

Vienna as a Sculptural Centre in the Long Nineteenth Century

Current Research on Sculpture in Central Europe

Ingeborg Schemper-Sparholz and Caroline Mang, eds.

Abstract

The Vienna Art Academy has always attracted budding artists from all over the Empire, especially after the reform in 1872. Similarly, the School of Arts and Crafts in Vienna played an important role from its foundation in 1867. It served as a model for such institutions in the crown lands, including Zagreb, Budapest and Prague. At the same time, the project of the Vienna Ringstraße, in which many professors from the academy were involved, offered the prospect of commissions.

Still, the networks of sculptors in the capital and the crown lands during these decades have been not explored enough. This is not a matter of purely art-historical questions; rather, the national question plays an important role. An international group of researchers is now tackling these connections, a century after the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and decades after the end of the partial division of Europe by the Iron Curtain.

[1] *Und er ging nach Hause und ließ die Büste des Kaisers Franz Josef aus dem Keller holen, und er stellte sie auf, vor dem Eingang zu seinem Haus. Und vom nächsten Tage an – als hätte es keinen Krieg gegeben – als gäbe es keine neue polnische Republik – als ruhte der alte Kaiser nicht längst schon in der Kapuzinergruft – als gehörte dieses Dorf Lopatyny noch zu dem Gebiet der alten Monarchie: zog jeder Bauer, der des Weges vorbeizog, den Hut vor der sandsteinernen Büste des alten Kaisers. [...] Es war, als arbeiteten auch Verehrung und Erinnerung an diesem Standbild und als veredelte jeder Gruß der Bauern, jedes Gebet eines gläubigen Juden bis zur künstlerischen Vollkommenheit das hilflose Werk der jungen Bauernhand. [...] Dem Grafen selbst aber, der das Dorf niemals mehr verließ, bedeutete dieses Denkmal mehr: es gab ihm, verließ er das Haus, die Vorstellung, daß sich nichts geändert hätte.*¹

With subtle irony Joseph Roth (1894–1939) describes the symbolic value of a bust of the ruler, which a member of the landed gentry in distant Galicia erects to "his Kaiser Franz Joseph". With his action the protagonist expresses his inability to grasp the fact that, following the collapse of the Empire, a new era is dawning in which nation states are replacing the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. As a Polish count with Italian roots who served with absolute loyalty in the army of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, this main character sees himself as a supra-national Austrian:

*Er hatte keine andere sichtbare Leidenschaft als die, die "Nationalitätenfrage" zu bekämpfen. Um jene Zeit begann nämlich in der Monarchie diese so genannte "Nationalitätenfrage" heftig zu werden. Alle Leute bekannten sich – ob sie wollten oder so tun mussten, als wollten sie – zu irgendeiner der vielen Nationen, die es auf dem Gebiete der alten Monarchie gab. Man hatte im neunzehnten Jahrhundert bekanntlich entdeckt, dass jedes Individuum einer bestimmten Nation oder Rasse angehören müsse, wollte es wirklich als bürgerliches Individuum anerkannt werden. "Von der Humanität durch Nationalität zur Bestialität" – hatte der österreichische Dichter Grillparzer gesagt.*²

[2] The novella almost perfectly illustrates the idea of 'state patriotism', as Pieter Judson postulates it in his history of the 'liberal empire' Habsburg.³ Here in distant Galicia, the figure of the emperor becomes a figure of reference for the representative of the military and the simple peasant in the sense of a transfiguring and romanticised 'invented tradition'.⁴

[3] Slovenian author Drago Jančar (b. 1948) refers to this story in an essay he wrote about Joseph Roth.⁵ In the same text Jančar describes a symbolic practice of exactly the opposite kind with regard to a monument to the emperor in Ljubljana. It was hoped that a bust of Emperor Franz Joseph I (Fig. 1), erected in 1903 following his visit to the city, would encourage the flow of state

¹ Joseph Roth, *Die Büste des Kaisers. Novelle*, 1935, zitiert nach ed. Reclam 1977, 25 f.

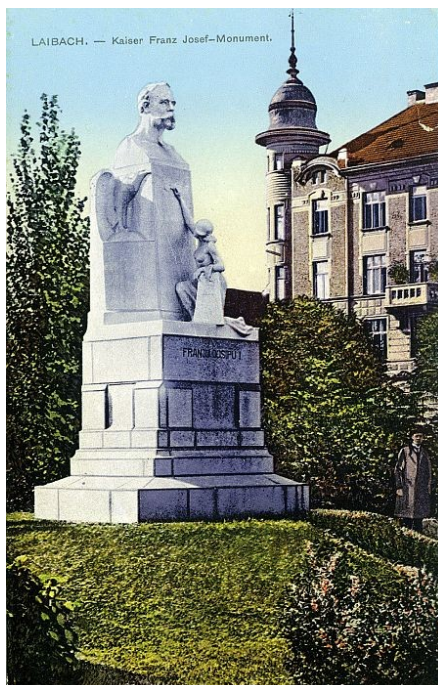
² Roth, *Die Büste des Kaisers*, 11.

³ Pieter M. Judson, *Habsburg, Geschichte eines Imperiums 1740–1918*, Munich 2017.

⁴ Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition*, Cambridge, UK 1992.

⁵ Drago Jančar, "Joseph Roth: Europäischer jüdischer Schriftsteller und österreichischer Universalist", in: *Die Flucht ohne Ende*, eds. Johann Georg Lughofer and Mira Miladinovic Zalaznik, Berlin/Boston 2011, 4 f.

financial aid to Ljubljana, which still showed signs of the devastation wreaked by the earthquake in 1895.⁶



1 Svtoslav Peruzzi (1881–1936), Monument to Emperor Franz Joseph I, Ljubljana, unveiled in 1908. The bust was damaged and removed after the end of the monarchy (photograph © Alamy stock, inv. no. 2BDFPDY)

[4] However, the hoped-for response took the form of funding for a German Theatre in the city. Against the background of the conflicts between the nationalities the removal of this image of the emperor after the First World War and its replacement by a bust of the Slavicist Franz Xaver Ritter von Miklosich (Fran[c] Miklošič; 1813–1891) is understandable. Curiously, however, the original pedestal for this bust, including a female personification of the city paying homage (originally to the emperor), was retained (Fig. 2).⁷

⁶ The competition was restricted to entries by Slovenian and Croatian sculptors. The winner, Svtoslav Peruzzi (1881–1936) from Ljubljana, had the typical biography of an artist of the Danube monarchy. He was initially apprenticed in Ljubljana to Alojz Gangl, who had trained in Vienna. From Agram (Zagreb) he moved to Vienna, where he studied at the *Kunstgewerbeschule* under Otto König and subsequently at the Vienna Academy of Fine Arts (*Akademie der bildenden Künste*) under Hans Bitterlich. In Vienna in 1903 he exhibited the bust of Franz Joseph I intended for the monument in Ljubljana. In 1905 he shared his studio in Vienna with the Croatian sculptor Ivan Meštrović. From 1912 he taught sculpture in Spalato (Split). See <https://www.slovenska-biografija.si/oseba/sbi416406/> (accessed 23.06.2020).

⁷ Božidar Jezernik, "Power and Remembrance, Supremacy of Oblivion: History of the 'National Monuments' in Ljubljana", in: *Hypercity, The Symbolic Side of Urbanism*, eds. Peter J. M. Nas and Annemarie Samuels, London 2006, 85-112, esp. 96-100. Barbara Murovec, "Ewige Präsenz der Wissenschaftler im öffentlichen Raum. Gelehrtentdenkmäler in Laibach", in: *Wiener Jahrbuch für Kunstgeschichte* 63/64 (2018), 351-366: 359-362.



2 Tine Kos (1894–1979), Bust of the Slovene philologist Franz Miklosich (Fran[c] Miklošič), Ljubljana, unveiled in 1926. It was placed on the pedestal that had been used for the sculpture by Svitoslav Peruzzi honouring Emperor Franz Joseph I (photograph © Karin Šmid)

[5] The possibility of a satirical approach to a portrait of the emperor in the form of a sculpture is illustrated by a clay figure made following Austria's annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1908, which depicts the annexed territory as a female figure seated on Franz Joseph I's lap. Made by caricaturist César Giris, it bears the ambiguous inscription "Encore des conquêtes à mon âge" (Fig. 3).



3 César Giris (1877–1941), Clay sculpture of Emperor Franz Joseph I sitting on the throne with scepter and personifications of "Bosnia" and "Herzegovina" on his lap, around 1908. Title below: "Encore des conquêtes à mon âge" (photograph © Austrian National Library [ÖNB], Picture Archive and Graphics Collection, inv. no. Pf 19000 E 404)

[6] And how did the monarch present himself as a representative of a multi-ethnic state? At the beginning of his reign, following the suppression of the revolution of 1848, the Arsenal was built in the imperial capital Vienna. It includes the Hall of Commanders on the first floor and the Hall of Fame on the second, in which architect Theophil Hansen planned to install a colossal statue of Franz Joseph I, but the emperor rejected this. In contrast to his ministers and generals, who are honoured with life-size statues, the ruler is only represented by a bust in the staircase.

[7] At the end of his reign, in the middle of World War I, the Ministry of Culture organised a competition for designs for a war memorial. Among others, the painter Alois Hans Schram (Schramm) submitted a design for a fortress-like complex with a hall of fame on the hill Burgstall in Nussdorf.⁸ In the centre, a monumental equestrian monument was to represent Emperor Franz Joseph I being carried on his shield by the peoples of Austria. This was a desperate attempt at the end of the monarchy to once again symbolically invoke the unity of the multi-ethnic empire under Habsburg leadership. The project was doomed to failure by the course of the war and the end of the monarchy in 1918. It would have been the only monument comparable to those national monuments in Germany erected after the proclamation of the German Empire in 1871 and intended to promote the federal countries' identification with the new state.⁹

⁸ Richard Bösel and Selma Krasa, eds., *Wiener Denkmäler vom Klassizismus zur Secession*, exh. cat., Vienna 1994, 94-102: 100.

[8] The increase in the number of monuments in public spaces is shown to be a characteristic phenomenon of this period. In so far as they articulate the structures of power and rulership, monuments should always be understood as a "materialisation or visualisation of a specific political culture".¹⁰ Just as relevant as the intentions behind erecting a monument are the political reinterpretations of these works over the course of time. In this regard, at times of crisis, war, and upheaval, monuments to the Habsburg emperors in particular were a special target of attempts by revolutionaries to topple or remove them, as the example referred to above shows.¹¹ At the same time, people in the Crown Lands were looking for figures of the national self-image with whom to identify, be they political revolutionaries of the recent past (after 1848) like Lajos Kossuth in Hungary, religious reformers like Jan Hus in Bohemia or representatives of culture – poets who wrote in the national language like Valentin Vodnik and France Prešeren in Slovenia or Adam Mickiewicz in Galicia. Language was thus elevated to a national asset, part of 'imagined communities'.¹² Although this type of invocation of national identities has been much discussed in research on nationalism as a construct of historical actors in specific circumstances, it still plays a major role today and is currently re-opening conflicts around monuments.

[9] The involvement of the sculptors in the conflicts between the nationalities, which had been smouldering in the Austro-Hungarian Crown Lands since the mid-19th century, was unavoidable. In these lands there was a swing between, on the one hand, the erection of monuments to members of the House of Habsburg as an expression of loyalty to the central power in Vienna, and, on the other, the construction of monuments to figures identified with the national cause, such as the monument in Ljubljana to the reformer of the Slovene language, France Prešeren, by Max Fabiani and Ivan Zajc. Many of the sculptors who made such monuments are linked by the fact that they studied in the *Residenzstadt* Vienna: On the one hand the Academy of Fine Arts (*Akademie der bildenden Künste*) in Vienna had, since its reopening in 1726, been an important magnet for artists from throughout the Monarchy, both those still in training and those who had completed their education. Following the reform of the Academy in 1872, which led to a marked improvement in educational conditions through the establishment of special schools, the number of students from the Crown Lands grew. On the other hand, the *Kunstgewerbeschule* (school of arts and crafts) in Vienna had played an important role since it was founded in 1867 and provided

⁹ Reinhard Alings, *Monument und Nation: Das Bild vom Nationalstaat im Medium Denkmal – zum Verhältnis von Nation und Staat im deutschen Kaiserreich 1871–1918*, Berlin 1996.

¹⁰ Gunther Mai, "Denkmäler und politische Kultur im 19. Jahrhundert", in: *Das Kyffhäuser-Denkmal 1896–1996. Ein nationales Monument im europäischen Kontext*, ed. Gunther Mai, Köln/Weimar/Wien 1997, 9-44: 14.

¹¹ Rudolf Jaworski, "Denkmalstreit und Denkmalsturz im östlichen Europa – Eine Problemskizze", in: *Die Besetzung des öffentlichen Raumes. Politische Plätze, Denkmäler und Straßennamen im europäischen Vergleich*, eds. Rudolf Jaworski and Peter Stachel, Berlin 2007, 175-190.

¹² Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, London 1983.

a model for similar institutions in the Crown Lands, for instance those in Zagreb, Budapest, and Prague.

[10] As a large-scale construction project the Ringstraße in Vienna, begun in 1857, offered the attractive possibility of obtaining commissions during and after completion of training. The leading sculptors of the Viennese art scene, who worked as teachers at the Academy, were commissioned to make monuments and sculptures for the buildings of the Ringstraße. Those who worked for them, however, frequently returned to their native countries where, in a different cultural and political context, they created monuments, portraits and decorative sculpture for buildings.

[11] One hundred years after the collapse of the Habsburg Empire a joint research initiative was launched in Ljubljana by the France Stele Institute (Barbara Murovec) and the University of Vienna (Ingeborg Schemper-Sparholz), which set itself the task of researching the art of monuments in the former Austro-Hungarian double monarchy. The participants in the workshop in Ljubljana pointed out the gaps in the respective research areas and presented the first questions arising from these gaps. Since the earlier studies, originally published in the respective national languages for the most part, were now available in German and English, the workshop held in these two languages made it possible to overcome the language barriers that had existed previously.¹³ In the course of the discussion about the contributions the need emerged to deepen this collaboration and to look for ways to digitally link the transnational research projects. Subsequently, it became possible to invite colleagues from Hungary, Croatia, Slovenia, the Czech Republic and Slovakia to Vienna for a second workshop entitled "Visualization of transnational networks in and between the artistic centres of the Habsburg monarchy – using the example of sculpture around 1900" and in the process to exchange ideas about the possible digital visualisation of networks in the area of 19th century sculpture.¹⁴ The focus was on identifying the requirements of a database that would allow the artistic networks to be visualised in cartographical and chronological form. Furthermore, the database should also contain visual material relating to the monuments, many of which were destroyed or transformed after the two world wars, along with additional information about relevant source material.

[12] This collaboration was continued in Zagreb in 2019, in response to an invitation from Irena Kraševac of the University of Zagreb.¹⁵ She provided the members of the research group with the opportunity to present the results of their most recent research and to deepen the discussion

¹³ First workshop: "Vienna as a sculptural centre in the 'Long 19th Century'. Current research on sculpture in Central Europe", 5-6 February 2018, France Stele Institute of Art History, Ljubljana, Slovenia, organized by Ingeborg Schemper-Sparholz and Barbara Murovec.

¹⁴ Second workshop: "Visualization of transnational networks in and between the artistic centres of the Habsburg Monarchy using the example of sculpture around 1900", 5-6 October 2018, Department of Art History at the University of Vienna, organized by Ingeborg Schemper-Sparholz and Caroline Mang.

¹⁵ Third workshop: "Cultural and political aspects of the sculptural monuments of the Habsburg/Austro-Hungarian Monarchy", 26-28 September 2019, Zagreb, organized by Irena Kraševac and Ingeborg Schemper-Sparholz.

begun earlier about the possibility of compiling these results, with the goal of publishing them digitally. The publication of the findings to date – nine selected contributions in this special issue of the RIHA Journal – represents a first step in this direction. Because the project is still at a very early stage, it can only address these themes in a number of selected countries of the former Monarchy. The expansion of the existing research network to include specialists from Poland, Italy, Romania and, with regard to The German Question in the 19th century, also experts on the centres of sculpture Berlin, Munich and Dresden is, naturally, the goal for future workshops.

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About the Guest Editors

Ao. Prof. Dr. Ingeborg Schemper-Sparholz is an expert in sculpture from the Baroque to the Long Nineteenth Century in Central Europe. She graduated from the Department of Art History of the University of Vienna, Austria, in 1978. In 2004 she qualified as a professor in Art History at the Faculty of Humanities, University of Vienna, with a professorial dissertation on *Der Bildhauer Lorenzo Mattielli. Die Wiener Schaffensperiode. 1711–1738. Skulptur als Medium höfischer und sakraler Repräsentation zur Zeit Kaiser Karls VI.* From 2004 till 2019 she was an Associate Professor at the Department of Art History of the University of Vienna. After her retirement, she continues to work on various publication projects and to supervise doctoral students.

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