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Otto Wagner's Role as a Professor in the History of Modern Architecture

Abstrakt: Ovaj rad kritički razmatra poziciju Otta Wagnera, znamenitog austrijskog arhitekte, u historiografiji moderne arhitekture. Iako se analizom Wagnerove teorije i izvedenih arhitektonskih objekata može utvrditi da on ni svojom teorijom ni praksom nije toliko inovativan u kontekstu razvoja moderne arhitekture, ovaj rad postavlja Wagnerov doprinos modernoj arhitekturi u kontekst njegove pedagoške djelatnosti u okviru Wagnerove škole, odnosno uticaja koji je, kao profesor, izvršio na generacije mladih arhitekata, koji su dali značajan doprinos arhitekturi modernizma.

Ključne riječi: arhitektura, eklekticizam, *fin-de-siécle* Beč, funkcionalizam, historicizam, historiografija, modernizam, teorija, Wagnerova škola, *Zeitgeist*

Abstract: This paper gives a critical examination of Otto Wagner's position in the historiography of modern architecture. Even though the analysis of Wagner's theory and completed architectural objects proves that he was not so innovative with his theory or practise in the context of the development of modern architecture, this paper positions Wagner's contribution in the context of his pedagogical activities within the Wagner School, that is the influence he, as a professor, exerted on the generations of young architects who significantly contributed to the architecture of modernism.

Key words: architecture, eclecticism, *fin-de-siécle* Vienna, functionalism, historicism, historiography, modernism, theory, Wagner School, *Zeitgeist*.

In the historiography of modern architecture Otto Wagner (1841-1918) takes a notable position starting from the first modern historical "classics", *Pioneers of Modern Design* (1936) by Nikolaus Pevsner and *Space, Time and Architecture* (1941) by Siegfried Giedion to the later ones, those by Vincent Scully, Kenneth Frampton and William Curtis. The early histories discuss Wagner's theory and practice in the context of the rising spirit of modernity and the shaping of the ideology of modern movement. His position has somewhat changed in the late 1960s and 1970s, the years that brought a dramatic questioning of the truthfulness of historical narrative

as a vehicle for representing the contents of the past, but his accomplishments for development of modern architecture still need further examination and elaboration especially in the context of his pedagogical practice at the Wagner School.

This paper is first going to examine the place of Otto Wagner in the historiography of modern architecture and then attempt to demonstrate that his major contribution to the architecture of the twentieth century was his influence as a professor who led the generation of architects over the threshold from nineteenth century historicism towards modern architecture.

Wagner's place is examined in the most influential histories of modern architecture, those discourses that established the foundations of modern architectural history such as Henry-Rusell Hitchcock and Philip Johnson's *International Style* (1932), Nikolaus Pevsner's *Pioneers of Modern Design* (1936), and Siegfried Giedion's *Space, Time and Architecture* (1941) as well as those that reflect the changing notions of modern architecture such as Vincent Scully's *Modern Architecture: The Architecture of Democracy* (1961), Bruno Zevi's *The Modern Language of Architecture* (1973), Kenneth Frampton's *Modern Architecture: A Critical History* (1980) and William Curtis' *Modern Architecture Since 1900* (1982). The criteria of selecting the texts were the degree to which they are representative of modern histories and the extent to which they hold an authoritative position in the history of modern architecture. Although all of the selected histories in one way or another deal with the same subject, there are significant differences from one author to the next in terms of persons, projects and ideas chosen.

In their influential history, *International Style* Hitchcock and Johnson consider Wagner as the individualist who was one of the first to "break consciously with the nominal discipline of the revivals".[1] Regarded as the influential figure of the *New Tradition* in the terms of these authors, Wagner "cultivated qualities of lightness and developed the plane surfaces of his architecture for their own sake,"[2] significantly a decade before Peter Behrens' architectural volume began to replace the traditional effect of mass.[3] Wagner, Behrens and Auguste Perret were the architects that "lightened the solid massiveness of traditional architecture,"[4] but Hitchcock and Johnson restrain from further elaboration or illustration of Wagner's architecture. The main objective of the authors was to advertise International Style and to establish the modern movement as a style, original, valid, logical and innovative as the great styles

[1] Henry-Russel Hitchcock and Philip Johnson, *International Style,* W.W. Norton & Company, New York, 1995, 40.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid, 41.

of the past.[5] Wagner's architecture did not find a room in the set of illustrations of this book which function as a real evidence that support the authors' argument.

The other two founding genealogies of modern architecture, that played a decisive role in shaping the ideology of modern movement, that of Giedion and Pevsner, regard Wagner as a significant figure in their narrative of genesis, triumph and decline of modern architecture. In *Pioneers of Modern Design* (1936) Nikolaus Pevsner refers to Wagner as "the most progressive Viennese architect,"[6] as one of the first to admire the machine and understand its relation to architecture and the link between design to ornamentation and his architecture is brought in relation to Adolf Loos (1870-1933), Louis Sullivan (1856-1924), Frank Lloyd Wright (1869-1959) and Henri van de Velde (1863-1957).[7] In order to demonstrate Wagner's modernity, Pevsner selects his most modern work, the Postal Savings Bank, as a representative of his built works and only uses quotations from his theoretical work *Modern Architecture* which prove his hypothesis: "The only possible departure for artistic creation is modern life." "All modern forms must be in harmony with...the new requirements of our time."[8] Pevsner compiled these facts, i.e. linked the evidence, quotations and an example together in his historical narrative that defines the roots, novelties and innovations in order to justify natural, and evolutionary development of modern architecture.

Sigfried Giedion also reserves room for Wagner in his history of modern architecture, *Space, Time and Architecture* (1941). Mirroring his fellow historian Pevsner, Giedion selects an almost identical quote from Wagner's *Modern Architecture*: "our starting point for artistic creation is to be found only in modern life."[9] The Postal Savings Bank is again selected to represent Wagner's architectural opus and the same is in the first edition of Vincent Scully's *Modern Architecture: Architecture of Democracy* (1961) where the Postal Savings Bank is contrasted to Horta's Maison du Peuple in order to demonstrate the break from organic curves in favor of hard, linear design.

In the aforementioned histories there is no trace of the Wagner's tendencies towards academic historicism. However, closer examination of what was considered to be Wagner's functional and modern architecture, indicated his eclectic tendencies. The design of the Postal Savings Bank (1908), probably Wagner's most modern work, is based on a logical trapezoidal plan with a banking hall at its center,

[5] See Hitchcock and Johnson *International Style*

[6] Nikolaus Pevsner, *Pioneers of Modern Design*, Penguin Books, New York, 1984, 30.

[7] Ibid., 27.

[8] See Pevsner, *Pioneers of Modern Design.*

[9] Sigfried Giedion, *Space, Time and Architecture*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1980, 317.

which contains a glass vault carried on steel columns. The architect tried to humanize these materials by arranging them in a church-like structure similar to the Renaissance ones that reflect rationality, harmony and symmetry. This building still echoes his earlier open-minded eclecticism of Neo-Renaissance or how he termed it "free Renaissance"[10] and it only attempts to express modernity through the modern use of materials so it still appears only as a modernized past.

Compared to his designs, Wagner's theoretical writings reflect more modern concepts such as his *Sketches, Drawings and Executed Buildings* published in four volumes,[11] which along with his architectural designs, contain his theoretical concepts, such as the need for a new style that would reflect the needs of a modern man. This plea for a new style was introduced in 1889, but this was a phenomenon of the nineteenth-century architecture in general and was acknowledged much before Wagner. For instance, in his *Lectures on Architecture* (1854-1868) French architect Viollet-le-Duc discusses the development of a new style that has to "consider the ideas of progress proper to our age."[12] Wagner could have been guided by Viollet-le-Duc's writings, or by the German influence that was predominant in Austria. Since he was studying in Berlin, it is more likely that he was inspired by the German theorists who touched upon the problem of style such as the architect K.F. Schinkel, who in 1822, in his diary raised the question of why his era should not have its own style. In 1828 German theorist Henrich Hübsch also wrote about this issue in his book *In What Style Should We Build*. In later works, Hübsch aimed to identify the means for developing a new style based on a "need," which is best identified by its primary elements of roof and supports, the notion that goes back to Marc Antoine Laguier's *Essay on Architecture* (1753). In 1845, another German architect, Eduard Metzger, discusses the same contemporary issue in his work *A Contribution to the Contemporary Problem: In What Style One Should Build*.[13] But probably the most direct influence on Wagner was that of his professor at the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna, Eduard van der Nüll who in 1845 also addressed the problem of style and eclecticism.[14] In "Andeutungen über die kunstgemässe Beziehung des ornaments zur rohen Form" (1845) van der Nüll calls for an end to Greek

[10] Wagner, like his Viennese contemporaries, was influenced by the historical approach of Gottfried Semper (1803-1879), a German architect, teacher and writer who envisioned the Renaissance as still capable of stylistic completion. See Gottfried Semper, "Der Stil," in *Otto Wagner: Reflections on the Raiment of Modernity*, (ed. Harry Francis Mallgrave), The Getty Center Publication Programs, Santa Monica, 1993.

[11] These four volumes were published from 1889 to 1922.

[12] E.-E. Viollet-le-Duc. *Lectures on Architecture*. Vol. I, Dover Publications Inc., New York, 1987.

[13] Harry Francis Mallgrave, "Introduction," in Otto Wagner, *Modern Architecture: A Guidebook for His Students to This Field of Art*, The Getty Center for the History of Art and the Humanities, Santa Monica, 1988, 17.

[14] Ibid., 16

and Gothic forms because the technical means of his age suggested new methods of construction. He believed that new style, developed from three criteria: logical use of materials; rational design, and construction; and sensitive artistic ennoblement of constructional form, would produce new form.[15]

In comparison to Wagner's *Sketches, Drawings and Executed Buildings*, his more revolutionary ideas are expressed in the first volume of *Modern Architecture* (1896). The book is divided into five chapters: "The Architect," consists of ideas on the profession; "Style" contains a rejection of historicism and Wagner's principles of modernity; "Composition" describes the procedures in planning; "Construction" includes his most important theoretical ideas, the core of his theory; and "The Practice of Art" gives practical tips on city planning. It was published in four versions between 1896 and 1914 reflecting the evolution of Wagner's concepts on modern architecture. In the preface to the third edition (1901), he defined this book as "an appeal to young architects to avoid copies and the path of plagiarism and to find salvation in the world of creation."[16] He emphasized the necessity for a new architecture in response to new functional requirements, new materials.

> Need, purpose, construction and idealism are the primitive germs of artistic life. United in a single idea, they produce a kind of 'necessity' in the origin and existence of every work of art, and this is the meaning of the words "ARTIS SOLA DOMINA NECESSITAS.[17]

Despite Wagner's calls for primacy of function and construction, he was still unable to break away from idealism, the esthetical concern with ideal beauty of form inherited from Renaissance. Not even in his last edition of *Modern Architecture* (1914) did Wagner completely distance himself from tradition. His chapter "Composition" still demands symmetry and the effect of perspective in the design.

> The aping of unsymmetrical buildings or the intentional making of an unsymmetrical composition in order to achieve a supposed painterly effect is totally objectionable. All unsymmetrical ancient models came about only because later generations made spatial changes to a building originally symmetrical, causing the asymmetry. Never, never may this be looked upon as the original intention.[18]

Demand for symmetry is a Renaissance principle, as is the significance of the effect of perspective.

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[15] Ibid.

[16] Otto Wagner, *Modern Architecture*, 55.

[17] Ibid., 91.

[18] Ibid., 86.

> When composing, the architect has to place great importance on the effect of perspective; that is, he must organize the silhouette, the massing, the projections of the cornice, the distortions, the sculptural line of the profile and ornaments in such a way that they appear properly emphasized from a SINGLE VANTAGE POINT.[19]

Wagner's modernism was not an escape from history, but rather a redefinition of the way that historical notions factor into a design which makes use of new materials and building techniques. Therefore *Modern Architecture* is a manifesto of a practitioner who was loyal to traditional values, but fully aware of the new challenges that architecture was facing.

It can be concluded that in the overall history of modern architecture neither Wagner's theoretical concepts nor his architecture are really revolutionary. His theory is not significantly different from what was being taught at the Ecolé des Beaux-Arts nor it was more evolutionary than what Louis Sullivan, was preaching in 1880s. In "Elements and Theories of Architecture" (1902) J.A. Guadet laid out the guiding principles of Beaux-Arts Academy teaching: program, purpose, symmetry, simplicity, and beauty. Wagner's *Modern Architecture* contains all these principles. Guadet's description of the architects' task: to "translate the aspirations of their time;" and to "be the artist of your own times—that is always a noble mission"[20] is similar to Wagner's definition of one of the most important tasks of an architect: necessity of perceiving needs of contemporary society and solving them.[21]

As early as 1881 Louis Sullivan addressed the emphasis on program and utility, associated with functionalism, when he described his first year in the firm Adler and Sullivan.

> He could now, undisturbed, start on the course of practical experimentation he long had in mind, which was to make architecture that fitted its functions – a realistic architecture based on well defined utilitarian needs – that all practical demands of utility should be paramount as a basis of planning and design; that no architectural dictum, or tradition, or superstition, or habit, should stand in his way.[22]

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[19] Ibid.

[20] J. -A. Guadet, "Elements and Theories of Architecture," in *America Builds*, Public Domain, New York, 1902, 323-334.

[21] Wagner, *Modern Architecture*, 68.

[22] Hugh Morrison, *Louis Sullivan: Prophet of Modern Architecture* quoted in Larry Ligo, *The Concept of Function in Twentieth-Century Architectural Criticism*, UMI Research Press, Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1984, 13.

His call for architecture that "fitted its functions" came much before Wagner's emphasis on the necessity for architecture to respond to functional requirements, new materials and structure: "Need, purpose, construction and idealism are the primitive germs of artistic life."[23]

Even though they are mentioned in the early histories of modern architecture, Wagner's theory and architectural projects do not seem very innovative or revolutionary, but there was something in his teaching methodology at Wagner School that inspired and encouraged his students to proceed with more revolutionary designs. Wagner School has been forgotten until 1969 when Otto Antonia Graf's essay "Die Vergessene Wagnerschule," was published. Prior to that Siegfried Giedion in his *Space Time and Architecture* briefly mentions the School, but refrains from further discussing its significance and contribution to the modern movement. Only after Graf's emphasis on significance of the Wagner School, Wagner was brought into historical discourse in this context. Vincent Scully, obviously impacted by Graf's account, in his revised edition of *Modern Architecture: Architecture of Democracy* (published in 1974) in the last, added chapter, praises Wagner's influence on the architecture of his student Karl Ehn i.e., that the design of Karl Marx Hof (1927-1930) reflects the influence of Wagner and his school. Ehn's Karl Marx Hof as a "descendant of Wagner School" was also acknowledged by William Curtis in his *Modern Architecture Since 1900* (1982), but surprisingly this history is not very different from Pevsner and Giedion in regards to Wagner's position in the history of modern architecture.

Unlike some of his aforementioned fellow historians, Kenneth Frampton in *Modern Architecture: A Critical History* (1980) examines Wagner's pedagogical role in the context of his influence on protagonists of Vienna Secession Josef Maria Olbrich, who assisted Wagner in his office and Josef Hoffman, who was a student in the Wagner School. The Wagner School is briefly mentioned in the context of the Futurist architect Sant' Elia and even though Frampton only scarcely mentions Wagner's pedagogical influence, his discourse opens the door for new insights provoking further exploration of Wagner's contribution as a professor.

Wagner's historical significance resides within his involvement with the Academy of Fine Arts where he was the chair of the school of architecture, which came to be known as the Wagner School. An insight into the Wagner School will provide a better understanding of Wagner's role in the history of modern movement. Wagner discovered, inspired, motivated and supported a number of young talents who carried Austrian architecture over the threshold towards modernity. The students of the Wagner School and the publications of their designs inspired architects around Europe and even across the Atlantic, in the United States.

[23] Wagner, *Modern Architecture*, 91.

The Wagner School effectively existed for twenty years, from 1894, when Wagner was appointed professor of the Academy, until 1914. Wagner was already fifty when he started teaching and many of his architectural designs were executed or were in the process of construction,[24] others, along with this theoretical approaches, were published in *Sketches, Drawings and Executed Buildings* (first volume was published in 1889). This document of his works, which show him as rather conservative,[25] won him the academic post — the faculty of the Academy assumed Wagner would continue teaching in the manner of his predecessors.

Since he was already an affirmed practitioner and theorist, for the students he was the architectural "super representative", the status that provided him with the authority, power and predisposition act as an "opinion leader".[26] His impressive opus of works (just published in *Sketches, Drawings and Executed Buildings*), the authority given by the title of professor and great rhetorical prowess all provided him with the confidence, power and skill to persuade. In 1986 the first volume of *Modern Architecture* was published, the text, that was written with a clearly didactic purpose, to serve as a guide to his students at the Academy.

Wagner's teaching was based on the strong relationship between master and student, thus he was very selective when admitting students and only the most gifted ones were able to enroll in his program. While the Technical University in Vienna was accepting up to seventy students a year, at that time, Wagner accepted on average six to seven students, out of ten times that number of applicants.[27] He justified this selective strategy through the definition of art: "art, as its name suggests, is an ability; it is talent developed to perfection by the chosen few, a talent to invest beauty with tangible form."[28] The teaching method based on a close relationship between master and student benefited both sides; Wagner taught his students and learned form them at the same time. But the best way to examine the effect of the School is to see how students perceived it. Karl Maria Kerndle, one of the most progressive students in Wagner's class, in 1902/03, writes:

> The work at the Wagner School is guided by this modern spirit of constant progress. The school's creative force is based on the insight, that

[24] Synagogue, Budapest (1870), Palais Wagner, 3 Wenweg, Vienna (1890), Nussdorf Dam, Danube Works, Vienna (1894-98), Stadtbahn System, Vienna (Karlsplatz Station with J.M. Olbrich) (1894-99).

[25] In the first volume of Sketches Drawings and Executed Buildings Wagner remained in line with the Neo-Renaissance style or "free Renaissance" as he referred to it. See Wagner *Sketches Projects and Executed Buildings,* 17.

[26] Ronald Carpenter, *History as Rhetoric,* University of South Carolina Press Columbia, South Carolina, 1995, 6.

[27] Ian Boyd White, *Three Architects from the Master Class of Otto Wagner*, The MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1989, 10.

[28] Wagner, *Modern Architecture*, 40.

> the sole starting point of all artistic desire should be modern, ever renewing life, where the task which artists must solve through art originates...The school's creative energy is rooted in the individuality of every single person; complete artistic freedom is the Wagner School's solution, just as necessity is the only master of art...The artist never finishes learning, he can never create something that he will not attempt to surpass with his next effort, he will remain for ever and immutable: the idea of art, the principle of art, the basis of its creation.[29]

The Wagner School had a three year curriculum which consisted of very specific assignments and was designed to teach students practical aspects of design, the understanding of structure, materials and functional requirements, as well as to inspire free expression and imagination. In the first year, students were assigned a simple Viennese apartment building, a project they would likely encounter in their professional lives, the one that would "give them a firm grasp of structures and an understanding of needs," and a "full appreciation of problems involved."[30] Once students became secure in dealing with practical problems and were able to respond to the requirements of purpose and the needs of a client, they were introduced to a more complex task, the design of a public building, which was the second year assignment. The public building was intended to incorporate complicated solutions and thus prepare students for challenging architectural profession. The third year in the Wagner School involved the progression towards more innovative and creative solutions – a project they might never encounter in their professional lives. The purpose of these assignments, as Wagner described it was "to help ensure that the divine spark of imagination that must always be alight in an architect becomes a luminous flame."[31] Such creative and exotic projects were given every year at the Ecolé des Beaux-Arts in Paris and Wagner recognized their significance to the training of the artist's imagination. He devoted himself to these kinds of projects because he believed in the importance of freedom and personal expression that would inspire young architects to avoid the path of plagiarism and to find salvation in the world of creation[32] and each student was free to choose whatever imaginary representations suits his personality.[33] The three-year curriculum had a strong impact on the

[29] Karl Maria Kerndle, "Aus der Wagner-Schule 1902/03 und 1903/04," in August Sarnitz, *Ernst Lichtblau, Architect 1883-1963,* Canfield and Tack Inc. Rochester, New York, 1994, 17.

[30] Otto Wagner, "Baukunsletisches Lehrprogram," in Borsi Franco, Godoli Edzio, *Vienna 1900: Architecture and Design,* Rizzoli International Publications, Inc., New York, 1986, 157-158.

[31] Ibid.

[32] Wager, *Modern Architecture*, 55.

[33] Wagner, "Baukunstlicher Lehrprogram", in Borsi and Godoli, *Vienna 1900: Architecture and Design*, 158.

students' future careers because it not only prepared them to respond to the needs of their clients, and to the structural and functional requirements, but it also encouraged them to break from traditional formal guidelines in search for free expression and innovation in design.

Wagner perceived the residential apartment building to be the basic building block of urban planning and therefore the model for young architects. The apartment building was adapted to the needs of modern humans, thus the floor plan needed to make maximum use of space in the most functional way.[34] Guided by the requirements of purpose and economics, Wagner's students designed very modern, functional buildings such as Slovenian architect Max Fabiani (1865-1962) who continued and developed the master's concepts. There have been suggestions that he even assisted Wagner in writing *Modern Architecture*[35] and the influence of Wagner's architectural manifesto is obvious in Fabiani's works. At the turn of the century, Fabiani designed the Portois & Fix Building on Ungargasse (1899-1900) which expresses a strict formulation of his professor's concepts. Here the architect applied Wagner's idea regarding urban architecture i.e., the need to take into account problems of hygiene caused by pollution.[36] The building reflects a functionalist approach in the selection of materials, architectural details, and limited decorative elements. The functionalism is evidently reflected in the division of the façade into the lower commercial space and the upper housing units, emphasized by the use of different materials; the lower part of the façade is red granite, higher floors are green tiles. In his model for the Portois & Fix Building Fabiani made a significant contribution in new use of color: painting of metal parts, both decorative and structural, some in silver i.e., in the chromatic sense with neutral means that lighten the structural weight. Research and experimentation in the field of color that took place in Wagner School was significant as the one in the field of form.

Ludwig Hevesi, Viennese critic in 1901 referred to the Portois & Fix building's façade as impressive, imposing and highly modern.[37] The cladding of the façade with slabs directly evolved from Wagner's apartment building, Majolikahaus, but the decoration is much more modern. Fabiani reduced the organic curves and floral decorations of the Art Nouveau to geometric patterns. The works of other Wagner students express similar characteristics: Jože Plečnik's Langer house in the Beckgasse (1900-1901), Ernst Lichtblau's apartment house in the Wattmanngasse (1914),

[34] From the Wagnerschule 1899, supplement to "Der Architekt" in Sarnitz, *Ernst Lichtblau,* 19.

[35] Borsi and Godoli, *Vienna 1900: Architecture and Design*, 157.

[36] Wagner touched upon problems of population growth, changes in traffic, loss of center in the urban city planning, and gave contemporary architects the task of resolving these problems by taking into consideration the requirements dictated by the new demands of modern individuals: traffic, economics and hygiene. See *Modern Architecture,* chapter "The Practice of Art".

[37] Peter Haiko, *Vienna 1850-1930: Architecture,* Rizzoli, New York 1992, 174.

both in Vienna; Alois Bastl's apartment house with commercial space in the Masarikova Street in Zagreb (1906).

The apartment houses of his students reflect a shift towards a modern trend that was in some way inspired by Wagner's designs. However, his students did not display Neo-Renaissance and Neo-Baroque arrangements, rather simplified forms ruled by the criteria of economy. Therefore, the costly stucco and stone-cutting work of the Classical design was sometimes replaced by two-dimensional decorations executed in sgraffito directly in the cement.[38] These buildings were not completely stripped of ornament, but décor had nothing to do with academic historicism, it was applied to the form as if the façade was a painting canvas and this architecture is referred to as "tattooed architecture."[39]

These architectural objects were often both apartment and commercial buildings, thus the functional requirements were followed religiously to make the maximum and most efficient use of space (e.g. Portois & Fix Building). The ground levels were usually reserved for commercial shops, where glass walls were required to fulfill the need for the transparency that would enable the display of goods in the windows hence such buildings demanded an analytical and functional approach to architecture, structure and materials.

The design that especially brought architecture and structure together was that of the department stores in the early years of the twentieth century. Following the functional requirements of the department store such as the need for transparency, the architects developed glass architecture as evident in the designs of Wagner's students, István Bénko-Medgyaszay and Karl Reinhart. Bénko's Design for a department store (1902) contains a glass cage in the central section of the front, he opens the interior space and integrates the building with the street. Reinhart goes even further with his design for his department store (1913) for he fully develops the concept of the curtain wall. This glass box also shows a very modern trend— the architect attempted to standardize the glass components according to a modular system based on the shape of a square. Wagner's teaching on the primacy of functional requirements and the importance of straight lines are not only followed by Bénko and Reinhart, but pushed further towards the glass-box architectural forms.

The projects by Bénko and Reinhart were not built, but they do exemplify the amazing drawing skills of students in Wagner's School. It seems that Wagner gave the graphic representation of the project sometimes even greater importance than the architectural solution, thus some of his students are regarded as major contributors to the graphic arts in Veinna, such as Josef Hoffmann, Leopold Bauder, Emil Hoppe and others. Wagner's interest in draftsmanship could be justified by the persuasive

[38] Borsi and Godoli, *Vienna 1900: Architecture and Design*, 170.

[39] Ibid.

element that the drawing has when presenting the architectural solution. The high drawing skills as evident in the works of his students were sometimes overemphasized and Wagner's teaching approach was criticized by some for "predominance of the hand,"[40] where drawing becomes not a means to an end but end in itself or as in the words of student Marcel Kammerer from 1908: "The mania for draftsmanship that is taking hold of architect should be regarded as a damaging shoot on a trunk full of sap."[41] Kammerer noticed that they are competing with artists, which becomes obvious in some designs that resemble the way of expression of Wagner's good friend, that of Gustav Klimt.[42] However, some problems of conceptual nature were tackled by Wagner School much before they appeared in painting — the use of abstract forms i.e., the utilization of rectangular surfaces and pure pyramidal and cubic shapes.[43]

The drawings of his students were published[44] and they served as means of spreading the new ideas outside of Vienna and even beyond the borders of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Wagner was probably aware of the fact that these revolutionary designs would not be built in conservative Vienna, but rather as skillful drawings would attract the eye, persuade the viewer by the design and revolutionize architecture in the less conservative parts of the world or in some less conservative times.

Wagner's goal of giving his students a "firm grasp of structures and an understanding of needs" as well as urging them to design "user-friendly and cost effective buildings"[45] has been achieved in the works of the aforementioned students. Their designs express the evolution and progression of architectural forms from Neo-Classical to modern. The modernity is expressed on several levels: realism, structure, purpose, material and necessity. Even though Wagner embodied these concepts in *Modern Architecture*, he still juxtaposed them to the classical concepts of symmetry and idealism. Thus it was his students' ability to differentiate the modern conceptions and incorporate them in their designs that carried his ideas forwards. There was something in Wagner's teaching method that encouraged free artistic expression, as one of his students wrote:

[40] Wagner's student Pavel Janák, statement from 1910. Ibid., 159.

[41] Ibid., 158.

[42] Marko Poceto, "Vagnerova škola: 1894-1912" u *Istorija moderne arhitekture, antologija tekstova, knjiga 1. Koreni modernizma*, (ed. Miloš R. Perović), Izdavačka zadruga IDEA i Arhitektonski fakultet Univerziteta u Beogradu, Beograd, 1997, 542.

[43] By 1910 these cubic forms were already exhausted by Wagner students. See Poceto, "Vagnerova škola: 1894-1912", 542.

[44] The first publication of the work of Wagner's students was in 1898 under title "Aus der Wagnerschule."

[45] Sarnitz, *Ernst Lichtblau,* 20.

> The main advantage of the Wagner School is the free individualistic expression of all talent and originality...no trace of the 'drills' and 'repetitive exercises that aim at superficial effects, something from which even the Ecolé des Beaux-Arts is still suffering. [46]

Freedom guided these architects to the creation of the early modern designs. One of their most interesting source of inspiration was the exploration of folk culture and the transformation of the anonymous "primitive" forms into modern designs. The interest in architecture innocent of academic training was drawn from the Mediterranean vernacular forms. This connection was made by Josef Hoffmann, Wagner's student and later assistant, in 1897, in his essay on the architecture of Capri:

> ...I was deeply moved by the architecture on the countryside. It is a simple but typical approach to building, which is despised by protagonists of official grand architecture. This approach could tell us about our desire to produce forms related to function and materials...[47]

When in 1896 Hoffmann returned from his trip to Rome, he exhibited his drawings in the Great Hall of the Academy and these projects caused confusion and debates in the Viennese intellectual circles for they were spontaneously built, based on stereometrically reduced functional shapes. The students viewed Mediterranean architecture as an example of "pure" forms that expressed bare arrangements of elementary volumes, stripped down to the basic geometric shapes. They developed projects marked by "geometric abstraction" and "technical symbolism" such as Karl Maria Kerndle's design of Sepulchral Chapel (1903). This project reflects linearity, abstraction, reduction of decorative elements on one hand, and technical constructions and materials on the other. It reveals an abstract composition of geometric forms stripped of ornament – a large white cube is divided in two equal parts by a narrow vertical entrance and a set of stairs; it is completely free from decoration, simple white and pure. It seemed that Kerndle wanted to champion the idea of pure architecture that was later mastered by Le Corbusier.[48] The Sepulchral Chapel features the concepts of symmetry and monumentality in the design inspired by Wagner's simplified classicism, but Kerndle reduces the formal elements to the abstract geometric shapes. The design is guided by fee rein to Kerndle's imagination, something that Wagner encouraged in his teaching.

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[46] This was written in 1898, from the Wagnerschule 1898 , supplement to "Der Architect" in Sarnitz, *Ernst Lichtblau,* 19-20.

[47] Borsi and Godoli, *Vienna 1900: Architecture and Design*, 178.

[48] Le Corbusier was also interested in folk architecture. In his youth, he travelled around the Balkans and recorded various thoughts on Macedonian houses, wooden buildings on the shores of Bosphorous and in Constantinople.

Ernst Lichtblau's interest in folk architecture came from his travels through the Bosnian region. In 1907 in the Austrian journal "Der Architect,"[49] he published an essay with sketches and photographs of different parts of Bosnia, places such as Sarajevo, Mostar, Jajce, and Banjaluka. The architect was interested in houses that were build during the Ottoman rule, in architecture composed of inexpensive material and wooden structure stripped off any kind of ornaments, set in an environment still untouched by Western civilization. This exploration of the folk, exotic and even "primitive," which finds its parallel in the painting from the late nineteenth and early twentieth-century, represented escapism from the cruel urban life, and eventually grew into an inspiration for design free from academic historicism.

The combination of travel sketches and designs introduced the idea of a collage in which existing forms or regional Bosnian architecture were analyzed, broken down and recomposed into new architectural units. The "assembly" is based on the selection of basic geometric forms, and reinforcing them with more enduring materials: natural stone walls, visible brick or stucco walls.[50] In his sketches such as House for Bosnia, Lichtblau uses the recognizable roof from Bosnian folk architecture and recomposes it into a new architectural unit creating a new simplicity based on the symbiosis of the "primitive" and "academic" architectural attitude.[51]

Even though the School was marked by the "spirit of experimentation," all projects were approached from the aspect of possibilities of their concrete realization, and thus were fully discussed, analyzed and critiqued.[52] On daily bases Wagner worked responsibly, intensely and individually with each student. The students were also obliged to participate in weekly meetings where published projects were together examined, commented and critiqued and each student was stimulated to actively participate in the discussion and freely formulate his critique. The concept of Wagner's teaching was oriented towards critical and creative approach to problems in architectural design and many students who graduated from other architectural schools attended these meetings as a part of their postgraduate education.[53] The rigid curriculum Wagner established in his school enabled two thirds of his students to make a living work in the important architectural offices: besides Wagner's own, in those of Josef Hoffmann, Ohman Bauer, Max Fabijani...

[49] Der Arhitekt, journal ran by Ferdinand Fellner Ritter von Feldegg, was a major promotor of Wagner School since 1989. For more information on the activities of the journal and its publications see Poceto, "Vagnerova škola," 535-549.

[50] Sarnitz, *Ernst Lichtblau,* 22.

[51] Nedžad Kurto, *Arhitektura Bosne i Hercegovine: Razvoj bosanskog stila,* Sarajevo Publishing and Međunarodni centar za mir, Sarajevo, 1998, 229-232.

[52] Poceto, "Vagnerova škola: 1894-1912", 537-538.

[53] Ibid., 537.

The most progressive years of the Wagner School were between 1897 and 1907 when the experimental architecture was created through optimism and euphoria over new forms. The Wagner School publications in 1905/1906 and 1907/1908 were very significant for the history of modern architecture at the time — this was understood to be the turning point in the move towards modernity.[54] The students continued where their master left off since Wagner was deeply influenced by the traditional views of his predecessors and the general attitude of conservative Viennese society, which was more inclined towards preservation than innovation and was hostile towards novelties.[55] He recognized the need for new architecture guided by the requirements of purpose, necessity and new materials, but never completely distanced himself from historicism. Fully aware of the difficulty of introducing and developing new ideas in the traditional environment, Wagner attempted to prepare his students and apprentices for "path with thorns" as he described architect's profession in *Modern Architecture.* His teaching encouraged them to develop new styles and change society guided by the modern spirit of constant progress, something Wagner himself was not able to reflect freely in his works.

His students and collaborators talk about this teaching as stimulating and encouraging such as Josef Hoffmann[56] who expressed works of genuine thanks to his master: "He understood how to encourage us and to support our hope. He had the gift of gladly bringing out all dormant abilities, of promoting and leading. He was truly a great and important teacher."[57] This notion is similar to Robert Oarley's account on Wagner published in *Der Architect* in 1919:

> His activity as a teacher was success chiefly because he was capable of rousing the young to very intensive work and to a colossal volition...One thing every student has learned: to carry every assignment to its ultimate conclusion, to study it in every sense and to elaborate it with the greatest precision, always with the desire to seek and invent something still better.[58]

Some of his students managed to distinguish the modern elements within Wagner's architectural works and apply them to their designs. The social context,

[54] Ernst Lichtblau, "Wagnerschule-Arbeiten aus der Jahren 1905/06 and 1906/07" and an appendix, Leipzig 1910 in Sarnitz, *Ernst Lichtblau,* 22.

[55] Carl Schorske described Vienna through the "specific Viennese situation": "the modern age in Vienna was handicapped by history; the modern age, modernity, and modernism were set off against each other...there was no activism, no real futurism and no radical modernism in Vienna." See Carl Schorske, *Fin-de-Siécle Vienna:Politics and Culture*, Vintage Books, New York, 1981, 6.

[56] Hoffmann was Wagner's student and assistant.

[57] This statement is from 1928. See Eduard Sekler, *Josef Hoffmann,* Princeton University Press, Princeton 1985, 13.

[58] Robert Oarley, "Otto Wagners Persönlichkeit," in Sekler, *Josef Hoffman,* 13.

traditional Vienna, was still a barrier to the development of these ideas, but the Wagner School gave them space for experimentation. They were given freedom by their professor and this was quite uncommon at the academies of their time: no art school of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries produced such a profusion of revolutionary ideas and projects in such a short period of time, going far beyond anything designed by Wagner himself.[59]

Through the Wagner School and the works of his students and collaborators, Otto Wagner exerted a strong influence on Austrian architecture and more broadly, on the European avant-garde. In Austria, he had an enormous impact on several generations of students, among them the generation that formed the Vienna Secession (1887) and the one that created the Austrian Werkbund (1913).

Wagner's assistant Joseph Maria Olbrich (1867-1908) and one of his most talented students, Josef Hoffman, who graduated with a Prix de Rome in 1895, cofounded an anti-academic art movement, the Vienna Secession. Joseph Maria Olbrich was not Wagner's student, but he was hired as a draftsman in Wagner's office and thus was impacted by the master's ideas. Wagner encouraged his assistants to participate in architectural competitions and Olbrich entered a number of them. The most important competition was for the North Bohemian Museum of Applied Arts in Reichenberg (1895). This project clearly revealed Wagner's influence: an abstracted classicism with quickly drawn semi traditional details. A few years later, Olbrich designed the Secession building (1897-1898), his most recognized edifice. Individualism and free expression, which were inspired and encouraged in both Wagner's atelier and school, were distinguishable in the design of his assistant. Here Olbrich freely uses the treasury of tradition to reinforce and refresh the sense of form, but at the same time he is moving towards his individual style in a confident and self-assured way. In the 1914 exposition in Cologne, the Deutscher Werkbund honored the late Olbrich as one of its "twelve apostles" along with such contemporaries as Peter Behrens, Josef Hoffmann, and Henry van der Velde.[60]

Josef Hoffmann (1870-1956) was also working for Otto Wagner, but at the same time he was establishing his position as an individual architect and making a name for himself. He was one of the founders of the Werkbund which played a significant role in the history of the modern movement. Only four years after he graduated, Hoffmann was appointed professor at the Kunstgewetbeschule in Vienna. As a practitioner he shared a classicist-rationalist tradition with Wagner, but his works are much more innovative. Around 1902 Hoffmann was beginning to move towards simplification and formal purification based on the post-1889 work

[59] Otto Antonia Graf, *Master Drawings of Otto Wagner,* Academy of Fine Arts, Vienna 1987, 23.

[60] Macmillian Encyclopedia of Architects, Vol. 3., (ed. Adolf K. Placzek), The Free Press, a Division of Collier Macmillian Publishings, Co, Inc, New York, 1982, 315-318.

of Otto Wagner as illustrated in his Purkersdorf Sanatorium (1904) which had an influence on Le Corbusier's later designs.[61] Hoffmann highly valued Wagner as a great architect, teacher and a friend. In April 1928 he delivered a memorial address at Otto Wagner's funeral where he remarked:

> Otto Wagner as an architect of revolutionary guiding genius must be finally recognized, and even our ungrateful city will learn to value and love him. We who had the good fortune to stand by his side, who appreciated him as the revered master and guide, frequently also friend, we thank him above all for all the stimulating and awakening forces.[62]

Hoffmann's architecture around 1901 reflected a preoccupation with the possibilities of abstract form in design and clear elements i.e., simple and free from ornament, that had never appeared in earlier styles. This was his own attempt to arrive at an abstract style.

Wagner's role as a professor was an important contribution to modernism: many of his students' designs paved the way for European Modernism. In 1901 and 1902 Emil Hoppe, Otto Schönthal and Marcel Kammerer graduated from the Wagner School. As students, they created imaginative designs infused with progress and modernity. The preeminence enjoyed by the three architects in Vienna can be appreciated through Marco Pozzetto's comments on the history of the Wagner School in which he describes Hoppe as the Wagner student "who contributed most to the formation of Viennese taste between 1900 and 1910," Kammarer as "one of the main figures in the Viennese scene" and Schönthal as "without doubt one of the most important personalities in Vienna both in his contribution to the development of modern form and through his built projects."[63] From 1902 to 1910 these three architects worked together in Wagner's firm, but while working for Wagner they matured towards independence and soon set up their own practice. The relationship between Wagner and the new Hoppe/Kammerer/Schönthal practice was the subject of a Joseph August Lux 1914 monograph on Wagner:

> As a further proof that no master did more to positively promote individual development than Otto Wagner, I would point in particular among the ranks of the younger generation to Marcel Kammerer, then Emil Hoppe and Otto Schönthal, a trio that matured quickly to create its own, individual style. To appreciate this, one has only to remember that most schools, and by no means the worst, produce absolutely

[61] Kenneth Frampton, *Modern Architecture: A Critical History*, Oxford University Press, New York 1980, 81.

[62] Sekler, *Josef Hoffmann,* 495.

[63] Marco Pozzetto, *Die Schule Otto Wagners 1894-1912*, quoted in White, *Three Architects from the Master Class of Otto Wagner,* 8.

> uniform students...that from the great A's and B's come countless a's and b's...In contrast, the products of 'Wagnerschule' offer a refreshing picture of constant individualization, which can be regarded almost as a continued education.[64]

The competition project for the Grandstand at the pony-trotting stadium in Vienna (1911-1913) reflects the trio's development of their own concepts regarding the relationship between structure and form but Wagner prepared them for this task since sporting installations and stadiums had been a favored subject in the Wagner School. Sport and the ferroconcrete structure of these buildings were seen as parallel and highly compatible expressions of the strength, vigor and efficiency of the new century[65] hence these forms and materials exemplify the architects' comprehension of the functional requirements of the building.

Between 1924 and 1928 Hoppe and Schönthal[66] designed the large social housing block the Sandleiten estate. The design was derived from Wagner's polemic *Die Grosstadt* (published in 1911) where he rejected the decentralized garden suburb as inappropriate for the economic and social needs of a highly mobile working population with little job security. This reflects the predominance of the former Wagner students in the design and planning of the housing estates promoted by the socialist city council in Vienna.[67] These housing blocks were created by Hubert Gessner, Reumann-Hof (begun 1924), Karl-Seitz-Hof (begun 1926) and by various other Wagner students: Ernst Lichtblau, Rudolf Perco, Camillo Discher and Karl Ehn.

Karl Ehn's design of the social housing project Karl Marx Hof (1927-1930) has been discussed in Curtis' *Modern Architecture Since 1900* as an important monument in the history of modern architecture and urbanism between the wars and as a "descendant of the Wagner School."[68] The Karl Marx Hof recalls the monumental order and rhythmic spacing of the arches often practiced by Wagner himself. The use of the clear-cut elevations, the absence of ornament, the flat roofs and linearity all resemble designs of Wagner School students, such as Kerndle, Hoffmann or Lichtblau.

Otto Wagner, Adolf Loos, Josef Maria Olbrich, Josef Hoffmann and a number of Wagner's students played a major role in Austria's vital contribution to modern architecture in Europe. Austrian architect Adolf Loos, who was probably the most revolutionary modern architect and theorist in fin-de-siècle Vienna, greatly admired

[64] Joseph August Lux, *Otto Wagner* quoted in White, *Three Architects from the Master Class of Otto Wagner*, 67- 68.

[65] White, *Three Architects from the Master Class of Otto Wagner*, 81.

[66] Kammerer was working on his own at this time.

[67] White, *Three Architects from the Master Class of Otto Wagner*, 88-90.

[68] Curtis, *Modern Architecture Since 1900,* Prentice Hall, Inc. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1987, 171.

Wagner. In his theory and design Loos advocated functional simplicity, appropriate use of materials and freedom from decoration. He was a strong proponent of pure forms, stripped from ornament. In "Ornament and Crime" (1908) Loos claimed that "The evolution of culture is synonymous with the removal of ornament from utilitarian objects....we have fought our way through freedom from ornament."[69] He sees ornament as "a crime against the national economy that should result in a waste of human labor, money and material."[70] Loos was very critical of Viennese architects such as Olbrich and Hoffmann who used decoration in many works of architecture and design, albeit he addressed their master, Otto Wagner as "the greatest architect in the world...a key figure in the development of twentieth-century European architecture."[71] In Germany, Wagner's significance can be detected in Peter Behrens' speech on Josef Hoffmann when he refers to Wagner as a "stimulating and ordering spirit of Vienna's artistic life," an "urbanistic genius of his time" and a man who "exerted influence on the entire artistic activity of his country"[72] or in Bruno Taut's statement that he is to a certain extent indebted to the Wagner School.

The influence of Wagner and his school spread throughout Europe, especially to former Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, Hungary, Croatia, Bosnia, Slovenia, and other countries in Eastern Europe and the Balkan Peninsula. The history of modern architecture in Czechoslovakia dates from the turn of the century when Wagner student Jan Kot*ěra* returned in 1898 from Vienna. Kotěra, regarded as the father of Czech's architecture, developed rational architecture based on unplastered brickwork[73] and carried it over to his students and collaborators. He was appointed director of the Academy of Fine Arts in Prague and as a professor he cultivated two generations of architects, cubist and the functionalist, including Josef Gočár, who was Kot*ěra's* successor at the Academy. Another student of Wagner, Pavel Janák, known as a representative of Prague avant-garde cubism, developed from the Wagnerian modern trend but soon felt a danger of uniformity in the rationalistic style. In 1911 he published the Manifesto of Cubism with Josef Gočár and Josef Chochol[74] and a group

[69] Adolf Loos, "Ornament and Crime" in *Programs and Manifestoes on 20-century Architecture*, (ed. Ulrich Conrads) The MIT Press, Cambridge, 1964, 21-23.

[70] Ibid.

[71] *The Dictionary of Art*, Vol. 32, Grove's Dictionaries Inc., New York, 1996, 760.

[72] Sekler, *Josef Hoffmann*, 495.

[73] Vladimir Slapeta and Wojciech Lesnikowski, "Functionalism in Czechoslovakian Architecture," in *East European Modernism: Architecture in Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Poland Between the Wars 1919-1936,* (ed. Wojciech Lesnikowski), Rizzoli International Publications Inc., New York, 1996, 59.

[74] Josef Chochol was initially influenced by the Wagnerian modern trend but later he drew his inspiration from cubism. The best examples of his pure, cubist architecture are houses in Prague below Vysehrad Hill (1911-1913).

of artists. Despite this Janák still acknowledged Wagner's significance in the history of modern movement.

> Wagner's system can and must be the basis for an analysis of the present situation in architecture. Historically he was the first modern architect. He was the first to be systematically and exclusively preoccupied with ideology. He was the most concrete. He should rightfully be designated the master of European architecture, not only because of his achievements, but also because he influenced all the other centers of Modernism in Europe. [75]

Wager students, particularly Kotěra, along with Janák, and Plečnik[76] had a crucial influence on the development of modern architecture in Czechoslovakia in 1920s, 1930s and 1940s — all the projects that represent great works of architecture emerged from the "schools" of these architects.[77]

Functionalism in Hungary was inspired by the work of Otto Wagner and his students Josef Hoffmann and Max Fabiani. Turning away from eclecticism and the excesses of Art Nouveau, Hungarian architects looked to their Austrian neighbors for new forms. The most outstanding architects were: Béla Málnai, Béla Lajta and József Vágó. Lajta's Rózsavölgyi House and the Chech-Hungarian Bank are significant monuments of Hungarian early modern monuments. Málnai's bank shows simplified classicism in its projecting bays and vertical elements, which can be found in the works of Wagner and Hoffmann.[78]

Slovenians Max Fabiani and Jože Plečnik both went through Wagner's training and Fabiani closely collaborated with Wagner, the latter's influence is very distinguishable in the Portois & Fix Department Store (1899) and the apartment and commercial building Artaria (1900). Jože Plečnik joined the Wagner School in 1895. In 1903 and 1905 he designed an office and residential building in the center of Vienna for Johannes Zacherl. The building transcended Wagner's relatively simple façades and monumentality. Peter Altenberg, a friend of Loos, praised the design in a letter to Plečnik:

> This noble and simple fortress...seems to have sprang out of the ground through its own noble strength. It broke conventions with monstrous vigor. It subdued, annihilated everything else.[79]

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[75] Borsi and Godoli, *Vienna 1900: Architecture and Design*, 200.

[76] Plečnik lived in Prague from 1911 until 1922 where he taught at the school of arts and crafts.

[77] Poceto, "Vagnerova škola: 1894-1912", 547-548.

[78] Janos Bonta, "Functionalism in Hugarian Architecture" in *East European Modernism*, 128.

[79] Borsi and Godoli, *Vienna 1900: Architecture and Design*, 218-219.

In the use of color Zacherl building suggests Adolf Loss's later stated principle that color should be dependent of used materials.[80]

In 1911 Jože Plečnik was appointed professor at the School for Arts and Crafts in Prague and later at Ljubljana University. He was the founder of the Slovenian school of architecture where another student of Wagner, Ivan Vurnik also taught. The influence of the Wagner School spread southward from the Slovenian border to Croatia. Viktor Kovačić, who taught at Zagreb University, and Alois Bastl, both Wagner students were certainly the fathers of modern Croatian architecture.

Besides the influence exerted by Wagner's students and collaborators within regions that were once under Austro-Hungarian rule, the stamp of the Wagner School could also be found in Scandinavian and Italian architecture. The architects from these regions were exposed to the architectural solutions of Wagner's students through the Wagner School publications of their designs. The architecture of Scandinavian architects, Sven Silow and Gunnar Morssing, for instance, reflect that influence. In Norway Oscar Shou's design for the National Theater in Bergen (1906-1909) also carried a mark of the Wagner School. Alvar Alto's teacher Nyström was also influenced by the school.[81]

Italian futurist architect, Antonio Sant' Elia, clearly indicates this influence, particularly the drawings (Study, 1912) which resemble Emil Hoppe's sketches (Study, 1902). Sant' Elia pyramidal arrangements of simple volumes strongly reinforced by a stairway follow Hoppe's technique of drawing elevations from close up and bellow.[82] The influence of Wagner's student is obvious and the architect and critic Giulio Arata, in 1914 recognized Sant' Elia's debt to the Wagner School: "In some drawings he imitates the rather cold forms of Margold or lets himself be influenced by the Austrian Wagnerian school."[83] The publications of Wagner School were a constant and treasured source of ideas for Sant' Elia. His belongings at the time of his death were scattered, with the exception of the publication *Wagnerschule 1902* which is the only book known to have belonged to him.[84]

Wagner's students contributed to the development of modern architecture, particularly in the training of future generations of architects, in various places in Europe and even in the United States of America. The political, social and economic turmoil in Austria and the rest of Europe, World War I and the Civil war in Austria in 1934 forced

[80] Poceto, "Vagnerova škola: 1894-1912", 544.

[81] Ibid., 204.

[82] Ibid., 181.

[83] Arata "La prima Mostra d' Architetture promossa dall' Associazioone degli Architetti Lombardi" (1914) in Esther da Costa Meyer. *The Work of Antonio Sant' Elia: Retreat into the Future,* Yale University Press, New Heaven, 1995, 39.

[84] Esther da Costa Meyer. *The Work of Antonio Sant' Elia*, 39.

many architects to emigrate to the United States, for example: Ernst Lichtblau (1883-1963), Rudolph Michael Schindler (1887-1953) and Richard Neutra (1892-1970).

Ernst Lichtblau emigrated to the United States in 1939. In 1945 he began teaching at Cooper Union as a textile design instructor and worked as a design consultant for New York's largest department store, R.H. Macy & Company. In 1948 he was appointed Professor and Head of the Department of Interior Design at the Rhode Island School of Design. Documentation from the School's student yearbooks and publications suggest a remarkable transformation under the influence of Lichtblau. In "Interior Architecture at Rhode Island School of Design", *RISD Alumni Bulletin*, Charles Fink writes:

> Ever since Professor Ernst Lichtblau arrived at Rhode Island School of Design from Vienna in 1947 and was persuaded to teach students interior rather than architectural design, the Department of Interior Architecture has been taken a direction which probably is still unique to professional programs in interior design. Lichtblau...liberated a profession which had embraced classicism for a century. The transformation he brought about was immediate and complete. Out went the trappings of a traditional curriculum in interior decoration...in fact, the entire eclectic vocabulary...his students learned to analyze space requirements in terms of the nature of activities and functions...[85]

Lichtblau's role as a professor was similar to Wagner's — he had the ability to encourage, support and prepare his students for the path of new discoveries in design. The other Viennese architects who emigrated to the United States left their marks as architects, some of them in the vocabulary of the modern, functionalist language.

R. M. Schindler enrolled in the Wagner School in 1910. Through Wagner, Loos and Frank Lloyd Wright, he became interested in America; he studied Wright's Wasmuth Portfolio in 1910. In 1914 Schindler went to Chicago to fulfill a three-year contract with a firm and after that starting in 1918 he spent a few years working in Wright's office. Wright sent him to Los Angeles to oversee construction of one of the projects they were working on, the Barnsdall Hollyhock House, where Schindler remained and worked in isolation. His most notable architectural forms were of concrete responding to the cubic forms and the De Stijl movement in Netherlands. Schindler's cubes were broken up so that interior and exterior flowed together. His architecture therefore does not retain much of Wagner's influence, but Wagner's encouragement of individualism and free expression as well as the ability to "stimulate his students with sparkling spirit" and give them exposure to the work of American architects, was significant for Schindler's future career.

[85] Sarnitz, *Ernst Lichtblau,* 36.

In 1923 Richard Neutra emigrated to the United States where he spent a few years working for Louis Sullivan and then Frank Lloyd Wright. He developed purely modern forms detached from historicism. Even though his work does not appear as anything Wagner ever designed, the influence of the master is noteworthy. In an interview in 1955 Richard Neutra stated:

> At the earliest age it was Otto Wagner, who was a contemporary of Louis Sullivan.... He built all the railway stations of the city of Vienna and the subway stations. There was belt line where it was possible to pay five cents and travel the whole day, never leave, just go around. I did that. And this was a great instruction in architecture because I was just looking at these stations from below and then I was looking at them also from above. It was a fairly low tuition, as you can see, and very instructive. This man had a great influence on me and I decided at that time that I would become an architect. He started as a Renaissance architect or in the style of eclecticism of that age, but he became gradually and in a most interesting development, a person who completely divorced himself from all stylistic canons...he had tremendous influence on a generation of students and on the world. He became very well known also in this country, but that has been forgotten now.[86]

In the overall history of modern architecture Wagner has been treated as a marginal figure and the historians did not really elaborate his architecture or his theoretical concepts in the context of development of modern movement. The first historians, such as Hitchcock and Johnson, Pevsner and Giedion, included Wagner in their narratives, but never thoroughly discussed what was his contribution to the modern movement.

These historical narratives are classified by the historian Panayotis Tournikiotis as "operative" for they construct the origins of the modern movement and present modern architecture as new, original independent and liberated from tradition. They are intended to serve as interpretations of the relatively recent past, of the spirit of the age or *Zeitgeist*, which is perceived as a collective consciousness or the spirit of a collective archetype that expresses itself in various spheres of human life and acts as dynamic force that unfolds history.[87] Based on the belief in Zeitgeist which carries the notion of influence, the reasons for the origins of events, movements or architectural forms and causal relationships between them i.e., they have a central thread and a moving force that carries the notion of evolution, origins,

[86] Peter John, *Oral History of Modern Architecture:Interviews With the Greatest Architects of the 20th Century*, N. Abrams Inc., New York, 1994, 93-94.

[87] Demetri Porphyrios, "Notes on a Method," in *On the Methodology of Architectural History*, (ed. Demetri Porphyrios), Architectural Design, St. Martin Press, New York, London, 1981, 96-97.

influences and coherent, unbroken development. According to writer Octavio Paz, modernity is a concept of Western society which places value of progress— time is regarded as linear, irreversible and progressive,[88] breaking away from the past and aiming towards originality and novelty in the future. Optimism in describing the evolution towards the victory of new architecture is clearly evident in these historical narratives and they can also be defined as active histories.

Hitchcock and Johnson's characterization of Wagner as an individualist who broke away from "the nominal discipline of the revivals,"[89] without the analysis of his architectural works or their inclusion within the rich set of photographic evidence of modern architectural work of their book *The International Style,* does not really prove this statement. The authors restrain from elaboration of Wagner's works probably because his buildings did not fall under the architectural design principle of regularity rather than symmetry as a defined modern principle by these historians. Giedion in *Space, Time and Architecture* and Pevsner in *Pioneers of Modern Design* justify Wagner's modernity with the example of the Postal Savings Bank and a quote that also does not really illustrate Wagner's theoretical or architectural opus. All of these influential historians use Wagner in the context of linking architects, events, developments, concepts and movements together by a general description of hypothesis that generates their point of view of the history of modern architecture. The main objective of their historical narratives was to lay out the foundations of modern architecture and shape its ideology at the time when this movement was at its peak. In their expression of euphoric rise of the modern movement, they also function as manifests of modern architecture. All of these early histories, but especially those of Pevsner and Hitchcock, express the optimism of their age and the genesis of modern architecture in the most persuasive way. Just as a literary form of epic with a sense of drama and hyperbole of the accomplishments of architectural heroes, they celebrate the triumph of pioneers of modern design or fathers of the International Style.

Hitchcock and Johnson and especially Giedion and Pevsner, held authoritative positions in the history of modern architecture and their narratives are still imperative readings on architecture and design of the late nineteenth and first three decades of the twentieth century. Because of their authoritative positions, *Space, Time and Architecture* and *Pioneers of Modern Design* impacted historical narratives of other historians, even the more recent ones, Wiliam Curtis who in *Architecture Since 1900*, in the case of Wagner, only reproduced historical views of his predecessors.

The postmodern theorists criticize these early modern histories for their subjective accounts and inability to objectively perceive and explain modern architecture and apprehend its completeness. These critical histories, characterized by Tournikiotis

[88] Hilde Heynen, *Architecture and Modernity*, MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachussetts, 1999, 9.

[89] Hitchcock and Johnson, *International Style*, 40.

as "derogative", aimed to discover whether political practices, economic practices and institutions intervened in the formulation of the problematic of an architectural discourse.[90] They suspect the teleology of reason and move away from the framing of the relationship between architecture and society as one of result/cause, effect/origin, form/content, representation/idea, i.e., the Hegelian model, thus rejecting Zeiteist, influence, origins and evolution.[91] One of the post World War Two historians, Bruno Zevi, in his book *Modern Language of Architecture* (1973) reconstructs the modern movement as something that needed to be proposed again. He does not develop his discourse as a progressive development of successive, historical events, but rather he introduces the language of architecture as a new approach in studying modern movement. The problem that modern architecture is facing, according to Zevi, is that it is lacking a codified language so it is unable to "speak architecture."[92] Thus his aim is to discover what that language is in order to prevent a possible decline of modern architecture. In *Modern Language of Architecture* he strongly opposed classical architecture and all his seven principles through which he approaches modern architecture are defined as "seven testimonies against classical idolatry".[93] In this context Wagner is mentioned in abridged or edited form, as an architect still impacted by academic principles: "The last vestiges of a Renaissance indoctrination can be found in the works of the Austrian Otto Wagner, although he repudiated it in his *Moderne Architektur* (1895)"[94]

The late 1960s and especially 1970s, brought a dramatic questioning of the architectural concepts that had prevailed up to then challenging the certainties of historical truth and methodological objectivity. It was inescapable, accordingly, that renewed attention would be paid not only to Wagner but to his School and students as well.

Vincent Scully's 1974 revised edition of *Modern Architecture: Architecture of Democracy* or Kenneth Frampton's *Modern Architecture: A Critical History* mention the significance of the Wagner School and the contributions of its students. The Otto Antonia Graf essay "Die Vergessene Wagnerschule" (1969) as well as the recent scholarship on Josef Hoffman, Jože Plečnik and other Wagner students, called the early one-sided, simplified picture of twentieth-century architecture into question. One of the most significant books in this context is Marko Pozzetto's *La Scuola di Wagner 1894-1912* (1979) who argues that in the context of development of modern architectural forms this school has not been granted an adequate position

[90] Panayotis Tournikiotis, *The Historiography of Modern Architecture*, MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachussetts, 1999, 101.

[91] Porphyrios, *On the Methodology of Architectural History*, 99.

[92] Bruno Zevi, *The Modern Language of Architecture*, Da Capo Press, New York, 1994, 6.

[93] Ibid., 67.

[94] Ibid., 171.

and its significance has not been enlightened yet. Pozzetto claims that Wagner's teaching was so progressive that almost all five points from Le Courbusier's theory (except the one on building placed on free standing pillars) were represented in the program of the Wagner School[95] and that the school was a real inspiration for development of new architecture that replaced cannons with personal sensibilities of an architect.[96] Therefore the significane of Wagner's role as a teacher has been acknowledged, but it still remains to be discovered.

In the examination of modern architectural histories in regard to the contribution of Otto Wagner to the development of modern movement one can conclude that the description of his theory and practice have been constructed in a certain way and Wagner School almost forgotten, especially in the early architectural histories. The impact of the school was perhaps excluded from these discourses because the majority of designs remained in the school's publications; they were never executed because of the socio-economic and cultural context of conservative, traditional Vienna. The other possible reason for excluding the Wagner School from these histories was the fact that not all of Wagner's students were paving the way to modernism. Leopold Bauer (1872-1938), for instance, failed to keep pace with the developments of his time; his buildings continued the nineteenth-century eclectic mode. Hence Wagner School was not producing all-modern and innovative spirits; some of its students never pushed Wagner's modern concepts further and never developed modern forms. The early, operative histories are also characterized by avoidance any kind of polemical approach. Modern architecture is presented as new, original, independent and liberated from historicism, thus any further elaboration on Wagner would bring in contradictions, discrepancies and ambiguities to their discourses. These historical narratives reflect pastoral views towards history because they deny contradictions, dissonances and tensions[97] and select only historical facts that will help them in constructing clear-cut, straightforward and unambiguous histories.

Such approach faced strong criticism from postmodern theorist who questioned the truthfulness of historical narrative as a vehicle for representing the contents of the past. The notion of historical knowledge presented through the narrative form, argues historian Alun Munslow, positions history together with literature for it carries a badge of its author and his subjectivity — his selection and use of facts is never innocent and accordingly history could be labeled as fiction.[98] This literary or fabricated character of history always carries a badge, a voice of its authors hence the biases and subjective accounts of architectural historians are reflected in the

[95] Poceto, "Vagnerova škola: 1894-1912", 544.

[96] Ibid., 535.

[97] Heynen, *Architecture and Modernity*, 14.

[98] Alun Munslow, *Deconstructing History*, Routledge, New York, 1997, 4-5.

favoritism of certain architects, movements and events. When contextualized in a specific cultural, social, political or economic system or viewed through a prism of author's national background one can conclude that these historical narratives operated in the certain ideological field thus writing them can be described as an ideological act. In this context it is significant to mention Panayotis Tournikiotis' study *The Historiography of Modern Architecture* where he analyzed number of architectural histories written between late 1930s and late 1970s and concluded that historical discourses present modern architecture through different genealogies, interpretations and descriptions and are founded on different concepts of society, history and architecture hence there are many modern movements as there are accounts of the events of the twenties and thirties.[99]

It is significant to note that Otto Wagner is "emplotted"[100] in many of these narratives, but what this paper also attempts to emphasize is that the examination of his presence in these histories must take into account the rhetorical and ideological strategies employed by each historian. None of these influential, authoritative histories were written by Austrian not even German historians and the revision of Wagner's real contribution to modern movement, which resides in his teaching approach and encouragement of his students who did push the architecture away from academic historicism, required further analysis of the Wagner School, its students, and Wagner's approaches in the specific social, cultural and political context of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century Vienna.

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[99] Tournikiotis, 221-222.

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Asja Mandić

Uloga Otta Wagnera kao profesora u historiji modern arhitekture

Sažetak

U historiji moderne arhitekture uočljivo je prisustvo austrijskog arhitekte Otta Wagnera (1841-1918), počevši od prvih modernih "klasika", iz 1930tih i 1940tih godina, gdje se njegova teorijska i praktična dostignuća stavljaju u kontekst pojave nove, originalne, inovativne arhitekture, do historijskih narativa pisanih kasnih 1960tih, 1970tih i 1980tih godina, koji problematiziraju sposobnost objektivne valorizacije i sistematizacije arhitektonskih dostignuća od strane svojih prethodnika. Kritičkim osvrtom na uticajne i autoritativne historije moderne arhitekture i analizom Wagnerove teorije i njegovih arhitektonskih objekata, može se zaključiti da ni u svojoj teoriji, ni praksi ovaj austrijski arhitekt nije bio inovativniji od svojih prethodnika, te da je njegova pozicija konstituirana na specifičan način i to u odnosu na ideološke strategije razmatranih historičara arhitekture i njihova nastojanja da definiraju izvore moderne arhitekture, elaboriraju njen razvoj, te da je uspostave kao stil. Uvidom u dostignuća Wagnerovih studenata sa "Wagnerove škole" rad "Uloga Otta Wagnera kao profesora u historiji moderne arhitekture" namjerava pokazati da se Wagnerov doprinos razvoju moderne arhitekture treba tražiti u njegovoj pedagoškoj praksi, odnosno načinu na koji je birao, podučavao i stimulirao svoje studente da traže nova arhitektonska rješenja, u pristupu kojim je studentima dozvoljavao potpunu umjetničku slobodu i imaginaciju. Pored osvrta na načine funkcioniranja Wagnerove škole (1894-1914), na "eksperimentalni duh" njegove metodologije rada, na njegovu predanost radu sa studentima, ovaj rad analizira i arhitektonske radove studenata navedene škole i pronalazi utjecaje Wagnerove i teorije i arhitektonske i pedagoške prakse u kontekstu otklona od akademskog historicizma. Wagnerovi studenti izvršili su utjecaj ne samo na modernu arhitekturu Austrije, već i na arhitekturu zemalja Istočne Evrope i Balkana kao što su nekadašnja Čehoslovačka, Bugarska, Hrvatska, Slovenija, Bosna i Hercegovina, a ostavili su pečat i na arhitekturu Skandinavskih zemalja, Italije i Sjedinjenjih Američkih Država.