

Figure 1. The Great Altar at Pergamon, second quarter of the second century B.C. Antikensammlung, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin. Photo: Bildarchiv Preussischer Kulturbesitz/Art Resource, N.Y

Portable ruins

The Pergamon Altar, Heinrich Wölfflin, and German art history at the fin de siècle

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Archaeological discoveries have tended to move hand in hand with the architectural imagination. As is well known, the discoveries of Pompeii and Herculaneum in the mid-eighteenth century provided one bookend for neoclassicism while the Aegina marbles, brought to Munich in 1818 after being restored by Thorvaldsen in Rome and exhibited in Leo von Klenze's Glyptothek from 1830 onward provided the other.¹ This was certainly no new modern development in cause and effect, for the whole Renaissance was a response to the fragments of ancient literary and material culture that eager humanists and antiquarians turned up. The discovery of the House of Nero (*domus aurea*) in sixteenth-century Rome inspired a generation of Renaissance painters and architects—Raphael, Giulio Romano, and many others—in developing the *maniera alla grottesca* just as much as the Napoleonic campaigns in North Africa led to the archaeologically driven *empire* style of Percier and Fontaine. Just as often these finds also caused significant debates. Such was the case of the discovery that the ancient temples were painted in vivid colors, which became a cause célèbre in the later nineteenth century. A generation of young architects in France (most notably Vaudoyer, Duban, and Duc) was profoundly affected as was Gottfried Semper in Germany. Indeed, Semper embarked upon writing his momentous treatise *Der Stil in den technischen und tektonischen Künsten* (1860–1862) as a direct result of this new conception of surface treatment in ancient architecture.²

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1. William J. Diebold, "The Politics of Derestoration. The Aegina Pediments and the German Confrontation with the Past," *Art Journal* (summer 1995):60–66.

2. For a general perspective on and bibliography for the period, see Barry Bergdoll, *European Architecture 1750–1890* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000). Most recently, on Semper and the polychromy issue, see Salvatore Pisani, "Die Monumente sind durch Barbarei

The list of such interactions is long. A particularly spectacular case was the effect of the physical lifting of the Hellenistic Pergamon altar from Turkey in 1879 and its parachuting into post-unification Berlin. Paradoxically, where the discovery led in terms of the arts, especially architecture, has attracted less attention than its more famous, earlier counterparts. To be sure, by the later nineteenth century, such large-scale plundering and lifting of artifacts was a relatively common procedure. As empires grew, and as industry and economic power expanded commensurately, so did the desire to transform national museums into temples of learning to showcase the imperial cultural attainments. In this respect, the German drive to acquire the identity of *Kulturnation* is a well-established example, but it was certainly not alone. As Theodor Mommsen, the doyen of German Romanists, noted in 1890, to the contemporary phenomenon of *Grosstadt* (big city) and *Grosswirtschaft* ("big" industry) also belonged *Grosswissenschaft* (big scholarship).³ The museum as institution was the natural recipient of this growth, and as it developed so did the scale and number of its exhibits.

But even in this company, the arrival of the Pergamon altar was a significant event (fig. 1). And even followed as it was by the *Orientforschung* spolia, the Babylonian Ishtar Gate (packed into 600 crates in 1902 but not completely installed until 1934), the Mschatta Gate (transported in 422 crates in 1904), and the Miletus Market Gate (1908–1909), the Pergamon altar remained a unique commotion.⁴ The fact that it presented an

monochrom geworden. Zu den theoretischen Leitmaximen in Semper's 'Vorläufige Bemerkungen über bemalte Architectur und Plastik bei den Alten,'" in *Gottfried Semper 1803–1879*, ed. W. Nerdinger and W. Oechslin (Zurich: Prestel and gta, 2003), pp. 109–115.

3. Suzanne Marchand, *Down from Olympus. Archaeology and Philhellenism in Germany 1750–1970* (Princeton: Princeton University press, 1996), p. 73; on the *Kulturkampf* that was a corollary of the *Kulturnation* concept, see Michael Lewis, *The Politics of the German Gothic Revival August Reichensperger* (New York: The Architectural History Foundation, 1993); on museum politics in Wilhelmine Germany and the ambition to present a global empire image, see Thomas Gaehtgens, *Die Berliner Museuminsel im deutschen Kaiserreich* (Munich: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 1992), p. 80.

4. Marchand, *Down from Olympus* (see note 3) pp. 215–219 (on Ishtar and Miletus); pp. 203–204 (on Mschatta).

important link in the history of Greco-Roman antiquity was certainly one reason, as was its timely arrival shortly after unification and the victory against the French, thus underscoring with great fanfare the emergence of Germany upon the stage of world powers.⁵ But the other reason was the very fact of its being a nearly complete architectural entity—not a gate lifted from a far larger wall structure, nor a fragment of pediment and one or two columns (as was the case for the Temple of Priene or Magnesia), but a 200-foot-long, continuous frieze of marble bodies frozen in mortal combat complete with parapets and crowning colonnade that rivaled the scope and scale of the Elgin marbles.⁶

Its reception was also unique. Where earlier, in the cases previously cited, an architectural, a figural, and/or a decorative art style was propelled by the arrival of new and startling visual stimuli, in the case of the Pergamon altar one of its most lasting effects (outside of its own discipline of archaeology and ancient art), I would argue, was upon the history of art itself, in areas ostensibly far removed from the Greco-Roman world. To be sure, its reception also dovetailed into the development of a new style—the neo-Baroque—though in more complex ways than solely for political reasons as has been argued so far. More specifically, the confrontation with the Pergamon marbles had a lasting effect on the concept of stylistic change (*Stilwandlung*) and on that of the relationship among media—architecture, sculpture, and painting—that it threw into crisis. In sum, I would like to argue that it acted as a “problem object” that precipitated debate, reevaluations, and indeed a *mise en abîme* of received values, and that it is precisely the fact of its being lifted out of its own context, its alienation, its portability and dramatic burst upon the stage of a developing discipline like a comet or meteorite that allowed it to function in this way.

1. The response among archaeologists and ancient scholars

The arrival of the Pergamon marbles in Berlin, beginning in 1879, literally sent the whole archaeology and art history world into shock. The history of the development of large-scale archaeology in Germany, of

which this is a prime example, has been admirably told by Suzanne Marchand; and she points out the internal competitions between rival sites, most notably, in this case, between Olympia (excavated by Ernst Curtius) and Pergamon (excavated by Carl Humann). While Curtius could not bring the findings home (because of Greek legislation) Humann could, as the German museums had worked out a transaction with the help of the Porte and diplomatic go-betweens, so of the two very large and important concomitant digs only the latter could ignite the imagination back home.⁷ The contrast between the two archaeological finds could not be greater—one “early” classical, the other Hellenistic; one confirming the received aesthetic of the Greek Winckelmannian ideal, the other literally turning it upside down, arising from a completely different sensibility, and yet of an aesthetic quality that could not be denied (figs. 2 and 3). The shock effect was tremendous among scholars, indeed the entire art world. Both Ivan Turgenev and Jacob Burckhardt responded with equal amazement to a sight of the marbles when they were first revealed to the public.⁸ “At the sight of these irrepressibly fine wonders, what becomes of all our accepted ideas about Greek sculpture, its severity, serenity, about its confinement within borders of its particular art, of its classicism—all those ideas that have been inculcated on us as indubitable truths by our instructors, theoreticians, aesthetes, by the whole of our training and scholarship?” Thus wrote Ivan Turgenev in “A Letter to the Editor” of the St. Petersburg newspaper *Vestnik Evropy* (European Herald) in 1880.⁹ Two years later, Burckhardt revisited

architecture. Alexander Conze, *Pergamon* (Berlin: F. Dümmlers, 1880), p. 10; Ludwig von Ulrichs, *Pergamon. Geschichte und Kunst* (Leipzig: T. O. Weigel, 1883), p. 16.

7. Marchand, *Down from Olympus* (see note 3). On specifics about the rival sites, see Adolf Michaelis, “Ernst Curtius,” in *Biographische Jahrbuch und Deutscher Nekrolog*, ed. A. Bettelheim (Berlin: Georg Reimer, 1897), pp. 56–88. Humann had tried to interest Curtius in Pergamon, and the latter did visit the site in 1871, but he was too taken with his youthful dream of excavating Olympia to pay attention to the Hellenistic site. See *Entdeckungen in Hellas*, ed. H. A. Stoll (Berlin: Nation, 1979), pp. 437 and 443.

8. The marbles were first exhibited in the Altes Museum to special guests (scholars, artists) and the press on November 26, 1879. Friedrich Karl and Eleonore Dörner, *Von Pergamon zum Nemrud Dağ. Die archäologischen Entdeckungen Carl Humanns* (Mainz: von Zabern, 1989), pp. 70–71. Marchand first raised the issues of the upheaval the altar caused and pointed to the disappointment of Curtius in the face of his rival’s success. Lionel Gossman has since adduced more sources from contemporary art historical texts in the ancient fields to confirm the dramatic effect of the find.

9. For the full text of Turgenev’s lyrical letter to the editor of the newspaper, see Karl and Dörner, *Von Pergamon* (ibid.), p. 71. The

5. On the political implications of the find, see Lionel Gossman, “Imperial Icon: The Pergamon Altar in Wilhelmine Germany,” *The Journal of Modern History* 78 (September 2006):551–587.

6. According to Alexander Conze, a three-column section of the upper colonnade was transported and erected in Berlin; Ludwig von Ulrichs is even more specific and states that of the 462 cases sent to Berlin, half were sculpture while the other half inscriptions and

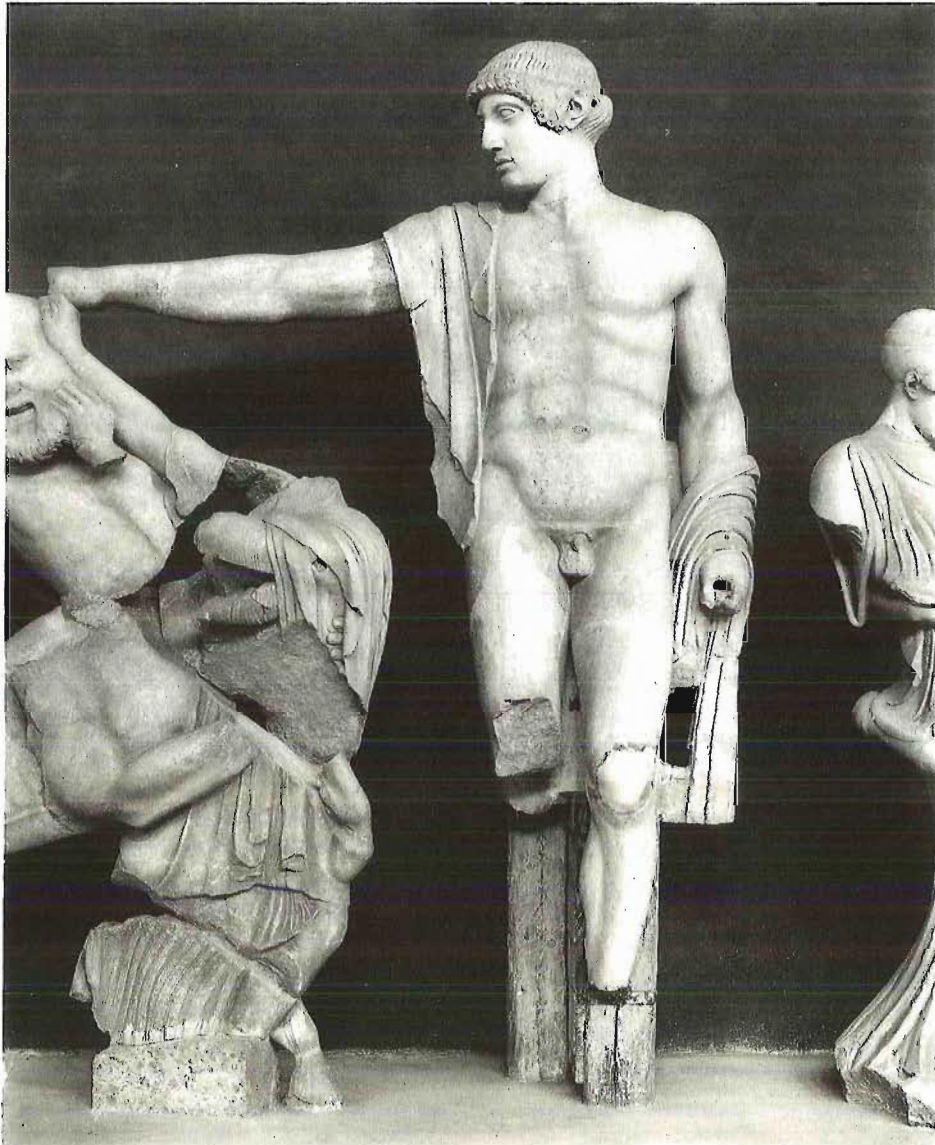


Figure 2 Combat of Centaurs and Lapiths. West tympanon of the Temple of Zeus at Olympia. Photo: Alinari/Art Resource, N.Y

the idea in different words when he wrote to his architect friend Max Alioth from Berlin: "I re-read your letter once again and came across the Nike of Samothrace, which is surely superb—but imagine something like twenty of these eight-foot women, among them some very well

preserved, in the frieze of Pergamon! All filled with furious vehemence and in the grandest style, which sets a good amount of art history on its head!"¹⁰

translation provided by Marchand, *Down from Olympus* (see note 3), p. 99, originates with Ivan Turgenev, *Literary Reminiscences and Autobiographical Fragments*, trans. David Magarshack (New York, 1958), p. 291

10. Letter of August 10, 1882, in Jakob Burckhardt, *Briefe und einen Architekten 1870–1889* (Munich: G. Müller and E. Rentsch, 1913), p. 204. See also his earlier letter to Alioth upon receiving the photographs of the altar "Anderes gewaltig Bewegtes aus jener Zeit [Nike's of Samothrace] lerne ich jetzt aus dem Altar von Pergamon kennen, wovon ich mir die grösseren Photographien habe kommen lassen," letter of March 6/7, 1882 to Max Alioth in *ibid.*, p. 190. Marchand notes yet another critical comment by Burckhardt: "This

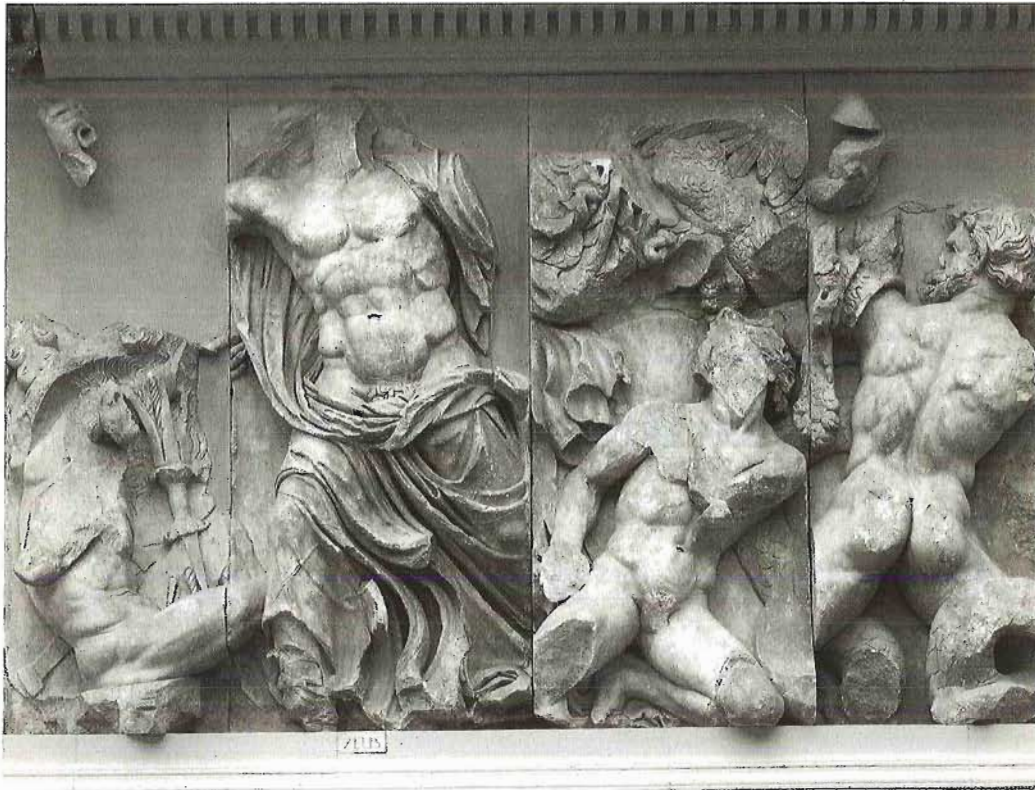


Figure 3. Zeus and his companions during the battle against the Giants. Relief from the Zeus altar at Pergamon, ca.180 B.C. Antikensammlung, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin. Photo: Erich Lessing/Art Resource, N Y

In his 1897 long Nekrolog article on Curtius's life, Adolf Michaelis, professor at Strasburg and member of the DAI (Deutsches Archaeologisches Institut) confirmed the effect from the perspective of a fellow archaeologist. He noted that the public responded more readily to the "Barock" language of the Pergamon marbles than to the late archaic sculptures of the temple of Zeus. Indeed, he added, some perceived the Pergamon altar to be a climax of Greek art and conversely felt that the Olympia excavations had been a disappointment.¹¹ Burckhardt

discovery has thrown the archaeologists' system into confusion! The narrow aesthetic is shaken to its roots, everything that had been written about the pathos of the Laocoon is waste paper, now that we have witnessed this frightful event." As quoted by Marchand, *Down from Olympus* (see note 3), p. 99

11 "So ward denn der Gigantenfries von manchen als das Höchste der antiken Kunst gepriesen, die olympische Ausbeute geringeschätzt. Fernerstehende bezeichneten das künstlerische Ergebniss der Ausgrabungen in Olympia geradezu als eine Enttäuschung, einen Misserfolg." Michaelis, "Ernst Curtius" (note 7), p. 78. In 1884, Heinrich von Brunn also recorded the almost excessive praise lavished

also found them so, and significantly beneath the artistic value of the Aegina marbles.¹² Humann himself was well aware of the significance of his find and voiced what would become general opinion when he wrote to Alexander Conze, then director of the antiquities collections of the Berlin museums (and from 1881 secretary of the powerful DAI) in September 12, 1878: "We have not found a dozen reliefs, but a whole artistic period that lay buried and forgotten!"¹³ Indeed, in a few

on the new arrivals. "[U]nter dem Eindrücke der ersten allgemeinen Ueberraschung sich die Lobsprüche bis zur Ueberschwänglichkeit steigerten." Heinrich von Brunn, "Über die kunstgeschichtliche Stellung der Pergamenischen Gigantomachie," *Jahrbuch der königlichen preussischen Kunstsammlungen* V (1884): 232.

12. "Alles ist gleich gering, Nacktes wie Gewandung. . . . Die Erfindung schon tritt weit zurück hinter den Aegineten." As quoted in Arnold von Salis, *Jacob Burckhardts Vorlesungen über die Kunst des Altertums. Gedenkenrede* (Basel: Helbing & Lichtenhahn, 1948), p. 11.

13. "Wir haben nicht ein Dutzend Reliefs, sondern eine ganze Kunstpoche, die begraben und vergessen war, aufgefunden." Karl and Dörner, *Von Pergamon* (see note 8), p. 58.

short years, the Pergamon marbles had become a *lieu de mémoire* for the German nation, condensing references in multiple layers and active at both high and low levels, from the ponderous volumes of archaeologists to the exhibition ground and souvenir market.¹⁴ Coming as it did upon the heels of Schliemann's discovery of Troy as well as Curtius's successes in Olympia, the scale and visibility of the Pergamon altar pushed it into the foreground and confirmed the international significance of German archaeology.¹⁵ As Gossman has shown, elliptically associated with and referring to the imperial ambitions of the *Kaiser* and the *Kaiserreich*, it was constructed into a location where these ambitions could find a culturally acceptable and at the same time patriotically effective representation.¹⁶

The scholarly response was swift to come. A cluster of publications that escalated to the level of a serious debate followed closely on the heels of the marbles' arrival. The archaeologist Alexander Conze published "Über das Relief der Griechen" (1882); Heinrich von Brunn, the article "Über die kunstgeschichtliche Stellung der Pergamenischen Gigantomachie" (1884); and a response to both came from Guido Hauck, (rector of the Technische Hochschule in Berlin) in his lecture delivered (and published) "Die Grenzen zwischen Malerei und Plastik und die Gesetze des Reliefs" as an anniversary address to celebrate the Kaiser's birthday on March 31, 1885. These publications dealt with the art-theoretical implications of the Pergamon finds and as such resonated beyond the archaeological field. They represent, of course, only the exalted tip of an iceberg, as literature about the Pergamon altar proliferated and reached even to the popular level of the guidebook. In the ancient field, it was immediately processed into Julius Overbeck's second edition of his history of Greek sculpture, and he gave the marbles an unqualified

enthusiastic reception.¹⁷ But perhaps the most famous response was Adolf von Hildebrandt's *Das Problem der Form* (1893)—a reading of sculpture (admittedly, without direct references to the Gigantomachy) that moved in and out of apperception and pure visibility while exalting the relief as the supreme manifestation of artistic vision.¹⁸

Ostensibly the debate was about how this work ought to be integrated into the canon. A significant find, and securely dated, it became a reference point to locate other, less well documented art and refine the current view of the stylistic unfolding of ancient sculpture. Where did the Laocoon fit, famously the prime example of Hellenistic art? What did it mean for Roman imperial art? But although dating attracted much attention, what was actually at stake was the definition of a style: what constitutes apogee, what constitutes decline, and what are its features. In short, the mechanics of style change (*Stilwandlung*). And guiding the discussions that unfolded were the concepts and themes of painterliness (*malerisch*), mixed media, naturalism versus idealism, pathos versus ethos, and of the nature of artistic decline.

One of the main issues that scholars were facing—and that Turgenev had picked up on right away—was the mixed-media effect of the altar. It was painterly, though a work of sculpture; and yet not an independent sculptural group either, but rather the foundation or podium of an architectural ensemble. Much of the debate revolved around the location of the Pergamon sculptural frieze among the three traditional media: painting, sculpture, and architecture. Clearly, painting

17. "... verdient unsere volle Bewunderung"; "[das wir] neben das Höchste und das Beste stellen können", "wirkungsvoll und genial erfunden." Johannes A. Overbeck, *Geschichte der griechischen Plastik*, 3rd ed., 2 vols. (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrich, 1881–1882), pp. 230–251

18. Hildebrand came up with the concept of the "malerisches Relief" in his *Das Problem der Form* (1893), where he merged painting, sculpture, and architecture and defined "Plastik" (sculpture) as the "Belebung der Fläche" (animation of the plane). He began writing the essay in 1876 and started sending drafts to Fiedler in 1881. As such, the conception of the work, though influenced by Fiedler, was also contemporary with the arrival of the Pergamon marbles at Berlin, and another famous response to them. On this dating, see Harry Mallgrave, *Introduction to Empathy, Form, and Space: Problems in German Aesthetics, 1873–1893*, ed. and trans. H. Mallgrave (Santa Monica: Getty Center, 1994), p. 35. Heinrich Wölfflin, reviewing it in the year of its publication, summarized Hildebrand's position: "[E]rst wenn die plastische Figur als ein Flaches wirkt, obschon sie kubisch ist, hat sie künstlerische Form. . . . Aus diesem Gesichtspunkte ergibt sich als allgemeinste Form künstlerischer Verarbeitung die *Reliefauffassung*." Heinrich Wölfflin, "Ein Künstler über Kunst," in *Allgemeine Zeitung*, n. 157 (Munich; July 11, 1893), in *Kleine Schriften*, ed. Joseph Gantner (Basel: Schwabe, 1946), p. 88.

14. Anke Böhne, "Rezeption des Pergamonaltars im deutschen Bürgertum," in *Tradita et inventa. Beiträge zur Rezeption der Antike*, ed. M. Baumbach (Heidelberg: C. Winter, 2000), pp. 441–458.

15. In the popular imagination, Schliemann was erroneously associated with Pergamon, so great was his reputation in Germany and the desire to connect the two. a great find with a great finder Schliemann's excavation of Troy preceded somewhat Pergamon (started in 1871, published in 1874), while his Mycenaean excavation and the recuperation of the gold (so-called Agamemnon) mask occurred in 1876–1878, the Troy excavation was reopened in 1878–1879 and was continued by Rudolf Virchow and Wilhelm Dörpfeld. *Ibid.*, p. 453, n. 44.

16. Pierre Nora, "Entre mémoire et histoire. La problématique des lieux," in *Les lieux de mémoire*, ed. Pierre Nora (Paris: Gallimard, 1984 and 1997), vol. 1, pp. 23–43

it was not, nor did anyone suggest it, but the adjective *malerisch* (painterly) was associated with it, almost as a mantra, and as a result, the question of blurring of boundaries between media arose. In his essay of 1882, Conze reviewed the attitudes to the “malerischer Relief” and noted that scholars contemptuous of *Zopf* (a pejorative term for German Baroque-cum-Rococo) also dismissed the painterly relief.¹⁹ What seemed self-evident to him was that *malerisch* and Baroque (decadent) art were synonymous. Indeed, in 1855, in his *Der Cicerone*, Burckhardt had moaned deeply at the decadent slipping of sculpture away from *Plastik* and into painterliness when he was evaluating Bernini’s work.²⁰ The arrival of the altar then allowed Conze to strike a blow at this prejudice. The main point of his essay was to demonstrate: (a) that the painterly relief had been invented by the Greeks, and thus was not a degenerated form introduced by the Romans (whose artistic merit he also wished to resurrect); and (b) that for the Greeks painting and relief were not separated, but were coextensive and that one can speak of relief-like Greek painting, as one can speak of a painterly relief.²¹ Indeed, he insisted that the relief may be understood as a special form of painting. In one fell swoop, Conze rehabilitated *Zopf* by rehabilitating its defining feature—painterliness—when he attached it to the find of the century. The *malerisch* quality of the relief also finally put to rest the opposition between ancient and modern work, he concluded, by proving that ancient sculpture also had a painterly period, and the frequent comparisons with Michelangelo and Andreas Schlüter that had been made, he continued, amply proved the point.²²

Of course, this did not settle the problem. The perennial issue of media specificity—a mainstay of art

criticism since the eighteenth century—continued to be invoked by others. It was a commonplace in the field to place those works of art on a pinnacle that used the characteristic features of their medium to reach perfection, and only those. And in 1883–1884 Adolf Trendelenburg in his “Die Laokoongruppe und der Gigantenfries des pergamenischen Altars” (a lecture delivered in November 1883 and again on March 4, 1884, at the German Archaeological Institute and published later that month) drew on similar arguments to review once again the relative merits of the frieze and the Laocoon (figs. 4 and 5).²³ Once other scholars had raised the thorny problem of influence, the dating of the two sculpture ensembles had become tightly connected to their relative value. And refereeing among them was the problem that Trendelenburg had set himself. Reinhard Kekulé von Stradonitz and Adrien Wagnon (professor at the University of Geneva) had placed the Pergamon marbles before the Laocoon; moreover, they had argued for the latter’s direct dependence on the frieze, while Overbeck had referred the issue to Conze in his authoritative tomes on Greek sculpture.²⁴ For Trendelenburg, like for so many, the issue was a vital one: By showing the Laocoon (“Michelangelo’s wonder of art”) to be derivative, it had been cast into a secondary work of art and essentially gutted of value.²⁵ In redating the Laocoon so as to place it before the frieze and reassert its importance, he too restated the painting/sculpture *paragone* that his contemporaries had claimed to be the defining feature of the frieze. Thus, he too noted the overlaps with painting—indeed, the competition between sculpture and its sister art—as the overwhelming stylistic novelty at work. However, for Trendelenburg, sculpture lost this contest, and the palm went to the Laocoon as being closer in spirit to the sculpture of the classical period. As far as he was concerned, he argued, the frieze could be praised as much as one wished, but no one could claim that its overcrowded composition, with its figures cutting across each other, its foreshortenings and perspectival bravura, could be the least bit inspired by “the spirit of sculpture”

19. Alexander Conze, “Über das Relief der Griechen,” in *Sitzungsberichte der königlichen preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin* XXVI (1882):566.

20. Jacob Burckhardt, *Der Cicerone* (Munich and Basel: Beck and Schwabe, 2001, vol. 2, p. 309). Burckhardt is even more cutting when it comes to architecture: The façade of Ss. Vincenzo e Atanasio is described as pure boastfulness (“reine Prahlerei”), though he is reluctantly positive about Rainaldi’s painterly façade of Sta. Maria in Campitelli. *Ibid.*, p. 301.

21. “[D]as Relief bei den Griechen, namentlich der Malerei gegenüber nicht etwas so für sich gesondertes war, wie bei uns herrschende Vorstellung ist. Es erscheint der Malerei gleichartiger, als man zuzugeben geneigt war, es kann sogar richtiger als eine besondere Art der Malerei, denn als Zweig der Plastik angesehen werden, und jedesfalls, so gut man vom Reliefcharakter der antiken Malerei gesprochen hat, kann man vom malerischen Charakter des griechischen Reliefs sprechen.” See Conze, “Über das Relief” (note 19), p. 574.

22. Conze, *Pergamon* (see note 6), p. 13

23. Adolf Trendelenburg, *Die Laokoongruppe und der Gigantenfries des pergamenischen Altars* (Berlin: R. Gaertners, 1884)

24. Reinhard Kekulé, *Zur Deutung und Zeitbestimmung des Laokoon* (Berlin and Stuttgart, 1883) and Adrien Wagnon, *La frise de Pergame et le groupe du Laocoon* (Geneva, 1881). This text constituted the introduction to his course on archaeology given at Geneva in 1881–1882. See also Adrien Wagnon, *Le Laocoon et le groupe d’Athena à la frise de Pergame* (Paris, 1882). Overbeck, *Geschichte* (see note 17), p. 241.

25. Trendelenburg, *Die Laokoongruppe* (see note 23), p. 10.



Figure 4. Laocöon, ca. 160–20 B.C. Vatican Museums, Vatican State. Photo: Alinari/Art Resource, N.Y.

("der Geist der Plastik").²⁶ In this manner, he rescued the originality of the Laocöon and placed the Pergamon frieze on a rising scale of naturalism (not an unqualified accolade) of which it represented a climax.

In the same year, Heinrich von Brunn, professor at Munich, also took up the issue in a monumental sixty-page essay on the Pergamon marbles (shortly thereafter to be published as a book), and he berated Conze and others for looking for *malerisch* qualities in the frieze.²⁷

26. *Ibid.*, p. 26.

27. Brunn, "Pergamenischen Gigantomachie" (see note 11), pp. 231–292.

Like Trendelenburg, he wanted to retain the importance of the Laocöon group for Hellenistic art against the rising fame of the Pergamon frieze. Conze was once again his target (and to a certain degree also Kekulé), and he reminded his readers that the latter had placed the frieze at the very center of Hellenistic art (of the Diadochi period)—indeed, had placed the frieze before the Laocöon—and given it priority in the invention of motifs.²⁸ However, dating and attribution were not his tools and he turned to close formal analysis to make

28. *Ibid.*, pp. 233 and 263

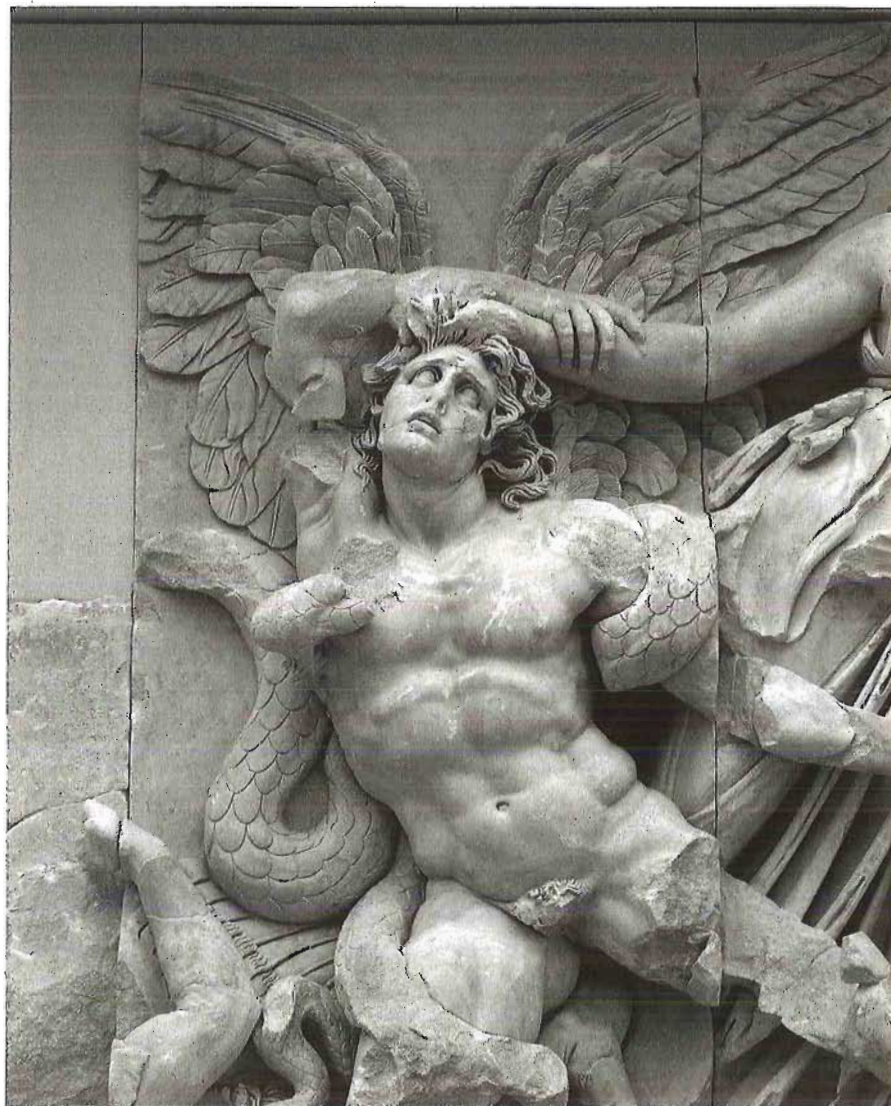


Figure 5 Alcyoneus, pulled by his hair by Athena. East frieze of the altar of Pergamon, 164–156 b.c. Antikensammlung, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin. Photo: Bildarchiv Preussischer Kulturbesitz/Art Resource, N.Y.

his point. Unable to deny its importance, he sought to assign the Pergamon frieze a separate category—rather than painterly, he saw it as “tectonic-decorative,” that is, a compositional element of a larger architectural whole (fig. 6). For him—and to make his point Brunn used a drawing of the altar seen from a great distance—the frieze read like a (decorative) carpet and its function was to explain the forces of statics at work in the architectural superstructure (whose foundation or podium it was after all) by way of the violently interlocking bodies. As such, he concluded, the frieze was an element of the

overall architecture and did not belong to sculpture.²⁹ Brunn offered thus a reading of the ensemble based on empathy theory (*Einfühlung*) but without naming it in so many words: He cited Gottfried Semper (from

29. “Die pergamenische Ara steht nicht im Mittelpunkte der Kunst der Diadochenzeit im Allgemeinen, sondern der Kunst im Anfange des zweiten Jahrhunderts und kann also keine rückwertige Kraft haben für die Beurteilung der Kunst des dritten, um so weniger als ihre architektonisch dekorativen Reliefs einer ganz anderen Kunstgattung angehören, als die statuarische Werke des dritten.” My emphasis, *ibid.*, p. 234.



Figure 6. War of the Gods against the Giants. North side of the Zeus altar from Pergamon, ca. 180 B.C. Antikensammlung, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin. Photo: Erich Lessing/Art Resource, N.Y

whom he certainly picked up the carpet analogy) and argued that the Gigantomachia was the foundation of the architectural complex coming alive, the embodiment of the forces of the superstructure weighing down upon the base.³⁰ As such, according to him, its function was architectural not painterly (he insisted that there was

30. "[D]ie Gigantomachie [ist] der lebendig gewordene Grundbau, die kämpfenden Gestalten [sind] die Verkörperung der Kräfte, welche an dem Grundbau unter der Belastung von oben mit einander in Widerstreit geraten sind." *Ibid.*, pp. 275–276.

no suggestion of space behind the figures to produce a painterly effect); the frieze fulfilled a tectonic function.³¹ And, after a close formal analysis, he concluded that it belonged to architecture, not painting.³²

Hauck, who also responded to Conze in his lecture of 1885, tried to argue against the universal application of *malerisch* to all forms of art—and even berated

31. *Ibid.*, pp. 277 and 282.

32. "[K]eineswegs malerisch sondern durchaus architektonisch gedacht ist." *Ibid.*, p. 276.

Lessing for mixing up painting and sculpture in that great German literature landmark *Der Laokoon oder über die Grenzen der Malerei und Poesie* (1766).³³ In the process, he acknowledged the traditional association of "painterly" with features of decline and confusion—that is, with signs of deterioration—and in so doing, he confirmed the prejudices attached to its use.³⁴ For him, "painterly" stood for "decorative," and he insisted that Hellenistic art was the first to import such elements into the relief. Overbeck had been careful to avoid the whole issue: According to him, the Pergamon marbles had retained the true spirit of Greek relief.³⁵ Unlike him, Hauck took the bull by the horns and attacked Conze and those who upheld his view. As he charted the trajectory of the painterly relief from here, he saw the line of development leading to the reliefs of the Roman triumphal arches, and he pointed to the Renaissance as its ultimate heir: Ghiberti introduced perspective into the relief and it is from here that painting took it over. This was the ultimate blending (not to say confusion) of painterliness and relief, which was not "saved" until Thorwaldsen, his contemporary hero, forsook the painterly staging for reliefs and returned the medium to its (pure) origins.³⁶ Thus, Hauck clearly testified to the fascination with the relief and its *malerisch* qualities that the Pergamon Gigantomachy caused even as he struck out in a different direction with his own reading. Indeed, in words that recalled Conze and anticipated Heinrich Wölfflin, he concluded: "We can speak about a relief conception in ancient painting just as much as we can speak of a painterly treatment of the relief."³⁷

If *malerisch* was a recurrent bone of contention, the other issue that the Pergamon altar precipitated was the need for the scholarly community to revise or at least face up to one of its central prejudices: in favor of idealism and against naturalism. The Winckelmannian ideal of noble simplicity and quiet grandeur ("edle Einfalt und stille Grösse") did not allow for strong, realistic emotions or gestures (fig. 7). This dialectic was accompanied by a value judgment that inevitably

avored the restrained and idealized work of the fifth century B.C.—that is, of Phidias and his school (fig. 8). This bias had been also telescoped onto later periods and had set the Renaissance against the Baroque. Alongside the idealism/naturalism opposition ran the prejudice in favor of ethos over pathos. In German art historical texts, these terms strayed somewhat from their Aristotelian origins and were used instead to denote contained and/or latent emotions rather than fully enacted (natural) ones.³⁸ Thus, the two sets of oppositions were in fact connected and reinforced each other. All scholars weighed in on this issue. Brunn, for example, argued that naturalistic detail ("superficialities") often affected viewers more than they realized, as if to suggest a cheaper trick to draw the spectator in.³⁹ Throughout, when dealing with the naturalism of the Pergamon altar, his vocabulary shifted to a light pejorative: The representation was that of superficial appearances of surfaces; the competition with reality pushed to illusionism; imitation of nature replaced free, ideal re-creation; the artist sought to exceed nature, and so on.⁴⁰ And to drive his point home, Brunn insisted that he missed the pathos that arose from ethos, as was the case for the Laocoon. In his view, the dramatic pathos of the Pergamon altar frieze was not the real purpose of the work; instead, it had become a means to display virtuosity, as was the case in epideictic rhetoric, and, in the end, it succeeded in being (merely?) decorative.⁴¹ Likewise, looking toward the negative implications of naturalism, Trendelenburg noted that all art historians had declared the striking realism of the frieze to be the last (and late) development phase of Greek art; hence he felt justified in dating the Laocoon earlier for its more idealized (read superior) conception of form.⁴² Alone, Conze did not allow prejudice to cloud his reading: Although he also noted the naturalism of the frieze, he insisted that this "frightening naturalism"

38. For example, in his lecture notes Burckhardt concluded his enthusiastic description of the reliefs: "Ethos ist's freilich nicht mehr, sondern lauter Pathos, und was für welches!" von Salis, *Jacob Burckhardts Vorlesungen* (see note 12), p. 20.

39. Brunn, *Pergamenischen Gigantomachie* (see note 11), p. 239.

40. *Ibid.*, p. 244.

41. *Ibid.*, pp. 260 and 290–291. Overbeck had made a similar evaluation in 1882 though without the critical tone that Brunn employed. Overbeck, *Geschichte* (see note 17) p. 251.

42. "Von allen Kunsthistorikern ist der pergamenische Gigantenfries mit seinem frappierenden Realismus also höchste Schöpfung der letzten Entwicklungsstufe hellenistischer Plastik mit Recht viel bewundert worden." Trendelenburg, *Die Laokoongruppe* (see note 23), p. 26; "die schlichtere, idealere Gruppe früher entstanden ist als die schwungvollere, naturalistischere Fries." *Ibid.*, p. 39.

33. Hauck had worked on the concept of *malerisch* at some length. See Guido Hauck, *Die malerische Perspektive, ihre Praxis, Begründung und ästhetische Wirkung* (Berlin: Springer, 1882).

34. "Merkmale des Verfallens," in *ibid.*, p. 10. "[Man war gewohnt] die Hinneignung zu malerischer Auffassung in der antiken Sculptur als ein Zeichen des Verfalls zu betrachten." *Ibid.*, p. 4.

35. Overbeck, *Geschichte* (see note 17) p. 250.

36. *Ibid.*, p. 14.

37. "Man kann demgemäss ebensogut von einer reliefmässigen Auffassung der antiken Malerei wie von einer malerischen Behandlung des Reliefs sprechen können." *Ibid.*, p. 4.

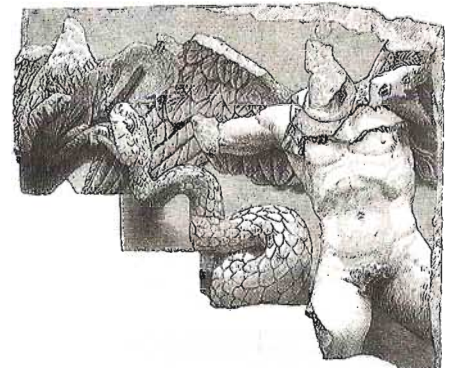
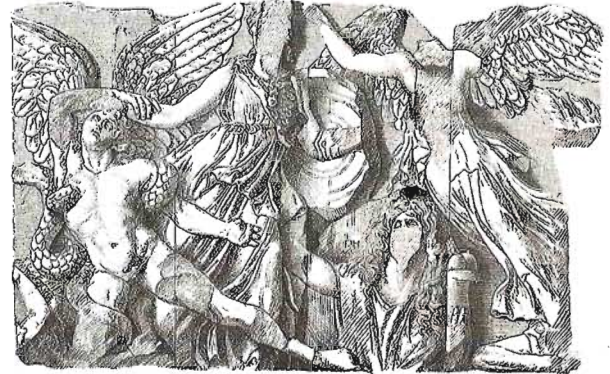
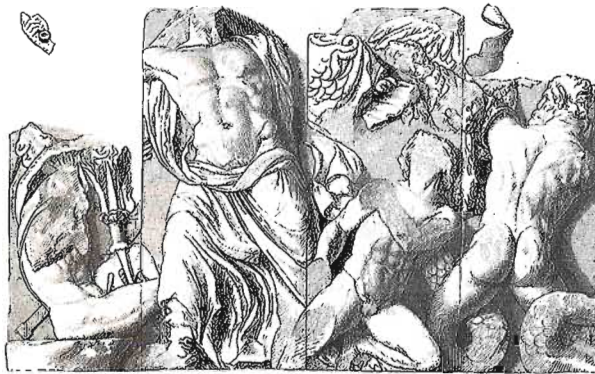


Figure 7. Details of the frieze, Zeus altar from Pergamon. Illustration from J. Overbeck, *Geschichte der griechischen Plastik*, 3d ed. (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrich, 1881), vol.1, figure 132.

was nevertheless part of a grand style.⁴³ And this “nevertheless” ultimately allowed him to take a position on the issue of decline: For him, the Pergamon marbles finally proved the quality of later Greek (Hellenistic) art, which until then had been much in question.⁴⁴

43. “. . . voll . . . schrecklicher Natürlichkeit und doch in einem grossen Stile.” Conze, *Pergamon* (see note 6), p. 13. Overbeck had also noted what he called the “realism” of the reliefs and saw it in conjunction with the emotional content as the features that later artists picked up from the Pergamon school. Overbeck, *Geschichte* (see note 17), p. 230.

44. Conze recalls how such outstanding works as the Nike of Samothrace or Venus of Milo had presented problems for scholars: They seemed of too high a quality to be assigned to a late date. “Es verschwindet dabei die zu niedrige Vorstellung von einer Zeit des Verfalls, in der man bis vor kurzem—ich erinnere an die samothrakische Nike—sich scheute treffliche Werke entstanden zu denken.” *Ibid.* He reiterates this position in Alexander Conze, “Review of J. Overbeck *Geschichte der griechischen Plastik* (1882),” *Göttingische gelehrte Anzeigen*, vol. 2, 1882, pp. 897–914. Although Conze takes issue with Overbeck, the latter had been only modestly prejudiced when he

2. The rise of Baroque studies

What is clear from the debates surrounding the Pergamon altar is that the categories invoked—*malerisch*, media overlap, naturalism, stylistic changes—plucked chords that resonated across the discipline of art history. Most importantly, the “ancients” had set a pattern by their frequent comparisons between the Pergamon frieze and “modern” art that ranged from late Renaissance to Baroque. Clearly, such comments had arisen from the first reactions of the art world—makers and critics—but the academics took them on. Conze compared the reliefs with the work of Michelangelo (whose late style was considered at the time to mark the beginning of the Baroque) and Schlüter; Ludwig von Ulrichs compared them with Rubens and Wagner; while

stated that the reliefs showed an “unexpectedly” high level of artistic conscientiousness (*Künstlerische Gewissenhaftigkeit*) for this late date. Overbeck, *Geschichte* (see note 17), p. 250.

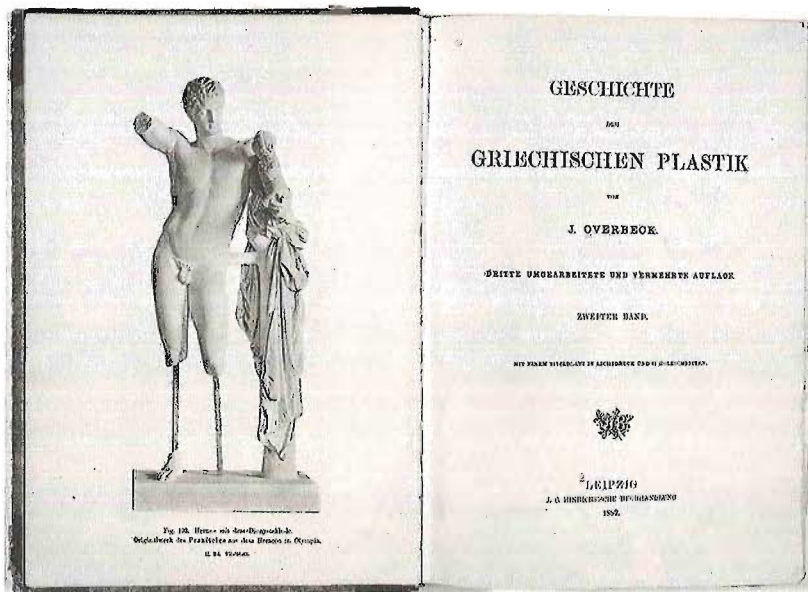


Figure 8. Title page, J. Overbeck, *Geschichte der griechischen Plastik*, 3d ed. (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrich, 1882), vol. 2.

Overbeck associated the Parthenon reliefs with Mozart and Raphael and Pergamon with Rubens and modern orchestral works. Even Burckhardt engaged in this game of analogies when he proposed Rubens as a meaningful later counterpart.⁴⁵ Without stepping outside of his field, Brunn also used the parallel with the Baroque when he quoted his own argument in *Geschichte der griechischen Künstler* (1857–1859) in which he described the art of the Diadochi (as it was known up until then) as (mercifully, he implies) free of willful mannerisms and baroque excessive fantasy (“barocke Phantasterei”), thus connecting once again the Pergamon altar with evaluations of the Baroque.⁴⁶

45. On Burckhardt's analogies, see von Salis, *Burckhardt's Vorlesungen* (note 12), p. 20–21. The tradition of reading Michelangelo's late style as Baroque reached August Schmarsow who reiterated it in his *Zur Frage nach dem Malerischen* (Leipzig: S. Hirzel, 1896). For Overbeck's comparisons, see Overbeck, *Geschichte* (note 17), p. 251.

46. Brunn, *Pergamenischen Gigantomachie* (note 11), p. 232. Arnold von Salis lists all those who had made such connections, although not the ones mentioned above. Thus, he names Konrad Zacher (*Beilage zur Allgemeinen Zeitung*, 1880) and Bernhard Förster (*Literarische Beilage der Karlsruher Zeitung*, 1880) who published immediately upon the first showing of the Pergamon marbles; and among later publications, he lists Ludwig von Sybel (*Weltgeschichte der Kunst*, 1888); Maxime Collignon (*Pergame; Restauration et*

But earlier art historical evaluations outside of ancient scholarship and Winckelmannian aesthetics also weighed on these readings and provided a critical position and vocabulary that the ancient scholars could seize upon. Burckhardt's *Der Cicerone* (1855) was one such well-known work that transcended periods and scholarly divides and provided a background for formal evaluations of art from antiquity to “modern” times. Thus, in architecture, Burckhardt had defined *malerisch* to be the essence (*Grundgefühl*) of the Baroque style (1580–1780),⁴⁷ a “questionable style” that he was almost apologetic for introducing to his readers, and he excused his attempt on the grounds of comprehensiveness.⁴⁸ Indeed, the term came up in connection with architecture time and time again, associated with restlessness⁴⁹ and movement,⁵⁰ but particularly with “a strong relief and therefore powerful

description des monuments de l'acropole, 1900); Walther Amelung (*Römische Mitteilungen*, 1903); and Reinhard Kekulé von Stadonitz (*Die griechische Skulptur*, 1906). Arnold von Salis, *Der Altar von Pergamon. Ein Beitrag zur Erklärung des hellenistischen Barockstils in Kleinasien* (Berlin: Georg Reimer, 1912), pp. 1–4.

47. Burckhardt, *Der Cicerone* (see note 20).

48. *Ibid.*, p. 296.

49. *Ibid.*, p. 309.

50. *Ibid.*, p. 298.

light/shadow effects,"⁵¹ with "a piling up of forms" and illusion of depth.⁵² Baroque sculpture was not far behind. There, too, Burckhardt identified a turn towards painterliness, naturalism, and excessive affect at all costs.⁵³ Bernini was his *bête noire*: His overly polished marbles, overdeveloped male musculature, spongy female bodies, and fluttering drapery that described the movements of the soul instead of the body led Burckhardt to evaluate this style as sad and even repulsive.⁵⁴ All these features were imported from painting, he concluded, leaving the plastic composition beyond redemption.⁵⁵ In his narrative, the finale of this *malerisch* destruction of sculpture was the altar group (chief among them Bernini's *Ecstasy of St. Theresa* and the *Cathedra Petri*), whose painterly composition sacrificed all laws of sculpture (fig. 9).⁵⁶ And with withering scorn he concluded that Bernini might as well have drawn the consequences of his push towards ever more naturalism and included color in his sculpture.⁵⁷

The similarity of Burckhardt's vocabulary to describe the Baroque to that employed by Conze, Brunn, or Trendelenburg to describe the Pergamon marbles is unmistakable. And yet, despite the prejudices attached to the Baroque with which this vocabulary was replete—witness Burckhardt—the popularity of the Pergamon marbles turned the tide toward curiosity and interest.⁵⁸ This fertile soil for revisiting a style that had been on the index for some time in contemporary architecture apparently bore instant fruit in the field of art history. The 1880s and 1890s mark almost an explosion of studies of the Baroque, whether German or Italian. Among the first were Robert Dohme's *Die Geschichte der deutschen Baukunst* (1886), in which the author spent a sizeable part of the book on the Baroque, and his later *Barock und Rokoko Architektur*



Figure 9. Gianlorenzo Bernini, *Ecstasy of St. Theresa of Avila*, 1645. Cornaro Chapel, Sta. Maria della Vittoria, Rome. Photo: Nimatallah/Art Resource, N.Y.

(1892); Cornelius Gurlitt's *Geschichte des Barockstiles in Italien* (of 1887) conceived for Franz Kugler's series in which Burckhardt had published the Renaissance volume in 1868; Heinrich Wölfflin's *Renaissance und Barock* (1888); August Schmarsow's *Zur Frage nach dem Malerischen* of 1896 and *Barock und Rokoko oder Über das Malerische in der Architektur* of 1897; and Alois Riegl's *Die Entstehung der Barockkunst in Rom* (from notes of 1898–1899 and 1901–1902). Even a cursory glance at these tomes shows the vocabulary to be familiar. For example, in 1886, the terms that Dohme uses to describe Baroque architecture are so repetitive as to be striking. On one page alone he uses the term *malerisch* nine times to describe the nature of the Baroque; in association with this term, he highlights the relief and figural sculpture (three times); he returns to the effects of light and shade ("the magic play of light and shadow" as he puts it) four times; and he draws attention to the animation (*Belebung* is his word) of the

51. *Ibid.*, pp. 299 and 301

52. *Ibid.*, p. 301.

53. *Ibid.*, p. 551.

54. *Ibid.*, p. 553.

55. *Ibid.*, p. 555.

56. *Ibid.*, p. 564–565.

57. *Ibid.*, p. 565.

58. Since the publication of *Der Cicerone*, Burckhardt had been slowly changing his views on the Baroque—at least on the architecture. However, this is evident in private correspondence and his readers were still working with his *Cicerone* views. In his letter of April 5, 1875, he writes to Alioth: "Mein Respekt vor dem Barocco nimmt stündlich zu und ich bin bald geneigt, ihn für das eigentliche Ende und Hauptresultat der lebendigen Architektur zu halten. Er hat nicht nur Mittel für alles, was zum Zweck dient, sondern auch für den schönen Schein." Burckhardt, *Briefe* (see note 10), p. 6.

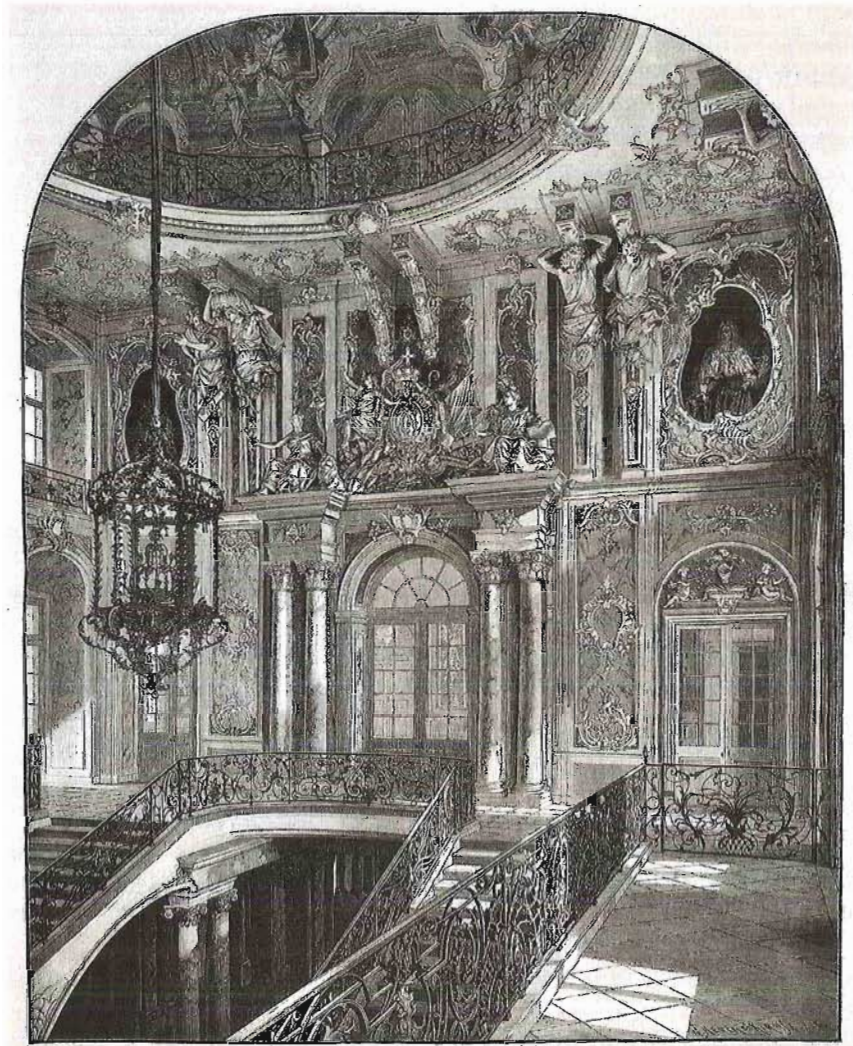


Figure 10. View of grand staircase, seventeenth century. Illustration from Robert Dohme, *Geschichte der deutschen Baukunst* (Berlin: G. Grote'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1887).

architectural elements also four times (fig. 10).⁵⁹ The other texts shared this vocabulary even if they moved in different directions with their own arguments. But at the level of formal analysis, some form of a consensus in reading baroque forms seems to have been reached here. Recalling Burckhardt, these authors also showed that they had read him across the literature surrounding the Pergamon marbles.

59. Robert Dohme, *Geschichte der deutschen Baukunst* (Berlin: G. Grote'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1887), p. 374.

Indeed, Michaelis's observation that the public response (rather than the scholarly one) to the recent excavations was clearly favoring the Baroque (read Pergamon) over the late archaic (read Olympia) also deserves some attention. Which came first: the interest in the Baroque and as result the interest in Pergamon, or the altar that produced an aesthetic revolution and rehabilitated a neo-Baroque sensibility and style? This may seem something of a chicken-and-egg question, but deserves unpacking if only to lay out the landscape against which the art historical debates were set. On the one hand, it is true that Humann had sent to Berlin

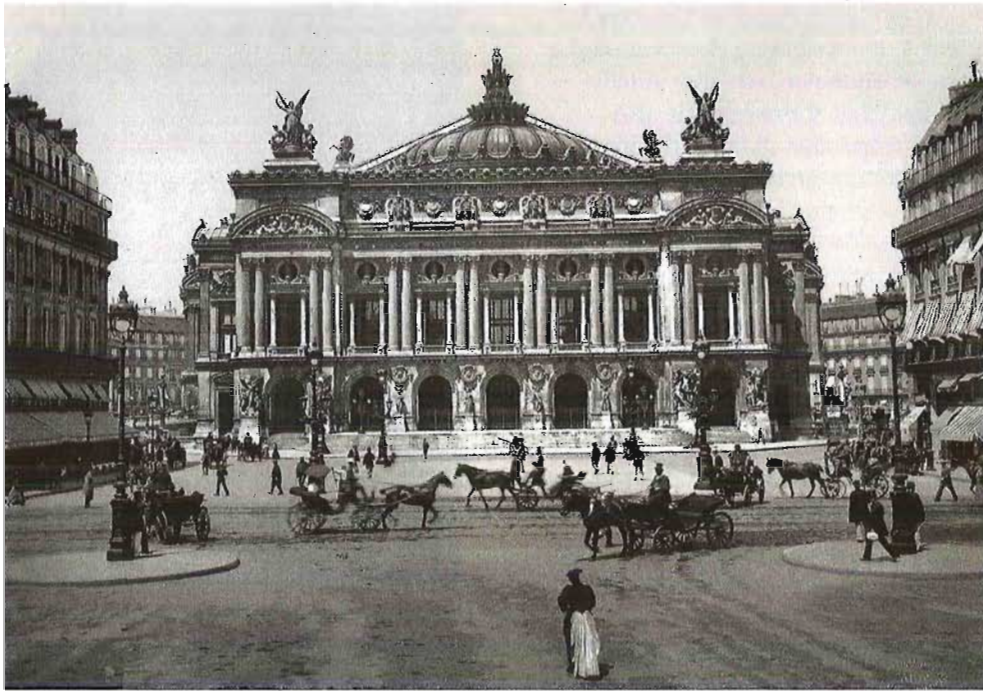


Figure 11 Anonymous photograph, the Place de l'Opéra with the Opéra Garnier, ca. 1900.
Photo: Adoc-photos/Art Resource, N.Y

two reliefs in 1872 (and showed them to Ernst Curtius in 1871), but they languished in storage until Conze was named director of the antiquities collections of the Berlin museums in 1877 and became interested.⁶⁰ Evidently, in 1871 the German archaeological world was not yet ready for them. Yet, on the other hand, the rise of a baroque sensibility certainly predated the arrival of the Pergamon marbles. Buildings such as the Paris Opera House (inaugurated in 1875) and the Great Exhibition pavilions springing up in various European capitals and well-known to visitors and the architectural media alike testify to this swing in taste (fig. 11). Moreover, by the 1870s, the debate about the “right style” for the century that was a commonplace among architects across Europe

60. *Entdeckungen in Hellas*, ed. H. A. Stoll (Berlin: Nation, 1979), p. 440. Humann states that the first he heard back from Berlin about an interest in Pergamon was on December 7, 1877, when Conze first wrote to him; this was followed by an interest in carrying out excavations, which Conze first expressed in his letter of February 26, 1878 (*ibid.*, p. 449). Although Curtius was not moved to excavate Pergamon, he did include the plan of the site developed by Humann in his *Beiträgen zur Topographie Kleinasien* and ensured that he was named member of the German Archaeological Institute. Wolfgang Radt, *Pergamon* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1999), p. 311

had become more focused in Germany and the issue of a national style took center stage. Although the Gothic Revival had held sway for some time, it was now being supplanted by neo-Renaissance, neo-Romanesque, and neo-Baroque alternatives. The debates around the style of the Reichstag—clearly seen as a major statement for being the German post-unification parliament building—document these swings and their respective justifications.⁶¹ At the end of a process that lasted from 1872 to 1882, Paul Wallot won the competition with a richly sculpted late-Renaissance or (incipient) neo-Baroque building.⁶² Indeed, like Semper's heavily

61. Lewis, *The Politics of the German Gothic Revival* (see note 3). There was a strong investment in the Renaissance in Germany, too, as the German national style (mostly advocated out of Bavaria but also Hannover). See the reception of Gabriel von Seidel's architecture and the building of the Bavarian national museum (1892–1900). Ingolf Bauer, “Das Bayerisches Nationalmuseum und die ‘Heimatkunst,’” in *Das Bayerisches Nationalmuseum*, ed. I. Bauer (Munich: Hirmer, 2000), pp. 233–250.

62. On how Wallot's architecture was perceived in Germany at the time, see Gurlitt's history of German art in the nineteenth century in which he describes this approach as being in the Bavarian spirit a “breitere, vollere, saftigere Architekturbehandlung.” Cornelius Gurlitt, *Die deutsche Kunst des XIX Jahrhunderts* (Berlin: Georg Bondi, 1899; 2nd ed 1900), p. 638.

ornamented style from his Opera house in Dresden to the later works in Vienna, the Reichstag demonstrated a shift in taste toward more opulence, whether strictly neo-Baroque or not. Inevitably, these revivals also generated interest in the respective styles and periods themselves, so a scholarly-cum-archaeological effort accompanied the Greek, Roman, Gothic, Renaissance, and other revivals. As a neo-Baroque also emerged, so did an aesthetic sensibility that favored its historical model. From a decadent architecture, pejoratively referred to as *Zopf* by the Schinkel school, the Baroque became a genuine and viable alternative, a perfect choice for a large public building—a hotel, a casino, an opera house, a palace, a theater.⁶³

There was one other major driving force behind the shift of taste and interest toward the Baroque in architecture: New building types, generally intended for large groups of people (be they national libraries or train stations) that became possible and affordable as the result of technological developments (iron and steel trusses, for example) provided the impetus toward the exploration of large scale and its architectural treatment. As representational spaces for competing empires—be they British, Austrian, Ottoman, or just emerging as such (like the German or the Italian), they traded in grandeur, splendor, scale, and effect and were part of a social/political/economic *mise en scène* particular to the late nineteenth century. Perhaps the most representative buildings—iconically at least—of this new globalized, competing, industrialized world, increasingly polarized around a few “imperial” centers, was the great exhibition pavilion, representing its nation and seeking to produce the greatest impact while containing the most people.⁶⁴ While Paxton’s Crystal Palace did not trade in baroque monumentality, subsequent efforts—in Paris, Vienna, Philadelphia, and elsewhere—turned to its formal language as a visual referent.

But other aspects also played into the popular reception in favor of the Baroque that Michaelis notes, and, once again, concerns the Pergamon marbles. No matter how well-primed the taste toward the Baroque might have been, it was latently so. It needed the shock effect that captured the attention and imagination and that the Pergamon marbles delivered. Indeed, what

63. On this process of an aesthetic turn to Neo-Baroque as reflective of a consciously imperial aesthetics and response to the Pergamon altar, see Gaehtgens, *Die Berliner Museumsinsel* (note 3), pp. 84–85 and Gossman, “Imperial Icon” (note 5), who develops the argument further.

64. On the Baroque as the language of empire in Germany, see Gossman, “Imperial Icon” (note 5).



Figure 12. Neues Schauspielhaus, Friedrich von Schinkel, 1818–1821 Berlin. Photo by author

has not been stressed is where it all took place: The marbles arrived in Berlin, the Berlin of Schinkel and the Schinkelschüler (and were first exhibited in Schinkel’s Altes Museum), the Berlin that had been nick-named “Spree Athen” (Athens on the Spree) in opposition to Semper’s Dresden as “Florenz auf der Elbe” (Florence on the Elbe). The effect was that much greater as it hit at the heart of the community that lived the Winckelmann classical ideal. Although Berlin and its neighbor Dresden were notable for exemplary *Zopf* architecture, the spare Prussian classicism of Schinkel had formed the taste of several generations of architects as well as that of the archaeologists (fig. 12). Overlaps between the architectural and archaeological communities were common, and many were active in both fields. Although Carl Bötticher, one of the stalwart supporters of the

But perhaps most important was Brunn's reading of the Pergamon altar base as a carpet of bodies that enact and represent the effects of the load it carried. This interpretation had a significant resonance in Wölfflin's work that went far beyond that of the psychologists he was quoting, for it showed how psychology of perception could be applied to the formal analysis of a work of art. Indeed, Wölfflin is quite candid about this origin of his thinking, and he cites enthusiastically the striking connection between architecture and sculptural composition in the Pergamon altar as proposed by Brunn.⁷¹ Moreover, this citation occurs at a key moment in the *Prologomena*, in connection with his reading of the pedimental figures in a Greek temple, "which, relieved from weight, can move freely."⁷² This is the climax of his argument—and its most visually compelling part—and an essential part of his reading of ornament as expression of "excessive force to form," which concludes his analysis of architecture.⁷³ Although Semper had been the one to establish such an empathy-based analysis of form, Wölfflin's most immediate source that applied the method to traditional art historical work—dating, establishing influence, evaluating artistic worth—remained Brunn, and his test case Pergamon.

From this general evaluation of architecture in 1888, Wölfflin turned to a sustained analysis of the Baroque. What moved him to write *Renaissance und Barock* was ostensibly his desire to understand another mechanism—this time the mechanism of stylistic change. "What happened to the Renaissance? Why did the Renaissance end?" were his questions.⁷⁴ Once again, he cited Brunn and Kekulé as well as Conze's article on the relief—indeed, most of the main protagonists of the Pergamon debate.⁷⁵ But perhaps the most telling statement is to be found in his preface: "For now, I had to abandon the plan for a parallel presentation of the ancient Baroque. It would have been too much of a burden for this little book. However, I hope to present this remarkable comparison elsewhere soon."⁷⁶ And, taking this argument

even further, and much like the scholars writing on the Pergamon marbles, Wölfflin also compares the Baroque with his own time, specifically with Wagner.⁷⁷ Clearly, when he turned to his book, the Pergamon marbles were on his mind for a number of reasons but also because there was one further issue that their arrival had put on the map. The problem of style change (*Stilwandlung*) in Greek art that the newly discovered marbles had precipitated made the issue even more topical than it already was. Trendelenburg, Conze, and Brunn were battling the same problem as Wölfflin: How to bring some stylistic order to the visual material of antiquity and on what criteria to base it. In the modern period, where Wölfflin's work was located, dating was not so much the issue as it was for his archaeologist colleagues, but stylistic transformation was. In contemporary architecture, the famous "Battle of Styles" had provoked many a discussion on what the appropriate style for the period might be and added considerable fuel to the art historical fire. However, the *mechanism* of stylistic change had not been broached as such and it was the Pergamon debates that really brought this issue into the foreground.

Of course, the impetus to understand stylistic change was also tied to the needs of Renaissance scholarship. In a period when the Renaissance was garnering much attention both as a building style among architects and as a historical model that validated the alliance between patron and artist, power and art (as laid out by Burckhardt in *Kultur der Renaissance in Italien*), understanding what exactly the Renaissance was, sharpening its contours and hence its definition had become something of a priority.⁷⁸ The days were quickly fading of its secondary place to the main subject of antiquity that had prompted the Zurich Eidenössische Technische Hochschule to appoint Burckhardt against opposition and "despite" the fact that he was no ancient scholar.⁷⁹ In this new climate, refining definitions became increasingly urgent.

71. "Über den frappanten Zusammenhang zwischen Architektur und Composition der 'pergamenischen Gigantomachie' vergl. Brunn in seinem Aufsatz, Berlin 1885." Wölfflin, "Prologomena" (see note 68), pp. 38 and 41, n. 2.

72. "... die dem Druck enthoben, hier frei sich entfalten können." *Ibid.*, p. 41.

73. "Überschüssige Formkraft," *ibid.*, p. 41.

74. "Warum hat die Renaissance aufgehört?" Wölfflin, *Renaissance und Barock* (see note 69), p. 57. "Unsere Absicht geht nicht auf eine Beschreibung dieser ganzen Entwicklung, sondern auf eine Begreifung des Ursprungs: was wird aus der Renaissance?" *Ibid.*, p. 3.

75. *Ibid.*, p. 22, n. 3; p. 23.

76. "Den Plan, eine parallele Darstellung des antiken Barocks mitzugeben, habe ich in letzter Stunde fallen lassen. Das Büchlein

wäre dadurch zu sehr belastet worden. Ich hoffe, bald an anderem Orte die merkwürdige Vergleichung ausführen zu können." *Ibid.*, preface.

77. "Man wird nicht vererkennen, wie sehr gerade unsere Zeit hier dem italienischen Barock verwandt ist. . . . Es sind die gleichen Affekte, mit denen ein Richard Wagner wirkt." *Ibid.*, p. 65.

78. On the impact of Burckhardt's definition of Italian Renaissance culture as the product of a patron/artist alliance on German modernism (the Darmstadt colony and the Werkbund), see Francesco Dal Co, *Figures of Architecture and Thought* (New York: Rizzoli, 1990).

79. On Burckhardt's Zurich appointment, see Werner Kaegi, *Jacob Burckhardt. Eine Biographie* (Basel/Stuttgart: Benno Schwabe, 1956), vol. 3, p. 567 also von Salis, *Jacob Burckhardts Vorlesungen* (note 12), p. 6.

Greek ideal in architecture, was chastised by Gottfried Semper and others for having written about the Greek temple without ever having seen one—he first went to Greece long after his *Tektonik der Hellenen* (1852) had seen the light of print—this was not a common occurrence. Indeed, some of the most renowned excavators—Wilhelm Dörpfeld, Carl Humann, Alois Hauser, Richard Bohn—were trained as architects. And the prevailing taste among architects filtered through to the archaeologists. According to Michaelis, Ernst Curtius, the excavator of Olympia, was profoundly influenced by Bötticher and Schinkel until the end of his life. This is especially evident in his public lecture given in 1853 at the Berlin Architects' Union (Architektenverein) for the annual celebration of Friedrich von Schinkel, otherwise known as the Schinkelfest.⁶⁵

3. *Malerisch, Körpergefühl, and the plastic reading of architecture*

As we have seen, the archaeologists' debates unfolded on lines familiar to both architects and art historians and as such found significant echoes in the literature of the period. It is also clear that the influence worked both ways. However, among the consequences of the Pergamon discovery and the debates it engendered for the field of art history as a whole, its effect upon the work of Heinrich Wölfflin is perhaps the most dramatic. His was the most lasting contribution that emerged from this moment of intensity as well as the one that drew real methodological innovations out of the Pergamon debates.

That Wölfflin was familiar with the debates is evident. Not only was the prominence of the principal actors such that the scholarly world would take notice (especially a young doctoral student as he was at the time), but Brunn was Wölfflin's much-admired teacher during his study years in Munich between 1882 and 1886 (when he submitted his dissertation *Prologomena zu einer Psychologie der Architektur*) and it was still to him that he dedicated *Renaissance und Barock*, his Habilitationsschrift of 1888.⁶⁶ Even more significant

is that Wölfflin cites von Brunn's Pergamon article in the *Prologomena* in a very critical passage (in a work moreover, where his citations are few and far between, and none other from art history). This sole art historical reference—together with one mention of Gottfried Semper's *Der Stil*—belies the importance it had for his argument. As is well known, in the *Prologomena* (1886), Wölfflin turns to the nascent discipline of psychology to understand the mechanisms at work in the reception of art—his specific case being architecture. And he is normally read as deriving much of his thinking from the sources he lists—Wundt, Helmholtz, Volkelt, Vischer, Lotze, Fechner—that is, the whole optics, psychology and empathy literature that moved at the intersection between aesthetics and science, while the art historical context is largely forgotten (with the exception of Burckhardt).⁶⁷ Semper (who claimed to be writing as an art historian) and even more so Brunn (who was so focused on close reading and formal analysis and leaned on Semper himself) were his very immediate, discipline-specific sources.⁶⁸ In short, empathy theory came mediated to Wölfflin and this mediation left its traces both in his method and in his questions. For example, in his analysis of the Pergamon reliefs, Brunn looks at a host of "peripheral" elements (following Semper's method) before he gets to the bodies themselves: He looks at shoes, drapery, animal skin, hair, feathers, wings, and scales. For Wölfflin, from his very first publication, the primary clues to a style or a style change would be those located on the margins: in objects of daily use, in clothes (the famous Gothic shoe), in the detail that announces and precedes the larger gestures in the monumental arts.⁶⁹ Both Semper and von Brunn had shown him the way.⁷⁰

67. For a discussion and translation of the principal texts associated with empathy theory, see Mallgrave, *Empathy, Form and Space* (note 18).

68. Gottfried Semper, *Der Stil* (Munich: Fr. Bruckmann Verlag, 1878; 1st ed., 1860–1863). Wölfflin cites Semper's reading of eurhythmia as related to physiological body rhythms—heart beat, blood circulation, breathing, etc. See Heinrich Wölfflin, "Prologomena zu einer Psychologie der Architektur," in Heinrich Wölfflin, *Kleine Schriften*, ed. J. Gantner (Basel: Benno Schwabe, 1946), pp. 13–47 p. 36.

69. Wölfflin, "Prologomena" (ibid.), p. 46; Wölfflin, *Renaissance und Barock* (Basel/Stuttgart: Schwabe, 1965; reprint of 1888), p. 58.

70. Although Wölfflin's attention to the margins may recall Morelli's, the father of connoisseurship, their interests were different: Wölfflin looked for period style changes while Morelli was concerned with personal artistic style. As such Morelli was no reference point for Wölfflin, even if they were both, in their own ways, indebted to the same turn toward an interest in the marginalia of culture. On this topic see Alina Payne, *Modern Architecture and the Rise of a Theory of Objects* (forthcoming).

65. Curtius delivered the lecture "Über die Kunst der Hellenen" on March 13, 1853. Michaelis, "Ernst Curtius" (note 7), p. 65.

66. In a letter of November 22, 1889, Wölfflin stated: "Als Lehrer, die ich am höchsten verehere, nenne ich Jacob Burckhardt in Basel, und Heinrich von Brunn in München." *Jacob Burckhardt und Heinrich Wölfflin. Briefwechsel und andere Dokumente ihrer Begegnung 1882–1897*, ed. Joseph Gantner (Leipzig: Koehle & Amelang, 1988), p. 79. His relationship with Adolf von Hildebrand—another important Pergamon interpreter—evolved after their meeting in Italy in 1889. On his first meeting with Hildebrand, see *ibid.*, p. 78.

From both perspectives—interest in the Baroque and in the Renaissance—*Stilwandlung* became a fundamental theme for Wölfflin that produced a life-long search and lends an extraordinary unity to his oeuvre. *Renaissance und Barock* is about the transition from one style to another in architecture as his test case and the beginning of a sustained reflection on this topic. To be sure, it was a direct response to both Cornelius Gurlitt's recent book on the Baroque, and to Adolf Göller who had posited form fatigue ("Ermüdung des Formgefühls") as the cause of stylistic changes.⁸⁰ In a way, it was also a response to Burckhardt, as Wölfflin himself acknowledged toward the end of his life: For him, Burckhardt had never defined the essence of the Renaissance style.⁸¹ But more followed. In *Klassische Kunst* (1899), he sought the transition (or *Stilwandlung*) from early Renaissance to High Renaissance in painting; in *Die Kunst Albrecht Dürers* (1905)—the transition from Gothic to Renaissance; finally, in *Grundbegriffe* (1915), he pulled together *Klassische Kunst* and *Renaissance und Barock* into one book that looks at all the media as they transition from Renaissance to Baroque, or in his words "follows step by step the development of modern seeing."⁸² The influences on his work were many and his reference pool large, but the initial impetus had come from the visibility and the scale of the debate surrounding the nature of Hellenistic style.

More importantly, the archaeologists' debate played a significant role in Wölfflin's development of his *malerisch* category, which would have a fundamental effect on the way the history of art would be practiced from then onward.⁸³ The echo of Conze's turn of phrase—picked up by Trendelenburg and others—in Wölfflin's definition of the painterly Baroque (where he argues that there is such a thing as a painterly architecture, even a painterly painting) is unmistakable.⁸⁴

80. Adolf Göller, *Zur Aesthetik der Architektur* (1887) and *Entstehung der architektonischen Stilformen* (1888).

81. "[In Burckhardt] sucht man umsonst nach einer Definierung dessen, was nun Renaissancestil sei. . . . Auch im *Cicerone* ist es nicht anders gehalten. Vielleicht hängt damit die besondere Kraft der Empfindung für das Einzelwerk zusammen." Heinrich Wölfflin, "Jacob Burckhardt," in *Gedanken zur Kunstgeschichte* (Basel: Benno Schwabe, 1941), p. 135.

82. "Schritt für Schritt die Entstehung des modernen Sehens verfolgt." Heinrich Wölfflin, *Kunstgeschichtliche Grundbegriffe. Das Problem der Stilentwicklung in der neueren Kunst* (Munich: Hugo Bruckmann, 1920; reprint; 1st ed., 1915), p. 1.

83. For a discussion focused on the *malerisch*, see Alina Payne, "Architecture, Ornament and Pictorialism: Notes on the History of an Idea from Wölfflin to Le Corbusier," in *The Built Surface*, ed. Karen Koehler (London: Ashgate Press, 2001), pp. 54–72.

84. "Wie es eine malerische Architektur gibt, so gibt es eine malerische Plastik; die Malerei unterscheidet in ihrer Geschichte selbst

And developing the argument upon already familiar lines, he explains that when a style becomes painterly, the architectural (or sculptural) features recede. For him, this media overlap is not a defect, as it was earlier for Burckhardt or for Hauck; instead, it is the characteristic feature of a style, the Baroque. From a sign of decline, a painterly art had moved into the pantheon of hallowed styles thanks to the Pergamon frieze.

Finally, for Wölfflin, architecture was ultimately sculpture. And Brunn's role in forming this perspective was fundamental. In the *Prologomena* Wölfflin formulated for the first time his understanding of the three-way relationship between artwork, its production, and its reception. And, as is well known, he posited the body as the hinge connecting the three. His test case was architecture. In his view, "corporeal forms [körperliche Formen] can be characteristic only because we also possess a body."⁸⁵ It is through this bodily link that architecture acquires meaning for the viewer; not directly, but through "körperliches Miterleben" (bodily empathy). In *Renaissance und Barock*, he returns to this view and applies it to a specific style: "We interpret all objects by analogy with our bodies" and he concludes "[m]oreover it is clear that architecture, an art of corporeal masses, can relate to man only as a corporeal being."⁸⁶ The rising empathy theory was clearly a significant factor in Wölfflin's conception of forms. But Brunn's reading of the bodies locked in mortal combat in the Pergamon Gigantomachia as a representation of the forces at work in the architectural ensemble carried the power of an actual example; one, moreover, of significant prominence and recognized aesthetic value.

Years later, this approach would be identified—and criticized—by August Schmarsow who took objection to the *Körperlichkeit* and *malerisch* concepts that Wölfflin had advocated. In his two books of 1896 and 1897 respectively, he placed the category of "painterly" under the microscope, precisely because in the interval it had acquired even greater status and even stronger

eine malerische Periode." Wölfflin, *Renaissance und Barock* (note 69), p. 15. Compare to Conze: "so gut man vom Reliefcharakter der antiken Malerei gesprochen hat, kann man vom malerischen Charakter der griechischen Reliefs sprechen." Conze, "Über das Relief" (note 19), p. 574.

85. "Körperliche Formen [architecture] können charakteristisch sein nur dadurch dass wir selbst einen Körper besitzen." Wölfflin, "Prologomena" (note 68), p. 15.

86. "Jeden Gegenstand beurteilen wir nach Analogie unseres Körpers", "Und nun ist klar, dass sie [die Architektur] als Kunst körperlichen Massen nur auf den Menschen als körperliches Wesen Bezug nehmen kann." Wölfflin, *Renaissance und Barock* (see note 69), p. 56.

association with the Baroque.⁸⁷ As Schmarsow knew only too well, the issue was attracting many—even a young Aby Warburg had been drawn to it when he presented on this topic in Schmarsow's own seminar in Florence in 1889. His paper was intended as a critique of the Laocoon by way of Quattrocento art, specifically Ghiberti's "painterly reliefs," although modern art and the relationship between painting and sculpture were at the core of his inquiry. Although he did not name the Pergamon altar directly, the choice of topic was driven by it as was its bibliography—Warburg quoted both Conze and Hauck and relied heavily on the latter.⁸⁸

But Schmarsow's critique was ultimately much more pointed. Wölfflin was his target and so were his broadly understood *malerisch* as well as his apperception theory of forms, which were based on a conception of architecture as solid body (*Körperlichkeit*) that enters into dialogue with the body sense of the viewers—calls it into service, as it were. Instead, Schmarsow posited space (*Hohlraum*) as the style location for architecture.⁸⁹ His perspective was, of course, complementary to Wölfflin's *Körperlichkeit*, one emphasizing "figure" the other "ground." Schmarsow wanted to resist the effects of the then-current empathy theory that exalted anthropomorphism and apperception and that increasingly led critics and art historians to blur the boundaries between the arts.⁹⁰ For him the category "painterly" (with its application to Baroque massing and sculptural relief) seemed central to such a confusion of concepts, and therefore in urgent need of reevaluation.⁹¹ And he put this tendency down to the persistence of the sculpture-based aesthetic ("plastisches Ideal") in German scholarship and to the impact of the Pergamon marbles specifically. He also identified the string of works on relief sculpture from the 1880s that had popularized the concept of "pictorial relief" that eventually led

to and found their confirmation in Hildebrand's *Das Problem der Form* (1893).⁹² And Schmarsow quotes Brunn, Conze, and Hauck.⁹³ The Pergamon altar had not produced the empathy theory or created the sculpture bias in German aesthetics. But as Schmarsow confirms, it joined them into a powerful alliance by providing the perfect visual catalyst. Rewriting the Baroque was its almost inevitable consequence.

A decade later, Arnold von Salis, professor of archaeology at Rostock, charted the reciprocal effect of modern Baroque studies upon the art history of antiquity (fig. 13).⁹⁴ In a reversal of Wölfflin's presentation of the Baroque, Salis defined the Hellenistic style of the East Mediterranean (read the Pergamon style) as the Hellenistic Baroque. Indeed, his intention to extend a stylistic category across historical periods was so close to Wölfflin's of 1888 that in almost the identical terms to his he included an apology in the preface in which he expressed his regrets that the scope of his book prevented him from a detailed comparison between the two—ancient and modern—Baroque styles.⁹⁵ Citing a copious literature that made such analogies—of known and little-known authors—he drew attention to the corporeal aspect of the altar's architecture and its dialogue with the figural relief.⁹⁶ Clearly, he had not read—or did not care about—Schmarsow and continued to look at architecture in terms of *Körperlichkeit* (corporeal form) rather than *Hohlraum* (space). This folding of art history upon itself illustrates the movement of scholarship—then as now—in ever tighter spirals where individual fields within the discipline proceed at a different pace and old concepts remain active and propel insights in one long after they have become anachronistic or simply redundant in another.

*

The interaction of discourses—archaeology, art history, architecture, politics, psychology, and aesthetics—with

87. August Schmarsow, *Zur Frage* (see note 45) and *Barock und Rokoko oder Über das Malerische in der Architektur* (Leipzig: S. Hirzel, 1897).

88. Aby Warburg, "Die Entwicklung des Malerischen in den Reliefs des Ghiberti. Entwurf einer Kritik des Laocoon an der Kunst des Quattrocento in Florenz," in Aby Warburg, *Opere I*, ed. Maurizio Ghelardi (London: Warburg Institute and Turin: Nino Arago, 2004), pp. 53–75.

89. "Die Architektur ist in ihrem eigensten Wesen Raumgestalterin." Schmarsow, *Zur Frage* (see note 45), p. 14.

90. "Es ist also eine Verirrung der ästhetischen Lehre, wenn sie, den Grad von Belebung übertreibend, die Analogien unserer Körpergefühle überall sucht und dieses objektiven Widerhaltes vergisst. Für die Anhänger dieser Auffassung geht ein grosser wichtiger Bestandteil der Architektur als Kunst verloren." *Ibid.*, p. 22.

91. *Ibid.*, p. 1.

92. "Ich sehe in dieser Einseitigkeit, wie gesagt, nur das Weiterwirken des plastischen Ideales, das in der Antike herkommend ihren Masstab für alle Baukunst nur vom hellenistischen Tempel entlehnt." *Ibid.*, p. 23.

93. *Ibid.*, p. 2. Schmarsow refers to Hauck as one of the first to draw attention to the consequences of the use of *malerisch* across the arts.

94. See Salis, *Der Altar von Pergamon* (note 46).

95. *Ibid.*, p. x.

96. "Es muss aber nachdrücklich betont werden, dass die Konstruktion des Bauwerks und seine *Körperlichkeit* in jedem Falle die Hauptsache und das eigentlich Bestimmende, und auch im diesem Sinne zu würdigen ist." My emphasis. In the same passage, Salis had also referred to Alois Riegl's *Stilfragen* as a useful reference. *Ibid.*, p. 9.

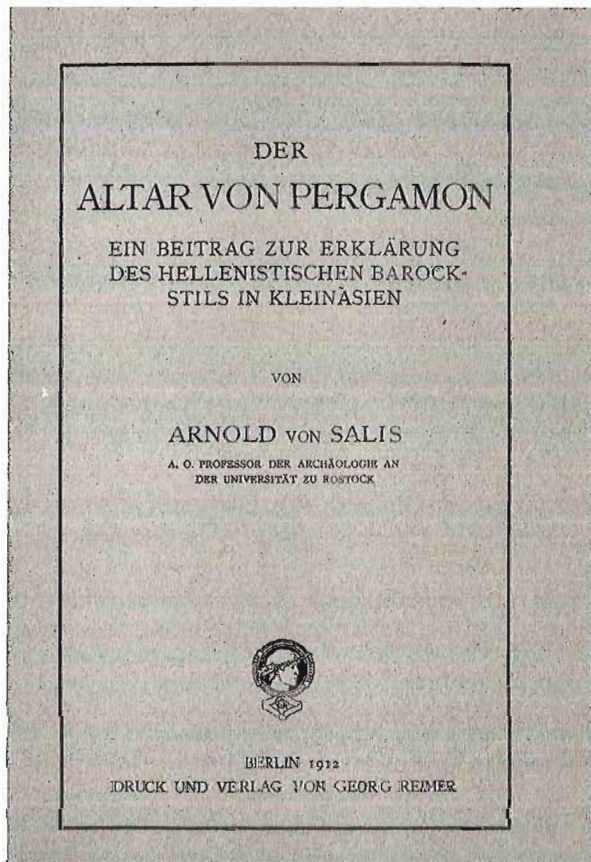


Figure 13. Book cover of Arnold von Salis, *Der Altar von Pergamon: Ein Beitrag zur Erklärung des hellenistischen Barockstils in Kleinasien* (Berlin: Georg Reimer, 1912).

their intersection point in the Pergamon altar shows that the rereading of the Baroque, which began in earnest in the 1880s, was not as unmediated as it may seem. In the process of assimilating the spectacular Hellenistic discovery into the ancient canon, categories that were well established and quality judgments long settled needed to be and were revisited. Art historians and archaeologists entered the fray, and the vocabulary and definitions they developed—albeit sometimes in opposition to each other—became associated with the kind of art of extremes that the Pergamon marbles represented. The intensity of the figural in this frieze—as Schmarsow argued—reinforced an old prejudice in favor of figure rather than ground, and added fuel to the apperception fire. Wölfflin's *Prologomena* of 1886 and his *Renaissance und Barock* of 1888 are unthinkable without the critical intensity surrounding the Pergamon altar. A way of seeing the “animated façade” as a major, positive achievement in the artistic production of one

period was transported or telescoped onto another, rescuing it from lengthy oblivion. When Wölfflin, Dohme, and Gurlitt wrote about the Italian or German Baroque buildings, their vocabulary, laced with terms like *malerisch*, focused on the relief effects, on light and shadow, on the decorative screen; and picking them out for special attention, they were drawing from a collective art historical vocabulary, if not consensus. The spotlight had illuminated art of a different kind and set the imagination going. Of course, the Baroque—like the Pergamon marbles—continued to suffer from the prejudices in the field, old sins having long shadows, but both had leaped onto the stage of serious scholarship and the mechanism of reevaluation had been set in motion.

As is so often the case, the conditions may be right, the terrain ready, and the issues all in place—yet they remain dispersed, latent, without direction until an event or an object precipitates the whole mix into a focused, consciously driven inquiry or debate. Given when the literature discussed here surfaces—in the late 1880s—and the intensity with which the concept of painterliness (*malerisch*), of sculptural relief, of animation, and of stylistic change become determining for a positive evaluation (or reevaluation) of the Baroque and galvanize an entire aesthetic sensibility, it is clear that it is the arrival of the Pergamon altar in Berlin that acts as the catalyst, the tangible, concrete event-as-object, which gives the discussions a direction and precision, making them converge on one point in time and in one place. Indeed, the discovery of the Pergamon marbles had a similar shock effect in the nineteenth century to the discovery of the Laocoon in the sixteenth, and it is perhaps only historic justice that they should have been pitted against each other by the field. They both redefined the reading of the past and caused a turning point in the sensibilities of the present. There are such “objects” that cause forces to coalesce, that attract theory, that speak to the imagination—in some ways they come at the moments when they are needed, almost as confirmation of what was latent in contemporary culture, as a visual fulcrum that concentrates attention in one place and hence literally objectifies what is unspoken. And the Pergamon altar is one of them.

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Figure 1 The Great Altar at Pergamon, second quarter of the second century B.C. Antikensammlung, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin. Photo: Bildarchiv Preussischer Kulturbesitz/Art Resource, N.Y.

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