

NEW RESEARCH ON ART AND ITS HISTORY

DECEMBER 2019

THE BURLINGTON MAGAZINE

The Art of Conservation

Gentile da Fabriano's gold leaf | Frans Hals or not? | Manet's tracings | The career of Joyce Plesters
Hogarth in London and New York | Luc Tuymans in Venice | The Turner Prize in Margate





to fabricating and legitimating the modern indices of authenticity, which carried wide-ranging political and social applications.

With the transformation of artistic media and the evolution of the institutional environment, signatures lost some of their former potency, although the authorial gesture lives on. Guichard's fascinating and learned essay analyses a central aspect – indeed an enabling feature – of the triumph of paintings as autonomous and mobile objects in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It deserves a wide readership and, one hopes, an English translation.

- 1 C. Guichard: *Graffiti: inscrire son nom à Rome (XVIe-XIXe siècle)*, Paris 2014; and *idem: Les amateurs d'art à Paris au XVIIIe siècle*, Seyssel 2008.
- 2 P. Griener: *Pour une histoire du regard: l'expérience du musée au XIXe siècle*, Paris 2017.

Das Autochrom in Großbritannien: Revolution in der Farbfotografie

By Caroline Fuchs. 324 pp. incl. 127 col. ill.
(De Gruyter, Berlin and Boston, 2017), £72.50.
ISBN 978-3-11-056683-3.

by LINUS RAPP

When on 10th June 1907 the Lumière brothers introduced the autochrome to the public, this first colour process seemed to represent a revolution in photographic techniques. Nonetheless, it took decades before colour photography became firmly established. Based on Caroline Fuchs's doctoral dissertation at the University of Zürich, the book under review throws light on this little-known early chapter in the history of colour photography. Examining its practitioners, the development of the technique and its different uses, Fuchs presents the autochrome as the first commercially viable colour photography process and argues that it initiated 'an engagement with colour in photography, which continued far into the second half of the twentieth century and is still of interest today' (p.11). More important than this central thesis is the amount of new material that the author presents. In order adequately to study the 'diversity of autochrome photography in Great Britain' and the 'complexity of the discourse on colour photography' (p.12), Fuchs organises her rich archival source material according to function, analysing the autochrome's use in art, sciences and in the field of leisure activities. Although this makes for a clear structure, the fact that the images chosen for analysis are treated as representative of the

thick impasto, riffing on the equivalence between his identity as an artist and his distinctively luscious brushstrokes. In *The milliner* (1746; Nationalmuseum, Stockholm) François Boucher applied his name to a box of silks, acknowledging his paintings as a form of seductive, luxury merchandise. Hubert Robert marked his presence through elegiac and anachronistic inscriptions on the monuments of antiquity. Most revealing, perhaps, is Guichard's discussion of Elisabeth Vigée Le Brun and Adélaïde Labille-Guiard, whose visual insistence on the authorship of their pictures was doubly important when set against the incredulity and misogyny of contemporary critics and the absence of property rights for married women.

Ranging widely across different genres, Guichard generates fresh insights about some famous paintings. In *Marat*

5. *Young student drawing*, by Jean-Siméon Chardin. 1738. Oil on panel, 21 by 17.1 cm. (Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth).

assassinated (1793; Royal Museum of Fine Arts of Belgium, Brussels) Jacques-Louis David carefully paired his name in antique lettering with that of the martyr of the French Revolution. Guichard argues that the inscription in stone contrasts with the cursive script found in the letters and *assignats* scattered around Marat's bath tub, thus registering the instability of revolutionary times, the novel connections between signatures and citizenship (as attested by petitions, subscriptions, banknotes and identity documents) and the menace of falsification in an era of reproductive technologies. The presence in 1792 of David on a committee investigating forged banknotes reflects artists' centrality

Books

medium is sometimes problematic and creates occasional imbalances in the space given to the discussion of some of them.

The first two chapters on the complex technical preconditions for the autochrome process and its development demonstrate its typical disadvantages, such as long exposure times, the difficulties of reproduction and limited possibilities of manipulation, which contributed to an early disenchantment with the technique. An expert on both technical questions and theoretical discourse, Fuchs presents arguments both for and against the autochrome by such famous photographers as Edward Steichen and Alfred Stieglitz as well as lesser-known practitioners such as Roger Child Bayley and Alfred Horsley Hinton.

The switch to the discussion of the relationship between art and the autochrome in chapter 3 is rather abrupt. In the passages on pictorialism, Fuchs challenges the theory put forward by John Szarkowski when he was Director of the Museum of Modern Art, New York, that art in colour photography truly began only with the exhibition of photographs by William Eggleston at the museum in 1976. She demonstrates that the autochrome plates of John Cimon Warburg (1867–1931) show a thoughtful handling of colour, which is neither purely decorative nor descriptive, but developed in dialogue with art into a language of its own. Her suggestion that, in making his portraits of Lady Ottoline Morrell (Fig.6), Adolph de Meyer was influenced by Gustav Klimt is convincing. It is unfortunate that despite the richness of the material discussed here, the analysis of the images is often merely descriptive. The relationship between art history and the autochrome is only partially analysed and there are no references, for example, to the treatment of the Orient. A deeper analysis of the influence of fine art on the autochrome, either in relation to colour composition or subject matter, could have added substance to the discussion of the importance of the autochrome process as an artistic dialogue with the world.

The autochrome was also experimented with by such scientific disciplines as micro-photography, dermatology and ornithology, without, however, achieving long-term success. Following Roger Cooter's and Stephen Pumphrey's concept of 'science popularization', Fuchs discusses different ways in which the new medium was tested. It was popular, for example, in plant photography, because the use of colour produced more realistic images. In presenting photographs of

wild flowers taken in Kashmir by the botanist Bernard Okes Coventry (active from the 1890s to the 1950s), a comparison with the German photographer Karl Blossfeldt (1865–1932), whose black-and-white depiction of plants emphasised their ornamental qualities, would have been helpful. In her penultimate chapter, Fuchs's turns to the autochrome as a 'source of revenue and leisure activity'

6. *Lady Ottoline Morrell*, by Adolph de Meyer. 1907–09. Autochrome, 16.5 by 10.8 cm. (National Portrait Gallery, London).

(p.153). As the title suggest, this covers a multitude of materials and inevitably the chapter is something of a descriptive survey, which nonetheless contains elements that should inspire future research. For example, in the case of Helen Messinger Murdoch (1862–1956), Fuchs demonstrates that female photographers used the autochrome process successfully, but Murdoch's partly ethnographical photos taken during a world tour in 1913–15 deserve more attention than they receive here.



In her brief conclusion Fuchs argues that the autochrome process caused a 'paradigm shift' (p.185). However, the impression given by the book is that the autochrome was in fact not a breakthrough success story, and whether it provided the basis on which the later discourse on colour photography was founded is also doubtful. Following a brief boom, the process was quickly forgotten, at the latest with the introduction of Kodachrome roll film in 1935. The book comes with a useful glossary, biographies of photographers and high-quality images. The strength of the book is the broad range of autochromes covered. Fuchs presents new material, presents new arguments and introduces little-known works and techniques. More than one century after its invention the fascination with the autochrome remains undiminished.

1 R. Cooter and S. Pumfrey: 'Separate spheres and public places: reflections on the history of science popularization and science in popular culture', *History of Science* 32 (1994), pp.237-67.

Design Dialogue: Jews, Culture and Viennese Modernism / Design Dialog: Juden, Kultur und Wiener Moderne
Edited by Elana Shapira. 475 pp. incl. 112 col. + b. & w. ills. (Böhlau Verlag, Vienna and Cologne, 2018), £35.72. ISBN 978-3-205-20634-7.

by **SABINE WIEBER**

Elana Shapira has brought together key scholars in the cross-disciplinary study of Viennese Modernism to shed new light on the pivotal participation of Jewish patrons, critics, architects, designers, professionals, collectors and authors in the formation of the city's progressive cultural landscape. This collection of essays has its origins in an international symposium, 'Design Dialogue: Jewish Contributions to Viennese Modernism', organised by Shapira at Vienna's University of Applied Arts and MAK Museum in October 2016.¹ The essays are either in German and preceded by an English summary or vice versa.

The complex relationship between Viennese Modernism and the Habsburg Empire's Jews has vexed scholars since the publication of Carl Schorske's influential *Fin-de-siècle Vienna: Politics and Culture* (1981) and might therefore strike readers as a not particularly novel approach. But Shapira's book recalibrates the relationship between Jewish identity formation and Viennese Modernism and thus makes a decisive

critical intervention into this well-developed field of study. Its authors replace Schorske's model of Jewish assimilation and retreat from politics into the realm of the aesthetic with an analytical approach that focuses on the dynamics of cultural interchange and networking between Vienna's Jews and Gentiles. On a more basic level, the book's numerous case studies make a compelling contribution to the ever-expanding field of 'Vienna 1900 studies' by deploying cross-disciplinary methodologies either to shed new light on familiar historical figures and sites or to draw attention to hitherto lesser-known ones, such as Emilie Bach (discussed in an essay by Rebecca Houze), Oskar Marmorek (Markus Kristan), Nelly Marmorek (Ingrid Erb) and Levy Moreno (Gerd Ziller). This represents a commendable achievement in itself, given the plethora of academic studies, films, novels and exhibitions on *fin-de-siècle* Vienna over the past twenty years.

The book is divided into five sections that each investigate particular aspects of the multi-layered dialogue between progressive design practices in the widest sense, which include architecture, criticism, exhibitions, patronage and other subjects, and 'the process of fashioning modern identities with concrete Jewish Viennese identifications' (p.23). The chapters within each section are chronological and thus follow a maybe slightly problematic pattern of stylistic development from Biedermeier to interwar Modernism. The first section, 'Narrating Jewish Emancipation', focuses on specific Jewish patrons and their use of architecture and design to carve out a position of aesthetic visibility within their own community and Vienna at large. Section two, 'A Jewish Renaissance. Opening Doors', explores some of the strategies used by Jewish architects, designers and professionals (such as Sigmund Freud) to claim a place within Vienna's progressive cultural circles. These strategies included, for example, the efforts of the art embroiderer Emilie Bach to initiate an international dialogue on design reform and education, which are explored in Rebecca Houze's essay.

The third section, 'Feminist Manifestos. Women Designing Emancipation', introduces gender into the discussion. It highlights some of the challenges encountered by professional Jewish women through a series of case studies, such as Deborah Holme's essay on the pioneering educator Eugenie Schwarzwald or Sabine Plakolm-Forsthuber's essay on the architect Liane Zimmler. Section four, 'Designed and Un-Designed Identities',

attempts to untangle some of the problematic interweavings between antisemitic rhetoric and modernist discourse and practice.

The final section, 'In Dialogue. Cultural Networks', focuses on the interwar years and presents some of the more problematic constructions of Jewishness in contemporary discourse on the built environment, such as Inge Podbrecky's essay on Josef Frank and Otto Neurath or Gerd Ziller on the legal plagiarism case between Levy Moreno and Friedrich Kiesler in 1924.

There is no space here to discuss the twenty-three essays individually. But despite the book's broad historical scope (1800-1938) and its elucidation of a wide range of cultural practices, the essays are linked by their authors' commitment to move away from casting Jews into the tired category of 'other', which implies that Jewish supporters of modern art, architecture and design simply deployed culture as means of acculturation. Instead, this collection of essays tests more recent analytical models of cultural exchange, co-production, negotiation and Jewish identity-formation that anchor these issues in specific times and places. In Shapira's words, the 'overarching thesis here is that the cultural identities "Viennese" and "Jewish" were not homogenous constructs and therefore could only be newly reconfigured according to the changing historical conditions, political agendas, and personalities' (p.12). A key question that emerges from this theoretical position evolves around the complicated relationship between modern and 'old' Jewish identity, advanced cultural practices and rising antisemitism. Shapira's introductory essay, 'Jews, Culture, and Viennese Modernism', offers a nuanced exploration of these complex historical constellations.

The book presents a rich and multi-dimensional picture of the multifarious contributions of Jews to the cultural fabric of Viennese Modernism. These progressive architectural and design practices and networks, in turn, participated in the complex process of Jewish identity formation, located in an ever-shifting socio-political landscape. The book's generous timeframe offers readers the opportunity to uncover patterns and ruptures that reverberate well into the present. Shapira must be commended for her intellectual and logistical rigour in bringing together such a wide range of topics and scholars under a single umbrella. Any collection of essays of this scope and ambition will exhibit some fluctuation of analytical rigour, but the overall quality of