Maria Hirsch in the *Kunstwissenschaftliche Forschungen*

Introduced, edited and translated by Karl Johns

The *Kunstwissenschaftliche Forschungen* were edited and apparently also funded by Otto Pächt, but publication was halted by the new German regime. It was published in Berlin, the two volumes presumably also fell victim to the book-burnings and probably deserve more attention than they have received.[1] The authors publishing their articles in the *Kunstwissenschaftliche Forschungen* hoped to place the study of art on a more objective footing and approach their subject more systematically and circumspect than was common in the *Repertorium für Kunstwissenschaft* or the *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*. They found a model for the psychology of perception in the Gestalt school, in the work of Kurt Koffka and others. The approach and goals have been most clearly explained by Pächt in his lectures about the method for the history of art.[2]

These authors did not unfortunately help themselves or their cause with the style of their writing. In a review of the second volume, Meyer Schapiro dwelled on this, but Schapiro's readers since then have unfortunately not considered his further comments very closely or completely.[3] The *Repertoire d'art et d'archéologie* omitted reference to the *Kunstwissenschaftliche Forschungen*.

If we consider the female contribution, we immediately face an aspect of the discreet charm of the bourgeoisie in that the information is very scarce. Maria Hirsch, née Parnas (1899/1900-1932), earned a doctorate on the subject of the Master

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[1] The two published volumes included the following: vol. 1: Hans Sedlmayr, 'Zu einer strengen Kunstwissenschaft', 7-32, G. A. Andreades, 'Die Sophienkathedrale von Konstantinopel', 33-94, Otto Pächt, 'Die historische Aufgabe Michael Pachers', 95-132, Carl Linfert, 'Die Grundlagen der Architekturzeichnung', 133-246, vol. 2: Guido Kaschnitz-Weinberg, 'Bemerkungen zur Struktur der ägyptischen Plastik', 7-24, Hans Sedlmayr, 'Das erste mittelalterliche Architektursystem', 25-62, Karl M. Swoboda, 'Zur Analyse des Florentiner Baptisteriums', 63-74, Otto Pächt, 'Gestaltungsprinzipien der westlichen Malerei des 15. Jahrhunderts', 75-100, Maria Hirsch, 'Das Figurenalphabet des Meisters E.S.', 101-112, Michael Alpatoff, 'Das Selbstbildnis Poussins im Louvre', 113-130, Emil Kaufmann, 'Die Stadt des Architekten Ledoux: Zur Erkenntnis der autonomen Architektur', 131-160.

[2] Otto Pächt, *Methodisches zur kunsthistorischen Praxis*, Munich: Prestel, 1977, English translation by David Britt, *The Practice of Art History Reflections on Method*, London: Harvey Miller, 1999.

[3] Meyer Schapiro, 'The New Viennese School', Otto Pächt ed. Kunstwissenschaftliche Forschungen, vol. 2, 1932, *The Art Bulletin*, vol. 18, no. 2, June 1936, 258-267.

ES under Julius Schlosser with Emil Reisch as second reader. Little is known of her other than that she lived in the Argentinierstrasse, Wien IV, with her three daughters and husband, Dr. jur. Alfred Hirsch, director of a weaving plant and himself a descendent of Bohemian specialists in that field. Her brother was a celebrated professor of chemistry who worked at numerous universities around all of northern Europe before being evacuated from Lviv to Moscow where he died in 1949. From the fact that her scholarly approach diverged from Schlosser and Reisch, and sympathized so closely with Otto Pächt and the small circle of uncompromising devotees of structural analysis, we might guess it to be more than a coincidence that her husband would have been a professional colleague of Pächt's father, and since they were close in age that Hirsch and Otto Pächt could have been acquainted socially before entering the university.

　　　　She follows the traditional trend in Vienna of tracing an artistic genre as Schlosser had done with ivory saddles, Swoboda with Roman and Romanesque palaces or Sedlmayr with the cathedral. We have rounded out the translation by adding the notices of public lectures held in Vienna published by Hirsch to make this her complete published work.

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Editorial note on page 101 of the Kunstwissenschaftliche Forschungen *vol. 2, 1933 with the outline of the entire article as she had agreed to submit before her death but did not complete.*

The following pages include the fragment of a study which Maria Hirsch had in 1931 agreed to submit for the second volume of *Kunstwissenschaftliche Forschungen*.

Two surviving drafts of the table of contents allow us to reproduce it here in its main points:

I   General Aspects
1   The Genre of Personified Alphabets
2   The Character of the Gothic Script
II   Structural Description
3   The Relationship to the Given Script and Legibility
4   "Composition" of the Figures into a Given Pattern
5   Structural Characteristics in the Relation of the Figures to One Another
III   The Date of the Personified Alphabet
IV   Genetic Questions
Structural Description of the Personified Alphabet from Bergamo
Comparison of the Form of the Master ES Alphabet with Other Examples of the Genre
Genetic Description of Individual Letters
Genesis of the Alphabet as a Whole
V   Historical Aspects
The Place of the Personified Alphabet within the Development of the Artistic Genre
The Place of the Personified Alphabet within the Development of German Style
VI   On the Personal Approach to form of the Master ES

Both of the surviving manuscripts include only the first two sections to such a degree that they can be published. They form a coherent study.

The text of these two sections has been edited according to both versions of the manuscript, but also with numerous references Maria Hirsch made in personal conversations with the editor and with Hans Sedlmayr, some of which go beyond what is fixed in the manuscript. In reconstructing this study, it struck us as necessary to also consider this oral version which was its final stage. While there only occasional emendations necessary in chapters 1, 2 and 3, sections 4 and 5 required reconstruction on the basis of the conversations. Dr. Alfred Hirsch, the husband of the deceased has obligingly and appreciatively permitted this.

Maria Hirsch, 'The Personified-Alphabet by the Master ES'[4]

I. General Aspects

1. The Genre of Personified Alphabets

The earliest preserved personified alphabets date from the 14th century. Each of them consists in a series of drawings rendering all 23 letters of the alphabet. During the 15th century alphabets carved in wood or engraved in copper also began to appear alongside those made as drawings. Isolated examples of the genre are still known from the 16th century[5].

Personified alphabets served as patterns for initials used in illuminated manuscripts, inscriptions on tombs, goldsmith work and the like. We have many examples of their implementation as such[6].

No personified alphabets are known from the earlier medieval period, and it is not possible to determine when the first example emerged. It is conceivable though that personified alphabets might have been made for the purpose and have served as patterns for the miniaturists producing illuminated manuscripts of the High Middle Ages[7].

Most of the preserved alphabets are in majuscule lettering, and only that by the Master ES and a slightly earlier alphabet of drawings from the 14th century include forms in Gothic minuscule. A number of personified minuscule initials on grave stones and in manuscripts prove that the minuscule with personified decorations were used in the same way as the minuscule initials.

The individual letters of the personified alphabets share a number of characteristics with the personifications of individual initials. However, the personified alphabets are not merely a collection of initials but a holistic structure image (ganzheitliches Gebilde) with the subunits (Untereinheiten), the individual

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[4] Originally published as 'Das Figurenalphabet des Meisters E. S.', *Kunstwissenschaftliche Forschungen*, vol. 2, 1933, 101-112. We have published the PLATES as a separate PDF that can be opened here.

[5] See Jaro Springer, *Gotische Alphabete*, Berlin: Internationale Chalkographische Gesellschaft, 1897, 3 ff.

[6] Springer, 5.

[7] The earliest Gothic alphabet I have found is in the manuscript Codex 507 of the Nationalbibliothek, Vienna and comes from the abbey of Rein. The drawings of the alphabet has initials consisting of plant tendrils and occasional zoomorphic motifs which are so subsidiary to the character of the script that this cannot yet be considered to be a figure-alphabet. Its qualities of style date it to the 13th century. An illustration is available in Julius Schlosser, 'Zur Kenntnis der künstlerischen Überlieferung im späten Mittelalter', *Jahrbuch der Kunsthistorischen Sammlungen des Allerhöchsten Kaiserhauses*, vol. 23, 1903 [280-338] plate XXVII.

letters are united so as to contribute to an artistic whole. They are elements in an ornamental sequence. It is true that their functions leave them with a certain independence and the can be removed from the association of the alphabet. We are able to observe differing attitudes to this process of isolating according to the time in which the alphabets were conceived. The 14th century alphabets were structured so that individual letter of the alphabet would lose comparatively little of its characteristics within the context of the whole. In the 15th century, the character of wholeness within the alphabet was so distinct, as in that by the Master ES for instance, that an example rendered autonomously includes essential differences compared to that within the series – as we shall show later on.

　　　As far as we are able to trace in the few preserved examples, the history of the personified alphabets reveals a tendency toward further developing the character of the genre. This tendency expresses itself particularly in that the qualities of script are more distinct in relation to the other letters of the later 15th century alphabets and are therefore more easily readable. Some of this will emerge in our structural analysis of the alphabet by the Master ES.

　　　All of the personified alphabets share a given function which leads to characteristic resolutions. When the goal is to decorate the form of a letter with the qualities of personification, the problem of a figure alphabet is no different than any other sort of personified initial. The combination of script with figural decoration leads to a variety of solutions to the problem at hand. The ground between the contours of the letters (the shaft ground) or the bare space enclosed by the letters and surrounding them can either be decorated, the decoration of the ground and the forms within the script might also be combined into an artistic unity, or else ornamental motifs can be made to enhance the edges of the letters. Figures and ornament decorating the interior of a letter are among the very most common phenomena of medieval decorative initials. This form of decoration provides for a smooth relationship of script and figures. If the 'trunk' of the letter is decorated however, the figural composition replaces parts of the script which becomes the 'ground' and in some instances also the frame for the figures. This mode of decoration is as common in medieval art as the other we have just described. A variant used far more scarcely has the script consisting entirely of figural decoration and the composition of figures completely replacing the script. Such a form was used in various styles of Byzantine, Irish and Romanesque illuminated manuscripts. These forms seem to disappear in the 13th century and emerge again in 15th century personified alphabets.

　　　Both individual initials and personified alphabets include hybrid forms combining these types. One such hybrid form can be seen in the drawings of a personified alphabet (from ca. 1340) now in the Berlin Print Room where the majuscule script provides the ground and frame for a decoration of figures and

tendrils but with individual stems of the plants also filling the empty round within the script.[8]

How to combine the figures and the shape of the lettering was a constant formal problem for personified alphabets as well as figured initials. It was resolved in various ways according to the trend of the general artistic volition (Kunstwollen), but there are two principles continually recurring with the greatest variety – a dynamic combination of figures to decorate a given script or instead filling the form of the script with individual figural motifs loosely massed.

Another constant formal problem facing the personified alphabets is the manner for binding the individual letters into a more elevated whole. There would already seem to be an intrinsic continuity in applying the same formal principles to decorating each of the individual letters while the letters belong to a given genre of script. Aside from this, more refined devices were also used to make the artistic coherence more overt. Motifs or formal details could be related in letters close to one another. In observing the Berlin alphabet we note for instance that the individual letters frequently show content related to one another, such as two distinct phases of the same action or a single motif such as dragons or snakes, first appearing individually and later in pairs. A chain of such relationships pervade the alphabet. In other cases, numerous letters allude to one another by the use of contrapposto, alternating large or small forms and the like. The strongest factor unifying an alphabet is its cohesive expressive character. Its expressive character is a thorough-going condition for the gestalt wholeness of an alphabet while the other relationships we have summarily mentioned each connect parts to one another.

The third constant formal problem in the personified alphabets is maintaining the legibility of the individual letters. This problem is also shared by the alphabets and figured initials. It does not arise when the script persists intact alongside the decoration, but legibility can be impaired if the decorative element displaces the script entirely or in part. This problem was resolved in many different ways guided by the genre of script and style of decoration. In heavily ornamented initials of Romanesque or early Gothic manuscripts the characteristic parts of the letters guarantee their legibility amid the decoration – such as the curve of the majuscule letter 'p'. Each initial is aided in its legibility by the ensuing line of script. From the meaning of a word, the reader spontaneously deduces the meaning of an initial of difficult legibility.

When figural imagery completely replaces the script, the figures might be interlinked so that their contours exactly circumscribe the form of the letter, or letters can be constructed in their characteristic form by bodily movements of the figures. In the first case, the degree of legibility depends on the precise or more general correspondence of the contours of the intended letter, and in the latter the point is more one of capturing the physiognomy of a given letter in the connection

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[8] Springer, op. cit., plate I-XII.

between the active bodily motions and characteristic elements of the letter such as the diagonal projection of the strut in the letter 'k'.

In preserving legibility of the personified alphabets, the script signs of the Latin majuscule and minuscule provided a given and fixed norm of linear ornament. A constant tension persists in all figure initials between the goal of preserving the norm and of dissolving it into an open ornament. Legibility varies according to which tendency predominated the form.

There is also a tension between the figures in their function as parts of a pictorial ornament and as parts of an objective semiotic context. In this way, the given ornament of a letter is the primary factor for the figural composition and therefore determines the choice and form of apt representational motifs, with their 'meaning' often only added later.

When Gothic script emerged, it altered an entire series of formal possibilities although its 'style' is the product of the same formal volition (Gestaltungswille) generating the very ornamental imagination which develops out of it.

2. The Character of the Gothic Script

Gothic minuscule developed from previous minuscule scripts. It already includes a series of characteristics in the second half of the 13th century which would remain with it until the end of the 15th century. Its unique qualities are most obvious in the so-called missal-script, a variant developed for manuscripts used in reading the mass. In their structure, the personified alphabet of the Master ES as well as the earlier figured minuscule alphabet preserved in the Biblioteca Civica in Bergamo are based on the clear forms of the missal script.[9] In the present state of scholarship in Gothic scripts, it is not possible to determine the model for the script of the Master ES or the master in Bergamo. In our present context it is unnecessary to exhaustively delineate the characteristics of the missal script. We can content ourselves in pointing out certain qualities important to our topic.[10]

The particular form of the Gothic minuscule alphabet derives from two qualities.

1. The individual letter does not rest on a horizontal line to be conceived as a ground line as in Latin script, but it is instead composed within an invisible rhomboid net defining the ends of the vertical shafts. The shafts of the letters can only be led in two directions – either vertically or diagonally. Horizontal and circular forms such as semi-circles and slings are completely absent and even the S-curve is broken into angles. As we have said, the form of these wide shafts is always defined by the fact that they end at the diagonal lines of the rhomboid net, therefore terminating in diagonals above and below. Aside from these strip-like vertical and

[9] Illustrations are available in Raymond van Marle, *The Italian Schools of Painting*, vol. 7, 'Late Gothic Painting in North Italy', The Hague: Nijhoff, 1926, fig. 57, 58.
[10] We mention the valuable publication by Ernst Crous and Joachim Kirchner, *Die gotischen Schriftarten*, Leipzig: Klinkhardt & Biermann, 1928, which includes pioneering work.

diagonal shafts, there are also thin linear slashes comparable to the hairlines in the script currently being taught in school. In fact, these hair-lines are remnants of the rhomboid lattice organizing the page with the appearance of not having been erased (plate 9 b). This formal mode means that on the overall impression of the script such as when we view a page, the body of a letter does not rest squarely anywhere but only stands on a point. This script has no stasis. It is possible to view a page of Latin script as a vertical sequence of extended broadly set levels while the Gothic page presents a lattice surface with the letters spanned within an invisible grid frame which supports them.

We must mention here already that these letters can also be read corporeally and spatially rather than in the surface – if we conceive the upper and lower diagonal edges as a sort of perspective foreshortening of the body of a shaft protruding from the surface. This conception is clear to see in an alphabet composed of architectural motifs which might be typical of the 15th century[11]. It shows the vertical shafts as prismatic bodies similar to finials resting on a rectangular ground plane with one of their corners facing the viewer.

One consequence of this structural principle of Gothic script, the rhomboid lattice, is that the shift of the line in a new direction always occurs abruptly in jogs and the angular slashes connect the parallel verticals about the vertical shafts in points. This formal characteristic of the script lends it a distinct expressive quality which it is possible to transfer to the objects being depicted.

2. The letters are all held to the same height throughout, comparable to our central interval, and this can only be exceeded very minimally to the top or bottom. There are practically no height differences within the line of script and there is no difference in the size of letters as in the Latin script when one of them extends across one, two or three line intervals.

II. Structural Description

3. The Relationship to the Given Script and Legibility

The personified alphabet by the Master ES includes two of the decoration types we have just described. The contours of the letters are retained as a framing device so as to maintain a border for the decoration. This affects the silhouette of the letter either not at all or only very little. On the other hand, the letter is not actually decorated but can be said to be replaced by figural decoration. This creates the possibility for a better development of an autonomous order for the ornament and also to replace the form of the letter with a meaningful ornamental whole. In the immediate impression they make, the images emerging from this procedure are more unlike the customary character of Gothic script. In the first instance, letters are filled with

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[11] Max Lehrs, *Der Meister WA Ein Kupferstecher der Zeit Carls des Kühnen*, Dresden: Hoffmann, 1895, also illustrated by Jaro Springer, op. cit., plates XVII-XXXIX.

figural motifs, and in the latter, ornament is formed on the basis of figures which seem only 'coincidentally' to recall characters of the alphabet.

Yet in both cases the Master ES adheres closely to the fundamental scheme, the proportions and texture of the lettering of the composition and preserves all of the rules of the script. He only varies the breadth of the shafts and intervals to the extent that was customary in 15th century Gothic minuscule. The space between the shafts of a letter 'n' was always wider than in the letter 'm' and the curve of the letter 'c' broader than the letter 'e', and so forth. The hair and shadow-lines of the script correspond exactly to the thin parts of the figures such as the arms, points of wings, animal tails, etc.

In spite of this comparatively strict fidelity to writing models, the individual letters vary greatly in their legibility. This can be gauged from the story of the earliest readings and interpretations of these letters. While the letters 'm', 'n', and 'o' had already been consistently read properly in the earlier art-historical research and led to no doubts or differences of opinion, the letter 'g' for instance was only recognized comparatively late. When we undertook the same experiment with a group of experienced paleographers, the result was the same. The comparative simplicity and difficulty in reading the individual letters was primarily due to the differences in their form as described[12]. Those easily read include the enclosed contours of the 'known' letters with the script strictly preserved. When the contours of the figural constellation are looser in relation to the intended letter, the letters were more difficult to read. A figure ornament composed in this way involves clear allusions to the form of the letters, but they cannot immediately be identified with the concrete letter as intended[13].

Our plate 9 c shows an example of the second situation. The firm and nearly seamless constellation of figures in the right half contrasts strongly to the very loose composition of the left. Yet the loose composition of the left renders the basic form of the 'g' as precisely as the rigorously full figural mass in the contours of the other letters. Each part of the letter is present, including the curve, the tail and the slash (Sinus, Cauda, Abstrich). The linear connection of the tail to the curve is never absent from the models and provided here by the bone of the dog. In spite of this impeccable inclusion of all basic parts of the letter 'g', the overall impression is not that of a letter 'g'. The tendency toward loose ornamentation has an effect here,

[12] The greater difficulty of legibility due to the tendency toward looser ornamentation should not be confused with the difficulty in distinguishing one letter from another such as 'u' from 'n,' 'i' from 'l', 'r' from 't', or 'e' from 'f'. This difficulty in distinguishing letters from one another is already present in the model and only reveals how closely the Master ES followed all of their characteristics.

[13] It is possible to object that an experiment with modern subjects about the relative legibility of individual letters cannot possibly be reliable since judgment is being made on a level inadequate to the foreign Gothic script. We can assume however that the legibility itself would not have been essentially different in another time. Paleographical training might be seen as a factor somewhat leveling the historical difference.

reduces legibility but also removes this figural constellation from the functional sphere of 'the alphabet' into a more autonomous sphere of an ornament consisting of figures with meaning unto itself.

As far as legibility is concerned, the form of the letter 'n' (plate 10 a) contrasts quite strongly to the 'g'. Its figures are so tightly intertwined as to form a seamless and cohesive body of the letter with almost no breaches of the outer contour and the inner contour only jagged in certain spots. It does not impede legibility and its 'existence as a letter' is our predominant impression.

The forms of the other letters array themselves between these two extremes. Those letters assume a special place where the shafts are formed by a single full figure – such as the 'm' (plate 10 b) or the 'y'. In these instances, the shafts alone can characterize the letter so unambiguously that the contours lose their significance for the legibility.

This description of the general structure of the letters by no means exhaustively characterizes their relation to the existing forms of script. It would still be necessary to describe many individual structural qualities which impede or at any rate reduce legibility of the letters themselves. All of these fluctuations disappear when we view the letters all together as a unity and an alphabet rather than in isolation. A remarkable balance in legibility emerges. All of the qualities impeding legibility are neutralized, and the figures completely converge into a script. Its character as script drowns out all other characteristics. This phenomenon only emerges when at least three letters are placed together (plate 9 a). It manifests itself less stridently when one of the individual letters is placed within a line of normal script as they were intended. Such observations could give the impression that the Master ES did not intend the letters to be viewed independently, but only as parts of the entire alphabet, and that the oscillation of legibility could be seen as a 'mistake' resulting from the image being taken out of context and viewed with an inadequate disposition (unadäquate Einstellung). There is much to speak for such an assumption, and all the more so since this phenomenon reveals the tendency we have mentioned of more sharply delineating the genre characteristics of personified alphabets. On the other hand there is the fact that each letter was engraved on a separate plate and not even a few were combined together. The pronounced differences of forms in the individual letters also speaks against such an assumption. At this point in our study, we cannot yet venture to suggest a reason for them – it seems natural to assume that they were done at different chronological moments. We might however already assume at this point that the Master ES himself intended the 'autonomous' effect of the figural images as 'free' ornaments and not requiring us to first generate an inadequate view in isolation (unadäquate Isolierung). We shall return to this entire phenomenon.

4. 'Composition' of the Figures into a Given Pattern

In every case, the Master ES either fills the letters with three dimensional corporeal forms (I) or constructs them from such (II).

I. The surface strips of the letters are not filled with flat motifs which could easily have been composed of plant forms, but as we have noted, with exclusively animal and human compact bodies conceived in fully sculptural terms with the occasional cliff or building. This creates a problem in filling the unavoidable gaps between the complicated articulation of contours in the letter shafts. It remains constant whether the form of the lettering is conceived as a flat image filled by strips or as a union of prismatic corporeal shafts – just described. While the two are never sharply distinguished but always shift and mingle, the Master ES makes it almost superabundantly clear that this conception also occurs. In the letter 'm,' the long band extending from the hat completely to the ground marks the front edge of an imaginary prism placed at an angle and enveloping the figure (plate 10 b). The curious bipartite shield of the wild man to the left in the letter 'k' replaces two border surfaces of the prismatic block with the greatest possible clarity (plate 12 a). In the first case (I a), the figures are fitted into a flat housing and in the second (I b) into something like three-dimensional blocks – a sort of 'compulsory block'. The problem is resolved in different ways. It is possible for instance to choose motifs with linear surface contours themselves parallel and straight (I a) or else with bodies 'naturally' fitting easily into a prismatic block-space (I b). Styles in painting and sculpture already provided existing 'models' for each. For example, the blocky figural ideal of the style of the 1440's accommodated the requirements of the filler decoration very well (plate 10 b). It is also possible to add fillers as additional motifs to attain a nearly straight enclosure for the lateral edges of the shaft. These were also usually small figure-motifs and only very rarely remaining parts of the written letter itself – as in the letter 'y'.

A particular problem emerged in forming the upper and lower terminations of the shafts. In accordance with the character of Gothic script, the strips of the letter shafts and in diagonals to one side or points on the central axis. This is the point where we recognize that the Master ES translates the existing contour of the shaft into a corporeal and spatial value. The bottom point in the shaft of a letter becomes the lowest spot in the front edge of a nearly quadrangular prism set on edge – the diagonal block well known to Gothic sculpture. The diagonals leading upward from this point to the left and right are conceived as the ground lines of the two front surfaces of the prism in perspective foreshortening. This lends a double aspect to every element of the letter form with the diagonal terminal lines leading up or down in the surface as well as into depth in the spatial sense. This is also expressed very clearly in the motifs inserted at these ambivalent spots in the letter. In the central shaft of the letter 'm' for example, the angular end at the top is formed by the wing of an eagle developing into the surface and the functionally identical diagonal below by the feet of a naked woman stepping out of the space at an angle. The eave of the roof at the top of the letter 'v' becomes the bordering line of the script when we follow it up or down, but if we view it as the roof of the house it juts at an angle

either out or into space (plate 11 d). Comparable examples can be found in nearly all of the letters.

When we view the form of the letters in spatial terms, the shifting contour in the surface assumes the connotation of a directional change in space. In filling the spatially conceived letter forms with sculptural motifs, this plastic filler-mass also includes abrupt breaks. Just as the rhomboid net forming the substructure of Gothic script only allows parts of letters to be combined in certain stereotypical turns, so also can space only be conceived in certain preconceived ways by the Gothic spatial imagination – in a given zigzag way. It explains the serration and broken pattern of the Gothic script. The bonded movement dictated by the Gothic spatial imagination corresponds with the structural rules governing Gothic script.

The largest part of the letter shaft is generally taken up by a relatively firm stem which like the shaft of the written letter itself is not static however and can grow either upwards from below or downwards. Any movement beyond the vertical can only begin at the ends. It leads laterally to the next parallel shaft as well as exclusively up and downwards which nearly always has the connotation of motion into or out of depth. This movement into depth invests the objective form with a particular direction which leads our eye to the nearest vertical beam. The abrupt bending is also a typical expression of the characteristic 'forcefulness' which we shall also observe in other aspects of the forms.

In this approach of decoratively filling the letter its coherence is guaranteed by the contour lines (plate 10 a). It is not able to include processes generating figural motifs in a particularly dynamic way.

II. The situation is different when the letters are constructed from a composition of figures without a fixed frame. Its intention appears 'natural or as if by itself' while the product seems 'coincidental'.

For instance, this process replaces the letter shaft consisting of figural imagery with silhouettes covering nearly the same surface. Its goal is not to anxiously create a straight delimitation of space, and the indentations and protuberances are not balanced by fillers. Instead, the contours of the figures are left to run their natural course. The characteristic form of the letters is achieved less by the placid surface form as it exists than by imitating the specific flow of the script – a dynamic element. The dynamism intrinsic to the figure is intended to render the individual physiognomy of a particular letter. The goal is a sort of mimical translation of the flow of the script. What matters is less a similarity to the parts of the letter than the dynamic relation to the letter as a whole or to its characteristic forms. The similarities are found in a common motif of motion. For example, the pointed wedge protrusion of the diagonal beam of the letter 'k' against the center of the vertical shaft is personified by a battle between two wild men (plate 12 a). On the other hand, a single dynamic motif decisive for the physiognomy of the letter can be made to 'speak' such as the recoiling lower extension of the letter 'q' by the subdued opponent retreating below (plate 11 a). A great variety of possible human and animal movements are used to reconstruct the dynamism of the script,

including crawling, cowering, wriggling, shifting, turning and confronting. These replacements express a rich imagination and an extraordinarily refined sense of differences of 'movements'.

It is finally also possible to characterize the physiognomy of a letter by confronting numerous figures in a certain narrative situation. In the letter 'p', the gulf in the interval between two shafts is felt to be a 'schism' dividing the fighters in the scene of struggle (plate 11 c).

A precondition for rendering such dynamic or physiognomically similar subjects in a letter of the alphabet is that the same dynamic and expressive structures (Gefüge) can be seen in the written letter even without such figures.

In constructing letters with figures in this way, they distinguish themselves from one another far more strongly than if they were made from a fixed vocabulary of standardized formal elements. In the letter 'g' of the Gothic script, there are two hairlines below and in the personified alphabet they are once rendered by a bone being chewed at, and in another instance as a flute being played (plate 9 c). Details are endlessly more varied, but the character of the individual letter, its individuality distinguishing it from all others is more pronounced – as if not all members of a script are derived from a very few identical basic forms. The oval of the animals hunting and returning into one another in the letter 'o' is as unique as the angular dance of the beggars leaning together in the letter 'x' (plates 10 d and c).

5. The Connectedness of the Figures to One Another

The parts of the letters are not identical to the parts of the figural structure (Figurengefüge), or only in very exceptional cases. Subsidiary parts of a letter consist of numerous figures, but on the other hand a single figure might also extend across numerous parts of a letter. In the letter 'a', the upper body of the seated man is part of the shaft and his legs belong to the slash (plate 9 a).

A curious interaction occurs from the stratification and interpenetration of two structures (zweier Strukturen), that of the script and of the figural context. It is by no means necessary for the breaks in the form of the letters, its bending points, to correspond to the 'natural' sections of a figural context. For this reason, these breaks (I) have an effect of articulating spots where the construction of the figures would not have yielded sharp incisions or accents on their own. On the other hand, the limits and sections of the figural structure also subdivide the letters in places where the flow of script would not have included interruptions. When the two structures are joined, the result is a rich play of divisions and unions of forms which neither sphere could generate on their own, and it occurs without forceful changes to the character of script or randomly transforming the figure motifs. This is how the Master ES is able to lend each sign of the alphabet an individual form as it could never have been done by simply varying the Gothic system of script. On the other hand (II), the movements of the human and animal bodies assume a rhythm by being integrated into the structure of the letter in a way that could never have been

made so stridently apparent by freely applying the same motifs of motions in an illustration.

Some examples: (I) the letter 'q' is formed from the motif of a battle among horsemen (plate 11 a). The bunting in the standard of the knight to the left is allocated as form to the right half of the letter because the division of the letter structure lies between the bunting and the standard bearer and also divides the subject matter. In moving the bunting to the right, the forms are crossed without a chaotic convolution, and in a captivating way they express the inextricable nature of the battle.

We see counterexamples (II) in the cases where partial unities of the figural structure are further subdivided or articulated by aspects of subject matter. The male figure and animal bodies in this way contribute to the shaft of the letter 'e' (plate 11 b) so that a light cleft occurs in the center where the form of the letter is completely uninterrupted and it emphasizes the sling of the 'e' as more separate and coherent.

Those examples (III) where the subsidiary sections coincide are yet more important than the overlapping of the breaks. When the breaks in the letter structure occur exactly at the joints of the figure mechanism, the changing direction of its movement is more pointedly expressed and often becomes strikingly visible for the first time. In the letter 'b', this is true of the drapery fold of the female where it hits the floor (plate 9 a). We also see it in the double turn of the panther chasing the dog in the letter 'o'. Although there is nothing of a naturalistic vignette, it expresses the lightning-fast and precipitous predatory movement with an unsurpassable brilliance (plate 10 d).

The typical form of connecting figures to one another as an independent ornament is the same we have already observed in that between the parts of individual letters – self-devouring, biting, clawing and interweaving active human and animal bodies. This unique mode of construction makes it possible to join the parts very densely while also dismembering their cohesiveness, but above all to apply, develop and put out forms in all directions without considering their 'natural' contexts.

We begin with the mental image of an indivisible motion of form which can however be resolved as stocky and tense or a slender, relaxed and detached shape while its relatively placid form consists of firmly interlocking movement. This muffled and convulsive sort of movement is primary but the dissolving and withdrawing motion is secondary.

This approach to interconnections is reciprocal, and its subjects of biting, consuming, attaching themselves and so forth also includes a sense of grip and being held, clasping, being clutched, pressing upward and providing a counter-burden[14]. Even those forms inspired by nothing more than a single rigid

14 There is a close relation on this point between the letters designed by the Master ES and the composition of Romanesque columns with beasts, such as at Freising and Souillac, and not merely due to the subject matter. It will require a separate study to determine the degree

undifferentiated shaft of a letter harbor an abundance of moving form and expressive force (plate 12 d). It provides the basis for an uncanny vibrancy in its expressive character. This also takes hold of the objective, static and even inorganic forms with cliffs splitting and water bubbling as in the St. Christopher of the letter 'v' (plate 11 d). The interaction of forms, petrifaction of organic entities, unbelievable vivacity of inorganic form, the suppression of formal subjects within an overarching context of the letter-structure, the dissolution of the subject into ornamental systems of forms and then also ornament, banderoles or armor and other 'dead' objects suddenly coming to life, these are all characteristics we find again as formal principles of Gothic heraldry. When the subject matter in the work of the Master ES comes into the proximity of heraldry, such as the rider on a horse, the result is a nearly heraldic image as in the letter 'l' (plate 12 c). This makes it easy to see that the work of the Master ES must have had a strong influence on the creation of heraldic images.

We must again emphasize the paradoxical aspect of this mode of linking in that it simultaneously maximizes both the interlocking and the dismemberment. This can be discerned in the individual figures themselves. Each individual removable form consists of fragile and loosely bound parts. When we consider the angular doll-like form of the human and some of the animal forms, the body parts strike us as being aligned additively without a coherent organic connection. We see the same tendency toward fragmenting the forms with drapery folds on a small scale and the spliced feathers of the birds and fur of the animals and wild men. This preoccupation also contributes to the unique drawing technique of the Master ES which students of engraving correctly define as a characteristic of his style. Each detail of form is clearly delineated from its neighbors with minute lines. This technique disrupts the wholeness of the individual forms much as the form of the lettering in a shaft is dissolved by the brittle relation between the figures within it.[15] In spite of this, the streaming motion simultaneously carrying and fragmenting the pieces of the forms is continuous throughout and has an even intensity which can be gauged by this effect.

In developing this system of connecting forms, the Master ES contributed an extreme expression of the period style around the year 1460 which Wilhelm Pinder

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to which genetic relationships exist between the two. We should only mention the remarkable initials in early 12th century Burgundian illuminated manuscripts which are comparable to the Romanesque animal columns, Charles Oursel, *La Miniature du XIIème siècle a l'abbaye de Cîteaux d'après les manuscrits de la Bibliothèque de Dijon*, Dijon: Venot, 1926, plates xxiv-xxix.

[15] This brittleness is already apparent in our first undivided overall impression. One subject who was shown the personified alphabet for the first time, felt that it appeared 'as if made from the bark of a tree', with our glance always being 'caught' at one spot or another.

has broadly characterized as the circulation style[16]. His art is among the most unique and historically significant manifestations of this style.

[16] Wilhelm Pinder, *Die Deutsche Plastik des ausgehenden Mittelalters und der Frührenaissance*, Potsdam: Athenaion, 1929, vol. 2, 356-357 and 372.

Maria Hirsch

Notices and News, *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte*, 1932, vol. 1, no. 2, 167-187[17]

General and Topographical Subjects

Michelangelo and Antiquity. Lecture held by Johannes Wilde at the Österreichisches Museum in Vienna (Winter 1931-32). Wilde limited his study to the period of Michelangelo's youth. In moving from one work to the next he demonstrated that acceptance of ancient forms or formal principles cannot be found before the year 1505. Only the subject-matter of individual works derives from antiquity (*Bacchus*, *The Battle of the Centaurs* etc.). The art of Masaccio, Jacopo della Quercia and Donatello remained the actual source for his forms and formal language. Even the marble *David* which has been related by some to antiquity is derived from an antiquity as it had been assimilated by 14th century Tuscan art. The antithesis of the closed and the looser contour of the left and right half of its body has to do with medieval theological opinions. The world of ancient forms became more significant for the work of Michelangelo around the year 1505. The revised project for the Tomb of Pope Julius II and the cartoon for the *Battle of Cascina* are evidence of the new attitude. An expansion and revision of ancient motifs can be found in individual works yet even now they are still revised. A pen drawing in the Casa Buonarotti showing a male nude from behind and based on a sarcophagus relief reveals how 'the individual ancient form, enriched by experience with the living model' stylizes the musculature into a 'Gothic mesh of forms'. On the Sistine Ceiling, the relation to 14th and 15th century Italian art is stronger than to antiquity. – For all of these reasons Wilde believes that antiquity cannot be considered the artistic point of departure for Michelangelo. [169]

Architecture

In a lecture (Vienna, Winter 1931/32), Hans Sedmayr studied the origin of specifically medieval architecture. One starting point for his investigation was the structural analysis of Hagia Sophia by Georgios Andreades (*Kunstwissenschaftliche Forschungen*, vol. 1). A new conception of architecture appears in the Justinianic building – having more in common with the future medieval architecture, the Romanesque and the Gothic, than previous ancient, Hellenistic or Roman architecture of the 'Christian antiquity' from the time of the Emperor Constantine in

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[17] *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte*, Bd. 1, H. 2 (1932), pp. 167-187. Available through JSTOR.

the 4th and 5th century. The new conception is characterized by 'encompassing form' ('übergreifende Form') in the structure of the walls, and can already be discerned in the Hagia Sophia. Wall surfaces or arches function as fillings for an 'encompassing' arch. In unending variations, such encompassing forms provide the ever recurring motif of Romanesque and Gothic architecture. This new structure of walls is the result of the new conception of the upper termination of the space. In ancient architecture the roof was simply added to the walls enclosing the space while in medieval architecture the supports bearing the top were first determined, and the walls were drawn in afterwards. Sedlmayr calls this specifically medieval system the 'baldachin-system', and it can be seen in the churches built under Justinian as well as in the naves of Gothic cathedrals. It is a dualistic formal principle by comparison to the monistic principle of antiquity. There were anticipatory stages of the baldachin-system in the architecture of the Roman baths, but they were exclusively technical, not artistic, and without the encompassing forms in the structure of the walls. For the moment we know of no definite precursors for the overarching form. The Justinianic baldachin-system can in its structure be clearly distinguished from that of the Romanesque and the Gothic. A third element of medieval architecture consists in its incommensurable proportions. The earliest synthesis of all three elements, the encompassing forms, the baldachin system and the incommensurable proportions occurred in the work of Anthemios of Tralles, the architect responsible for Hagia Sophia. His activity had the same historically decisive importance as that of Brunelleschi or the Frenchman Ledoux at the time of the French Revolution. In its ancient form, the baldachin system recurs sporadically in post-medieval architecture such as with Balthasar Neumann, but the 'encompassing form' disappeared after the end of the medieval period. [170-171]

Sculpture

Bruno Fürst held a lecture at the Österreichisches Museum (Winter 1931-32) about a large 15th century Austrian carved altarpiece which entered the Kunsthistorisches Museum storage from the Hofburg in Vienna in 1899. In its unrestored state it has already been published and properly dated around 1450 by Franz Kieslinger. The entire altarpiece consists of scenes in relief carving. This in itself is something unusual while the approach to the art of the relief is unique – it is a relief that is neither illusionistic nor composed of sculptural figures in the round (as later with Pacher), but rather a form of 'sculptural painting' using the devices from both sorts of relief.

Evaluating all visual data according to its spatial function leads to leveling the value of figural and non-figural elements. This is a pointer to the relative proximity of the art of Konrad Witz. The expressive character of the figures results from the bodily movement, much as in the Wurzach Altarpiece. The new conception of substance resulted in a transition of the surface completely antithetical to the earlier soft style – it would like to be understood as the result of the confrontation of

forces working against one another. Its conception of relief includes a specifically Austrian stylistic principle, the projection of a sculptural conception of an image into the chest of a shrine. [177-178]

Painting and the Graphic Arts

Giorgione. 'The Three Philosophers'. Lecture by Johannes Wilde in the Urania in Vienna (Winter 1931-32). Wilde presented the original form of the painting which had been cut down for decorative reasons. Particularly important indications are to be found in the well-known *Gallery Painting* in Vienna by David Teniers. The question of its subject matter had previously never been answered in a satisfactory way. Christian Mechel, the director of the gallery under Emperor Joseph II, first described it as 'The Three Magi from the East'. A comparison of the painting to a version of the legend from the apocryphal Book of Seth, 6th century Syria, confirms that this painting depicts a certain passage of the legend, the anticipation of the star, widely known in the medieval period. The three kings are described there as magicians and embody the three ages of man as well as the three continents of Asia, Europe and Africa, for which reason one of the Magi is often shown with dark skin in medieval paintings of the Epiphany. All of the elements mentioned in the legend, the three ages of man the mountain and the cave are present in Giorgione's painting, and the x-ray shows that additionally the middle figure of the three originally had a black face. It would appear that this ultimately clarifies the subject matter of the painting. Since it was treated very freely, this was not an easy matter to discover. – The x-ray also provides insight into the origin of the painting in a way otherwise only accessible through sketches and designs by an artist. The first version distinguishable in the x-ray has the stylistic characteristics of the 15th century while the second is closer to the ideals of 'classic art'. The distinctions of the two versions allow a better reassignment within the chronology of Giorgione's work which was presented at the end of the lecture. [184]

Correggio. 'Io and Ganymede'. Lecture by Karl Maria Swoboda in the Urania in Vienna (Winter 1931-32). By closely pursuing the provenance of both paintings, Swoboda has been able to draw important conclusions about their original function and to explain both their unusual vertical format within renaissance painting as well as details of their composition. The sources reveal that the Correggio paintings of *Leda*, Berlin, Kaiser-Friedrich-Museum, and *Danae*, Rome, Galleria Borghese, were sent to the Emperor Charles V as 'The Loves of Zeus'. If we compare the original measurements and composition of the *Io*, the *Ganymede* and *Leda*, the result is that the Vienna panels must have originally flanked the *Leda*. This makes their structure understandable exclusively within the context of the larger artistic whole as they were originally intended. The panel with *Danae* might also originally have had two flanking panels and the two groups of three might originally have formed wall decorations of a renaissance space. The study of the pictorial ideas yielded another

explanation. In both cases, the adoption of ancient types and their use led the artist to his own resolution. The *Ganymede* began with the traditional types of Ganymede in sculpture and *Io* with the type of the nymphs of the source seated beside a pitcher of water. This permits a clarification of the artistic process of formal development and of the relation of these paintings to similar works by Correggio. [184]

Rubens, 'The Feast of Venus'. Lecture by Karl Maria Swoboda in the Urania in Vienna (Winter 1931-32). We learned the results of a thorough study of the canvas and body of color of this marvelously preserved painting. It is well-known that Rubens expanded the painting twice during the work, at first adding 54 cm to the left, 23 cm to the right, 29 cm to the top, and then the second time only 29 cm to the top. Its original size refers to *The Feast of Venus* by Titian in the Prado as the source for the composition since the original conception was a variation of the work of Titian – as clear from the statue of the goddess with nymphs and the group of trees above the ground level with the putti. Rubens was familiar with the painting by Titian in Stockholm and copied it while both painters knew the ancient description of a painting of this theme by Philostratos. This text provided something of a guideline for Rubens while he was making variations to the work of Titian. As far as the type is concerned, Titian had rendered the statue of Venus after the famous *Venus of Syracuse*. Rubens adjusted the type with greater archaeological veracity. The impulse for the Eros-type came to Rubens from the painters of Bologna. The second version of the painting involves the addition of the dance of the nymphs and satyrs and of the grotto in place of what had originally been four putti moving toward the center of the painting. It is possible to discern many traces of the original version within the application of the paints and it would therefore be very desirable to x-ray the entire canvas. Rubens made his first revision of the painting based on archaeological and mythological considerations. In a letter of thanks written by Rubens 16 March 1636 to his friend the scholar Claude-Nicolas Fabri de Peiresc he criticized the landscape in an ancient fresco depicted in an engraving he had been sent. In his painting, Rubens made changes to the main part of the landscape which accord to the criticism voiced in his letter and added the grotto of the nymphs which the description by Philostratos calls for but Titian had only alluded to. The final addition to the painting sought to create cohesion between the lower groups of figures by another crowning them above. While the painting has previously been vaguely described as a late work, this association with the year 1636 provides a date for the second version. [184-5]