



P R E S S E M I T T E I L U N G

29. April 2010

Lecture Adi Efal: Distancing the Past: Alois Riegl's Realist History

Alois Riegl's art history has been the subject of numerous attempts to pinpoint its philosophical orientation. Adi Efal suggests a further approach: Austrian neo-Kantian realism. She considers the metaphysical premises of neo-Kantian realism insightful for an understanding of Riegl's "Kunstwollen". Riegl was acquainted with a peculiar turn-of-the-century Austrian variant of the neo-Kantian movement: Neo-Kantian realism. This school insisted on the reality of human apprehension, encompassing both nature and mind, and conceived of this reality as consisting of the perpetually changing distance between humans and things. In Riegl's art history, as well as in this peculiar version of realism, distance is understood as the spatio-temporal duration (Dauer) of things-of-nature. Structures of distancing, then, are the structures of reality itself. Adi Efal interprets Riegl's concept of "Kunstwollen" from a neo-Kantian realist perspective and considers how this approach can lend insight into Riegl's "Der moderne Denkmalkultus: Sein Wesen und seine Entstehung" (1903). In this essay, Riegl developed a typology of values with which monuments can be endowed. That typology rests on the various attitudes modern culture establishes between itself and material remnants of the past. Adi Efal argues that Riegl's central differentiation between "Age-value" (Alterswert) and "Historical-value" (Historischen Wert) relies on the dynamics of distancing which is contained in his formulation of "Kunstwollen". She reflects additionally on Riegl's contributions to both a realist theory of art history and a neo-Kantian realist conception of values.

Adi Efal

Distancing the Past: Alois Riegl's Realist History

Lecture at the IFK, Wien

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Selected publications: Panofsky's Idea and Auerbach's Figura: Two Iconodulist Philological Experiments, in: The Protocols of the History and Theory Department of the

Bezalel Academy, 14, October 2009; Iconology and Iconicity. Towards an Iconic History of Figures, between Erwin Panofsky and Jean-Luc Marion, in: Naharaim. Zeitschrift für deutsch-jüdische Literatur und Kulturgeschichte, I/2/III, 2008; Habitude against itself: Redefining the 'Symbol' in Turn-of-the-Century French Visual Symbolist Discourse, in: Æ. Canadian Aesthetics Journal, 13, Summer 2007.