

"ART IS RELIGION:" ADOLF HOELZEL'S MODERNISM

A THESIS IN

Art History

Presented to the Faculty of the University
of Missouri - Kansas City in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree

MASTER OF ARTS

by
SHARON REEBER

B.A., Tufts University, 1984

Kansas City, Missouri
2011

© 2011

SHARON REEBER

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

"ART IS RELIGION:" ADOLF HOELZEL'S MODERNISM

Sharon Reeber, Candidate for the Master of Arts Degree

University of Missouri - Kansas City, 2011

ABSTRACT

This study considers the work of Austrian-born Adolf Hoelzel (1853 - 1934), an innovative artist and educator whose contributions to German modernism deserve to be reassessed. His intense lifelong search to understand the essence of art led him from the nineteenth-century European academic tradition to the vanguard of twentieth-century abstraction. The universality of his theories was rooted in his understanding of the European painting tradition, particularly Gothic and Northern Renaissance painting, as well as the artwork of children and the mentally ill, thus tying his investigations to larger themes of primitivism in European art. Even as his work moved farther away from objective depiction, his recurring evocation of Christian imagery, especially those with small groups of people in reverential poses, reached back to an earlier period of sacred European art, as he pursued the ideal of harmony central to his artistic concerns.

Hoelzel has been remembered as an important teacher to a generation of German modernists, such as Oskar Schlemmer and Johannes Itten. However, as the

history of modernism is reevaluated, Hoelzel's work, as well as his ideas, reveal themselves to have been in step with and often to have prefigured international developments in twentieth-century art. Through a reworking of the tradition of religious imagery in painting and drawing, and later as a designer of stained-glass works, Hoelzel found a path from nineteenth-century academic narrative to innovative twentieth-century abstraction and created a body of work with a spiritual content in which the abstract expressive qualities of brilliant color were combined in harmonious compositions.

APPROVAL PAGE

The faculty listed below, appointed by the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences have examined a thesis titled " 'Art is Religion:' Adolf Hoelzel's Modernism" presented by Sharon Reeber, a candidate for the Master of Arts degree, and certify that in their opinion it is worthy of acceptance.

Supervisory Committee

Frances S. Connelly, Ph.D., Committee Chair
Department of Art and Art History, UMKC

Rochelle Ziskin, Ph.D.
Department of Art and Art History, UMKC

Jenny Anger, Ph.D.
Department of Art, Grinnell College

CONTENTS

| | |
|--|-----|
| ABSTRACT | iii |
| LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS | vii |
| ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS | ix |
| Chapter | |
| 1. INTRODUCTION | 1 |
| 2. THE ARTISTIC MEANS – UNIVERSALITY IN ART | 13 |
| Primitivism in Modern Art | 16 |
| 3. “ART IS RELIGION” | 32 |
| Early Abstraction | 38 |
| Tube Paintings | 48 |
| Late Works: Pastels and Stained-glass | 51 |
| 4. CONCLUSION | 59 |
| ILLUSTRATIONS | 62 |
| BIBLIOGRAPHY | 86 |
| VITA..... | 92 |

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

| Figure | Page |
|--|------|
| 1. Adolf Hoelzel, <i>Anbetung der Koenige</i> | 62 |
| 2. Adolf Hoelzel, <i>Abstraktion</i> | 63 |
| 3. Adolf Hoelzel, <i>Legende</i> | 64 |
| 4. Giotto di Bondoni, <i>Adoration of the Magi</i> | 65 |
| 5. Adolf Hoelzel, <i>Kartenlegerin</i> | 66 |
| 6. Adolf Hoelzel, <i>Dachauer Moos</i> | 67 |
| 7. Rogier van der Weyden, <i>St. Columba Altarpiece, Adoration of the Magi</i> | 68 |
| 8. Adolf Hoelzel, <i>Biblisches Motiv</i> | 69 |
| 9. Adolf Hoelzel, <i>Komposition (Anbetung)</i> | 70 |
| 10. Hans Memling, <i>The Seven Joys of the Virgin</i> | 71 |
| 11. Adolf Hoelzel, <i>Heilige Ursula</i> | 72 |
| 12. Adolf Hoelzel, <i>Window for the J.F. Maercklin Company</i> | 73 |
| 13. Adolf Hoelzel, <i>Komposition in Rot</i> | 74 |
| 14. Adolf Hoelzel, <i>Golgotha (Skizze zu einer Grablegung)</i> | 75 |
| 15. Giotto di Bondone, <i>Lamentation</i> | 76 |
| 16. Adolf Hoelzel, <i>Gruene Anbetung</i> | 77 |
| 17. Adolf Hoelzel, <i>Anbetung der Frauen</i> | 78 |
| 18. Adolf Hoelzel, <i>Biblische Figurenkomposition</i> | 79 |

| | |
|--|----|
| 19. Jan Brueghel the Elder, <i>Adoration of the Magi</i> | 80 |
| 20. Adolf Hoelzel, <i>Ornament V</i> | 81 |
| 21. Adolf Hoelzel, <i>Altarbild</i> | 82 |
| 22. Adolf Hoelzel, <i>Stained-glass design for Pelikan window</i> | 83 |
| 23. Adolf Hoelzel, <i>Window for the J.F. Maercklin Company (detail)</i> ... | 84 |
| 24. Giovanni di Paolo, <i>Rose of Heaven</i> | 85 |

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would first like to extend my appreciation to the Graduate Assistance Fund of the University of Missouri, Kansas City Women's Council for financial support of my research. Through this organization I received the Corky and Bill Pfeiffer Award, the Clarence and Shirley Kelley Award, and the Friends of Mary Merryman Award, which enabled me to travel to Stuttgart in the Spring of 2011 to see original works by Adolf Hoelzel, meet with scholars, and conduct research in the museums there.

Thank you to my parents, Zelda and Morton Reeber, for also supporting this trip financially, for their ongoing encouragement of my education, and for sharing with me their openness to all kinds of art as we visited New York City's museums when I was a child.

I am grateful for the friendly reception I received in Stuttgart from the art history community. Dr. Daniel Spanke, Curator and Hoelzel expert, and Mr. Roger Bitterer, Keeper of Works on Paper at the Kunstmuseum Stuttgart were generous with their time and information, and allowed me behind the scenes to view works in storage first-hand. At the Stuttgart Staatsgalerie, I was amply assisted in the archives by Dr. Wolf Eiermann and in the library by Mrs. Brigitte Heinlein.

Thanks are due to my friend and host in Stuttgart, Dr. Stefan Voelker, whose generous and elegant hospitality is unparalleled.

I am indebted to Dr. Frances Connelly, my principal advisor in the University of Missouri, Kansas City Department of Art and Art History. Her wise and patient

counsel, meticulous scholarship, and excellent teaching have guided me well through my graduate school career. Dr. Connelly's groundbreaking work on the subject of primitivism in art afforded me a fresh approach to the subject of this study.

Special appreciation goes to my husband, Frederick Chiaventone, for unwavering support and encouragement as well as careful reading of all my manuscripts. His enthusiasm, intellectual curiosity, and love of learning are a constant source of inspiration. I dedicate this work to him and to our sons, Owen and Gabriel

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This study will examine the work of Austrian-born Adolf Hoelzel, an innovative artist whose contributions to German modernism deserve to be reassessed. His intense lifelong search to understand the essence of art led him from the nineteenth-century European academic tradition to the vanguard of twentieth-century abstraction. A brief look into Hoelzel's extensive body of work reveals an overwhelming succession of aesthetic directions. From the highly accomplished realism of his genre paintings of the 1880s, through impressionistic influences in the 1890s, Hoelzel moved through an exciting period in the first decades of twentieth century, guided by a spirit of exploration and experimentation. Working vigorously until his death in 1934, his late works burst with intense color and abstract form, a culmination of a life-long effort to understand and exploit what he took to be the underlying rules of picture-making.

His first theoretical concerns dealt with questions of composition - the design of the two-dimensional plane. After 1900 he was increasingly interested in color as a compositional element. His insights into composition and color formed the basis of his influential teaching which, until recently, seemed to be his greatest legacy. New

research and consideration has led to a greater appreciation of Hoelzel's accomplishments as an artist as well. This paper will concentrate on the use of religious imagery in Hoelzel's work as it relates to his central aesthetic concerns, and show how he connected the religious art of the European tradition with modern approaches. In pursuing his passion to understand and exploit "artistic means" he ultimately formulated and pursued the goal to create a secular expression of universal harmony.

Throughout his life, the tradition of Christian art remained a touchstone. It provided the raw material from which he derived his theory about the "artistic means," the essentials of pictorial composition, and also provided a nominal subject matter for his increasingly abstract paintings and drawings. In his later years, certain themes, such as the "Adoration," formed a leitmotif which he reprised in more or less abstract versions while pursuing what was for Hoelzel the highest goal of art: creating visual harmony. These works, though intended for a secular audience, retain a spiritual quality. By dissecting, incorporating, and re-working the European sacred art tradition, Hoelzel succeeded both in progressing towards a modernism that embraced the idealism of his age, and creating a unique and important body of work.

Two paintings from 1912, *Anbetung der Koenige* (Adoration of the Magi) (Figure 1) and *Abstraktion* (Abstraction) (Figure 2) reveal a mature artist restlessly experimenting with color, facture, and iconographic tradition. At first glance these works seem to be the work of two different artists. As we shall see, the first painting, which appears to be a more traditional religious work, has the same goal as the

second. Although not immediately obvious, the bright patches of color in *Abstraktion* refer to a rich figural tradition of European religious art from which Hoelzel drew inspiration. While the reference to sacred art is more oblique than in the clearly narrative *Anbetung der Koenige*, both works are based on Hoelzel's passion for balancing the formal elements of composition. For Hoelzel these paintings were not so different. Both are much more about the essence of painting as an expression of innate harmony than about subject matter.

After considering Hoelzel's conception of the "artistic means," the building blocks of color, line and composition which he saw as the essential elements of art (Chapter 2), I will investigate his choice of religious themes in the absence of a narrative or didactic purpose, and follow the path he took through the motifs of traditional Christian art to pursue his own goals of creating work that expresses a secular spirituality (Chapter 3).

It is an interesting time to take a closer look at Adolf Hoelzel, who is undergoing a reevaluation as an important contributor to modern art in Germany. At this writing, in 2011, three exhibits in Germany and Switzerland and a lecture series investigate his place in art history.¹ The city of Stuttgart, where Hoelzel served as Professor at the Art Academy from 1905 to 1919 and lived until his death, holds the world's largest concentration of his artworks and archival material. The Kunstmuseum Stuttgart, an elegant glass-walled cube built in 2005, has devoted one gallery exclusively to displaying Hoelzel's artwork, and also includes his work in

¹ For a listing of current exhibits and events about Adolf Hoelzel, see the website: <http://www.adolf-hoelzel.de/aktuell/>

other galleries that showcase the work of his students. The bulk of their Hoelzel collection was acquired in 1986 with the purchase of the Pelikan collection. Formerly housed in Hannover, this collection of mostly oil paintings was assembled in 1918 by Senator Fritz Beindorff, owner of the Pelikan Company, who purchased a Hoelzel retrospective exhibit of that year in its entirety.² Other works in this museum include stained-glass original and reproduction windows, and a large selection of works on paper which are not on permanent display.

The Stuttgart Staatsgalerie, a three-building complex augmented in 1984 by James Stirling's postmodern Neue Staatsgalerie, in addition to holding a range of works from throughout Hoelzel's career, houses the archive collection of drawings and manuscripts called "Adolf Hoelzel - the Art-Theoretical Estate." The collection of 2,355 pages of letters and writings was acquired in 1997 from Hoelzel's granddaughter. These undated pages in Hoelzel's densely-packed and expressive handwriting typically contain a block of text written in black ink or pencil and one or more drawings, often unrelated in content to the text. On these pages Hoelzel expressed his thoughts in short, aphoristic phrases or paragraphs, or stream of consciousness musings. They include his ideas about art, music, teaching, art theory, and life in general. Each page is a composition unto itself, with the text areas forming a rhythmic pattern in counterpoint to the drawings, often in a written block or "plinth" at the bottom of the page supporting a drawing above. The huge number of them

² This windfall allowed Hoelzel the financial breathing room to submit his application for retirement from Stuttgart Art Academy, where conflicts with his colleagues over pedagogical philosophy had become increasingly uncomfortable.

attests to Hoelzel's habit of writing often and spontaneously. His intent was not to create a treatise or manifesto about art, and he never intended to publish these. Rather they were for him both a place to play with visual ideas and to perform a kind of mental house-cleaning. The reader is rewarded with an open door into his musings.³

The contemporary researcher benefits tremendously from the ongoing digitalization project being carried out by the University of Fine Arts in Hamburg that affords access to these texts. This is an online-accessible archive of both facsimiles of typescripts of these Hoelzel pages and digitized texts based on the typescripts.⁴ This collection of texts, though fragmentary in nature and mostly undated, is the most comprehensive direct expression of Hoelzel's ideas. Although he is remembered most for being a teacher and theoretician, Hoelzel never wrote a treatise that summed up his life's work, so these writings provide a valuable insight into his thoughts.

The 2009 exhibit, *Kaleidoskop Hoelzel in der Avantgarde* at the Kunstmuseum Stuttgart and the Kunstforum Ostdeutsche Galerie, Regensburg marked a high point in the reception of Hoelzel's work. This ambitious exhibit and its extensive catalog with scholarly essays has helped inspire a new focus on research. In October 2009, on the 75th anniversary of Hoelzel's death, the Researcher's Circle working with the recently formed Adolf Hoelzel Foundation (currently under the direction of Walter

³ for a discussion of this body of work see: Michael Lingner et al., *Adolf Hoelzel 1853-1934: der Kunsttheoretische Nachlass* (Stuttgart: Kulturstiftung der Laender and Staatsgalerie Stuttgart, 1998).

⁴ The typescripts prepared by Hoelzel students on old manual typewriters unfortunately are sometimes hard to read and thus prone to inaccuracies in digital transcription. However, the ability to search for keywords provides great access to a large body of information. Password access is free upon request.

Poehler), was initially created to bring together historians studying Hoelzel.

According to Dr. Daniel Spanke, a curator and an organizer of the Kunstmuseum's exhibit, the Foundation now has years of work planned for the future in sorting and publishing archival material from the Hoelzel home in Stuttgart-Degerloch.⁵

For most of the twentieth century, sources for research about Hoelzel were fairly limited. They included German and Austrian exhibit catalogs, a modest number of published writings or lectures by Hoelzel himself, and a few published essays and books by his students. In addition to these, Hans Hildebrandt, an art historian and friend of Hoelzel, championed him in appreciative essays throughout his life. Hoelzel did receive consideration by important German art historians: earlier in his career by Arthur Roessler, and at mid-century by historians especially interested in modern art and the development of abstraction such as Walter Hess, Werner Haftmann, and Werner Hofmann.⁶ Prior to 1980 only two dissertations focused on his work. Though he is mentioned in the context of modern art in Stuttgart and in a few German general histories, for art historians and curators from other countries, Hoelzel seems to have been largely invisible.

Wolfgang Venzmer, the first major Hoelzel scholar and champion who was not Hoelzel's contemporary, published a comprehensive monograph with catalogue

⁵ in a conversation with the author on April 6, 2011

⁶ Walter Hess, *Dokumente zum Verstaendnis der modernen Malerei* (Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1956); Werner Haftmann, *Malerei im 20. Jahrhundert* (Munich: Prestel, 1962); Werner Hofmann, "Studien zur Kunsttheorie des 20. Jahrhunderts," *Zeitschrift fuer Kunstgeschichte*, Vol. 18, No. 2, 1955 (Munich and Berlin: Deutscher Kunstverlag), 136 - 156.

raisonné in 1982.⁷ Incorporating extensive research based on twenty years of Hoelzel scholarship, Venzmer succeeded in combining a biographical account with a detailed chronological description of Hoelzel's artistic development and an up-to-date list of his known works. The missionary sense of rescuing Hoelzel from obscurity and giving him the historical place he deserves is common to this book and the latest (2003) monograph by Karin von Maur, whose vindicating purpose is clear from the title, *Der Verkannte Revolutionaer. Adolf Hoelzel - Werk und Wirkung*⁸ In addition to the 2009 exhibit catalog, other recent publications include Alexander Klee's work on Hoelzel's time in Vienna, and Gerhard Leistner's study of the Saint Ursula paintings.⁹

One reason for the crusading posture that Hoelzel scholars tend to take lies in the paradox of Hoelzel's relative obscurity. Though living in the places and periods of important developments in modern art, he remained in the background. An artist who mastered nineteenth-century realism in the best academic tradition, Hoelzel was highly involved in the first stirrings of modernism in Central Europe. He studied in the cultural center and capital of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Vienna, exhibited as a founding member with the first and second Viennese Secession exhibits in 1898,¹⁰

⁷ Wolfgang Venzmer, *Adolf Hoelzel, Leben und Werk: Monographie mit Verzeichnis der Oelbilder, Glasfenster und ausgewaehlte Pastelle* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1982).

⁸ Karin von Maur, *Der Verkannte Revolutionaer. Adolf Hoelzel - Werk und Wirkung* (Stuttgart, Leipzig: Hohenheim Verlag 2003). (Title: The Unrecognized [or Underestimated] Revolutionary, Adolf Hoelzel - Work and Impact)

⁹ Gerhard Leistner, *Adolf Hoelzel, Heilige Ursula 1914/15* (Regensburg: Museum Ostdeutsche Galerie, 2000).

¹⁰ and later in the 10th in 1901 and the 23rd in 1905. See Alexander Klee, *Adolf Hölzel und die Wiener Secession*. (Prestel: München, Berlin, London, New York, 2006).

and published an essay in that iconoclastic group's journal *Ver Sacrum* in 1901.¹¹ Hoelzel's essay prefigured theories of abstract art well before his paintings had moved in that direction. In 1900 his work was shown both at the Paris Exposition Universelle and at the Munich Secession. In 1907 he exhibited with the Berlin Secession. His time as a student in Munich and later as a teacher in nearby Dachau coincided with the innovations of Jugendstil design. Peg Weiss has demonstrated the significance of this design impulse for abstraction in modern art, and Munich's contribution as a formative place for the development of German modernism. She is one of the few historians of this period to discuss Hoelzel in the context of the first stirrings of abstract art in the chapter "Prophets of Abstraction" in her book *Kandinsky in Munich - the Formative Jugendstil Years*.¹² Hoelzel is considered one of these prophets, along with Hermann Obrist and August Endell. It is telling that Weiss discusses Hoelzel in the context of Wassily Kandinsky, who has long taken on the role in art history as the visionary of abstract art in Germany.¹³ By the time of Kandinsky's

¹¹ "Über Formen und Massenverteilung im Bilde." *Ver Sacrum IV, Mittheilungen der Vereinigung Bildender Künstler Österreichs*, Vienna 1901, 243-254.

¹² Peg Weiss, *Kandinsky in Munich - the Formative Jugendstil Years* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), 40 - 4 .

¹³ Although the creative lives of Hoelzel and Kandinsky overlapped in Munich, Weiss nevertheless must conclude that "the nature of the reciprocal influences between these two artists remains unclear," while acknowledging Hoelzel's contribution to the creative "Munich milieu," *ibid*, 46. Venzmer also discusses the possible mutual influence of these two artists. He sees a critical stance in Hoelzel vis-a-vis Kandinsky's early expressive abstraction and quotes Hoelzel's comment from March 1915, "Also: Sobald wir die Harmonie als ein Wesentliches fuer das Bild betrachten, spielen die Verhaeltnisse und Verhaeltniszahlen eine wesentliche Rolle. Sonst Kandinsky. (Thus: as soon as we regard harmony as something essential to a picture, the relationships and number of relationships play a crucial role. Otherwise you have Kandinsky.), Wolfgang Venzmer, *Adolf Hoelzel, Leben und Werk. Monographie mit Verzeichnis der Oelbilder, Glasfenster und ausgewaehlter Pastelle*. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1982). 121. Hans Hildebrandt refers

publication of the seminal manifesto for abstraction *Ueber das Geistige in der Kunst*¹⁴ in 1912, Hoelzel was a 59-year-old, well-established professor of painting at the Stuttgart academy, who shared his theories on color and composition with an appreciative circle of students while continuing his own quiet but intense explorations into the essence of art. He was to work in his studio in Stuttgart for another 22 years, experimenting in the mediums of pastel and stained-glass, and producing a remarkable body of work late in life that anticipated later twentieth-century impulses such as Abstraction-Création, *l'art informel*, and Abstract Expressionism. As the black cloud of fascism was beginning to gather in Germany, Hoelzel's death in 1934 spared him the experience of his colleagues and students: the laws that forbade modern artists to work and forced them to emigrate, the vilification in being labeled "degenerate,"¹⁵ and the trampling of the idealism inherent in much of early modern art.

It is primarily through his better-known students that Hoelzel's reputation has

to an exchange of letters he had with Kandinsky in which the artist expresses his astonishment in later learning that Hoelzel had arrived at abstraction in 1910 (based on information in Hildebrandt's book), while Kandinsky's first abstract work was created in 1911. But at the time Hoelzel's abstract drawings had only been seen by a small circle of friends. Hans Hildebrandt, "Introduction." *Katalog der Gedaechtnisausstellung zum hundertsten Geburtstag von Adolf Hoelzel* (exh. cat.) (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer Verlag, 1953).

¹⁴ Wassily Kandinsky, *Ueber das Geistige in der Kunst* (Munich: R. Piper and Co., 1912). Published in an English translation as *The Art Of Spiritual Harmony*, Michael Sadleir, translator (London: Constable and Co. Ltd, 1914).

¹⁵ Eight of Hoelzel's works are listed in the inventory database of "degenerate art" seized by the Nazi government in 1937/38 being compiled by the University of Berlin, see: Datenbank zum Beschlagnahmearchiv der Aktion "Entartete Kunst", Forschungsstelle "Entartete Kunst", FU Berlin, <http://emuseum.campus.fu-berlin.de/eMuseumPlus?service=RedirectService&sp=Scollection&sp=SfieldValue&sp=0&sp=0&sp=3&sp=SdetailList&sp=0&sp=Sdetail&sp=0&sp=F>

survived. Those who developed national and international reputations acknowledged the debt to their teacher Adolf Hoelzel in published and unpublished writings.

Among these were Johannes Itten and Oskar Schlemmer, who were invited by Walter Gropius to teach at the Bauhaus, and who brought Hoelzel's innovative teaching concepts and distinctly non-academic approach with them. In Itten's important treatise on color published long after the Bauhaus years and still in print in many languages, *The Art of Color* (1961), Itten credits his Stuttgart professor whose color theories he presents in the book.¹⁶ Carry van Biema, another student, attempted to write the book in 1930 that Hoelzel never did, a summary of his teaching.¹⁷ Willi Baumeister, Otto Meyer-Amden, Ida Kerkovius, and many others belong to the Stuttgart students who held their teacher in high esteem and developed careers in Germany and Switzerland. Emil Hansen, a student from Hoelzel's earlier art school in Dachau near Munich, became known later as the important German Expressionist, Emil Nolde.

The new pedagogical approach that made Hoelzel a popular teacher also contributed to keeping him in the background. He presented his ideas about composition and color, and about how formal elements combine to make a good picture, but expected the students to take from him only what they found useful. He

¹⁶ For the most recent English-language edition, see *The Art of Color: The Subjective Experience and Objective Rationale of Color* (NY: John Wiley and Sons, 1997). For a compelling argument about the influence of Hoelzel's pedagogical ideas on the Bauhaus Basic Course, see: Nina Gumpert Parris, "Adolf Hoelzel's structural and color theory and its relationship to the development of the basic course at the Bauhaus: a dissertation in history of art." (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1979).

¹⁷ Carry van Biema, *Farben und Formen als lebendige Kräfte* (Jena: Eugen Diederich, 1930).

encouraged them to follow their own path. As a result, he did not influence students stylistically, nor did he want to correct their artwork. Hoelzel had learned from his own experience that it is better to guide than to dictate what is correct.¹⁸ He gave his students an unusual amount of autonomy and thus there was not an identifiable "Hoelzel" look to their work. But the term "Hoelzel School," that contemporary critic Julius Baum used to characterize those working with this professor in 1913,¹⁹ is a useful way to identify those who were influenced by him. In the larger sense, the Hoelzel School includes all his students and the modern impulses that originated with them during his tenure at the academy in Stuttgart between 1906 and 1919. This city became a center of German modernism that existed alongside the well-known Blaue Reiter group in Munich that formed around Wassily Kandinsky, and the Expressionist group die Bruecke in Dresden. Hoelzel, born in 1853, was a contemporary of Van Gogh: his students, most of whom were born in the 1880s, were of the Expressionist generation. Hoelzel first exhibited together with his students in 1916/17 in Freiburg

¹⁸ as he wrote: " I have lost the most time and suffered the most when I got input from every side telling me what I was supposed to do. From this I learned the lesson that a teacher must be careful in what he gives. That's how I got the idea to give lectures with practical examples and to not correct the work of my students. Each one can take what he wants from the lectures, and leave behind whatever doesn't seem to fit..." (Am meisten habe ich Zeit verloren und sehr darunter gelitten, dass mir von allen Seiten immer so viel hineingsprochen wurde in das was ich eigentlich hätte thun sollen. Ich habe mir daraus die Lehre gezogen, dass man auch als Lehrer vorsichtig im Geben sein soll. So bin ich darauf gekommen Vorträge . mit praktischen Beispielen zu halten und nicht eigent lich in die Bilder meiner Schüler hineinzukorrigiren. Denn aus diesen Vorträgen kann sich jeder herausnehmen was er will und das lassen, was ihm gerade nicht passt...)Adolf Hoelzel, Archivbereich Hölzel Transkriptionen. http://ask23.hfbk-hamburg.de/draft/archiv/ah_transkriptionen/hoelzel_GE-DIV-1_V-1-V-2-69_U, hereafter referred to as Hoelzel Archive.

All translations are by the author.

¹⁹ "Die Hoelzelschule," *Stuttgarter Kunst der Gegenwart* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlagsanstalt, 1913), 150-156. Thanks to Dr. Wolf Eiermann, archivist at the Stuttgart Staatsgalerie, for a discussion about this term.

and Frankfurt in an exhibit called *Hoelzel and his Circle*.²⁰ The phrases Hoelzel Circle and Hoelzel School were used by curators and historians over the ensuing years to indicate a group of artists who gathered around this teacher and absorbed his theories before moving in their own directions.

The word circle itself provides an apt theme for Hoelzel in several respects. It implies a supportive group without a hierarchical structure, very much in keeping with Hoelzel's sensibility. The cooperative spirit that Hoelzel fostered among his students when he shared public commissions with them speaks to the generosity they appreciated in him.²¹ Visually, the circle as motif and design element played an increasingly important role in his later works in unifying abstract compositions, and creating the sense of harmony central to his aesthetic concerns. For example, the whitish circular shape in the center of *Abstraktion* (Figure 2) holds together and focuses the expressive energy of the rough brushwork and tempers the strong contrast of hues. As we shall see, the circle motif became an element expressing the spiritual content of his late works, the culmination of a life-long investigation of the essence of art which Hoelzel pursued through his theoretical writings, teaching, and often religious-themed artwork.

²⁰ see Wolfgang Venzmer, "Introduction," *Hoelzel und Sein Kreis: Der Beitrag Stuttgarts zur Malerei des 20. Jahrhunderts. Eroeffnungsausstellung des Wuerttembergischen Kunstvereins Stuttgart im wiederaufgebauten Kunstgebaeude am Schlossplatz*. (exh. cat.) (Stuttgart: 1961), 5 - 13.

²¹ For example, the 1913-4 murals for the Deutsche Werkbundausstelung in Cologne, whose production Hoelzel oversaw, were carried out by students Willi Baumeister, Oskar Schlemmer, and Hermann Stenner.

CHAPTER 2

THE ARTISTIC MEANS - UNIVERSALITY IN ART

In 1901 Adolf Hoelzel published the essay "On Form and Distribution of Mass in the Picture" in the Vienna Secession journal *Ver Sacrum*¹. In it he presented the seminal ideas for a theory of abstract art that would inform both his teaching and later his own remarkable development from an accomplished nineteenth-century genre painter to an experimenter at the forefront of the avant-garde.² This essay was not the work of a visionary with a grand plan, however. Instead Hoelzel laid out in a very logical fashion how painting works formally. Putting aside all consideration of content, he focused on how the viewer "reads" the input from a two-dimensional plane. What would now be termed "principles of two-dimensional design," a standard component of today's art education, was presented here theoretically, separate from the discussion of painting technique or artistic expression. Hoelzel derived these principles himself from the study of a variety of paintings drawn from

¹ Adolf Hoelzel. "Ueber Form und Massenverteilung im Bilde," *Ver Sacrum, Mittheilungen der Vereinigung Bildender Kuenstler Oesterreichs IV* (Vienna, 1901), 243 - 254.

² Peg Weiss finds striking parallels between this essay by Hoelzel and Kandinsky's much later book *Punkt und Linie zur Flaeche* (Point and Line to Plane) published while Kandinsky was teaching at the Bauhaus in 1922. Both authors used historical examples from the canon of Western painting - the acknowledged masters - to support their points. Peg Weiss, *Kandinsky in Munich - the Formative Jugendstil Years* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979).

European art history. His name for the abstract building blocks of composition, the "artistic means," described the lines, shapes, colors and space used in a painting. For Hoelzel, the artistic means were the core materials at the artist's disposal, from which infinite works could be created, and this phrase, artistic means, formed the bedrock of his life's work.

He found these building blocks in all artworks, and in his 1901 essay he discussed examples from Hugo van der Goes, Sandro Botticelli, and Peter Paul Rubens to support his claims. Hoelzel did not only seek these underlying means in the works of acknowledged masters. His understanding of the fundamentals of art was a much more universally conceived idea, and extended far beyond the works that could be seen on museum walls. Hoelzel's search for the artistic means of art extended to artists other than those with formal training. For example, he appreciated the instinctive quality of the naïve work of children and mentally ill adults. Looking at these works non-judgmentally further reinforced his belief in the power of the substructure of art. He commented about children's art:

Sometimes in the designs the lines and shapes, like light/dark [contrast] and spots of color inspire the child's imagination to create special new representative illustrations, which develop differently from what was first intended. In both cases it is the power of the means which give the portrayal the expression, whether constructed from representational ideas or from the child's imagination out of certain linear and formal constellations... Both types of creative activity could be practically cultivated, together with a thorough understanding and mastery of the means. In outstanding children's drawings we already see a very extensive unity of the mastered means with simplified representation, and with that a very high level of artistic achievement.³

³ Es mag bei der Darstellung ebensowohl vorkommen, dass hinzukommende Linien und Formen wie helldunkel und Farbflecken die Phantasie des Kindes zu besonderen neuen gegenständlichen Darstellungen anregen; dass auch etwas anderes als zuerst vorgenommen entsteht, das

Here he clearly considered representational and purely formal expressions as equally valid, a point taken for granted by critics today, but radically new for a man of his time and training.

Hoelzel also was exposed to the artwork of inmates of mental institutions through the work of Dr. Hans Prinzhorn in 1920, two years before the publication of Prinzhorn's important book *Bildnerei der Geisteskranken* (The Art of the Insane). Dr. Prinzhorn had been lecturing and presenting his collection of artwork by asylum inmates mostly to medical audiences, but at a gathering of thirty in the home of Hoelzel's friend, the art historian Hans Hildebrandt, he spoke primarily to artists, including Adolf Hoelzel and his students. This was a fruitful and inspiring meeting for both the doctor and the master artist.⁴ Prinzhorn became interested in Hoelzel's teaching, and would later devote a page of text in his book to the Stuttgart teacher's theories. Hoelzel was struck by the quality of the work presented, and it further strengthened his convictions that the artistic means are fundamental to all artistic expression. He responded to these works because they were visually compelling. In Hoelzel's view, the asylum inmates intuitively grasped the principles of the artistic

Gegenständliche im Laufe der Arbeit einen anderen Ausdruck als zuerst gedacht erhält. In beiden Fällen ist es die Kraft der Mittel(,) die dem Dargestellten den Ausdruck verleiht; ob vom gegenständlichen Gedanken ausgegangen oder dieser von der Phantasie des Kindes aus gewissen Linien- und Formzusammenstellungen (...)und einigen solchen Zutaten geschaffen, in aus ihnen entdeckt wurde. Beide Arten schöpferischer Tätigkeit wären im Verein mit einer gründlichen Kenntnis und Beherrschung der Mittel vielfach praktisch zu üben. Wir sehen nun in hervorragenden Kinderzeichnungen eine bereits sehr weitgehende Vereinigung beherrschter Mittel mit vereinfachter Gegenstandsdarstellung und damit sehr hohe künstlerische Leistungen. Hoelzel Archive 07_NT_T237

⁴ Ulrich Roethke. "Wege zu kühner Kunst: Adolf Hoelzel, Hans Prinzhorn, und die 'Bildnerei der Geisteskranken.'" in Marion Ackermann et al., *Kaleidoskop. Hoelzel in der Avantgarde* (exh. cat.). (Heidelberg: Kehrer Verlag, 2009), 120.

means. This provided him further evidence of the innate truth of these principles that he had worked hard to formulate and teach. To the extent that the works of the asylum inmates were artistically effective, Hoelzel found them to be of high quality. His interest was not in the art as expression of the creator's illness, but rather in the connection to what he saw as fundamental and universal artistic qualities, which were naturally expressed in these works, especially because of the patients' unique circumstances of isolation coupled with lack of inhibition.

Without a doubt it is a truly artistic path that we find in the excellent drawings by the insane. Stimulation of imagination through the means and fantastic interpretations and as a result, a continuation of the same. Often those who don't understand come to the conclusion that modern art borders on insanity, because it is based on similar, truly artistic principles. I think it is just the opposite, namely this: that we can see through the works of the insane, which exhibit highly personal characteristics due to their isolation, that we are following the wrong path in our artistic education, while the works of these insane people are actually based on an artistic foundation. Thus we are attracted to these works not because they are made by insane people, but rather because they are in part highly artistic. And this artistic quality comes from a more or less uninhibited use of the play of the hand, through which these odd, that is, personal situations and what appears to us as the artistic stroke of the works find their expression.⁵

⁵ Zweifellos ist's ein wahrhaft kuenstlerischer Weg, den wir in den hervorragenden Irrenzeichnungen finden. Phantasieanregungen durch die Mittel und phantastische Ausdeutungen und in der Folge Weiterfuehrung derselben. Es wird von Unverstaendigen hier oft der Schluss gezogen, dass die moderne Malerei an Wahnsinn grenzt, weil sie von aehnlichen, wahrhaft kuenstlerischen Prinzipien ausgeht. Ich bin der umgekehrten Meinung, naemlich dieser, dass wir aus den Arbeiten der Irren, die durch die Abgeschlossenheit dieser Menschen ein hoechst Persoenliches aufweisen, nur zu ersehen vermoegen, dass wir in unserem kuenstlerischen Unterrichts Irrwege gehen, waehrend die Arbeiten dieser Irren auf tatsaechlich kuenstlerischer Basis ruhen. Also nicht weil sie von Irren, sondern weil sie zum Teil hoch kuenstlerisch sind, ziehen sie uns so an. Und dieses Kuenstlerische beruht zunaechst in einer mehr oder weniger hemmungslosen Ausnuetzung des Spiels der Hand, wodurch jene merkwuerdigen, eben persoenlichen Verhaeltnisse und der uns kuenstlerisch erscheinende Strich der Arbeiten zum Ausdruck kommen. Hoelzel Archive 2 NT 983-V.

Primitivism in Modern Art

One of the ways in which progressive European artists in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century broke with the prevailing academic tradition was by embracing primitivism. In the most recent scholarship on this topic,⁶ the understanding of this term has been expanded beyond the stylistic incorporation of African masks in Pablo Picasso's works, formal borrowing from "less-advanced cultures," or the idyllic South Seas fantasies of Paul Gauguin. Primitivism is in its larger sense a cultural construct specific to European culture, with roots in the eighteenth century.⁷ The impulse to look to earlier times and foreign cultures in order to discover or recapture something missing or lost in their own industrialized, civilized world was shared by some European artists in the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth-centuries. These artists looked for a source of artistic authenticity in places and times far from their own. Their enthusiasm for Asian, African, South Seas, Medieval art, and folk art challenged and subverted the dominance of the Classical tradition and the detailed illusionism of the High Renaissance as the accepted measures of visual culture in Europe. The reevaluation of the assumption that one aspect of the European tradition represented the highest level of human cultural development created fertile ground for new directions in modernism. As Frances Connelly summarizes, "Primitivism in the visual arts was (and is) an urge toward

⁶ i.e.: Jill Lloyd, *German Expressionism: Primitivism and Modernity* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1991); Frances Connelly, *The Sleep of Reason: Primitivism in Modern European Art and Aesthetics, 1725 - 1907* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University, 1995).; and David Pan, *Primitive Renaissance* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2001).

⁷ Connelly, *The Sleep of Reason*, 5.

deliberate regression combined with an even more compelling desire for rejuvenation."⁸

For Hoelzel, the universal concept of the artistic means relates directly to this broad conception of primitivism, an idea that has come to encompass, in addition to art from "exotic" cultures, "the art of children and the insane, 'back to nature,' movements, exoticism, African-American art and culture, 'outsider art,' and a general interest in violence and sexual freedom."⁹ Hoelzel saw the artistic means as potentially present everywhere and referred to its universality and internationality:

Thus in painting we distinguish an objective-literary (agenda) from the absolute nature of pure art - and that nation, whose artworks contain the most [pure] art will be artistically and thus culturally the most significant in this regard. We must be grateful to those artists in Germany who have been occupied with basic investigation of pure art, who seek to redefine it. This reveals that pure art is international, as is the effort to achieve it, because we recognize it in the top artworks of all times and countries, in Asian art and Russian icons as well as in the artworks of Germany, England, Italy and France.¹⁰

It is interesting that Hoelzel emphasized in his theoretical writings the rationality of his approach. Rationality as the best quality of the classical tradition and the pinnacle of European intellectual development had suffered attacks during

⁸ Ibid, 35.

⁹ Pan, *Primitive Renaissance*, 191.

¹⁰ So unterscheiden wir auch in der Malerei ein gegenständlich literarisches (Programm) von dem Absoluten der reinen Kunst - und diejenige Nation wird künstlerisch und damit kulturell in dieser Hinsicht am bedeutendsten sein, in deren Kunstwerken am meisten Kunst enthalten ist. Dankbar aber müssen wir jenen Künstlern in Deutschland sein, die sich mit gründlicher Erforschung reiner Kunst beschäftigen(,) diese tief zu ergründen suchen. Aus dem Gesagten erhellt, daß reine Kunst international ist, sowie das Bestreben(,) ihr nahezukommen, denn wir erkennen sie in den höchsten Kunstwerken aller Zeiten und aller Länder, ebensowohl in der asiatischen Kunst, den russischen Ikonen, wie in den Kunstwerken Deutschlands, Englands, Italiens und Frankreich. Hoelzel Archive _07_NT_T111

the Romantic period of the eighteenth century and was again under fire from many quarters in avant-garde art and literature of the latter nineteenth century, most notably by the Symbolists. Hoelzel did not champion the unconscious, as they did. Instead, Hoelzel embraced reason and logic to defend his theories. By characterizing his ideas as rational and ruled by universal laws, he bestowed them with intellectual *gravitas* and reiterated the valuation of the rational mind so central to academic pedagogy. References to the Golden Mean in Hoelzel's compositional teaching further link him to classical idealism. His devotion to the idea of the artistic means is always justified by the inevitability and inherent logic of compositional rules.¹¹ As he put it, "The knowledge of the elements, of all logic and all reason, makes up the basis of the harmony and the counterpoint."¹² It is compelling because it is true, he seems to say. But this search for a higher truth, this idealism, connects him with other artists at the time moving towards abstract art while leading him away from the academic tradition.

Hoelzel invoked the idealism associated with the classical tradition while at the same time striding forcefully in a new direction. Yet he always emphasized that the rules alone are not enough: "Ability, knowledge and sensibility, the great trinity

¹¹ For a discussion of the rational nature of Hoelzel's abstraction and its connection to contemporary art theory, see Norbert Schmitz, *Kunst und Wissenschaft im Zeichen der Moderne. Exemplarische Studien zum Verhaeltnis von klassischer Avantgarde und zeitgenoessischer Kunstgeschichte in Deutschland. Hoelzel - Woelfflin - Kandinsky - Dvorák*. (Diss. Univ. Wuppertal 1993. Alfter 1993.)

¹² Die Kenntnis der Elemente, aller Logik und aller Vernunft, bildet hier die Grundlage der Harmonie und der Kontrapunktik. Hoelzel Archive 09_NT_T358
Hans Hildebrandt also quotes one of Hoelzel's oft-repeated maxims: "Alles Unlogische und Unklare ist diletantisch." (Everything that is illogical and unclear is amateurish.) Hans Hildebrandt, "Introduction," *Katalog der Gedaechtnisausstellung zum hundertsten Geburtstag von Adolf Hoelzel* (exh. cat.) (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer Verlag, 1953).

of artistic creation! None is conceivable without the other two. Thus the highest artistic sensibility goes together at its innermost with artistic knowledge and ability."¹³ Referring to the rules of composition that he derived, Hoelzel insisted that reason must be governed by intuition. "These rules never had the quality of being completely binding for me, because it turned out that they worked in some cases and in others seemed inappropriate. And so today I maintain the clear position that truly artistic work can be achieved only when a rule corresponds with our highest perceptions."¹⁴

As with other primitivizing artists of that era, for example Wassily Kandinsky, whose early folkloric Russian scenes evoked a romanticized past,¹⁵ the motivation for looking outside the academic tradition was to reach back to something more pure and true. David Pan writes about Kandinsky's art in the context of primitivism, and contrasts it with the kind of exotic primitivism of Max Pechstein and Emil Nolde, both of whom visited Pacific Island cultures. Instead, the Blaue Reiter artists "attempted to understand the primitive as a certain spiritual dimension of all human

¹³ Koennen, Wissen und Empfinden, die grosse Dreieinigkeit fuer das kuenstlerische Schaffen! Keines ist ohne die beiden anderen zu denken. So haengt kuenstlerische Hoechstempfindung aufs Innigste mit dem kuenstlerischen Wissen und Koennen zusammen. Loc. cit., quoted in Rudolf Bayer, *Adolf Hoelzel - Pastelle und Zeichnungen*, (exh. cat.) (Bietigheim-Bissingen: Galerie Bayer, 1996), 64.

¹⁴ ...diese Gesetze hatten fuer mich nie ueberhaupt voellig bindenden Charakter, denn es stellte sich bald heraus, dass das fuer einen Fall Guenstige fuer den anderen voellig unangebracht erschien, und so stehe ich auch heute noch auf dem klaren Standpunkt, dass nur wenn Gesetz und unsere hoechste Empfindung sich deckt, wahrhaft Kuenstlerisches geleistet werden kann... Hoelzel Archive_06_NT_T79_V_

¹⁵ For example, in the painting *Das Bunte Leben* (Motley Life), 1907. For a discussion of Kandinsky's primitivism, see Peg Weiss, *Kandinsky and Old Russia: The Artist as Ethnographer and Shaman* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995).

culture. They did not work with dichotomies of Western versus non-Western or primitive versus modern but with the distinction between the spiritual and the material." He further argues that Kandinsky's "most advanced techniques of abstraction were inconceivable outside of a primitivist project."¹⁶

Like Hoelzel, Kandinsky worked with Christian religious iconography and symbols, especially in the years prior to 1912. Through his extensive writings, especially *Ueber das Geistige in der Kunst*, Kandinsky emphasized that the goal of art is to contribute to the spiritual development of human society, and this goal was supported by abstraction as a way of disengaging from and rising above the evil of materialism. Unlike Hoelzel, Kandinsky envisioned the whole society moving forward with an artist-shaman at the helm, guiding its progress. Hoelzel was not grandiose in this way. His primitivism lacked both the utopian, manifesto-like quality that was often characteristic of early modernism, and the theosophical underpinnings of Kandinsky's expansive ideas.¹⁷ Yet both artists found their way to abstraction as a distillation of essential qualities in art, and both acknowledged in their own way the spiritual potential of abstract art.¹⁸

Another modernist for whom abstract art expressed spiritual truths was the Dutch painter Piet Mondrian. His involvement with theosophy coincided with

¹⁶ Pan, 101.

¹⁷ For a detailed analysis of Kandinsky's spiritual underpinnings, see Sixten Ringbom, *The Sounding Cosmos: A Study in the Spiritualism of Kandinsky and the Genesis of Abstract Painting* (Turku, Finland: ABO Akademi, 1970).

¹⁸ For essays on the connection between abstract art and spirituality, see Maurice Tuchman, et al, *The Spiritual in Art: Abstract Painting 1890 - 1985* (exh. cat.) (New York: Abbeville Press, 1986).

Kandinsky's embrace of this occult movement.¹⁹ Mondrian also connected art with universality in these comments from his notebooks of 1912 - 1914: "The universal - although its germ is already in us - towers far above us: and just as far above us is the art which directly expresses the universal," and "art advances where religion once led" and "all art is *more or less* direct expression of the universal."²⁰ For both Kandinsky and Mondrian, abstraction in art, a path leading in only one direction, was deeply connected to their religious/philosophical convictions about progress, as expressed in their writings. The absence of the object meant a purification of art. Although some of their ideas overlapped with those of Hoelzel, the loss or absence of the object in a painting was not central to Hoelzel's way of thinking, which is why his passion for aesthetic experimentation led in many directions: figurative, abstract, and non-objective at the same time. As we shall see in the next chapter, art and religion became conflated for Hoelzel as he continued to work without reference to either an organized philosophy like Theosophy or a formal tie to Christianity.

In contrast to many other modern artists who emulated the artwork of other times or cultures considered "primitive" in order to subvert the academic tradition - Picasso's fascination with ethnographic collections is one example - Hoelzel did not

¹⁹ Founded by Helena Blavatsky in New York in 1875, theosophy sought to unite strains of mystic and esoteric wisdom from ancient Egyptian and Buddhist sources. It gained adherents in Europe, primarily between 1875 and 1915, and still exists as an organization today. For a discussion of the meaning of theosophy for abstraction of Kandinsky and Mondrian, see Peter Fingesten, "Spirituality, Mysticism and Non-Objective Art," *Art Journal*, 21, No. 1 (Autumn 1961): 2 - 6.

²⁰ Quoted in Roger Lipsey, *An Art of Our Own: The Spiritual in Twentieth-Century Art* (Boston and Shaftesbury: Shambhala, 1988), 67, from Piet Mondrian, *The New Art - The New Life: The Collected Writings of Piet Mondrian*, ed. and trans. Harry Holtzman and Martin S. James, (Boston, 1986), 169, 42, 41 respectively. Lipsey's chapter on Mondrian provides a thorough analysis of the connection between the artist's philosophy and work.

typically reach beyond the European boundaries to find sources for his investigation of the universality of art. In the nineteenth century and into the twentieth century, it was common to refer to the Gothic and early Renaissance art of Europe as primitive.²¹ Thus Hoelzel would have regarded the work of Giotto and what was then termed the "Flemish Primitives"²² (now more commonly called Northern Renaissance painting) as a more primitive form of expression - a historical primitive.

Adolf Hoelzel was generally more interested in investigating compelling composition than in tapping into the naive or crude power of a foreign mode of visual expression.²³ For him composition was everything. What Hoelzel read in the paintings of the Northern Renaissance and Italian Gothic art was not the story, or as he put it, the "literary-objective" element, but rather the harmonious composition. On a trip to Italy in 1904-1905 he visited Ravenna, Padua, Trieste, and Venice and his enthusiasm about the art he saw was expressed in a letter to his friend, the art historian Arthur Roessler.²⁴ The Giotto frescoes in the Arena Chapel in Padua,

²¹ For a thorough discussion of the broader concept of the primitive in art as a construct of European culture, see Connelly, *The Sleep of Reason*, Chapter 1.

²² This term was used throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The implication was that art prior to the high Renaissance was on its way to something more refined, working through the visual problems of representation. For example, Roger Fry used the title "The Primitives" for his 1926 article comparing Flemish and Italian painting beginning around 1400. His summary of their more or less parallel development includes this sweeping generalization which speaks to the assumption of progress in European art: "Both courses start from the general European tradition of Gothic design, and both end in that pictorial language which has obtained more or less all over Europe from the seventeenth century to our own times." Roger Fry, "Flemish Art at Burlington House. I - The Primitives" *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs*, 50, no. 287 (February 1927): 59.

²³ One exception to this statement would be his appreciation of Asian ink paintings as a good model for the use of the light/dark contrast principle.

²⁴ Gerhard Leistner, with Heidrun Berchtold, "Hoelzel zwischen Maehren und Schwaben. Eine illustrierte Reise durch seine Biografie" in Ackermann, et al., *Kaleidoskop ...*, 19.

completed in 1305, must have especially impressed him. The frescoes surround the viewer in the chapel from floor to ceiling, each a framed figural composition with brilliant color surrounded by a dominant blue. The subjects are well known scenes from the Christian pictorial tradition: "The Life of the Virgin" and "The Life of Christ." Holy figures wear gilded halos. The fresco technique allows for little surface texture and only subtle light/dark modulation, hence they have a flatter look than later oil paintings. Hoelzel's high regard for Giotto,²⁵ as well as his despair at the public taste in art, is expressed in this statement:

Often the public is satisfied, when an objective image is recognizable, distinct, and correctly portrayed, and mindlessly demands that this is the definition of art. In fact it identifies art by these qualities, and considers such pictures as great artistic advancement in comparison to, for example, Giotto! Nothing can be done about that. It only goes to clearly show the low point of the general art education and art appreciation.²⁶

Hoelzel's direct encounter with the art in Italy fueled his developing theories of composition and caused him to question larger assumptions about the progress of Western art that placed the advanced illusionism of High Renaissance painting at the pinnacle of its development. With fresh eyes he saw the qualities of earlier Italian art. His insight is expressed in a note he made that refers to other places he visited on the

²⁵ It is interesting that Giotto was also important to other modern artists. In a letter to Bonnard dated May 7, 1946, Matisse wrote: "Giotto is the peak of my aspiration. But the journey toward something which, in our time, would constitute the equivalent is too long for life." in Jean Clair, ed., *Bonnard - Matisse Correspondance, 1925 - 1946* (Paris: Gallimard, 1991), 127.

²⁶ Vielfach gibt sich das Publikum zufrieden, wenn im Bilde das Gegenständliche erkennbar, deutlich und richtig vorhanden ist und verlangt dieses unbekümmert um die Kunstbegriffe. Ja es identifiziert dieses mit Kunst und hält solche Bilder fuer einen grossen kuenstlerischen Fortschritt etwa gegenüber Giotto! Da wird nichts zu machen sein. Es zeigt auf's deutlichste den Tiefstand der allgemeinen künstlerischen Bildung und des Kunstsinnes. Hoelzel Archive 09_NT_T392

1904-05 trip, and underscores the importance of visiting these Italian sites . "As much as one assumes that progress has been made here, in practice one reaches the certain conviction that increasing naturalism isn't always an advantage, Venice and St. Mark's Cathedral and Doges palace."²⁷ Here he is questioning the larger assumption that culture, and for Europeans that meant all human culture with Europe at the top of the hierarchy, was a forward progression, a time-line with only one direction. This skepticism about progress, and willingness to look past the values of academic art placed Hoelzel in the company of artists who embraced primitivism.²⁸ The important idea that universal qualities of art could be found by regressing, reaching back in the time-line, fueled his developing theories.

Legende (Anbetung der Engel in Gruen) (Legend - Adoration of the Angels in Green) (Figure 3), a painting from around 1908, has pictorial elements reminiscent of the flatness and simplicity of Giotto's *Adoration of the Magi* from the Arena Chapel (Figure 4). In both works, all of the figures are focused on the Madonna and child. An angel stands to the left of Mary. In Giotto's painting, some figures wear halos and

²⁷ So sehr man annimmt, daß hier ein Fortschritt stattgefunden hat(,) so sehr kommt man in der praktischen Arbeit zu der sicheren Überzeugung, daß der zunehmende Naturalismus nicht immer vorteilhaft sei, Venedig und Marcuskirche und Dogenpalast. Hoelzel Archive_18_NT_15-1-V-1-R

²⁸ This period of art had also fascinated an earlier generation of artists reacting to Baroque excesses who looked to the art of the past for the "primitive" power of strong line and flat composition. Robert Rosenblum discusses the renewed enthusiasm for classical art, as well as work by Masaccio, Giotto, and Ghiberti, among artists and collectors in the late 1700s. "For, belying the simplistic view that would locate a taste for Greek art with Neoclassicism and a taste for medieval art with Romanticism, artists and connoisseurs of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries could look at Exekias and Cimabue with equal enthusiasm. From the 1760's on, in fact, there appeared in historical tandem elaborate and adulatory publications that reproduced and, at times, even compared the primitive beginnings of both ancient and modern figural art, beginnings that seemed to offer the common denominator of simple anti-illusionistic style that created forms through almost exclusively flat and linear techniques." Robert Rosenblum, *Transformations in Late Eighteenth Century Art* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967), 163.

some do not, in accordance with the iconographic tradition that sets gold halos on the heads of the holy figures, angels and saints. The clothing consists of simple long robes that cover indistinct body shapes. Hoelzel's work avoids the narrative content and emphasizes the balance of shape and color. Thus his faces are featureless, treated with the same broad strokes as the figures and landscape. His use of color is more in line with that of the Fauves, with seemingly arbitrary color that has been freed from its descriptive role. While Giotto illustrates a story about people, Hoelzel takes some of the visual elements - figures, landscape and sky - and creates an arrangement emphasizing the balance of their inherent abstract qualities. The color green dominates and unites the composition, the lightness of yellow balances the darkness of brown, and red accents both heighten the effect of the green and guide the viewer's eye across the canvas. The space, although readable, is de-emphasized in favor of the overall visual balance.

The re-working of the inherited iconographic tradition of European religious art evident in this 1908 painting shows Hoelzel moving away from the values, as well as the subject matter of his academic training as he develops new goals for art. The tremendous distance he travelled philosophically and aesthetically from the narrative, realistic art of the nineteenth century is best appreciated by examining an early work. Hoelzel had excelled in the Munich school of naturalism as taught by Wilhelm von Diez, as demonstrated in his virtuosic mastery of naturalism and illusionism in paintings of the 1880s and 1890s. For example, *Kartenlegerin* (1886) (Fortune Teller) (Figure 5) shows an interior with a woman in Dutch costume, painted with

great attention to the details of lighting and texture in the various surfaces and materials. The piercing, direct gaze of the subject suggests a strong psychological and narrative content. This genre scene was in line with the Dutch themes in vogue in Munich at that time, and was the kind of painting that won Hoelzel early acclaim and success.²⁹

But Hoelzel was not content to continue in that mode. He was vitally interested in and receptive to innovations in European painting at the end of the nineteenth century. Shortly after *Kartenlegerin* was painted he visited Paris, a seminal experience for his artistic development. By 1904 he was working with a group of like-minded artists in Dachau and well into his varied approaches to landscape influenced by Impressionism. We see his openness to experimentation in loose, dynamic paint application and an expanding palette. In *Dachauer Landschaft (Dachauer Moos)* (Dachau Landscape - Dachau Moor) 1904 (Figure 6) the emphatic brushstrokes, activated surface, and violet mixed with blue in the sky make a clear reference to contemporary work by Claude Monet that Hoelzel saw on his trip to Paris in 1887. Figurative imagery still played a role at this point in several works depicting single females,³⁰ but it is after his Italian trip that the figural groupings suggestive of late Gothic and early Renaissance religious painting begin to appear in

²⁹ "... die Bilder gefielen seinen Freunden, Kollegen wie auch den Kritikern, Kunsthändlern und dem Publikum, was vielen eine Hauptsache scheint, weil das Publikum doch auch die meisten Bilder kauft." (His friends and colleagues, as well as the critics, dealers and public liked the pictures, which seems to be the main issue for many, because the public bought most of them.) Arthur Roessler, *Neu-Dachau: Ludwig Dill, Adolf Hoelzel, Arthur Langhammer* (Bielefeld and Leipzig: Verlag von Velhagen und Klasing, 1905), 92.

³⁰ for example. *Herbstabend* (Autumn Evening), 1906, Kunstmuseum Stuttgart, and two rather academic paintings titled *Akt, stehend* (Standing Nude) from 1908, Kunstmuseum Stuttgart.

tandem with vivid color experimentation.

The Northern Renaissance paintings, identified in German as *altniederlaendische Malerei*, also served as inspiration and compositional models. Hoelzel's 1901 Ver Sacrum essay refers to an otherwise unidentified *Annunciation* by Hugo van der Goes and admires its repetition of compositional triangles and squares.³¹ Hoelzel would have been familiar with major collections of art from this period from his student days in Vienna and Munich. Since he lived in or near Munich between 1876 and 1905, it is likely that Hoelzel studied old master works at Munich's Alte Pinakothek, which houses a significant collection, including sacred paintings by Hans Memling, Dieric Bouts the Elder, Lucas Cranach the Elder, and Rogier van der Weyden³². In the latter's *St. Columba Altarpiece* (1455) we see an *Adoration of the Magi* in the center panel (Figure 7), a scene of several figures clustered together around the infant Christ. A Dieric Bouts *Adoration - Winged Altar "Pearl of Brabant,"* (ca. 1465) is also part of this collection. This kind of grouping will appear again and again in Hoelzel's later works with titles referring to sacred art: *Legend - Adoration of the Angels* (Figure 3) or *Biblical Theme* (Figure 8) but also simply *Composition* (Figure 9). This Munich museum also houses the huge panel *The Seven Joys of the Virgin* (1480) by Hans Memling (Figure 10), a complex of multiple

³¹ "Ueber Form und Massenverteilung im Bilde," 253.

³² From an e-mail exchange with the author May 24, 2011, Dr. Daniel Spanke, curator at the Stuttgart Kunstmuseum and Hoelzel scholar, supports this supposition: "I would agree with you that it is very likely that Hoelzel knew these works well. That also has to do with the training at the German art academies, which placed a high value on the study of the Old Masters." /Ich würde Ihnen zustimmen, dass es sehr wahrscheinlich ist, dass Hölzel diese Werke recht gut kannte. Das hängt auch mit der Ausbildung an den deutschen Kunstakademien zusammen, die großen Wert auf das Studium der Alten Meister gelegt haben.

figurative groupings with architecture and landscape framing that incorporates many individual scenes into one unified composition.

The sacred works from this period have in common elements that intrigued Hoelzel and were discussed in his theoretical writings on composition and color. In addition, we can see their influence on his own paintings, even as Hoelzel moved toward more flatness and a brighter, more spectral³³ palette in the first years of the twentieth century. Along with the sense of harmony and visual balance that was so important to him, the use of color by these fourteenth- and fifteenth-century artists seems to have contributed to his theory of color contrasts. In the van der Weyden altarpiece, for example, (Figure 7) the central figures are draped in vivid red and blue, with lesser areas of yellowish tan in the foreground. This primary red-yellow-blue triad is described in Hoelzel's color theory and its use in color-compositional structure is evident in many works from 1914 on, notably the Saint Ursula series.³⁴ In one version of this theme from 1914/15 (Figure 11) Hoelzel has applied the paint with rough strokes using a dominant red-yellow-blue color scheme. Here, again, the vibrant paint application and puzzle-like arrangement of shapes takes precedent over the figures and the narrative. The round halos are prominent but the separation of

³³ The spectral palette was based on the colors of the rainbow, or the spectrum. John Gage contrasts it with the tonal palette of the nineteenth century: "Pisarro's arrangement without black was a sort of compromise between the tonal scale and the spectrum, and we saw earlier how Hogarth had tried to offer a rational alternative to the tonal palette by invoking the rainbow. The 'primary' or 'spectral' palette was one of the most common variations on the traditional tonal form throughout the nineteenth century." John Gage, *Color and Culture: Practice and Meaning from Antiquity to Abstraction* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 187.

³⁴ Gerhard Leistner, *Adolf Hoelzel - Heilige Ursula 1914/1* (exh. cat.) (Regensburg: Museum Ostdeutsche Galerie, 2000), 31.

figure and background is dissolved as the arrangement of shapes fills in the two-dimensional plane. We can barely make out the boat that Saint Ursula rides in, a central element of her story.³⁵ The use of vibrant, subtly modulated local colors, especially vibrant red and blue, in the earlier religious works is also echoed in Hoelzel's late works in vivid pastels (Figure 9), and the brilliant stained-glass commissions he created for the Bahlsen factory and the Pelikan company in Hannover, and, towards the end of his life for the City Hall and Maercklin Firm in Stuttgart (Figure 12). He made a note of the connection between these colors and harmony: "Pictorial harmony = happy unity of all the means used in the picture in relationship to each other and to our eye. Is dependent on mood and thus extremely changeable. All dyads and triads are combinations of yellow, blue, red."³⁶

Hoelzel's use of examples from art history to demonstrate important principles of composition and design, which he first made public in the 1901 *Ver Sacrum* article, also became an important part of his art-theoretical principles and his pedagogy.³⁷ As his student Carry von Biema explains:

Hoelzel's teaching doesn't stem from these texts [referring to a long list of texts that he had studied on art, philosophy, and color theory], but rather from two living sources which never run dry. One is the continuous study of the immortal masterpieces of all peoples and times, which are genuine and

³⁵ Although the "Saint Ursula" paintings were made for the 1914 Werkbundaussstellung in Cologne specifically because the story of this saint is tied to Cologne history, the narrative elements of the story are only obliquely referenced.

³⁶ Bildharmonie = glücl. Vereinigung aller im Bilde verwendeten Mittel im Verhältnis zueinander und zu unserem Auge. Ist abhängig von der Stimmung, daher äußerst wandelbar. Alle Zwei- und Dreiklaenge sind Zusammensetzungen von Gelb, Blau, Rot. Hoelzel Archive_06_NT_T74

³⁷ This aspect of Hoelzel's teaching was also perpetuated by his student Johannes Itten as a Bauhaus teacher, and included in Itten's book, *The Art of Color*.

unchanging, like the works of nature, and which have survived decades and centuries of artistic controversy, because they contain the effect which humanity perceives as "harmony," that is, unity with oneself and the entire world. The other living source is the human itself, the proportions of the body, the wonderful characteristics of the eyes and the natural, healthy manner of perception. Since these two sources are neither old nor new, but eternal, the laws of harmony in art are also eternal.³⁸

The emphasis on the universal laws that Hoelzel saw at work in studying masterpieces of the past speaks to the comprehensive nature of his theory and its ultimately spiritual nature, since it connects art with the expression of eternal truths. Like other primitivising artists looking back in time to find essential truths, Hoelzel felt that in great works of Western art he was uncovering eternal laws which could generate infinite new works and point toward the future of art.

³⁸ Aber nicht aus dem Studium dieser Schriften entspringt die Hoelzelsche Lehre, sondern aus zwei lebendigen Quellen, die niemals versiegen. Die eine ist das unausgesetzte Studium der unvergaenglichen Meisterwerke aller Voelker und Zeiten, die echt und unverwandelbar sind, wie die Werke der Natur, und die durch Jahrhunderte und Jahrtausende allen Kunststreit ueberdauert haben, weil in ihnen jene Kraft wirksam ist, die die Menschheit als "Harmonie" als Einklang mit sich selbst und mit dem Weltganzen empfindet. Die zweite lebendige Quelle aber ist der Mensch selbst, die Proportionen seines Koerperbaus, die wunderbaren Eigenschaften seines Auges und die natuerliche gesunde Art seiner Empfindung. Weil diese beiden Quellen weder alt noch neu sind, sondern ewig, so sind auch die Harmonie Gesetze der Kunst ewig. Carry von Biema, *Farben und Formen als lebendige Kräfte* (Jena: Eugen Diederich, 1930), 6 -7.

CHAPTER 3

"ART IS RELIGION"

The theme of artistic means runs through much of Hoelzel's extensive writing. While he never published a book summarizing his theory of art, he left over two thousand pages of diaristic notes and aphorisms that clearly reveal the centrality of this idea. In these, he discusses artistic means in comparing music and art, and in relating art and divinity. In both of these areas, the motif of harmony underlies his theory and his artistic output. As I will show, harmony is the key to understanding Hoelzel's recurring use of Christian religious imagery in an increasingly avant-garde body of work.

A formally trained violinist who played throughout his life, Hoelzel saw a close connection between visual art and music. In his writing about color composition, Hoelzel often invoked the comparison of music theory. For him the composition of colors on a two-dimensional surface related directly to musical composition.¹ Here he refers to his color theory:

There are oppositions, similarities, and kinship. The oppositions that contain a similarity are related. Warm and cool are opposites in color. But if I place a

¹ For a discussion of Hoelzel's contemporaries who also explored the music-painting connection with abstract art, see Karin von Maur, *Der verkannte Revolutionär - Adolf Hölzel: Werk und Wirkung*. (Stuttgart, Leipzig: Hohenheim Verlag, 2003), 172 - 176.

warm-dark against a cool-dark, a kinship has been established between the opposites.

The theory of oppositions and their utilization is nothing other than the theory of counterpoint in music, while the resolution to unity is the subject of harmonics.²

Another comment further explains the music/painting connection:

Justification for developing [a picture] from the means, in regards to the exhibition of the Adoration...assignment of a picture for the Freiburg exhibition...in September...

It has gradually become clearer and clearer that harmonic conditions and requirements also exist in painting, in fact they are the defining quality... [and] the introduced objective portrayal is subject to these requirements. Yet not all objects find their expression in the same ... harmonic instance in the same way. The object requires in each case certain fundamentals of harmony, just as the words of a song require certain rhythms. In this way a song is not absolute music just for the sake of the sound and ... One can't just put words or a poem to any purely musical work of art. The music has to be composed and individually thought of for the sound of the words and the rhythm. That's exactly how it is with the object in a picture. If one takes that as the point of departure, then it states its requirements, just as the song does, and these must be fulfilled.³

² Es gibt Gegensätze, Gleichheiten und Verwandtschaften. Verwandt sind jene Gegensätze, die eine Gleichheit enthalten. Warm und Kalt sind in der Farbe Gegensätze. Stelle ich aber Dunkel-Warm gegen Dunkel-Kalt, so ist zwischen den Gegensätzen Verwandtschaft geschlossen. Die Lehre von den Gegensätzen und ihrer Ausnutzung ist nichts anderes als die Lehre vom Kontrapunkt in der Music, während das Zurückführen auf die Einheit Sache der Harmonielehre ist. from Adolf Hoelzel, *Gedaechtnisausstellung zum 100. Geburtstag* (exh. cat.) (Stuttgart 1953), quoted in Rudolf Bayer, *Adolf Hoelzel - Pastelle und Zeichnungen* (exh. cat.) (Bietigheim-Bissingen: Galerie Bayer, 1996), 62.

³ Berechtigung, aus den Mitteln heraus zu entwickeln..Betrifft Ausstellung der Anbetung... Überlassung eines Bildes für die Freiburger Ausstellung ...im September...

Ist es nun nach und nach immer klarer geworden, dass harmonische Bedingungen und Forderungen auch in der Malerei vorhanden, ja im Bilde massgebend sind, ... die eingeführte gegenständliche Darstellung diesen Verpflichtungen unterworfen. Doch ... gelangt nicht jeder Gegenstand durch die gleichen harmonischen Vorgänge in gleicher Weise zu seinem Ausdruck. Der Gegenstand fordert jeweils bestimmte Harmoniegrundlagen: wie etwa die Worte des Liedes diese und gewisse Rhythmen verlangen: also so ganz eigentlich das Lied nicht absolute Musik rein um des Klanges willen und ...Man kann nicht jedem rein musikalischen Kunstwerk Worte, ein Gedicht unterlegen. Die Musik für die Wortklänge und Rhythmen/ muss eigens gedacht und componirt werden. Genau so wird es sein mit dem Gegenstand im Bild. Geht man von ihm aus, so stellt es wie das Lied seine Forderungen(.) die erfüllt werden müssen. Hoelzel Archive_07_NT_T185

The use of the terms harmonics and harmony has wider implications for Hoelzel than just music theory. Harmony in music is a metaphor for a divine balance that he sought to create in painting. As in the complex work of Bach, which Hoelzel greatly admired, the abstract expression of spirituality in music was for Hoelzel directly related to visual art. The artistic means were both a path to this sense of harmony and a revelation of a pre-existing state of grace that the artist has access to. Hoelzel left no writings that were overtly Christian in nature, but referred repeatedly to spirituality as an underpinning of art. For Hoelzel, art was a form of religion, as revealed by this comment:

God is higher than man, so take that which comes from God over that which comes from man.

The work is higher than man. Who created it is not important.

Sacrifice everything that prevents the means from developing; an artwork can only be composed in this way. If you employ the artistic means as divine power and fulfill their wishes in order to serve them longingly, the essence of art will be revealed to you.⁴

Another comment makes it clear the extent to which religion and art were conflated:

"How can one think about religion and other things while creating? One has to be completely absorbed in the artistic creation. Then the appropriate religion will enter into it, the artistic."⁵ In another note, he characterizes art itself as something divine,

⁴ Gott steht hoeher als der Mensch, also nehmt lieber, was von Gott kommt, als vom Menschen./ Das Werk steht hoeher als der Mensch. Wer es geschaffen hat, ist nicht von Belang./ Alles opfern, was die Mittel hindert, sich richtig zu entfalten; so nur kann sich ein Kunstwerk auf der Flaechе gestalten. Wendest du die kuenstlerischen Mittel als goettliche Kraft an und erfuellst du nur ihre Wuensche, um sehnsuechtig ihnen zu dienen, so wird sich das Wesen der Kunst dir erschliessen. Hoelzel, quoted in Rudolf Bayer, *Adolf Hoelzel - Pastelle und Zeichnungen* (exh. cat.) (Bietigheim-Bissingen: Galerie Bayer, 1996), 56.

⁵ Wie kann man denn während des Schaffens an Religion und andere Dinge denken? Da muß man doch nur in seinem künstlerischen Schaffen aufgehen. Dann kommt die richtige Religion hinein,

almost like a divine force which the artist taps into by taking the appropriate respectful and humble attitude:

If you want to seriously connect with true art then you have to get away from the hustle and bustle of the world. You have to be with art alone. Indeed if you want, it is with you everywhere, invisible to other mortals. But in quiet solitude, with this divinity, you will enjoy the loveliest hours, if you honor it, and it is in the mood to favor you.

If you demand an earthly reward, and direct your artistic work toward specific goals, and force it to express something in a certain time, the divine will quietly vanish, and it will take a long time for it to befriend you again. If you repeat this often, for understandable human reasons, it will leave you forever.⁶

Hoelzel completed only a few religious commissions in his lifetime,⁷ yet

die künstlerische. Hoelzel Archive_13_732-1-V

⁶ Willst Du Dich mit wirklicher Kunst dich ernstlich verbinden, muss Du abseits gehen vom weltlichen Getriebe/Treiben. Musst Du mit ihr allein sein. Freilich ist sie, wenn Du willst, ueberall bei Dir, unsichtbar den anderen Sterblichen. Doch nur im trauten Alleinsein (Beisammensein) mit dieser Goettlichen wirst Du die schoensten Stunden geniessen, wenn Du ihr huldigst, und sie gelaunt ist, Dich zu begluecken. Verlangst Du dabei irdischen Lohn und willst Du Dein kuenstlerisches Schaffen bestimmten Zwecken und [...] opfern, auch die Kunst zwingen in einer bestimmten Zeit einen Ausdruck zu suchen, entschwindet die Goettliche Dir unter der Hand und lang wohl braucht es, bis sie Dir wieder zum Freund wird. Wiederholst Du solches dann oeffter, aus begreiflichen menschlichen Gruenden, so geht sie fuer immer dann von Dir. Hoelzel Archive_05_NT_143-1-V-2-V

Hoelzel seems to be recommending a meditative state to connect to a divine creative force. Though Hoelzel never studied meditation, Alexander Klee makes the connection between Hoelzel and Zen Buddhism, citing the artist's habit of cultivating a stream-of-consciousness state while creating drawings, his interest in Japanese ink painting, and his non-authoritarian teaching style, in the essay "Adolf Hoelzel und der Zen-Buddhismus," in Hans Guenter Golinski, ed. *Zen und die westliche Kunst*, (exh. cat.), (Cologne: Wienand, 2000), 59. At the the end of his argument Klee concludes: "The receptivity to Zen Buddhism, which has until now been established in the middle of the 20th-century, would then have been anticipated by fifty years by a 'late bloomer,' when we consider the generation to which Hoelzel, born in 1853, belonged." / Die zen-buddhistische Rezeption, die bisher hauptsaechlich auf die Mitte des 20. Jahrhunderts festgeschrieben wurde, waere damit von einem 'Spaetentwickler,' bedenkt man Hoelzel's Generationszugehoerigkeit als 1853 geborenem, um 50 Jahre vorweggenommen.

⁷ An altar triptych painting at the Peter Behrens-designed Chapel at the German Werkbund exhibit in Munich in 1922 was one example. This incorporated a version from the Saint Ursula series of paintings. An earlier example is a crucifixion mural at the St. Paul Church in Ulm, completed in

religious art was a touchstone throughout his long working life. As the above quotations suggests, he saw art as drawing upon something divine and pre-existing that the artist reveals more than creates. He further stated: "Absolute art is that in which the powers of the artistic means come into their own with the least [outside] influence."⁸ In the examples of European religious painting that he experienced through travel, in museums, and presumably in reproductions, Hoelzel saw the artistic means creating works of harmony and divinity, and providing what he referred to as a "master formula" for art.⁹

Hoelzel's criticism of the academic tradition goes hand in hand with his conception of the universality and divine nature of the artistic means. The academic tradition, he felt, was bound by the limitations of what he called "literary objective" art, or the "objective portrayal" mentioned above. This is the art that he was trained to make: art based on literature, clearly illustrating a story. In fact, his mistrust of the literary is succinctly expressed in this comment: "Words are human, true art is

1910 and still on view there.

⁸ Absolute Kunst is jene, in der die Kraefte der kuenstlerischen Mittel am wenigsten beeinflusst zur Geltung kommen. quoted in Rudolf Bayer, *Adolf Hoelzel - Pastelle und Zeichnungen* (exh. cat.) (Bietigheim-Bissingen: Galerie Bayer, 1996), 56.

⁹ It may also be interesting to investigate the kind of sacred art Hoelzel was familiar with from his childhood in Olmuetz, at that time part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, currently in the Czech Republic. A book of photographs of church art from his home town (and coincidentally, published by Eduard Hoelzel, the artist's father, whose firm still exists in Vienna) contains examples of sculpture, painting and architecture. Among them is the mural in the Dominican Church from 1500 that shows multiple panels with scenes from the life of Christ, including an Adoration, characterized by dense figural compositions in a late Gothic style. A copy of this book is in the Special Collection of the library at University of Missouri, Columbia: Adolf Nowak, *Kirchliche Kunst-Denkmaale aus Olmuetz*, published by Kaiser Franz Josef-Gewerbe- Museum (Olmuetz: E. Hoelzel, 1890 - 92).

divine."¹⁰ Academic art contained "the expectation that the visual be verbal."¹¹ As we have seen, art in the pure sense, based on the truth of the artistic means, had a different goal for him: to embody harmony.

Since flat shapes form the basis of all two-dimensional images it follows that all appearances of objects in a picture must be made up of flat shapes. We will have to utilize our imaginations to make sense of the picture and interpret it as a depiction of an object. The depiction of the object must be simultaneously harmonious and in proportion to the picture format.

This is the way to make a harmonious, objective composition. Otherwise, if you start from the broader literary interpretation of the object and force it to conform to the [visual] requirements of the two-dimensional picture plane, it may not fit well in the harmonious sense. [But] this would be accomplished if you started with a painterly-artistic approach.¹²

In this comment Hoelzel goes a step beyond the central insight of abstract art that was famously formulated by the French painter Maurice Denis around 1890 - that all painting is at its most fundamental an arrangement of forms on a two-dimensional surface.¹³ This he reiterates in the first sentence. Drawing the consequences from

¹⁰ Das Wort ist menschlich, wahre Kunst goettlich. quoted in Maria Lemmé, *Adolf Hoelzel - Gedanken und Lehren* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1933), 15.

¹¹ Connelly, 32.

¹² Da die Flaechenform die Grundlage aller Darstellung auf der Flaechen ist, wird naturgemaess im Bilde alle Gegenstandswirkung aus Flaechenformen entstehen muessen. Wir werden unsere Phantasie fuer eine Gegendstandsdarstellung, die gleichzeitig harmonisch und proportional zur Flaechen und ihrer Begrenzung erfolgen muss, wenn wir den Verpflichtungen fuer "das Bild" nachkommen wollen, so kultivieren muessen, dass wir an diesen Flaechenbedingungen heraus ein kompositionell Gegenstaendliches entwickeln koennen. Dieses ist der gegebene Weg fuer eine harmonisch gegenstaeliche Komposition; denn der Ausgang vom literarisch Gegenstaedlichen, das wir dann erst gezwungen sind, den Forderungen der Flaechen anzuordnen, einzuzwaengen, is weitlaeufiger und nicht immer im harmonischen Sinn, als im eigentlich malerisch-kuenstlerischen Sinne durchfuehrbar. "Aphorisms," from *Hoelzel und sein Kreis* (Stuttgart 1916), quoted in Bayer, *Adolf Hoelzel - Pastelle und Zeichnungen*, 98.

¹³ "Remember that all painting, before being a war-horse, a nude woman or some anecdote, is essentially a flat surface covered with colors and assembled in a certain order." Maurice Denis, 'Définition du néo-traditionisme,' *Art et Critique*, August 1890, quoted in Claire Frèches-Thory and

this understanding, he pinpoints the drawback of the "literary objective image." It must be forced onto a two dimensional plane that naturally demands an abstract harmonious composition. In doing so it sometimes falls short in the artistic sense. For Hoelzel the abstract quality, "the purely painterly-artistic sense," is inherently more important than the requirements of depiction. This realization of the underlying structure of art, or the compositional construction, is for Hoelzel tied directly to his reading of the masterpieces of earlier European Christian painting.

One sees very well from these examples of the Old Masters how the rules are utilized, that is, the connection between the relationships of the plane with that of the format. It cannot be determined to what extent a compositional construction was used, but it can be fairly certainly assumed that there was an underlying one. If, however, perception alone led to the given results in many cases, that would even more surely prove to us how necessary it is to educate our perceptions in this way.¹⁴

Early Abstraction

The painting that Hoelzel scholars often point to in order to justify his status as a frontrunner in the development of abstract art (and, significantly, ahead of what was deemed to be Wassily Kandinsky's breakthrough to abstraction in 1909) is

Antoine Terrasse, *The Nabis* (New York: Harry Abrams, 1991), 22.

¹⁴ Man sieht aus diesen Beispielen alter Meister sehr wohl wie das Gesetzmäßige, d.h. die Verbindung der Verhältnisse auf der Fläche mit denen der Begrenzung verwertet wurde. Es ist dabei nicht festzustellen inwieweit dabei eine Konstruktion stattgefunden hat, doch ist mit ziemlicher Sicherheit anzunehmen, daß eine solche zu Grunde liegt. Sollte aber die Empfindung in vielen Fällen allein zu dem gegebenen Resultate geführt haben, so wäre das erst recht der Beweis für uns, wie notwendig es ist, unsere Empfindung in diesem Sinne zu schulen. Hoelzel
Archive_18_NT_37-1_2-V

Hoelzel's 1905 *Komposition in Rot* (Composition in Red), (Figure 13).¹⁵ As Michael Lingner puts it, "with the *Komposition in Rot* Hoelzel accomplished in 1905 ... his conclusive breakthrough to artistic abstraction in painting which he turned into a means of expression relatively independent of the object."¹⁶ Figures and landscape are simplified to a puzzle-like arrangement of flat shapes, pictorial depth is de-emphasized so much that it is hard to read the space, and, more importantly, color has broken free of its descriptive, supporting role. Whether or not this work is seen as "totally abstract" is perhaps not so important. The *Komposition in Rot* is the first of his works to show an abstracted figural group that connects to the earlier religious painting tradition with which he worked more intensively from 1908 on.

Gerhard Leistner disputes the claim that this work is largely non-objective and as such, a breakthrough, but links this final painting of the Dachau years to *cloisonnisme*, a style connected with Gauguin and also the French painters known as "Nabis."¹⁷ The obviously unfinished quality and the vague figures remain mysterious. Noemi Smolik sees a folk-art connection, and identifies the figures as women in traditional costumes of head kerchiefs and many-layered skirts, which Hoelzel would know from the southern German area in which he lived, as well as the Czech town of

¹⁵ see Wolfgang Venzmer, *Adolf Hoelzel, Leben und Werk. Monographie mit Verzeichnis der Oelbilder, Glasfenster und ausgewaehlter Pastelle* (Stuttgart 1992); Karin von Maur, *Der verkannte Revolutionär - Adolf Hölzel: Werk und Wirkung* (Hohenheim: Hohenheim Verlag, 2004).

¹⁶ Mit der "Komposition in Rot" gelingt Hölzel 1905 jedenfalls sein endgültiger Durchbruch zur künstlerischen Abstraktion auch in der Malerei, die er damit zu einem relativ gegenstandsunabhängigen Ausdrucksmittel macht. Michael Lingner, "Exerzitien-Ornamente-Konzepte. Zur Eigenart der Schrift(sockel)bilder im 'Theoretischen Nachlass' von Adolf Hölzel," *Kaleidoskop...*, 135.

¹⁷ Leistner, *Saint Ursula*, 16. The Nabis (Hebrew:"prophets") were a group of artists who exhibited together between 1891 - 1900, influenced stylistically by Paul Gauguin.

Olmuetz, then part of the Austro-Hungarian empire, in which he spent the first eighteen years of his life. These were, as she puts it, "women of the village, who accompany Hoelzel into abstraction."¹⁸ Though they are faceless and of ambiguous gender, the configuration of these forms echoes the late-Gothic and early Renaissance "Adoration" groupings that we have considered. Two opposing groups with heads bowed are facing each other with one figure in the middle bent down. While in the earlier religious works the infant Jesus is always the focus of the group's attention, this element is missing in Hoelzel's grouping, perhaps because the painting was unfinished, or perhaps because it was not important. However, the size of the figures in relation to the surrounding space and the placement of them on a frontal plane parallel to and near the bottom horizontal of the picture's format echo qualities of the earlier works, notably Giotto's *Adoration of the Magi* (Figure 4). This quiet and reverent scene recurs in many guises throughout the remaining years of Hoelzel's varied artistic output.

This painting alone certainly did not launch Hoelzel on a straight-line path to non-objective art. He continued to work in a multiplicity of styles in the first decade of the twentieth century. His move to Stuttgart in 1905 (the same year this painting was completed) to take over the post of professor at the conservative Stuttgart Academy, may have made him hesitate to show such radical work right away¹⁹. But

¹⁸ Dorffrauen, die Hoelzel in die Abstraktion begleiten. Noemi Smolik, "Unerkannt, verkannt, wiederentdeckt. Adolf Hoelzel, František Kupka, Wassily Kandinsky," *Kaleidoskop...*, 128.

¹⁹ Willi Baumeister, an important Hoelzel student, commented: "Coming out of the greyness of Dachau, Adolf Hoelzel was appointed to the academy, where he slowly unbuttoned his sheepskin during the course of his tenure and became a wolf. He wouldn't have been appointed as one." Adolf

Komposition in Rot clearly led to many abstracted figural groupings that follow in his paintings, and the strong use of primary red is a turning point in his new intense colorization following the grey-greens of the Dachau landscapes.

The painting *Golgotha - Skizze zu einer Grablegung* (Golgotha - Sketch for a Burial), 1907/08, (Figure 14) also shows the use of flattened and strongly colored areas reminiscent of *cloisonnisme*. Depicted is a religious theme that has a well-established iconography and incorporates two traditional representations and two events simultaneously: the three crosses together on the background hill of Golgotha, where Christ was crucified with two thieves, and the Lamentation, a group of mourners clustered around the dead Christ in the foreground. The color is bright, flat, and distinctly unnaturalistic, and the clustered figures turn into an indistinguishable mass of red and grey shapes on the right. While it certainly shows a scene, the storytelling takes a back seat to the arrangement of flat shapes. This depiction combining Christian iconography with Hoelzel's exploration of color, form, and composition suggests a debt to Giotto's *Lamentation Over Christ* from the Arena Chapel in Padua (Figure 15). Without directly quoting Giotto's painting, Hoelzel utilized some compositional techniques from the earlier work. The extended body of Christ is seen from the right, horizontal and parallel to the painting's long side, with mourners clustered so that together they form a larger mass. In Hoelzel's painting, as in Giotto's, the composition is harmonized by a careful balance of verticals and

Hoelzel, aus Dachauer Grau einst an die Akademie berufen, hatte im Laufe seiner Amtszeit seinen Shafspelz langsam aufgeknöpft und war ein Wolf geworden, als solcher waere er nicht berufen worden." quoted in Wolfgang Venzmer, *Hoelzel und sein Kreis - Der Beitrag Stuttgart zur Malerei des 20. Jahrhunderts*. (exh. cat.) (Stuttgart: Wuerttembergischen Kunstverein, 1961), 7.

horizontals, with diagonals leading the eye to a focus on the head of Christ. Here Hoelzel again creates vague robed figures that do not fit into any particular time or place, their costumes just shapes of color, their faces indistinct.

As Wolfgang Venzmer points out, this work was created around the same time that Hoelzel likely saw an exhibit of new French painting that included work of Paul Gauguin and the Nabis. A documented visit to Hoelzel by Nabi painter Paul Sérusier later that year supports the idea of sympathetic tendencies both stylistically and conceptually between the two artists, who shared an interest in art theory and a spiritual sensitivity.²⁰

Around the same time, 1908/9, the artist created *Gruene Anbetung* (Green Adoration) (Figure 16). This painting utilizes energized, impasto brushwork and simplified shapes of four draped figures and trees. A horizon line separates the green foreground from a yellowish sky. The palette is reduced to a dominant color scheme of greens and yellows, with red and orange accents. Three lighter-colored figures form a central triangle, a compositional device widely employed by Renaissance artists in depictions of the holy family. The triangle as compositional anchor remains important in many guises throughout Hoelzel's work and was one of the basic shapes he wrote about.²¹ The flatness here is heightened by strong brushstrokes which

²⁰ Wolfgang Venzmer, *Adolf Hoelzel, Leben und Werk. Monographie mit Verzeichnis der Oelbilder, Glasfenster und ausgewahlter Pastelle* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1982), 84.

²¹ "The simplest and most elementary flat shapes are the purely geometrical ones, the triangle, rectangle, polygon, the rhombus, circle, the oval, etc. The more our artistic shapes approach the elementary flat shapes, the more important and significant is their formal effect as a shape. We can see this clearly in the most various significant works of art."/Die einfachsten und elementaren Flächenformen sind die rein geometrischen, das Dreieck, Viereck, Vieleck, der Rhombus, Kreis, das Oval etc. Je mehr wir die künstlerischen Formen den elementaren geometrischen Formen

emphasize the painting's surface, heavy outlines, and lack of narrative detail. It is a study in value and temperature contrasts: light/dark and warm/cool. The triangular cluster of figures has been melted into a single mass so that the figures lose their individual identities. Only the postures of the figures allow us to make the connection with religious art tradition.

In *Anbetung der Frauen* (Adoration of the Women, 1912) (Figure 17)

Hoelzel's use of expressive brushstrokes has taken center stage to produce an all-over composition with a dominant primary color scheme, which Hoelzel referred to in musical terms as the "major triad." This painting is unified and balanced by the color, the shape and energy of the strokes, and the roughly circular repetition of the figural theme, stated most clearly in the center with a suggestion of a Madonna holding a child on her lap. Surrounding this figure other draped women are suggested, with bent heads in an essentially reverent pose. However, the forms at the top, if divorced from the context of the whole composition, are so indistinct that they would lose their identity as figures and dissolve into patches of color.

This painting uses an approach described in Carry von Biema's book as "flooding" color. It is a compositional technique that emphasizes creating color unity by making one color dominant, almost as if the painting were seen through colored glass in one hue. The red color dominates and takes over, but is tempered by the hue and value contrasts of the cobalt blue, which pushes the red forward optically. The yellow completes the primary triad, another example of the red-yellow-blue color

nähern, desto wichtiger [und] bedeutender als Form ihre formale Wirkung. Das sehen wir deutlich an den verschiedensten bedeutenden Kunstwerken... Hoelzel Archive_08_NT_T306

scheme, while the green accents offer a complementary color contrast, heightening the intensity of the red. Hoelzel wrote a note that seems to apply to this painting: "Harmony equals unity/ influenced [by] intensity and quantity. To create the unity 'red' means to give the red a special value, to make it dominant in quantity and intensity."²²

The paint application ranges from veils of color to impasto, with white canvas showing through. Thinned paint is allowed to drip and flow. This is painting *alla prima* that retains a freshness and immediacy of the gestural mark. It is full of barely contained energy and has the quality that later in the century would be termed abstract expressionism. It demonstrates one of the seeming contradictions of Hoelzel's work as a theoretician that made him so compelling a teacher: he understood how to balance the combination of underlying rules and principles with spontaneity and freedom, ultimately giving intuition the upper hand.²³

The *Biblische Figurenkomposition* (Biblical Figural Composition, no date) is a small pencil drawing on thin paper filled with figures and shapes (Figure 18). This drawing is typical of the many composition studies that Hoelzel produced as independent drawings, and was probably not intended as preparation for larger work. In fact, the "Art-theoretical Estate" is full of drawings in graphite or ink in which the

²² Harmonie=Einheit Intensität und Quantität beeinflusst. Etwas auf die Einheit Rot führen heißt, dem Rot einen besonderen Wert geben, es quantitativ und intensiv vorherrschend machen. Hoelzel Archive_16_1035-1-V

²³ "...what we call a law in art is something eternally changeable and will remain so, and will always be supplemented anew by nature, temperament, time, and personality... "/was wir in der Kunst Gesetz nennen, ein ewig Wandelbares sein und bleiben wird, dass durch Natur, Temperament, Zeit und Persoehnlichkeit immer neu ergaenzet wird. Hoelzel Archive_06_NT_T79_V_Seite1_2_3

clearly defined rectangular or square border is broken up into scenes with landscape or figural elements, or completely non-objective compositions. While there is no evidence that Hoelzel was working directly from art-historical sources in these compositional improvisations, in this case the composition is very similar to that of Jan Brueghel the Elder's *Adoration of the Magi* of 1598 (Figure 19). The Brueghel painting, from the collection of Vienna's Kunsthistorisches Museum, shows a dense grouping of people surrounding a seated Madonna and child in the foreground, in front of a dilapidated peasant's hut with a steeply pitched triangular roof. On the right a crowd recedes into the distance and a town can be seen on horizon. Since Hoelzel studied at the Vienna Art Academy between 1872 and 1876, it is likely that he was familiar with this museum's collection and this work.²⁴

In Hoelzel's pencil drawing, the play of light and dark, one of the basic contrasts that Hoelzel taught in his composition classes, has the upper hand. These shapes are mostly unmodulated by tone, and no attempt is made at creating a realistic spatial illusion. The scene, however, is somewhat recognizable: a group of draped figures with halos is arrayed parallel to the long side of the picture plane, heads bowed, perhaps in prayer or adoration. They are facing the center of the picture, but the object of the adoration, if that is the scene, is not apparent. Again Hoelzel has referred to the Bible without giving us the story. An arc above is filled with a pattern

²⁴ Jan Brueghel's painting borrowed compositional ideas and motifs from several older Adoration paintings by Hieronymus Bosch and Pieter Brueghel the Elder. So Hoelzel's drawing may inadvertently be another step in a long borrowing and transformation process. See: "Netherlands 15th - 16th Centuries: Selected Masterpieces," Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna, <http://www.khm.at/en/collections/picture-gallery/selected-masterpieces/>

of round shapes. In fact, Hoelzel's delight in patterning is evident as shapes are repeated throughout, scaled up and down. The triangle with curved sides, suggestive of an architectural structure, frames the central group, as does the hut in Brueghel's painting. We can see the confident hand of the experienced artist - all lines are drawn with a sure and steady stroke, nothing is erased.²⁵ He is exploring one of the infinite possibilities for dividing the rectangle - an experiment in design that he never tired of, which takes as a point of departure the figure groupings familiar from older sacred art.

But Hoelzel's abstraction does not begin as a complex depiction that becomes simplified or reduced. Instead, he builds up shapes and lines according to his own compositional laws that produce an underlying layout grid, combined with his artistic impulse, which he sometimes referred to as "perception," and finds within the process a motif to develop. His student Johannes Itten recalled that Hoelzel began all of his pictures with either a grid of lines or splotches of color, even the ones with religious themes.²⁶ Hoelzel wrote often about the mysterious process of creating a work of art

²⁵ "While I hold the pointed pen very lightly, because it requires a certain free rein, I can and must handle a soft pencil with all my strength, because that's the only way I can get out of it what it is capable of and what it deserves: architectural form, the major points, the minor points."/Während ich die spitze Feder sehr leicht halten, sie gewissermassen von selbst laufen lassen muss, werde ich den weichen Stift mit aller Kraft behandeln können und müssen, denn nur so bringe ich aus ihm heraus, was er giebt und was ihm zukommt. architektonische Form, Haupt- und Nebensachen. Hoelzel Archive_06_NT_T53

²⁶ In seinen Bildern waren die Linien und Formen durch diese Konstruktion verfestigt, dann erst setzte er Hell-Dunkel und Farbe dazu. Ein anderes Mal begann er Farbfleck an Farbfleck zu setzen und aus diesen heraus entwickelte er gegenstaendliche Formen. Selbst seine religioesen Themen gestaltete er aus den in der Konstruktion vorher abstrakt gesetzten Formen und Farben. Er selbst sagte einmal: "Mit der Religion kann man nicht malen." /In his pictures the lines and shapes were established by these constructive lines, and then he added the light/dark values and color. Another

in just this way, for example:

I should point out here that in visual art as well there are thoughts, and the working out of those thoughts, and that both need continuing experiences. In short, we can't really say very much about how an artwork comes into existence and what it finally develops into. It might begin with an experience, but this can also enter into it later, just as the old composers developed the most wonderful variations out of trivial themes.... A full page looks different from an empty one, and within the progression from the empty plane to the full plane a wealth of the most varied possibilities are contained.²⁷

On the right side of this drawing, the crowd dissolves into linear play, and the sense of depth that is hinted at is then denied. Despite the lively and playful action of the pencil, order and balance is achieved through use of the artistic means. One has the sense that each of his compositions is a puzzle that he took joy in resolving, always moving forward and adding lines until a satisfying harmony was achieved.

In the equally ambiguously named *Biblisches Motiv* (Biblical Theme), 1914, (Figure 8) we again see a grouping in the center of red-robed figures that could be an "Adoration" or a "Holy Family." A round yellow shape surrounding each of the heads suggests a halo, a reference to the gilded halos of *Trecento* art. Here the figures are so integrated into the overall patterning of the canvas that the space is again

time he began by placing a patch of color next to another patch, and developed an objective shape out of this. Even his religious themes were constructed from the previously abstract shapes and colors. He said himself once, "you can't paint with religion." Johannes Itten, "Adolf Hoelzel und sein Kreis." in *Der Pelikan, Sonderheft ueber Adolf Hoelzel zum 125-jaehrigen Bestehen der Firma Guenther Wagner in Hannover*, nr. 65 (Hannover, April 1963), 36.

²⁷ Es sei auch hier wieder darauf hingewiesen, dass es auch in der bildlichen Kunst Gedanken und ihre Verarbeitung giebt und dass es in beiden Hinsichten immer wieder fortgesetzter Erlebnisse bedarf. Der kurze Sinn ist der, dass wir eigentlich über die Art des Entstehens und schliesslichen Werdens eines Kunstwerkes nicht viel sagen können. Es kann mit einem Erlebniss anfangen, dieses kann aber auch erst später dazu treten, wie die alten Musiker aus trivialen Themen die wundervollsten Variationen entwickelten.... Ein gefülltes Blatt sieht anders wie ein leeres aus und in der Entwicklung von der leeren zur gefüllten Fläche sind ja wohl eine Fülle der verschiedenartigsten Möglichkeiten enthalten. Hoelzel Archive_06_NT_T53

unreadable. The yellow, brown, green, and dark blue shapes are almost swirling around the center. This is an expressive use of paint, with a conscious lack of precision but a great inventiveness in shape-making that also suggests the collage technique that Hoelzel was experimenting with at this time using torn pieces of paper and cloth. The figures anchor the center but dissolve into the whole orchestration of the larger composition containing vague hints of landscape and architecture, and perhaps a yellow angel with red wing to the right. The glazing technique affords the viewer a feel for the process of painting by making visible underlying layers through thinned paint application - the yellows become a bit dirty and their harshness is tempered as darker colors are visible beneath. The group of people with bent postures have become fully integrated shapes and are no longer separable from a background. The harmony inherent in the subject matter suggested by the reverent group is expressed through the use of the artistic means of color and composition.

Tube Paintings

In 1917/1918 Hoelzel again explored a new direction. He dispensed with brushes and began applying paint onto a solid cardboard or wooden support directly from the paint tubes. Dragging the tube along the support released fat, irregular lines of paint which mixed as they were applied. The metal paint tube opening became both a drawing and a sculpting tool. These works are all framed in proportionally wide wooden frames, some of which are painted by Hoelzel. The so-

called "tube paintings" are modest in scale (some are 10 x 7.5 inches, and some a little larger) and appear now on display as a grouping in the Kunstmuseum Stuttgart's Hoelzel gallery. Hoelzel referred to these as "knitted pictures."²⁸

Four of these are titled "Ornaments." These are simple, symmetrical, and completely non-objective compositions in which the surface is divided geometrically, dominated by a large square rotated along the central axis so that its points touch the top center and two sides of the painting. The colors combinations are exercises in Hoelzel's theories of color contrasts. On one of them, *Ornament V* (Figure 20), Hoelzel's ruled pencil lines are visible beneath the horizontal band of brown paint taking up the lower portion. His approach here, familiar from his composition classes, is revealed: the surface was first divided by a symmetrical scaffolding of carefully drawn overlapping pencil lines over which the thick oil paint was applied. Clearly most of the pencil lines were ultimately ignored in the creative process. The resulting images have an iconic quality.²⁹ Though the surfaces are rough, they are strictly balanced and quietly regal in effect.

A more complex composition from this group is titled *Altarbild* (Altarpiece)(Figure 21). In this painting the geometrical breakdown of the space is further developed. Diagonal lines that divide the upper square lead the eye to a central image that could suggest a seated figure on a throne, or a statue on an altar under a triangular roof. A loose application of red paint emphasizes the edges of the

²⁸ Venzmer, *Adolf Hoelzel - Leben und Werk*, 132.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

rectangular painting, and the dark frame is also painted with colors used in the picture.³⁰ The painted frame, the theme presented, and the bulky thickness of the paint move this work into the realm of a three-dimensional object. The paint functions sculpturally here and reminds the viewer of religious relief carvings.

The use of symmetry in these and others from this group give them a somber, ceremonial quality, and bring to mind devotional images found in Catholic chapels in Bavaria, Eastern Orthodox icons, and the *Trecento* altarpieces Hoelzel so admired. The small size contributes to the feeling that they could be found in an intimate chapel, the focus of private prayer. Hoelzel created modern paintings which could function as objects of meditation.

His friend and admirer, the art historian Hans Hildebrandt, characterized Hoelzel as essentially a ceaseless experimenter for whom each work was a way to approach a new problem in search of a harmonious solution.³¹ Towards the end of his life, long after he had retired from public teaching, Hoelzel moved away from oil painting and focused on the medium of pastels. He delighted in the pure saturated pigments and often created flat, all-over compositions of colored shapes, some looser with soft edges, and some bounded by dark borders, which suggest stained-glass

³⁰ Hoelzel noted his pleasure with this technique: "Colorful frames painted with enamels in red, blue, etc. The most remarkable changes happen with pictures placed in these frames, which must be colorful themselves. Extremely stimulating experiments. A heightening of the color effects when put together."/Farbige Rahmen rot, blau etc, mit Lackfarben gestrichen. Mit den in solche Rahmen gestellten Bilder, die an und für sich farbig sein müssen, gehen die merkwürdigsten Veränderungen vor. Außerordentlich anregende Versuche. Höchste Steigerungen von Farbwirkungen in der Zusammenstellung. Hoelzel Archive 16_1128-1-V

³¹ Hans Hildebrandt, "Adolf Hoelzel als Zeichner," (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1913). Reprinted in *Adolf Hoelzel - Farbe - Zeichnung - Abstraktion*, published by Bauhaus-Archiv (Darmstadt: Eduard Roether Verlag, 1969).

window designs. The forms vary from shard-like to curvilinear. That color ultimately became his great passion is clear from this comment: "My life belongs to color, its artistic arrangement and application in a picture: that which is called design."³² The question of "objective" as opposed to "non-objective" art didn't seem to be an important one for him. He had very early on come to the conclusion that the "object" was unnecessary, and possibly a hindrance to a good work of art. Compositional experimentation in both black and white and color moved back and forth between pure patterning and flat design to clear suggestions of figures, landscape, and architecture.

Late Works: Pastels and Stained-glass

Beginning with a commission in 1915 for the H. Bahlsen cookie factory in Hannover, Hoelzel began to explore a new medium, stained glass. The ambitiously scaled and highly abstract work for a corporate client combined his finely developed color sense, color compositional theory, and the overall harmonious orchestral quality that he had worked toward his whole life. Using a medium traditionally associated with churches, Hoelzel was again processing and reworking the European sacred art tradition as modern art. At the end of his life, from age 78 until his death, his last major works were secular corporate and public stained-glass commissions: for the Pelikan Company, a pen manufacturer in Hannover, for the Maercklin Company, a

³²Mein Leben gehoert der Farbe, ihrer kuenstlerischen Zusammenstellung und Verarbeitung im Bilde: Was man Gestaltung nennt. Quoted in Maria Lemmé, *Adolf Hoelzel - Gedanken und Lehren* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1933), 24.

dealer of porcelain, in Stuttgart, and for the Stuttgart City Hall.

The Kunstmuseum Stuttgart's collection of Hoelzel's works on paper contains many pastels, some of which were designed for and used directly by stained-glass fabricators as a pattern for windows. In one such example, (Figure 22) which was used in the production of the stained-glass windows designed for the Pelikan company in 1932, we see that saturated color, puzzle-like shape composition, and a suggestion of a figural grouping that hearkens back to the countless versions of the Adoration scene. Unifying this composition is the central circle or oval, repeated more or less distinctly in most of the panes of the two vertical 54-pane panels of the large conference room installation.³³ Each 7.3 x 11.2 inch panel functions simultaneously as an individual composition and an integral part of the whole work. In fact, the individual panes were created first and the larger composition was developed afterward, as Hoelzel and some of his trusted students arranged the finished panes at the fabricator's studio, evaluating and adjusting the cumulative effect.³⁴ The circle became an important compositional motif again for Hoelzel in his late works, while the colors in the Pelikan windows were related to the musical interval of the seventh, as described by Hoelzel in his color theory.³⁵

³³ Though the original windows were mostly destroyed during the war, partial replicas were made in the late 1960's based on Hoelzel's designs. Venzmer, *Adolf Hoelzel - Leben und Werk*, 188.

³⁴ Ibid, 188 -190.

³⁵ Hoelzel called these designs "abstrakte Kompositionen nach dem Septimenschlüssel." Although the term "Septimenschlüssel" (seventh key) is not directly taken from music theory, it refers to Hoelzel's color theory in which he relates the the musical scale to the eight-step color spectrum. The relationship between colors corresponds to musical intervals. For a discussion of this work, see Karin von Maur. *Der verkannte Revolutionär - Adolf Hölzel: Werk und Wirkung* (Stuttgart, Leipzig: Hohenheim Verlag, 2003), 153 - 154.

In the late phase of Hoelzel's oeuvre, from about 1925 until his death, he completed a great number of small scale drawings in pastel, his chosen medium, in which he tirelessly pursued his aesthetic interests. These works were not meant as studies or designs, but as explorations in their own right. He left the titles vague, often referring to them as "compositions" or dispensing with titles altogether. This flowering of creativity evidenced a continuing vitality, even as he became personally and professionally more isolated. Wolfgang Venzmer comments: "His very personal late work is completely that of a loner."³⁶ In these works he was fully immersed in pursuing color composition using the intense pigments and freedom of this medium which for him perfectly combined the advantages of drawing and painting. In *Komposition (Anbetung)*(Composition - Adoration) (Figure 9) from around 1928 we see the patches of flat color, the palette range from primary to tertiary with black and white, and the rhythmic patterning typical of this period. The Adoration theme is hinted at in the central circular shape, with figures suggested by small head circles on both sides, being drawn into the energy of the center. The masterful balance of hue and value create a deceptive simplicity. Again he achieves a sense of timeless harmony.

In Hoelzel's final work, the window for the Maercklin company (Figure 12), we see the brilliant color contrasts, the merest suggestions of figures which dissolve into curvilinear shape, and the musical sense of design that exploits the variety and size range of rounded forms to imply rhythmic and harmonic patterns. Here the circle

³⁶ Sein sehr persönliches Spätwerk ist vollends das eines Einzelgängers. Ibid, 195.

as compositional device appears in the center in the four rectangular panes on the flanks, and is reiterated in the the top section as the shape of the colored glass pane imbedded in a neutral background. Circles and ovals are incorporated in a fragmented way in the larger middle panel. In the lower left colored panel (Figure 23) a group of figures facing the center from the right and left echo the Adoration theme again, contained in a sheltering circle within the rectangle.

Though he sees no connection between Hoelzel and primitivism³⁷, Daniel Spanke reads an ethical and religious message in the recurring circle and concludes that Hoelzel's pictures show a "concrete and active religion."³⁸ Of the circle, Spanke writes, "It has to do with a cultural return to primal shapes, to origins, and thus to what is true."³⁹ He sees the use of the circle imagery as an affirmation that man is in harmony with the world, protected by the larger universe. The groupings of figures show a mutually supportive cosmos.

The figures are grouped in 'devotional gestures' around a center. These are figures of sympathy, which thematically demonstrate how each individual is drawn to another and thus exists in a mutual relationship of harmony and respect. The Adorations of Hoelzel are religious pictures, not so much in the sense of illustrating a theme iconographically (here they are often not very precise), but rather insofar as they express the basic religious concept of the connection of the individual to a larger whole made up of other elements for which the basic visual vocabulary stemming from the 'divine power' of the artistic means can provide structure and shape.⁴⁰

³⁷ as he states in his essay 'Kaleidoskop und Ornament - zu Hoelzels Konzeption des modernen Bildes,' *Kaleidoskop...*, 56.

³⁸ anschauliche und taetige Religion, *Ibid*, 60.

³⁹ Es geht um eine kulturelle Rueckfuehrung auf Urformen, Urspruengliches und daher Richtiges, *Ibid*.

⁴⁰ Die Figuren darin gruppieren sich in 'Devotionsgebaerden' um ein Zentrum. Es handelt sich um

Contrasting Hoelzel's circles with Piet Mondrian's rectangular cross forms, Kurt Leonhard characterized both as abstract religious symbols. He describes Hoelzel's circles as "roses of heaven, which seem to unfurl into infinity while at the same time appearing to close around a center"⁴¹ He refers here to the rose of heaven or celestial roses from Dante's *Divine Comedy*. In an illustration of Dante's work by Sienese artist Giovanni di Paolo from 1445 (Figure 24) the late-Gothic painter depicts this image literally, tucking holy figures with halos into the open petals of a white rose. A comparison between this image and the pastel design for the Pelikan window (Figure 22) yields surprising parallels in both coloration and theme, although we cannot say if Hoelzel was aware of di Paolo's painting.

It is interesting to note that a sympathetic contemporary writer also perceived "lofty goals" in Hoelzel's work, but without referring to religion. In a book about Stuttgart's art world in 1913, Heinrich Weizsaecker wrote appreciatively about then-Professor Hoelzel in the context of the writer's hope for the rejuvenation of German art:

Only one thing can be predicted: the time will come, when people will again

Zuneigungsfigurationen, die thematisch verdeutlichen, wie jedes Einzelne sich einem Anderen zuneigt und dadurch mit allem in harmonischer, respektvoller Wechselbeziehung steht....So sind die Anbetungen Hoelzels religioese Bilder, nicht so sehr indem sie ein ikonografisches Thema illustrieren, in diesem Sinne sind sie oft nicht sehr praezise, sondern indem sie das Grundreligioese der Rueckbindung des Einzelnen in ein immer schon groesseres Ganzes von Mitelementen im Grundbildlichen vermoege der 'goettlichen Kraefte' der kuenstlerischen Mittel Struktur und Form werden lassen. Ibid, 60 - 61.

⁴¹ ...Himmelsrosen, die sich ins Unendliche zu entfalten und doch zugleich um eine Mitte zu schliessen scheinen. Kurt Leonhardt, *Adolf Hoelzel -Vorlaeufer und Spaetentwickler*, in Kat. Adolf Hoelzel (Monographien der Kuenstlergilde Esslingen, Band 10) (Munich, 1968), 9, quoted by Daniel Spanke, Ibid.

to a large extent understand art not as it is often thought of now, as one embellishment of life among others, but as a struggle of the human soul toward its highest good. The defining ideas for the work of our artist [Hoelzel] point in the direction of this lofty goal. The awareness that he has devoted himself to this goal should already be fully gratifying to him and will be the best remuneration of his legacy.⁴²

Why did Hoelzel keep coming back to these religious motifs for almost thirty years? Some, like Gerhard Leistner, point out that the religious-sounding titles were sometimes added only in retrospect for different exhibits, or changed from one to another, and pictorial elements were repeated in works with varying titles. This convinces him that Hoelzel really had no interest in religion and that the "Adoration" theme, for example, was just a jumping-off point for creating an abstract painting.⁴³ More convincingly, Wolfgang Venzmer, Hoelzel's dedicated biographer, has a different interpretation that reiterates the primitivist connection:

This type of theme for Hoelzel has a relation to the "concept of the return of man to an Arcadian, undisturbed environment" as it plays a role in the pictorial world of Pierre Puvis de Chavannes, Hans von Marées or Paul Gauguin. *His* Arcadia is peopled with angels, worshipers and those humbly abiding. And the fact that he takes up the theme of Adoration can also be understood as a search for a lost ideal world. The Adorations were for him, or more exactly, became for him more and more something like a foothold, a form to be filled with the memory of something forgotten that also needs to be recovered.⁴⁴

⁴² Nur eines laesst sich vorhersagen: ihre Zeit wird erfuehlt sein, wenn man wieder in einem weiteren Umfange, als jetzt vielfach ueblich ist, Kunst verstehen wird nicht nur als einen Schmuck des Lebens neben anderen, sondern als ein Ringen der Menschenseele um eines ihrer hoechsten Gueter. In der Richtung eines so hoch gestellten Zieles weisen die Ideen, die fuer das Schaffen unseres Kuenstlers bestimmend sind. Das Bewusstsein, sich ganz fuer sie gegeben zu haben, darf ihm schon heute als eine vollkommene Genugtuung und als der schoenste Lohn seines Wirkens erscheinen. Heinrich Weizsaecker, "Adolf Hoelzel," in Julius Baum, *Die Stuttgarter Kunst der Gegenwart*. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1913), 148-149.

⁴³ *Heilige Ursula*, 42.

⁴⁴ Diese Thematik steht bei Hoelzel in einer Beziehung mit der "Vorstellung von der Rueckkehr des Menschen in eine arkadish-unberuehrte Umwelt," wie sie etwa in der Bildwelt von Pierre Puvis de

Hoelzel commented on the attraction he had for religious painting, and how for him, art and religion were inextricably linked.

For the artist it is about a refined sensibility for the great legends. Because a religious picture is its artistic illustration, which seems artistic and religious at the same time, if the wonderful legends are depicted using art in the highest sense. Art is religion, it puts one in a religious frame of mind, lifts one up, and this all the more when the underlying material has to do with faith.⁴⁵

The apparent contradiction between Hoelzel's statement "you can't paint with religion" and his many religious titles and references inspired the consideration of Roman Ziegelgaensburger, whose essay in the recent Hoelzel exhibit catalog concludes:

In Hoelzel's pictures you won't find a fighting Saint George, who might bring the harmonious composition out of balance with his energetic activity, as in Kandinsky, or a Madonna, who brings a dark sensibility to Marc's painting "Tirol," but instead devotional scenes that are always quiet, peaceful and above all compositionally exceptionally well-balanced. As a viewer one is supposed to be removed from the quotidian with these Christian references and together with the formal-artistic mode, elevated to a different, unusually harmonious frame of mind, transported, so to speak. Thus prepared, one could sensitively approach the religious content (not the intellectual) inherent - according to Hoelzel - in "pure" art, and ignore the complex underlying pictorial composition. This must ultimately be the reason that the avant-garde

Chavannes, Hans von Marées oder Paul Gauguin eine bestimmende Rolle spielt. *Sein* Arkadien ist bevoelkert von Engeln, von Anbetenden und demutig Verharrenden. Und dass er das Thema Anbetung aufgreift, is auch als die Suche nach der verlorenen heile Welt zu verstehen. Die Anbeutngen waren ihm oder, genauer, wurden ihm zusehends so etwas wie ein Halt, eine Form, die mit Erinnerungen an etwas Vergangenes, das zugleich wiederzugewinnen sei, gefuellt werden muesse. Venzmer, *Adolf Hoelzel, Leben und Werk*, 88.

⁴⁵ Fuer den Kuenstler handelt es sich um den feineren Sinn fuer die herrlichen Legenden. Denn das religioese Bild is ihre kuenstlerische Illustration, die eben dann kuenstlerisch und religioes gleichzeitig wirkt, wenn die wundervollen Legenden im hoechsten Sinn von Kunst dargestellt werden. Kunst ist Religion, sie selbst stimmt religioes, erhebt,und zwar um so mehr....wenn ein dem Glauben ensprechender Stoff unterlegt wird. *Ibid*, 86.

artist throughout his life - despite his definitive-sounding statement 'you can't paint with religion' - never did without the sacred reference.⁴⁶

Looking at the Maercklin window, now appropriately backlit in the Kunstmuseum Stuttgart's gallery display where its lambent colors achieve their full effect, the vague figural elements are easier to apprehend from a distance. The closer the viewer comes, the more the sense of music takes over. It has the complexity of a symphonic work in which simultaneous sounds from different instruments form changing chords, eliciting a range of emotions. The viewer can perceive an orchestral richness in which the abstract elements coexist in perfect equipoise. Opaque shapes are mixed with translucent ones, intensifying the glow of the warm colors. The force of the cobalt blue is intensified by its proximity to red or orange. The overall effect is highly energized and dynamic, but also perfectly balanced by the formal symmetry of the brilliantly colored panels set amongst a background of warm neutral rectangles. Hoelzel died in 1934 before this work was installed, and thus it stands as his final creative statement.

⁴⁶ Es findet sich eben in Hoelzel's Bildern kein kaempfender heilige Georg, der den harmonisch Bildaufbau durch sein energisches Tun ins Ungleichgewicht bringen koennte, wie bei Kandinsky oder eine Madonna, der in Marcs Gemaelde "Tirol" eine schwarze Sense zu schaffen macht, sondern immer ruhige, friedliche und vor allem kompositionell aeusserst ausgewogene Andachtsszenen. Als Betrachter sollte man durch solche christliche Anspielungen sogleich aus dem Alltag herausgenommen und zusammen mit dem Formal-Kuenstlerischen in eine andersartige, aussergewoehnliche harmonische Stimmung versetzt, sozusagen entrueckt werden. Derartig vorbereitet koennte man dem Religioesen (nicht dem Geistigen), das - so Hoelzel - der 'reinen' Kunst innewohnt, empfindsam gegenuebertreten und die ausgekluegelte, dahinter stehende Bildkonstruktion uebersehen. Dies muss letztlich auch der Grund gewesen sein, warum der avatgardistische Kuenstler zeitlebens - und das entgegen seiner zunaechst sehr entschieden wirkenden Aussage "Mit der Religion kann man nicht malen" - doch eigentlich nie 'ohne' sakrale Andeutung auskam. Roman Ziegelgaensburger, " 'Mit der Religion kann man nicht malen.' Ueberlegungen zum religioesen Motiv im Werk von Adolf Hoelzel," in *Kaleidoskop...*, 69.

CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSION

Adolf Hoelzel's life-long passion for exploring the universal laws governing all two-dimensional art-making, which he called the artistic means, took him on a fertile but solitary path from nineteenth-century academic naturalism to the forefront of twentieth-century non-objective painting. The universality of his theories was rooted in his understanding of the European painting tradition, particularly Gothic and Northern Renaissance painting, as well as the artwork of children and the insane, thus tying his investigations to larger themes of primitivism in European art. Even as his work moved farther away from objective depiction, his recurring evocation of themes from Christian iconography, especially those with small groups of people in reverential poses, reached back to an earlier period of sacred European art, as he pursued the ideal of harmony central to his artistic concerns.

Though long overlooked, the work of Adolf Hoelzel is being reevaluated and appreciated for its important contribution to German modernism. Until recently his reputation as a theoretician and teacher overshadowed the consideration of his work as an artist. As the history of modernism is revised, Hoelzel's paintings, drawings, and designs, as well as his ideas, reveal themselves to have been in step with and

often to have prefigured international developments in twentieth-century art. Through a reworking of the tradition of religious imagery and the stained-glass medium of early Christian church art, Hoelzel found a path from nineteenth-century academic narrative to innovative twentieth-century abstraction.

One hazard inherent in tracing a cultural development like abstraction in visual art is the impulse to simplify a complex trajectory into a single story line. Hence in the writing of twentieth-century art history, the European story becomes distilled into a story of the innovations of the Paris-centered art world being displaced by New York during World War II. Public collections of modern art established in New York before World War II helped solidify the canon and the story. Although German Modernism in art and design, especially the Bauhaus, was included in these, neither Alfred Barr at the Museum of Modern Art nor Hilla von Rebay, at New York's Guggenheim Museum, purchased a work by Adolf Hoelzel. His absence from these major collections is certainly one factor in his anonymity in the United States.

Another factor in Hoelzel's general obscurity may have been his lack of interest in self-promotion. While deeply appreciated by his students and a few collectors, his interest in teaching, creating, and theoretical exploration was not accompanied by the utopian urge to set the world on a new path. He didn't rail against the evils of the past, nor did he prescribe an elixir. Hoelzel was not identified with a group or movement. He passionately but rather quietly pursued a deeply considered line of inquiry into the nature of art, and shared it with those around him. It is left to future historians to situate his ideas and works in a larger and more

nuanced evaluation of early twentieth-century abstraction. Fortunately, the increasing availability of the primary materials from Hoelzel's hitherto unpublished writings via the ongoing digitalization project, combined with the projected future work of the Hoelzel Foundation will provide more opportunities for this to happen.

While the concerns about structure and color that led him to abstraction appear on the one hand to be purely formal, the spiritual underpinnings are clear upon more careful consideration of both the art and Hoelzel's written musings. The universal message of harmony expressed and revealed in visual form, especially in Hoelzel's late work, shows how his formal considerations were integrated with what was for him an essentially spiritual insight. A fragment of Hoelzel's writing reads like a poem and seems to express the metaphysical nature of these mature works, as well as the potential for abstraction to connect with deeper truths. It evokes the fluid quality of the Maercklin window:

Forms break up into innumerable parts
and fade away
Melt away even farther
Somewhere over there,
collect themselves again
to new forms.

Thus something new is created out of something past
Decaying and becoming,
The configuring of the world
is always the same
and eternal.¹

¹ Gestalten sich spalten /In unzählige Teile/Und schwinden dahin/ Zerfließen weitfort./ Irgendwo dort sammeln sie sich wieder/Zu neuen Gestalten/So wird etwas Neues aus Früherem geschaffen./Verwesen und Werden/ Das Weltengestalten ist immer dasselbe/ Und ewig. Hoelzel Archive_09_NT_T356.

ILLUSTRATIONS



Figure 1. Adolf Hoelzel, *Anbetung der Koenige* (Adoration of the Magi), 1912, oil on canvas, 43.3 x 48.8 inches, formerly Staatsgalerie Stuttgart, lost during World War II



Figure 2. Adolf Hoelzel, *Abstraktion* (Abstraction), 1912, oil on canvas, 19.9 x 16 inches, private collection



Figure 3. Adolf Hoelzel, *Legende (Anbetung der Engel in Gruen)*, (Legend - Adoration of the Angels in Green), around 1908, oil on canvas, 26.4 x 33.5 inches, Delta Kunst GmbH, Hannover



Figure 4. Giotto di Bondone, *Adoration of the Magi*, 1304 - 1306, fresco, 78.7 x 72.8 inches, Cappella degli Scrovegni, Arena Chapel, Padua



Figure 5. Adolf Hoelzel, *Kartenlegerin* (Fortune Teller), 1886, oil on canvas, 32.9 x 27 inches, Kunstforum Ostdeutsche Galerie, Regensburg



Figure 6. *Dachauer Landschaft (Dachauer Moos)* (Dachau Landscape - Dachau Moor), 1904, oil on canvas, 25.8 x 33.7 inches, private collection, Stuttgart



Figure 7. Rogier van der Weyden, 1455, *St. Columba Altarpiece, Adoration of the Magi*, center panel of triptych, oil on panel, 54.3 x 60.2 inches, Alte Pinakothek, Munich



Figure 8. Adolf Hoelzel, *Biblisches Motiv* (Biblical Theme), 1914, oil on canvas, 48.8 x 42.5 inches, Kunstmuseum Stuttgart



Figure 9. Adolf Hoelzel, *Komposition (Anbetung)* (Composition - Adoration), around 1928, pastel on paper. 17.5 x 13.3 inches, private collection

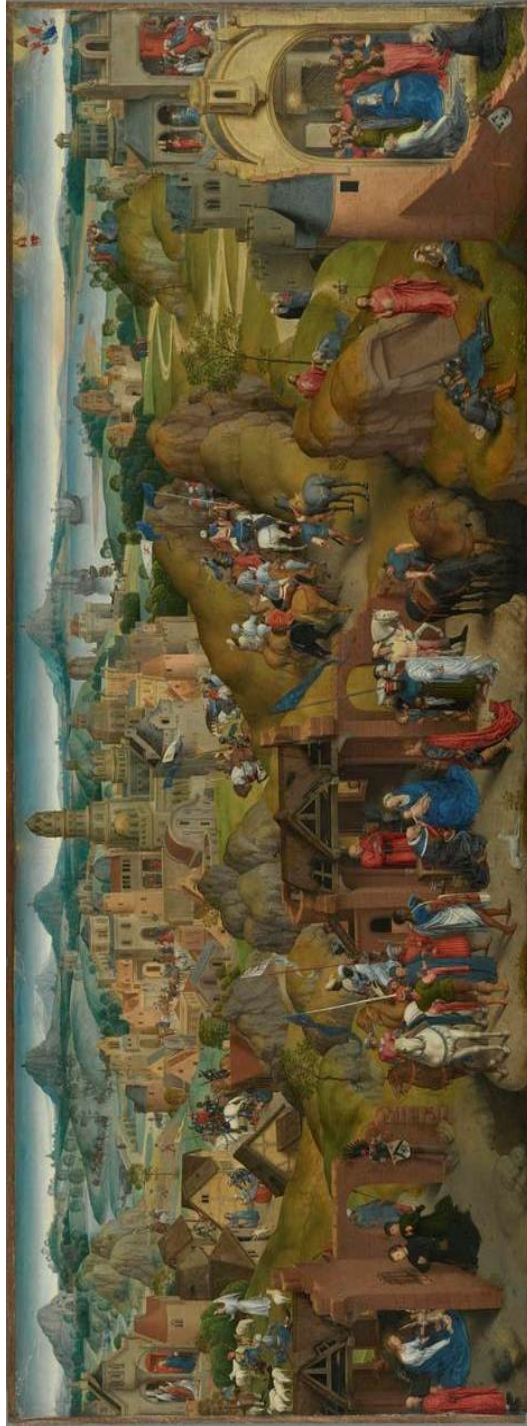


Figure 10. Hans Memling, *The Seven Joys of the Virgin*, 1480, oil on panel, 31.89 × 74.41 inches, Alte Pinakothek, Munich



Figure 11. Adolf Hoelzel, *Heilige Ursula* (Saint Ursula), 1914/15, oil on canvas, 49.2 x 43.3 inches, Kunstforum Ostdeutsche Galerie, Regensburg

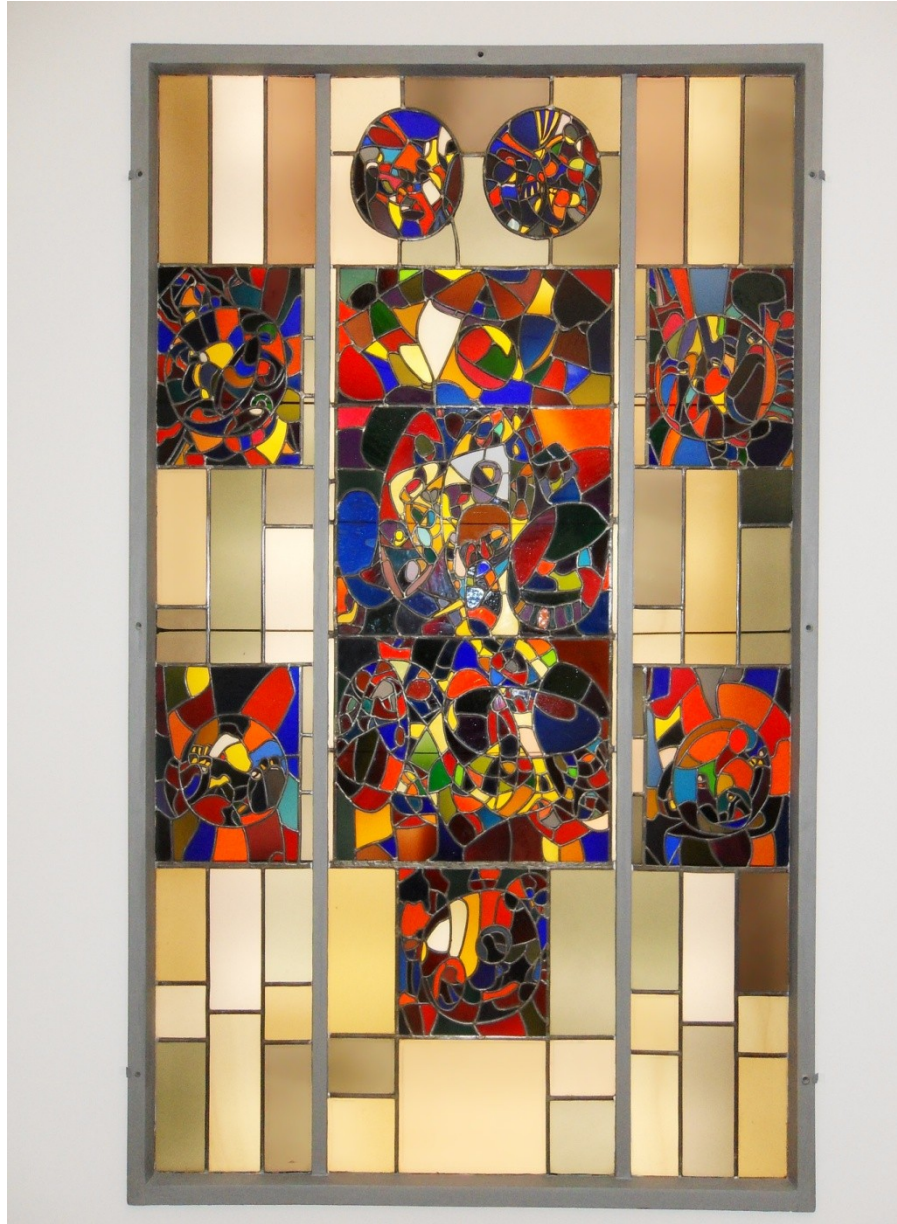


Figure 12. Adolf Hoelzel, *Window for the J.F. Maercklin Company*, 1934, stained-glass, (middle section: ca. 57 x 24 inches), Kunstmuseum Stuttgart

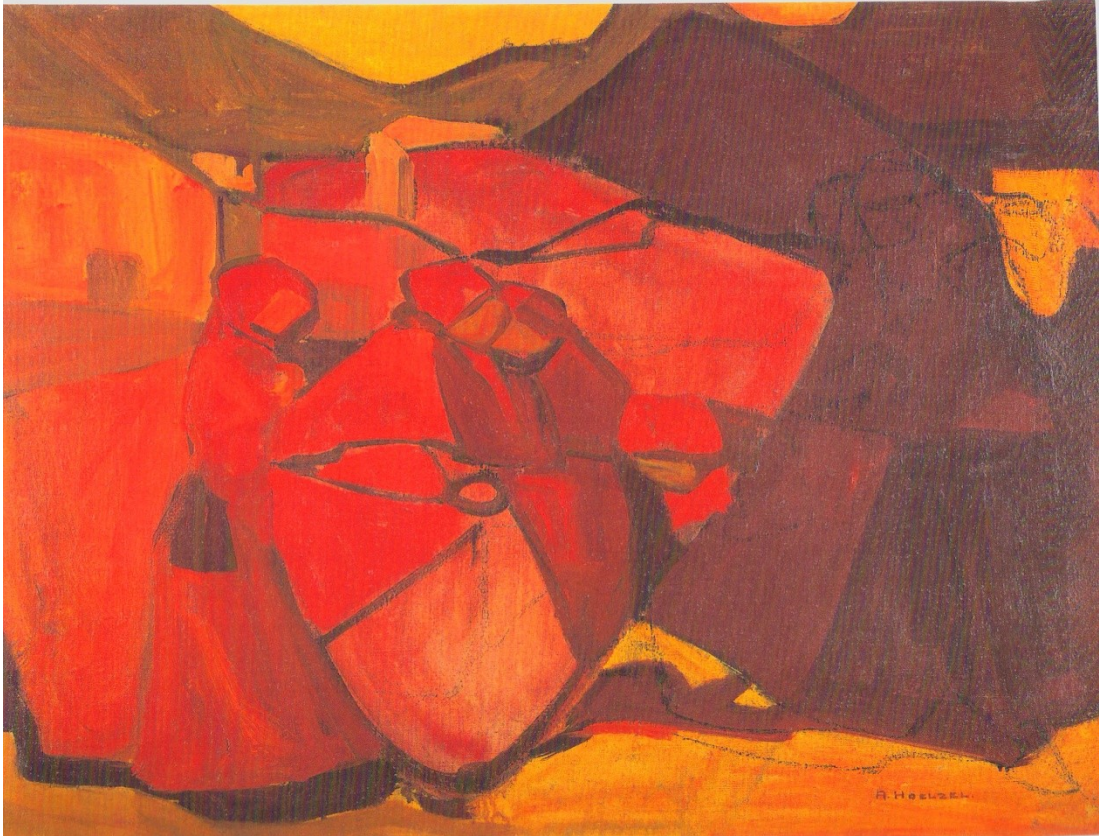


Figure 13. Adolf Hoelzel, *Komposition in Rot I* (Composition in Red I), 1905, oil on canvas, 26.8 x 35.5 inches, Sprengel Museum, Hannover



60

Figure 14. Adolf Hoelzel, *Golgotha (Skizze zu einer Grablegung)* (Sketch for a Buriel), 1907/1908, oil on canvas, 26.8 x 33.1 inches, Delta Kunst GmbH, Hannover



Figure 15. Giotto Di Bondone, *Lamentation Over Christ*, 1305-1308, fresco, Cappella degli Scrovegni, Arena Chapel, Padua



Figure 16. Adolf Hoelzel, *Gruene Anbetung* (Green Adoration), 1908/1909, oil on canvas, 20.5 x 24.2 inches, Kunstforum Ostdeutsche Galerie, Regensburg



Figure 17. Adolf Hoelzel, *Anbetung der Frauen* (Adoration of the Women), 1912, oil on canvas, 33 x 27 inches, Kunstmuseum Stuttgart



Figure 18. Adolf Hoelzel, *Biblische Figurenkomposition* (Biblical Composition with Figures), n.d., pencil on paper, 7.6 x 10 inches, Kunstmuseum Stuttgart,



Figure 19. Jan the Elder, *Adoration of the Magi*, 1598, oil on copper, 13 x 18.9 inches, Kunsthistorisches Museum Vienna



100

Figure 20. Adolf Hoelzel, *Ornament V*, 1917/18, oil on cardboard (in wooden frame), 9.8 x 7.5 inches Kunstmuseum Stuttgart

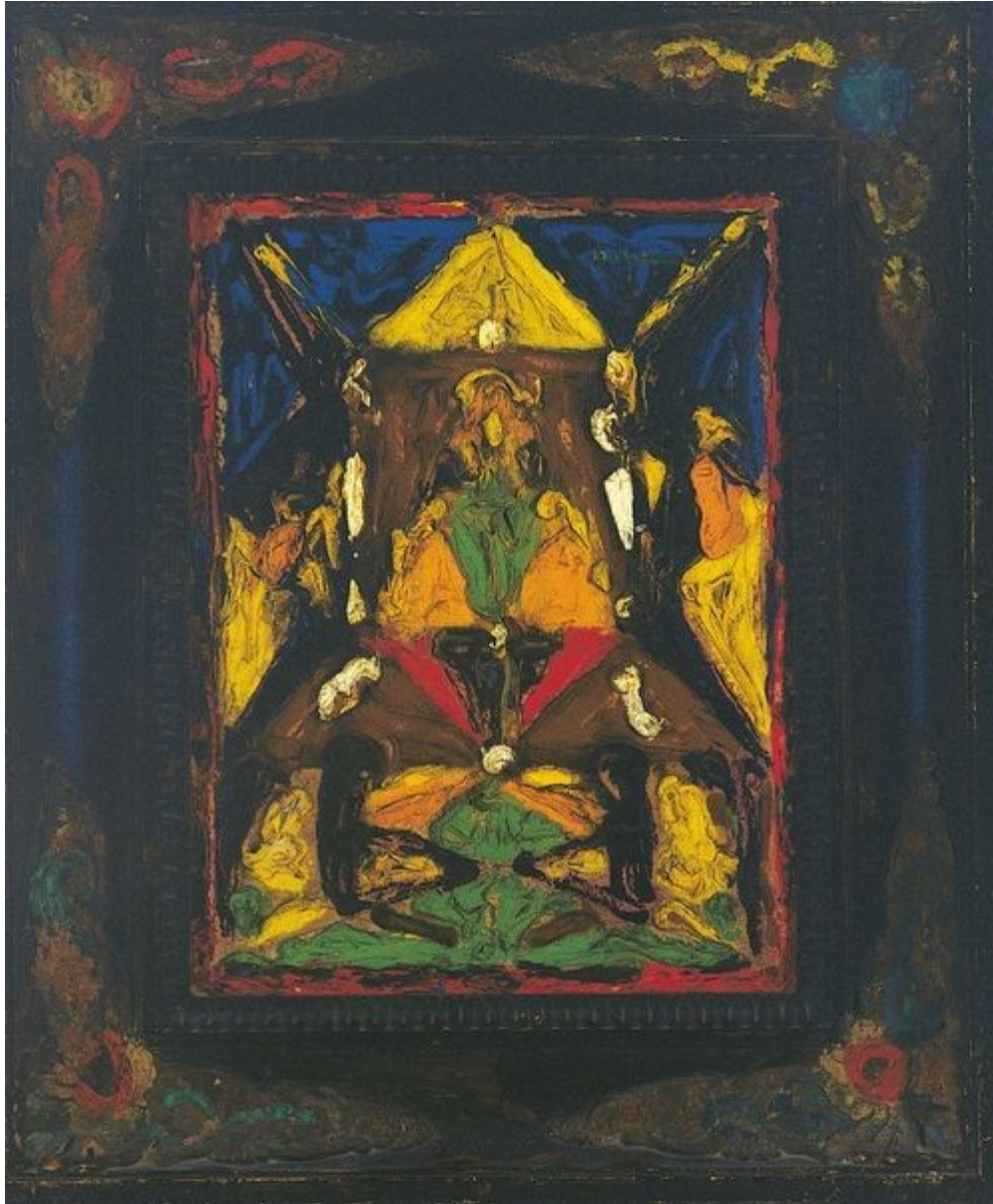


Figure 21. Adolf Hoelzel, *Altarbild* (Altarpiece), 1917/18, oil on board, 9.8 x 7.5 inches, in painted wooden frame, Kunstmuseum Stuttgart

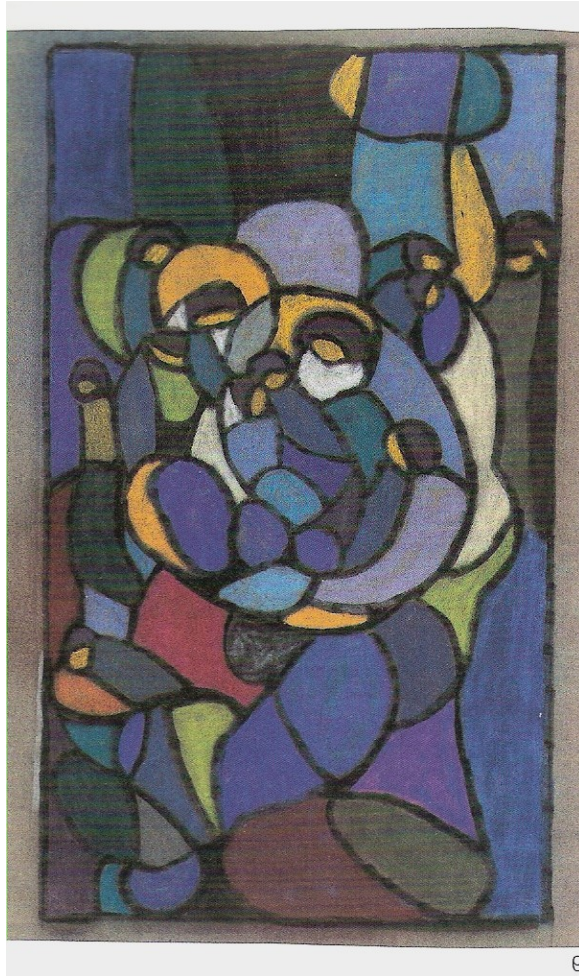


Figure 22. Adolf Hoelzel, *Stained-glass design for Pelikan window*, 1932, pastel on paper, 19 x 11 inches, Kunstmuseum Stuttgart

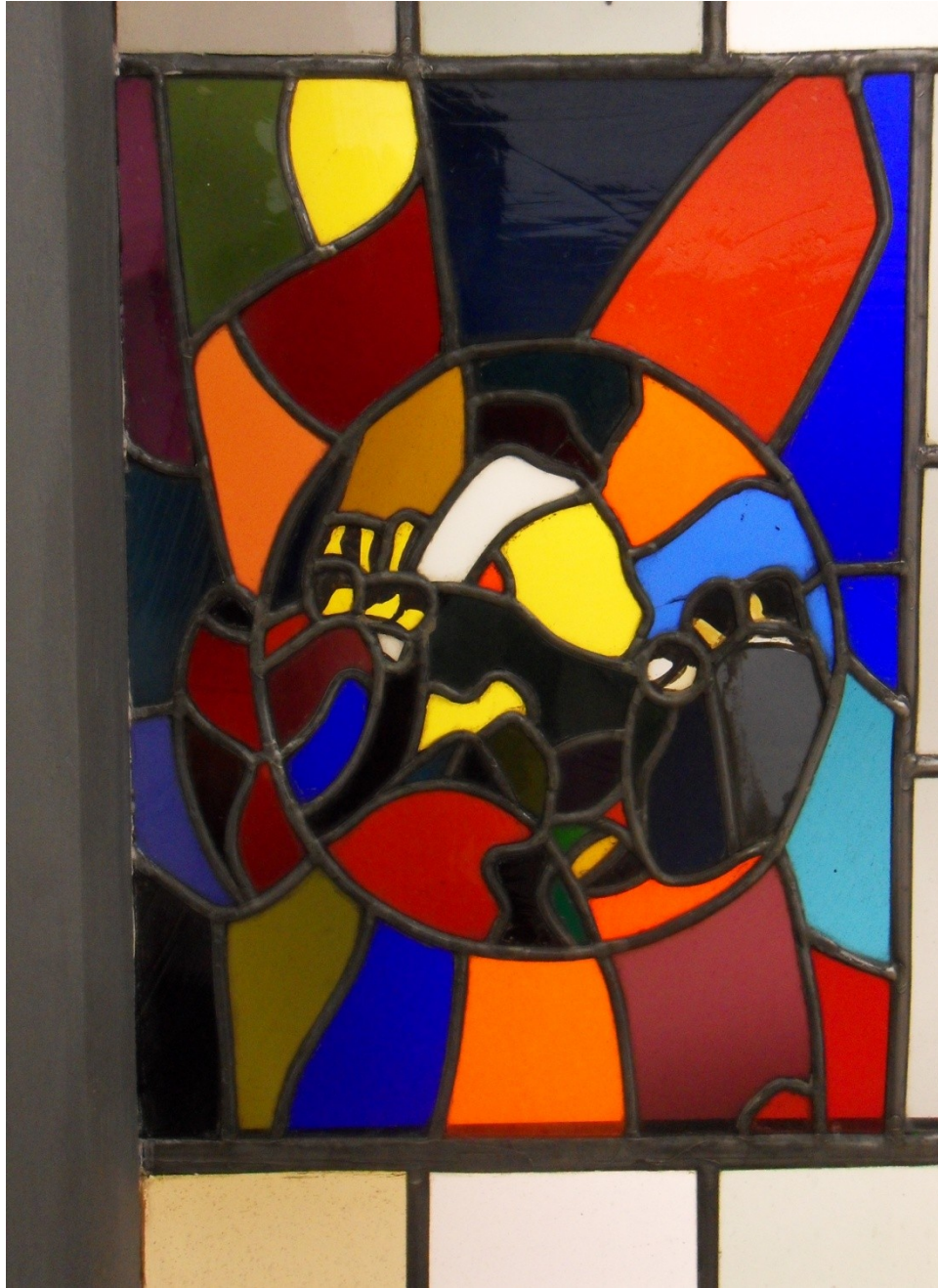


Figure 23. Adolf Hoelzel, *Window for the J.F. Maercklin Company (detail)*, 1934, stained-glass, Kunstmuseum Stuttgart



Figure 24. Giovanni di Paolo, *Rose of Heaven*, 1445, manuscript illumination for Dante's *Divine Comedy*, 3 x 6-5/8 inches, Yates-Thompson Codex, British Library

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Ackermann, Marion, Gerhard Leistner and Daniel Spanke. *Kaleidoskop. Hoelzel in der Avantgarde* (exh. cat.). Heidelberg: Kehrer Verlag, 2009.
- Allgaier, Dr. Elke, et al. "Staatsgalerie Stuttgart." <http://www.staatsgalerie.de/>
- Baum, Julius. *Die Stuttgarter Kunst der Gegenwart*. Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1913.
- Bayer, Rudolf. *Adolf Hoelzel - Pastelle und Zeichnungen*. (exh. cat.) Bietigheim-Bissingen: Galerie Bayer, 1996.
- Beck, Rainer. *Adolf Hoelzel - Aufbruch zur Moderne*. (exh. cat.) Munich: Christoph Duerr Verlag, 1980.
- Biema, Carry van. *Farben und Formen als lebendige Kräfte*. Jena: Eugen Diederich, 1930.
- Connelly, Frances. *The Sleep of Reason: Primitivism in Modern European Art and Aesthetics, 1725 - 1907*. University Park: Pennsylvania State University, 1995.
- Datenbank zum Beschlagnahmeinventar der Aktion "Entartete Kunst",
Forschungsstelle "Entartete Kunst", FU Berlin,
[http://emuseum.campus.fu-berlin.de/eMuseumPlus?
service=RedirectService&sp=Scollection&sp=SfieldValue&sp
=0&sp=0&sp=3&sp=SdetailList&sp=0&sp=Sdetail&sp=0&sp=F](http://emuseum.campus.fu-berlin.de/eMuseumPlus?service=RedirectService&sp=Scollection&sp=SfieldValue&sp=0&sp=0&sp=3&sp=SdetailList&sp=0&sp=Sdetail&sp=0&sp=F),
- Figura, Starr. *German Expressionism - The Graphic Impulse*. (exh. cat.) New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 2011.
- Fingesten, Peter. "Spirituality, Mysticism and Non-Objective Art," *Art Journal*, 21, no.1 (Autumn 1961), 2 - 6.
- Frèches-Thory, Claire and Antoine Terrasse. *The Nabis*. New York: Harry Abrams, 1991.
- Fry, Roger. "Flemish Art at Burlington House. I - The Primitives." *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs*, Vol. 50, No. 287, February 1927, 58 - 63 + 66 - 69 + 72 - 73.

- Gage, John. *Color and Culture: Practice and Meaning from Antiquity to Abstraction*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999.
- Haenlein, Carl. *Adolf Hoelzel - Bilder, Pastelle, Zeichnungen, Collagen*. (exh. cat.) Hannover: Kestner Gesellschaft, 1982.
- Haftmann Werner, *Malerei im 20. Jahrhundert*. Munich: Prestel, 1962.
- Hartt, Frederick and David G. Wilkins. *History of Italian Renaissance Art*. Seventh Edition. Upper Saddle River, London etc.: Prentice Hall, 2007.
- Hess, Walter. *Dokumente zum Verstaendnis der modernen Malerei*. Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1956.
- Hildebrandt, Hans. "Adolf Hoelzel als Zeichner." Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1913. Reprinted in *Adolf Hoelzel - Farbe - Zeichnung - Abstraktion*, published by Bauhaus-Archiv, Darmstadt: Eduard Roether Verlag, 1969.
- "Adolf Hoelzel - ein Beitrag zu seinem Wirken als Lehrer." *Werk*, 40, no. 3, Winterthur 1953, 99 - 104. Reprinted in *Adolf Hoelzel - Farbe - Zeichnung - Abstraktion*, published by Bauhaus-Archiv, Darmstadt: Eduard Roether Verlag, 1969.
- "Introduction" in *Katalog der Gedaechtnisausstellung zum hundertsten Geburtstag von Adolf Hoelzel*. (exh. cat.) Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer Verlag, 1953.
- Hoelzel, Adolf. "Archivbereich Hoelzel Transkriptionen. Transkriptionen des theoretischen Nachlasses von Adolf Hoelzel. 2290 Ressourcen." Hochschule fuer bildende Kunst, Hamburg. (ongoing digitalization project) http://ask23.hfbkhamburg.de/draft/archiv/ah_transkriptionen/
- "Über Formen und Massenverteilung im Bilde." *Ver Sacrum IV, Mittheilungen der Vereinigung Bildender Künstler Österreichs* Vienna 1901, 243-254.
- "Natur und Kunst," "Synthese und Analyse," "Erfindung und Verarbeitung," *Gedaechtnisausstellung Professor Adolf Hoelzel* (exh. cat.) (Stuttgart: Wuert. Kunstverein, 1947).
- Hofmann Werner. "Studien zur Kunsttheorie des 20. Jahrhunderts," *Zeitschrift fuer Kunstgeschichte*, 18, no. 2, 1955, Munich and Berlin: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 136 - 156.

Itten, Johannes. *The Art of Color : the Subjective Experience and Objective Rationale of Color*, Translated by Ernst van Haagen. New York : John Wiley, 2004.

-- "Adolf Hoelzel und sein Kreis." in *Der Pelikan, Sonderheft ueber Adolf Hoelzel zum 125-jaehrigen Bestehen der Firma Guenther Wagner in Hannover, no. 65*. Hannover, April 1963.

Kandinsky, Wassily. *Ueber das Geistige in der Kunst*. 10th Edition with an introduction by Max Bill. (Bern: Benteli Verlag. Original publication date 1912).

Klee, Alexander. *Adolf Hölzel und die Wiener Secession*. Prestel: Munich, Berlin, London, New York, 2006.

"Kunstmuseum Stuttgart." Stiftung Kunstmuseum Stuttgart,
<http://www.kunstmuseum-stuttgart.de/index.php?site=Home>

Lasko, Peter. *The Expressionist Roots of Modernism*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003.

Leonhard, Kurt. "Adolf Hoelzel - Vorlaeufer und Spaetentwickler." *Katalog Adolf Hoelzel. Monographien der Kuenstlergilde Esslingen*. Volume 10. Munich: 1968, 3 - 9. reprinted in: *Katalog Adolf Hoelzel, Pastelle und Zeichnungen aus einer privaten Sammlung*, Galerie Doebele Stuttgart, (exh. cat.) Stuttgart, 1991, 8 -13.

Leistner, Gerhard. *Adolf Hoelzel - Heilige Ursula 1914/15*. (exh. cat.) Regensburg: Museum Ostdeutsche Galerie, 2000.

--with Heidrun Berchtold, "Hoelzel zwischen Maehren und Schwaben. Eine illustrierte Reise durch seine Biografie" in Marion Ackermann, Gerhard Leistner and Daniel Spanke. *Kaleidoskop. Hoelzel in der Avantgarde* (exh. cat.). Heidelberg: Kehrer Verlag, 2009, 16 - 25.

Lemmé Maria. *Adolf Hoelzel - Gedanken und Lehren*. Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1933.

Lingner, Michael. "Exerzitien-Ornamente-Konzepte. Zur Eigenart der Schrift(sockel)bilder im 'Theoretischen Nachlass' von Adolf Hoelzel" in Marion Ackermann, Gerhard Leistner and Daniel Spanke. *Kaleidoskop. Hoelzel in der Avantgarde* (exh. cat.). Heidelberg: Kehrer Verlag, 2009, 132 - 137.

- with Karin von Maur and Wolfgang Venzmer. *Adolf Hölzel (1853-1934) – Der Kunsttheoretische Nachlass. Mit Beiträgen von Michael Lingner, Karin v. Maur und Wolfgang Venzmer.* Stuttgart: Kulturstiftung der Länder und der Staatsgalerie Stuttgart, 1998.
- Lipsey, Roger. *An Art of Our Own: The Spiritual in Twentieth-Century Art.* Boston and Shaftesbury: Shambhala, 1988.
- Long, Rose-Carol Washton, ed. *German Expressionism - Documents from the end of the Wilhelmine Empire to the Rise of National Socialism.* New York: G. K. Hall & Co., 1993.
- Lloyd, Jill. *German Expressionism: Primitivism and Modernity.* New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1991.
- Maur, Karin von. *Der verkannte Revolutionär - Adolf Hölzel: Werk und Wirkung.* Stuttgart, Leipzig: Hohenheim Verlag, 2003.
- "Hoelzel und seine Konzeption einer 'musikalischen Malerei' in Marion Ackermann, Gerhard Leistner and Daniel Spanke. *Kaleidoskop. Hoelzel in der Avantgarde* (exh. cat.). Heidelberg: Kehrer Verlag, 2009, 80 - 89.
- Morgan, David. "The Idea of Abstraction in German Theories of the Ornament from Kant to Kandinsky," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 50, no. 3, Summer 1992, 231 - 242.
- "Netherlands 15th - 16th Centuries: Masterpieces of the Picture Gallery."
Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna
<http://www.khm.at/en/collections/picture-gallery/selected-masterpieces/>
- Nowak, Adolf. *Kirchliche Kunst-Denkmale aus Olmuetz*, published by Kaiser Franz Josef-Gewerbe-Museum, Olmuetz: E. Hoelzel, 1890 - 92.
- Pan, David. *Primitive Renaissance: Rethinking German Expressionism.* Lincoln and London, University of Nebraska Press, 2001.
- Parris, Nina Gumpert. "Adolf Hoelzel's structural and color theory and its relationship to the development of the basic course at the Bauhaus: a dissertation in history of art." Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1979.
- Pope-Hennessy, John Wyndham. *Paradiso: The Illuminations to Dante's Divine Comedy by Giovanni Di Paolo.* New York: Random House, 1993.

- Ringbom, Sixten. *The Sounding Cosmos: A Study in the Spiritualism of Kandinsky and the Genesis of Abstract Painting*. Turku, Finland: ABO Akademi, 1970.
- Roessler, Arthur. *Neu-Dachau: Ludwig Dill, Adolf Hoelzel, Arthur Langhammer*. Bielefeld and Leipzig: Verlag von Velhagen und Klasing, 1905.
- Roethke, Ulrich. "Wege zu kuehner Kunst: Adolf Hoelzel, Hans Prinzhorn, und die 'Bildnerei der Geisteskranken.'" in Marion Ackermann, Gerhard Leistner and Daniel Spanke. *Kaleidoskop. Hoelzel in der Avantgarde* (exh. cat.). Heidelberg: Kehrer Verlag, 2009, 116 - 124.
- "Adolf-Hoelzel Stiftung." <http://www.adolf-hoelzel.de/>
- Rosenblum, Robert. *Transformations in Late Eighteenth Century Art*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967.
- Rueden, Egon. *Van de Velde - Kandinsky - Hoelzel. Typologische Studie zur Entstehung der gegenstandslosen Malerei*. Wuppertal, Ratingen, Kastellaun, 1971.
- Smolik, Noemi. "Unerkannt, verkannt, wiederentdeckt. Adolf Hoelzel, Frantisek Kupka, Wassily Kandinsky." in Marion Ackermann, Gerhard Leistner and Daniel Spanke. *Kaleidoskop. Hoelzel in der Avantgarde* (exh. cat.). Heidelberg: Kehrer Verlag, 2009, 126 -131.
- Schmitz, Norbert. *Kunst und Wissenschaft im Zeichen der Moderne. Exemplarische Studien zum Verhaeltnis von klassischer Avantgarde und zeitgenoessischer Kunstgeschichte in Deutschland. Hoelzel - Woelfflin - Kandinsky - Dvorák*. Diss. Univ. Wuppertal 1993. Alfter 1993.
- Spanke, Daniel. "Kaleidoskop und Ornament - zu Hoelzels Konzeption des modernen Bildes," in Marion Ackermann, Gerhard Leistner and Daniel Spanke. *Kaleidoskop. Hoelzel in der Avantgarde* (exh. cat.). Heidelberg: Kehrer Verlag, 2009.
- "Tour." Alte Pinakothek, Munich
http://www.pinakothek.de/alte-pinakothek/sammlung/rundgang/rundgang_en.php
- Tuchman, Maurice, Judi Freeman, and Carel Blotkamp. *The Spiritual in Art: Abstract Painting 1890 - 1985* (exh. cat.) New York: Abbeville Presss, 1986.
- Venzmer, Wolfgang. *Adolf Hoelzel, Leben und Werk. Monographie mit Verzeichnis der Oelbilder, Glasfenster und ausgewaehlter Pastelle*. Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1982.

-- *Hoelzel und sein Kreis - Der Beitrag Stuttgart zur Malerei des 20. Jahrhunderts.* (exh. cat.) Stuttgart: Wuerttembergischen Kunstverein, 1961.

Vergo, Peter. "Hoelzel and Itten," *Abstraction: Towards a New Art - Painting 1910 - 1920.* (exh. cat.) London: Tate Gallery, 1980, 76 - 79.

Weiss, Peg. *Kandinsky in Munich - the Formative Jugendstil Years.* New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1979.

-- *Kandinsky and Old Russia: The Artist as Ethnographer and Shaman.* New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995.

Weizsaecker, Heinrich. "Adolf Hoelzel," in Julius Baum, *Die Stuttgarter Kunst der Gegenwart.* Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1913.

Ziegelgaensburger, Roman. "'Mit der Religion kann man nicht malen.'
Ueberlegungen zum religioesen Motiv im Werk von Adolf Hoelzel," in Marion Ackermann, Gerhard Leistner and Daniel Spanke. *Kaleidoskop. Hoelzel in der Avantgarde* (exh. cat.) Heidelberg: Kehrer Verlag, 2009, 64 - 71.

VITA

Sharon Reeber was born in New York in 1962 and attended public schools near New York City. She studied German, art, art history, and music at Tufts University, graduating magna cum laude in 1984. From 1982 - 1984 she was a student at Eberhard-Karls-Universitaet in Tuebingen, Germany, an experience that provided opportunities for first-hand encounters with the art and architecture of Europe. Upon returning to New York, she was assistant to motivational research pioneer Dr. Ernest Dichter. This was followed by work in Public Affairs for the U.S. European Command in Stuttgart, Germany. She has travelled to and pursued research in art history in Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Italy, England, France, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Greece, and Japan.

Since returning to the United States, Ms. Reeber has taught and developed her studio practice. She was on the faculty and Board of Directors of the Carnegie Arts Center, and has been adjunct professor at the University of St. Mary and at Benedictine College in Kansas, and the University of Missouri. Most recently, she has taught undergraduate courses in Drawing, Painting, Design, Twentieth-Century Art History, and History of Visual Art. She has assisted Professor Craig Subler in the Printmaking Studio at the University of Missouri, Kansas City.

As an artist, Ms. Reeber has exhibited widely across the United States and held workshops at her studio. Her work is included in private and corporate collections in the U.S., Europe, and South America. As a gallery director, she curated

and organized exhibits for a not-for-profit arts organization in Missouri.

While completing graduate studies at the University of Missouri, Ms. Reeber has been a research assistant to the Curator of Decorative Arts at the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, providing translations and art historical research for a major exhibit, and assisted with an exhibit catalog for the Nerman Museum of Art in Kansas.