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‘German industriousness, German spirit, German energy and German persistence’: Habsburg
Cultural Politics and the Moravian Design Museum

Introduction: Museums and Design Reform

The story of museums in Austria-Hungary has invariably been told in relation to the major institutions in Vienna: the Kunsthistorisches Museum, the Museum for Art and Design (now Applied Art) and the Albertina. In many respects this is entirely understandable. With collections of world-class significance, they merit extensive critical attention, yet such a focus reaffirms the tendency to view the culture of the late Habsburg Empire through a Viennese lens. Indeed, Carl Schorske’s famous account of fin-de-siècle Vienna as a metonymic image of Austria-Hungary has, although based on research originally published some 50 years ago, proven remarkably persistent in its influence.¹ It has long been recognised, however, that privileging the capital as the stage on which the drama of the final decades of Austria-Hungary was played out can lead to a disproportionate regard for the preoccupations of Viennese cultural, social and political actors.²

As a counter, therefore, to the gaze centered on Vienna, this article examines museums of design in Bohemia and Moravia in the five decades leading up to the collapse of the Habsburg state. Its chief focus is on the Moravian Museum of Design, founded in the city of Brünn in 1873, but it considers, too, museums of design in Prague, Reichenberg (now: Liberec), Troppau (now: Opava) and Olmütz (now: Olomouc). Design museums are of particular museological interest, for in contrast to the galleries based on the art collections of the Habsburgs or aristocratic families such as the Liechtensteins or the Esterházy, they were institutions founded with an explicit state-sanctioned mission: to improve the quality of design and thereby to improve the competitiveness of the Austro-

¹ Carl Schorske, *Fin-de-siècle Vienna: Politics and Culture* (New York: Knopf, 1979).

² Pieter Judson, *The Habsburg Empire: A New History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016)

Hungarian economy. As such, they raise important questions about how museums operated as instruments of centralised economic and cultural policy. What messages did they seek to convey through their collecting and exhibition activity as well as other forms of public engagement? How well were such messages received? Indeed, what kind of a public did they imagine?

The Moravian Design Museum was amongst the first wave of museums to be established in Austria-Hungary and it enjoyed close relations to the first such institution to be established in the Habsburg state: the Museum for Art and Industry in Vienna. However, when considering it and other museums in Bohemia and Moravia additional questions are to be asked about the wider efficacy of the design museum as the instrument of a policy that originated in Vienna. What happened when institutions created to satisfy the visions of economic and cultural bureaucrats in the imperial capital encountered the exigencies of local municipal politics? The answer to this question may help determine whether one can talk of a co-ordinated ‘exhibitionary complex’ in Austria-Hungary. Yet before examining the Museum itself, however, it is necessary to establish some basic points about Brünn as well as about the formation of design museums in general.

The Moravian Manchester

Brünn is now the Czech city of Brno. Thanks to Simon Mawer’s novel *The Glass Room*, it is known as the location of Mies van der Rohe’s modernist masterpiece, the Villa Tugendhat.³ It was an important centre of Czechoslovak avant-garde architecture, but its identity under Habsburg rule was markedly different. Until 1947 it had a significant German-speaking population; indeed, after Vienna and Graz, it had the third largest German-speaking population of any city in Austria-Hungary. Where other major cities, such as Prague, Budapest and Lemberg, had seen the number of German-speaking inhabitants dwindle to a tiny minority during the nineteenth century, that of Brünn had remained

³ Simon Mawer, *The Glass Room* (London: Simon and Shuster, 2009).

constant. In part this was no doubt thanks to the city's proximity to Vienna; it is only 140 kilometres (87 miles) north of the Austrian capital.

The close connections between Brünn and Vienna are still visible in its architecture. The cityscape is punctuated by the work of Viennese architects who introduced designs familiar from the streets and squares of the capital to the Moravian city. Theophil Hansen, Eduard von der Nüll, August Siccardsburg and Heinrich von Ferstel all designed prominent public buildings in the city centre in the 1860s and 1870s.⁴ It was not uncommon for regional cities to employ architects from Vienna, whose prestige was much sought after, but Brünn was distinctive in terms of how much of its architecture was designed by figures based in the capital. Like Vienna, too, it had its own inner ring road, the Ringstrasse, built on the old fortifications surrounding the historic city centre that were pulled down in the 1860s. The redevelopment of the site was again overseen by a Viennese architect, this time Ludwig Förster.⁵

Relations between the two cities were deeper than one of mere architectural emulation. For much of the nineteenth century they were closely tied politically and socially. Leading figures in Brünn's political life were active in the wider imperial context. A notable example was the Liberal politician Carl Giskra (1820-1879) who practiced as a lawyer in Brünn in the 1860s while also serving as a representative of the German-Liberal Party, first in the Moravian Diet and then, from 1862, in the imperial Diet. He was mayor of Brünn from 1866-67, acted briefly, in 1867, as President of the Austrian parliament and was Austrian minister of the Interior from 1870.

Brünn was more generally a bastion of German Liberalism. This undoubtedly reflects the interests of the industrialists who dominated municipal life. Known as the 'Moravian Manchester,' it was home to

⁴ Pavel Zatloukal, *A Guide to the Architecture of Brno, 1815-1915* (Brno: Obecní dům Brno, 2006).

⁵ Pavel Zatloukal, 'Die Brünnener Ringstrasse,' in *Bürgertum in der Habsburgermonarchie IV: Bürgerliche Selbstdarstellung. Städtebau, Architektur, Denkmäler* eds. Hanns Haas and Hannes Stekl (Vienna: Boehlau, 1995), 27-42. See, too, Pavel Zatloukal, *Brněnská okružní třída* [The Brno ringroad] (Brno: Památkový ústav v Brně, 1997).

a major textile industry with enterprises of national and international significance; the firm of Karl Offermann (1792-1869), for example, was the biggest producer of military uniforms in Austria-Hungary, supplying the Habsburg army as well as those of numerous other states.⁶ Like many other Brünn industrialists, Offermann was a prominent ambassador for Austrian industry abroad, including serving as a jury member of the Great Exhibition in London in 1851. More generally, too, Brünn's textile manufacture was an important feature of the international face of Austrian industry.⁷ Wider social and family networks also bound Brünn to Vienna. This is most evident in the case of the Gomperz dynasty. Born in Brünn, the brothers Julius (1823-1909) and Max Gomperz (1822-1913) were dynamic figures in the city's commercial and social life. Owners of the Palais Gomperz on the Vienna Ringstrasse, Julius became president of the chamber of commerce in Brünn, was leader of its small but influential Jewish community and was eventually ennobled, while Max was vice-president of the chamber of commerce before moving to Vienna where he eventually became president of the Creditanstalt bank. Their cousin Heinrich (1843-94), a textile and banking magnate, lived in Brünn where he played a leading role in its economic life as well as its cultural and artistic activities.⁸ A noted art lover, Heinrich was one of the founders of the Moravian Art Association ('Mährischer Kunstverein') in 1882 and after his death his personal art collection became the core of the city's public art gallery.⁹ In many provincial cities in Austria-Hungary cultural life was shaped primarily by

⁶ Andrea Březinová, "Propojení umění a průmyslu je heslem naší doby." Brněnští vlnaři a první akvizice do sbírky textilií moravského průmyslového muzea' [Uniting art and industry is the slogan of our age: Brno's wool merchants and the first acquisitions of the textile collections of the Moravian design museum] in Andrea Březinová and Tomáš Zapletal, *Brno - Moravský Manchester* (Brno: Moravian Gallery, 2014), 131.

⁷ *Exhibition of the Works of Industry of All Nations 1851: Reports by the Juries on the Subjects in the Thirty Classes into which the Exhibition was Divided* (London: Spicer, 1852), 350.

⁸ See ... *Z lásky k umění a sobě pro radost ... Umělecká sbírka Heinricha Gomperze (1843-1894)* [Out of love for art, and my own pleasure ... the artistic collection of Heinrich Gomperz] eds. Jana Svobodová et al. (Brno: Moravian Gallery, 2004).

⁹ Albert Rille, 'Die städtische Heinrich Gomperz-Gemäldesammlung in Brünn,' in *Zeitschrift des Deutschen Vereines für die Geschichte Mährens und Schlesiens* 11 (1907): 1-58; Lubomír Slaviček, "Sobě, umění, přátelům": Kapitoly z dějin sběratelství v Čechách a na Moravě 1650-1939 [For oneself, art and one's friends: Chapters from the history of collecting in Bohemia and Moravia, 1650-1939] (Brno: Barrister and Principal, 2007), 193 ff.

aristocratic patrons, clerics and the emerging bourgeoisie – the *Bildungsbürgertum* – but in Brunn, in contrast, it was textile entrepreneurs who played the decisive role. The implications of this difference will become clear later.

The Growth of Design Museums

Two key figures lay behind the establishment of the museums of design in Austria-Hungary: Rudolf Eitelberger (1817-1885), professor of art history at the University of Vienna, and Gottfried Semper (1803-1879), professor of architecture at the Zürich Polytechnic (now the ETH Zürich). Semper had become drawn into the circle around Prince Albert in London in the 1850s and was involved in the organisation of the Great Exhibition of 1851. Reflecting on the Exhibition a year later in his short book *Science, Industry and Art*, Semper was critical of the disorderly jumble of styles apparent in the displays and, like many contemporaries, traced this to the effects of industrialized technological production and the market-driven nature of demand. There was now a superfluity of means of production that had led to a denigration of materials, he argued.¹⁰ Commodities had become empty abstractions:

The destination of the [market commodity] is not determined, nor the specifics of the person who will be its owner. It can therefore possess no characteristics or local colour (in the broadest sense of the word). It must, however, possess one feature: the ability to fit harmoniously into its surroundings.¹¹

This and similar criticisms would be formulated throughout the nineteenth century, yet whereas some observers, such as exponents of arts and crafts, responded by attempting to resurrect pre-industrial skills and modes of production, Semper held that the solution lay in the reform of education, in which students would learn to work *with* materials and thereby avoid the arbitrary application of motifs and

¹⁰ Gottfried Semper, *Wissenschaft, Industrie und Kunst* (Brunswick: Friedrich Vieweg, 1852), 16-19.

¹¹ *Ibid*, 24.

decorative forms lacking any meaningful relation to the medium that seemed so prevalent of bad design.¹²

Semper put this idea to practice by teaching in the Department of Practical Art, set up by Prince Albert as part of the Museum of Manufactures (later, the South Kensington Museum) founded in 1852. Semper moved in Zurich in 1855, however, and it was in the German-speaking world that he had the greatest influence, in particular, on Eitelberger. For the latter, impressed by Semper's ideas and by the apparent impact of the South Kensington Museum on the quality of British design by the time of the 1862 International Exhibition in London, persuaded the Emperor to support the establishment of the Austrian Museum for Art and Industry in Vienna, which duly opened in 1864.¹³

The Museum was an important tool of state economic policy, and Eitelberger therefore saw it as axiomatic that a network of similar institutions should be created across the Empire, with the institution in Vienna, of which he was the first director, at its hub. Although he borrowed the idea of the design museum from Britain, Eitelberger looked enviously at France which, he argued, had created the just the kind of organisation he aspired to at home.¹⁴ Implicit in this was also his vision of the Museum as a vehicle for promoting cultural preferences that were in tune with the cosmopolitan identity of Habsburg dynasty.¹⁵

¹² David Diephouse, 'Science, Industry and Art: Gottfried Semper's Search for the *juste milieu*,' *The Journal of the Rutgers University Libraries*, 40.1 (1978) 14-31.

¹³ Eitelberger, 'Die Gründung des Oesterreichischen Museums (Erinnerungen aus der Zeit vom Juni 1862 bis 1864),' *Gesammelte Kunsthistorische Schriften* (Vienna: Braumüller, 1879), vol. II: 81-117.

¹⁴ Eitelberger, 'Zur Reform der Landesmuseen in Oesterreich,' *Gesammelte Kunsthistorische Schriften*, vol. II: 241-52.

¹⁵ Diana Reynolds, 'Die österreichische Synthese: Metropole, Peripherie und die kunstgewerblichen Fachschulen des Museums,' in *Kunst und Industrie*, ed. Peter Noever (Vienna: MAK, 2000), 203-18; Reynolds, 'Manufacturing Austria,' in *Alois Riegl in Vienna, 1875-1905: An Institutional Biography* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014), 65-84.

The Moravian Design Museum (Mährisches Gewerbemuseum) was founded in 1873. Given its extensive and close connections with the capital, it is perhaps unsurprising that Brünn was one of the first cities outside of Vienna to set up a museum of design. Eitelberger's grounds for setting up the Museum for Art and Industry had been hard economic calculation. As he later reminisced, 'It was at the World Fairs that the consuming and producing public first gained a clear and vivid insight into what world trade means; it became clear to the public what level of achievement was necessary for producers to play a role in world trade.'¹⁶ As an important industrial center, such motivations stood in accord with the interests of the textile manufacturers so dominant in Brünn, and it was an obvious location for a sister institution to Eitelberger's museum.

The Design Museum was not the first museum in Brünn, however, nor the first to exhibit works of art and applied arts. That honor belonged to the Regional Museum, referred to as the 'Franzensmuseum' after the Emperor Francis. Founded in 1817, the Franzensmuseum was primarily intended to promote the natural sciences, but it possessed a collection of paintings and sculptures.¹⁷ In keeping with its focus on the history, topography and natural history of Moravia, however, these were by local artists and were acquired and displayed in virtue of their relevance to local themes and were scattered in different rooms throughout the gallery, rather than as a single exhibition of works of art. As such, the Franzensmuseum exemplified a common type of museum, the 'Provincial Museum' ('Landesmuseum') which, as its name suggested, had a distinctly parochial outlook. Rudolf Eitelberger later noted that such institutions embodied outmoded historical traditions that consisted of a mix of 'the romantic ideas of high Tories [Hochtories], the eccentric intuitions of historians and archaeologists, who pursue a political vision aimed at restoring the past.'¹⁸

¹⁶ Rudolf von Eitelberger, 'Die Gründung des Österreichischen Museums: Erinnerungen aus der Zeit vom Juni 1862 bis 20. Mai 1864,' in *Gesammelte Kunsthistorische Schriften*, vol. II, 82.

¹⁷ Christian d'Elvert, *Geschichte der K.K. Mähr.-Schles. Gesellschaft zur Beförderung des Ackerbaues, der Natur- und Landeskunde, mit Rücksicht auf die bezüglichen Cultur-Verhältnisse Mährens und Österr. Schlesiens* (Brünn: Society for the Promotion of Agriculture, Natural and Local History, 1870), 174-86.

¹⁸ Rudolf Eitelberger, 'Zur Reform der Landesmuseen in Österreich,' in *Gesammelte Kunsthistorische Schriften*, vol. II, 243-44.

In addition to its mission to disseminate ideas of design reform, the Moravian Design Museum, like all museums of design and applied arts, was part of a broader epistemic shift towards ‘modern’ specialized museums that took place during the course of the mid-nineteenth century. New disciplines, including art and design history, were reshaping the nature of inquiry, with an emphasis on scholarly rigor and the critical treatment of historical sources. The older provincial museums were of limited value for new forms of ‘scientific’ knowledge, Eitelberger claimed, as they could not sustain the universal interests and ambitions of the latest scholarly research.¹⁹ Consequently, they needed to be reformed so they might be more closely aligned with the emerging academic disciplines. Museums of design were central to this goal; artefacts were no longer to be acquired for reasons of local antiquarian interest but rather in systematic fashion as exemplars of aesthetic and technological norms, and they were displayed and collected on new scientific principles.

When Eitelberger’s institution in Vienna was founded and then, later, the Moravian Design Museum, the conception of how it might function was still evolving and went in tandem with the development of the idea of design and of art and design history as autonomous discourses. Yet as early as 1875 Eitelberger welcomed the spread of this new type of institution across Austria-Hungary as a welcome instrument of modernization.²⁰ The latter pertained not only to the professionalization of museological practice but also to museums’ role in economic progress. With properly trained scholars rather than enthusiastic amateurs employed in the education of the visiting public, informed critical judgment was exercised in selecting the best examples of historical and contemporary design work for display. In keeping with their pedagogical role, the design museums were accompanied by the creation of

¹⁹ Ibid, 244.

²⁰ Rudolf Eitelberger, ‘Die Gewerbemuseen in den Kronländern Österreichs,’ *Mittheilungen des k.k. Österreichischen Museums für Kunst und Industrie* 116 (May 1875): 340-45.

associated schools of design, first in Vienna and then across the Monarchy.²¹ As early as the 1870s Eitelberger observed, with some degree of satisfaction, the beneficial effects of this system.²²

The early history of the design museums themselves indicates that this process was still incomplete by the end of the nineteenth century. The idea of design as a specialized area distinct from that of fine art, which is often traced back to the Kantian opposition of the fine and ‘mechanical’ arts, had not fully worked through into the logic of museological organization and display. The conflation of these two categories is built into the German term, ‘Kunstgewerbe’ (art industry). Hence, in the early years of the Museum for Art and Industry Eitelberger mounted several exhibitions of art historical subjects such as Dürer (1871) and Michelangelo (1875).²³ Indeed, the identity of design museums remained unresolved and a subject of debate, as did the issue of nomenclature. Jacob von Falke, Eitelberger’s deputy and successor as Director, preferred the single term ‘art industry’ (‘Kunstindustrie’) over Eitelberger’s insistence on art *and* industry, as it brought out the Museum’s commercial mission more explicitly.²⁴ The latter was all the more in evidence in Brünn, where it was the Museum for ‘Gewerbe’, a concept that denotes trade but which came to serve as a shorthand for ‘design.’ The terminological fluidity could feed into disputes over the mission of the institution; in Vienna Wilhem Exner, a leading advocate of educational reform, referred to the ‘Trade Museum’ (‘Gewerbemuseum’) and argued that its primary function should be to address the implication of mechanized mass production (‘die mechanische Grossindustrie’).²⁵ This was closer to Semper’s original concerns,

²¹ On the design school in Vienna see Gottfried Fliedl, *Kunst und Lehre am Beginn der Moderne: Die Wiener Kunstgewerbeschule, 1867-1918* (Vienna: Residenz Verlag, 1986). On the history of the design school in Prague, see Martina Pachmannová and Markéta Pražanová, eds., *Vysoká škola uměleckoprůmyslová v Praze, 1885–2005* (Prague: VŠUP, 2005).

²² Rudolf Eitelberger, ‘Der Neubau und die Organisation der Kunstgewerbeschule des Österr. Museums im Verhältnisse zu ähnlichen Anstalten Deutschlands,’ *Gesammelte Kunsthistorische Schriften* vol. II, 167.

²³ Jakob Falke, ‘Die Dürerausstellung im Oesterreichischen Museum,’ in *Mittheilungen des k.k. Österreichischen Museums für Kunst und Industrie*, 68 (1871): 381-83.

²⁴ Jacob Falke, *Lebenserinnerungen* (Leipzig: Georg Meyer, 1897): 196.

²⁵ Wilhelm Exner, ‘Das künftige Gewerbemuseum,’ in *Mittheilungen des k.k. Österreichischen Museums für Kunst und Industrie*, 113 (1875): 288-92.

perhaps, than Eitelberger's subsequent interpretation of the Museum's identity, although it should be noted that Eitelberger himself also referred to Trade Museums ('Gewerbemuseen').

The 1870s were a time of considerable expansion in the number of design museums across Austria-Hungary; the Museum for Art and Industry in Vienna moved into its imposing purpose-built accommodation on the Ringstrasse in 1871, while in 1872 the Hungarian parliament made available a significant fund to acquire objects at the World Fair in Vienna the following year in order to establish a similar institution in Budapest. That same year, 1873, saw the founding not only of the Moravian Design Museum but also of the North Bohemian Design Museum in Reichenberg and the Franz-Josef Design Museum in Eitelberger's native town of Olmütz.²⁶ Design museums were established elsewhere, too, in Bohemia and Moravia. In Prague Eitelberger staged, in collaboration with the local Chamber of Commerce, an exhibition of Viennese Design in 1868, and in 1875 a collection of works of design and applied arts by the School of Goldsmithing was put on permanent display in the suburb of Smíchov in 1875, although it was not until 1885 that this was institutionalized in the form of a Museum of Applied Arts.²⁷

The flurry of activity in 1873 was no coincidence. Not only was it the same year as the World Fair held in Vienna, it also marked the 25th anniversary of the accession to power of Emperor Franz Josef, and suggests that the founders of the museums envisaged their activities as participating in a quintessentially imperial civic and political order. As such they were inevitably drawn into broader

²⁶ On the history of the museum in Reichenberg see Gustav Pazaurek, *Das Nordböhmsche Gewerbe-Museum 1873-1998. Denkschrift zur Eröffnung des neuen Museum-Gebäudes* (Reichenberg: North Bohemian Museum of Design, 1898).

²⁷ K. k. Österreichisches Museum für und Industrie in Wien und Handels- und gewerbekammer in Prag, *Katalog der kunstgewerblichen Ausstellung in Prag* (Prague: Verlag des Ausstellungscomités, 1868). An edition was also published in Czech as *Seznam vitvárů uměleckého průmyslu vystavených od c.k. rakouského Musea pro umění*. On the permanent exhibition see Rudolf Eitelberger, 'Permanente kunstgewerbliche Ausstellung in Prag,' *Mittheilungen des k.k. Österreichischen Museums* 123 (December, 1875): 453-4; J. K., *Katalog der permanenten Kunstgewerblichen Ausstellung der Fachschule für Goldschmiedekunst und verwandte Gewerbe in Prag* (Prague: Self-published, 1876).

political debates. An instructive example of this phenomenon was the context of the founding of the Museum of Applied Arts in Prague, which was in part a response to the Náprstek Czech Museum of Industry (Náprstkové české průmyslové muzeum) set up in the city in 1862 by the entrepreneur Vojtěch Náprstek.²⁸ A politically active Czech entrepreneur who had spent 10 years in exile in the United States due to his involvement in the failed revolution of 1848, Náprstek established his private museum with the express purpose of promoting Czech and Slavic art and design.²⁹ Thus, alongside ‘ethnographic’ artefacts from America, Africa, Asia and Australia, the Museum had displays of ‘Ruthenian folk industry’ and ‘embroidery, national folk costume (the work of our mothers).’³⁰ The Prague Museum of Applied Arts, in contrast, was set up by the city’s Chamber of Commerce as a counterpart to the Museum for Art and Industry in Vienna. Although he did not live to see its formal opening, Eitelberger was closely engaged in early discussions about the idea of its establishment. As such, the two museums of design in Prague served as proxies for competing ideas of culture and the creative economy: one based on the supranational values of the Habsburg regime, the other more particularistic and national.

Design museums were thus participants in broader debates about cultural identity that went to the heart of the Habsburg Monarchy, yet despite this, their creation was mostly left to local initiative. Hence, the Moravian Design Museum was summoned into existence by the Industrial Association in Brünn. Formed in 1861, the Association staged exhibitions of art and design almost as soon as it was established, and the creation of the Museum was in certain respects a logical continuation of this

²⁸ See Milena Secká, *Vojta Náprstek: Vlastenec, sběratel, mecenáš* [Vojta Náprstek: patriot, collector, patron] (Prague: National Museum, 2011), 199-214. See, too, J. L. Kottner, ‘Zpráva o vzniku a rozvoji náprstkova českého průmyslového muzea v Praze’ [Outline of the origin and growth of the Náprstek Museum of Czech Industry in Prague] in *Průvodce sbírkami náprstkova českého průmyslového muzea v Praze* [Guide to the collections of the Náprstek Museum of Czech Industry in Prague] (Prague: Náprstek Museum of Czech Industry in Prague, 1898), 1-10.

²⁹ The logic of the collection is outlined in Anon, *Rozvrh sbírek průmyslového muzea českého* [The programme of the collections of the Czech Industrial Museum] (Prague: Náprstek Museum of Czech Industry in Prague, 1878).

³⁰ *Průvodce sbírkami Náprstkova českého průmyslového muzea v Praze*, 11.

activity. Both were tied to Vienna. As early as 1865 the Association mounted a display of works loaned from the Museum for Art and Industry, with a subsequent exhibition in Brünn in 1869 that drew extensively on the collections of the Vienna Museum as well as on work by prominent Viennese enterprises such as the textile company Philip Haas, the celebrated glass manufacturers J. & L. Lobmeyr and the famous Thonet furniture company, which had already become a matter of local interest since setting up its factory in the Moravian town of Koryčany near Brünn.³¹

There was a substantial traffic in objects, ideas and people between the museums of the two cities. The pages of the journal of the Museum for Art and Industry in Vienna featured frequent reports on the activities of its neighbour.³² Equally, the Moravian Design Museum published its own journal, the *Mittheilungen des mährischen Gewerbemuseums*, from 1883 onwards, which was modelled on that of its more august counterpart, with regular updates on Vienna exhibitions as well as essays on historical and contemporary topics. Many of these were based on the lectures delivered as part of an annual winter programme in which Vienna-based figures were prominent visitors. Notable speakers included, for example, Albert Ilg, curator in the imperial collections (and, later, the Kunsthistorisches Museum), Emilie Bach, director of the Vienna Technical School (Fachschule) in Embroidery, the orientalist Josef Karabacek, Jakob Falke (Eitelberger's successor as director of the Museum in Vienna), the philosopher Alois Riehl, and Camillo Sitte.³³

The directors of the Moravian Design Museum did not have the academic pedigree of Eitelberger, but they were all a product of the Vienna educational system. Its two most influential directors, August Prokop and Julius Leisching, exemplify this pattern. Prokop (1838-1915), from Iglau (Jihlava) in

³¹ A list of the exhibitions is provided in *Festschrift des mährischen Gewerbe-Vereines in Brünn zur Feier seines 25-jährigen Bestandes* 28. März 1886 (Brünn: Moravian Design Museum, 1886), 65.

³² See, for example, Anon, 'Das mährische Gewerbemuseum in Brünn,' *Mittheilungen des k.k. Österreichischen Museums für Kunst und Industrie* 154 (1878): 124-29; Johann Georg Schön, 'Das erste Decennium des mährischen Gewerbe-Museums in Brünn,' *Mittheilungen des k.k. Österreichischen Museums* 221 (February 1884): 34-40; Anon - 'Das mährische Gewerbemuseum' in *Mittheilungen des k.k. Österreichischen Museums* 227 (September 1884): 174-80; 228 (September 1884): 201-4; 229 (October 1884): 231-7.

³³ See the list in *Mittheilungen des mährischen Gewerbemuseums* 5.10 (1887): 165.

western Moravia, studied architecture in Vienna, then moved to Brünn where he taught at the Technical Institute. Appointed Director of the Moravian Museum in 1882 he returned to Vienna in 1892, to the Technical Academy – the renamed Polytechnic – becoming its rector. Leisching (1865-1933) was a native of Vienna where he studied architecture at the Technische Hochschule, and was the first non-Moravian to hold the post. The longest-serving Director of the Museum (he continued after 1918), his elder brother Eduard (1858-1938) served as Director of the Museum for Art and Industry in Vienna from 1909 to 1925, thus cementing the connections between the two institutions. This sense of the identity of the Museum in Brünn as part of the apparatus of the Habsburg imperial state was confirmed when Archduke Rainer Ferdinand, cousin of the Emperor, agreed to be its protector, remaining so until his death in 1907 when it was renamed the Archduke Rainer Museum for Art and Industry in Brünn. The Archduke was already the Protector of the Museum for Art and Design in Vienna, and the change of name to include ‘Art’ suggested a further alignment with Eitelberger’s institution in Vienna.

The involvement of the Archduke tied the Museum in Brünn to imperial circles and raises the broader question as to how the state viewed such institutions and whether it had a coherent policy towards them. It is clear that, on the one hand, the Habsburg administration recognized their importance. In its first annual published report of 1870, for example, the Austrian Ministry of Culture and Education foregrounded the importance of the Museum for Art and Industry as a policy instrument and the significance accorded to it is indicated, too, by the financial support it was granted.³⁴ In the same year the Museum and its Design School operated with a budget of 309,524 Gulden (although a substantial amount of this was taken up by the cost of construction of the new museum building on the Ringstrasse). This compares with just over 386,000 Gulden spent on the training of teachers or a budget of some 280,000 Gulden for school inspections cross the *entire* Austrian half of the Empire.³⁵

³⁴ Ministerium für Cultus und Unterricht, *Jahresbericht des Ministeriums für Cultus und Unterricht für 1870* (Vienna: Ministry of Culture and Education, 1871), 287.

³⁵ *Ibid*, 14.

Outside of Vienna, however, it was left to provincial elites to realize Eitelberger's ideals and to provide the resources. There seems to have been little interest on the part of the central authorities in providing meaningful financial support to museums outside of the Austrian 'heartlands.' Apart from the Museum for Art and Industry in Vienna only two other museums received funding from the central Ministry of Culture: the Museum Carolino-Augustum in Salzburg and the Joanneum in Graz. Although it received occasional support from central sources, including the Emperor, who awarded 1000 Gulden when it was first set up, the Moravian Design Museum had to rely mostly on funding from the Moravian regional administration or from private donors. The published figures for 1886 are indicative of the more general pattern.³⁶ The Museum received annual recurring grants from the Moravian Regional Administration and Brünn city council. The Ministry of Education also awarded a one-off grant. Totalling some 5000 Gulden, these grants were, in comparison with the funds flowing to institutions in Vienna, very small amounts. Hence it was private enterprises and individuals who provided the lion's share of the income. The Museum benefitted from a number of major bequests and donations in its early history but with the exception of Johann II Prince Liechtenstein, the donors were also mostly local.³⁷ This was typical of a wider situation. In Reichenberg, for example, even though the Design Museum managed to persuade the Emperor's brother, Archduke Karl Ferdinand, to act as its Protector, this brought little material benefit. Its first two decades of existence were constantly threatened by lack of financial means, even though Reichenberg was, like Brünn, a wealthy and successful industrial centre. Shortage of funds meant the closure, for example, of the Museum's drawing school, a drastic measure given that, as noted above, such schools were central to the educational and economic mission of the design museums.³⁸ Moreover, while involvement of relatives of the Emperor bestowed an imperial sheen, the governance of the design museums outside of Vienna was markedly local. Thus, the Board of Trustees ('Curatorium') of the Moravian Design

³⁶ *Mittheilungen des mährischen Gewerbemuseums* 4.6 (1886): 85.

³⁷ Karl Höß, *Fürst Johann II von Liechtenstein und die bildende Kunst* (Vienna: Anton Schroll, 1908), 166 ff.

³⁸ Pazaurek, *Das Nordböhmisches Gewerbe-Museum 1873-1898*, 20.

Museum consisted almost entirely of Brünn industrialists or political representatives from the municipality.³⁹

This may hardly be surprising, but it indicates that while Eitelberger and others, including those in the Ministry, saw museums as an important tool of cultural and economic policy, this was not followed up by concrete action to support the institutions in question. This gap between Vienna and the other crownland institutions is evident in their architectural histories, too. Although it initially had to make do with the old real tennis court, the Museum for Art and Industry soon moved into the prestigious building designed by Ferstel (Figure 1). Outside of the capital the situation was less satisfactory. The Design Museum in Reichenberg endured a nomadic existence for 25 years, first being housed in a school and then a number of other inappropriate buildings before it eventually moved into the purpose-built premises it still occupies (Figure 2). Hungary was, of course, governed separately after 1867, but a comparable situation obtained: the collection purchased in 1873 for the Museum of Applied Arts in Budapest had initially to be located in spare space on the staircase of the National Museum. As with Reichenberg, it was nearly 25 years before the Museum gained its own building, although when this eventually happened it was rewarded with Ödön Lechner's famous design that opened in 1896 (Figure 3).

The Moravian Design Museum contended with similar challenges; it was initially located in the offices of the Moravian Industrial Association (Gewerbeverein).⁴⁰ Brünn possessed no proper exhibition spaces, and the Association made use of temporary accommodation, including schools or the Baroque Reduta theatre. Visitors noted the inadequacies of this situation. Bruno Bucher, curator of the Museum for Art and Industry in Vienna noted that the lack of space made it impossible to mount an adequate display: 'older and newer objects, works in bronze and glass, are all presented in a colorful muddle. The view is picturesque, and the exhibition would undoubtedly have been more

³⁹ *Das Mährische Gewerbe-Museum in Brünn: Festschrift zur Eröffnung des neuen Gebäudes*, 11.

⁴⁰ Anon, 'Gewerbemuseum,' *Brünner Tagesbote* 2 December (1873): 3.

instructive if it had been possible to organize it in a more systematic fashion.’⁴¹ Such a muddle of objects in poorly designed cramped spaces is striking given that the design museums were founded specifically to remedy the spectacular jumble of commodities that Semper and Eitelberger had witnessed at the Great Exhibition.

A Habsburg Institution?

In 1883 the Moravian Design Museum moved into a building in Brünn designed by its second director Johann Georg Schön.⁴² The new building advertised the close connections with the capital. A two-storey Neo-Renaissance structure (Figure 4), it was clearly influenced by Heinrich von Ferstel’s museum building in Vienna, and the similarity was even more visible in the interior, where the visitor entering the museum would find themselves in a classical atrium that was closely modelled on its counterpart in the capital (Figure 5). Thus was fulfilled the stated wish for Brünn to have an ‘institution that, hand in hand with the central branch in Vienna, would secure and deepen the successes and experiences of the new design reform movement for the Margraviate of Moravia.’⁴³ The parallels with Vienna went further, too, than museum design, for like Eitelberger’s institution, the Moravian Museum was built on a plot on the newly created Ringstrasse, prestigious land which, as in the capital, had already begun to take on a symbolic function in defining the identity of the city.

The description of the museum as a ‘branch’ of Eitelberger’s institution invites questions about how it operated, about practices of collecting and display, how it engaged with the municipality, who it was intended to be *for* (in other words: who was the imagined audience?) and the extent to which these

⁴¹ Bruno Bucher, ‘Kunstgewerbliche Ausstellungen in den Kronländern,’ *Mittheilungen des k.k. Österreichischen Museums für Kunst und Industrie* 49 (1869): 7.

⁴² Friederike Hillbrand-Grill, ‘Johann Georg Schön,’ *Österreichisches Biographisches Lexikon 1815-1950* (Vienna: Austrian Academy of Sciences, 1995), vol. 11, 35-36.

⁴³ Anon, *Das Mährische Gewerbe-Museum in Brünn: Festschrift zur Eröffnung des neuen Gebäudes* 17. Februar 1883 (Brünn: Moravian Design Museum, 1883), 20.

were in emulation of the museum in Vienna. In his survey of design museums Eitelberger was clear that provincial institutions should not be provincial in their focus:

With these museums it is not a case of promoting the sectoral interests of the factory owners or the particular interests of artisanal laborers – one does not found museums for such specific interests [...] In museums more general perspectives must be the standard; it is only when we don't lose sight of those that the individual gains most, irrespective of whether the museum visitor is a worker or a factory owner, a producer or a buyer. Equally, it is fundamentally wrong to base such museums on the nation alone. Any commodity that is destined for world trade will be insensitive to national idiosyncrasies.⁴⁴

The refusal to make concessions to local and national sensitivities had a particular significance in Austria-Hungary, but it also reflected the global interests of Semper and other design reformers of the mid-nineteenth century such as Owen Jones. Semper admired 'Asiatic' industry for its ability to produce objects that reproduced the features of the commodity, but without the loss of craft skills of the sense of medium.⁴⁵ Likewise Jones, whose *Grammar of Ornament* (1856) was translated into German as early as 1865, argued for the need to adopt a global perspective in order to find exemplary illustrations of the universal principles of design.⁴⁶

Initially, the museums in Bohemia and Moravia implemented broadly similar policy, even though they were not acting under direct instruction from Eitelberger. The museum in Reichenberg, for example, saw itself as an institution that 'unified the cultural interests of the entire region' offering rich material for the 'aspirant manual laborer' as well the 'youth preparing to take the path of art and

⁴⁴ Eitelberger, 'Die Gewerbemuseen in den Kronländern Österreichs,' 341.

⁴⁵ Semper, *Wissenschaft, Industrie und Kunst*, 24.

⁴⁶ Stacey Sloboda, "'The Grammar of Ornament': Cosmopolitanism and Reform in British Design,' *Journal of Design History*, 21.3 (2008): 223-36. *Grammar of Ornament* was published in German as Owen Jones, *Grammatik der Ornamente* (Leipzig: Ludwig Denicke, 1856).

science' and the 'scholarly researcher.'⁴⁷ While its collections tended to emphasize the art and design of northern Bohemia, its journal, the *Mittheilungen des Nordböhmisches Museums*, published articles on a broad range of subjects, from Ottoman textiles, Persian carpets and Japanese ornament, to Romanian glass painting, medieval Bohemian goldsmithing and Silesian embroidery.⁴⁸ A similar situation pertained in the Museum of Applied Arts in Prague; while, understandably, Bohemian glass figured prominently in its collections, its acquisition policy was avowedly cosmopolitan.⁴⁹ A leading figure involved in setting it up was Vojtěch Lanna, owner of a shipping firm whose personal collections included ancient Greek vases, Islamic ceramics and metalwork, Meissen porcelain, Bohemian glass and Italian majolica, and eventually formed a central part of the Museum's display.⁵⁰ This international character defined it clearly against the Náprstek Museum, which had allied itself to the project of Czech nationalism.

The Moravian Design Museum was equally faithful to Eitelberger's vision. Indeed, Eitelberger drew particular attention to Brünn as an outstanding example of the new kind of modern 'scientific' museum that superseded the encyclopedism of the older regional museums.⁵¹ It also acquired objects irrespective of their place of origin; anything that could exemplify the best design work globally was considered appropriate, and this included Islamic, Chinese and Japanese artefacts.⁵² The Museum was

⁴⁷ Pazaurek, *Das Nordböhmisches Gewerbe-Museum 1873-1898*, 18.

⁴⁸ See Jan Mohr, '100 let periodických publikací Severočeského průmyslového muzea,' [100 years of periodical publications of the North Bohemian Museum of Industry], *Sborník Severočeského muzea-Historia* 7 (1984): 5-21.

⁴⁹ Helena Koenigsmarková, 'Kunst und Industrie: Wien – Prag,' in *Kunst und Industrie: Die Anfänge des Museums für angewandte Kunst in Wien*, ed. Peter Noever, 235-42.

⁵⁰ Filip Wittlich, *Vojtěch svobodný pán Lanna, sběratel, mecenáš, podnikatel* [Vojtěch Freiherr von Lanna, collector, patron, entrepreneur] Prague: UPM, 1996)

⁵¹ Eitelberger, 'Die Gewerbemuseen in den Kronländern Österreichs,' *Mittheilungen des k.k. Österreichischen Museums für Kunst und Industrie* 116 (1875): 340-45, and Eitelberger, 'Das mährische Gewerbemuseum in Brünn,' *Mittheilungen des k.k. Österreichischen Museums für Kunst und Industrie* 142 (1877): 104-8.

⁵² Sabina Dvořáková, 'Sběratelství islámského umění v Brně' [The collecting of Islamic art in Brno] in *Příběhy tisíce a jedné noci. Islámské umění v sbírkách Moravské galerie v Brně* [Stories of a thousand and one nights. Islamic art in the collections of the Moravian gallery in Brno] (Brno: Moravian Gallery, 2011), 49-50.

consequently a beacon of cosmopolitanism in a city where private art collectors and the Brünn Art Association as well as the Regional Museum, focused on works by local (i.e. Moravian) and Austrian artists.⁵³ The Design Museum in contrast built up substantial collections of textiles, ceramics, furniture, glass and metalware from all over Europe and beyond. As early as 1877 it staged an exhibition of objects from the Oriental Museum in Vienna while, later, in 1886 it hosted a large scale 'Ethnographic Exhibition' of over 500 objects from across the world.⁵⁴ Reports on acquisitions give an insight into policy; that of 1887, for example, noted the purchase of, amongst others, Egyptian textiles, southern Moravian bridal veils, a Persian lamp, a 'Circassian' dagger, a Venetian dagger and Swiss majolica ware.⁵⁵

Eitelberger's vision of the design museums was that they should be active participants in the public sphere and should disseminate design reform ideals as widely as possible. This goal was pursued through the organization of open public lectures, the publication of an inexpensive journal, the sale of plaster casts and photographic reproductions of items in the collection.⁵⁶ This was a template followed by other museums of design. Indeed, in the case of the Moravian Design Museum it is difficult to overestimate its public educational and cultural importance, for it ensured that the city remained connected to the wider artistic and educational apparatus of the state. In this respect, as in many other towns and cities, it was more important to municipal life than its counterpart in Vienna, for all that the latter gained all the national and international attention. Eitelberger's museum was one of several institutions open to the public that were dedicated to the visual arts in Vienna, from galleries such as the Albertina and the imperial collections on display in the Belvedere Palace (and, later, the Kunsthistorisches Museum) to notable private collections such as the Czernin Picture Gallery, as well

⁵³ On art collecting in Brünn during this period see Slaviček, "*Sobě, umění, přátelům*": *Kapitoly z dějin sběratelství v Čechách a na Moravě 1650-1939*, 193 ff.

⁵⁴ See Heinrich Frauberger, 'Orientalische Ausstellung im mähr. Gewerbe-Museum in Brünn,' *Tagesbote aus Mähren und Schlesien* 14 April (1877): 4. On the ethnographic exhibition see *Mittheilungen des mährischen Gewerbemuseums* 4.3 (1886): 41.

⁵⁵ *Mittheilungen des mährischen Gewerbemuseums* 5.1 (1887): 11-12.

⁵⁶ Gabriele Fabiankowitsch, 'Das Vermittlungsprogramme des K.K. Österreichischen Museums für Kunst und Industrie,' in *Kunst und Industrie*, ed. Peter Noever, 175-92.

as the public lectures delivered at the University and the Polytechnic. In contrast, the Moravian Museum was for many years the only institution of its kind in Brunn. It also had a library and, in the absence of a university in the city – the Masaryk University was not founded until the 1920s – played an important role as a wider place of learning and study in art and design.

Curatorial policy in the Museum also revealed the hand of Viennese thinking. The organization of the displays, in particular, was heavily shaped by the ideas of Semper, whose program for a museum had been central to Eitelberger's initial conception for the Museum of Art and Industry in Vienna. In his manuscript 'The Ideal Museum,' written while he was in London and donated to Eitelberger's Museum in late 1868 or early 1869, Semper had proposed organizing museum collections according to material rather than chronology or geography.⁵⁷ This was in keeping with his broader concern with the relation between form and medium, and Semper envisaged displays based on the four categories of metal, textiles, ceramics and wood. Eitelberger did not adhere exactly to this prescription, but as the first guide to the collections of the Museum for Art and Industry indicates, the principle was broadly followed, with galleries of precious and non-precious metals, textiles, leatherwork and ceramics, as well as sculpture, casts, and 'modern design.'⁵⁸

This arrangement was applied elsewhere in Austria-Hungary; Semper's emphasis on the primary role of ceramics and textiles led the Museum of Applied Arts in Budapest, for example, to focus on these as the core of its collection.⁵⁹ There are no visual sources to determine the exact nature of the display, but it is clear from contemporary publications (Figure 7) that in the Moravian Design Museum collections were also organized according to medium, with separate rooms dedicated to ceramics,

⁵⁷ Gottfried Semper, *The Ideal Museum* (Vienna: Schlebrugge, 1999).

⁵⁸ K.K. Oesterreichisches Museum, *Wegweiser durch das K. K. Oesterreichische Museum für Kunst und Industrie* (Vienna: K. K. Oesterreichisches Museum, 1873), 1.

⁵⁹ See Rebecca Houze, 'Hungarian Nationalism, Gottfried Semper and the Budapest Museum of Applied Art,' *Studies in the Decorative Arts* 16 (2009): 7-38; *Gottfried Semper und Wien: Die Wirkung des Architekten auf "Wissenschaft, Industrie und Kunst"* eds. Rainald Franz and Andreas Nierhaus (Vienna: Boehlau, 2007).

textiles, glass and wood, displaying works from a wide range of periods and places together.⁶⁰ Indeed, the Museum in Brünn persisted with Semper's ideas long after other concerns had become uppermost in Vienna and elsewhere. It was not until 1899 that the displays were reorganized into 'period rooms' that combined objects in a variety of media and were meant to exhibit the aesthetic norms of specific times and places, a concept that had been pioneered by Wilhelm von Bode, director of the Berlin Gemäldegalerie and, later, the Berlin State Museums.⁶¹ As late as 1903 Julius Leisching, director of the Moravian Design Museum wrote a paean in the pages of its journal to Semper's contribution to museum theory and practice.⁶² Brünn was not alone in this regard; Semper's museological ideas were still admired in Prague at the turn of the century, and not only by German-speaking authors; the same year that Leisching wrote in praise of Semper, the Czech art critic Otakar Hostinský paid lengthy tribute to him in a lecture at the Museum of Applied Arts in Prague.⁶³

Such extended attachment to Semper might be read as indicative of the conservatism of provincial cities, but it can also be attributed to the local dynamics of Brünn and the character of the city. Semper's practical concerns with the aesthetic implications of specific materials and techniques of production were highly amenable to the interests of the industrialists who oversaw the Moravian Museum. In Vienna, in contrast, there was a tension between the commercial and market-driven imperatives of the Museum and Eitelberger's understanding of design and applied arts in terms of cultivated taste. Semper's museology was thus replaced by other concerns in Vienna. Indeed, it is worth noting that one of Semper's most powerful critics was none other than Alois Riegl, curator of

⁶⁰ Anon, 'Das mährische Gewerbemuseum in Brünn,' *Mitteilungen des k.k. Österreichischen Museums für Kunst und Industrie* 154 (1878): 124. See, too, Tomáš Zapletal – 'Průmyslové Muzeum - Pendant Průmyslového Města. Moravské Průmyslové Muzeum v Moravské Manchesteru 1873-1918' [The Design Museum – an accessory of the industrial city. The Moravian Design Museum in the Moravian Manchester 1873-1918] in Zapletal et al, *Brno - Moravský Manchester*, 112-23.

⁶¹ *Moravská Národní galerie* [The Moravian National Gallery] ed. Petr Tomášek (Brno: Moravian Gallery, 2011).

⁶² Julius Leisching, 'Gottfried Semper und die Museen,' *Mittheilungen des Mährischen Gewerbemuseums* 21 (1903): 185-92.

⁶³ Otakar Hostinský, 'Gottfried Semper a umělecký průmysl' [Gottfried Semper and industrial art] *Dílo* 2 (1903): 73-89.

textiles at the Museum, who seminal study *Stilfragen* (Questions of Style) elevated formal aesthetic considerations over the practical concerns of material that had been central to the older thinker's work.⁶⁴

Even though the statutes of the Moravian Design Museum made reference to the elevation of taste as its primary mission, the professional and institutional context within which it operated ensured that it followed different priorities.⁶⁵ Indeed, it arguably adhered even more closely to the original practical economic aims of design museums than did its Viennese counterpart. Hence, initially, little weight was given to questions of the authenticity of the items in its collections, since its purpose was to exhibit models for emulation by the designers who formed the backbone of the city's economy. Duplicates were sometimes sold to raise funds for new purchases, in a matter of fact approach to the management of the collections that would have been difficult to fathom in Vienna.⁶⁶

In contrast to the Museum for Art and Industry in Vienna, very few staff in the early years of the Moravian Design Museum were art historians. The first director, Friedrich Arzberger, taught mechanical technology at the Technical Institute in Brünn, and his successor, Johann Georg Schön, designer of the Museum building, was a professor of water, road and railway engineering, also at the Technical Institute. August Prokop, the third director, was a local architect with the concerns of the practitioner rather than the art historian. In part this situation reflected the fact that there was no museums profession as such in the late nineteenth century. Art galleries had traditionally been overseen by artists while the regional museums had been mostly led by enthusiastic amateur local historians and antiquarians. As the number of trained art historians grew, a professional cadre emerged that could claim to being better qualified to assume this role. Eitelberger's role in the

⁶⁴ Alois Riegl, *Stilfragen: Grundlegungen zu einer Geschichte der Ornamentik* (Berlin: George Siemens, 1893).

⁶⁵ The first of the statutes stated that its task was to 'encourage the perfection and elevation of design work ... as well as the broadening of taste and understanding of design products amongst the populace,' 'Statuten des mährischen Gewerbemuseums in Brünn' in Schön, *Das mährische Gewerbemuseum in Brünn: Festschrift zur Eröffnung des neuen Gebäudes*, 5.

⁶⁶ See the report in *Mittheilungen des mährischen Gewerbemuseums* 4.6 (1886): 87.

Museum for Art and Industry represented a turning point in this process. Yet change occurred gradually; outside of Vienna trained historians of art and design were limited in number, and it fell to representatives of other related professions to fulfil that role. As a creation of the city's industrialists, the appointment of Arzberger, Schön and Prokop reflected an interest in the Museum as a vehicle of technical as much as aesthetic education.

Audiences and Culture Wars

By the end of the nineteenth century an issue of growing importance for the Museum for Art and Industry in Vienna was how to respond to developments in contemporary design. The appointment of Arthur von Scala as its director in 1897 prompted polemical debate, for in place of historical subjects Scala mounted exhibitions of contemporary design from abroad, with particular emphasis on arts and crafts work from England. A combination of conservative resistance as well as thinly veiled xenophobia led to furious tirades in the press while, equally, leading younger designers, such as Adolf Loos, were critical of Scala's failure to be modern *enough*.⁶⁷ There was conflict in the Museum's School of Applied Arts, too, when Scala replaced the older established professors with younger artists and designers associated with the Secession.⁶⁸ Outside of Vienna there were parallel debates about the importation of new ideas, particularly from Paris or Berlin, but the experience of modernity was construed in terms of national difference and questions of ethnicity. Habsburg cosmopolitanism came to be seen as the relic of a feudal order, and nationalist ideologues sought to advance particularistic visions of culture that championed what they claimed to have been marginalized and, *in extremis*, oppressed national minorities. The 1880s and 1890s thus witnessed a preoccupation with the search for 'authentic' forms of national expression in the arts.⁶⁹

⁶⁷ See, for example, Adolf Loos, 'Der Fall Scala' (1898) in Loos, *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. Adolf Open (Vienna: Lesethek, 2010), 20-33.

⁶⁸ See Diana Reynolds, 'A Museum of his Own,' in *Alois Riegl in Vienna: An Institutional History 1875-1905*, 239-60.

⁶⁹ *Art and the National Dream: The Search for Vernacular Expression in Turn-of-the-Century Design*, ed. Nicola Gordon-Bowe (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1993).

Eitelberger had been alert to the dangers of nationalism in the 1850s and had seen the Museum for Art and Industry as, in part, a bulwark against it. This raises the question not only of the kinds of artefacts that were exhibited, but also of the public that was envisaged for the museums. As Suzanne Marchand has argued, Eitelberger envisaged one that transcended differences of class and ethnicity, and this was because he refused to link aesthetic preferences to specificities of class, gender or ethnicity.⁷⁰ Hence, Eitelberger stated ‘there is only one beauty, there is only one art. There cannot be one art for the poor and another for the rich.’⁷¹

This belief in universal values was partly an inheritance from Enlightenment aesthetics, but partly, too, it was Eitelberger’s loyalty to the Habsburg vision of the Empire as a multi-cultural polity. Indeed, his speech delivered at the formal opening of Heinrich Ferstel’s new building for the Museum of Art and Industry in 1871 bemoaned the artistic fragmentation of the Empire; Polish artists no longer exhibited in Vienna, he complained, those in Prague kept the capital at arm’s length, those in the Tirol had more in common with Munich, while Hungary had become a law unto itself: ‘Art is no longer a common endeavor for the peoples of Austria.’⁷² He attempted to combat this with a counter-image that dismissed such beliefs as relics of the past: ‘The times are gone when educated peoples and individuals believe they can close themselves off from their neighbours and from neighboring peoples ... The call for prohibitions, for the exclusion of foreigners, is reminiscent of the times when we used to summon the police and the censor, instead of trying to help ourselves.’⁷³

The appeal of such calls was limited to new publics that were divided on linguistic and cultural lines. The changing nature of the public sphere and the splintering of Bohemian into distinct Czech and

⁷⁰ Suzanne Marchand, ‘The View from the Land: Austrian Art Historians and the Interpretation of Croatian Art,’ in *Dalmatia and the Mediterranean: Portable Archaeology and the Poetics of Influence*, ed. Alina Payne (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 34-35

⁷¹ Rudolf Eitelberger, ‘Das deutsche Kunstgewerbe’ (1876) in Eitelberger, *Gesammelte Kunsthistorische Schriften*, vol. II, 345.

⁷² Rudolf Eitelberger, ‘Die Kunstbestrebungen Österreichs’ (1871) in Eitelberger, *Gesammelte Kunsthistorische Schriften*, vol. II, 197.

⁷³ *Ibid*, 177.

German identities has been much discussed.⁷⁴ It also impacted on the museum world. The first visible sign was the development of the National Museum in Prague. Originally founded by aristocratic patrons as the Bohemian Patriotic Museum in 1818, a Czech and German organ of regional identity celebrating the old Kingdom of Bohemia, the Museum soon became a monolingual entity devoted to advancing the cause of Czech nationalism.⁷⁵ Náprstek's Museum was another instance, as was the Museum of Art and Design, although this time in an attempt to rebut the appeal of nationalism. Although its first director, Karel Chytil (1857-1934), exhibited Czech nationalist sympathies in some of his writings, the Museum of Applied Arts in Prague resisted becoming entangled in the worst of the ethnic struggles in the city. This was no small achievement given that the two major fairs held in the city in 1891 and 1895, became a stage for often bitter mutual recrimination and nationalist rivalry between Czechs and Germans.⁷⁶

Disputes in Prague were particularly poisonous, but the cities of Reichenberg and Brünn and, by extension, their museums, were not able to escape such problems either. In the early 1890s, for example, the Bohemian Diet suspended subventions to the Museum in Reichenberg until it could prove it was open to Czech speakers; a condition of further support was the publication of catalogues in both Czech and German, and the curatorial board (Curatorium) was expected to include representatives of the Czech-speaking community.⁷⁷ With a municipality dominated by wealthy German-speaking industrialists, and with a significantly higher proportion of German speakers across Moravia, Brünn was not quite so vulnerable to such sanctions, but conflicts nevertheless arose. As in so many other spheres, the point of dissent focused on the status of German language and culture.

⁷⁴ See Gary Cohen, *The Politics of Ethnic Survival: Germans in Prague, 1861-1914* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 2006).

⁷⁵ On the early history of the museum see Rita Krueger, *Czech, German and Noble: Status and National Identity in Habsburg Bohemia* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2009).

⁷⁶ Marta Filipová, 'Peasants on display: The Czechoslovak ethnographic exhibition of 1895,' *Journal of Design History* 24.1 (2011): 15-36.

⁷⁷ Pazaurek, *Das Nordböhmisches Gewerbe-Museum 1873-1898*, 28

The Moravian Industrial Association that had created and maintained the Museum treated it ostensibly as an emblem of Habsburg culture. Its public pronouncements, however, gave a rather different impression. The Festschrift published to celebrate the 25th anniversary of its foundation declared that ‘the Association and its enterprises are the creation of German citizens of the German city of Brünn; German industriousness, German spirit, German energy and German persistence created it, maintained and cultivated it, and if its value and goodness has benefitted and continues to benefits all fellow inhabitants of our city, regardless of their nationality, and if the Industrial Association is always led in its actions by what is universally the best and not by the moment of nationalism, it is displaying its thoroughly German character ...’⁷⁸ This pronouncement typified the ideological outlook of German-speaking liberals, for whom Austrian and German were synonymous, and who saw no contradiction between asserting the value of German culture while also believing this was a non-national position to take. Because they saw German as a supranational language of culture, business and learning, their basic failing was an inability to imagine that non-German minorities might have a different perspective. Although the Industrial Association in Brünn did not actively discriminate against non-Germans – anyone could be a member as long as they identified with German culture and values – it came to be seen as primarily an organization for ethnic Germans. The same could be said of the Moravian Art Association, brought into existence in 1882 by many of the same figures who had been pivotal in the creation of the Design Museum and the Industrial Association.⁷⁹ Again, the Art Association was not explicitly nationalist, but it was almost entirely oriented towards the German-speaking art world, either Vienna or Munich.

One of the Art Association’s leading members was Friedrich Wannieck (1838-1919), a wealthy industrialist and a supporter of the nationalist mystic Guido von List’s (1848-1919) pagan creed,

⁷⁸ Anon, *Festschrift des mährischen Gewerbe-Vereines in Brünn zur Feier seines 25-jährigen Bestandes* 28. März 1886, 13.

⁷⁹ Robert Janás, 'Mährischer Kunstverein - dějiny spolku v letech 1882-1945' [The Moravian Art Association – history of the society between 1882 and 1945] in *90 let Domu umění města Brna: Historie jednoho domu* [90 Years of the House of Art of the city of Brno: The History of a single house] ed. Pavel Liška (Brno: Dům umění, 2000), 9.

‘Wotanism,’ which is often seen as anticipating some of the fringe mystical beliefs of Nazism.⁸⁰ For the present discussion his most important contribution to the cultural life of Brünn was his role in exacerbating the sense of division between its German and Czech inhabitants. In 1884 he set up the Deutsches Haus Association (Verein Deutsches Haus) and was its first president. The Association was created to raise funds for a cultural institution that would promote German culture. This goal was achieved in 1891 with the opening of the Deutsches Haus (Figure 8), an imposing red brick edifice built in a northern Renaissance style. With an art gallery, concert hall, restaurant and a library, as well as numerous smaller rooms for different groups including the Industrial Association, the Deutsches Haus symbolized the erosion of the difference between German as the *lingua franca* of Brünn’s civic life, on the one hand, and as the language of a specific, privileged, ethnic group on the other.⁸¹

This was replicated elsewhere in Bohemia and Moravia. Like the German Casino founded in Prague in 1875 and similar cultural centres in other towns such as Pilsen (Plzeň), Budweis (České Budějovice) and Znaim (Znojmo), the Deutsches Haus in Brünn was testament to the insecurity of the German populations in the urban centres outside of the Austrian heartlands.⁸² However it is of particular interest in the case of Brünn because key individuals were involved in both the Deutsches Haus and the Design Museum, two institutions with quite opposed ideological missions.

Before the Deutsches Haus was built, the focus of German nationalist gatherings in Brünn had been the gymnasium of the Fitness Association (‘Turnverein’), built in 1868 by August Prokop (Figure 9), future director of the Moravian Design Museum. The design for the building was resonant with national German associations. In contrast to the Neo-Renaissance architecture that typified most of

⁸⁰ Simon Goodrick-Clarke, *The Occult Roots of Nazism: The Ariosophists of Austria and Germany, 1890-1935* (New York: NYU Press, 1992).

⁸¹ Gustav Trautenberger, *Festschrift zur Eröffnung des Deutschen Hauses in Brünn am 17., 18. und 19. Mai 1891* (Brünn: Verlag Deutsches Haus, 1891), 26.

⁸² Věra Laštovičková, ‘Německé národní domy’ [German national houses] in Laštovičková, *Cizí dům? Architektura českých Němců 1848-1891* [A foreign house? The architecture of Bohemian Germans, 1848-91] (Prague: UMPRUM, 2015), 135-50.

the buildings erected during expansion of the city in the 1860s and 1870s, Prokop chose to imitate the late medieval architecture of northern Germany.⁸³ In part this may have been informed by the fact that he had worked as an assistant in an architectural office in Kiel, but Gothic was fast becoming a visual emblem of German national identity and Prokop cannot have been unaware of the political connotations of his design. He was also involved in the development of the Deutsches Haus. He served on the jury for the architectural competition, unexceptional, perhaps, in virtue of his position, but more controversially, he chose to exhibit the submissions in the Design Museum.⁸⁴ Indeed, arrangements were also made to allow Wannieck to deliver a series of lectures in the Museum on the project.⁸⁵ Prokop's participation in both institutions suggests that the boundaries between imperial 'kaisertreu' and nationalist politics were fluid; alongside his support for the Deutsches Haus, he also organized a lavish exhibition in 1888 to celebrate the Emperor's 40th anniversary that entailed building an extension that doubled the size of the original building of the Design Museum.⁸⁶

The conflation of 'imperial' and 'German' in the minds of the members of Industrial Association and other representatives of Brünn's social and cultural elite points towards the complex landscape of municipal politics. Although not as bitter as in Prague, interethnic rivalry was visible. The cause was the changing demography of the city. The success of the textile industries had brought about an influx of Czech-speaking workers from the surrounding countryside, and administrative re-organisation led to the merger of the German-speaking city centre with the predominantly Czech-speaking suburbs. Consequently the economic and cultural dominance of the German-speaking population gradually came into question from the 1870s onwards. Brünn may have been the birthplace of important German-speaking Liberal politicians but, equally, it was the home of leading representatives of Czech

⁸³ 'Die Turnhalle zu Brünn. Von Architekt und Prof. Aug. Prokop,' *Allgemeine Bauzeitung* 48 (1883): 11. See, too, Pavel Zatloukal, *Příběhy z dlouhého století: Architektura let 1750-1918 na Moravě a ve Slezsku* [The history of a long century: Architecture in Moravia and Silesia from the years 1750-1918] (Olomouc: Museum of Art, 2002), 354.

⁸⁴ *Mittheilungen des mährischen Gewerbe-Museums* 5.6 (1887): 92 and 5.10 (1887): 165.

⁸⁵ Friedrich Wannieck, *Vorträge gehalten im Mährischen Gewerbe Museum betreffend die Ausschmückung des zu erbauenden Deutschen Hauses in Brünn* (Brünn: Verlag Deutsches Haus, 1887).

⁸⁶ *Kaiser-Jubiläums-Ausstellung*, ed. Alois Naske (Brünn: Moravian Design Museum, 1888).

national politics. Of these perhaps the most significant was Alois von Pražák (1820-1901), who led the Moravian branch of the Czech National Party (Národní strana) and served as Austrian Minister of Justice in the 1880s. As if to underline this growing self-confidence, he erected a lavish Neo-Renaissance mansion, the so-called Pražák Palace (Figure 9), built by Theophil Hansen in 1873-74, on a plot of land on the Brunn Ringstrasse.

The aspiring Czech-speaking middle classes gradually increased their imprint on the city, laying claim to symbolically important space in the centre. The most important example was the so-called Besední dům (Meeting House) (Figure 10). Also built by Hansen in 1870-73, it had a library and a concert hall devoted to Czech art, music and intellectual life.⁸⁷ The building was clearly seen as a provocation in certain quarters of the German-speaking population; when the Deutsches Haus was opened it was noted with satisfaction that its grand ballroom was twice the size of the equivalent in the Besední dům.⁸⁸ Pražák had been a leading figure in the development of the Besední Dům, and his Palace was situated alongside it, as if to cement the Czech presence in this prestigious part of the city centre. A powerful symbol of the increasing disjunctions and contradictions in the city can be found in the fact that it was located on the Ringstrasse between the Pražák Palace and the Museum of Design.

The idea of a public that transcended such divisions came under increasing strain. The Museum sought to accommodate the changing face of the city by catering to the interests of different sections of the populace. Hence, it exhibited design work by the 'Vesna' Technical School for Girls set up by the Czech community, but this tactic was equally problematic and was a source of discontent in certain quarters of the German population.⁸⁹ As early as 1884 there were complaints by the *Tagesbote*

⁸⁷ Lea Firmlová, Zdeněk Geist et al, *Besedni dům: Architektura, společnost a kultura* [The Besedni dům: Architecture, society and culture] (Brno: State Philharmonia, 1995).

⁸⁸ Gustav Trautenberger, *Festschrift zur Eröffnung des Deutschen Hauses in Brunn am 17., 18. und 19. Mai 1891*, 30.

⁸⁹ The Vesna educational society for girls was set up in 1870, with a school opening in 1886. See Anon, *Vesna: Sborník ke čtyřicátému výročí městských dívčích odborných škol v Brně* [Vesna: Anthology for the fortieth anniversary of the municipal vocational school for girls in Brno] (Brno: Vesna Society, 1926)

fur Mähren und Schlesien (The Moravian and Silesian Daily Herald), the main German-language daily newspaper, about attempts by the Czech community to use the Museum for their own purposes, including the delivery of lectures in Czech and the promotion of ‘Czech propaganda.’⁹⁰ Clearly, certain parts of the Brunn population paid only lip service to the Museum’s ideological mission and claimed exclusive ownership of it. Conversely, the concession to Czech speakers failed to prevent a growing polarization of cultural life. Pražák’s membership of the Industrial Association and the Art Association did little to allay the suspicion that they were ‘German’ organizations. The final decades of the century therefore saw the institutionalization of growing divisions. Indeed, the degree of mutual antagonism can be gauged by Czech responses to the opening of the Deutsches Haus. A subject of lavish and enthusiastic coverage in the German language press, it received rather less positive reports in the *Moravská Orlice* (The Moravian Eagle), the leading Czech-language newspaper in Moravia, referring to it as ‘a nice new pub – a Jewish pub – but nothing more.’⁹¹ The casual anti-Semitism is a reminder of the darker side of Czech nationalism but it is a reminder of the prominence of Jewish industrialists amongst those associated with the Deutsches Haus.

By the 1890s, therefore, the Design Museum had become entangled in the politics of ethnic difference and competition; the challenges it faced were thus distinct from those that preoccupied the Museum for Art and Industry in Vienna. Prokop’s successor Julius Leisching, who took over in 1893, managed to retrieve the situation, mounting notable exhibitions of modern design.⁹² But while Leisching had close personal ties to Vienna, he also introduced a number of important innovations that can be seen as an assertion of independence from Vienna. In 1895 he set up a Technological Department where the latest machine technologies were put on display and orders could be placed with the manufacturers. This represented a considerable step away from the Museum for Art and Industry in which questions of style and historical emulation were still being debated. As such, Leisching was

⁹⁰ *Tagesbote fur Mähren und Schlesien*, 31 October 1884: 1, and 6 November 1884: 1.

⁹¹ ‘Německý dům,’ *Moravská Orlice*, 17 May 1891: 2.

⁹² Exhibitions such as the *Ausstellung modernen Kunstgewerbes* (1899); *Emil Orlik* (1900); *Moderne Interieurs: Ausstellung Oesterreichischer im Kunstgewerbe thätiger Künstler* (19 December 1900 to 1901) showed work by, amongst others, Emil Orlik, Emil Gallé, Bigot, Walter Crane, Jules Chéret and Otto Eckmann.

revisiting the ideas of Semper, who saw museums of design as enabling a more informed engagement with new technologies, as well as those of Wilhelm Exner, whose campaign against the aesthetic preoccupations of the Museum on the Vienna Ringstrasse eventually led to the establishment of the Technical Museum in 1909.⁹³

In addition, Leisching played a leading role in the creation of the Federation of Austrian Design Museums (Verband österreichischer Kunstgewerbemuseen) in March 1900.⁹⁴ With representatives from twelve design museums across Austria, such as Lemberg, Brünn, Pilsen, Budweis, Graz, Czernowitz, Linz and Prague, it was the first real attempt to make a reality of Eitelberger's dream of a network of institutions across the Austrian crownlands (those in Hungary played no part). But its most remarkable aspect is that it excluded Eitelberger's own museum; hence, while its first meeting was held in Vienna, it was not in the Museum for Art and Industry that its members met, but rather the Hotel Bristol near the Opera House. This deliberate distancing may be put down to professional rivalry and ambition, but it symbolizes, too, the extent to which regional museums had developed the confidence to pursue their own goals, without feeling constrained by the capital. Indeed, the fact that it was Brünn, the most Viennese of cities outside of Vienna, that took the lead, makes this all the more striking.⁹⁵

At the same time, however, the Museum remained an outpost of Austro-German culture. German remained the sole language of business, and it showed next to no meaningful interest in work by Czech-speaking designers and artists. Its publications appeared only in German, too. This may appear unexceptional; the same could be said of the Museum of Applied Arts in Prague or the Design Museums in Reichenberg and Olmütz. Yet the Regional Museum in the same city became a bilingual

⁹³ On the history of the Technical Museum see *100 Jahre Technisches Museum Wien* eds. Helmut Lackner, Katharina Jesswein and Gabriele Zuna-Kratky (Vienna: Technical Museum, 2009).

⁹⁴ 'Bericht über die erste Konferenz österreichischer Kunstgewerbemuseen in Wien,' *Mitteilungen des mährischen Gewerbemuseums* 18.6 (1900): 41-48.

⁹⁵ From 1901 the Moravian Museum referred to its own journal as the 'Magazine' ('Zeitschrift') of the Federation and published annual proceedings of the meetings.

institution, publishing catalogues in German and Czech. The Design Museum, in contrast, continued to treat German as a non-national *lingua franca* of public discourse, and thus continued to be perceived as an instrument of German cultural hegemony. The strongest indication of this was the fact that the newly emerging Czech-speaking middle classes began to set up their own cultural institutions and associations to rival those that were already in existence. The first was the Czech-language Club of the Friends of Art (Klub přátel umění), created in 1899 to provide a forum for Czech artists and enthusiasts who felt excluded by the existing institutions of the Brünn art world. This inaugurated a new era, in which Brno would become a significant centre of specifically Czech modernist art and design. That, however, remains a separate chapter in the history of central European art.

Conclusion

Design museums were set up as a way of overcoming the perceived deleterious effects of mass production on design quality. This was first recognized in Britain as an issue, primarily because industrialized manufacture developed there earlier than in the rest of Europe. Thanks to Semper and Eitelberger the British model was imported to Austria-Hungary, with the belief that museums would encourage understanding of the constraints and affordances of materials, as well as elevating the general level of taste in the public. By the turn of the century, however, the most innovative designers were no longer looking to the collections of institutions such as the Museum for Art and Industry as sources for emulation.

Such considerations were complicated by the fact that museums of design became drawn into the increasingly fractious cultural politics of the later Habsburg Empire. Eitelberger saw design museums primarily in terms of their mission to elevate the general level of taste. A more discerning public would demand higher quality commodities, due to a greater familiarity with universal principles of good design. Yet the idea of such principles came increasingly under strain, not only due to the challenge to aesthetic norms laid down by the progressive artists and designers of the turn of the century, but also due to the fracturing of the public sphere. There was no single public of the kind that

Eitelberger had envisaged. Even in the 1860s this was doubtful but by the end of the nineteenth century it was doubly implausible.

In her overview of the relation between museums and national identities Sharon Macdonald has argued that 'Public museums, then, were from their beginnings embroiled in the attempt to culture a public and encourage people to imagine and experience themselves as members of an ordered but nevertheless sentimentalized nation-state.'⁹⁶ In the case of Austria, there stood, instead of 'nation-state,' the idea of a multi-cultural dynastic polity, but no less effort was expended on trying to fashion a public sphere that identified with the Habsburg dynasty and its legitimizing narratives. Museums of design thus stood at the very heart of the debate over the cultural identity of the Danube Monarchy.

The case of Brünn suggests that even in a city with numerous social and political ties to Vienna the idea of a shared culture and public space did not meet with universal assent. Anxieties about the erosion of positions of privilege, or the demand for greater cultural recognition, overrode the founding ideological mission of the Museum and compromised its position. *In extremis*, the fragmented public of Brünn led to a proliferation of organisations designed to satisfy the particularist outlooks of its different groups. The vulnerability of institutions such as the Moravian Design Museum to co-option by sectoral interest was heightened by the fact that Eitelberger's desire for a co-ordinated system remained a purely rhetorical gesture. The lack of sustained central support from the Vienna Ministry for Culture and Education (or indeed of any Ministry) meant that they were compelled to rely on local resources, with all the dependencies that entailed.

The history of Brünn demonstrates that individuals could at times embrace a non-national liberalism and, at others, advance a specifically German or Czech identity. This phenomenon affected the Design Museum no less than other artistic and cultural associations. Hence, its foundation was motivated by a liberal desire to enhance the efficacy of capitalist manufacture, yet it also came to

⁹⁶ Sharon Macdonald, 'Museums, National, Postnational and Transcultural Identities,' *Museum and Society* 1.1 (2003): 5.

serve as an organ for more nationalistically tinged social and economic visions. Rather than providing an ordered and shared cultural space, the museum ended up being a site of difference, trying to accommodate the conflicting demands of the city population.

In many respects the fact that museums were drawn into municipal political tensions and conflicts is to be expected, for they were, after all, city institutions. The ability of the Design Museum in Prague to remain aloof from the vicious squabbles between Czechs and Germans in the city was the more remarkable exception. The story of the Brunn Museum shows how difficult this was, especially given the ambiguous status of German culture. Nevertheless, for all that it often adhered to Habsburg cultural mission, its freer embrace of the practical demands of industry and its role in the Federation of Design Museums shows that by the end of the nineteenth century Viennese cultural bureaucrats could no longer paternalistically dictate the terms under which the populations of the crown lands and their cultural institutions could operate. The puzzling aspect of this history is the fact that while bureaucrats in the Ministry of Culture recognized the value and importance of museums, they relied almost wholly on the goodwill and loyalties of local elites and administrations. In short, when it came to museums, there was no overarching strategic policy to channel central resources to achieve what all agreed was the most desirable goal. This is puzzling precisely because such inaction coincided with growing anxiety in Vienna about the perceived fragmentation of the State which more focused coordinated action might have ameliorated. The Moravian Design Museum provides an object lesson, therefore, in the limitations of Habsburg cultural policy implementation as well as, more generally, a questioning commonly held assumptions about the efficacy of museums as the organs of a state-coordinated exhibitionary complex.