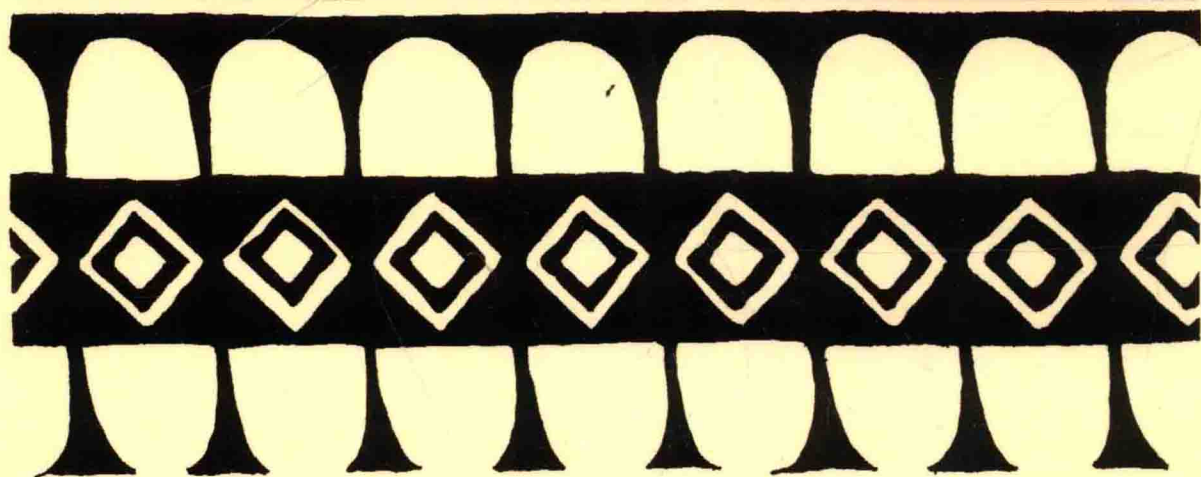
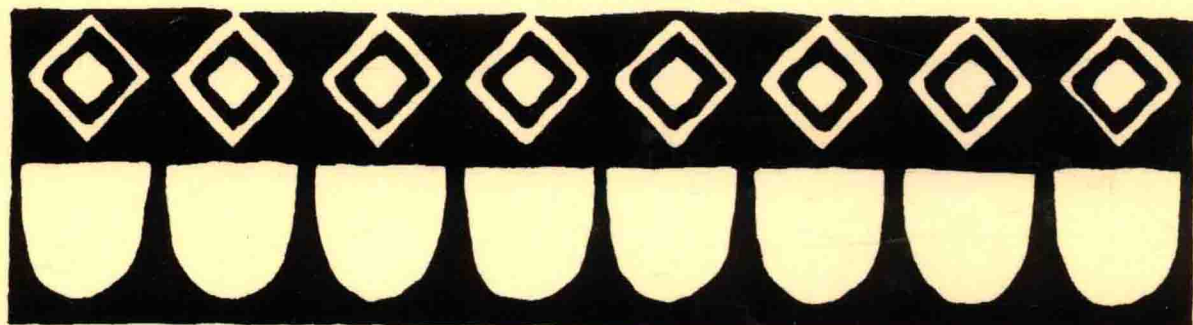


TEXTILES OF THE WIENER WERKSTÄTTE

1910-1932



Thames & Hudson

ANGELA VÖLKER

TEXTILES OF THE WIENER WERKSTÄTTE

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With the collaboration of
RUPERTA PILCHER



Thames & Hudson

SOURCE OF ILLUSTRATIONS

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ILLUSTRATIONS ON PAGES 1 AND 2:

1 Poster designed by Maria Likarz in 1919 for the Wiener Werkstätte showroom at 32 Kärntnerstraße, Vienna

2 'Erna', an ensemble designed by E. J. Wimmer-Wisgrill featuring the use of the pattern 'Grünfink (1910/11) by Lotte Frömel-Fochler; cf. fig. 393

Translated and adapted from the German edition, *Die Stoffe der Wiener Werkstätte 1910-1932*, first published in 1990

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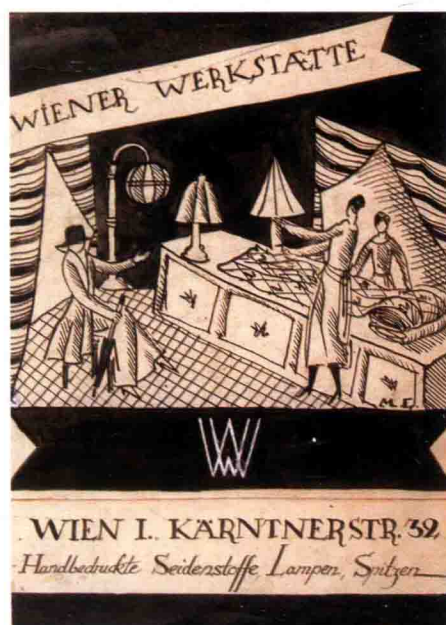
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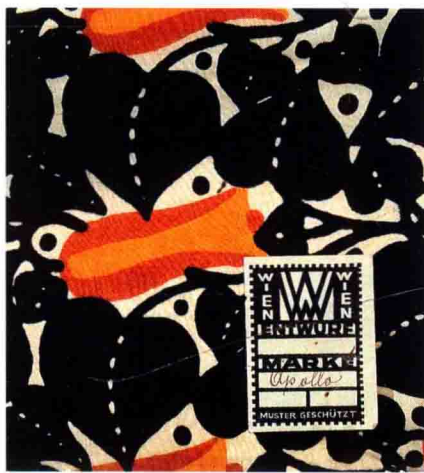
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3 Blouse featuring APOLLO (1910/11) by
Josef Hoffmann. Fashion photograph album, 1911

AN OUTLINE OF ITS BACKGROUND HISTORY AND ARCHIVAL AND OTHER EVIDENCE OF ITS ARTISTIC AND BUSINESS ACTIVITIES

In 1903, when Art Nouveau was at its peak in Vienna, the architect Josef Hoffmann, the painter Koloman Moser and the industrialist Fritz Waerndorfer founded the Wiener Werkstätte, an association of artist-craftsmen working with various materials; its members included gold- and silversmiths, jewelry makers, leather workers and bronze founders, and there were also workshops for painters, varnishers and cabinetmakers.¹ Designers and craftsmen with specialist skills worked as equals, producing hand-crafted objects to meet the needs of everyday living in all its aspects. Wiener Werkstätte products were intended to stand out from the general run of aesthetically unsatisfying, badly finished factory-produced merchandise and conventional handicrafts then available, and in this way the association would become the purveyor of good taste to its customers. In Vienna this meant the abandonment of the typical stylized floral and vegetal motifs associated with international Art Nouveau, and the substitution of simple, practical objects, the special character of which was derived from a combination of artistic design and sympathetic treatment of the materials em-



4 Josef Hoffmann. APOLLO (1910/11).
Fabric sample

5 Blouse featuring APOLLO (1910/11) by
Josef Hoffmann. Artist's postcard by Mela
Köhler, 1911



ployed. The models known to have influenced design in Vienna were contemporary English and Scottish artists, especially Charles Rennie Mackintosh, and the work of Dutch architects and graphic artists was also an important source of inspiration.² Recent research has demonstrated clearly the comparatively late, but significant interest of Viennese artists in Japanese art.³

With Josef Hoffmann as architect, the Wiener Werkstätte was responsible for the design of two major buildings: the Sanatorium at Purkersdorf near Vienna (1904) and the Palais Stoclet in Brussels (1905–11). In both of these buildings not only the structure but the interior decoration, the furnishings and the entire range of household objects formed part of the total concept. Whilst the Sanatorium represents the early 'severe' stylistic phase, the interior of the Palais Stoclet reflected the more ornamental tendencies which were gaining ground again shortly before 1910.

These trends were activated not least through Carl Otto Czeschka, who was with the Wiener Werkstätte only between 1905 and 1907, but continued to contribute designs after he left.

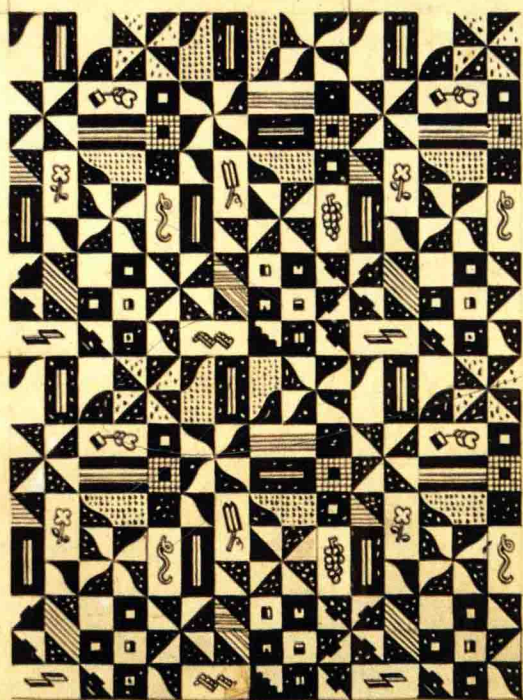
As a result of financial disagreements Koloman Moser also left in 1907, but he too supplied designs subsequently.⁴ In the autumn of 1906 Hoffmann's pupil Eduard Josef Wimmer-Wisgrill began working for the Wiener Werkstätte, taking over as head of the fashion department between 1910 and 1922; he was succeeded by Max Snischek, who had worked in various departments from c. 1914. Dagobert Peche, one of the most influential of the Wiener Werkstätte artists, began working with the association after 1911, but this collaboration came to an abrupt end with his premature death in 1923. Maria Likarz, Mathilde Flögl and Felice Rix, the designers who were most important in respect of the textile department, first made a significant impact in the years after the First World War.

Around 1910, when the departments of fashion and textiles were being formally established, the Wiener Werkstätte had ceased to be the idealistic association of artists as originally conceived by its founders. In Moser's eyes it had distanced itself all too soon from its stated aims: 'In my opin-

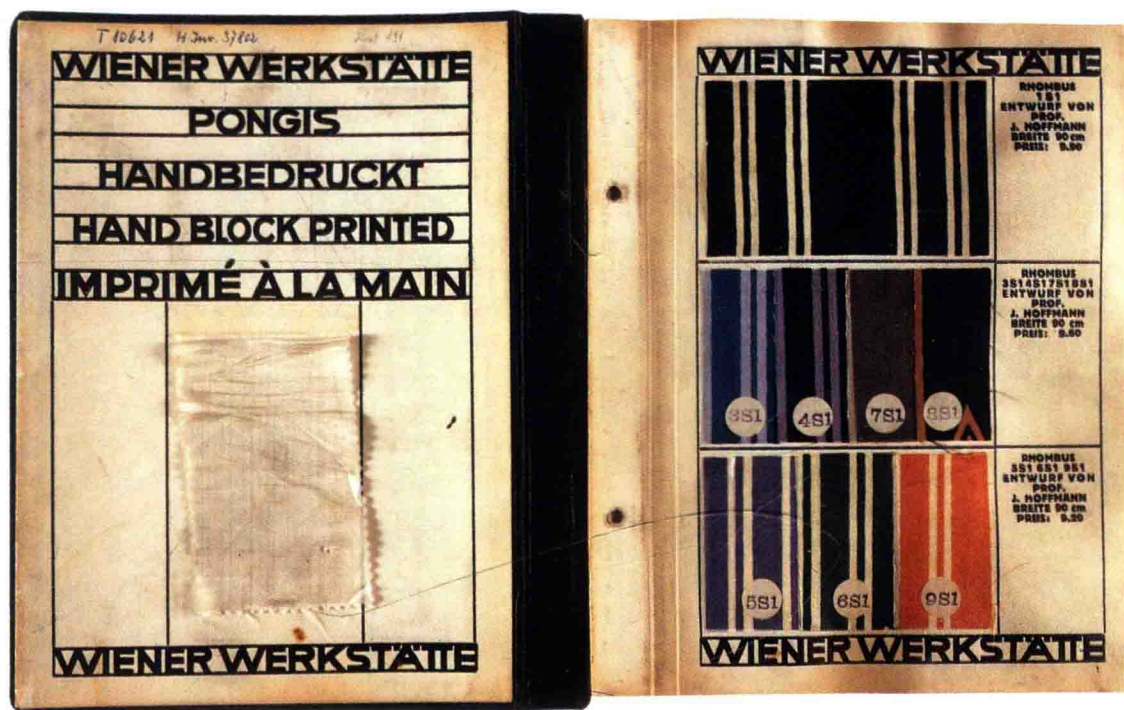
ion the work became too diversified and altogether too dependent on the taste of the client',⁵ was the frank assessment he offered later in his memoirs. With the founding of new departments, the Wiener Werkstätte pursued an overtly commercial course, offering as wide a spectrum of hand-crafted merchandise as possible, all displaying a uniform and easily recognizable style and available to the public from the Wiener Werkstätte's own elegant showrooms.

The first such showroom was opened on the Graben in the centre of Vienna in 1907, followed in 1916 by shops stocking the products of the fashion and textile departments respectively. In 1918 a new showroom for *Stoffe, Spitzen und Beleuchtungskörper* (fabrics, laces and light fittings) was opened. Branches were likewise established in other towns and cities, including Berlin, Zurich and New York, with varying degrees of success. In addition, from 1904 onwards the Wiener Werkstätte participated regularly in exhibitions, fashion shows and trade fairs, both at home and abroad.

6 Josef Hoffmann. REFRAIN (1929). Final pre-print drawing



7 Josef Hoffmann.
RHOMBUS
(1910/12).
Silk sample book,
c. 1912



Despite the range of its activities, the Wiener Werkstätte was often beset with financial problems, leading to internal reorganizations and a succession of financial directors. After the association ceased trading and was wound up (its assets were sold at auction in 1932), Alfred Hofmann, its last financial director and liquidator of the business, acquired the archive containing all the records of the association, and in 1939 he offered to sell the complete collection to the Österreichisches Museum für Kunst und Industrie, today the Österreichisches Museum für angewandte Kunst. However, his proposal did not receive the favourable response he had hoped for, and consequently he sold off parts of the archive separately, including fabric printing blocks which were purchased by a company based near Zurich.

The then curators of the museum cannot be absolved of all blame for the resulting dispersal of what was not appreciated for its value as an essential historical record of the association's business. It was only after the Second World War, in 1947, that the archival material entered the museum's collection, and finally, in 1955, the remaining stock – still considerable in quantity – was donated in its entirety. The museum began compiling an inventory, dealing first with the 'artistically valuable' documents such as original drawings (figs. 6, 55, 56, 207, 241, 303, 342, 343), but work on it is still by no means complete.

The extensive range of archival material now owned by the Österreichisches Museum für angewandte Kunst – a collection which provides the basis for the content of this book – embraces documentary and artistic material of a rare completeness, offering challenges in the exploration of as yet uncharted aspects of the Wiener Werkstätte's history. In the last ten years of so numerous publications dealing with the Wiener Werkstätte in general have appeared, often in association with major exhibitions. They describe individual departments and their fields of activity (fashion, ceramics, cutlery, postcards, leather goods etc.)⁶ or feature the work of leading designers such as Josef Hoffmann, Koloman Moser, Eduard Josef Wimmer-Wisgrill and Dagobert Peche.⁷ The research involved has always relied heavily on the almost inexhaustible source material still preserved in the Wiener Werkstätte archive.

One well-known area of the Wiener Werkstätte's productions – textiles – which was probably one of the most successful, has not yet been thoroughly researched. The scope is wide, including printed silk ribbons, silk shawls, embroidery and lace (all of which undoubtedly call for detailed investigation), but in this book only the printed and woven fabrics designed and produced by the Wiener Werkstätte are featured. There are in fact some 20,000 fabric samples in a wide variety of shapes

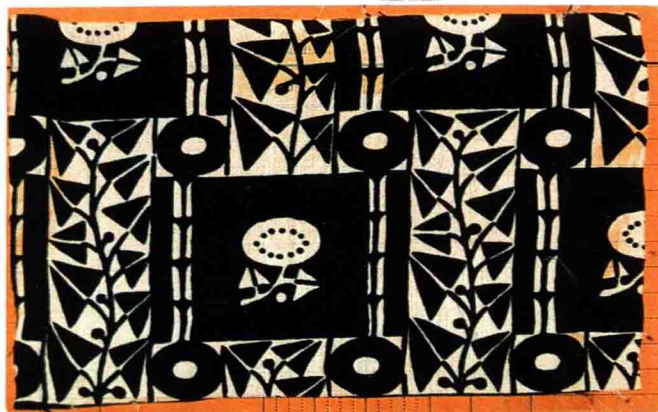
Archiv 19.10.92
Dessin *Rudolf*
 Entwurf *Likarz* Dat. *Januar 1930* Modellstecher *Likarz* Dat. *19.1.30*
 Modelle bei *92.10.1.30* 3 Modelle: Decker *1* Mat. *2* Kosten *1395.-*
 Nr. *1108* Rapport Länge *32* Breite *32* Einfass. *1* Farben *1*

Col.	Pos.	Bemerkungen	Disponiert				Disponiert			
			Dat.	Stoff	Meter	P	Dat.	Stoff	Meter	P
	<i>84</i>	<i>Druckerberechnung</i> <i>4 flg.</i>								
	<i>84</i>	<i>2 flg. gef.</i>								
	<i>75</i>	<i>4 flg. gef.</i>								
	<i>84</i>	<i>2 flg. gef.</i>								

8 Maria Likarz. RADIO (1926). Fabric samples in various colour-schemes, large card index

and sizes which provide the basis for research. About a hundred artists were responsible for designing over 1,800 patterns, which exist in a great variety of colour-schemes.⁸ Printed silks predominate, but there are also examples of printed cottons, voiles and linens, as well as a group of woven fabrics. They are all still kept in the original order, as established by the Wiener Werkstätte: large folders containing the various fabric patterns are arranged in alphabetical order according to individual pattern names and stored in boxes. Although

this method of storage, which was evidently useful and practical for commercial purposes, must of course be preserved as a historical document, it is irritating for the researcher and even more so for the interested member of the public, and tends to create a confusing picture. Any attempt at a systematic description of the Wiener Werkstätte's fabric production thus required a radical rearrangement of the source materials with the aid of colour slides, card indexes and, more recently, computerized records.



Nr 462 ROLLSCHNECKE Entwurf Hoffmann
2 Formen Nr. 40. - Braune & G.
Alteutscher Platz 3. 10.

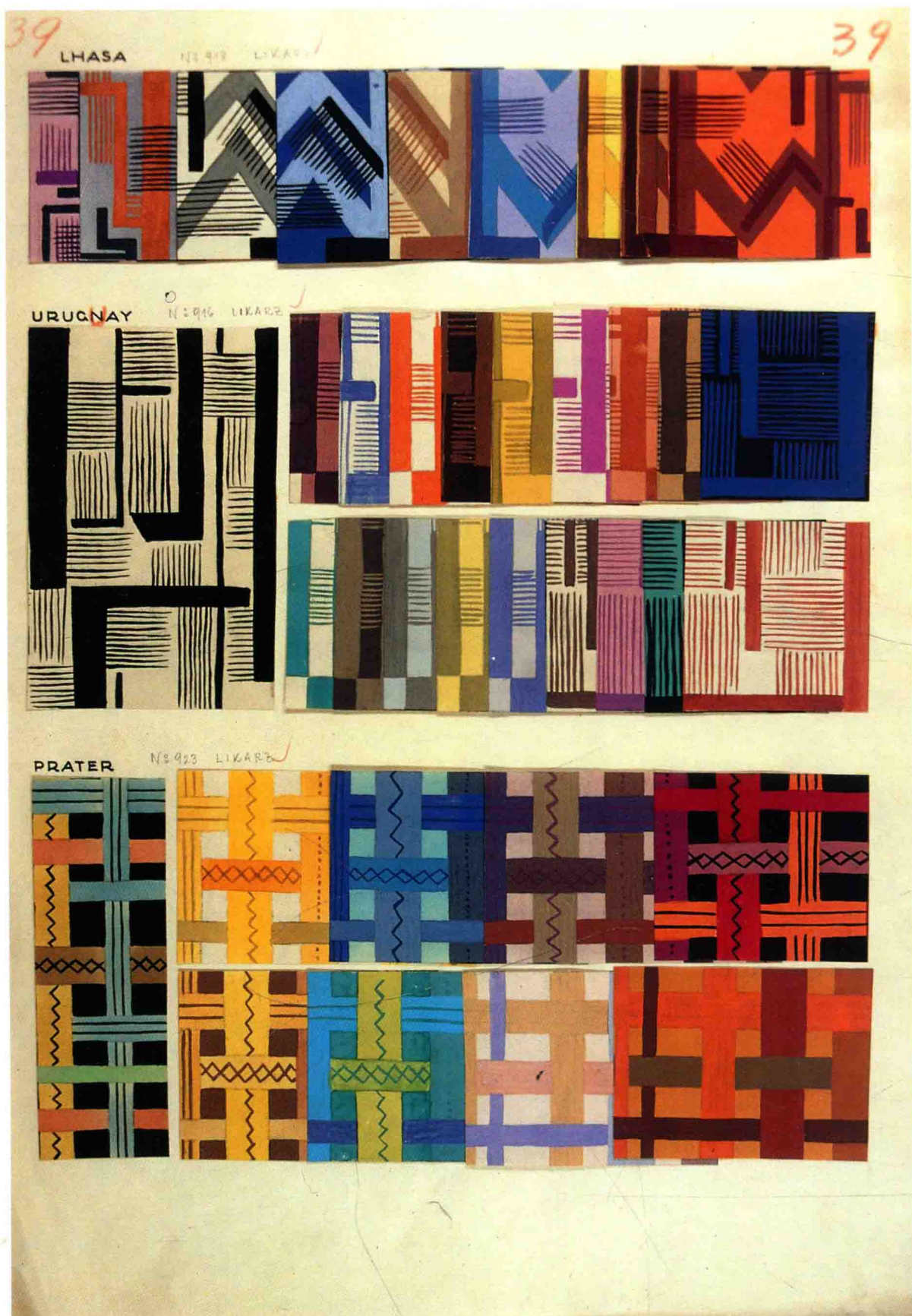
Col.	Farben
<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>

9 Josef Hoffmann. ROLLSCHNECKE (1910/12). Small card index, recto (right) and verso with sample

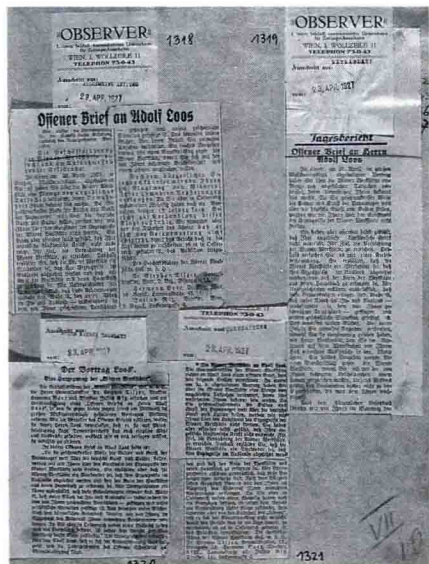
In addition to the Wiener Werkstätte archival material, the Österreichisches Museum für angewandte Kunst owns various other related items (now scattered among different departments) which were purchased directly from the Wiener Werkstätte, acquired at auction when its assets were sold in 1932 after it had closed, or which the museum acquired later (a number of items entered the collection in 1967 after the Wiener Werkstätte

While the surviving patterns, along with the fabric samples in the collection of the Österreichisches Museum für angewandte Kunst, give an impressive overall view of the Wiener Werkstätte's fabric

[illegible]



11 Maria Likarz. LHASA (1925), URUGUAY (1925) and PRATER (1925). Trial colour-schemes; gouache on paper



12 *Annalen*.
Newspaper cuttings,
1927, including the
open letter to Adolf
Loos published in the
Wiener Allgemeine
Zeitung on 23 April

Wiener Werkstätte, served to keep the association in the public eye. Although it experienced mixed fortunes, both in terms of artistic quality and of commercial success, during its three decades of active production, the Wiener Werkstätte very rapidly fell into oblivion in the 1930s, and it was only in the mid-1960s that a new interest took root. This has continued to grow in recent years, to the point at which international enthusiasm has been reflected in exhibitions held not only in Vienna, but in cities the world over, including Venice (1984), Paris (1986), Brussels and New York (1987), Tokyo (1989) and Barcelona (1993).¹²

production, the surviving archival evidence helps to establish matters of dating by reference to two different production card indexes, store registers and two stock registers which include dates of production. The final pre-print gouache drawings, kept in envelopes or pasted on to large sheets of paper (fig. 11), convey the entire range of colour-schemes for individual patterns, complementing the actual fabric samples in various colour combinations. Surviving photographs, mostly catalogued in large albums and showing objects, interiors and fashions, serve to illustrate the contexts in which fabrics were used, whilst the extensive correspondence, invoices, minutes of business meetings, reports and other written records provide invaluable information about the Wiener Werkstätte's customers and sales policy.

A further important source of information is contemporary publications; thanks to the reputation created by the Wiener Werkstätte, critics, journalists and museum curators, both at home and abroad, described the impact made by new collections, focused on the contributions made by various artists or illustrated the use of fabrics in fashion and interior decoration. The Wiener Werkstätte itself collected press cuttings, which are now preserved in the archive.¹¹ The daily press reported on fashion shows, exhibitions and current events, such as the opening of new showrooms or the presence of prominent visitors. Even the polemical lectures delivered by Adolf Loos, the leading architect and opponent of Josef Hoffmann and the

¹ For a summary of principal events in the history of the Wiener Werkstätte see Schweiger 1984, pp. 11ff.

² Cf. Brussels 1987 (exhib. cat.), esp. p. 11.

³ The Wiener Werkstätte itself laid emphasis on Japanese handicraft techniques as ideal models, notably in its *Arbeitsprogramm* (working programme) published in 1905. Cf. *Hohe Warte* I, 1904/05, p. 268; also Brussels 1987 (exhib. cat.), p. 12; Wien 1990 Japonisme (exhib. cat.), pp. 57–64. See Schweiger 1984, pp. 42f.

⁴ Wien 1979 (exhib. cat.).

⁵ Op. cit., p. 12.

⁶ E.g. Schweiger 1984, Neuwirth 1985, Völker 1984 and 1990, Hansen 1982 and 1984, Pichler 1992.

⁷ Hoffmann: Sekler 1985; Zurich 1985 (exhib. cat.); Wien 1986/87 (exhib. and stock cat.); Wien 1987 (exhib. and stock cat.); Wien/Brtnice 1992 (exhib. cat.); New York 1992/93 (exhib. cat.). Moser: Wien 1979 (exhib. cat.); Fenz 1984. Wimmer-Wisgrill: Wien 1983 (exhib. cat.). Peche: Wien 1987 (exhib. cat.); Salzburg 1987 (exhib. cat.); Reiter 1987.

⁸ The present publication lists 1,335 of these patterns; those for which inadequate illustrative material is available in the museum have been omitted from the catalogue, but can be traced in the WW archive with the aid of card indexes and colour slides.

⁹ The ribbons and printing blocks are kept in the museum's *Modesammlung* (fashion collection), which is housed in Schloß Hetzendorf, Vienna.

¹⁰ Cooper-Hewitt Museum, inv. nos. 1988–62: 1–1494.

¹¹ The press cuttings are preserved in the so-called *Annalen*, a series of large-format albums, inv. nos. WWAN 82–87.

¹² For details of exhibition titles see the list of bibliographical sources; the Barcelona exhibition of 1993 was held at the Fundacio la Caixa.