

The Origins of Baroque Art in Rome

Alois Riegl

Edited and translated by Andrew Hopkins and Arnold Witte,
with essays by Alina Payne, Arnold Witte, and Andrew Hopkins

- **Delivered at the turn of the twentieth century, Riegl's groundbreaking lectures called for the Baroque period to be judged by its own rules and not merely as a period of decline.**

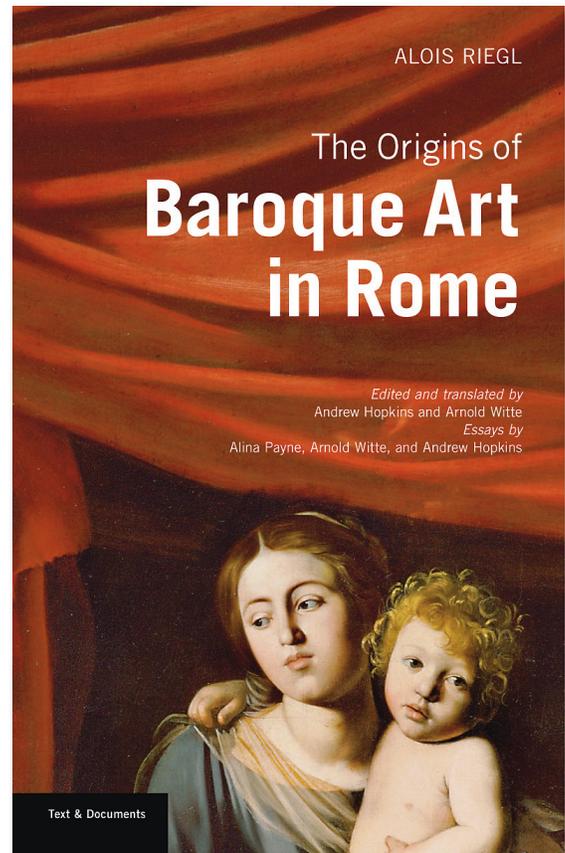
Delivered three times between 1898 and 1902 and subsequently revised with an eye toward publication, Alois Riegl's lectures on the origins of Baroque art in Rome broke new ground in their field. In his approach and content, Riegl offered a markedly different account from that of Heinrich Wölfflin and other contemporaries: the beginning of the new artistic era extending from the 1520s to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was to be judged by its own rules and not merely as a period of decline.

This first English translation brings Riegl's compelling vision of the Baroque to life and amply illustrates his charisma as a lecturer. His text is full of perceptive observations on the most important artists of the period from Michelangelo to Caravaggio. By taking the spectator into consideration, Riegl identifies a crucial defining change between Renaissance and Baroque art and provides invaluable inspiration for present-day readers.

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THE ORIGINS OF BAROQUE ART IN ROME

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Front cover: Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio, *Madonna of the Rosary with Saint Dominic and Saint Peter Martyr* (detail), 1607. See p. 253.

Back cover: Facade of Saint Peter's Basilica, Vatican City. See p. 197.

Frontispiece: Antonio da Sangallo the Younger, Facade of the Palazzo Farnese, Rome, built in 1534 (detail). See p. 136.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This project was born a decade ago in Rome, when researching, respectively, *Italian Architecture from Michelangelo to Borromini* (2002) and *The Artful Hermitage* (2008). No scholar of sixteenth- and early-seventeenth-century Italian art and architecture can fail to be impressed by Alois Riegl's *Entstehung der Barockkunst in Rom* of 1908, but the work itself is not widely known in the English-speaking world, despite the attention devoted to Riegl in the last thirty years. In addition to the translation, which finds such a natural home in the Getty Research Institute's long-standing series Texts & Documents, it seemed important to explain the historical context of this somewhat misunderstood work as well as its significance to art history. Anticipating a chapter of her forthcoming book *From Ornament to Object: Modern Architecture and the Rise of a Theory of Objects*, here Alina Payne presents her research on Riegl and the beginning of Baroque studies that explains the choices Riegl made vis-à-vis his predecessors and their work in the field of Baroque studies, why his choices were so timely, and what makes his contribution unique in the field. In the essay that follows, Arnold Witte reconstructs Riegl's ideas about the period on the basis of an examination of his manuscripts in Vienna, shows how innovative his intentions were for a book on the Italian Baroque, and to what extent the editors in 1908 succeeded in their attempt to reconstruct the impact of Riegl's lecture series. In his essay on Riegl's reception in the 1920s and 1930s, with a coda on the 1980s, Andrew Hopkins shows how influential just two essays from the 1920s were on subsequent thinking about Riegl, and he reconstructs the wider array of approaches to and thinking about Riegl and his book on the Italian Baroque in the 1920s, especially in Munich and Vienna.

In the limited space available for interpretation in a volume predominantly dedicated to presenting Riegl's work in translation, naturally all topics of interest to do with this work could not be addressed, and there are other important aspects that are absent from the discussion here. In addition, we initially thought to annotate the translation with the most important recent literature on each artist. Such an approach clearly would have required at least double the space available, while this kind of information can be easily obtained today through electronic databases and catalogs. By making available in English translation Riegl's text on the Italian Baroque we hope that in the future more Anglo-American scholars will join in the debate about Riegl's work and that future scholarship will focus on other topics of significance that can be gleaned from this fascinating and perceptive text.

For their help in many ways we would like to thank Hans Aurenhammer, Claudia Conforti, Pierluigi Congedo, Daniela del Pesco, Martijn Eickhoff, Deborah Howard, Margaret Iversen, Iris Lauterbach, Maria Loh (for two inspired suggestions), Carole Paul, Matthew Rampley, Georg Vasold, Robert Williams, and Richard Woodfield, together with the members of his University of Glasgow seminar in Art Historiography, for the opportunity to present our essays to this research group in September 2009.

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— *Andrew Hopkins and Arnold Witte*

NOTE ON THE TRANSLATION

Translating Riegl is not easy, as most of our predecessors will confirm.¹ Yet the difficulties one encounters in the process of turning his texts into readable English that still conveys a fair idea of what he is saying and how he goes about saying it differ with each book or essay. Some issues of language, grammar, and vocabulary are peculiar to *Die Entstehung der Barockkunst in Rom*, especially because most of the text is not really finished, or, toward the end, hardly finished at all. While the beginning of the book consists of elaborate sentences and complete paragraphs, from the chapter on sculpture onward these start to break down into very short and sometimes incomplete sentences. As a consequence, it was not an easy task to turn these telegraphic phrases into proper sentences in English that enable the reader to follow his line of thought.

In order to offer a convincing text, we had to flesh out incomplete sentences, add words so as to clarify the line of thinking, and shift sentences around to make sense of the structure of clause and subclause that Riegl used a great deal. We therefore opted for several rounds of editing during the process of translation: moving from the literal—and literally unreadable—first translation to what we hope is a well-formulated English text. In a final round of corrections, we decided in a number of cases to return to a more literal translation with the aim of conveying something of the original wording—which, for an author such as Riegl, counted.

It would have been cumbersome, to say the least, to indicate every change from the original text; however, especially in the later chapters when the subject of a phrase was less clear, we have supplied a name or words in square brackets where we deemed these necessary. We have not signaled the adoption of modern spelling; a case in point is Sangallo, who is consistently called San Gallo in Riegl's text, but we have opted for present-day art historical use.² We have also supplied first names of both artists and authors as Riegl, who surely knew many authors personally, referred to them only by their surname: [Heinrich von] Geymüller is still easily recognized by scholars today, but the almost forgotten figure of “the Jesuit Grisar” thus becomes “the [Austrian] Jesuit [historian Hartmann] Grisar.” Figure captions reflect current thinking regarding the life dates of artists and the titles and dating of paintings; however, we have not updated any dates or titles that Riegl references in his text in order to preserve the factual information on which he founded his opinions.

We have updated Riegl's table of contents to reflect the pagination of this edition (see pp. 91–92). For readers who wish to consult the original German text, we have included the page numbers of the 1908 edition; they appear throughout the running text in square brackets and in bold.

The real challenge of translating Riegl lies in the particular words he chose and the concepts he wished to express. In a number of cases Riegl invented neologisms in order to clearly distance himself from other scholars in the field. Not only is *Kunstwollen* a neologism but so are *Zwangsmotif* (controlling motif) and *Tiefraum*

(which we translated as “deep space” rather than “perspectival space,” as the latter is too reminiscent of Panofsky’s terminology that serves completely different aims). In most cases we have acceded to the choices of earlier translators of Riegl’s work. However, we decided not to do so with *Nahsicht*, a term that takes on particular importance in this text. Translated either as “near view” (by Iversen)—which does not, in our view, sufficiently reflect the terminological specificity aimed at initially by Adolf von Hildebrand and then by Riegl—or as “proxemic” (by Woodfield in *Framing Formalism*), which, according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, is an adverb of the sociological term *proxemics* meaning “the study of the spaces that people feel it necessary to set between themselves and others as they vary in different social settings.”³ Instead, we have decided to use “proximate,” which the *Oxford English Dictionary* defines as “closely neighboring, immediately adjacent, . . . nearest (in space, serial order . . .), etc.”⁴

Other neologisms have tested our inventiveness further. In Riegl’s discussion of the typology of the Roman house he refers to *Hofbau*, *Hallenhof*, and *Hofhallenbau*, all referring to slightly different constructions based around courtyards and derived from antique building types. Here we have opted to use the Latin “domus” for *Hofbau* and have chosen to follow Riegl in making combinations based on his own neologisms, such as “courtyard hall buildings” for *Hofhallenbau*. In other cases we have included the original German word or words in brackets following a translation, especially for terms that remain clumsy in English: “placed distant from the eye [(*optische Ferne*)];” or “to be seen from afar [(*fernsichtig*).]”

Other terms such as *Hochdrang* could hardly be translated consistently with only one English term, and here the reader will find “height,” “vertical(ity),” or “an upward surge,” depending on the context. Some architectural terms that were, and still are, familiar in German, such as *Risalit* and *Verkröpfung*, are entirely absent in English terminology. Here we believe that “ressault” and “crossettes,” the precise French terms familiar to English-speaking architectural historians, work much better than clumsy phrases such as “projecting bays in a facade” and “[entablature] projecting around [pilasters].”⁵ *Gefühl* and *Empfindung* presented another intricate problem, here resolved for contexts indicating more physical or bodily feelings by adopting “sensation” for *Empfindung* and “feeling” for *Gefühl*, but using “emotion” for more psychological contexts, such as an inner *Gefühl* of a human being, and “sentiment” in cases where *Empfindung* refers to the human soul.

As a result of later historical events, the complex geographic-racial term *Romanisch*, officially meaning either “Romanesque” or “Latin” and indicating a Roman origin, has been translated here as “Latinate,” as for Riegl it carried a particular cultural and artistic meaning. *Germanisch* and *Nordisch* are translated as “Germanic” and “northern” and are more or less interchangeable in this text, as Germanic in the early twentieth century was not only considered the culture of the German State but also often incorporated that of other neighboring countries,

including the Low Countries. The one difference is that for Riegl “northern” included French culture, while “Germanic” did not.

During the process of translating and editing, we not only have benefited from the advice of Volker Welter and Evonne Levy but also have looked carefully at the labors of earlier translators, to all of whom we are indebted. Any faults that remain are our own.

— *Andrew Hopkins and Arnold Witte*

Notes

1. See especially the preface by Jacqueline Jung in Alois Riegl, *Historical Grammar of the Visual Arts*, trans. Jacqueline E. Jung (New York: Zone, 2004), 37–48.
2. In all instances where we decided to update the spelling of names of artists to modern usage, we have followed the *Grove Dictionary of Art*, ed. Jane Turner (New York: Grove, 1996).
3. *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd. ed., ed. J. A. Simpson and E. S. C. Weiner (Oxford: Clarendon, 1989), 12:726.
4. *Oxford English Dictionary*, 12:727.
5. We have especially benefited from Eduard Muret and Daniel Sanders, *Enzyklopädisches englisch-deutsches und deutsch-englisches Wörterbuch*, 4 vols. (Berlin: Langenscheidt, 1900), for contemporary translations of less familiar words.