‘Out of All that is Alive and Felt’:

The Austrian Werkbund and the Design of Social Democracy

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Summary:

This article analyses the interior designs of the Austrian Werkbund in the context of political designs for social democracy, focusing particularly on the 1932 Werkbundsiedlung as a site of aesthetic and cultural inclusion. By embracing the vernacular idioms of Central and Eastern European folk art, the Historicist style associated with nineteenth-century Austrian imperialism, and the innovations of modern technology, the Werkbund represented an attempt to come to terms with the cultural legacy of the empire and to define the future of the Austrian state. In doing so, a comfortable, decidedly sentimental approach to design came to function as a site of encounter between history and ethnicity, offering a visual continuity between pre-1918 imperial Vienna and inter-war Red Vienna. Werkbund designers such as Josef Frank, Paul Fischel, Heinrich Kulka, Adolf Loos, Heinz Siller, and Oskar Wlach were thus well-positioned to contribute to the programme of eclectic decoration that was sponsored by the social democratic welfare initiatives of 1920s and 1930s Vienna.

Keywords: 1930s—Austrian Werkbund—Frank, Josef—interior design history—modernity—Vienna

Introduction

On 30 July 1932, the Austro-British philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein sent a letter to his friend Gilbert Pattison, writing, ‘I’m sure you’ll be interested to see me as I walk with a sister and a friend of mine in an exhibition of bloody modern houses. Don’t I look enterprising?!’[1] Accompanying the letter was a photograph of Wittgenstein himself, strolling alongside his friend Arvid Sjögren and his sister Margaret Stonborough-Wittgenstein (**Fig. 1**). The exhibition ‘of bloody modern houses’ was that of the Vienna Werkbundsiedlung, located in the southwestern suburban 13th district of the Austrian capital, and known in the English-language press of the time as the

International Housing Exposition Vienna. During the summer of 1932, the exhibition, organized by the Austrian Werkbund, offered members of the public the opportunity to purchase seventy detached and row homes designed by a diverse group of thirty-one leading international architects, including the likes of Josef Frank, André Lurçat, Gerrit Rietveld, Adolf Loos, Richard Neutra, and Margarete Schütte-Lihotzky. In the words of the chief architect Josef Frank, the model homes were designed 'to show as many architectural solutions as possible to the problem of the small one-family house'.[2] Designs were the antithesis of uniform, on the inside and outside; architects experimented with a range of building forms, which were enhanced by the pastel colour scheme devised by the Hungarian-born painter and Werkbund Executive Secretary László Gábor, in order to create a cheerful, village-like environment.[3] Interiors were colourful and showcased an eclectic array of modern, historical and folk-influenced furniture and decorative objects; this diversity of the homes on display set the Werkbundsiedlung apart from previous exhibitions of modern housing, notably the Weißenhofsiedlung (1927) on the outskirts of Stuttgart, which was sponsored by the German Werkbund. Despite the fact that it was one of the most important international exhibitions in the history of modern architecture and design, boasting more than 100,000 visitors, the Werkbundsiedlung has remained understudied. Wittgenstein might have lumped it in with the lot of 'exhibition[s] of bloody modern houses,' however the pluralistic conceptions of Austrian Werkbund designers resulted in a Viennese housing estate that looked and functioned unlike those that have come to be associated with the modernist canon.

The Austrian Werkbund was a work federation of architects, artists, builders, and craftsmen, who were keen to develop quality industrial design products for the masses. The organisation was established in 1912, when the German Werkbund met in Vienna for its annual conference.

Although the two Werkbund branches were meant to be run as parallel ventures, the Austrian branch had a very different trajectory in terms of its approach to ornament, which became especially evident after the First World War. Astrid Gmeiner and Gottfried Pirhofer have argued that the Austrian and German organisations had been run very differently since the former's inception. The German Werkbund had gradually unfolded out of an elite group of art nouveau artists and wealthy patrons, whereas the Austrian Werkbund received political support from the outset and from around the Habsburg Empire; notable offices and institutions included the Ministry for Public Works, the Bureau for the Promotion of Trade in Vienna, the Institute for the Promotion of Trade in Trieste, the Museum of Tyrolean Folk Art and Industry in Innsbruck, and regional museums of craft and the applied arts in Bolzano, Brno and Liberec.[4] Moreover, while the designers of the German Werkbund promoted the stripped-down surfaces and uniform ensembles that have come to be associated with modern industrial design, the Austrian Werkbund encouraged the production of brightly coloured and ornamental textiles, furniture and decorative objects. Its designers simultaneously embraced the vernacular idioms of Central and Eastern European folk art, the Historicist style associated with nineteenth-century Austrian imperialism, and the innovations of modern technology. The activities of the Austrian Werkbund represented an attempt to come to terms with the cultural legacy of the empire and to define the future of the Austrian state. In doing so, a comfortable, decidedly sentimental approach to design came to function as a site of encounter between history and ethnicity, offering a visual continuity between pre-1918 imperial Vienna and inter-war Red Vienna that was directed by objects made 'out of all that is alive and felt: at last, the art of the people, not art for the people.'[5] This statement, proclaimed by the architect and designer Josef Frank at the close of his 1931 book *Architecture as Symbol: Elements of German New Building*, urged that modern design take an inclusive stance in the

negotiation of diverse cultural identities and sensibilities. The notion of design as a collaborative and haptic pursuit would guide the projects of the Austrian Werkbund in the inter-war years, when Vienna was continuously under Social Democratic control between 1918 and 1934, despite control at the national level from conservative coalitions.[6] This ethos would ultimately find its culmination in the interiors on display in the Werkbundsiedlung.

Internationally prominent members of the Austrian Werkbund included the likes of Josef Frank, Josef Hoffmann, Adolf Loos, Richard Neutra, Dagobert Peche, Lucie Rie, Margarete Schütte-Lihotzky, Oskar Wlach, and Emmy Zweybrück-Prochaska. The fact that notorious rivals Adolf Loos and Josef Hoffmann belonged to the same group is explained by Ernst Plischke's characterisation of the organisation: 'Our friendship and collective work is based on the following principle: "We agree to disagree."'[7] This diversity is reflected in the wrapping paper designed by an anonymous member of the Austrian Werkbund (**Fig. 2**), which highlights their embracing of a range of historical and contemporary styles and objects. Ribbon-like waves promote the location of a Werkbund showroom in the luxurious Grand Hotel, situated on the famed Ringstraße that had replaced the city's medieval walls with a grand late nineteenth-century boulevard. They frame sets of free-floating objects on a red-and-black spotted background; minimalist vases and abstracted artefacts are interspersed with suggestive folk motifs of a man offering a bouquet of flowers and a decorative duck. The sample of paper, dating from 1930, recalls the work of students at the School of Applied Arts in Vienna, such as that of Josef von Divéky, inspired by folk art in rendering modernist postcards for Franz Joseph's Diamond Jubilee parade in 1908.[8] The School's incorporation of folk art into the curriculum also influenced textile designer and early Werkbund member Emmy Zweybrück-Prochaska, who was

a leading voice in the promotion of folk art and modern design.[9] This distinctive blending of folk art and Modernism became a hallmark of the Austrian Werkbund, and would feature in interiors for the Werkbundsiedlung. Members utilised ornament as a cultural-political device in forging a visual identity for a new republic, and their designs also reflected theories of ornament developed by Alois Riegl, Adolf Loos and Josef Frank. They simultaneously addressed larger debates surrounding ornament and the politics of the post-imperial First Republic, resulting in a translation of diverse vernacular forms and motifs into a social democratic Modernism. Ornament thus played a critical role in the ethnic politics of Central and Eastern Europe, challenging the geographical boundaries drawn after 1918, and addressing historiographical discourses whilst engaging with the everyday lives of the inter-war Viennese population.

Ornament, History, Empire

The Austrian capital provided a unique backdrop where the production and consumption of Modernism necessitated an engagement with history, as well as the diverse cultural traditions of the empire's distinct ethnic groups. This was supported by Vienna's long tradition of stylistic Historicism, a practice tightly interwoven with the Habsburg policy of supranational imperialism dating back to the reign of the Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian I in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. The architectural historian Andreas Nierhaus has recently situated Viennese Historicism at the crossroads of imperial power and modern experimentation, noting specifically that ornament, as both representative and abstract, made the transition to urban modernity a smooth and accessible one.[10] The architect Otto Wagner, who would inspire the Vienna Secession to break free from the prescriptions of Historicism, utilised ornament in creating an art nouveau style that won over the liberal middle class, the notoriously conservative Vienna city council under the

mayor Karl Lueger, and the imperial family. The fact that Wagner received so many prominent commissions from such a wide demographic spectrum attests to the complex overlappings of Austrian identity around 1900; ornament, particularly in Wagner's designs for the Austrian Postal Savings Bank and the Viennese metropolitan railway system, represented the public compromise between imperial pomp and progressive urbanism. The balance between decorative elegance and industrial functionalism meant that Wagner could fit simultaneously into modernist narratives and Austrian ornamentalism; this sense of diplomacy found its way into inter-war design, and the interiors for the Werkbundsiedlung in particular.

A brief discussion of the Austrian imperial state around 1900 illuminates the cultural-political background of the eclectic approach to design in 'Red Vienna' – the name given to the city's inter-war period under social democratic leadership, in the face of conservative Catholic ('black') national leadership. The respective designations of 'red' and 'black' referred to the party colours of the rival factions that had been established in the monarchy during the late nineteenth century: the Social Democratic Party (1889) and the Christian Social Party (1891). The Habsburg Empire was a vast contiguous state that was defined by its defiance of ethnic, confessional and linguistic boundaries, and which comprised sizeable portions, if not all territory, of present-day Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, and Ukraine.[11] There was a deep connection between Viennese Modernism and an Austrian identity based on stylistic eclecticism. The pro-Secessionist Berta Zuckerkandl, one of the foremost art and design critics of fin-de-siècle Vienna, alluded to this affinity in arguing that 'Austria's cultural pluralism should be preserved as the most powerful principle of art, and not be forced down to a monocultural notion of society.'[12] She continued to maintain this later in her

autobiography, written somewhat nostalgically in the 1930s: 'It was a question of defending a purely Austrian culture, a form of art that would weld together all the characteristics of our multitude of constituent peoples into a new and proud unity. For to be Austrian did not mean to be German; Austrian culture was the crystallization of the best of many cultures.'[13] Works designed by members of Viennese applied arts groups such as the Wiener Werkstätte and Hagenbund (the more 'moderate' modernist group associated with the Austrian-American architect and illustrator Joseph Urban, known for its internationalism and engagements with the folk art movement), attested to Zuckerkandl's conviction that the Austrian style was based on an amalgamation of the empire's diverse demographics. This would account for the Werkbund's decided focus on socio-cultural engagement, particularly in the years following the First World War as many designers belonging to these groups would go on to join the Austrian Werkbund.

The notion of the 'crystallization of the best of many cultures' was also central to the early writings of Alois Riegl, and is perhaps most apparent in his 1894 publication as *Folk Art, House Labour and House Industry* (German original: *Volkskunst, Hausfleiß und Hausindustrie*). From 1886 to 1897, Riegl was Keeper of the textile department in the Austrian Museum of Art and Industry, established in 1864 on the Semperian model and following the South Kensington project; this object-based work clearly influenced his writings on ornament. In *Folk Art, House Labour and House Industry*, Riegl considered the contemporary status of folk art and its manifestation within the multi-ethnic dimensions of the Habsburg Empire, warning against the misuse of folk art as a hegemonic tool in nationalist as well as imperialist programmes.[14] He criticised nineteenth-century myths of a pure, unspoiled folk art, and bemoaned its emergence as a fashionable trend in bourgeois circles.[15] In doing so, Riegl engaged with such trends across European contexts at the

time,[16] and called 'for new art-historical research that concentrated on folk art's supranational characteristics rather than its ethnic particulars.'[17] Riegl's conception of folk art as an international yet historical mode of expression at the fin-de-siècle points to the tensions between the vernacular traditions of Central and Eastern European and modern industrial design, which would continue to shape writings on ornament well into the twentieth century.[18] In a biographical reflection on the folk art trend described by Riegl, the Viennese émigré Ernst Gombrich opened *The Sense of Order*, his 1979 study of the sensory implications of decorative art, with an anecdote about his mother lingering over richly colourful, ornate works of Slovakian peasant embroidery.[19] The urban attraction to folk textiles in particular from around the Monarchy suggests the widespread impact of the late-nineteenth century imperial project to collect and produce vernacular designs, particularly with respect to embroidery and the wider influence of folk art on modernist textile production. Rebecca Houze has argued for the manifestation of this phenomenon in Wiener Werkstätte fashions in particular, demonstrating how designs by Carl Otto Czeschka, Lotte Frömel-Fochler, Josef Hoffmann, Marianne Perlmutter, and Eduard Josef Wimmer-Wisgrill either 'feature[d] stylized floral motifs, likely inspired by Austrian and Hungarian folk embroidery' or bore names that 'evoke[d] exotic places within the Dual Monarchy.'[20] The question of folk art circulated throughout the empire, leading many Austrian architects and designers, such as Adolf Loos, to further grapple with the vernacular in their critical writings.

Houze has noted the reverberations of Riegl's engagement with the contemporary implications of folk art in the writings of Adolf Loos: 'For both men, the lingering nostalgia for primitive forms in the present day signalled a troubling counter to progress, in which advanced industrial nations suppressed the modernization of the provinces.'[21] In his lecture 'Ornament and Crime' (1910), for

example, Loos described the delegations of Austrian peasants at the 1908 Jubilee celebrations as 'more primitive' than the barbarian peoples that overran the Roman Empire, and criticised the spectacle of their traditional folk costume on parade as evidence of Austria's cultural and economic backwardness, especially in relation to those nations that he perceived as modern.[22] Christopher Long has revealed how Loos's relationship to ornament is a complex one, particularly in the context of pre-war Vienna, and demonstrates that the architect refused to shun ornament altogether. Loos 'did not lose his faith in ornament, but rather in our capacity to make and use new ornament.'[23] Echoing Riegl's ideas, there was still a time and place for historical forms, however it was inappropriate for modern designers to continue to copy them. Along these lines, Loos's 1914 essay '*Heimat* Art' (a reference to the German nationalist conception of 'homeland')[24] could be seen as the link between Ringstraße Historicism, the writings of Riegl, and the practices of the Austrian Werkbund, which had been established just two years earlier. Loos attacked the very notion of a 'regional art' by calling it a 'lie,'[25] criticising the construction of 'national' styles, as did Riegl in his writings. By underlining historical practices of cultural exchange as an indicator of the supranational underpinnings of folk art, Loos asserted that the presence of foreign elements is precisely what makes something 'Viennese' in the first place – for instance, he compared the use of 'oriental' spices in Viennese cuisine to the ornamental eclecticism of the city's architecture and design. This particular approach to design was one of many that contributed to the Austrian Werkbund's diversity in a post-imperial context, as Loos would go on to become one of its key figures after 1918.

Sites of Social Democracy

While the Wiener Werkstätte and Adolf Loos were defining new stylistic directions for modern Austria, a group of Marxist thinkers were plotting a model for a new Austrian state. As nationalist sentiment was on the rise throughout the crown lands, and with the Emperor Franz Joseph celebrating his Diamond Jubilee in 1908, the future of the Habsburg Empire became increasingly uncertain. Meeting regularly in the Café Central, Rudolf Hilferding, Otto Bauer, Max Adler, and Karl Renner devised a plan for the evolution of the centuries-old imperial order into a Marxist state. The Austro-Marxists advocated equal parliamentary representation for the various ethnic groups of the Monarchy, which they believed would overcome the power struggles of nationalist movements. Their ultimate goal was for Austria-Hungary to be transformed into a 'state of nationalities', providing social equality whilst maintaining the ethnic plurality of the supranational Habsburg model. According to Otto Bauer, for example, in his seminal 1907 publication *The Nationalities Question and Social Democracy*, bourgeois social exclusivity manifested itself in most powerfully in nationalist phenomena. Bauer called upon those of those who fell into two extreme modes of thinking – 'naïve cosmopolitanism' and 'naïve nationalism' – to gradually transform their beliefs and actions into a 'conscious internationalism.'[26] The elite Modernism of the Wiener Werkstätte and the promotion of vernacular folk art in the crown lands (as captured by Riegl) run parallel to the Austro-Marxists' fears of this binary approach to contemporary politics and styles of living. After 1919, the Austrian Werkbund would work closely within the parameters of Austro-Marxist policy; in doing so, designers stressed the continued ideal of transcending nationalist identities, and maintained the multicultural character of the Empire through ornamental eclecticism.

When the Habsburg Empire was officially dissolved in October 1918, Austrians found themselves confronted with a much smaller 'Alpine republic'. This 'residual' state experienced economic collapse and widespread hunger, as Austria was left with the provinces that were the poorest in natural resources and most expensive to maintain. What the new successor states of Eastern Europe gained after the war in terms of cultural expression, political autonomy, and the opportunity to focus on the development of indigenous resources, the remaining Austria was sorely lacking. Viennese designers no longer had the diverse networks and materials that the empire had offered to them; the stylistic diversity of the Austrian Werkbund represented an attempt to transform those vernacular traditions into a transnational and diachronic modernity. The Werkbund did indeed represent a modernist movement in its dynamic engagement with wider contemporary challenges and opportunities, but this was not in the same spirit of the canonical avant-garde and its institutions. Its members met extreme challenges after 1918, as they were cut off from vernacular inspirations and material resources, such as glass and wood from Bohemia, limestone from Moravia, and textile crafts from Bukovina and Galicia.

The policy of maintaining supranational stability amongst the multi-ethnic population of the empire was transposed onto eliminating class conflict in the post-imperial Austrian state. Moreover, the Viennese working classes were of diverse ethnic backgrounds, representing the various nationalities of the multiple regions of the former empire, while, generally speaking, the Viennese middle class tended to identify more and more with German nationalism. This would play a role in how the Werkbund increasingly directed its designs towards the masses. An innovative approach to housing was central to the Social Democratic agenda of Red Vienna, with an ornamental approach to design at the crux of mass participation. By 1934, 400 council estates

were built throughout all of Vienna's twenty-three districts, with 64,000 new living units created in order to accommodate the urban population. To complement these massive building projects, the Social Democratic city council also developed a strategic policy of interior design, created to ensure that working class residents engaged actively and thoughtfully with the decoration of their homes.

The local government's heavy investment in interior design was connected to debates on hygiene and the elimination of slums, as well as to the long Viennese tradition of *Gemütlichkeit*, or culture of cosy relaxation, often in the sociable company of others. The Karl-Marx-Hof, perhaps the most famous of the council estates, housed a critical initiative that was developed by the Austrian Werkbund. Under the direction of the architect and designer Ernst Lichtblau, a permanent interior design centre and exhibition space was opened in the Karl-Marx-Hof in December 1929. It was called the Advice Bureau for Interior Design and Domestic Hygiene of the Austrian Association for Housing Reform (*Die Beratungstelle für Inneneinrichtung und Wohnungshygiene des Österreichischen Verbandes für Wohnungsreform*), known better by its acronym BEST. The BEST advised tenants how to furnish their new flats, and it hosted exhibitions showcasing new furniture and industrial design. To accommodate workers' schedules, the centre was open on Fridays, Saturdays, Sundays and most holidays, and the consultation services and exhibitions were free of charge. The BEST was also very much rooted in the pre-war networks of the Viennese Secession and Wiener Werkstätte – Ernst Lichtblau had been one of Otto Wagner's students as well as an early member of the Wiener Werkstätte.[27] The decorative tendencies of imperial Austria were thus propagated, but with a new veneer of Socialism. This built on pre-war practices of *Raumkunst* ('spatial art'), in which fully furnished interiors, often designed by members of the

Secession, Wiener Werkstätte and Hagenbund, were commonly displayed as models for modern living, with working-class as well as bourgeois audiences in mind.[28]

Eve Blau has noted that this was 'the first time [that] the Viennese working-class tenant had both the opportunity and the need to invest in the dwelling itself; to furnish and decorate it as he or she chose'[29]. For many working-class families, the process of furnishing their new homes meant that they would first accommodate the few possessions that had survived their many moves – these were usually historical items, old and cherished family heirlooms – and then they would gradually acquire additional pieces of furniture and other household fixtures. Unlike the interior designs of many German modernist housing projects – most notably the Weißenhofsiedlung (1927), which was built by the German Werkbund on the outskirts of Stuttgart, matching ensembles, particularly those devoid of ornament, were neither practical nor advocated by the BEST. It is also in this context that *Wiener Wohnkultur* emerged out of the practices of Werkbund members such as Oskar Strnad, Oskar Wlach and Josef Frank, who, influenced by their training with the prominent Historicist Karl König at the Technical University, 'sought to reinterpret the historical legacy, to graft together old and new forms as a means of making a viable modern culture.'[30] While this group of architects initially designed interiors almost exclusively for wealthy bourgeois families, they would influence the intersection of folk art, Historicism and Modernism in inter-war homes across class boundaries, including those in the Werkbundsiedlung.[31]

Designing the Post-Imperial Home

As this eclectic mode of Socialist interior design resonated with the late-nineteenth-century trend in Historicism, it made sense that in the 1920s, the Austrian Werkbund's Vice-President and chief

international spokesman was Josef Frank. Frank was born to acculturated Jewish parents on July 15, 1885 in the spa town of Baden bei Wien. His father was a textile wholesaler who hailed from the rural province of Heves in northeastern Hungary, and his mother was from Bratislava, now the capital of the Slovakia. Frank's early exposure to the textile trade and transnational imperial dynamics, complemented by his study of both Western and non-Western art history, and his architectural training at the Technical University, which included writing a dissertation on Leon Battista Alberti under the supervision of Karl König, had an enormous influence on his creative output and theoretical writings. In 1924, he established the interior design company Haus & Garten with Oskar Wlach, which served as a parallel yet distinct venture to the Wiener Werkstätte, encouraging the purchase of individual pieces as opposed to the matching sets advocated by the likes of Josef Hoffmann. Although Haus & Garten largely appealed to the progressive tastes of an upper middle-class, predominantly Jewish, clientele,[32] Frank experimented with different materials to produce more affordable versions of those designs, which were then often distributed through the Austrian Werkbund.

Frank's writings can be framed as a direct response to his experience working with the German Werkbund for the 1927 Stuttgart exhibition, which included designing a (poorly received) house for the Weißenhofsiedlung. In *Architecture as Symbol* (1931), Frank expanded his ideas on the significance of ornament for new building projects. He was extremely critical of the avant-garde's prescriptions for stylistic homogeneity, promoting instead a design philosophy that insisted upon individual expressions of sentimentality. For Frank, it was essential that architecture and design arrive at an 'art of humanity' that stressed a pluralistic notion of the decorative, accomplished through an ever-evolving amalgamation of organic motifs and new interpretations of vernacular

sensibilities. Sceptical of the elevation of the cold, untextured metal surfaces of the mechanical in producing a future that precluded engagement with the lifestyles of the past, *Architecture as Symbol* called for a modernity that would draw upon ancient Egypt and the Renaissance just as much as it reflects the gentility of the English country house, the cosiness of the Austrian Biedermeier, and Adolf Loos's thoughtful approach to the use of historical ornamentation, whilst utilising materials and forms of craftsmanship from China, Japan and India.

In *Architecture as Symbol*, Frank underlined the importance of historical ornament in modern living in his chapter on 'Unrest.' Frank's discussion of comfort and a return to more leisurely modes of production might seem anachronistic, a delayed sympathy with the nineteenth-century Arts and Crafts Movement; and the call for 'ornament of past times' might seem reactionary for 1931, especially given the widespread enthusiasm for the clean, streamlined Modernism typically associated with the Bauhaus in design circles of the time. However, Frank wrote *Architecture as Symbol* as an urgent and scathing critique of modern architectural practices, striving actively against the prescriptive modernism of figures such as Le Corbusier and Walter Gropius. In doing so, he articulated an alternative Modernism that emerged from the multi-ethnic dimensions of the Habsburg Empire and was insistent that ornament be the guiding force behind form and function. Frank also made a strong case for the inclusion of Historicist elements in the modern home, proclaiming that 'our time is the whole of the historical time known to us.'[33] He juxtaposed old and new furniture pieces and used brightly ornate textiles to bring interiors into the living world. He concluded that 'the new architecture will be borne out of the entire bad taste of our time, its incoherence, its vibrancy, its sentimentality, out of all that is alive and felt; at last, the art of the people, not art for the people.'[34] Frank's disavowal of the artist-genius and elevation of the masses

led to a radical reframing of modern design and its relationship to the past, present and future. Rather than creating a sense of commonality through the streamlined aesthetic of the avant-garde, Frank sought to combine Socialist politics with historical narratives in an attempt to reveal the organic continuity of natural materials, distinct cultural forms, and humanistic progress in the destructive aftermath of World War I. By alluding to the images and products of imperial trade and cultural exchange, his designs functioned as an international vernacular, not unlike Esperanto, with the intention of directing a global historical consciousness on a popular level. The *Mirakel* textile, designed by Frank for Haus & Garten around 1930 illustrates the ideas in *Architecture as Symbol* particularly well, exemplifying Frank's call for modern design to encompass the entirety of world history and culture (**Fig. 3**). With its bright organic abstraction, the pattern alludes to what seems like in infinite number of traditions: the floral designs of İznik pottery, the bold ornamentation of Javanese batik sarongs and West African waxprints, traditional Lower Austrian folk embroidery, and even William Morris's Arts and Crafts *Cray* furnishing fabric of 1884.

In 1929, the Werkbund, under the conceptual direction of Josef Frank and the sociologist Otto Neurath, launched a plan for a new housing estate in Vienna, which was meant as a response to the 1927 Weißenhofsiedlung in Stuttgart, which showcased a utopian conception of modern architecture that had its basis in the notion of a single dominant style. Indeed, the interiors on display would 'pose an alternative to the minimal, carefully unified, *sachlich* look that had been one of the dominant themes of the Weissenhof exhibition.'[35] Following on the pluralistic designs of the Austrian Werkbund, the exhibition was 'consonant with Frank's antipathy toward the machine aesthetic of "das neue Bauen" or indeed any kind of aesthetic system, the objective was individuality (rather than uniformity) within severely restricted financial and spatial limitations.'[36]

Furthermore, it was firmly rooted in the social democratic housing policies of inter-war Vienna; chief planners Josef Frank and Otto Neurath, as well as architects Margarete Schütte-Lihotzky and Adolf Loos, had all been advisers to the Municipal Housing Department since the early 1920s.[37] In reflecting on the parallel development of the social housing blocks and the settlers' movement on the outskirts of the city, Frank and Neurath decided upon a village-like composition for the Werkbundsiedlung, intended as a stylistic and ideological compromise between the densely populated urban superblocks and semi-rural cooperative housing.[38] This was also connected to their collaborative work at the Social and Economic Museum in Vienna, for which Neurath and Frank designed exhibitions aimed at educating 'a politically organized, but semiliterate and multi-ethnic urban proletariat' about the technicalities of housing design.[39] In doing so, they utilised Neurath's pictorial language ISOTYPE in order to present an international visual language that was accessible across social, linguistic and cultural borders. Although the German graphic designer Gerd Arntz developed a stylized, albeit fluid, approach to this language, the internationalist underpinnings of ISOTYPE supported the internationalist ethos of Frank's eclectic interiors, as both aimed to communicate visually to a multicultural population following the dissolution of the Habsburg Empire.

By showcasing interiors that resisted the categorization and rigid tenets of high modernist thought whilst being thoroughly entrenched in contemporary aesthetic, political and technological discourses, the fully-furnished model homes of the Werkbundsiedlung proposed a new and pluralistic definition of modern decoration, one that would engage with both tradition and innovation and, perhaps most significantly, allow for greater agency on the part of the house dweller. Building on his collaborative work with Frank throughout the 1920s, Neurath began to

develop his own philosophy of architecture and interior design, specifically in relation to the execution of Viennese social housing programmes, such as the BEST office. For Neurath, it was essential that modern housing allow working class individuals to achieve a maximum of happiness (*Glücksmaximum*) in real, as opposed to ideal, modern homes. He asserted that domestic architecture had to react to the changing needs of the individual, who should always be given the option of free choice. This was a critical response to the predilection amongst German modernists for uniform sets of tubular steel furniture (such as that showcased in the Stuttgart Weißenhofsiedlung), which Neurath argued were inappropriately rigid for the chaotic diversity of modern life,[40]

The interiors on display in the exhibition were also in line with one of Frank's major assertions in *Architecture as Symbol*: 'Modern is the house that can assimilate all the vitality of our time and still be an organically developed entity. Modern German architecture might be objective, practical, correct in principle, sometimes even appealing, but it remains lifeless.'[41] The living room for Werkbundsiedlung house no. 32 (**Fig. 4**), designed by the Viennese Jewish designer Oskar Wlach, is in many ways an affront to Walter Gropius and Marcel Breuer's dining/living room for Weißenhofsiedlung house no. 16 five years earlier. Wlach emphasises the soft warmth of wood, made delicately ornate through gently carved arms and rounded backs, and complemented by the sentimentality of a light floral bedspread, framed illustrations on the walls, an elegant brass floor lamp, and a colourful modernist area rug (not too dissimilar from Bauhaus designs at the time). This is a marked contrast to the cool tubular steel and decidedly anti-ornamental (and completely unsentimental) space exhibited by the German Werkbund in 1927. Similarly, the living room composed by Adolf Loos and the Jewish Moravian-born designer Heinrich Kulka for house no. 49

(**Fig. 5**) highlights an organic approach to modern lifestyles, which grew out of Loos's mentorship of Kulka during his studies and early professional career.[42] Constructed as a double-height space, the room builds upon Loos's aesthetic of combining functionalism with comfort; 'Loos's rooms are decidedly not conceived as coordinated ensembles. Instead they have the comfortable feeling of a casual mixture of objects – all well chosen for representing the best response to a particular need, but certainly not stylistically uniform.'[43] The mezzanine boasts a cosy seating area, with an L-shaped sofa upholstered in a bright yet sedate chintz, which contrasts with the dark wood of the roomy armchair and its matching round coffee table. Downstairs, three armchairs of distinct styles and materials are juxtaposed, creating a conversation between the heaviness of dark wood with a velvet-cushioned seat, the lightness and subtle curvature of rattan, and the open pattern of the rush chair, made warmer a thick cushion. The two levels are connected by the graceful industrial design of the chandelier, with its globe-shaped glass pendant; operating on a pulley system, the light could be adjusted to be higher or lower, depending upon the needs of the occasion.

In the Werkbundsiedlung exhibition, it was intended that every arrangement be perceived as having been able to come from the inhabitants themselves, as opposed to bearing the signature styles of the prominent designers behind the exhibition. Although the living room for Josef Frank's house no. 12 (**Fig. 6**) clearly bears his signature style, it is undogmatic in its eclecticism. The juxtaposition of old and new furniture pieces as well as the use of brightly ornate textiles brought the interiors into the real world of living inhabitants, a technique that had been advocated by the BEST. The room displays items that could be refurbished family heirlooms, such as the leather-seated Windsor rocking chair and the desk, a classic Biedermeier design that was painted a matte chartreuse to offset the classic gold-plated metal fittings. As in Wlach's living room, Frank

includes a vibrantly coloured, abstractly patterned area rug, which might have clashed with the *Karma* textile used for the curtains and bedspread. Similar to *Mirakel* in its bold organic abstraction, *Karma* makes use of the bright, primary palette of folk art in bringing a dynamic sense of ornamentation and cheerful living to the small but cosy space.

The dining room in house no. 54, with its exterior designed by the Dutch architect Gerrit Rietveld and interior by the Viennese team of Paul Fischel and Heinz Siller, perhaps best embodied the Austrian Werkbund ideal of bringing together the historical, the modern and the vernacular (**Fig. 7**). The space is defined by its cosy use of wooden furniture and eclectic textiles. Situated around the dining table are armless Windsor chairs, complemented by a folk-inspired checked tablecloth with playfully embroidered flowers and Gmundner ceramic serving pieces at the ready. Bearing the classic *grüngeflammt*, or green 'water' pattern, the Gmundner ceramics represent a long tradition of Austrian craft between folk art and Modernism; the first mention of a potter's house in the Upper Austrian town of Gmunden dates back to 1492, and the Gmundner Ceramics Factory collaborated with the Wiener Werkstätte in the execution of designs by Bertold Löffler and Michael Powolny (both of whom were also active members of the Austrian Werkbund). The inclusion of the *grüngeflammt* pieces would have forged a sentimental connection with exhibition-goers, as the distinctive traditional design was (and continues to be) instantly recognisable as well as popular across Central Europe;[44] at the wall is an understated upholstered bench made livelier by an assortment of mismatched cushions. The curtain separating the bar area from the dining area bears a large floral pattern that is perhaps a result of late nineteenth-century *Japonisme*, revealing a table topped by glassware designed by Adolf Loos for J. & L. Lobmeyr – suggestive of how Austrian imperial culture continued to linger in the social democratic home. The light fixtures

display an elegant minimalism, demonstrating that modern industrial design can (and should) play a role in the ever-evolving, socially and aesthetically inclusive interior. With this space, Fischel and Siller argued in favour of the ideas expounded by Josef Frank and the rest of his Austrian Werkbund colleagues, but also cited the traditions of Habsburg Historicism (Windsor chairs, Lobmeyr) and diverse manifestations of Austrian Modernism. For the Austrian Werkbund, sentimentality and ornament were political devices used to grapple with historical and cultural continuity in order to shape the past, present and future of Austria.

However, although the interiors of the Werkbundsiedlung captured this vibrancy, the exhibition came at a precarious moment in Austrian history and was ultimately unsuccessful. Poor financial planning meant that houses were designed outside of the means of the working classes, and only fourteen of the seventy houses were sold – a consequence of them being too expensive for workers, and too small for bourgeois needs.[45] Moreover, the exhibition was received negatively by modernists and anti-modernists from Austria and beyond. The inclusion of international architects and designers led conservative right-wing critics in Austria to attack the cosmopolitan (and therefore 'Jewish)' nature of the estate. On the other hand, the interiors on display were too decorative for the *sachlich* tastes of German modernists, who dismissed the Werkbundsiedlung for its profusion of ornamentation and sentimentality. Indeed, one of the most vocal critics of Josef Frank was the art and architectural historian Sigfried Giedion, who consciously omitted the exhibition, as well as Frank's entire oeuvre, from his 1941 book *Space, Time and Architecture*. Giedion's decision effectively erased many Austrian Werkbund designers from the mainstream modernist canon.

Only one year later, in 1933, conservative members of the Werkbund formed their own branch, the 'New Austrian Werkbund,' in an anti-Semitic protest against the overwhelmingly Jewish membership of the organisation.[46] This act was a prelude to the short-lived Austrian Civil War of 1934, in which the Christian Socialist party of Engelbert Dollfuss ousted the Social Democrats, outlawing the party that had shaped the progressive housing policies of inter-war Vienna, and introducing the four-year reign of Austro-Fascism. In 1938, Hermann Neubacher, the president of the Austrian Werkbund at the time of the Werkbundsiedung, became the first Nazi mayor of Vienna. By then, however, many of the Werkbund's members had already left Austria, as the majority were Jews and Social Democrats. While their eclectic approach to Modernism would have little immediate influence on the canonical narrative of twentieth-century architecture and design, it did find its most profound manifestation in Frank's later work for the Stockholm-based firm Svenskt Tenn, celebrated for his vibrant textiles and colourful home furnishings. In this way, the Austrian Werkbund's designs for social democracy have continued to be adapted and re-interpreted, encouraging 'all that is alive and felt' to shape the modern home.

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Figure legends

Fig. 1 Postcard of Ludwig Wittgenstein walking through the Werkbundsiedlung with his friend Arvid Sjögren and his sister Margaret Stonborough-Wittgenstein, 30 July 1932. Reproduced with permission from the Ludwig Wittgenstein Trust.

Fig. 2 Wrapping paper of the Austrian Werkbund, 1920-30. Reproduced with permission from MAK: Austrian Museum of Applied Arts/Contemporary Art.

Fig. 3 Josef Frank, *Mirakel* textile, first designed for Haus & Garten, Vienna, ca. 1930. Reproduced with permission from Svenskt Tenn.

Fig. 4 Oskar Wlach, Living room in Werkbundsiedlung house no. 32, Vienna, 1932. Photograph by Martin Gerlach. Reproduced with permission from the Wien Museum.

Fig. 5 Adolf Loos and Heinrich Kulka, Living room in Werkbundsiedlung house no. 49, Vienna, 1932. Photograph by Martin Gerlach. Reproduced with permission from the Wien Museum.

Fig. 6 Josef Frank, Living room in Werkbundsiedlung house no. 12, Vienna, 1932. Photograph by Martin Gerlach. Reproduced with permission from the Wien Museum.

Fig. 7 Paul Fischel and Heinz Siller, Dining room in Werkbundsiedlung house no. 54, Vienna, 1932. Photograph by Martin Gerlach. Reproduced with permission from the Wien Museum.

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[1] Ludwig Wittgenstein, postcard to Gilbert Pattison on 30 July 1932, Wittgenstein Archive Cambridge.
[2] Josef Frank, 'International Housing Exposition Vienna', *Architectural Forum* 57 (1932): 325.
[3] Otto Kapfinger, 'Anspruch und Ausgang: Zur Projekt- und Baugeschichte der Internationalen Werkbundsiedlung Wien 1932,' in *Werkbundsiedlung Wien 1932: Ein Manifest des Neuen Wohnens*, ed. Andreas Nierhaus and Eva-Maria Orosz (Salzburg: Müry Salzmann, 2012), 52.
[4] Astrid Gmeiner and Gottfried. Pirhofer, *Der österreichische Werkbund: Alternative zur klassischen Moderne in Architektur, Raum- und Produktgestaltung* (Salzburg: Residenz Verlag 1985), 12-13.
[5] Josef Frank, *Architecture as Symbol: Elements of the German New Building*, in *Josef Frank: Writings, Vol. 2*, ed. Tano Bojankin, Christopher Long and Iris Meder (Vienna: Metroverlag, 2012), 181.
[6] Steven Beller, *A Concise History of Austria* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 207.
[7] Gmeiner and Pirhofer, *Der österreichische Werkbund*, op. cit., 7.
[8] Megan Brandow-Faller, 'Folk Art on Parade: Modernism, Primitivism and Nationalism at the 1908 *Kaiserhuldigungsfestzug*', *Austrian Studies* 25 (2017): 113.
[9] See Friedrich Heller, *Emmy Zweybrück: Werkstätte und Schule* (Vienna: Praesens, 2017).
[10] Andreas Nierhaus, ' "Die architektonische Schönheit Wiens liegt ausschließlich in den Gebäuden der Zukunft." Planen und Bauen in den Pionierjahren der Ringstraße', in Andreas Nierhaus, ed., *Der Ring. Pionierjahre einer Prachtstrasse* (Salzburg: Residenz Verlag, 2015), 15-21.

[11] The most thorough discussion of the dynamic demography of the Habsburg Empire remains István Deák, *Beyond Nationalism: A Social and Political History of the Habsburg Officer Corps, 1848-1918* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990).
[12] Berta Zuckerkandl, *Zeitkunst Wien 1901-1907* (Vienna and Leipzig: Hugo Heller, 1908), 41. 'Die Vielartigkeit in Österreich sollte als kräftigstes Kunstprinzip erhalten und nicht zur Einartigkeit niedergezwungen werden.' Author's translation.
[13] Berta Zuckerkandl, *My Life and History*, trans. John Sommerfield (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1939), 178.
[14] Georg Vasold, *Alois Riegl und die Kunstgeschichte als Kulturgeschichte: Überlegungen zum Frühwerk des Wiener Gelehrten* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Rombach Verlag, 2004), 29; and Diana Reynolds Cordileone, 'Displaying Bosnia: Imperialism, Orientalism, and Exhibitionary Cultures in Vienna and Beyond: 1878-1914', *Austrian History Yearbook* 46 (2015): 29.
[15] Rebecca Houze, 'At the Forefront of a Newly Emerging Profession? Ethnography, Education and the Exhibition of Women's Needlework in Austria-Hungary in the Late-Nineteenth Century', *Journal of Design History* 21, no. 1 (March 2008): 31.
[16] David Crowley, 'Finding Poland in the Margins: The Case of the Zakopane Style', *Journal of Design History* 14, no. 2 (2001): 105.
[17] Brandow-Faller, op. cit., 99.
[18] Frederic Schwartz has also revealed the extent to which Riegl's writings on *Kunstwollen* were exalted by prominent designers of the German Werkbund, including Walter Gropius and Peter Behrens. See Frederic Schwartz, *The Werkbund: Design Theory and Mass Culture before the First World War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 21.
[19] E. H. Gombrich, *The Sense of Order: A Study in the Psychology of Decorative Art* (Oxford: Phaidon, 1979), vii.
[20] Rebecca Houze, *Textiles, Fashion, and Dress Reform in Austria-Hungary before the First World War: Principles of Dress* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015), 220.
[21] Houze, op. cit., 249.
[22] Adolf Loos, 'Ornament und Verbrechen', in *Trotzdem: Gesammelte Schriften 1900-1930*, ed. Adolf Opel (Vienna: G. Prachner, 1997), 84. See also Brandow-Faller, op. cit., 111.
[23] Christopher Long, 'The Origins and Context of Adolf Loos's "Ornament and Crime"', *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 68, no. 2 (June 2009): 218.
[24] Janet Stewart, *Fashioning Vienna: Adolf Loos's Cultural Criticism* (London: Routledge, 2000), 68.
[25] Loos, 'Heimatkunst,' op. cit., 125. Author's translation.
[26] Otto Bauer, *Die Nationalitätenfrage und die Sozialdemokratie* (Vienna: Marx-Studien, 1907), 525.
[27] Eve Blau, *The Architecture of Red Vienna* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1999), 191.
[28] See Sabine Forsthuber, *Moderne Raumkunst: Wiener Ausstellungsbauten von 1898 bis 1914* (Vienna: Picus Verlag, 1991.
[29] Eve Blau, op. cit., 192-93.
[30] Christopher Long, '*Wiener Wohnkultur*: Interior Design in Vienna, 1910-38', *Studies in the Decorative Arts* 5 (Fall/Winter 1997/1998): 30.
[31] Ursula Prokop, 'Frank and "The Small Circle around Oskar Strnad and Viktor Lurje"', in *Josef Frank: Against Design*, ed. Christoph Thun-Hohenstein and Sebastian Hackenschmidt (Basel: Birkhäuser, 2016), 57.
[32] Elana Shapira, 'Sense and Sensibility: The Architect Josef Frank and His Jewish Clients', in *Josef Frank: Against Design*, op. cit., 61.
[33] See Karin Lindegren, '*Architektur als Symbol*: Theory and Polemic', in *Josef Frank, Architect and Designer*, ed. Nina Stritzler-Levine (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 101.
[34] Frank, *Architecture as Symbol*, op. cit., 181.
[35] Long, '*Wiener Wohnkultur'*, op. cit., 44.
[36] Blau, op. cit., 132-132.
[37] Blau, op. cit., 102.
[38] Kapfinger, 'Anspruch und Ausgang', op. cit., 39.
[39] Eve Blau, 'Isotype and Architectural Knowledge', in *Émigré Cultures in Design and Architecture*, ed. Alison Clarke and Elana Shapira (London: Bloomsbury, 2017), 37.
[40] Otto Neurath, 'Glückliches Wohnen. Die Bedeutung der Werkbundsiedlung für die Zukunft', in *Die Arbeiterzeitung* 169 (19 June 1932); and Otto Neurath, 'Die Internationale Werkbundsiedlung Wien 1932 als "Ausstellung"', in *Die Form* 7 (1932), 208-17. For further discussion on these debates, see Sabrina Rahman, '"Glückliches Wohnen" und "Lebendiges Schaffen": Otto Neurath, Josef Frank und die Werkbundsiedlung als Lebensmodell', in *Werkbundsiedlung Wien 1932*, op. cit., 90-95.

[41] Frank, *Architecture as Symbol*, op. cit., 135.
[42] In addition to a series of collaborative projects with Loos in the 1920s, including the design of a house for Josephine Baker, Kulka authored the seminal monograph on Loos during the architect's lifetime; see Heinrich Kulka, *Adolf Loos: Das Werk des Architekten* (Vienna: Anton Schroll, 1931).
[43] Alina Payne, *From Ornament to Object: Genealogies of Architectural Modernism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), 225. See also Long, '*Wiener Wohnkultur*', op. cit., 34.
[44] Irmgard Gollner, *Gmundner Keramik: Kunst aus Ton, Feuer und Farbe* (Gmunden: Gmundner Keramik Manufaktur GmbH, 2003), 7.
[45] Anita Aigner, 'The Vienna Werkbund Estate on Display', *Austrian History Yearbook* 46 (2015): 73.
[46] Long, '*Wiener Wohnkultur*', op. cit., 47.