

MADNESS AND MODERNITY

Architecture, Art and Mental Illness in Vienna and the Habsburg Empire, 1890-1914

by Leslie Topp (Oxford)

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Duration: 4 years, beginning April 1, 2004

Project Leader: Dr. Leslie Topp, Senior Lecturer in History of Art, School of Arts and Humanities, Oxford Brookes University; homepage: <http://ah.brookes.ac.uk/arhistory/staff/topp.html>

Co-Project Leader: Gemma Blackshaw, Lecturer in History of Art, Faculty of Arts and Education, University of Plymouth

For further information about doctoral studies at Oxford Brookes University, see the website: <http://www.brookes.ac.uk/postgraduate/research>.

You can also contact Harriet Irvine, at hjirvine@brookes.ac.uk.

For further information about the History of Art department, see <http://ah.brookes.ac.uk/arhistory/index.html>

For further information about History of Medicine at Oxford Brookes, see <http://ah.brookes.ac.uk/historyof-medicine/index.html>

To discuss any aspect of the project and the studentships available, please contact Leslie Topp by e-mail or post in the first instance.

E-mail: ltopp@brookes.ac.uk

Mailing address: School of Arts and Humanities, Oxford Brookes University, Headington Campus, Gypsy Lane, Oxford, UK OX3 0BP

Project Description and Goals

Throughout the modern period, avant-garde movements in the arts have concerned themselves with mental illness, with the experience of it, the objects it produces, the science and myth surrounding it, with systems developed to relieve or cure it.

This project examines the emergence of the relationship between the visual arts and mental illness at the beginning of the 20th century, with a particular focus on Vienna and the Habsburg Empire. It integrates, for the first time in this area, the study of fine art, design, architecture and urbanism.

Austria-Hungary lends itself well to such a study for several reasons. Turn-of-the-century Vienna was a centre of psychiatric innovation. There was a strong lay interest in issues concerning mental health and illness, and the intellectual culture was permeated by psychiatric discourse. Between 1898 and 1914, psychiatric reform meant that several new state-of-the-art public psychiatric institutions were built across the Empire. This corresponded with a building boom in sanatoriums for nervous ailments.

Vienna also witnessed reform movements in all the visual arts around 1900, and the points of contact between the new art and architecture and the new psychiatry were numerous. Otto Wagner, the »father« of modern architecture, and several of his acolytes designed asylums and sanatoriums. Klimt, Schiele, Kokoschka, and Kubin experimented with the imagery of mental illness, including the figures of the hysteric and the pathological criminal. Freud's psychoanalytic theories began to have an impact on visual culture. Asylum patients themselves were engaged in making art.

The goals of this project are (1) through original primary research, to widen and deepen our understanding of the various ways and contexts in which psychiatry, mental illness and the progressive visual arts interacted; and (2) to reconsider assumptions about the links between madness and modernity, and about the culture of turn-of-the-century Vienna, in light of this research. Were modernists always primarily attracted to the primal irrationality of madness, or was there an equally strong interest in the eradication of mental illness through the creation of totally-designed utopian worlds? Was madness necessarily embraced for its unmediated access to emotional reality, or did its grimaces and gestures offer new symbolic vocabularies and social disguises? Modernism in the visual arts of Vienna 1900 tends to be divided between the forward-looking optimism of the architects and the inward-looking pessimism of the fine artists – by focussing on the theme of madness, can we see the two camps as occupying a common cultural landscape and move away from stark dichotomies towards a more subtle approach?

The project will result in a major international exhibition, several scholarly publications, and two doctoral theses. Leslie Topp and Gemma Blackshaw will co-curate an exhibition entitled *Madness and Modernity: Mental Illness and the Visual Arts in Fin-de-Siècle Vienna* – negotiations with major London exhibition venues are underway. All participants in the project will contribute towards the research for and/or administration of the exhibition and catalogue. Dr. Topp will also write a monograph on the *Modernist Mental Hospital*, with the assistance of the postdoctoral research assistant.

Positions Available

Postdoctoral Research Assistant

We are looking for a creative, flexible, motivated person to fill the key role of research assistant on the project. The post is full-time for three years, and involves archival research in selected archives in Central Europe, co-authorship of articles, assisting the author of a monograph and participation in the research and preparation for a major exhibition.

The starting date is April 19, 2004.

The successful candidate will be responsible for:

- research in archives identified by the project leaders
- creation of reports on archival research
- assisting in preparation of a monograph on the architecture of psychiatric institutions in the Habsburg Empire, 1890-1914
- assisting in preparation of exhibition and exhibition catalogue on mental illness and the visual arts in Vienna ca. 1900
- co-authoring of articles on related topics

The successful candidate should have:

- Good honours first degree in relevant discipline
- PhD in relevant discipline (or have completed by April 19, 2004)
- Experience in archival and primary source research
- Excellent writing skills
- Good German language skills
- Willingness to learn new skills
- Ability to work independently
- Willingness to travel and work in various locations in Europe

Any of the following might also be an advantage:

- Knowledge of modern architectural and/or art history
- Knowledge of history of medicine
- Knowledge of Central European history and culture
- Experience using archives and primary sources in Central Europe
- Reading knowledge of Italian, Czech and/or Polish
- Ability to use bibliographic software
- Ability to read Kurrentschrift
- Publications record

Salary: £19,942-£21,852 (in addition to the costs of research travel and subsistence abroad)

Applications: Applications should consist of a covering letter, a CV and an application form. Application packs are available online at <http://www.brookes.ac.uk/vacancy/>; by e-mail from vacancies@brookes.ac.uk or write to: Directorate of Human Resources, Oxford Brookes University, Wheatley Campus, Wheatley, Oxon, OX33 1HX, UNITED KINGDOM

Deadline: The closing date for applications is February 20, 2004. Interviews will be held on March 18, 2004.

Studentships

Applications are invited from students to work on one of the following two projects, under the supervision of Dr. Leslie Topp in the Department of History of Art at Oxford Brookes University.

Studentship 1: Exhibiting madness: The creation and exhibition of images of and art by psychiatric hospital patients in Vienna, 1890-1914

Studentship 2: The architecture and culture of sanatoria for nervous ailments in Central Europe, 1890-1914

Successful candidates will have the opportunity to be involved in the preparation of a major exhibition and exhibition catalogue related to this project.

Funding

- Students currently resident in the UK (and fulfilling the AHRB residence requirements) will each receive a £10,500/annum maintenance grant (to be adjusted annually for inflation) and up to £1,616 over three years towards UK study trips and overseas conferences, in addition to having their fees paid.
- Students who are nationals of a member state of the EU other than the UK, but who do not meet the residence requirements, are eligible for a fees-only award.
- Regardless of residence status, each student will be able to claim costs stemming from research travel and subsistence abroad (up to £9,900 for Studentship 1; up to £17,400 for Studentship 2).

Successful candidates should have an honours degree and a Masters degree (or equivalent) in a relevant area and an ability to read German.

Applications

For application forms, please contact the post-graduate administrator:

E-mail: pgah@brookes.ac.uk

Phone: ++44 (0) 1865 483720

Mailing Address:

Post-Graduate Administrator

School of Arts and Humanities

Oxford Brookes University

Headington Campus

Gipsy Lane

Oxford OX3 0BP

Closing Date: The deadline for applications is March 8, 2004. Interviews will be held on the March 24, 2004.

Oxford Brookes University

Oxford Brookes University is located in Oxford, England, with easy access to London. With research strengths in history of art, history of architecture and the history of medicine (including psychiatry), it is particularly well positioned in terms of staff and resources to support work in this area.