

The individual contribution of each author is clearly visible. Each of them wrote two chapters while the introduction and epilogue were written by Matthew Rampley. The book opens with basic information on the history of the most significant museums—their patrons, private collectors, and their relationships with the imperial and local authorities. Special emphasis is given to the position of the museums in the urban fabric and the efforts to transform each city with new museum buildings into a cultural capital. The architectural designs of those buildings specifically built for museums are analyzed from the point of view of style, while the sculptural decorations and paintings on the facades and in the interiors are examined based on their iconographic program.

Also analyzed are spatial layouts and the correspondence of the exhibition halls' decorations with the displayed artifacts, the furnishings of the museums and galleries, and the styles of picture framing. Additionally, authors touch on the permanent exhibitions in trying to determine to what degree national ideologies and aesthetics played a role in their concepts. Furthermore, they explore the number and profiles of museum visitors and a gradual modernization, or “cleansing” of the galleries from a huge number of works that used to hang on the walls before the end of the nineteenth century. Finally, the authors examine gender issues, showing that, although throughout the nineteenth-century museums were places dominated by men, in the early twentieth century, specifically from 1913, the first females were employed as curators at the Museum of Fine Arts in Budapest and at the Museum for Carniola in Ljubljana.

The history of the museum in Austria-Hungary is contextualized within the history of museums in other European countries, primarily France and the German empire. The numerous particularities of the Austro-Hungarian museums, it is explained, stem from the complex political structure of the country and the fact that it was an extremely diverse area in which multiple nations established institutions to gain visibility in society. At the same time, the authors emphasize that not everything should be interpreted through the point of view of national policies. Although the museums were regularly products of national ambitions, there was at the same time a distinct sort of loyalty to the ruling House of Habsburg, and the connections established by the museum staff largely transcended narrow national and ethnic borders. The text of this monograph, therefore, clearly shows how the history of art actually became internationalized in the age of nationalism.

It can be concluded that, considering the breadth of the subject, this monograph not only represents an important contribution to the history of museums in the Habsburg Empire but also a contribution to the history of the Viennese school of art history, one of the starting points of the history of art as a profession. As such, it will undoubtedly serve numerous researchers as a starting point for further investigations.

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Afflerbach, Holger. *On a Knife Edge: How Germany Lost the First World War*

Translated by Anne Buckley and Caroline Summers. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022. Pp. xiii + 557.

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Holger Afflerbach's *Auf Messers Schneide* was first published in German in 2018 and now appears in a new English edition, expertly translated by Anne Buckley and Caroline Summers. Its main—and most controversial—arguments center on the question of whether Imperial Germany's defeat was inevitable

after the failure of the Schlieffen Plan in September 1914. For Afflerbach, the outcome of the war remained “on a knife’s edge” until 1918, although he is also at pains to stress that after 1914 only two, albeit equally likely, results, were possible: a draw or an Allied victory. Significantly, Germany’s military leaders and statesmen had to make a series of “spectacular strategic errors” (80) in order to throw away the possibility of stalemate, the most important of them being the declaration of unrestricted submarine warfare in 1917, which brought the United States into the war. At the same time, the Allies, particularly after 1916, were seized by an irrational determination to win irrespective of the costs. This means that they “bore a great deal of the responsibility” for the war’s “long duration” and even more so for its disastrous legacy (429–30).

Afflerbach’s book has grabbed attention primarily because it challenges key elements in the “Fischer thesis,” namely the contention, put forward by the Hamburg historian Fritz Fischer in the 1960s, that Germany’s leaders engaged in a conscious “grasp at world power” between 1914 and 1918, and therefore deliberately and consistently sabotaged all opportunities for a negotiated settlement. Yet while refuting this aspect of Fischer’s findings, Afflerbach still acknowledges that “German society had an unjustified degree of trust in its own military strength and this inspired Germany’s actions from the very beginning of the war, interrupted only by sudden fits of panic” (419). This suggests not only continuities with the Third Reich but also with the 1950s and early 1960s, when West German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer pursued an over-confident “policy of strength” toward the Communist East that occasionally gave way to agonizing moments of self-doubt. Most notably this was the case during the Spiegel Affair in 1962, to which Afflerbach makes passing reference (17).

Understandably, Afflerbach has less to say about Austria-Hungary, but “Germany’s most important ally,” as he calls it (19), still makes appearances at regular intervals throughout the book. On the one hand, there is little new or surprising in the claim that the Habsburg Empire was more of a liability than an asset when it came to joint military operations on the battlefield. On the other hand, Afflerbach—building on his much-admired 2002 study of the Triple Alliance from 1882 to 1914—has something new to say about the bigger strategic mistakes made by the Dual Monarchy, in particular its failure to prevent Italy’s declaration of war in May 1915 by agreeing to territorial concessions. “The Italian intervention,” he argues, “was a central turning point of the First World War,” not only because it opened another front against the Central Powers but also because it “made it less likely that the conflict could be ended by political compromise [as] the Austro-Hungarian and British governments would . . . discover in 1917” (93).

Where Afflerbach’s book will be of less interest to historians of Austria is his fixation on “the key political and military decision-makers” and the large-scale backing that they supposedly received from their respective societies, as opposed to the “victims’ of [the] war” (5). If the category “victims” is understood to include not only the huge numbers of civilians as well as soldiers who experienced Habsburg military “justice” at its most brutal and “dirty” (see Hannes Leidinger, Verena Moritz, Karin Moser, and Wolfram Dornik, *Habsburgs schmutziger Krieg: Ermittlungen zur österreichisch-ungarischen Kriegsführung 1914–1918* [St. Pölten, 2014]), but also the many brave men and women among them—representing all the different nationalities and social strata of Central Europe—who became active in the growing resistance against war and Habsburg tyranny, then this is a significant omission. The Dual Monarchy wanted to arrange secret talks from 1916 at the latest, at least with Russia and/or France and Britain (less so with Italy). But this was only so that it could continue to repress the important movements for national liberation and social justice within its own imperial borders (and within the lower ranks of its own military). As such, it is difficult to see how a negotiated peace in late 1916 could have been anything but temporary and unstable, a blunt instrument to stave off a German as much as an Austrian problem: what to replace the defunct Habsburg Empire with, without further undermining the foundations of German power.