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GUSTAV LUDWIG. THE PHOTOGRAPHIC BEQUEST – An online exhibition by the Photo Library of the Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz – Max-Planck-Institut

Beginning on 20 June 2011 an online exhibition by the Photo Library of the Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz – Max-Planck-Institut will show 46 historical photographs from the estate of the art historian Gustav Ludwig.

Gustav Ludwig (1854-1905) was among the most eminent art historians of his generation and is now all but forgotten. After studying medicine he settled in London, where he developed a keen interest in art history parallel to his medical practice. Forced to leave London for medical reasons in 1895, he traveled to Vienna and attended lectures on painting history and theory. Ludwig's work was concerned with the historicization and recontextualization of individual objects based on the in-depth study of source materials. This perspective, in turn, strongly informed his studies in Venice, where he spent the last years of his life.

At the same time, Ludwig was among the first to fully exploit the innovative potential of photography for art-historical study. He not only amassed an extensive collection of photographs, but also trained at the *Lehr- und Versuchsanstalt für Photographie und Reproduktionsverfahren* in Vienna, where he became familiar with photographic processes such as the platinotype, as well as with techniques of photomontage.

Significantly, Ludwig's estate, willed to the Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz in 1905, bears witness to early twentieth-century art-historical practices, and the photographs shown in the present online exhibition belong to this bequest.

Among Ludwig's most noteworthy works is his essay on Bonifazio Veronese, published in 1901 in the *Jahrbuch der preußischen Kunstsammlung*. Ludwig's biographical investigation into the Renaissance painter's life, until then practically unknown, was pathbreaking. Moreover, the article presented a reconstruction of Bonifazio's decorative cycle, completed in 1529, for the Venetian Palazzo dei Camerlenghi. For his analysis, Ludwig had reproductions of the Palazzo's floor plans made from the originals in the Venetian state archive, as well as front views of the building's interior spaces, to which he affixed photographs of the artworks in a collage-like fashion. These materials, preserved in the Photo Library of the Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz, afford us unique insight into the intellectual "laboratory" of the art historian.

Ludwig's photographic bequest also contains seven images that document his reconstruction of Vittore Carpaccio's Saint Ursula Cycle in the chapel of the Scuola di Sant'Orsola in Venice. After the Scuola's dissolution in 1806 the paintings were transferred to the Accademia, where they were reinstalled and unveiled in 1895. Ludwig did not agree with the sequence in which the paintings had been rehung and, together with the historian Pompeo Molmenti, submitted a counter-proposal. To lend visual



support to their hypothesis, Ludwig constructed a wooden model of the chapel. He pasted onto its walls photographic reproductions of the paintings in their proposed sequence, and the model was then photographed from various perspectives. Finally, the photographs were retouched and again photographed. Several of these images were later included in the monumental Carpaccio monograph Ludwig wrote collaboratively with Molmenti, but which was published only posthumously in 1906. These albumen and silver gelatin prints lend us a rare understanding of Ludwig's art-historical work process.

Ludwig's academic interest in art-historical issues was informed by his in-depth source research. His studies of the trade relations of the Serenissima, of local textile production, oriental objects in Venetian households, and other arts and crafts ultimately culminated in a large-scale work entitled "Venezianischer Hausrat zur Zeit der Renaissance" [Venetian Household Effects in the Renaissance Period], published posthumously in the series of the Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz in 1906. At the heart of Ludwig's inquiry was the "restello da camera," a piece of furniture common in Venetian households of the time. Ludwig was the first to recognize the function of this object, which he described as a "combination of a mirror and a row of prongs for the hanging of objects." He also situated Giovanni Bellini's five allegorical paintings from the Accademia in Venice in this contextual framework and used photographs to suggest a hypothetical reconstruction of their mounting.

This online exhibition not only grants us insight into Gustav Ludwig's photographic estate, but also sheds light on the creative incorporation of the photographic medium into art-historical practice.

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Texts: Almut Goldhahn

Coordination and editing: Almut Goldhahn

Available online beginning on 20 June 2011 at <http://expo.khi.fi.it>

The next online exhibit features Bartolomeo Ammannati's sculptures and will open on 21 November 2011.

Further info:

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Photographic Material

Gustav Ludwig's reconstruction of the mural decoration in the second salon of the Magistrato del Sale, Palazzo dei Camerlenghi in Venice, before 1901, wash drawing and albumen print, 41.7 x 53.5 cm (mount), Photo Library of the Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz, Inv. 8392.

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Photomontage with photographs of Tintoretto's works for the Palazzo dei Camerlenghi in Venice and handwritten annotations by Gustav Ludwig, before 1901, 38.5 x 52.4 cm (mount), Photo Library of the Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz, Inv. 8404.

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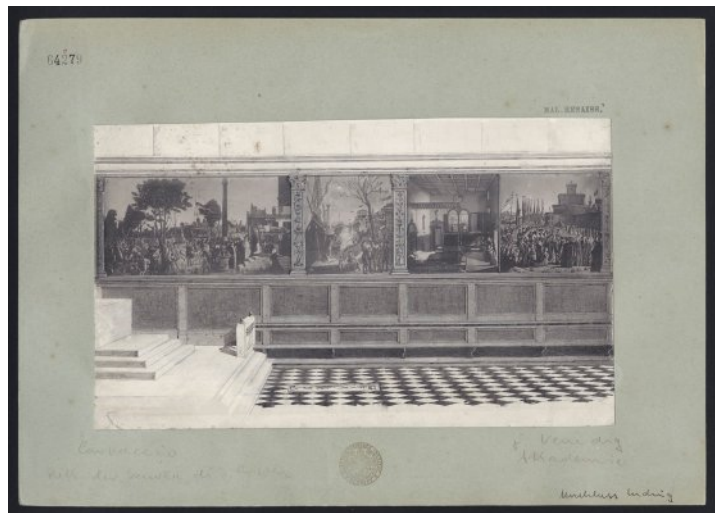
Tomaso Filippi (photographer) and unknown draughtsman: Gustav Ludwig's reconstruction of Carpaccio's Saint Ursula cycle, c. 1904, silver gelatin print, washed, 17.5 x 23.5 cm (photo). Photo Library of the Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz, Inv. 59349.

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Tomaso Filippi
(photographer)? and unknown
draughtsman: Gustav
Ludwig's reconstruction of
Carpaccio's Saint Ursula cycle,
c. 1904, silver gelatin print,
washed, 15 x 25.5 cm
(photo). Photo Library of the
Kunsthistorisches Institut in
Florenz, Inv. 64279.

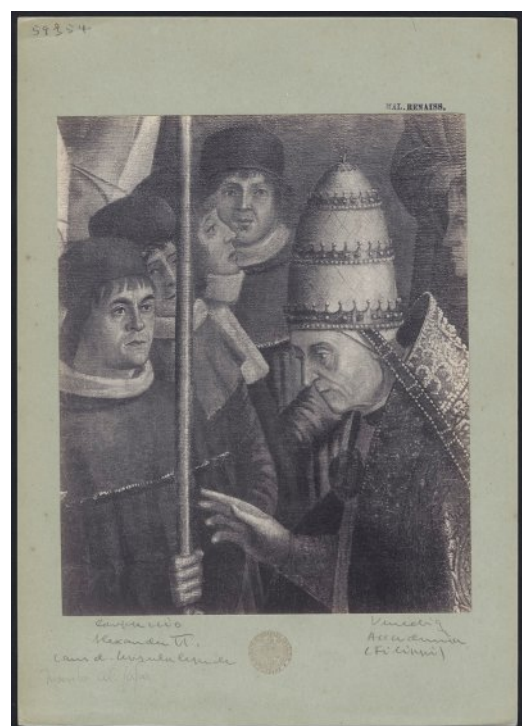
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Tomaso Filippi: "Carpaccio:
Saint Ursula Cycle. Meeting of
Saint Ursula and her Betrothed
with Pope Ciriacus in Rome
(detail), Venice, Accademia",
before 1905, platinum print
(?), 23.8 x 19.6 cm (photo).

Photo Library of the
Kunsthistorisches Institut in
Florenz, Inv. 59354.

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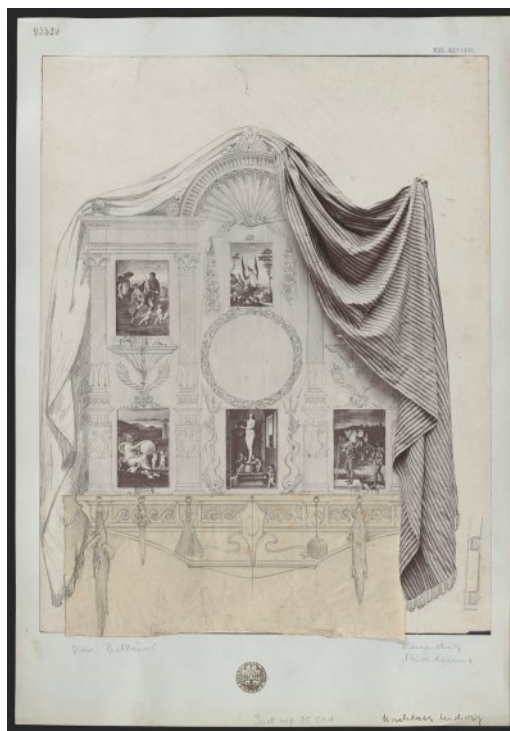
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Unknown photographer:
Gustav Ludwig's reconstruction
of a "Restello da camera"
incorporating Giovanni
Bellini's allegorical panels,
before 1905, silver gelatin
print, paper, pencil, 39.8 x
30.8 cm (photo). Photo Library
of the Kunsthistorisches
Institut in Florenz, Inv. 95529
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