk der Buchmalerei aus den Beständen des Louvre ein Beitrag, der die Fenster der Forschung mit fragwürdiger Gewissheit schließt. Das ist umso bedauerlicher, als hier kein Essay aus der Vogelperspektive – wie im Fouquet-Buch von Erik Inglis – vorgelegt wird, sondern Grundlagenarbeit, auf die jede künftige For-

schung zurückgreifen muss. Trotz einzelner Mängel wird dieses Buch, das weit über die nur mit 70 Werken bestückte Ausstellung hinausgeht, sicher zu Recht zu den künftigen Standardwerken gehören.

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## Vienna enchanted by Makart?

**Makart. Ein Künstler regiert die Stadt.** Wien Museum, Wien,

9. Juni–16. Oktober 2011. Kat. hg. v. Ralph Gleis. München, Prestel Verlag 2011. 276 S., Ill. ISBN 978-3-7913-6371-1. € 39,95

**Makart. Maler der Sinne.** Unteres Belvedere, Wien, 9. Juni–9. Oktober 2011. Kat. hg. v. Agnes Husslein-Arco/Alexander Klee. München, Prestel Verlag 2011. 252 S., Ill. ISBN 978-3-7913-6370-7. € 39,95

Doris H. Lehmann

**Historienmalerei in Wien.** Anselm Feuerbach und Hans Makart im Spiegel zeitgenössischer Kritik. Köln, Böhlau Verlag 2011. 527 S., zahlr. Ill. ISBN 978-3-412-20107-4. € 64,90

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**T**he Gesellschaft bildender Künstler Österreichs was celebrating its 150th anniversary in 2011 by hosting the Wien Museum's comprehensive Hans Makart (1840–84) exhibition in its headquarters, the Vienna Künstlerhaus. The venue was particularly

relevant to Makart scholarship because the artist launched his major paintings from here. But the Wien Museum's exhibition was not the only Viennese initiative last summer to reassess the city's most famous nineteenth-century painter. At the Lower Belvedere, Makart's large canvases, portraits and interior design schemes were showcased under the title of *Makart, Maler der Sinne*. The exhibitions were marketed as a joint-venture and presented the painter from two distinct curatorial platforms – Ralph Gleis at the Wien Museum projected Makart as a cultural-historical phenomenon of his time and Alexander Klee at the Belvedere traced Makart's painterly impact. In many ways, the two shows participated in a renewed art historical and popular interest in nineteenth-century Salon painting evidenced by recent international loan exhibitions and catalogue raisonnés (Cabanel, Gérôme, Bouguereau). But the two Makart events should also be viewed in a more specific context, namely, a gradual disciplinary move beyond the much-rehearsed 'Vienna 1900' paradigm. It is encouraging to see two of Vienna's premier institutional spaces dedicated to a Salon painter without the customary need to cast him as the 'other' of Viennese modernism. Although Makart's work has previously been put on show in Austria and Germany (most notably at the Staatliche Kunsthalle Baden-Baden in 1972, at the

Wien Museum's Hermes Villa in 2000-2001 and at the Salzburg Museum in 2007), the recent exhibitions represented the most ambitious endeavours yet.

### THE ARTIST'S REIGN AT THE WIEN MUSEUM

The Wien Museum drew from a large and diverse range of objects in its collection as well as international loans to convey the splendour of Makart's reign as central Europe's premier princely painter. Makart controlled his artistic 'empire' from his studio. Upon the painter's premature death in 1884, Rudolf von Alt painted a final watercolour of his studio, which has been reproduced as a large translucent screen into the exhibition's first room (*fig. 1*). Entitled "Makart's Studio," it explored the diverse ways in which the artist used his studio, as a physical place and a representational space, to promote himself as a painter, a taste maker and a designer. When entering this exhibition room, one's attention was immediately drawn to Makart's monumental painting *Der Frühling* (1883/84) which features prominently in Alt's watercolour and represented one of the exhibition's highlights because it encompasses so many aspects of Makart's painterly practice: it was conceived as part of a cycle, it celebrates form, colour and rhythm, it sensualises and eroticises mythology, it features his second wife Berta as the figure of spring – and it has not left the Salzburg Museum in 40 years. The area in front of *Der Frühling* payed homage to Makart's studio and displayed some of the key props from Alt's watercolour, including a Makart-bouquet of dried palm leaves and tall grasses.

As the exhibition was thematically organised, the next room introduced Makart's early 'scandal paintings' such as his fantastic triptych of an amorous world, *Die Pest in Florenz* (1868), which he used to establish himself in Vienna's art scene. His contacts with Vienna's money nobility soon made him one of the city's most coveted portraitists and he represented some of the most beautiful women of his day. As a lover of the theatre, Makart kept a close friendship with Charlotte Wolters and painted

her on several occasions, most famously in her signature role as Messalina (*fig. 2*). He also designed a number of theatre sets and organised a costume ball in honour of Richard Wagner in 1875. This connection to Wagner was further explored in a stunning room entitled "Painted Music – The Ring of the Nibelungen" which introduced four of Makart's Nibelungen paintings that have not been seen in Vienna since 1883; securing this loan from Riga marked a significant achievement. In subject and palette, these extraordinary paintings demonstrate a clear departure in Makart's oeuvre.

The Wien Museum owns a large selection of objects from Makart's legendary pageant of Charles V's entry into Antwerp organised for the imperial couple's silver wedding anniversary in 1879 and it should not come as a surprise that a room dedicated to the Festzug formed one of the exhibition's most spectacular spaces with, for example, 27 of Makart's 35 oil sketches of elaborately decorated floats for Vienna's guilds and co-operations displayed here as a continuous frieze. The painter died only five years later and as his reputation was so tied to the cult of his personality, interest in his work soon waned and he became the target for a new generation of Viennese artists who rebelled against his "schwülstige Schinken."

**G**leis's confident use of photographs, documents and material culture evidenced his curatorial experience with historical collections. The exhibition was driven by a historically grounded, carefully researched thesis for which quite extensive bilingual (German/English) wall texts, maps and labels provided the script. His approach might seem a bit didactic, even old-fashioned, but it should be remembered that Makart is still not a familiar name outside Austria. The show also employed creative display strategies such as the placement of female portraits in the Ranftl room, thus drawing attention to the fact that Makart painted the very wives and daughters of the Künstlerhaus artists and donors on permanent display here. Maybe a less successful intervention was the commissioning of the Viennese artist Raja



Schwahn-Reichmann to create a contemporary Makart-style interior. Her bright and gaudy interior sat uncomfortably with the rest of the exhibition, but served as an important reminder of the different colours and textures in Makart's studio which we only know through black and white photographs and Alt's watercolour.

### THE SENSUOUS PAINTER AT THE BELVEDERE

Contrary to the Wien Museum's interdisciplinary focus on Makart's relationship with the city and its society, the Belvedere examined the artist's œuvre through the lens of international modernism. Alexander Klee drew on the Belvedere's superb collection of Makart paintings to suggest a link to Impressionism and fin-de-siècle Décadence. The exhibition opened with Makart's spectacular *Venedig huldigt Caterina Cornaro* (fig. 3) which was seen by thousands of viewers when it was first exhibited at the Künstlerhaus in 1873 and on its subsequent world tour. This painting shows how colour and light played a key role in Makart's neo-baroque representational language and attests to his rather loose interpretation of history. In the exhibition, the painting was displayed against a large piece of purple velvet which was intended to make an allusion to the sumptuous quality of his work. To push this idea of tactility even further, the word 'sensation' was spelled out in dark red velvet letters and suspended from the ceiling. This lettering actually represented an artistic intervention by the contemporary artist Gudrun Kampl and continued through the exhibition. The next room, with walls clad in dark blue fabric, staged Makart's famous personification of the five senses alongside Renoir's *Après le Bain* (1876), making the point that both artists were interested in the female body's sensual impression on the viewer. This argument emphasises Makart's modernity in the handling of paint, brushwork as well as his 'decadent' subject matter infused with sensuality, spectacle and morbidity.

Moving away from this suggestion, Makart's stunning *Bacchus and Ariadne* was installed in a beautifully curated room that showed three

sketches tracing Makart's shift in emphasis from Bacchus to Ariadne. The painting was paired with Anselm Feuerbach's *Orpheus und Eurydike* (1869; fig. 4) and Ferdinand von Keller's *Hero und Leander* (1880) to juxtapose varying approaches to the representation of mythology. Towards the end of the circuit, one encountered a large 'box' wrapped in red fabric and again flagged by velvet letters spelling out "Dumba". This object actually recreated the original dimensions of Makart's famous interior design schemes for Nicolaus Dumba's study (1871-73) for which he provided six wall paintings, a ceiling painting as well as expert advice on the room's furniture. This important commission launched Makart's career as an interior designer and paved the way for the Ringstraße's "Prunkstil," and it was a joy to experience the wall paintings in their spatial relationship to one another rather than viewing them on a gallery wall (unfortunately, the ceiling painting could not be secured from Japan).

True to its title, the Belvedere's exhibition conveyed a very different picture of Makart than the Wien Museum. By focusing on the paintings themselves, Klee attempted to tie Makart's painterly practices into larger international phenomena that potentially extradite him from the still prevalent (art historical) devaluation of his work as oppressively pompous. The Wien Museum shared this ambition, but Gleis situated Makart and his work in its time, place and socio-cultural fabric. This is of course not to suggest that the Wien Museum did not feature outstanding artworks or that the Belvedere lacked intellectual rigour. But Gleis' confident handling of a vast range of objects generated a complex and multi-layered account of this captivating art historical period. Klee's vision was equally ambitious, maybe even more so given that much of the argument around Makart's links to international modernism represents relatively new territory. But the Belvedere's exhibition design left much of the 'intellectual' work to the visitor while the sensual aspects of the exhibition took precedence. One could certainly approach the velvet- and satin clad walls, the fabric letters suspended from the ceiling and the reduced wall-

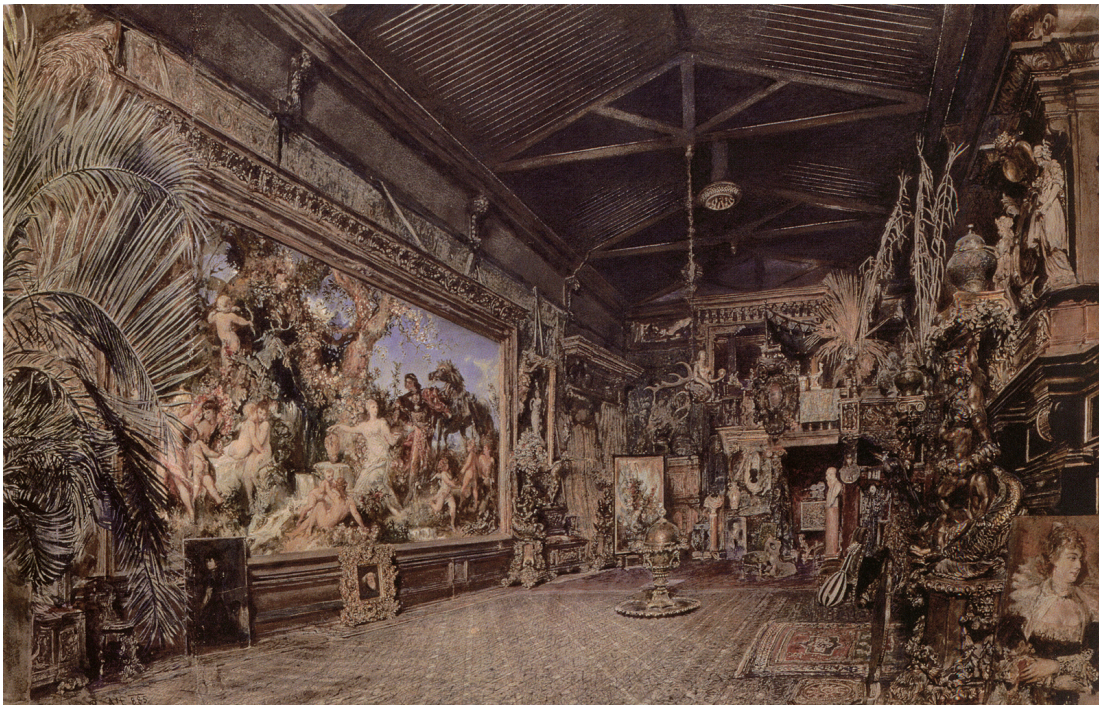


Fig. 1 Rudolf von Alt, Hans Makart's Atelier in der Gusshausstraße, 1885. Wien Museum (Kat. I, S. 27)

texts and minimalist labels as a post-modern commentary on Gründerzeit opulence. But for most visitors, this display strategy reinforced the very stereotypes that both exhibitions were working so hard to dispel. And while the dialogue between Makart and French modernism represented an important art historical intervention, it does not suffice to simply draw on one's own collection of French 'masterpieces' to prove this connection. To be fair, some of the comparisons between Couture or Delacroix and Makart, for example, were historically sound and visually stunning, but others should have warranted more careful consideration.

**B**oth exhibitions were accompanied by superbly illustrated catalogues, and the Belvedere's publication rectifies some of the exhibition's limitations, although it has a rather confusing layout and lacks substantial catalogue entries. Both volumes secured renowned scholars to present new research and to make exciting contributions to the field. The Belvedere's catalogue opens with an essay by Werner Hofmann examining how, and indeed if, Makart fits into progressive developments in nineteenth-century art history. Werner Telesko

conveys a nuanced picture of the role of history painting (in the sense of representations of history rather than as an academic genre) in nineteenth-century Austria. Two essays, one by Stephanie Auer and the other by Martina Sitt and Marvin Alter, problematise Makart's representation of women as historical actresses and allegorical figures. Thomas Wiercinski and Markéta Theinhardt provide a much needed foundation for the exhibition's ambition to place Makart into an international context: Wiercinski by analysing Makart's formative stay in Munich and Theinhardt by unveiling the painter's reception in contemporary French art criticism. Alexander Klee contributes a captivating essay on Ernst von Brücke's writings on Makart that reveals the clash of two worlds – experimental sciences and *l'art pour l'art* (133). The catalogue closes with Uwe Schögl's exploration of Makart's employ of photography in his artistic practice and as a means of self-promotion.

The Wien Museum's catalogue opens with Ralph Gleis' interpretation of Makart as a princely painter and as a historical phenomenon, which is given further analytical weight by Kurt Bauer's essay on the socio-political context of the 'Makart-time.' Elke Doppler scrutinises Makart's strategic

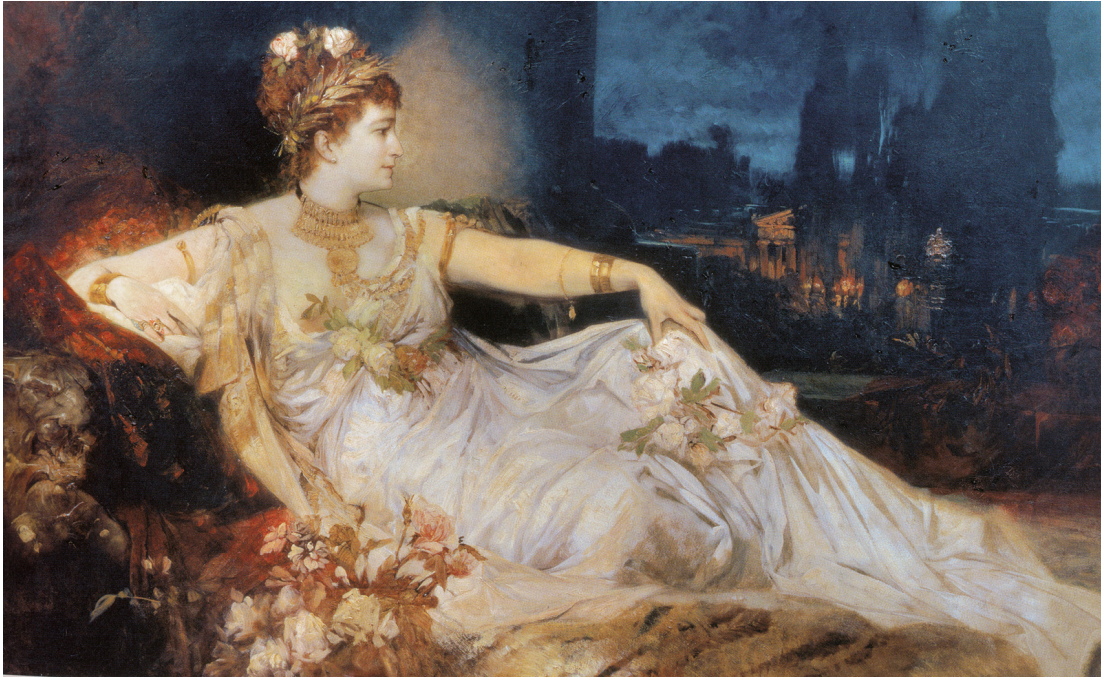


Fig. 2 Hans Makart, Charlotte Wolters als Messalina, 1875. Wien Museum (Kat. I, S. 97)

use of self-portraiture (in painting and photography). Doris Lehmann explores Makart's success and puts forth the evocative thesis that Makart made a series of "brave decisions against audience expectations and against art politics of his day" (50). Werner Kitlitschka places Makart's decorative paintings within the context of his 'competitors' for Ringstraßen projects. Hans Ottomeyer discusses late nineteenth-century artists' studios as spaces that transformed life into art on many levels, while Eva-Maria Orosz looks at them as fashionable templates for domestic interiors. Alexandra Steiner-Strauss' and Werner Telesko's essays investigate different aspects of Makart's engagement with the theatrical by looking at his stage designs and his Festzug respectively. Michaela Lindinger traces Makart's relationship to some of his sitters, his "glamour-girls and society-ladies" (84), while showing his great impact on contemporary fashion and society. Wolfgang Kos' closing piece offers an evocative rumination on Makart as an art superstar and foils him against twentieth-century icons such

as Andy Warhol, Joseph Beuys and Damien Hirst. Both catalogues thus approach Makart from distinctive vantage points and despite occasional overlaps, provide a sustained scholarly engagement with Makart and his time.

### REVISION OF PREJUDICES

Doris H. Lehmann could not have published her book at a better time, because her nuanced interpretation of Feuerbach's and Makart's contemporary reception adds yet another dimension to the Makart exhibitions. Art historians have long posited the two artists as arch enemies and supported a view of Feuerbach as misunderstood intellectual and of Makart as fashionable princely painter. While their different approaches to history painting indeed polarised contemporary audiences and critics, Lehmann's careful analysis offers new, and often surprising, insights into the strategic ways in which the two artists actually activated a discourse of 'artistic rivalry' to serve their career ambitions. Lehmann's

study pays particular attention to the 1870s, when Feuerbach and Makart were both in Vienna and history painting underwent an anxious period of redefinition. Although Franz Joseph's Ringstraßen project provided plenty of opportunity for painters in the 'grand manner' to decorate new public buildings, the death of Leopold Kupelwieser in 1862 and Carl Heinrich Rahl in 1865, left a vacuum in Vienna's history painting. Makart's arrival in 1869 and Feuerbach's appointment to the Academy in 1872 injected new life-force into history painting but the two artists also competed for prestigious state commissions.

Lehmann illustrates how both artists used exhibitions to promote their individual programmes for history painting: Feuerbach, the Idealist, adhering to a strict academic division of genres and Makart, the colourist, embracing a much looser take on historical or mythological 'truth.' For Lehmann, their struggle over esteem and recognition thus embodied a much deeper conflict over the future style and direction of Austrian history painting. This conclusion has profound implications for the ways in which art historians have traditionally thought about this period because it considers the stylistic pluralism of the 1870s as a manifestation of an acute crisis in history painting (a "Richtungstreit," 6) rather than a stylistic free-for-all. In the end, Lehmann shows that with Makart's appointment to Feuerbach's vacated professorship in 1878, he

'wins', but this was "a victory, not a triumph" (236) because it entailed a number of compromises and failures: Feuerbach left Vienna bitterly disappointed; Makart adapted his style to the cultural ministry's criteria for elevated history painting; and stylistic change never quite materialised.

Lehmann's "Fazit" offers a thought-provoking commentary on current art historical valuations of Feuerbach, Makart and Viennese history painting. The book closes with an "Excursion" into identifying some of the historical persona represented in Makart's *Der Einzug Karls V. in Antwerpen* (1878). Here, Lehmann once again draws on her meticulous research skills and knowledge of the period to identify 15 historical figures in Makart's famous canvas. Some might consider this a self-indulgent exercise but it actually unveils Makart's important social networks and engenders further research.

**L**ehmann's publication makes an important contribution to the scholarship on Viennese history painting during the 1870s and 1880s by revising some of the persistent art historical tropes around Feuerbach's and Makart's 'rivalry.' In the process, she weaves together two fields of research and demonstrates that Feuerbach cannot be properly understood without Makart and vice versa. By



Fig. 3 Makart, Venedig huldigt Caterina Cornaro, 1872/73. Belvedere, Wien [Kat. I, S. 55]



Fig. 4 Anselm Feuerbach, *Orpheus und Eurydike*, 1869. Belvedere, Wien (Kat. II, S. 31)

closely scrutinising their contemporary reception rather than their posthumous appropriation, Lehmann provides a salient interpretation of the so-called crisis of history painting. This anxiety over the style, role and direction of history painting was not restricted to a Viennese context and for this reason alone, Lehmann's publication is of interest to nineteenth-century scholars in general. Her methodology might strike some readers as a slightly conservative but her fastidious scouring of primary source materials gives her argument an undisputable authority (which is further supported by an excellent bibliography featuring secondary sources from the 1870s onwards).

On this note, it must be mentioned that Lehmann provides an extremely helpful appendix

of transcriptions of key primary documents and although most of the included newspaper articles are now available through internet platforms, it makes for an important scholarly reference compendium. But her argument does not rely on these documents alone and her superb visual analysis and iconographic interpretations of Feuerbach's and Makart's paintings feature prominently in her book. Her conclusions thus emerge directly from her visual sources rather than being mapped onto them, which can no longer be taken for granted in current art historical publications. Robert Stiassny wrote in his 1888 essay "Hans Makart und seine bleibende Bedeutung" that "in the future, it will not be art historians but cultural historians who will engage with Makart" (qtd. in Gerbert Frodl, *Hans Makart. Monographie und Werkverzeichnis*, 1974, 7), but this summer's Makart exhibitions and Lehmann's book prove that a joint effort yields the most satisfying results yet!

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