

# Felix Horb: Notes in the margins of Max Dvořák, Hans Sedlmayr and Erwin Panofsky

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[...] the hallmark of the new type of researcher is not the eye for the 'all-encompassing whole' nor the eye for the 'comprehensive context' (which mediocrity has claimed for itself) but rather the capacity to be at home in the marginal domains.

Walter Benjamin, 'Rigorous Study of Art', 1933.



Figure 1 Friedrich Feigl, *Portrait of Felix Horb*, 1909.

Oil on canvas. Stockholm University Art Collections. (Photo Christian Saltas.)

Felix Horb is one of the lesser-known art historians of the Vienna School. He never held a permanent position within the academy and his publications are few. His main contributions to the art historical field are his studies on architectural representation in Late Medieval painting, presented in his unpublished dissertation of 1923 and in the publications *Das Innenraumbild* (The Inner-room Image) from 1938 and *Cavallinis Haus der Madonna* (Cavallini's House of the Madonna) from 1945. He also published a book on a painting by Vincent Sellaer and one single, odd article.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Felix Horb, 'Duccios und Giotto's Architekturbild und seine Vorgeschichte', Stockholm University Library, MAG HUM 89.309 [Vienna, 1923]; *Das Innenraumbild des späten Mittelalters. Seine Entstehungsgeschichte*, Zürich and Leipzig: Max Niehans Verlag, 1938; *Cavallinis Haus der Madonna*, Gothenburg: Wettergren & Kerners Förlag, 1945;

Horb's method could be called constructivist. It was founded in Alois Riegl's and especially Max Dvořák's early works, but there are connections also with the New Vienna School and Hans Sedlmayr. Furthermore, Horb's studies are in direct dialogue with Erwin Panofsky and the Warburg School.

Horb was born in 1890 and grew up in Prague.<sup>2</sup> His older brother Max Horb (1882–1907) was an expressionist painter who belonged to the circle of Max Brod and Frans Kafka.<sup>3</sup> Stockholm University owns a portrait of Felix Horb, dated 1909, which was painted by Friedrich Feigl, another member of the group (Fig. 1).<sup>4</sup> Felix Horb's elder sister Gabriele (1876–1957) was politically active and married to Karl Heller, one of the founders of the Social Democratic Party in Czechoslovakia.<sup>5</sup> Heller was a member of the Czech Parliament between 1920 and 1938. Another sister, Valerie (1886–1948), was a translator and participated in the publication of a book on anti-Semitism at the anarchist press of Michael Kácha in 1933.<sup>6</sup>

In 1910 Horb went to Vienna, to study art history, archaeology and philosophy.<sup>7</sup> When he arrived, Max Dvořák had recently been appointed professor. Dvořák's principal work up to that date was *Das Rätsel der Kunst der Brüder van Eyck* (The Enigma of the Art of the Brothers van Eyck).<sup>8</sup> He was at the time still heavily influenced by Riegl, not least *Das holländische Gruppenporträt* (The Dutch Group

'Kunstdenkmäler herausgeben von Ernst Garger', *Konsthistorisk tidskrift*, vol. XX, 1952, 33–7; *Zu Vincent Sellaers Eklektizismus*, Stockholm: Kungl. Vittterhets Historie och Antikvitetsakademien, 1956.

<sup>2</sup> Sten Karling, 'Felix Horb in Memoriam', *Konsthistorisk tidskrift*, vol. XXVII, 1958, 138–9, is the only publication on Felix Horb. The best source for biographical information about him and his relatives is the documentation on police interrogations that took place from his arrival in Sweden in 1939 until he received Swedish citizenship in 1955, Statens utlänningskommission 401819, Felix Horb. Riksarkivet, Stockholm. I am currently working on the intellectual biography of Horb, to be published by the Royal Swedish Academy of Letters, History and Antiquities.

<sup>3</sup> Nicholas Sawicki, 'The Critic as Patron and Mediator. Max Brod, Modern Art, and Jewish Identity in Early Twentieth-Century Prague', *Images*, vol. 6, 2013, 30–51, with further references.

<sup>4</sup> Sten Karling, *The Stockholm University Collection of Paintings*, Stockholm, 1978, 98 (No. 309); on Feigl, see also Sawicki 2013 and Harald Christoph Tesan, 'Feigl, Friedrich', *Allgemeines Künstlerlexikon. Die bildenden Künstler aller Zeiten und Völker*, vol. XXXVII, Munich, 2003, 529–31.

<sup>5</sup> Statens utlänningskommission, Centrala dossiér 1941–1945, F1B:831, Gabriele Heller. Riksarkivet, Stockholm.

<sup>6</sup> Statens flyktingnämnd, Personaler rörande flyktingunderstöd, Akt 976, Valerie Horb. Riksarkivet, Stockholm; Valerie Horb et al., *Weltgericht über den Judenhass. Eine internationale Rundfrage über das Wesen des Antisemitismus*, Prague: Michael Kácha Verlag, 1933.

<sup>7</sup> Felix Horb, Philosophischen Fakultät – Nationalien, 1909–1914. Sign: 329–31. Archiv des Universität Wien, Vienna.

<sup>8</sup> Max Dvořák, *Das Rätsel der Kunst der Brüder van Eyck*, Munich: R. Piper & Co. Verlag, 1925 [1904].

Portrait).<sup>9</sup> The methodology is exacting, with detailed analyses of related, individual works of art. The ‘enigma’ to be solved by Dvořák was the unexpected advances in painting, shown by the van Eyck brothers in the 1420s, explained by the author as resulting from an integration of Italian Renaissance art with a North European tradition. The first part of the study is dedicated to the differentiation between the hands of Hubert and Jan in the Ghent altarpiece. The following part outlines the earlier history of Netherlandish painting, from the mid-fourteenth century until the time of the van Eycks. The method is historic-genetic and Dvořák tries to understand the gradual developments leading up to Jan van Eyck’s breakthrough; the causal links (*Kausalverbindungen*) and development chains (*Entwicklungsketten*) of the individual works of art.<sup>10</sup>

In his later period Dvořák became more expressionistic. The lectures on Italian Renaissance artists held during 1918–19 are far less detailed and less methodologically oriented. The first, on Giotto, begins with a contrast–comparison between a fresco in the Arena chapel and a relief by Giovanni Pisano, instead of a historic-genetic analysis.<sup>11</sup> The purpose is not to understand the historical development but to establish the spiritual meaning of the individual artist’s work. The art historical problems to be resolved are not foregrounded, as before. Dvořák died in 1921 and the lectures were published posthumously by his students. Some of his later essays were printed under the well-known title *Kunstgeschichte als Geistesgeschichte* (Art History as a History of the Spirit). According to Hans Sedlmayr it was Felix Horb who came up with the telling title that has since then come to represent Dvořák’s later scholarship.<sup>12</sup>

Horb’s studies were interrupted for almost five years by the 1914–18 war, just as he had begun working on his thesis. The original topic was ‘Der Architekturbild bei Giotto und Duccio’ (The Architectural Image in Giotto and Duccio) and was probably given to him by Dvořák.<sup>13</sup> In the book on the van Eyck brothers Dvořák had touched upon the matter, claiming that the Italian Renaissance had its origin in the recuperation of certain antique motifs in late thirteenth-century art, such as landscapes and architecture.<sup>14</sup> Some early drafts for Horb’s dissertation deal specifically with the art of Duccio and Giotto, much in the style of the late Max

<sup>9</sup> Alois Riegl, *Das holländische Gruppenporträt*, Vienna: Druck und Verlag Österreichischen Staatsdruckerei, 1931 [1901].

<sup>10</sup> Dvořák, *Das Rätsel*, 12–13. The historic-genetic method was elaborated by another of Horb’s teachers, Hans Tietze, *Methode der Kunstgeschichte. Ein Versuch*, Leipzig: E. A. Seeman Verlag, 1913 and defended again by Dvořák in an essay from 1914, ‘Über die dringendsten Methodischen Erfordernisse der Erziehung zur Kunstgeschichtlichen Forschung’, *Wiener Jahrbuch für Kunstgeschichte*, vol. XXVII, 1914 [1913/14], 7–19.

<sup>11</sup> Max Dvořák, *Geschichte der italienischen Kunst im Zeitalter der Renaissance. Akademische Vorlesungen*, Munich: R. Piper & Co. Verlag, 1924.

<sup>12</sup> Max Dvořák, *Kunstgeschichte als Geistesgeschichte. Studien zur abendländischen Kunstentwicklung*, Munich: R. Piper & Co. Verlag, 1927; Hans Sedlmayr, *Kunst und Wahrheit. Zur Theorie und Methode der Kunstgeschichte*, Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1958, 71.

<sup>13</sup> Felix Horb. Kunsthistorisches Institut Wien, Vienna.

<sup>14</sup> Dvořák, *Das Rätsel*, 185–6.

Dvořák.<sup>15</sup> The intention is to establish the 'spiritual personalities' of the two artists. Horb begins with a contrast–comparison between Duccio's *Christ Entering Jerusalem* and a Byzantine mosaic with the same subject. The purpose is not to establish a historic-genetic relationship but, as in the late Dvořák, to bring out the psycho-phenomenological content of the artist's work.

When Horb's thesis was delivered to Julius Schlosser almost ten years later, in January 1923, the title had been changed to *Die Vorgeschichte der Duccios und Giotto's Architekturbild* (The Pre-History of Duccio's and Giotto's Architectural Image).<sup>16</sup> From a reference in the text to 'my unforgettable teacher' it can be assumed that it was written after Dvořák's death, most of it probably in 1922. The style of writing and the whole approach to the problem has changed. Already the first sentences can be read as a critique of the abandoned method:

Two possibilities to restrict the work: You limit yourself to the architectural image of Duccio and Giotto, deal with the individual paintings, examine their relation to each other and come to an understanding of the development of the artist's work in relation these representations. To restrict the topic in such a way would, in our opinion, be a fatal mistake. Much would remain unexplained that can only be understood in the context of the greater historical development.<sup>17</sup>

Instead of restricting himself to the two artists, Horb is now focused on the specific art historical problem: the development of architectural representations in late thirteenth- and early fourteenth-century Italian painting. All comparisons between works of art are made in order to explain historic-genetic sequences, rather than for contrast. He follows the motif all the way back to the Hellenic-Roman tradition, where he finds two principal types of architectural representations, interiors (*Interiören*) and inner rooms (*Innenräume*). The first type is sometimes called box-space (*Kastenraum*), because the figures are placed in a kind of box or 'doll's house' (Fig. 2). The inner room, on the other hand, is characterized by its openness

<sup>15</sup> Bound with the volume of the delivered thesis, Horb, 'Duccios und Giotto's Architekturbild und seine Vorgeschichte'. In his last will, Horb donated his books and papers to what is today Stockholm University Library; Bouppteckning efter Felix Horb. Stadsarkivet, Stockholm.

<sup>16</sup> Rigorosenakt des Felix Horb, 23/1 1923:478. Sign: Phil. Rig. Akt. PN. 5547, Fol. 7. Archiv des Universität Wien.

<sup>17</sup> Horb, 'Duccios und Giotto's Architekturbild und seine Vorgeschichte'; 'Zwei Möglichkeiten, die Arbeit zu begrenzen: Man beschränkt sich auf das Architekturbild Duccio's und Giotto's, beschäftigt sich mit den einzelnen Gemälden, prüft ihr Verhalten zu einander und kommt dadurch zur Erkenntnis einer Entwicklung im Werke der Künstler innerhalb des in Frage stehenden Darstellungsgebietes. Den Umfang so zu bestimmen, wäre nach unserer Meinung ein verhängnisvoller Fehler. Denn es bliebe dann sehr Vieles unerklärt, dass nur im grossen entwicklungsgeschichtlichen Zusammenhänge erklärt werden kann.'



Figure 2 Unknown artist, *Chorego with Actors*, c.79 AD. Mosaic. Museo Nazionale, Naples (The Poets House).

Figure 3 Unknown Artist, *Architectural Phantasy*, c.79 AD. Museo Nazionale, Naples. (From Fausto & Felice Niccolini, *Le case ed i monumenti di Pompei disegnati e descritti*, vol. I, Naples 1854)

and it flourishes especially in the Pompeian fourth style, where different architectural motifs are combined in a fanciful manner (Fig. 3). Horb calls these constructions prop-architecture (*Stützenarchitektur*). The architectural compositions are based on differently connected, free-standing columns, usually without walls, supporting flat roofs, segmented arches and/or pediments. The outside as well as the inside of the buildings are displayed simultaneously. Horb follows the motifs and their different variations into the Early Middle Ages, in book manuscripts and the mosaics in, for example, Ravenna. After that, the motifs disappear altogether and are not seen again until the mid-thirteenth century.

It was Joseph Garber's studies that had made Horb aware of the importance of the wall paintings at San Lorenzo fuori le Mura and San Paolo fuori le Mura in Rome. Garber finished his dissertation on the topic for Dvořák in 1912 and published it in 1918.<sup>18</sup> Horb had a copy of the book with a personal dedication in his library.<sup>19</sup> Following up on a few paragraphs in Dvořák's book on the van Eyck brothers, Garber showed that the Early Christian wall paintings of the old Roman basilicas became important models for artists in late thirteenth-century Rome, pointing at similarities between iconographic programmes and at the classicizing style of Pietro Cavallini. What Horb noted was that the prop-architecture of the Pompeian style made a reappearance in the same churches and at same time (Fig. 4). He dated the paintings at San Lorenzo to the 1260s, followed by the works of Cavallini in San Paolo, then the works in Old Saint Peter's and finally Cavallini's mosaics in Santa Maria in Trastevere, documented to 1292. In the *Birth of the Virgin* of the latter church, the prop-architecture has been stabilized with stronger walls

<sup>18</sup> Julius Schlosser, 'Die Wiener Schule der Kunstgeschichte', *Mitteilungen des Österreichischen Instituts für Geschichtsforschung*, vol. XIII:2, 1934, 220.

<sup>19</sup> Joseph Garber, *Wirkungen der Frühchristlichen Gemäldezyklen der alten Peters- und Paulus-Basiliken in Rom*, Berlin-Vienna: Verlag von Julius Bard, 1918; Horb's copy is now at Stockholm University Library, Mag. Hum. 89.826.

and is characterized by more pronounced realism (Fig. 5). It is as if the two Late Antique types had been combined. The development was carried further in Assisi by the so-called Isaak Master and the Master of the Saint Francis Cycle (Figs 6 and 7). In the Arena chapel Giotto reused Cavallini's architectural backdrops, for example in the *Birth of the Virgin* (Fig. 8). Giotto's figures are better integrated with the architecture, but the simultaneous display of the outside and inside remains the same. With Giotto, the circle is completed, so that the Antique box-space almost seems to be reappearing (Fig. 9). Still, a curious aspect is that the exterior is always accounted for, even though it is relegated to the very margins.



Figure 4 Unknown artist, *Life of Saint Lawrence*, 1260–70. Fresco. San Lorenzo fuori le Mura, Rome.  
(From Joseph Wilpert, *Die römischen Mosaiken und Malereien*, vol. II, Freiburg 1914.)

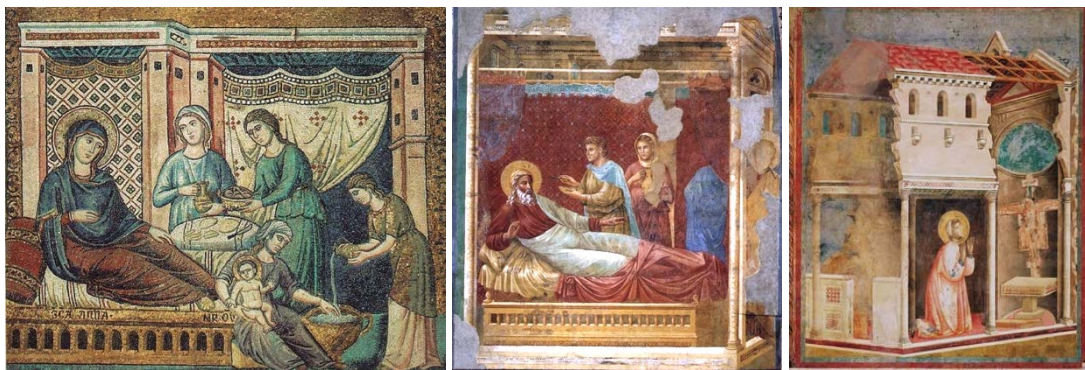


Figure 5 Pietro Cavallini, *Birth of Maria*, 1291. Mosaic. Santa Maria in Trastevere, Rome.

Figure 6 Isaak Master, *Isaak Rejecting Esau*, c.1295. Fresco. San Francesco, Upper Church, Assisi.

Figure 7 Master of the Saint Francis Cycle, *Miracle of the Crucifix*, c.1295. Fresco. San Francesco, Upper Church, Assisi.



Figure 8 Giotto, *Birth of the Virgin*, 1305. Fresco. Arena Chapel, Padua.

Figure 9 Giotto, *Christ Disputing the Doctors*, 1305. Fresco. Arena Chapel, Padua.

Clearly, much of Horb's work was inspired by Dvořák's scholarship, both in historical outline and historic-genetic methodology. There were some differences, though. First of all, the style of writing is much dryer, without any poetic claims whatsoever. In Horb there are no elaborations on peripheral matters, no pleasant excursions beyond dealing with the facts of the given art historical problem. Another difference is that Horb does not analyse styles as much as single motifs. He never discusses the style of a period, an artist or a particular painting. The architectural constructions have been singled out and he deals solely with their typologies. This gives the whole presentation a constructivist approach that is close to the New Vienna School and the work of Hans Sedlmayr.

Sedlmayr completed his dissertation in the same year as Horb.<sup>20</sup> At the time Horb was the older and more experienced art historian, whereas Sedlmayr had switched from architectural studies to art history as late as 1920.<sup>21</sup> Horb was well versed in the tradition of the Vienna School – he had read the early Dvořák, Riegl and Franz Wickhoff. Sedlmayr wrote his dissertation on Fischer von Erlach and in his first publication on the architect in 1925 he was dealing with similar historic-genetic aspects as Horb, trying to detect the architect's Italian sources.<sup>22</sup> If anything, this study is more conventional than Horb's, with its biographical outline and catalogue of attributed works. After finishing his dissertation Horb found work at Krystall-Verlag and became editor of the *Belvedere* journal in the 1920s. This is where Sedlmayr published some of his first articles; and Horb also made efforts to advance his career in other ways.<sup>23</sup> In a correspondence with Fritz Saxl in 1926 he tried to persuade him to publish Sedlmayr's work on Borromini in the Warburg series.<sup>24</sup> It was too long for the *Belvedere*, he explained, and could not be published in the

<sup>20</sup> Schlosser, 'Die Wiener Schule', 223.

<sup>21</sup> The studies on Sedlmayr are growing steadily; Maria Mannig, *Hans Sedlmayrs Kunstgeschichte. Eine kritische Studie*, Vienna, 2017, with further references.

<sup>22</sup> Hans Sedlmayr, *Fischer von Erlach der Ältere*, Munich: R. Piper & Co. Verlag, 1925.

<sup>23</sup> Hans Sedlmayr, 'Gestaltetes Sehen', *Belvedere*, 1925, 65–75, as well as other studies.

<sup>24</sup> Letters from Felix Horb to Fritz Saxl, 1925–27. Warburg Archive, London.

*Wiener Jahrbuch* because of a conflict. Horb describes the author as ‘unusually talented’ and an ‘excellent speaker’. However, Saxl declined, both to publish the article and to have Sedlmayr as a guest in Hamburg, arguing that his work was too remote from the interests of the Warburg Institute.

It is not difficult to understand Horb’s support for, and fascination with, Sedlmayr’s study on Borromini.<sup>25</sup> They seem to have shared an understanding of images as functions rather than styles. Sedlmayr would talk of them as machines, where the art historical problem was to understand the different elements and how they functioned together.<sup>26</sup> In order to do so the genetics of the image had to be discovered, just as Horb had done with the architectural backdrops in Giotto’s art. In a well-known essay from 1931 Sedlmayr proposed a movement towards a more rigorous study of art. Differentiating between two different kinds of art history he promoted the primacy of a scholarship founded strictly on the visual appearance of artworks, as opposed to the history of culture. Sedlmayr hoped for an art history that ‘can investigate the properties of works and their internal organization and structure ... classify works according to their natural groups and establish genetic connections among works on the basis of their properties [and] ... arrive at an understanding of the historical events whose products it is studying and of the forces at work behind these events’.<sup>27</sup> These were issues that truly interested Horb, not least the strict focus on the visual aspects of artworks. There are no texts whatsoever on the architectural backdrops of Giotto’s paintings, making them an ideal test case for such a rigorous study of art.

When it came to the field of psychology they did differ, though. Horb had no interest in the study of psychological types or Gestalt psychology. He was content with the concept of *Kunstwollen*, sometimes *Formwollen*, bringing dynamics to the historical situation. Perhaps like Schlosser, he saw the danger of *psychology* turning into *mythology* in the hands of some younger Vienna scholars.<sup>28</sup> In the 1930s, with the rise of fascism and the upcoming war, Horb and Sedlmayr came to diverge even further. Sedlmayr, a Catholic, was a racist and an early member of the Nazi party.<sup>29</sup> In his later publications on Fisher von Erlach he distanced himself from previous methodological approaches and in a preface to the Borromini book published in 1939, he deplored his own constructivist tendencies of the 1920s.<sup>30</sup> Horb’s book *Das Innenraumbild* from 1938 is even more constructivist than the thesis of 1923.

<sup>25</sup> Hans Sedlmayr, ‘The Architecture of Borromini’, *Journal of Art Historiography*, vol. XIV, 2016 [1930], 1–114.

<sup>26</sup> Sedlmayr, ‘Gestaltetes Sehen’, 65; Sedlmayr, ‘The Architecture of Borromini’, 10.

<sup>27</sup> Hans Sedlmayr, ‘Toward a Rigorous Study of Art’, *The Vienna School Reader*, ed. and trans. Christopher Wood, New York: Zone Books, 2000 [1931], 139.

<sup>28</sup> Schlosser, ‘Die Wiener Schule’, 190.

<sup>29</sup> Mannig, *Hans Sedlmayrs Kunstgeschichte*, 2017 with further references; especially illuminating is Evonne Levy, ‘Sedlmayr and Schapiro Correspond, 1930–1935’, *Wiener Jahrbuch für Kunstgeschichte*, vol. LIX, 2010, 235–63.

<sup>30</sup> Hans Sedlmayr, ‘Introduction to the New Edition [of the Architecture of Borromini]’, *Journal of Art Historiography*, vol. XIV, 2016 [1939], 111.



With the German annexation of Austria in 1938 Horb had to flee Vienna, where he had lived and worked for almost thirty years. Thanks to his sister Gabriele and brother-in-law Karl Heller he was helped by the Workers' Movement Refugee Association to go to Sweden in November 1939.<sup>31</sup> Together with them and his sister Valerie he settled in Stockholm, where after some years he achieved a position as a curator of paintings at the Berg Institute for Art History, today part of Stockholm University. He stayed there until his death in June 1958. With his nearness to the Social Democratic party, admiration of his brother's avant-garde painting and as a secularized Jew, it does not seem likely that Horb very much enjoyed Sedlmayr's later developments. It is surprising, therefore, and suggests a profound relationship dating back to the 1920s, that Sedlmayr travelled to Stockholm to meet Horb in 1955. From a couple of letters, we learn that they discussed Sedlmayr's *Verlust der Mitte* from 1948. Horb's only comment in relation to the book is cryptic, focusing on the method rather than the results. Probably it is meant to clarify something from their discussions, when Horb explains that the method should be 'an opportunity to learn about and to think through the specific theme'.<sup>32</sup> Sedlmayr's 'method of critical form', launched in *Verlust der Mitte*, was perhaps not so much a method for 'thinking things through' as for a certain selectivism and it was heavily debated at the time.<sup>33</sup> Sedlmayr's idea was that the most radical works of art are best suited to represent the dreams and the subconsciousness of an era. Critics claimed that with such a spectacular selection of artworks it is only logical that the common-sense, middle-ground – *der Mitte* – must appear as altogether missing. A lack of historic-genetic background is no doubt paradigmatic for such works of art, which most probably was seen as a problem by Felix Horb.

Horb had just completed his dissertation in 1923 when Erwin Panofsky's essay *Die Perspektive als symbolische Form* (Perspective as Symbolic Form) appeared for the first time.<sup>34</sup> It deals with similar issues and materials as Horb but with a very different approach. Panofsky begins his investigation with a discussion of definitions and theories of perspective, from Antiquity and into the Early Modern period. Where Horb exclusively analyses specific works of art and their genetics, Panofsky understands the history of ideas as being all-important and fundamental. While Panofsky seldom gives individual works of art more than a sentence Horb will give them at least half a page. Horb is careful in sorting out problems of

<sup>31</sup> Letter from Felix Horb to Workers' Movement Refugee Association, 7 November 1939. Arbetarrörelsens arkiv, Stockholm.

<sup>32</sup> Letter from Felix Horb to Hans Sedlmayr, 1 June 1955, Stockholm University Archive, Sten Karling Collection, Tavelksamlingens korrespondens; 'Der methodische Teil bedeutet für mich eine über das konkrete Thema gehende belehrende Gelegenheit, mit- und nachzudenken.'

<sup>33</sup> Hans Sedlmayr, *Verlust der Mitte. Der Bildende Kunst des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts als Symptom und Symbol der Zeit*, Salzburg: Otto Müller Verlag, 1951 [1948], 8–10; for a severe criticism, see Werner Hofmann, 'Zu einer Theorie der Kunstgeschichte', *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte*, vol. 14:1, 1951, 118–23.

<sup>34</sup> Erwin Panofsky, *Perspektive as Symbolic Form*, trans. Christopher Wood, New York: Zone Books, 1991 [1924/25].

restorations, dating and copying while Panofsky shows no such concern and displays a self-confidence that is foreign to Horb. Panofsky's well-known hypothesis is that Antiquity had knowledge enough to produce spatial representations similar to modern perspective, but lacked the single-point central perspective of the Renaissance period, where the room is seen with one eye from a particular point of view and is spread out on a flat image surface. Basically, it was Giotto who conceived of this new symbolic form by combining the flatness of Gothic art with the materiality of particular Byzantine motifs.



Figure 10 Unknown artist, *Scenes from the Story of Joseph (Old Testament) with Pharaoh's Dream (left)*, c.1300. Mosaic. Baptistry, Florence.

When Horb resumed his studies again in the 1930s he added a critique of Panofsky's essay. A central issue is a series of mosaics in the Florentine Baptistry from around 1300, representing, among other things, *Pharaoh's Dream* (Fig. 10). According to Panofsky, the architectural construction is a typical Byzantine form that was later elaborated by Giotto.<sup>35</sup> Horb does not agree: Panofsky is exaggerating the influence of Byzantine art on Italian artists of the period and he does not realize the important influence of Late Antiquity upon thirteenth-century art. The sleeping Pharaoh is reclining under a structure of the same type as the prop-architecture in San Lorenzo fuori le Mura from 1260s and as developed by Cavallini, Jacopo Torriti and others in the following decades. The very abstract logic of Panofsky is learned and impressive but, according to Horb, not founded in the logic of the actual, historical situation. Understanding the development of the motif means ending up in Rome, not in the Baptistry of Florence. With a clear aim at Panofsky's theoretical foundation, he writes:

If we were presented with the Late Medieval inner-room image of the early *trecento* in one stroke, that is, without any pre-history, then one could understand this sudden appearance as the result of a pure thought-process ... Beside the fact that the suggested train of thought rests on a completely

<sup>35</sup> Panofsky, *Perspective as Symbolic Form*, 54–5 and 119 (note 39).

unrealistic and excessively abstract foundation, it is refuted because it is countered by the actual development of Late Medieval architectural space and inner-room representations and because a knowledge of this development gives a better understanding of their fundament.<sup>36</sup>

While Panofsky understood the Renaissance perspective as a realization of abstract ideas and ideals, Horb explained it as a gradual development of already existing visual forms that took place from the late thirteenth century onwards. Their different views on Cubism are telling. For Panofsky the style of Modern painting represents a cultural shift comparable to the one that took place during fall of the Roman Empire.<sup>37</sup> Horb is more down to earth, noting that, despite the efforts of Cubism, the image concept developed by the Renaissance is still the dominant one.<sup>38</sup> The importance of photography and film all through the twentieth century seems to support Horb's view.

In 1952 Panofsky visited Stockholm and held a series of lectures at Gripsholm Castle.<sup>39</sup> The theme was 'The Renaissance Problem in the History of Art' and one of the lectures dealt specifically with the relation between thirteenth-century painting and Antiquity. Panofsky also made a visit to the Berg Collection of paintings in Stockholm. Correspondence between Panofsky and Horb informs us that they discussed the latter's opinion on the matter. Horb writes: 'I am very pleased to know that you, highly honoured Professor, after going over the literature, found my thesis ... to be correct.'<sup>40</sup> Panofsky in turn writes to Horb that he recently has had the opportunity 'to make some propaganda for your writings'.<sup>41</sup> A young PhD student is working on the problem of representational space in Giotto. Panofsky has put Horb's publications in her hand – publications that naturally were 'as unknown to her as they had been to me', he writes.

Panofsky's lectures at Gripsholm were not published until 1960, when Horb was no longer alive. The author refers generously to Horb and embraces the idea

<sup>36</sup> Horb, *Das Innenraumbild*, 72; 'Wären wir mit einen Schlage, also ohne Vorgeschichte, das spätmittelalterliche Innenraumbild zu Anfang des Trecento da, dann können man diesem plötzlichen Erscheinen einen reinen Denkvorgang zugrunde legen ... Abgesehen davon, daß der angenommen Gedankengang nur für einer Seite vollständig wandlosen in ihrem allzu abstrakten Charakter verdächtige Interpretation abgelehnt werden, weil sie durch die Entwicklung der spätmittelalterlichen Darstellung des nur-architektonischen Raumes zum Innenraumbild widerlegt wird und weil gerade die Kenntnis dieser Entwicklung volle Klarheit über die Verhaltensweise schafft, auf der jenes beruht.'

<sup>37</sup> Panofsky, *Perspective as Symbolic Form*, 72.

<sup>38</sup> Horb, *Das Innenraumbild*, 71–2.

<sup>39</sup> Gregor Paulsson, 'Editor's Preface', in Erwin Panofsky, *Renaissance and Renascences*, Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1965 [1960], VIII.

<sup>40</sup> Letter from Felix Horb to Erwin Panofsky, 2 October 1952, Smithsonian Institution, Archives of American Art, The Erwin Panofsky Papers. Washington DC; 'Es its mir ein sehr angenehmes Bewusstsein, dass Sie, sehr verehrter Herr Professor, nach vorläufigen Lektüre, meine these ... als richtig angesehen haben.'

<sup>41</sup> Letter from Erwin Panofsky to Felix Horb, 3 December 1952. Smithsonian Institution, Archives of American Art, The Erwin Panofsky Papers. Washington DC.

that Antique art had an influence upon late thirteenth-century artists. Still, he sticks to his model from *Die Perspektive als symbolische Form*, where the merging of Gothic and Byzantine styles are essential for the emergence of the new art. Cavallini's name has been added to the list of painters who were responsible for the changes, but no individual work of art by him is mentioned or discussed.<sup>42</sup> *Pharaoh's Dream* in Florence is once again given as an example of a purely Byzantine art, notwithstanding Horb's observation that the architectural structure is a result of the rediscovery of Late Antique imagery. Basically, Panofsky has not changed his mind and in direct response to Horb he writes that 'the undeniable influence of Late Antique and Early Christian art on Jacopo Torriti, Cavallini and Giotto is, I think, only one aspect, however important, rather than the cause of this process'.<sup>43</sup> For Panofsky the Renaissance was a unified, cultural and intellectual phenomenon that cannot seriously have made a return to another era. For Horb the problem was all about the evidence of images and he did not exclude the possibility that an Antique motif may have had just as big an impact on a later period as contemporary cultural circumstances or abstract ideas could have had. Visual representations are carriers of their own truth and internal logic. They have their own traditions.

Horb's legacy as an art historian is slight compared to figures such as Dvořák, Sedlmayr and Panofsky. The results of his work have not gone altogether unnoticed, though. The idea of a late thirteenth-century Proto-Renaissance in Rome is today accepted by most well-informed scholars. For example, Richard Krautheimer writes in his standard book on Rome in the Middle Ages that Cavallini and other artists turned to Late Antique models 'for credible space, achieved by placing into depth figures and architectural props'.<sup>44</sup> Giotto scholars, on the other hand, have been reluctant to adopt this point of view.<sup>45</sup>

Still, the historical implications do not seem to have been the most important issues for Horb. It was the method. Like so much else that was done and achieved within the Vienna School it had to carry a heavy weight. Horb was a scholar who believed strongly in the systematization of visual representations and the possibility of building solid links between individual works of art. With his rigid and constructivist approach he evaded the lure of dichotomic simplifications and crude generalizations about styles, nations or races that haunt so many of his contemporaries' texts. The grand narratives of the giants may be ever so fascinating. Clarifications, corrections and subtle objections are quietly pencilled in the margins.

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<sup>42</sup> Erwin Panofsky, *Renaissance and Renascences in Western Art*, Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1965 [1960], 133.

<sup>43</sup> Panofsky, *Renaissance and Renascences*, 137.

<sup>44</sup> Richard Krautheimer, *Rome. Profile of a City, 312–1308*, Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1980, 210.

<sup>45</sup> *The Cambridge Companion to the Art of Giotto*, eds Anne Derbes and Mark Sandona, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004, 30, 62, 76–102.

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