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# Otto Wagner and the Steinhof Psychiatric Hospital: Architecture as Misunderstanding

Leslie Topp

A few weeks ago I was returning to Vienna by train from the west. A sculptor from Paris was sharing my compartment. As we approached the outskirts, he suddenly pointed to the view on his left and exclaimed in astonishment: "What is that?!" There, on the long slope above the tiny village of Baumgarten—Gustav Klimt was born there, an omen of modernity—was a white city, sparkling in the bright summer sun. Crowned by the golden dome of a white marble church. . . . "That is something very special," said my Frenchman. "That, I have to see."—Ludwig Hevesi, "Otto Wagners moderne Kirche," 1907<sup>1</sup>

Thus did Ludwig Hevesi, art critic and advocate of all things modern in Vienna, begin his newspaper column on October 6, 1907. His anecdote wove together past and future, local and international, the fine arts, technology, and medical science. Baumgarten, the tiny old village in the hills to the west of Vienna, in the beloved Vienna Woods, had given birth to Gustav Klimt, who would revolutionize the visual arts in Vienna. Now the farmland above it had sprouted a "white city," itself crowned by a domed church designed by the architectural archmodernist Otto Wagner. The intercity train sped by, allowing the Parisian sculptor, an anonymous witness from the center of modern European culture, to absorb the impact of the largest mental hospital on the continent—for that is what this "white city" was (Fig. 1). He was spellbound, and Hevesi gratefully reported the astonishment of the Parisian confronted with the accomplishments of a city usually known for its attachment to the past: "He stared, incredulous: 'You're so far advanced in Vienna!'"<sup>2</sup>

The Lower Austrian Provincial Institutions for the Care and Cure of the Mentally and Nervously Ill "am Steinhof" opened on October 8, 1907, two days after Hevesi's column was published in the *Fremdenblatt*. A century later, it still functions as Vienna's primary public psychiatric institution, known among the Viennese as a rambling complex on the outskirts harboring the disturbing psychiatric legacy of the Nazi period and containing one of Otto Wagner's major works, his domed church (Fig. 2). Visits to Wagner's Steinhofkirche tend to be accompanied by nervous jokes about men in white coats and the likelihood of getting out afterward. But in 1907 Hevesi did not think the French sculptor's desire to see the new hospital was comic; nor did he assume that he would visit only the church. Hevesi presented the church and the hospital as an integrated whole, a "white city," the fulfillment of the "omen of modernity" offered by Klimt's birth nearby. Solemnly, he reported statistics to fill out the picture: "five million pieces of laundry to launder; an electric train, which delivers meals in huge containers from the kitchen."<sup>3</sup> He described "a whole city with an area of 100 hectares, with 60 separate buildings, each with 40 meters between

them; for a population of 2500 people, but with future capacity for 5000."<sup>4</sup>

How was it that a psychiatric hospital was fashioned as a "white city"? How could such a project have captured the imagination of a cultural modernist in this way? How and why did a specialist medical institution end up speaking a language readily understood in progressive artistic circles? For answers to these questions, this article looks closely at the process through which the complex at Steinhof was initiated, planned, designed, built, and represented to the public. I focus on two of the main disciplines, or subdisciplines, involved in this process: asylum psychiatry and self-consciously modern architecture. I seek to retrieve the precise moment that each of these subdisciplines had reached in Vienna by the early twentieth century, particularly with a view to identifying what each group believed buildings were for, what ambitions and intentions they had (or did not have) for them. Finally, I look at what we can know about the nature of their interaction and analyze the Steinhof complex itself as a product of that interaction—bearing the traces of their mutual understanding and misunderstanding.

Like many recent studies, this one aims to capitalize on architecture's concrete and necessary involvement in an aspect of the world beyond architecture by situating the object of study very precisely in its extra-architectural context. I am indebted especially to those scholars who have, in case studies of particular buildings, building programs, or building types, made extensive use of the resource offered by the people other than the architect—clients, building committees, professional users—who were responsible for the shape and look of the building or buildings in question. The goal of these studies is a new kind of architectural history, one that recasts the building as a cultural and social document and avoids the logical dead-ends and blind spots of the focus on the single architect-hero, of style- and taste-oriented histories, and of teleological narratives of the architectural avant-garde. There are, broadly, three methodologies used by these new studies (at least, by those that focus on the nineteenth and twentieth centuries). In the first, the building or buildings are—very self-consciously—separated not only from the architect but also from the "architectural" (by which I mean the discipline as delineated by academic architectural training; I do not mean the design of buildings in general, which, as these studies point out, was often undertaken by professionals other than architects). This strategy radically challenges the traditional authorship of the building by the architect and the building's position in an architect- or style-focused story of architectural development. It is an approach often used in the discussion of buildings that tend to be dismissed as retrograde or insignificant in traditional architectural history.<sup>5</sup> The second methodology emphasizes the architect's own openness and sensitivity to, and suitability for, the extra-

architectural worlds represented by the other agents involved in the building. The resulting structure is seen as the product of a fruitful collaboration, co-authored by the architect, the client, and other agents, all of whom are given more or less equal attention. This approach tends to be used in discussions of buildings and architects thought of as modernist, and it is accompanied by a rethinking of what it means to be true to function, in which “function” is shown to include the political, the spiritual, and the social as well as the practical and structural.<sup>6</sup>

The third methodology, while equally dedicated to retrieving the full range of meanings with which clients and other nonarchitectural participants invest buildings, concentrates on the gaps between the intentions and discourses of the various players—including the architect. Here, the building is seen as the result of a complex and fraught interaction between groups, or disciplines, with distinct cultures, worldviews, and assumptions about how a building mediates meaning and what meanings it should mediate. This approach engages with Dana Cuff’s analysis of the relationship between architect and client as one of negotiation, in which “the architect responds to his or her vision of the client rather than the actual client.”<sup>7</sup> Christine Stevenson’s study of eighteenth-century British hospital and asylum architecture shows how fruitful this strategy can be for building types that are subject to battles between architects and medical professionals, while at the same time responding to the claims of a wider urban, political, and artistic context.<sup>8</sup> Steinhof’s design evolved through a series of interactions among a number of groups and individuals, including (but not limited to) psychiatrists, government officials, government-employed architects, politicians, representatives of the Catholic church, and the private architect Otto Wagner.<sup>9</sup> All these groups make an appearance in this essay. My focus, however, as I have mentioned, is on Otto Wagner, on the one hand, and a group I am calling the asylum planners, on the other—that is, those who were involved in writing the extensive building brief for the complex, a group dominated by psychiatrists but also including civil servants who were experts in public welfare provision. The doctors and civil servants who planned Steinhof embraced an overblown psychiatric optimism, with a strong emphasis on publicity, and they sought to expand the influence of the mental hospital into the lives of the wider public. Wagner, who designed both the church and the overall plan of the complex, learned only enough of asylum planners’ language to be able to grasp simple ideas, enough to be able to understand the version of their goals that was intended for public consumption. The buildings and their representations communicate this simplified notion in the sophisticated medium of modern architecture and the ideal community.<sup>10</sup>

Let us imagine that Hevesi’s Parisian sculptor, having settled into his Vienna hotel, decided to see Steinhof. He makes an appointment by applying to the office of the director, Heinrich Schlöss; as part of a concerted public relations effort, tours were provided for those members of the public who had a genuine (as opposed to prurient) interest in the institution.<sup>11</sup> From the city, he travels westward toward the Vienna Woods, past the walls of the former Vienna asylum

and along a road where a new electric tramline is being built to transport people from the city to Steinhof. Suburbs change to countryside, which in turn gives way to landscaped parkland on either side of an avenue forming the approach to the hospital.<sup>12</sup> At the entrance, a sense of occasion, transparency, and welcome: two simple but substantial blocks (containing staff apartments) frame two identical diminutive, flat-roofed buildings (for the porter and guards), which flank wrought-iron gates painted green and bent into Secessionistic motifs. Between the lodges and the apartment blocks are low walls with delicate iron fencing above. Beyond that, a seven-foot wall extends in both directions.

The sculptor is admitted to the forecourt of what looks like a municipal government headquarters for a new, forward-looking municipality (Fig. 3). A monumental clock occupies the center of the forecourt, aligned with the main entrance. From this building—the hospital’s main administrative center—emerges the sculptor’s tour guide, perhaps the administrative director or one of the psychiatric staff. The sculptor is given an overview of the layout on a numbered plan (Fig. 4); its self-conscious graphic clarity is not lost on him. They make their way up the hill, distancing themselves from the loud curses of the man who has just been delivered by ambulance to the admissions pavilion, and the extent of the institution (sixty buildings over 1,100 acres [143 hectares], according to the sculptor’s guide) is gradually revealed. A straight sloping road planted with saplings on either side takes them upward from terrace to terrace, and as they climb they catch glimpses of the gold and white church above. All the other buildings in the complex, the guide says, have been designed by the government architects Carlo von Boog and Franz Berger, conforming to Wagner’s plan and following his “new” style. They pass on their right the buildings of the main axis, themselves all symmetrically composed around a central axis: after the administration building, the theater and social center, with a fountain out in front, followed by the enormous common kitchen. On the left, the pavilions for women patients, the first one for “quiet,” curable patients, the second for “quiet” incurables (Fig. 5). The sculptor suppresses his surprise at the absence of walls or fences, as well as the impression of controlled normality, as nurses lead groups of patients to their next therapeutic activity. Further pavilions with patients in gardens behind low fences are visible beyond, and if the sculptor insisted on straying further from the main axis, he would reach another row of pavilions. There the gardens are hidden behind eight-foot-high walls and verandas enclosed in a net of green iron and wire (Fig. 6).<sup>13</sup>

A small electric train leaves the kitchen, transporting a warm lunch to the pavilions as the sculptor and his guide ascend the staircase to the uppermost terrace and the church, the conclusion of the axis. They emerge from a world of flat roofs, pale red brick, and white stucco into the glow of white marble, a thin, jutting, horizontal cornice, and a gilded half-spherical dome. Stylized, overlife-size figures of angels and saints are arranged in strict symmetry over the entrance and on the towers (Figs. 7, 8). In their company, the sculptor and his guide take in the panoramic view. The pavilions—those for men, on their left, mirror the women’s—march down the hill, slight variations on a theme of cubic volumes,



1 Erwin Pendl, Steinhof Psychiatric Hospital, Vienna, bird's-eye view, 1907 (from *N.-Ö. Landes-Heil- und Pflegeanstalt für Geistes- und Nervenkranken "Am Steinhof" in Wien* [Vienna: Nieder-Österreichisches Landesauschuss, ca. 1907–8], n.p., courtesy Niederösterreichisches Landesbibliothek)

with large rectangular windows and simple green-painted ironwork forming verandas and entrance canopies. The pavilions take up less space than the gardens and paths between them. The buildings on the central axis make larger statements in the same vocabulary. The view skips from the near to the far—to the hills and mountains to the north and west and the sprawl and spires of Vienna in the east. On the way down the hill, the sculptor and his guide take a detour and pass through the sanatorium, the area for paying patients, some of whom they see strolling among the pavilions (the guide calls them villas). This area boasts even more green, and more open space, and instead of brick, there is smooth stucco, with Secessionistic ornamental bands. The *Kurhaus*, the therapeutics building, which occupies the center of this section, particularly impresses the sculptor with its low-slung facade dominated by a curving bay of modern stained glass (Fig. 9). Afterward, looking through the illustrated prospectus the guide gives him, he sees that behind the bay is a swimming pool (Fig. 10).

We know that Steinhof was a popular destination for traveling psychiatrists, drawn there to witness the much-vaunted reforms in the care of the insane initiated by the Lower Austrian government.<sup>14</sup> The province had already made an impact on the psychiatric world with a smaller mental hospital complex built between 1898 and 1902 at Mauer-Oehling, a village west of Vienna. The process of planning this hospital

had triggered a thoroughgoing reform of Lower Austria's policies regarding the care of the insane, presented as bringing the province to the forefront of European practice.<sup>15</sup> In the words of the psychiatrist and future director of Mauer-Oehling Josef Starlinger,

thanks to this comprehensive reform, the care of the insane in Lower Austria has been raised to a level that is not merely on a par with all other provinces and nations, but that can in certain respects serve as a modern model to others, for the benefit of the sick, the honor of the province, and the lasting fame of its current parliamentary representatives. The fact that this reform was inaugurated with the erection of the Lower Austrian Provincial Institutions for the Care and Cure of the Mentally Ill means that this institution stands as the cornerstone and starting point of a new epoch.<sup>16</sup>

A Festschrift on the institution, published in 1902, concluded its opening section, the "Development of Psychiatry," with the glorification of the present, as represented by Mauer-Oehling: "Thus did the treatment of the insane swing from the generous but primitive notion that the mentally ill were blessed by God, through the terrible stages of dark superstition, unspeakable cruelty and gruesome crimes, to today's approach, encouraged by the aesthetics and ethics of moder-



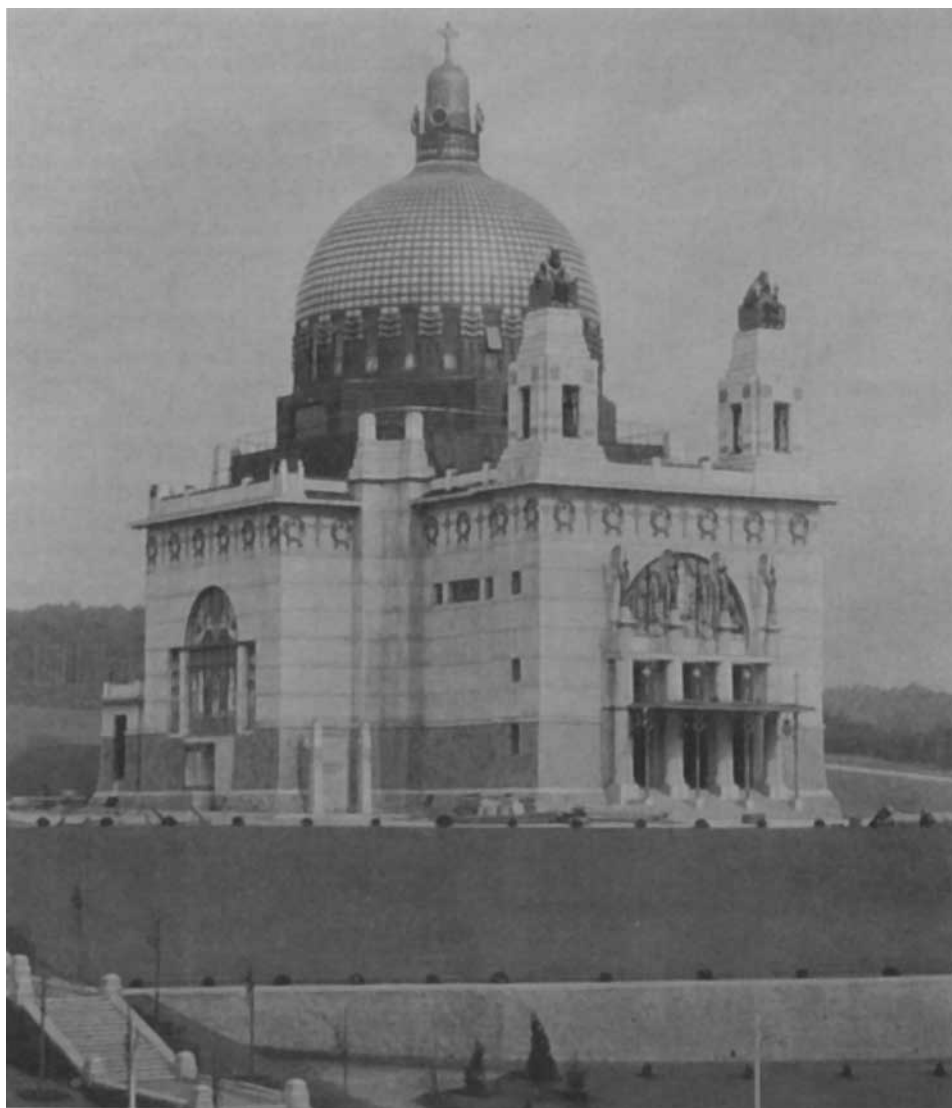
nity.”<sup>17</sup> In 1908, a year after Steinhof was opened, the Third International Congress for the Care of the Insane was held in Vienna. Fedor Gerényi, Lower Austria’s leading social welfare planner, who was closely involved in the planning of both Mauer-Oehling and Steinhof,<sup>18</sup> spoke of psychiatry as “the field among all the medical sciences that has perhaps demonstrated the most striking innovations.”<sup>19</sup> The evidence for this was in the buildings: “The creation of new asylums as ‘open door’ cottage complexes, the employment of the mentally ill in agriculture and in the workshops . . . when compared to the old closed asylums . . . represent such extraordinary progress, that they alone show how rapidly our view of things can change within a relatively short time.”<sup>20</sup>

### The Narrative of Asylum Reform

Doctors and government officials made much of the innovative, progressive nature of the Lower Austrian reforms. In both the professional literature and publicity material, they spoke the language of progress and rebirth: the new Lower Austrian mental hospitals signaled the dawning of a new age of humane, scientific treatment of the insane, in contrast to the barbaric practices of the past. But as the extensive scholarship on the history of “asyludom” shows, by the end of the nineteenth century Western psychiatry had been both heralding and attempting to imple-

ment this new age repeatedly for over a century. While the Lower Austrian reformers stressed their modernity and their transcendence of past therapeutic chaos and inhumanity, it is difficult to point to actual elements of innovation in the psychiatric care they were proposing. Instead, they resorted, paradoxically, to a tried-and-true narrative of psychiatric reform and renewal. It is worth sketching out the history of this narrative, in order to expose the conventional language of psychiatric “progress” and “modernity” by the beginning of the twentieth century—in order to perceive the overblown qualities of this language, the rhetorical quality of the rhetoric. We can then try to discern how Wagner understood it.

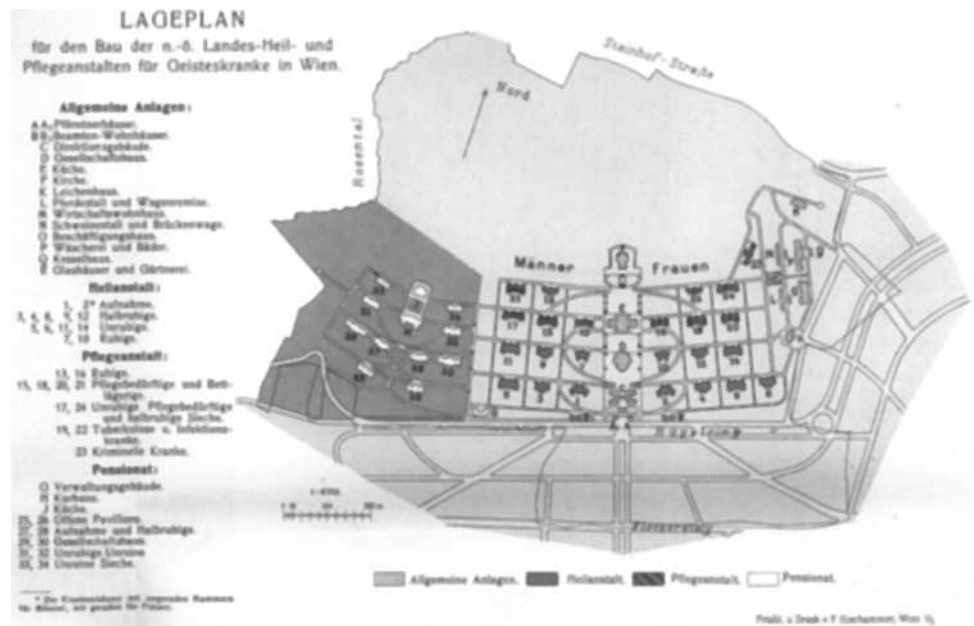
The containment of groups of humans within buildings lay at the core of this narrative of psychiatric renewal, featuring in the stages of the story taking place both before and after the proposed reform. The confinement of parts of the mad population was almost always taken for granted; the issue in late-eighteenth- and nineteenth-century discussions was whether the circumstances of their confinement were bad or good, inhumane or humane, irrational or scientific. The purpose-built insane asylums established in England in the second half of the eighteenth century were described as well-ordered havens, in contrast to the poorhouse or prison, where some insane had previously been sequestered, or the private madhouse, run for profit, or the ancient and de-



**2** Otto Wagner, Steinhofkirche (St. Leopold's), 1905–8 (from *Der Architekt* 14 [1908]: 1)



**3** Franz Berger, administration building, Steinhof, 1903–7, view of 2002 (photo: Michael Wabb)



4 Steinhof plan, published 1904 (from *Bericht des Landesausschusses*, vol. 6A [1903–4], n.p.)



5 Steinhof, view of kitchen, church, and part of the pavilion for quiet, curable women (from *Die niederösterreichischen Landesirrenanstalten und die Fürsorge des Landes Niederösterreich für schwachsinnige Kinder, Jahresbericht über die Zeit von 1908–9* [Vienna: Hof- und Staatsdruckerei, 1909], n.p., courtesy ÖNB Wien)

graded lunatic hospital embodied most powerfully by Bethlem, housed in its suspiciously palatial seventeenth-century building in Moorfields, London.<sup>21</sup> Likewise, somewhat later, early-nineteenth-century German psychiatrists promoted themselves as replacing with a systematic psychiatry and the first purpose-built asylums the disorder and cruelty resulting from mixing the insane with criminals and general hospital populations.<sup>22</sup> Such an intention, or self-presentation, was implicit in the name “asylum” in English and, in German, in the replacement of the term *Tollhaus* (madhouse) with *Heil-Anstalt* (institution for healing).<sup>23</sup>

What did therapy for the insane mean? While in practice violence and invasive physical treatment and restraint continued to be used, from the mid-eighteenth century the progres-

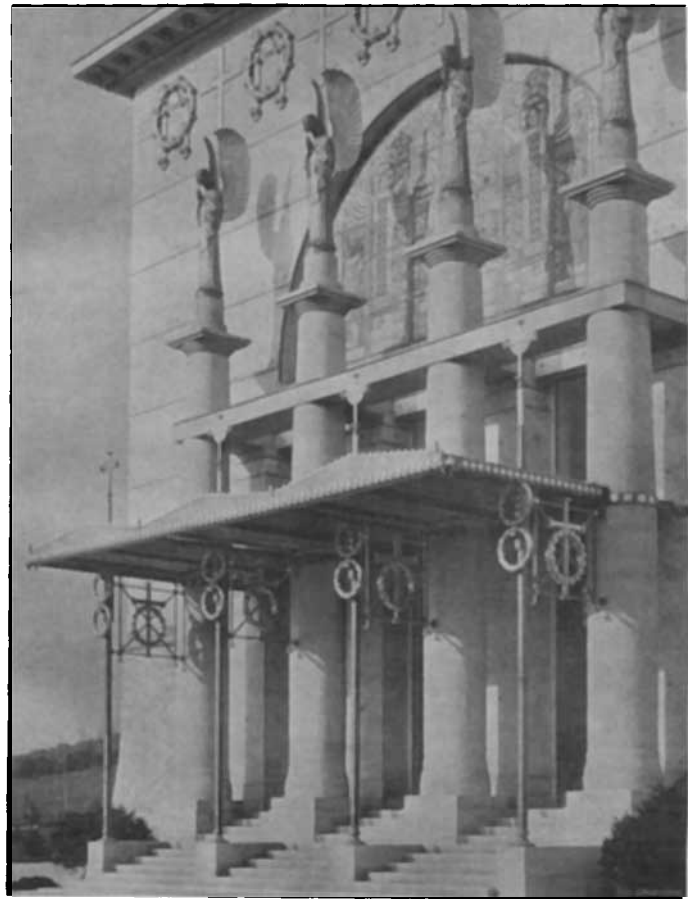
sive ideal presented to potential donors to the new public-subscription asylums was the psychological and spatial “management” of the insane. Inspired by both an Enlightenment belief in the power of reason and an Evangelical commitment to the equality of men before God, asylum superintendents began to espouse what they described as “mildness” and “kindness” toward those who would now be known as “patients,” with a view to obtaining obedience and replacing the outward discipline of manacles and chains with an inner self-discipline.<sup>24</sup> (Michel Foucault extrapolated this tendency into a symptom of the new post-Enlightenment operation of power in his famous 1960s and 1970s studies of the spatial techniques used to control the mad and the criminal.)<sup>25</sup> In the 1780s and 1790s, at the York Retreat in England, in Paris



6 Steinhof, patients on veranda of pavilion (from *Die niederösterreichischen Landesirrenanstalten, Jahresbericht 1908–9*, n.p., courtesy ÖNB Wien)

under Philippe Pinel, and in Florence under Vincenzo Chiarugi, so-called moral treatment was further elaborated. Classification of different types of patients—men and women, quiet and raving, physically ill and healthy, curable and incurable, lower and upper class—and their spatial separation from each other were seen as essential to the overall sense of order and rationality in the asylum and to the individualized treatment of patients.<sup>26</sup> Elaborate spatial schemes (including, but not limited to, those influenced by Jeremy Bentham's *Panopticon*<sup>27</sup>) were soon developed by asylum planners to accommodate both classification and ease of surveillance, and by the mid-nineteenth century the art of asylum building had taken on the technical sophistication of a branch of engineering: in 1843, the Hanwell Asylum in England had twenty-seven wards, each devoted to a different type of patient.<sup>28</sup>

At the York Retreat (founded by the Quaker William Tuke in 1796 and influentially publicized in Samuel Tuke's 1813 *Description of the Retreat*), another key theme in asylum planning was inaugurated: the concerted construction of the asylum on the model of the way the sane world lived—that is, the creation of a kind of parallel universe for the insane. The premise was that the York Retreat was a "surrogate home," and its building, designed by builder-architect John Bevans, was a deliberately domestic construct, with the signs of con-



7 Steinhofkirche, detail of entrance with angel figures, designed by Othmar Schimkowitz (from *Der Architekt* 14 [1908]: 3)

finement (such as bars on windows) carefully concealed.<sup>29</sup> As Barry Edginton has argued, one of the assumptions behind the York Retreat was that "sane" surroundings would help restore patients to sanity through a kind of osmosis.<sup>30</sup>

The legacy the York Retreat sought to overcome was that of the York Lunatic Asylum (1774–77), one of the eighteenth-century asylums mentioned above that were themselves advanced as a new beginning, a built response to prior abuses. The model of the asylum-as-home was itself later overtaken by the model of the asylum as self-sufficient colony, in which "work therapy" saw patients working in the asylum's own fields, workshops, kitchens, and laundries.<sup>31</sup> And, from mid-century on, asylum planners began to reject the single, sprawling asylum building, proposing instead a complex of smaller units.<sup>32</sup> Here, it was claimed, truly modern and humane treatment and care could be provided. The hominess of the York Retreat, impossible to achieve as the size of buildings grew in response to increases in patient numbers, could be duplicated in the small pavilions, or villas, as they came to be called in the German-speaking countries. All patients, apart from those who were raving or dangerous, could enjoy the advantage of "open-door" treatment—that is, they would be confined not in a room or a building but within the borders of the (often very large) asylum complex, a world within itself. For the vast majority of patients, "freedom" consisted of being put to work on the asylum farm or in the workshops, kitchens, and laundries.<sup>33</sup> Toward the end of

the nineteenth century, progressive asylum planners increasingly advocated the development of so-called family-care treatment, in which quiet, semisocialized patients would be billeted with families either in special units designed for them on the edge of the complex or in the agricultural villages bordering the asylum.<sup>34</sup>

One might think that the flip side of such disintegration would be integration with the world of the “sane,” and the notion of family care seems to foreshadow late-twentieth-century notions of care in the community. But in the nineteenth century tendencies toward integration were countered by the persistent notion that the asylum embodied an implicit critique of modern civilization, particularly modern urban civilization. The common conviction that the best place to build an asylum was on an elevated site, with good air, and at a distance from urban centers persisted into the twentieth century.<sup>35</sup> The desire to put distance between the asylum and centers of human civilization coincided with the identification of “moral” causes of insanity (including poverty, overwork, grief, intimate relationships, and religion) in most early-nineteenth-century psychiatric treatises.<sup>36</sup> As Leonard Smith writes: “The exposition of a cause, particularly a ‘moral’ cause, provided the intellectual justification for removal to the asylum from the environment that nurtured it. By receiving treatment in the sequestered asylum, the sufferer could be insulated from that cause and placed back on the road to recovery.”<sup>37</sup> In his 1839 treatise, W. A. F. Browne developed this notion, that aspects of life in society could drive people mad, into a full-blown attack on the characteristic aspects of modern life itself. His solution was, as Andrew Scull has expressed it, the “asylum as utopia”—the creation of an alternative world in which all problems of modernity could be reversed.<sup>38</sup>

By 1900, did psychiatrists and asylum planners still believe that asylums could be central to curing insanity? As quickly as asylums were built, they filled up and became overcrowded.<sup>39</sup> Scull has argued that by the end of the nineteenth century the psychiatric profession was in denial about the fact that their beloved asylums had been reduced in practice to nothing more than warehouses; they refused to admit that the line that early-nineteenth-century reforms had so definitively drawn between the asylum and the prison had become increasingly blurred as the century progressed.<sup>40</sup> Psychiatrists found their hard-won professional medical standing threatened by the suspicion that they had become nothing more than minders for a completely marginalized, static, and medically uninteresting population (this quite apart from the suspicion that they had betrayed the trust of the mentally ill themselves and their relatives). In the German-speaking world, the marginalization of the asylums was also a product of the rise of clinical psychiatry. From about 1860 on, the psychiatric cutting edge was to be found not in the asylum but in the university and the urban clinic (though by 1900, the hope that clinicians would find a cure for mental illness had also largely faded).<sup>41</sup> The expansion of the realm of psychiatry into the area of neurosis among the general population and the development of the idea of mental hygiene in the early twentieth century can be seen as responses to the anxiety that asylums, and psychiatry in general, had failed in their curative mission.<sup>42</sup>



8 Steinhofkirche, detail of roof figure of Saint Severin, designed by Richard Luksch, view of 2002 (photo: Michael Wabb)

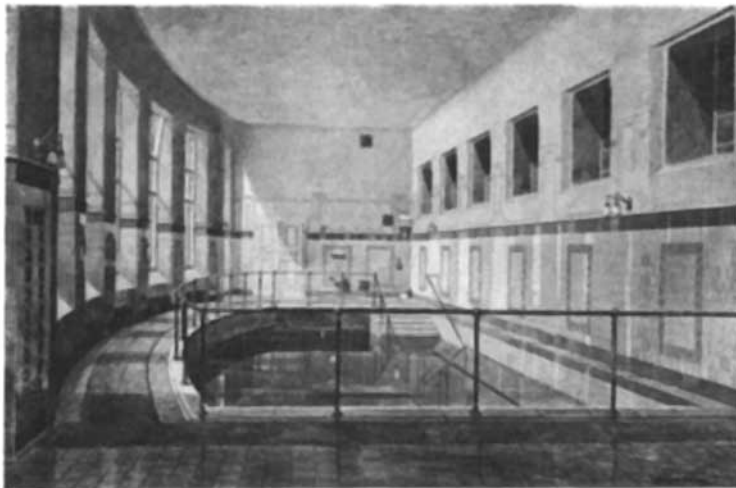
By 1898, the Austrian psychiatric profession still saw itself struggling with the “numerous prejudices . . . that reign among lay people even now, at the end of the nineteenth century, to the great disadvantage of the mentally ill themselves.”<sup>43</sup> A potted history of psychiatry, “The Treatment of the Insane, Then and Now,” was published in that year as a pamphlet by the Lower Austrian government,

to demonstrate the overwhelming revolution, which has taken place in the treatment of the insane. The times of cold showers, of chains, of barbaric punishments, are past. Modern psychiatry holds fast to the legacy of those noble minds, who first revealed to the astonished world the possibility of a free treatment of the insane. And it continues, steadfast, the perfection and further development of this great ideal.<sup>44</sup>

One wonders whether prejudices against psychiatric institutions were relieved by this Whiggish narrative or rather reinforced by the constant repetition of this story of reform and success in the face of growing numbers of asylum patients and the inevitable questions as to whether it was right to keep



9 Berger, Steinhof Sanatorium Kurhaus, 1908 (from *Die niederösterreichischen Landesirrenanstalten, Jahresbericht 1908–9*, opposite 118, courtesy Niederösterreichisches Landesbibliothek)



The cure-house.

The Swimming-pool.

10 Steinhof Sanatorium Kurhaus, swimming pool (from *The Provincial Sanatorium of "Steinhof" in Vienna (Austria) XIII. Prospectus* [Vienna: Province of Lower Austria (ca. 1907–8)], courtesy Niederösterreichisches Landesbibliothek)

innocent people locked up—however humanely—for a lifetime.<sup>45</sup> In any case, it was bombastic self-celebration rather than embarrassed silence that accompanied the opening of the psychiatric institutions (no longer called asylums) at Mauer-Oehling and later Steinhof. They would be large, their planning would be overseen by all the great names in psychiatry, and they would represent an elegant synthesis of every self-proclaimed advance that had taken place in the treatment of the insane up to the present day. They would stand as built textbooks of modern psychiatry. Johannes Bresler, a leading European expert on asylum planning, called Steinhof “the greatest institution in Europe, which is outfitted and

equipped with everything that the present offers and requires.”<sup>46</sup>

Steinhof was certainly the *largest* in Europe, at a time when progressive psychiatry tended to be associated with small urban acute clinics, when large self-contained asylums were, as we have seen, suspected of being mere warehouses for the chronically ill. Steinhof’s planners were determined to resist marginalization, to control their public image, and, indeed, to convince the world of the relevance and social centrality of the Steinhof project. They pursued these goals largely through a careful use of language and labels, but also by rethinking how parts of the institution would operate. The

incorporation of nervous ailments into the range of disorders treated at Steinhof was at the center of this “rebranding” effort. “Nerves” were inserted into the name of the new institution, which read in full: the Lower Austrian Provincial Institutions for the Care and Cure of the Mentally and Nervously Ill “am Steinhof.” “The word ‘asylum’ [*Irrenanstalt*] is avoided. . . .,” reported the *Neue Freie Presse* in its article marking Steinhof’s opening:

But not only has the label *Irrenanstalt* been abandoned; the entire organization of the new institution has been arranged in such a way that it no longer represents an *Irrenanstalt* in the received sense of the word. The modern development of the care of the insane has meant that public institutions admit not only the definitively mentally ill but also patients suffering from nervous ailments that have a psychiatric basis.<sup>47</sup>

This aspect of the new institution must have been strongly emphasized in the publicity and during the tours of Steinhof given to the press. Newspaper articles such as the one in the *Neue Freie Presse* gave particular attention to the admission of nervous patients.<sup>48</sup>

The incorporation of *Nervenranke* into Steinhof formed a bridge between the “otherness” of mental retardation or full-blown psychosis and the more familiar and pedestrian nervous disease.<sup>49</sup> Newspaper readers could themselves identify with the figure of the neurasthenic, and they would have been acquainted with the thriving science and business of therapies for nervous ailments.<sup>50</sup> Although nervous patients and mentally ill patients could be admitted to either the “pauper,” or state-supported, part of the institution or the section in which affluent patients paid a daily fee for their care, it was the latter, the paid section, that was identified most closely with the realm of nervous disease. Labeled the *Pensionat* (meaning the area reserved for paying patients) in the original 1902 planning brief, this separate group of thirteen buildings, housing 356 patients, became the “Sanatorium” in the institution’s statute and in press reports,<sup>51</sup> “sanatorium” being the modern label for a residential treatment center for nervous ailments. Only the Sanatorium was provided with a *Kurhaus*, a therapeutic center like those found in most private sanatoriums for nervous ailments, and the Steinhof Sanatorium *Kurhaus* was equipped with the most up-to-date facilities for mechanotherapy, electrotherapy, hydrotherapy, and sun and air cures.<sup>52</sup> This was not typical equipment for an asylum; in 1906 the director of Mauer-Oehling, Josef Starlinger, called for the importation of such facilities from the private sanatorium into the *Irrenanstalt* and identified Steinhof as the “first asylum on the continent” where the new therapies would be incorporated “to a significant degree.”<sup>53</sup> Though the Steinhof Sanatorium contained pavilions for disturbed psychotic patients, equipped with isolation cells,<sup>54</sup> it also gestured toward the sanatorium for nervous ailments, a place that a “normal” person—or, at least, the “normal” person of the upper middle classes—would find recognizable.

Fedor Gerényi, the director of public welfare projects for the Lower Austrian government, who was active in the planning of both Mauer-Oehling and Steinhof, verbalized the

wider social implications of Steinhof’s expansion into the realm of nervous disease. “In almost all advanced modern countries [*Kulturstaaten*],” Gerényi argued, “we see the following factors as the most influential causes of mental disturbance: alcoholism, syphilis, and the increased demands placed on the money-earning classes by the struggle for survival.”<sup>55</sup> Gerényi drew on prevalent and widely popularized theories that linked a perceived rise in nervous ailments to the increased stresses of modern civilization: “Modern economic evolution has placed increased demands on the physical and mental powers of the individual, and the influence of these demands on the health of the people is well known. . . .”<sup>56</sup> The government should take measures in the name of the “health of the people,” Gerényi argued, to counter this situation. These measures would include reducing the working week, enforcing minimum amounts of vacation time for “intellectual” workers, and encouraging people to adopt a “simple way of living,” thus making them less prone to overwork for the sake of higher earnings. The final measure, for those for whom these remedies had not worked, would be the creation of “Nervenheilanstalten,” hospitals for nervous ailments, or, failing that, the authorities should allow “the voluntary admission of those suffering from nervous ailments into special sections of the public asylums.”<sup>57</sup> Gerényi went on to describe the way this worked at Steinhof. All nervous patients needed was a letter from a doctor explaining the need for the treatment; they would have “complete freedom of movement both within and outside the institution—depending on the doctor’s prescription—and they may leave the institution at any time,” again, depending on various conditions, including not presenting a danger to the public.<sup>58</sup> It was important that governments support this kind of initiative, Gerényi contended, in order to prevent those suffering from merely nervous ailments from continuing to overstrain themselves and thus ending up in an asylum as a mental patient.<sup>59</sup>

The orientation toward nervous ailments at Steinhof, then, embodied an attempt to fight the marginalization of the asylum on a number of levels. The language of “nervousness,” with its sanatoriums and fashionable treatments, would have seemed much more familiar and less threatening—especially to the powerful educated upper middle classes—than that of traditional asylum psychiatry. The provision for patients suffering from nervous ailments to admit themselves voluntarily and to enjoy (at least in theory) the freedom to do what they pleased and to leave whenever they wished introduced a completely new dynamic to an institution in which confinement was still a basic underlying prerequisite for treatment—the presence of nervous patients suggested that the asylum wall was permeable. Finally, in a period when it was strongly suspected that most asylums, despite their utopian tradition as tools in a cure, were basically nothing more than warehouses for the chronically ill, it placed asylums—and Steinhof in particular—back at the center of an effort to improve and control modern life. The associations with the modernist ideal community invoked by Wagner corresponded, as we will see, with the rhetoric of social centrality, but it had a very ambivalent relation with the new sense of permeability, or integration with the outside world.

### Overlapping Disciplines: Asylum Planning and "Architecture"

In 1907, Dr. Gustav Kolb from Bayreuth published his *Atlas of Asylum Construction: A Handbook for Public Authorities, Psychiatrists and Planners*. This two-volume publication laid out in comprehensive detail the various options available to the modern asylum planner.<sup>60</sup> In the foreword Kolb insisted that his atlas should not be used thoughtlessly as a pattern book, and he spared a thought for the frustrated creative impulses of the asylum architect (or *Techniker*, as he called him):

In terms of aesthetics, we must allow the architect a certain amount (indeed, in my view, a large amount) of creative freedom. When he declares, "The plan might be ideal from a psychiatric standpoint, but it is completely unsuited to the landscape, to the building style of the region, and to the style I had in mind for the asylum"—then, I believe, it is the duty of the psychiatrist to sit down with him and find a plan that is satisfying from both a psychiatric and an aesthetic standpoint. For it is only in this way that we will fascinate him with his thorny task, only thus will we make it bearable for him to be eternally dependent on the psychiatrist (for this dependence is the necessary result of the need always to keep the psychiatric requirements of the asylum in mind). Only thus will we prevent him from dedicating himself heart and soul to the ancillary buildings, the only ones in which he can exercise some creative freedom. (And it is these ancillary buildings that threaten to become the main features of our modern show asylums).<sup>61</sup>

As asylums became more technologically and spatially elaborate, the collaboration between designers and asylum planners became ever more essential. But, as Kolb implies, conflicts between the psychiatrists planning the asylum and the architect engaged to give the plans built form could easily emerge from the differing set of priorities embraced by the two groups. This is a central methodological point for the study of asylum architecture. The language of the asylum planners, including the elaborate discourse about the relation between buildings and mental illness that they had woven over a hundred and fifty years, is seductive in its richness and specificity, but it is important to avoid putting asylum planners' words in architects' mouths. As Stevenson has shown in her study of British hospital and asylum architecture, the relation between building for health and "high architecture" at that time was far from stable. At certain moments, the hospital and asylum were cherished architectural commissions; at others, the relation was fraught with difficulty and mutual suspicion, and it was not at all clear that hospitals and asylums should have anything to do with "architecture"—that is, with trained architects and their concerns.<sup>62</sup> For Kolb, the hierarchy is unshakable—the asylum architect is "eternally dependent on the psychiatrist," and this was a widespread assumption among asylum psychiatrists at the time.<sup>63</sup> Even Kolb, however, found moments of creative freedom for the architect in the design of the ancillary buildings (a not insignificant part of the asylum complex, including chapels and theaters), in the overall visual articulation

(the "style" Kolb's imaginary architect "had in mind for the asylum"), and even in elements of the layout.

Asylum planners themselves often had points to make about the appearance of asylums. For Kolb, for instance,

the built environment of the asylum must avoid everything that made the exterior of the old lunatic asylum resemble a prison and helped to mark it with the stamp of the penal institution and the blemish of degradation. The old asylums had massive buildings with bars on the windows; narrow, dark courtyards; gardens shut off anxiously from the outside world through high fences or walls. In their place, modern applied psychiatry builds smaller buildings, attractively laid out, seemingly informal in their grouping, and in no way different, on the exterior, from a normal hospital or residential dwelling. Grapevines climb up the walls, a charming veranda invites one to rest, attractive grounds surround the houses, in which gardens for the patients are delineated by fences indistinguishable from the fences with which a private citizen would enclose his property.<sup>64</sup>

Questions of "style" may have been left up to the architect, but he was steered toward a certain approach or attitude, based on small-scale informality, charm, naturalness, and the model of the residential neighborhood. In the brief for Steinhof, the villa system is embraced because it allows patients of different types to be separated from each other and easily classified, and also because it "corresponds . . . to the modern, humanitarian tendency to distance the asylum from anything coercive and prison-like."<sup>65</sup> From where did the asylum planners derive their vocabulary for discussing the appearance of buildings? How can we know how well they were acquainted with current architectural trends? Had Kolb read Hermann Muthesius on the English house, or Alfred Lichtwark's essays on the new domestic architecture, with their rejection of monumentality in favor of a self-conscious informality and naturalness? Or perhaps simply visited (or even lived in) one of the fashionable villa suburbs, where these ideas (or their popular offshoots) were being embraced? Similarly, in the specialist psychiatric literature on asylum planning we might be hearing an echo of current urban planning debates in the discussion of whether or not the division of the asylum into two equal halves determined by the separation of the sexes should automatically result in a complex laid out in a symmetrical grid. Can we detect the influence of the Viennese urbanist Camillo Sitte behind the argument that the "boring regularity" of the grid should be replaced by "the variety and unruliness of the village"?<sup>66</sup>

In any case, while the program for Steinhof gave detailed guidelines on where the various types of patient pavilions and facilities should be located in relation to each other, it left formal contours of the plan to the discretion of the architect.<sup>67</sup> The hints of the asylum planners' awareness of current trends in architecture in their discourse are not enough to account for the architectural and urban forms employed at Steinhof. Different decisions were made at other contemporary asylums, despite similar aesthetic nudges.<sup>68</sup> In the architecture of Steinhof (in the buildings' profiles, use of materials and color, and ornamentation) we see the values of

# LAGEPLAN DES BAUES DER NEUEN N.-Ö. LANDES- IRKENANSTALT IN WIEN.

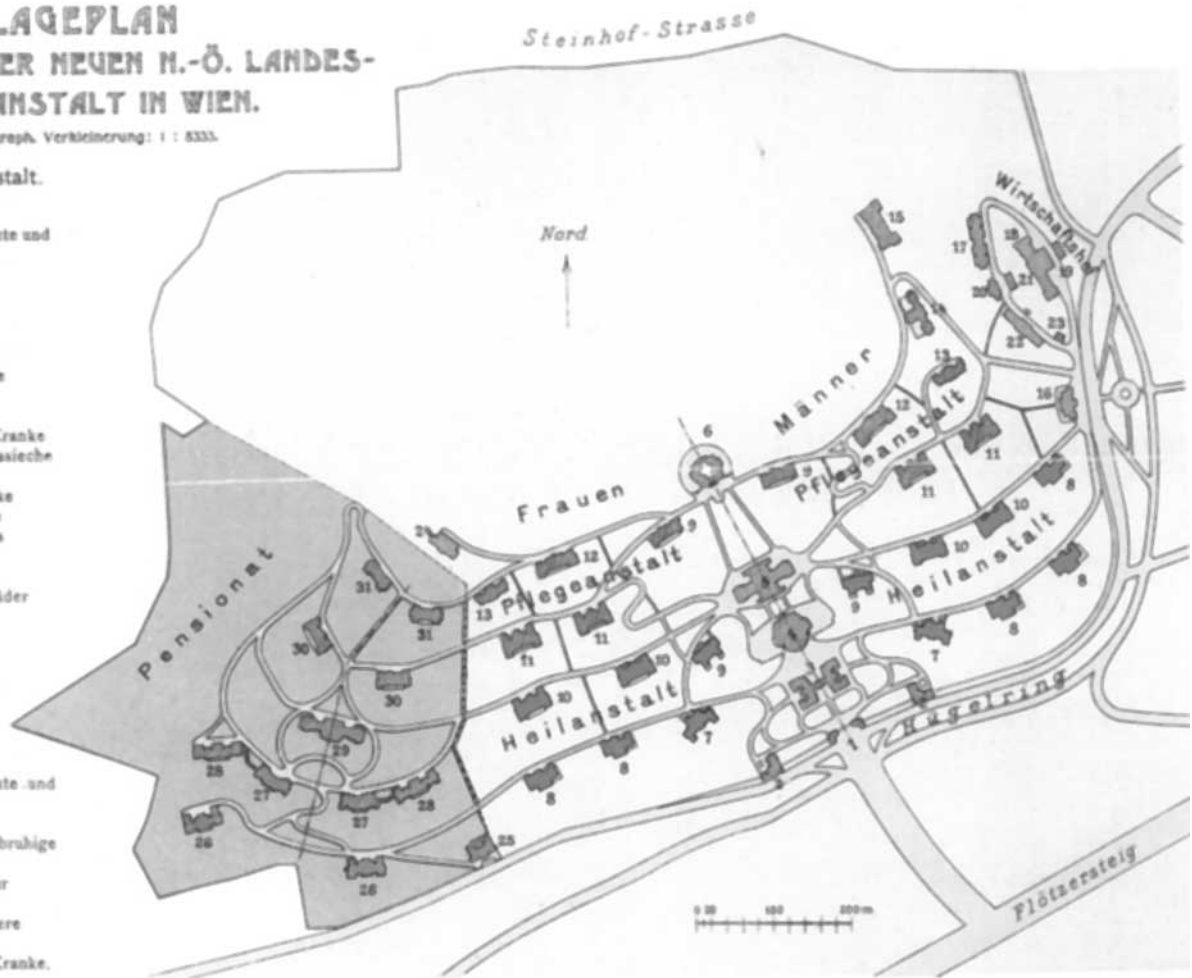
Photograph. Verkleinerung: 1 : 8333.

## Heil- u. Pflegeanstalt.

- 1 Pförtnerhäuser
- 2 Wohnhäuser für Ärzte und Beamte
- 3 Direktion
- 4 Gesellschaftsbau
- 5 Küche
- 6 Kirche
- 7 Aufnahme
- 8 Halbruhige Kranke
- 9 Ruhige Kranke
- 10 Unruhige Kranke
- 11 Pflegebedürftige Kranke
- 12 Unruhige u. geistesleiche Kranke
- 13 Tuberkulose Kranke
- 14 Kriminelle Kranke
- 15 Beschäftigungsbau
- 16 Leichenhaus
- 17 Schweineställe
- 18 Wäscherei und Bäder
- 19 Dampfkesselhaus
- 20 Wohnhaus
- 21 Wagenschoppen
- 22 Pferdeställe
- 23 Brückenwaage
- 24 Gewächshaus.

## Pensionat.

- 25 Wohnhaus für Ärzte und Beamte
- 26 Ruhige Kranke
- 27 Aufnahme und halbruhige Kranke
- 28 Gesellschaftshäuser
- 29 Kurhaus
- 30 Unruhige, unsaubere Kranke
- 31 Unreine, sieche Kranke.



11 Steinhof, plan produced by the Landesbauamt (Niederösterreichisches Landesarchiv, Box F5, Landes-Registratur 1793–1904, I-2/n, no. 66813)

simplicity, naturalness, and informality, but what is most striking is that these qualities are self-consciously articulated in the language of “modern architecture” coming straight out of avant-garde circles in Vienna and applied consistently in the manner of the *Gesamtkunstwerk*. Simplicity is combined with moments of high drama and monumentality. The plan of the institution is neither simply organic nor gridlike but a carefully proportioned and self-contained axial composition, which gestures toward both the Baroque and the utopian.

### Otto Wagner and Steinhof

Wagner was not the first to propose an overall plan for Steinhof; an earlier plan was produced in the usual way by the Landesbauamt, the Provincial Office of Building Works, under the direction of Carlo von Boog in 1903 (Fig. 11).<sup>69</sup> A comparison of the two plans allows us to reconstruct Wagner’s procedure (Fig. 12). The Landesbauamt plan maintained the traditional central axis but positioned the pavilions to either side irregularly, following the uneven contours of the slope above Baumgarten. The Sanatorium (*Pensionat* on Fig. 11) formed a bulge to the southwest; workshops and agricultural buildings tailed off to the northeast. A member of the Lower Austrian parliament, in the debate over whether to approve Wagner’s plan (and one could analyze these

parliamentary debates as demonstrations of another language in which Steinhof was discussed), thought that in the Landesbauamt’s proposal, it looked

as if these 27 buildings each had a different owner, each of whom had, on his own piece of land, oriented his facade this way or that, higher or lower in the terrain, whichever was cheapest. . . . [It was] as if someone had rolled the buildings out like dice on a piece of green paper. . . .<sup>70</sup>

Wagner’s plan, by contrast, according to the same parliamentarian, was “organic,” based on the premise that “one must be able to see on the plan that everything belongs together.”<sup>71</sup> (It also required, unlike the other plan, the expensive terracing of the slope on which the pavilions were to be built.)<sup>72</sup> Wagner’s plan manages to be both rectilinear and organic; while based on a grid, it is not additive in principle. The anchor is the central axis of church, kitchen, theater and social center, and administration building. This north-south axis splits the men’s and women’s sections of the combined *Heil- und Pflegeanstalten* (Institutions for Curable and Incurable Patients), which are then woven together by the curving paths that form mirror images of each other as they snake around the two inner rows of pavilions (thus expressing the



been given responsibility for producing architectural plans for the whole institution.<sup>77</sup> Some parliamentarians wanted to hold a competition to attract further plans for the church, but it was widely understood and restated at this meeting that no competition had so far been held; it seems that the later reports were misleading. It had simply been the case, as one parliamentarian put it, that the head of the Landesausschuss, Leopold Steiner, “had projects submitted to him, by the Landesbauamt, as well as by well-known architects, who were interested in the commission.”<sup>78</sup> Steiner himself added that after the Landesbauamt had submitted its plans, he had been approached by representatives of Viennese “artistic circles” who insisted that the design of the new institution should take into account the “future development of Vienna”; as a result, the Landesausschuss had felt obliged to ask for artists’ contributions, “and thus did the Wagner project come about.”<sup>79</sup> In the concluding report by the Landesausschuss on the Steinhof project, published in 1909, all mention of other projects was dropped, and Wagner was presented as having himself proposed his participation:

In the meantime *Oberbaurat* Otto Wagner, Professor at the Academy of Fine Arts, approached the Lower Austrian Provincial Committee with the proposal that he be consulted as an artistic collaborator during the process of building the asylum, just as the Viennese Transport Commission had consulted him during the building of the Viennese municipal railway [*Stadtbahn*]. . . . Wagner submitted designs for the church building, but also, at the same time, he devised a general plan for the layout of all the various buildings, and submitted it to the Provincial Committee.<sup>80</sup>

What seems clear is that apart from the Landesbauamt, Wagner was the only one to try his hand at an overall plan for the institution; other architects submitted plans for the church only.

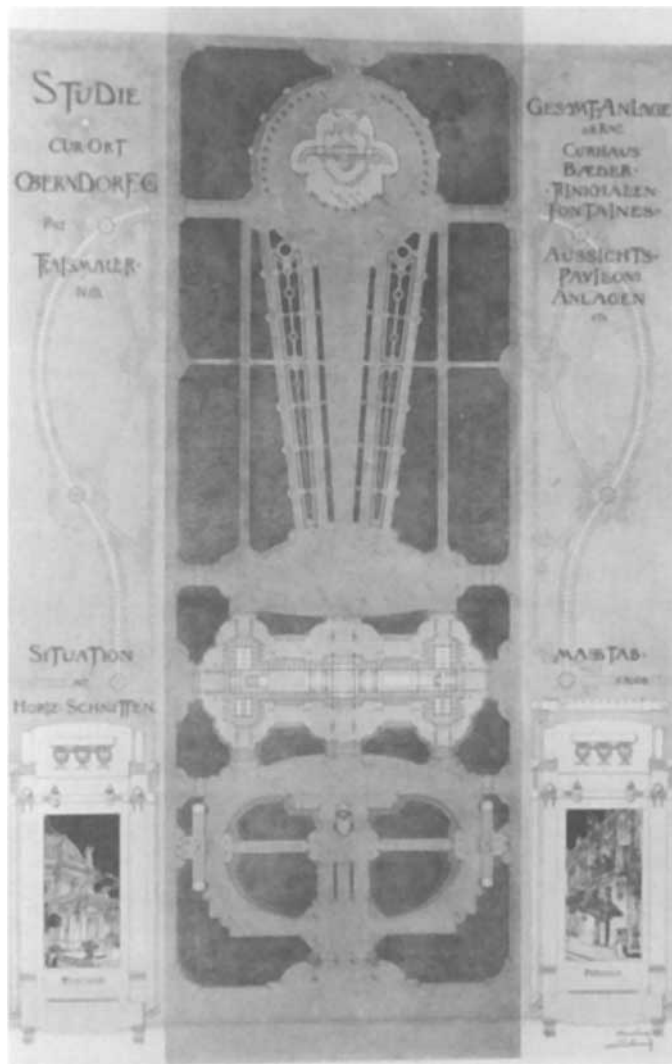
Steiner’s reference to the intervention of a lobby group for artists, calling his attention to the future development of Vienna and insisting that artists be given the opportunity to take part, certainly bears the marks of a Wagner-led initiative. Wagner spearheaded a campaign in Vienna to involve private architects like himself in large public projects that would normally have been designed by government-employed architects and engineers.<sup>81</sup> In addition to acting as a kind of artistic director on the Vienna municipal railway, he had an ongoing role in the laying out of new city districts, having won the competition for a new general plan for Vienna in 1894.<sup>82</sup> The notion that the new institution should take into account the city’s “future development” could well refer to the fact that the plans for the part of the Thirteenth District where Steinhof was to be situated were still in flux.<sup>83</sup> Indeed, the section of the City Regulation Plan (*Generalregulierungsplan*) issued in 1904 and including Steinhof shows a seamless unity between the pattern of streets, paths, and gardens in the hospital complex itself and the sweeping streets and gardens planned beyond the walls (visible in Fig. 12).<sup>84</sup>

Most likely Wagner became involved in Steinhof through a combination of good connections (he may have been tipped off about the provincial government’s plans by one of his

many contacts among the Vienna city authorities) and well-organized and forceful personal initiative and intervention. Wagner was always on the lookout for projects that in his mind represented a typically modern challenge, that reinserted the architect in the mainstream of modern life, that allowed him, as he wrote in *Modern Architecture*, to “illustrate our better, democratic, self-confident, ideal nature and take into account man’s colossal technical and scientific achievements.”<sup>85</sup> A commission for an insane asylum might seem an unlikely target for such ambitions, but, as we have seen, by the beginning of the twentieth century the “insane asylum” had been replaced by the “mental hospital,” a project injected with utopian fervor and presenting itself—however dubiously—as a “colossal scientific achievement.” The combination of the social and humanitarian ideals expressed in the publicity surrounding Steinhof with a large-scale project serving a defined, pragmatic, public purpose likely would have appealed to Wagner. (The opportunity to build a church would also have appealed to him; he was preoccupied with the problems of church design and produced a number of unbuilt projects beginning in the 1870s.<sup>86</sup>) Wagner’s realism and attention to purpose and use was always shot through with idealism. His design process, he claimed, was one in which he allowed himself to be inspired by both the pragmatic realities and the ideal essence, or “inner truth,” of a commission.<sup>87</sup>

What, then, would Wagner have perceived as the “inner truth” of the new Lower Austrian asylums, and how did he choose the forms in which to express it? The villa asylum could be as large, varied, and autonomous as a small urban unit, with its combination of residential and public buildings, agricultural infrastructure, and workshops, all built in the open countryside. And this city built from scratch would be dedicated to healing people whose mental health had been destroyed by the stresses of modern civilization, committed not only to housing, feeding, and employing its population but also to transforming it. This, at least, is the kind of optimistic, idealist formulation of the asylum’s goal that would have appealed to Wagner. Vienna and its environs in this period offered no examples of such new cities, but the ideal of the utopian community, or colony, on unbuilt land outside the city was very much in the air. Steinhof, I argue, is expressed in a formal language that was emerging just at that time, in both built and imagined form—the language of the ideal community of late Romanticism and early modernism. The context here is a *fin de siècle* intellectual culture inspired by Friedrich Nietzsche, life-reform movements (*Lebensreform*), and the *Gesamtkunstwerk*: a context in which a community built from the ground up was both a tool and a symbol of cultural regeneration.<sup>88</sup>

One of the most fertile (yet unstudied) sources of plans for ideal communities in Vienna was the project Wagner assigned to the students in their final year of the master class, known as the Wagner Schule, that he led as professor of architecture at the Vienna Academy of Fine Arts. In response to Wagner’s requirement that they choose their own ideal program, unhindered by considerations of budget or location, many Wagner-Schüler designed elaborate, fully landscaped, multifunctional complexes in rural settings. A number of the presentation drawings for these projects were



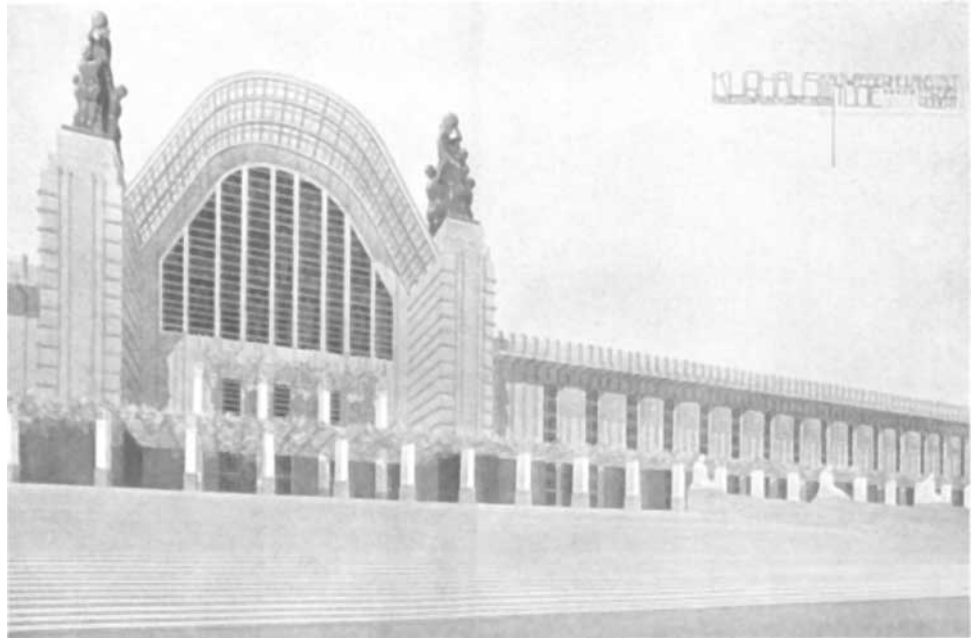
13 Anton Schania, study for a spa at Oberndorf bei Traismauer, Lower Austria, 1897 (from *Aus der Wagner Schule* 1897, *Der Architekt*, suppl. 1 [1897]: 11)

featured in the publication *Aus der Wagner Schule*, published annually from 1895 on.<sup>89</sup> No student chose a mental hospital, but some designed complexes with health-related functions. Anton Schania's 1897 project for a spa town arranged its various functions symmetrically along a central axis and used Beaux-Arts landscape planning to create a unified and dynamic whole (Fig. 13). In 1905, Robert Farsky's project consisted of an enormous *Kaltwasserheilstalt* (literally, a cold-water therapy clinic, an institution that proliferated in Central Europe and that treated internal and especially nervous ailments).<sup>90</sup> Fifty-six identical flat-roofed pavilions flanked formally landscaped parks and a central axis with a pool in the center and the *Kurhaus* at one end, raised on a podium, a demonstrative modern showpiece (Figs. 14, 15). Similar ideas and forms were used by Wunibald Deininger in his 1902 Wagner Schule project for an artists' colony: a central axis separating ranks of identical individual buildings (presumably artists' villa/studios, with steeply sloping roofs) organized on a grid and surrounded by geometric plantings (Fig. 16). At the opposite end of the axis from the entrance, Deininger placed a large common building with a monumental modern entrance, raised on a platform and set within a framing semicircle of what look like pillars or cypresses.

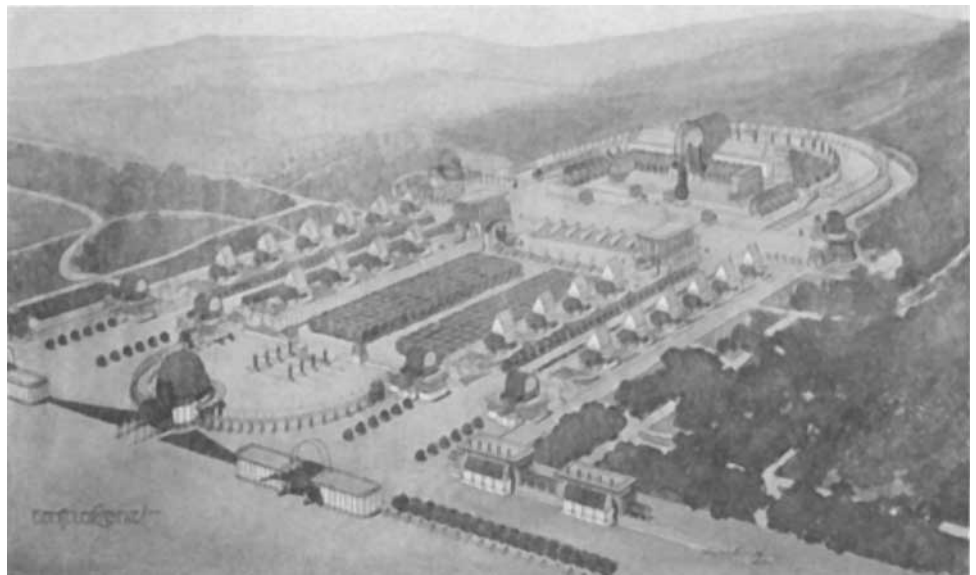
Wagner himself tried to capitalize on opportunities to develop actual commissions in the form of these ideal complexes. In 1898 he was commissioned by his fellow professors at the Academy of Fine Arts to design new buildings for the academy on the Schmelz, open land on the periphery of Vienna. His plans, which were exhibited at the Secession but never built, proposed a low-density campus for the academy, with a grid of small studio buildings spread across the wooded twelve hectares (approximately thirty acres), behind a hierarchically arranged sequence of museum and administrative buildings, all focused on a magnificent cubic hall of honor, with huge expanses of Secessionistic stained glass and an innovative openwork iron crown (Fig. 17). In the bird's-eye view, a double row of trees forms a defining border between



14 Robert Farsky, study for a *Kaltwasserheilstalt* on the Danube, 1905 (from *Wagnerschule: Projekte, Studien und Skizzen aus der Spezialschule für Architektur des Oberbaurat Otto Wagner, 1905/06 und 1906/07* [Leipzig: Baumgärtner's Buchhandlung, 1910], 26)



15 Farsky, study for the *Kurhaus* at a *Kaltwasserheilstalt* on the Danube, 1905 (from *Wagnerschule*, 26)



16 Wunibald Deininger, study for an artists' colony, 1902 (from *Wagner Schule 1902* [Vienna: Martin Gerlach, 1903], 65)

the complex and the sparsely populated hills and agricultural land that extend beyond.<sup>91</sup>

Wagner's closest assistants, Josef Hoffmann and Joseph Maria Olbrich, were meanwhile writing and speaking of their dreams of an ideal city. Hoffmann, in a 1901 essay, connected the erection of a new city with a rejection of the existing one, where he wanted to "die for pain and shame over the insensitivity and barbarism of our buildings and monuments. . . . Someday when our soul awakens we will avoid our cities with disgust and have to erect new ones in untouched regions."<sup>92</sup> In the same year, the critic Hermann Bahr reported that Olbrich had made the following statement in the midst of a lively discussion with friends three years earlier:

We must build a city, a whole city! . . . The government must give us a field, in Hietzing or on the Hohe Warte, and there we will create a world. . . . All would be dominated by the same spirit, the streets and gardens and

palaces and huts and tables and chairs and lights and spoons, expressions of the same feeling; but in the middle, like a temple in a sacred grove, a house of work. . . .<sup>93</sup>

While Hoffmann continued to dream, Olbrich was given the opportunity to build his new city in the form of the artists' colony at Darmstadt in Hessen, Germany.<sup>94</sup> Commissioned and largely funded by Archduke Ernst Ludwig of Hessen, the settlement on an undeveloped site on a hill (the Mathildenhöhe) was both artists' colony and the focus of a series of exhibitions of modern architecture and design. Compared with the strict axial symmetry and rectilinearity of the Wagner Schule complexes I have discussed, the colony's plan had more of the organic asymmetry of an Arts and Crafts suburb, and this self-consciously haphazard quality has been further emphasized by later demolitions and additions. But the plan for the *Dokument deutscher Kunst*, the exhibition that inaugurated the colony and that consisted of both permanent and



17 Wagner, project for the Academy of Fine Arts on the outskirts of Vienna, 1898. Vienna, Wien Museum

temporary buildings, can be seen as a scaled-down version of the typical Wagner-Schule project (Fig. 18). An axis begins with the (temporary) graphic arts building, is flanked by villas more or less symmetrically arranged, and climaxes in the “Ernst Ludwig Haus,” the “house of work” of Olbrich’s dreams, containing galleries and studios. All of this was carefully landscaped.

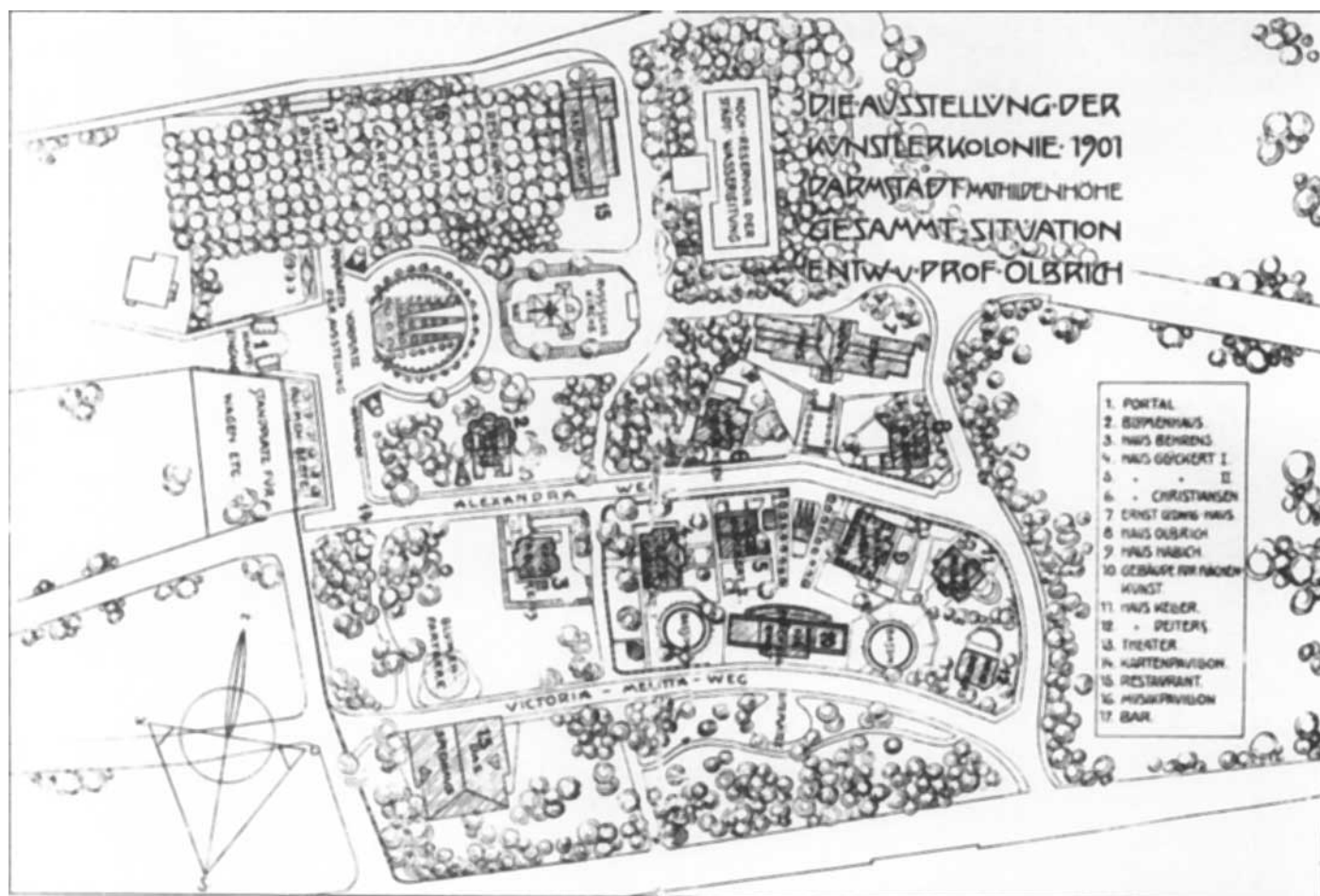
Hevesi’s description of Steinhof as a “white city” on the hill, “sparkling in the bright summer sun,” must be seen in the context of these urban experiments. Wagner reformulated Steinhof in the language of an ideal community, most obviously through the overall plan, but also through his design for the church. The original building brief did not call for the church to be part of the central axis of common buildings; its placement was left to the discretion of the architects.<sup>95</sup> The Landesbauamt plan placed the church at the top of the axis, at the highest point in the complex (Fig. 11), and this striking setting may have been part of what attracted Wagner and Bauer to submit plans for a building with a budget of only 300,000 Kronen.<sup>96</sup> As Wagner consolidated the buildings, gardens, and streets of the complex into his intricate, perfectly proportioned grid, he designed his church as the focal point (Fig. 15). A fusion of simplicity and monumentality, it filled the same aesthetic role as the *Kurhaus* in Farsky’s sanatorium, the monumental common building in Deininger’s artists’ colony, and the Ernst Ludwig Haus at Darmstadt. In his 1904 explanatory report, Wagner stressed the importance of the setting, and of how the church would provide an aesthetic resolution for the complex as a whole:

The church lies at the highest point in the grounds, on the main axis of the complex, and thus its primary aesthetic

task is to form the dominant feature of the architectural complex. It should serve as a resting point for the eye, as it sweeps over the conglomerate of buildings.<sup>97</sup>

When Steinhof was opened, the art and architecture critics, not surprisingly, focused all their detailed attention on Wagner’s church; they were not interested in the specifics of the other hospital buildings. They were interested in them in general, though, as the components of the city of which the church was the crowning element: “The church of the Lower Austrian Provincial Institutions . . . rises up in the middle of a small city consisting of clean, simple, unpretentious and—for those very reasons—pleasant buildings,”<sup>98</sup> wrote A. F. Seligmann of the *Neue Freie Presse*: “In beautiful natural surroundings, the slender gilded dome of the asylum church rises up, visible from afar, forming the crown of a giant terrace covered with beautiful gardens and sleek, homogeneous buildings.”<sup>99</sup> Otto Schönthal, a graduate of the Wagner Schule, writing in *Der Architekt*, described the church as the “focal point” of the hospital: “The overall view of the complex with the church and its gilded dome as the crowning element is an overwhelming one.”<sup>100</sup>

In a 1904 presentation drawing, a “view of the church with surroundings,” the footprint of the church is integrated in a detailed rendering of the overall plan of the central axis of administration building, theater, kitchen, and church, flanked by two rows of patients’ pavilions, all woven together by the combination of grid and winding pathways climbing the hill (Fig. 19). Wagner here was showing how his design relates to the other buildings around it and demonstrating how the church does not make sense without the rest of the complex, nor the complex without the church. The land-



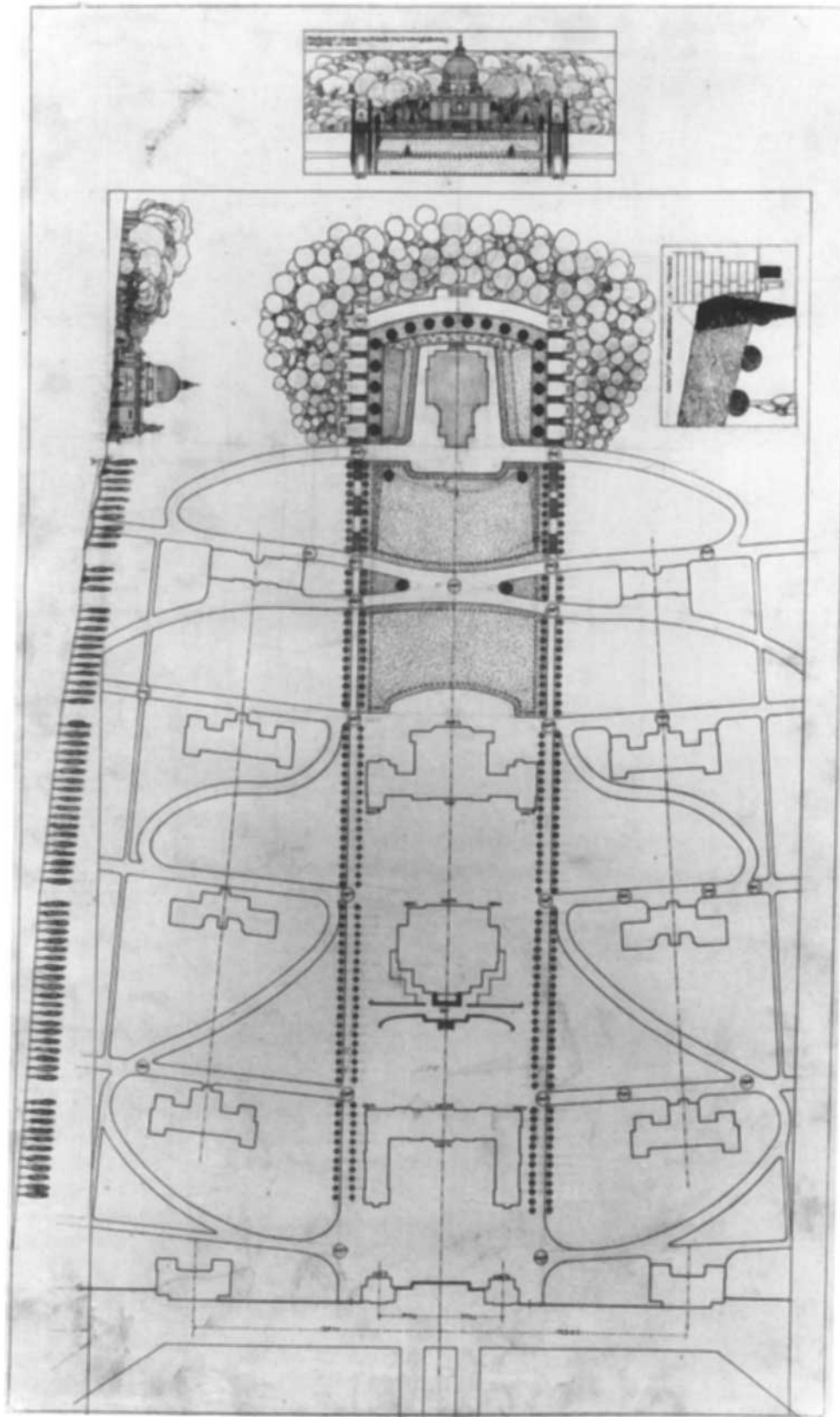
18 Joseph Maria Olbrich, plan of artists' colony, Darmstadt, during the exhibition *Dokument deutscher Kunst*, 1901 (photo: Institut Mathildenhöhe, Darmstadt)

scape design, carefully rendered in the drawing, plays a vital role in creating the sense that the complex forms a whole, though one not consisting of equal parts but focused instead on a dominant moment. A double line of planting frames the central axis of buildings, climbing up the hill to the church, which is surrounded by multiple rings of strictly geometric planting and terracing on three sides, crowned by a splendid grove, which appears like a glorious natural halo on the plan, reminiscent of the hair of one of Klimt's allegorical women.<sup>101</sup> Landscaping was crucial to the choreography of the final-year Wagner Schule projects. In Deininger's artists' colony, for example, spherical and cubic topiary plants form a kind of military parade culminating in rings of cypresses, columns, and terraces around three sides of the focal common building (Fig. 16). Olbrich dreamed of a "temple in a sacred grove" at the center of his ideal city, and while rows of closely and regularly spaced shrubs or trees flanked the axis leading to the Ernst Ludwig Haus, preexisting streets and buildings (judging from the 1901 plan) excluded space for the grove (Fig. 18). Wagner had the benefit of a great deal more space to work with.

Wagner's written description of the church stressed the stages through which he aimed to intensify the viewer's attention and focus it on the church and, within the church, on the altar. As the eye swept across the complex, it would be arrested by the setting and landscaping of the church, and

also by the overproportioned half-spherical gilded dome.<sup>102</sup> After entering the church, the visitor would proceed through a portal and a vestibule, which would "intentionally dampen the impression made on the viewer's senses"<sup>103</sup> in preparation for the effect of the interior's vast, white, light-filled space (Fig. 20). There the eye is again captured and directed toward the high altar, where the impact of color (used sparingly elsewhere, including in the stained glass) is the greatest.<sup>104</sup>

These were gestures of dramatic monumentality—not a quality ever denied by Wagner, but one that he insisted was based on attention to purpose and simplicity. As in all Wagner's projects from the mid-1890s on, attention to purpose (*Zweckmässigkeit*) was a major determining factor in the design of the Steinhof church, and much was made of the ingenious ways in which purpose—in terms of structure and use—was fulfilled.<sup>105</sup> The construction consisted largely of a pragmatic and inexpensive combination of new and old building technology and materials, creating a lightweight structure clad with thin panels of marble and Rabitz (a form of plaster reinforced with wire). The bolts used to fasten the marble panels were left in place and covered in copper, serving as a geometric ornament; similarly, Wagner turned the metal framework of the domed ceiling (into which the Rabitz panels were inserted) into a decorative feature. The uninterrupted focus on the altar and pulpit was made possible by the absence of supporting pillars in the main space and by the



19 Wagner, view and plan of church for Steinhof with pavilions. Vienna, Wien Museum

fine acoustics; everyone could see and hear without distractions (Fig. 21). Generous provision was made for electric lighting—for hygienic reasons, claimed Wagner. Another hygienic feature much commented on was the holy water font, which consisted not of a bowl holding stagnant water but of a constantly flowing tap. The main feature to emerge from the particular function of this church was the use of short

pews, “so that the nurses sitting among the patients can react easily if necessary” to an emergency and remove the offending patient.<sup>106</sup>

The formal simplicity, proportion, and order of the composition—the large, uninterrupted white surfaces and volumes, the repetition of squares, half circles, and half spheres, the stylized figures in Koloman Moser’s windows



20 Steinhofkirche, view of interior  
(*Der Architekt* 14 [1908]: 5)

and in the other images—formed a metaphoric and aesthetic bridge between attention to purpose on the one hand and monumentality on the other. “The building art of our times,” wrote Wagner, concluding his 1904 description of the church,

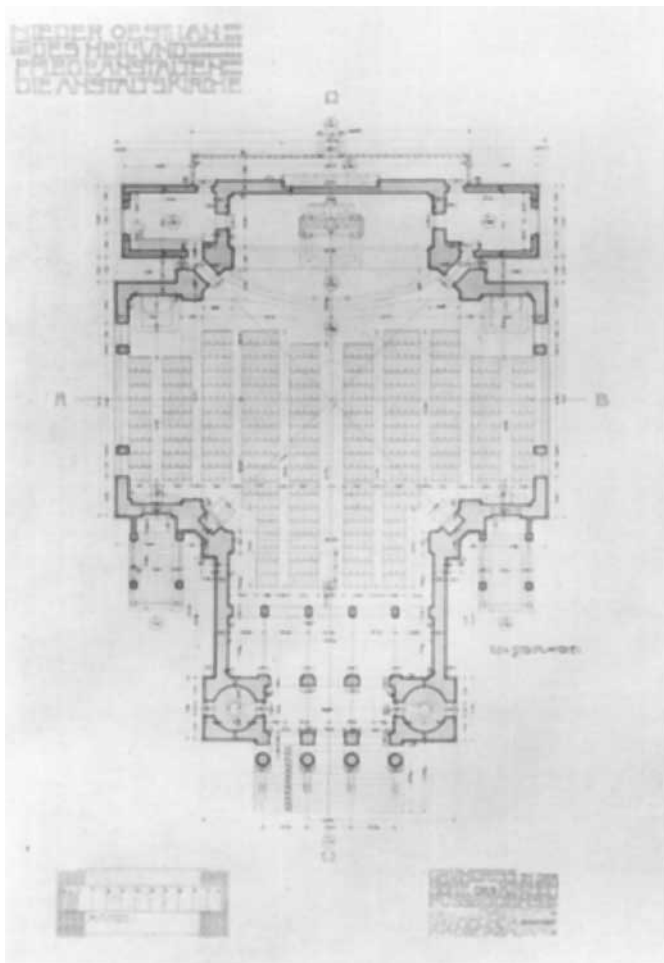
seeks to develop forms and motives from purpose, construction and material. It must also be as simple as possible, if it is to express our sensibility clearly. These simple forms should be balanced carefully one against the other, in order to achieve the beautiful relationships on which the effect created by the works of “our building art” almost entirely depends.<sup>107</sup>

Through simple, proportioned monumentality, Wagner sought to transform truth to purpose into an expression of the inner truth.<sup>108</sup> His attention to purpose represents an effort, on the one hand, to reach out beyond “architecture” (as an art) to the reality of the task at hand and, on the other, to use the art of architecture to express that reality. In stressing and seeking to express “purpose,” Wagner of course defines it in terms he can understand, as something that can be easily determined, explained, and grasped. The purpose of an institution like Steinhof was a shifting thing, in the process of being defined, and it differed depending on who was trying to define it—Was it to cure people, contain them, to remove them, or to integrate them; was it progressive, or regressive? But this ambiguity, I would argue, did not concern Wagner; he was eager to keep things straightforward and simple, content to rely on the abstractions offered by Steinhof’s psychiatric promoters.

Moreover, since he did not need to be involved in the design of individual patient pavilions, Wagner could ignore difficult issues such as the continuing use of isolation cells.<sup>109</sup> He was concerned with the church and with the big picture, the “urban plan” of the institution. The planning documents and the brief had little to say about the church; in discussing the setting and distribution of buildings, the brief condensed a century of asylum planning developments into a few simple principles. Wagner carefully and self-consciously based his design on those principles, while aestheticizing them, by invoking the ideal community.

The first principle was that the institution would be situated in natural, open surroundings, raised on a hill on the outskirts of the city. This had been achieved by the provincial government planners when they secured the site above Baumgarten. They purchased enough excess land to assure that the city would never crowd the institution, and the city planning authorities also provided a greenbelt.<sup>110</sup> While the Landesbauamt designers had let the position of the buildings be determined by the contours of the land, Wagner had pushed the government to take full advantage of the blank slate offered by the site to create a tour de force of master planning. Wagner’s design demanded the terracing of the hillside, thus making possible the “beautiful relationships” of his plan, its perfect proportional balance of simple forms. The terracing also created panoramic views from all parts of the institution and offered the view of its dominant feature, the church, to Vienna.

The brief envisioned an institution that would consist of multiple small-scale buildings with a simple appearance and



21 Steinhofkirche, ground-floor plan. Vienna, Wien Museum

include everything necessary for the existence of a population of two to three thousand people living a regimented, easily supervised life. Wagner arranged the buildings, as we have seen, on a grid, using paths and landscaping in such a way that the sense of the whole was reinforced by the parts rather than lost among them. The simple, ordered daily regimen—intended to replace the mental disorder experienced by the patients and the chaos and violence of past psychiatric regimes—was represented in the plan by Wagner in spatial terms. The graphic clarity of the plan symbolized the ease of supervision. The building brief also determined, as has been mentioned, that the primary common services would be grouped together in a central axis, dividing the main part of the institution into two equal halves, for men and for women. While the first plan by the Landesbauamt attempted to soften the strict formal symmetry that often resulted from this aspect of asylum planning, Wagner reinforced the axial symmetry and exploited its aesthetic potential, using the tools of Beaux-Arts planning much as the final-year Wagner Schule projects had used them. The brief called for smaller complexes for agricultural and manufacturing activities and for paying patients, which, while forming separate units, would be connected to the main institution. Wagner designed the layout for these so that they made the entire organism more complex while reinforcing its unity and wholeness. The church's position at the top of the main

axis of common buildings became in Wagner's design a kind of aesthetic node from which all three areas of the complex radiated.

Finally, we return to Wagner's concept of the project's "inner truth," his attempt to give visual form in his designs to the higher ideals striven for by the institution for which he was building. From the rhetoric surrounding Steinhof, we can see that what he was called on to embody was the progress made in the care of the insane and the centrality of the asylum to modern life. I have argued that the various aestheticizing maneuvers employed by Wagner amounted to designing Steinhof (at least on a visual level) as an ideal community, on the model of Deininger's artists' colony or of Olbrich's at Darmstadt. It was this that Hevesi was responding to in calling it a "white city." Wagner invoked the ideal of the city built from scratch in nature as a total work of art to connect the psychiatric rhetoric represented by Steinhof with the particularly fin de siècle utopianism represented by places like Darmstadt. The latter embodied the belief that art, and particularly the total aestheticization of the built environment, could transform the world. As Gabriele Bryant has described in her study of the *Gesamtkunstwerk*, the role of art shifts in late Romantic Nietzsche-influenced German culture from representation to essence.<sup>111</sup> Places like Darmstadt, where the total axial design and the focus on the cult building were accompanied by new, simpler, more spiritual ways of life and the rejection of urban civilization,<sup>112</sup> strove to become centers from which a transforming, redemptive power would radiate. In this aim, we can see the goals of the asylum planners—the assertion that the modern mental hospital was a social project of central importance to modern civilization—monumentalized and aestheticized.

#### Misunderstanding and Interdisciplinary Study

This essay has interpreted Steinhof as emerging from the interaction of two groups that, to use a linguistic metaphor, spoke two different but overlapping languages about their shared project. It has focused on what I see as Wagner's partial understanding of the asylum planners' goals—the ways he interpreted the intentions of the asylum planners through the filter of his own concerns. I conclude by suggesting some implications of this gap in understanding.

As we have seen, the separateness and self-containment of Steinhof coexisted with tendencies toward integration. The use of the villa plan was inspired in part by the desire to replace the single, monolithic, prisonlike structure with a friendly, open neighborhood of buildings—a gesture asylum planners saw as overcoming otherness and fostering comfort and familiarity. Likewise, the incorporation of patients with nervous ailments into the mission of the institution can be seen as an attempt to bridge the gap between the world of the asylum and its inmates and the "normal" outside world, to render the asylum wall permeable, and to encourage "sane" people to check themselves in for the sake of their nerves. There was never any question of building Steinhof within the existing fabric of Vienna; physical separation was still deemed essential by the planners, for both therapeutic and practical reasons. But an alternative visual model to the ideal community existed in which the separate-but-familiar psychiatric hospital could be expressed. The Landesbauamt plan, with its

buildings rolled out “like dice on a piece of green paper,” and Kolb’s vision of “smaller buildings, attractively laid out, seemingly informal in their grouping, and in no way different, on the exterior, from a normal hospital or residential dwelling” took their inspiration from existing extra-urban settlements such as agricultural villages or suburban neighborhoods of detached houses.

The established trope of the asylum-as-utopia, gaining its power from its separateness and rejection of the world beyond its walls, and the newer rhetoric of the open, friendly mental hospital existed in unresolved tension in the discourse of early-twentieth-century planners, including the psychiatrists and government officials who planned Steinhof. Wagner’s brand of modernism thrived not on tension but on glorious resolution; it filtered out the ambiguity of the asylum planners’ goals and focused exclusively on their utopian ambitions. The separation between the “greatest asylum in Europe” and the existing city, with its flaws and complications, was something to be exploited for its full effect, not softened. It was a showy separateness, a model for the modern world, a “white city,” an exhibition of the future.

I do not mean to suggest that Steinhof is a case of architectural hubris, of the architect willfully betraying a client’s goals, nor do I wish to imply that if Wagner had only immersed himself more deeply in the history and current state of asylum planning he could have produced something “better” or with a greater “truth to purpose,” closer to what was wanted. I would go so far as to say that a residue of misunderstanding is inherent in anything designed by an architect for a client. Whenever two or more groups with different ways of thinking about the world and the built environment are involved in designing something together, the possibility of a mismatch of meaning arises, not least because what each group means to say is a shifting rather than a stable thing. Few historians of painting (or sculpture, printmaking, or photography) still insist on the artist’s unmediated access to a reality out there to be depicted. Attention to the extra-architectural contexts for buildings—to what a building means when it is seen as a document of cultural or social (or medical) history, rather than just a monument (or footnote) of architectural development—is an immensely fruitful tendency in recent architectural history. What I have sought to do here is to focus on “architecture” as a foreign language rather than as an accurate translation.

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## Notes

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1. Ludwig Hevesi, “Otto Wagners moderne Kirche,” in *Altkunst-Neukunst, Wien 1894–1908* (Vienna: Konegen, 1909; reprint, Klagenfurt: Ritter, 1986), 249: “Vor einigen Wochen kehrte ich mit der Westbahn nach Wien zurück. Ein Pariser Bildhauer war mein Coupégenosse. Als wir in das Weichbild einfuhren, deutete er plötzlich links zum Fenster hinaus, mit einem Schrei der Überraschung. ‘Was ist das?!’ Auf dem langen Hügellücken über dem Örtchen Baumgarten—Gustav Klimt ist da geboren; modernes Omen—schimmerte in der hellen Sonne eine weisse Stadt. Überragt von der goldenen Kuppel einer weissmarmornen Kirche. . . . ‘Das ist ja etwas ganz Besonderes,’ sagte mein Franzose, ‘das muss ich mir ansehen.’”
2. *Ibid.*: “Er staunte, ungläubig fast: ‘So weit sind Sie in Wien?’”
3. *Ibid.*: “Fünf Millionen Stück Wäsche zu waschen: eine elektrische Eisenbahn, welche die Speisen in grossen Zylindern aus dem Küchengebäude exportiert.”
4. *Ibid.*: “eine ganze Stadt mit einem Stadtgebiet von 100 Hektar, mit 60 gesonderten Gebäuden, die 40 Meter voneinander stehen. Für eine Bevölkerung von 2500 Kranken, aber mit Zukunftsraum für 5000.”
5. See, for example, Katherine Fischer Taylor, *In the Theater of Criminal Justice: The Palais de Justice in Second Empire Paris*, Princeton Series in Nineteenth-Century Art, Culture and Society (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993); and the discussion of late Victorian public school buildings in Deborah E. B. Weiner, *Architecture and Social Reform in Late-Victorian London* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994).
6. See, for example, Joseph M. Siry, *Carson Pirie Scott: Louis Sullivan and the Chicago Department Store* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988); *idem*, *Unity Temple: Frank Lloyd Wright and Architecture for Liberal Religion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); and Eve Blau, *The Architecture of Red Vienna* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1999). The chapters on Joseph Maria Olbrich’s Secession Building, Josef Hoffmann’s Purkersdorf Sanatorium, and Adolf Loos’s Haus am Michaelerplatz in Leslie Topp, *Architecture and Truth in Fin-de-Siècle Vienna* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), also adopt this approach.
7. Dana Cuff, *Architecture: The Story of Practice* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1991), 179.
8. Christine Stevenson, *Medicine and Magnificence: British Hospital and Asylum Architecture, 1660–1815* (New Haven: Paul Mellon Center for Studies in British Art and Yale University Press, 2000). See also Abigail A. Van Slyck, *Free to All: Carnegie Libraries and American Culture, 1890–1920* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995); Carla Yanni, *Nature’s Museums: Victorian Science and the Architecture of Display* (London: Althone, 1999); Annmarie Adams, *Architecture in the Family Way: Doctors, Houses, and Women, 1870–1900*, Studies in the History of Medicine, Health, and Society (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1996); and Topp, *Architecture and Truth*, chapter on Otto Wagner’s Postal Savings Bank, 96–131.
9. One could also mention builders, suppliers, landscape designers, nurses, journalists, photographers, illustrators, and, of course, the patients as groups that helped to form Steinhof as a social phenomenon, though they had no opportunity to be involved in the planning.
10. A groundbreaking article on Steinhof’s architecture was published in 1981 by Peter Haiko, Harald Leupold-Löwenthal, and Mara Reissberger, “Die weisse Stadt—der ‘Steinhof’ in Wien; Architektur als Reflex der Einstellung zur Geisteskrankheit,” *Kritische Berichte* 3, no. 37 (1981): 3–37, translated into English as “The White City—The ‘Steinhof’ in Vienna: Architecture as a Reflection of the Attitude towards Mental Illness,” *Sigmund Freud House Bulletin* 5, no. 2 (1981): 10–40. The authors also take as their starting point Hevesi’s reference to Steinhof as a “white city” and refer briefly to Steinhof as a “pragmatic anticipation” of Bruno Taut’s Stadtkrone (“The White City,” 10). Inspired by the connection they made, I am investigating the possibility and nature of a link between Steinhof and the planning of utopian communities before Taut. I take issue with their argument that Wagner’s church was meant to serve as a kind of touristic-architectural distraction from the fact that Steinhof was an asylum. That argument could be made about the current public impressions of the church, but when Steinhof was built, the church and the rest of the institution were almost always mentioned in the same breath. Manfredo Tafuri was interested in the church as an ambiguous marker in what he romantically saw as an ambiguous “Gartenstadt” where reason and unreason lived in constant tension; Tafuri, “Am Steinhof: Centrality and ‘Surface’ in Otto Wagner’s Architecture,” in

*Die Kunst des Otto Wagner*, ed. Gustav Peichl (Vienna: Akademie der bildenden Künste, 1984), 65–67. Another work that briefly but usefully sets Wagner's church in the context of the larger institution is Elisabeth Koller-Gluck, *Otto Wagners Kirche am Steinhof* (Vienna: Tusch, 1984).

11. On the topic of visits from the public, the director of Steinhof was required to follow these guidelines: "Outsiders, who can be assumed from their social or professional standing to have an interest in the arrangements of the institution, can be given permission to visit by the Director or by the Lower Austrian Provincial Committee [*Landesausschuss*]. The Director is responsible for arranging tours for the visitors who are admitted [*Fremden Personen, von welcher ihrer sozialen oder Berufsstellung nach ein Interesse für die Anstaltseinrichtungen anzunehmen ist, kann der Besuch der Anstalt vom niederösterreichischen Landesausschuss oder vom Direktor gestattet werden. Wegen Führung der zugelassenen Besucher trifft der Direktor die erforderliche Veranlassung*]; *Dienstvorschriften für die Ärzte* (Vienna: Landesausschuss des Erzherzogtums Oesterreich unter der Enns, 1909), 34. Edmund Holub, a Steinhof psychiatrist, and Fedor Gerényi, an official responsible for asylum provision in the Lower Austrian government, advocated public visits as part of a campaign to overcome prejudice against psychiatric institutions; [Edmund] Holub, "Wir und die Öffentlichkeit!" *Psychiatrisch-Neurologische Wochenschrift* 9 (1907): 358; and Fedor Gerényi, "Irrenpflege und Verwaltung," in *Dritter internationaler Kongress für Irrenfürsorge in Wien, 7–11. Oktober 1908* (Vienna: Franz Doll, 1909), 8.
12. These details are taken from the account of Dr. L. Vernon Briggs, of the Mental Department of the Boston Dispensary, who described his visit to Steinhof in 1909; Briggs, "Am Steinhof: Hospital and Sanatoria in Vienna for Mental and Nervous Patients of Lower Austria," *American Journal of Insanity* 65 (1909): 709. The approach to the hospital entrance, though it lay outside the area of the hospital proper, carefully followed and extended the layout of the hospital itself. This can be seen in an excerpt from the *Generalregulierungsplan* of Vienna from 1904, in the Niederösterreichisches Landesarchiv, Landesausschuss Box F3, Irrewesen, I-2/1, Irrenanstalt Wien, Allgemeine 1903–4, no. 14310.
13. Franz Berger, "Baubeschreibung der n.-ö. Landes-Heil- und Pfllege-Anstalten für Geistes- und Nervenkrankte 'am Steinhof' in Wien XIII," *Psychiatrisch-Neurologische Wochenschrift* 9, nos. 27–28 (1907): 236, states that the walls were 2.5 meters (8 feet 2¾ inches) high.
14. G. Antonini, "Il grande nuovo Manicomio di Vienna in Steinhof," *Note e Riviste di Psichiatria, Diario del San Benedetto—Manicomio Provinciale di Pesaro*, 2nd ser., 2, no. 1 (1909); Briggs, "Am Steinhof"; Marco Pozzetto, *Die Schule Otto Wagners, 1894–1912* (Vienna: Anton Schroll, 1980). Thomas Müller has studied the phenomenon of "traveling psychiatrists" in the nineteenth century, when a research trip to several asylums was a standard aspect of the planning process for a new asylum; Müller, "Reisende Psychiater: Zum Transfer medizinisches Wissens unter europäischen Ärzten im späten 19. Jahrhundert," in *Die Welt erfahren: Reisen als Kulturkontakt*, ed. B. Struck, H.-E. Bödeker, and A. Bauerkämper (Frankfurt: Campus, 2004).
15. In Lower Austria, provincial insane asylums had housed only curable and dangerous incurable patients; nondangerous incurable patients were the responsibility of municipal authorities. In the process of planning Mauer-Oehling, the planners and psychiatrists visited several German asylums and found that the quiet incurable patients were cared for there, and provided the bulk of the manpower for the modern "agricultural colony." The colony, where "open-door" treatment was used and patients engaged in agricultural and workshop labor as part of their therapy (and in order to make the asylum self-sufficient), was an essential element of the modern villa-plan asylum. It was felt. In 1897–98, the law was changed in Lower Austria to allow harmless incurable patients to form part of the asylum population, and the Mauer-Oehling program was changed accordingly; "Bericht des niederösterreichischen Landesausschusses über die Vorarbeiten für die anlässlich des fünfzigjährigen Regierungsjubiläums Seiner Majestät des Kaisers Franz Josef I. in Mauer-Öhling zu errichtende Landesanstalt . . . (Beilage XLVI)," *Stenographische Protokolle des niederösterreichischen Landtages*, VIII Wahlperiode (1897): 3–6.
16. Josef Starlinger, "Die Reform des Irrenwesens in Niederösterreich und die neue Irrenanstalt in Mauer-Oehling," *Psychiatrische Wochenschrift*, no. 34 (1899): 306: "So wäre denn dank dieser durchgreifenden Reform das niederösterreichische Irrenwesen wieder auf eine Höhe gehoben, das nicht bloss den Vergleich mit allen übrigen Ländern und Staaten ungeschmälert aushält, sondern in mancher Beziehung sogar als modernes Muster dienen kann, zum Wohle der Kranken, zur Ehre des Landes und zum dauernden Ruhme seiner derzeitigen Vertreter. Dass die Durchführung dieser Reform mit der Errichtung der Landes-Irrenheil- und Pfllegeanstalt in Niederösterreich eingeleitet wird, giebt dieser Anstalt selbst noch eine besondere und dauernde Bedeutung als Eckstein und Ausgangspunkt einer neuen Epoche."
17. *Die Kaiser Franz Joseph-Landes-Heil- und Pfllege-Anstalt in Mauer-Öhling: Festschrift* (Vienna: Niederösterreichische Landesausschusse, 1902), 6: "So schwang sich die Irrenbehandlung von der hochherzigen, aber primitiven Anschauung des Gottgeweihtseins der Geisteskranken durch die furchtbaren Stadien finsternen Wahnglaubens, unsäglicher Gemütsroheit und grauenhafter Verbrechen zur heutigen von der Ästhetik und Ethik der Jetztzeit geforderten Auffassung."
18. Briggs, "Am Steinhof," 716.
19. Gerényi, "Irrenpflege und Verwaltung," 3: "Dasjenige Spezialgebiet der medizinische Wissenschaften, das vielleicht die augenfälligsten Neuerungen zur Folge gehabt hat. . ."
20. *Ibid.*: "Die Herstellung neuer Irrenanstalten als open door Cottageanlagen, die Beschäftigung der Geisteskranken in der Landwirtschaft und in Werkstätten . . . bilden gegenüber den alten geschlossenen Irrenanstalten . . . einen so ungeheuren Fortschritt, dass es an diesem allein schon zu erkennen wäre, welche Umwandlungen die menschlichen Anschauungen im Laufe verhältnismässig kurzer Zeit erfahren können."
21. Anne Digby, *Madness, Morality and Medicine: A Study of the York Retreat, 1796–1914*, ed. Charles Webster and Charles Rosenberg, Cambridge History of Medicine (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 4; and Leonard Smith, "Cure, Comfort and Safe Custody": *Public Lunatic Asylums in Early Nineteenth-Century England* (London: Leicester University Press, 1999), 16–18. Stevenson, *Medicine and Magnificence*, 92–97, shows how the austere facade of St. Luke's asylum (1750), built adjacent to the Moorfields Bethlem (1674–76), represented an explicit rejection of Bethlem's perceived decadence.
22. Dirk Blasius, "Einfache Seelenstörung": *Geschichte der deutschen Psychiatrie 1800–1945* (Frankfurt: Fischer Taschenbuch, 1994), 22–24; and Eric Engstrom, *Clinical Psychiatry in Imperial Germany: A History of Psychiatric Practice*, Cornell Studies in the History of Psychiatry (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2003), 17–23. While the history of asylum psychiatry in Britain, the United States, France, and Germany has been and continues to be the focus of detailed historical research, the literature on asylum psychiatry in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Austria is very limited. See Dieter Jetter, "Zur Entwicklung der Irrenfürsorge in Donauraum," *Medizin-historisches Journal* 6 (1971): 189–99; and Hans Weiss, "Geschichte der Psychiatrie in Österreich," *Österreichische Zeitschrift für Soziologie* 2 (1978): 41–57. From the primary sources, though, it is clear that the planners of Steinhof saw themselves in the context of psychiatric developments as they occurred in Britain and Germany, and I therefore turn to the rich scholarship on these areas in order to reconstruct the history of the "psychiatric reform" narrative that gets retold in the literature surrounding Mauer-Oehling and Steinhof.
23. One of the first uses of *asylum*, or *asile*, was by J. E. D. Esquirol, the French psychiatric reformer, in a publication of 1818 reviewing the care of the insane throughout France: "I would like these [new] establishments [housing only the insane] to be given a specific name which conjures up no painful idea; I would like them to be called asylums"; quoted in Jan Goldstein, "Psychiatry," in *The Companion Encyclopedia of the History of Medicine*, ed. W. F. Bynum and Roy Porter (London: Routledge, 1993), 1359. Blasius, "Einfache Seelenstörung," 22–23, attributes the first use of *Heilanstalt* to replace *Tollhaus* to the psychiatrist J. G. Langermann, who carried out influential reforms at Bayreuth in 1803–5.
24. Digby, *Madness, Morality and Medicine*, 5–8.
25. Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (London: Penguin, 1979); and *idem*, *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason* (London: Tavistock, 1967). Chris Philo, "Enough to Drive One Mad": The Organization of Space in 19th-Century Lunatic Asylums," in *The Power of Geography: How Territory Shapes Social Life*, ed. Jennifer Wolch and Michael Dear (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1989), 258–90, offers a balanced assessment of Foucault's analysis of asylums and the subsequent influence of his ideas.
26. Smith, "Cure, Comfort and Safe Custody," 192–94.
27. Philo, "Enough to Drive One Mad," 265–70, examines the empirical evidence for the influence of the Panopticon on early-nineteenth-century asylum reform and design.
28. Smith, "Cure, Comfort and Safe Custody," 194. See also, for the German context, Engstrom, *Clinical Psychiatry*, 22–23.
29. Digby, *Madness, Morality and Medicine*, 37–39.
30. Barry Edginton, "The Design of Moral Architecture at the York Retreat," *Journal of Design History* 16, no. 2 (2003): 103–17.
31. Smith, "Cure, Comfort and Safe Custody," chap. 7.
32. The history of the development of what was variously called the block, cottage, or villa plan, or the colony in Europe and the United States has yet to be studied fully. Philo, "Enough to Drive One Mad," 276–79, discusses arguments in British psychiatric journals of the 1850s and 1860s in favor of what he calls the "fragmented asylum." Kai Sam-

- met examines the lively debate about asylum planning in German psychiatric circles in the 1860s in which C. F. Flemming called for a "centrifugal dispersal of the old system" of the closed asylum to form agricultural colonies, cottage asylums, or "colonies for the insane [*Irrenkolonien*]; Sammet, "Ueber Irrenanstalten und deren Weiterentwicklung in Deutschland": Wilhelm Griesinger im Streit mit der konservativen Anstaltspsychiatrie 1865–1868, vol. 1, *Hamburger Studien zur Geschichte der Medizin* (Münster: Lit, 2000), 65. Carla Yanni, "The Linear Plan for Insane Asylums in the United States before 1866," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 62, no. 1 (2003): 43–45, outlines the development in the United States of the "cottage plan" in the second half of the nineteenth century. Dr. Hoppe, reviewing an English article on asylum construction for a German journal in 1900, maintained that the Germans were the first, beginning in the 1870s, to build the "villa asylum" proper, that is, the asylum consisting entirely of a complex of relatively small buildings spread over the grounds and not connected to each other. This arrangement he contrasted to the "pavilion system" common in late-nineteenth-century Britain, in which the separate pavilions, or blocks, are connected to each other by covered walkways; Hoppe, "Review of R. H. Steen (London), 'The Evolution of Asylum Architecture and the Principles, Which Ought to Control Modern Construction' (The Journal of Mental Science, Jan. 1900)," *Psychiatrische Wochenschrift* 2, no. 23 (1900): 227–28. It can also be contrasted to the American "cottage plan," in which the individual cottages were part of a complex centered on a tradition linear-plan asylum (Yanni, 44–45). For the development of the villa system in Germany, see also Albrecht Paetz, *Die Kolonisierung der Geisteskranken in Verbindung mit dem Offen-Thür-System, ihre historische Entwicklung und die Art ihrer Ausführung auf Rittergut Al-Scherbitz* (Berlin: Julius Springer, 1893), 10.
33. Paetz, *Kolonisierung der Geisteskranken*, 11–31, provides a history of the development of "open-door" treatment and work therapy in the German villa asylum and argues for the psychiatric and humanitarian advantages of this building form.
  34. Peter Bartlett and David Wright, eds., *Outside the Walls of the Asylum: The History of Care in the Community 1750–2000* (London: Althone, 1999); Fedor Gerényi, *Le progrès de l'assistance des aliénés dans la Basse-Autriche depuis 1902*, Comptes-Rendus du II. Congrès International de l'Assistance des Aliénés, Milan 26–30 Septembre 1906 (Bologna: Emiliano, 1907); Thomas Müller, "Vergleichende Medizingeschichte des 19. Jahrhunderts: Offene Familienpflege psychisch Kranker am Beispiel Frankreich und Deutschland," *Nachrichtenblatt der Deutschen Gesellschaft für Geschichte der Medizin, Naturwissenschaft und Technik* 52 (2002): 127–28; and Philo, "Enough to Drive One Mad," 279–82. Thomas Müller has published extensively on the debates surrounding family care in Germany and France in the late nineteenth century. See, for example, Müller, "Vergleich und Transferanalyse in der Medizingeschichte? Eine Diskussion anhand von Reiseberichten als Quelle," *Medizinhistorisches Journal* 39, no. 1 (2004): 57–77.
  35. Sammet, *Ueber Irrenanstalten*, 189–92, discusses the opposition encountered by the German psychiatrist Wilhelm Griesinger when he challenged the principle of the asylum's removal from the center and advocated central urban clinics for curable cases.
  36. Smith, "Cure, Comfort and Safe Custody," 102–12.
  37. *Ibid.*, 112.
  38. Andrew Scull, ed., *The Asylum as Utopia: W. A. F. Browne and the Mid-Nineteenth Century Consolidation of Psychiatry*, Tavistock Classics in the History of Psychiatry (London: Tavistock/Routledge, 1991).
  39. Andrew Scull, "A Convenient Place to Get Rid of Inconvenient People: The Victorian Lunatic Asylum," in *Buildings and Society: Essays on the Social Development of the Built Environment*, ed. Anthony D. King (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980), 48–50; Blasius, "Einfache Seelenstörung," 64–80; and Engstrom, *Clinical Psychiatry*, 30–33.
  40. Scull, "A Convenient Place," 49–50; and *idem*, *The Most Solitary of Afflictions: Madness and Society in Britain, 1700–1900* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 382.
  41. Engstrom, *Clinical Psychiatry*, *passim*.
  42. Scull, *Most Solitary of Afflictions*, 382; and Engstrom, *Clinical Psychiatry*, chap. 7.
  43. Alexander Pilz, *Die Irrenbehandlung einst und jetzt* (Vienna: Niederösterreichische Landesauschüsse, 1898), 23: "unselige[n] Vorurtheile . . . welche noch jetzt, am Ende des 19. Jahrhunderts, zum grössten Schaden der Geisteskranken selbst, unter den Laien herrschen. . . ." Heinz-Peter Schmiedebach and Eric Engstrom have both identified an active antipsychiatry movement in late-nineteenth-century Germany and have shown how preoccupied psychiatrists were with defending their profession against attacks from the press in this period; Schmiedebach, "Eine 'antipsychiatrische Bewegung' um die Jahrhundertwende," in *Medizinkritische Bewegungen im Deutschen Reich (ca. 1870–ca. 1933)*, ed. Martin Dinges, Medizin, Gesellschaft und Gesellschaft (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 1996), 127–59; and Engstrom, *Clinical Psychiatry*, 425–44.
  44. Pilz, *Irrenbehandlung einst und jetzt*, 23: "den enormen Umschwung zu zeigen, welcher sich auf dem Gebiete der Irrenbehandlung vollzogen. Die Zeiten der kalten Douchen, der Ketten, der barbarischen Strafen sind vorüber. Treu und fest wahr die moderne Psychiatrie das Vermächtnis jener hehren Geister, welche zuerst der stauenden Welt die Möglichkeit der freien Irrenbehandlung darthaten, und stetig baut sie fort an der Vervollkommnung und Weiterentwicklung des grossen idealen Werkes."
  45. In 1900, the director of the Vienna asylum, Adalbert Tilkowsky, analyzed the statistics for the Austrian Empire (that is, the provinces of the Habsburg Empire except for Hungary): between 1848 and 1896, while the population had grown by a third, from about 18 million to about 25 million, the number of asylum patients in 1896 (about 12,500) was more than four times what it had been in 1848 (about 2,700). Tilkowsky, "Das öffentliche Irrenwesen in Oesterreich," in *Oesterreichs Wohlfahrts-Einrichtungen, 1848–1898*, ed. Hans Heger (Vienna: Moritz Perles, 1900), 374.
  46. Johannes Bresler, "Gegenwärtiger Stand des Irrenwesens," in *Dritter internationaler Kongress*, 23: "die grossartigste Anstalt Europas, die mit allem eingerichtet und versehen ist, was die Gegenwart bietet und fordert. . . ." Bresler was the author of the definitive guide to German asylums, *Deutsche Heil- und Pflegeanstalten für Psychischkranke im Wort und Bild*, 2 vols. (Halle: Marhold, 1910–12).
  47. "Die neuen Landesheil- und Pflegeanstalten," *Neue Freie Presse*, October 6, 1907, 13: "Es ist aber nicht nur die Bezeichnung Irrenanstalt in Wegfall gekommen sondern auch die ganze Organisation der neuen Anstalten derartig eingerichtet, dass sie eine Irrenanstalt im überkommenen Sinne nicht mehr darstellen. Die moderne Entwicklung der Irrenpflege hat es mit sich gebracht, dass in öffentlichen Anstalten nicht nur ausgesprochen Geisteskranke, sondern auch solche Nervenkrankte verpflegt werden, deren Leiden auf psychiatrischer Grundlage beruht." Engstrom, *Clinical Psychiatry*, 185, shows that there was a general tendency around 1900 to drop the label *Irrenanstalt* and replace it with more "modern" terms such as *Nervenklinik*; this he sees as part of the desire at this time for psychiatry to improve its public image.
  48. See also "Die neuen niederösterreichischen Landes-Heil- und Pflegeanstalten für Geistes- und Nervenkrankte," *Wiener Bilder*, October 9, 1907, 8.
  49. *Statut für die N-Ö Landes-Heil- und Pflegeanstalten für Geistes- und Nervenkrankte 'am Steinhof' in Wien, XIII*. (Vienna: Landesauschuss des Erzhertzogtumes Österreich unter der Enns, 1907), 10, paragraph 16.
  50. Leslie Topp, "An Architecture for Modern Nerves: Josef Hoffmann's Purkersdorf Sanatorium," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 56 (1997): 414–37; and *idem*, *Architecture and Truth*, chap. 3. The psychiatrist Richard von Krafft-Ebing (1840–1902) is an example of an asylum doctor who very successfully expanded into the realm of nervous ailments; see Harry Oosterhuis, *Stepchildren of Nature: Krafft-Ebing, Psychiatry, and the Making of Sexual Identity*, Chicago Series on Sexuality, History, and Society (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000).
  51. "Die Eröffnung der niederösterreichischen Landes- Heil- und Pflegeanstalt," *Fremden-Blatt*, October 8, 1907, 3; "Die neuen Landesheil- und Pflegeanstalten," *Neue Freie Presse*, October 6, 1907, 13; and *Statut für Steinhof*, 3, paragraphs 5, 6.
  52. "Bericht des niederösterreichisches Landesauschusses über den Landtagsbeschluss vom 9. Juli 1901, betreffend die Abtretung der Landes-Irrenanstaltrealität im IX. Wiener Gemeindebezirk zum Zwecke des Neubaus von medicinischen Unterrichtskliniken (Beilage XLVI)," *Stenographische Protokolle des niederösterreichischen Landtages VIII Wahlperiode* (1902): 51.
  53. Josef Starlinger, "Einiges über Irrenklinik, Irrenanstalt, Irrenpflege in den letzten 25 Jahren," *Jahrbücher für Psychiatrie* 26 (1906): 418.
  54. "Bericht des niederösterreichisches Landesauschusses vom 9. Juli 1901," 50.
  55. Gerényi, "Irrenpflege und Verwaltung," 4: "In fast allen modernen Kulturstaaten können als massgebende Ursache für die Geistesstörung angesehen werden: die gesteigerte Anforderungen, welche der Kampf ums Dasein den erwerbenden Ständen auferlegt, der Alkoholismus, und die Syphilis."
  56. *Ibid.*: "Der Einfluss der gesteigerten Anforderungen, welche die moderne wirtschaftliche Evolution an die physischen und geistigen Kräfte des einzelnen Individuums stellt, auf die Volksgesundheit ist ja allgemein bekannt. . . ." Richard von Krafft-Ebing, in his pamphlet for lay people on "healthy and diseased nerves," made a direct link between the increased stresses of modern life and the increased incidence of nervous disorder in a chapter entitled "Our Nervous Age"; Krafft-Ebing, *Über gesunde und kranke Nerven*, 5th ed. (Tübingen: H. Laupp, 1903), 1–15.

57. Gerényi, "Irrenpflege und Verwaltung," 5: "... Gestattung des freiwilligen Eintrittes Nervenkranker in besondere Abteilungen der öffentlichen Irrenanstalten. ..."
58. *Ibid.*, 6: "sie haben je nach ärztlichen Verordnung innerhalb und ausserhalb der Anstalt volle Bewegungsfreiheit und können auch die Anstalt jederzeit verlassen. ..." See also *Statut für Steinhof*, 22, paragraph 34.
59. Gerényi, "Irrenpflege und Verwaltung," 6.
60. G[ustav] Kolb, ed., *Sammel-Atlas für den Bau von Irrenanstalten: Ein Handbuch für Behörden, Psychiater und Baubeamte*, 2 vols. (Halle: Carl Marhold, 1907).
61. *Ibid.*, vol. A, iii: "Wir müssen doch dem Techniker auch in ästhetischer Hinsicht ein gewisses und zwar meines Erachtens ein weitgehendes Mass von Gestaltungsfreiheit lassen. Wenn er erklärt: 'Der Grundriss mag vom psychiatrischen Standpunkte aus ideal sein, in die Landschaft, in die Bauart der Gegend, in den Stil der Anstalt, wie ich ihn im Auge habe, passt er absolut nicht hinein'—dann, meine ich, muss es Pflicht des Psychiaters sein, gemeinsam mit dem Techniker einen Grundriss zu finden, der psychiatrisch und ästhetisch befriedigt. Denn nur so fesseln wir den Techniker an seine dornvolle Aufgabe, nur hierdurch machen wir ihm die ewige Abhängigkeit vom Psychiater erträglich, die sich aus der notwendigen Berücksichtigung der psychiatrischen Postulate ergibt, nur hierdurch verhüten wir, dass er seine ganze Lust und Liebe den Nebengebäuden zuwendet, bei denen allein er selbstständig frei schaffen darf, den Nebengebäuden—welche die Hauptsache der modernen Monstreanstalten zu werden drohen." By "ancillary buildings," Kolb presumably meant the asylum chapel and the theater.
62. Stevenson, *Medicine and Magnificence*. As she writes in an earlier essay on the architecture of hospitals, psychiatry was "the only medical specialty to mount a sustained campaign against architecture," architecture being "the rival competence [to psychiatry] in the programme of constructing nurturing environments"; Christine Stevenson, "Medicine and Architecture," in *Companion Encyclopedia*, 1505. Adams, *Architecture in the Family Way*, chap. 2, traces the professional rivalry between medical doctors and architects around the single-family home in late-nineteenth-century England.
63. In the lively discussion in turn-of-the-century German-language psychiatric literature about the built form new mental hospitals should take, the architect is never given a voice. The implied ideal person to implement the asylum planners' recommendations is an anonymous and obedient government technician. See, for example, Josef Krayatsch, "Ein Gutachten über die Anlage und bauliche Einrichtung einer modernen Irrenanstalt," *Jahrbücher für Psychiatrie* 8, nos. 2–3 (1895): 1–36; Paetz, *Kolonisierung der Geisteskranken*; and Josef Starlinger, "Ein Beitrag zum Irrenanstaltsbau (Aus einem Reiseberichte)," *Psychiatrische Wochenschrift*, no. 13 (1901). Yanni, "Linear Plan for Insane Asylums," 39, finds the architect assigned a similar secondary role in mid-nineteenth-century asylum planning in the United States.
64. Kolb, *Sammel-Atlas*, vol. A, 51: "Es ist in der bauliche Anlage der Anstalt alles zu vermeiden, was die alte Irrenanstalt äusserlich einem Zuchtthause ähnlich machte und ihr damit den Stempel der Strafanstalt aufdrücken, den Makel des Entehrenden anhaften half: statt massiger Gebäude mit vergitterten Fenster, engen, dunklen Höfen, mit Gärten, welche ängstlich durch hohe Zäune oder Mauern von der Aussenwelt abgesperrt sind, errichtet die moderne praktische Psychiatrie gefällig angelegte, scheinbar zwanglos gruppierte, kleinere Gebäude, die sich äusserlich in nichts von einem Wohnhause unterscheiden; am Hause rankt sich der wilde Wein in die Höhe, eine hübsche Veranda ladet zum Ruhen ein, vor den Häusern dehnen sich gefällige Anlagen aus, welche zu Gärten für die Kranken durch Zäune abgetheilt sind, die sich in nichts von der Umzäunung des Besitzthumes eines beliebigen Privatmannes unterscheiden."
65. "Bericht des niederösterreichischen Landesausschusses vom 9. Juli 1901," 22: "entspricht ... dem humanitär-modernen Zuge, der Irrenanstalt den Charakter des Zwangsmässigen und Kasernenhaft zu benehmen. ..."
66. Starlinger, "Beitrag zum Irrenanstaltsbau," 131: "die langweilige Regelmässigkeit. ... dorfartige Abwechslung und Regellosigkeit."
67. "Bericht des niederösterreichischen Landesausschusses vom 9. Juli 1901," 22.
68. Paetz, *Kolonisierung der Geisteskranken*, 10, 68, pls. 1–3, Lageplan, called for simplicity in the exterior design of patient villas, the substitution of all "luxurious ornament" with "natural decoration" (such as verandas), and the creation of a "freer" and "more friendly" impression than had been the case in the "prisonlike" corridor-plan asylum. The hospital he planned and directed, Alt-Scherbitz, was laid out in a flowing asymmetrical fashion, and a regional rural style was adopted for the buildings. The variety of architectural and planning vocabularies adopted for villa-plan asylums can be seen by looking through the national guides to asylums published in the early twentieth century; see Bresler, *Deutsche Heil- und Pflegeanstalten*; Heinrich Schlöss, *Die Irrenpflege in Österreich in Wort und Bild* (Halle: Carl Marhold, 1912); and Augusto Tamburini, Guilio Cesare Ferrari, and Giuseppe Antonini, *L'assistenza degli alienati in Italia* (Turin: Unione Tipografico-Editrice Torinese, 1918).
69. Niederösterreichisches Landesarchiv, Box F5, Landes-Registatur 1793–1904, I-2/n, no. 66813. The plan seems to have been submitted to the provincial parliament (Landtag) along with a September 1903 report by the Landesausschuss (Bericht LX, September 21, 1903), in which it is described. See *Bericht des Landesausschusses des Erzerzogtums Österreich u.d. Enns über seine Amtwirksamkeit*, vol. 6A (Vienna: Hof- u. Staatsdruckerei, 1903–4), 679–99, esp. 694–95. Hajiko et al., "The White City," fig. 28, were the first to reproduce this plan and to compare it with Wagner's.
70. *Stenographische Protokolle des niederösterreichischen Landtages*, 34. Sitzung der I. Session, November 12, 1903, 1256: "als wenn diese 27 Objekte lauter verschiedener Besitzer hätten, von denen jeder auf seinem Stück Grund seine Fassade in diese oder jene Linie stellt, auf dieser oder jene Terrainhöhe, wie es ihm am billigsten kommt. ... als wenn man sie [die Gebäude] aus einer Spielschachtel auf grünes Papier austreuen, und jedes Haus dort hinstellen würde, wo es eben hingewürfelt wurde." The speaker was Viktor Silberer.
71. *Ibid.*: "organisch ... man muss auf dem Plane sehen, das alles zusammengehört." None of the representations of complete plans for Steinhof is known to come from Wagner's own hand or his office; from Wagner's atelier we have only the site plan for the church, with parts of the complex indicated (see below). The overall plan was published in several slightly different forms; the most detailed one, and the one in which the style of the presentation seems closest to Wagner's own, is that contained in a 1907 special number of the *Psychiatrisch-Neurologische Wochenschrift* devoted to Steinhof, "Festnummer aus Anlass der Eröffnung der niederösterreichischen Landes-Heil- u. Pflege-Anstalten für Geistes- und Nervenkranken 'am Steinhof' in Wien am 8. Oktober 1907," *Psychiatrisch-Neurologische Wochenschrift*, nos. 27–28 (1907): 234. This was also published in *Auszug aus der Verwaltungstätigkeit der christlichsozialen Landtagsmehrheit in den Jahren 1902–1908* (Vienna: Wahlkomitees der christlichsozialen Partei für den I. Bezirk, 1908), n.p.
72. The expense of the terracing caused controversy for years afterward. See the 1909 provincial parliament discussion of the fact that Steinhof came in 8 million Kronen over budget (which had been set at 18 million Kronen). *Stenographische Protokolle des niederösterreichischen Landtages*, 17. Sitzung der I. Session, October 12, 1909, 536–37.
73. The echo was even more distinct in an earlier version of Wagner's plan, which included a separate kitchen building for the Sanatorium. Here, the kitchen was positioned to the north of all the other buildings, at the top of the axis, reflecting the position of the church in the main part of the complex. *Bericht des Landesausschusses*, vol. 6A (1903–4), n.p.
74. *Stenographische Protokolle des niederösterreichischen Landtages*, I. Session, November 12, 1903, 1264–65. According to Otto Antonia Graf, the final plan and church design were approved on October 18, 1904; Graf, *Otto Wagner*, vol. 1, *Das Werk des Architekten, 1860–1902*, Schriften des Instituts für Kunstgeschichte, Akademie der Bildenden Künste, Wien (Vienna: Böhlau, 1985), 400.
75. Otto Wagner, "Die Kirche der Niederöster. Landes- Heil- und Pflege-Anstalten," in Graf, *Otto Wagner*, vol. 1, 400. In a preface to the reprint of this report, Graf states that Wagner's project was devised for a competition in which he, his student Leopold Bauer, and Carlo von Boog took part.
76. Niederösterreichische Landesausschuss, "Erläuterung zur Bauvollendung der Kirche der Niederöst. Landesheil- und Pflegeanstalten," in Graf, *Otto Wagner*, vol. 1, 406: "zur Erlangung von Plänen für den Bau der Kirche eine engere baukünstlerische Konkurrenz ausgeschrieben und die eingelangten Entwürfe dem Landtage zur Entscheidung vorgelegt."
77. *Stenographische Protokolle des niederösterreichischen Landtages*, I. Session, November 12, 1903, 1252, 58. An invoice for another plan for the church, commissioned by the Landesausschuss from the establishment architect Franz Ritter von Neumann, exists in the Niederösterreichisches Landesarchiv, Box F6, Landes-Registatur 1793–1904, I-2/n (Neubau Wiener Irrenanstalten 1904), no. 85122, December 22, 1904.
78. *Ibid.*, 1252: "hat sich Projekte vorlegen lassen, sowohl seitens des Landesbauamtes, als auch seitens namhafter Architekten, die sich dafür interessiert haben." The speaker is Robert Pattai. See also comments by Franz Rienössl, 1255.
79. *Ibid.*, 1262: "Künstlerkreisen ... zukünftige Entwicklung der Stadt Wien ... und so entstand das Projekt Wagner." In his statement, Steiner also explained that in the case of one of the projects, he was approached by the architect with the offer of designs. It is not clear

- whether he was referring to the project by Bauer or by Boog. *Stenographische Protokolle des niederösterreichischen Landtages*, I. Session, November 12, 1903, 1263.
80. "Schlussbericht des Landesausschusses für das Erzherzogtum Österreich unter der Enns über die Errichtung der niederösterreichischen Landes- Heil- und Pflegeanstalten für Geistes- und Nervenkranken am Steinhof, Wien, XIII. (Beilage 50)," *Stenographische Protokolle des niederösterreichischen Landtages X* (1909), 28: "Mittlerweile war der k.k. Professor an der Akademie der bildenden Künste, Oberbaurat Otto Wagner, an den Landesausschuss mit dem Antrag herangetreten, ihn zur künstlerischen Mitwirkung bei der Durchführung des Irrenanstaltbaues in der Weise heranzuziehen, wie dies seitens der Kommission für Wiener Verkehrsanlagen anlässlich des Baues der Wiener Stadtbahn geschehen war. . . . Wagner hat ein Projekt für den Kirchenbau, gleichzeitig aber auch einen Situationsplan über die Hauptdisposition sämtlicher Bauwerke ausgearbeitet und dem Landesausschuss vorgelegt."
  81. Jeroen Bastiaan van Heerde, *Staat und Kunst: Staatliche Kunstförderung 1895–1918* (Vienna: Böhlau, 1993), 233–40. See also Wagner's comments in [report on May 12, 1900, meeting of the Ministry of Education's art council], *Vir Sacrum* 3, no. 11 (June 1, 1900): 178. Wagner included a chapter on this subject in the fourth edition of his *Modern Architecture* in 1914; see Otto Wagner, *Modern Architecture: A Guidebook to His Students to This Field of Art*, trans. Harry Francis Mallgrave (Santa Monica: Getty Center for the History of Art and the Humanities, 1988), 143–48.
  82. In his winning plan, designed in 1892–93, Wagner included a new *Irrenhaus* to replace the existing Vienna asylum; he described it as a complex on 33 hectares (81.5 acres—less than a tenth the size of Steinhof) on the western edge of the city and encouraged the Landesausschuss to buy up the land at the time, while it was still inexpensive; Otto Wagner, "Erläuterung-Bericht zum Entwurfe für den General-Regulierungs-Plan über das gesammte Gemeindegebiet von Wien," in Graf, *Otto Wagner*, vol. 1, 115.
  83. "Bericht des niederösterreichischen Landesausschusses vom 9. Juli 1901," 4.
  84. Niederösterreichisches Landesarchiv, Box F3, Irrewesen, I-2/1, Irrenanstalt Wien, Allgemeine 1903–4, no. 14310.
  85. Wagner, *Modern Architecture*, 78.
  86. Tafuri, "Am Steinhof," 63–64.
  87. Topp, *Architecture and Truth*, 14–15, 130–31.
  88. See Barbara Miller Lane's discussion of the phenomena of the artist's colony and *Lebensreform* in Germany and Scandinavia around 1900; Lane, *National Romanticism and Modern Architecture in Germany and the Scandinavian Countries*, *Modern Architecture and Cultural Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 126–44. For the *Gesamtkunstwerk* as a transformative force, see Gabriele Bryant, "Architecture as 'Precursor of Redemption'? Industrial Culture and the Idea of the Gesamtkunstwerk in German Modernism," *Mac Journal* 4 (1999): 95–103; and idem, "Projecting Modern Culture: Aesthetic Fundamentalism and Modern Architecture," in *Tracing Modernity: Manifestations of the Modern in Architecture and the City*, ed. Mari Hvattum and Christian Hermansen (London: Routledge, 2004), 68–80.
  89. Many of these are published in Pozzetto, *Die Schule Otto Wagners*. See also, on the Wagner Schule, Iain Boyd Whyte, *Three Architects from the Master Class of Otto Wagner: Emil Hopppe, Marcel Kammerer, Otto Schönthal* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1989).
  90. Edward Shorter, "Private Clinics in Central Europe, 1850–1933," *Social History of Medicine* 3, no. 3 (1990): 168–71.
  91. Wilhelm Holzbauer et al., *Das ungebauete Wien, 1800 bis 2000: Projekte für die Metropole* (Vienna: Historisches Museum der Stadt Wien, 1999), 252, fig. 7.16.
  92. Josef Hoffmann, "Einfache Möbel," *Das Interieur* 2 (1901), reprinted in Eduard Sekler, *Josef Hoffmann: The Architectural Work* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), 483.
  93. Hermann Bahr, "Ein Document deutscher Kunst," in *Bildung: Essays von Hermann Bahr* (Leipzig: Insel, 1901), 45–46: "Eine Stadt müssen wir erbauen, eine ganze Stadt! . . . Die Regierung soll uns, in Hietzing oder auf der Hohen Warte, ein Feld geben, und da wollen wir dann eine Welt schaffen. . . . Alles von demselben Geiste beherrscht, die Strassen und die Gärten und die Paläste und die Hütten und die Tische und die Sessel und die Leuchter und die Löffel Ausdrücke derselben Empfindung, in der Mitte aber, wie ein Tempel in einem heiligen Haine, ein Haus der Arbeit. . . ."
  94. Before this, in 1899, Olbrich had been commissioned by friends connected with the Secession to plan a colony of villas on the Hohe Warte, a hill in the Viennese suburbs. Having been laid out by Olbrich, the villas were built by his friend Josef Hoffmann, but, as Thomas Zaunshirn points out, the development lacked a focal point—it had no public buildings at all, much less a templelike "house of work"; Zaunshirn, "Von Wien nach Darmstadt," in *Die Lebensreform: Entwürfe zur Neugestaltung von Leben und Kunst um 1900*, ed. Kai Buchholz et al. (Darmstadt: Institut Mathildenhöhe Darmstadt and Häusser, 2001), vol. 1, 477–78.
  95. The 1902 *Bauprogramm* stated that the central axis of the institution should consist of a community hall (*Gesellschaftshaus*), kitchen, workshops, and central baths; "Bericht des niederösterreichischen Landesausschusses vom 9. Juli 1901," 22. The question of the role of the church building and religion (particularly Catholicism), both in modern psychiatric institutions like Steinhof and in the worldview of modern architects like Wagner, is a very interesting one that deserves further study. A key figure here is Heinrich Swoboda, a Viennese university professor of theology who advocated a progressive approach to church architecture in a 1904 lecture to the Association of Austrian Architects; Swoboda, "Kirche und Baukunst," *Der Architekt* 10 (1904): 29–32. Swoboda was brought in to consult with Wagner on the church design. "Bericht und Antrag des Landesausschusses des Erzherzogtumes Österreich unter den Enns, betreffend den Neubau der an Stelle der aufzulassenden Irrenanstalt Wien zu errichtenden Heil- und Pflegeanstalten (Beilage XXII)," *Stenographische Protokolle des niederösterreichischen Landtages IX Wahlperiode* (1904): 2.
  96. For the budget for the church and other buildings, see *Bericht des Landesausschusses*, vol. 6A (1903–4), 681.
  97. Wagner, "Kirche der Niederösterr. Landes- Heil- und Pflege-Anstalten," 403: "Auf dem höchsten Punkte des Geländes in der Hauptachse der Anlage steht die Kirche, der also in künstlerischer Beziehung schon in erster Linie die Aufgabe zukommt, in bezug auf Fernwirkung die Dominante der Bauanlage zu bilden und dem über das Häuserkonglomerat streifenden Auge als Ruhepunkt zu dienen."
  98. A. F. Seligmann, "Die Kirche der niederösterreichischen Landesirrenanstalt am Steinhof, erbaut von Otto Wagner," *Neue Freie Presse*, October 6, 1907, 13: "Die Kirche der niederösterreichischen Landes- und Pflegeanstalten, [erhebt] sich jetzt inmitten einer kleinen Stadt von sauberen, einfachen, präensionslosen und eben darum ganz angenehm wirkenden Gebäuden besagter Anstalt. . . ."
  99. *Ibid.*: "In herrlicher landschaftlicher Umgebung erhebt sich, schon von weitem sichtbar, als Krönung einer von schlichten, gleichartigen Gebäuden und schönen Gartenanlagen bedeckten Riesenterrasse, die schlanke, vergoldete Kuppel der Anstaltskirche."
  100. Otto Schönthal, "Die Kirche Otto Wagners," *Der Architekt* 14 (1908): 2: "der Brennpunkt . . . Das Gesamtbild der ganzen Anlage mit der Kirche und ihrer vergoldeten Kuppel als bekrönendem Punkt ist ein überwältigendes."
  101. In the 1902 competition project, Wagner included a framing device in front of the church of columns with an arbor draped with vines. In the 1904 project, this was removed; the front of the church was left uncluttered and the landscaping behind and to the sides was intensified. For the 1902 project, see Graf, *Otto Wagner*, vol. 1, 400, fig. 583.106.9. Though Wagner's grove and terrace structure behind the church is painstakingly depicted in Erwin Pendl's bird's-eye view of the completed Steinhof (Fig. 1), it seems it was never actually built. The concluding report by the Landesausschuss on Steinhof (1909) describes a framing element serving as a background to the church, "behind which, in the future, a small grove of red beech will grow up, creating a striking picture with its changing colors"; "Schlussbericht des Landesausschusses (Beilage 50)," 138: "hinter welchem sich künftig ein Wäldchen aus Rotbuchen erheben wird, das mit seiner wechselnden Farbenpracht ein wirksames Landschaftsbild erhoffen lässt."
  102. Wagner, "Kirche der Niederösterr. Landes- Heil- und Pflege-Anstalten," 404.
  103. *Ibid.*: "dämpfen . . . absichtlich den sinnlichen Eindruck auf den Kirchenbesucher. . . ."
  104. *Ibid.* Ferdinand von Feldegg, editor of the preeminent architecture journal *Der Architekt*, assumed that the clear focus encouraged by the design of the church was a gesture toward the needs of a congregation of the mentally ill: "For, as any psychiatrist will tell you, it is extraordinarily difficult to bring together the insane mentally, to concentrate their defective thought patterns on a particular point. They listen and look with half an ear and half an eye, and when the other half of their senses is dissipated, for instance by an awkwardly designed church, nothing remains to hold them [Denn es ist, wie jeder Irrenarzt bestätigen wird, ausserordentlich schwer, Irre geistig zu sammeln, ihr defektes Denken auf einem bestimmten Punkt zu konzentrieren. Mit halbem Ohr, mit halbem Auge hören und sehen sie zu; wenn dann die andere Hälfte dieser Sinne, etwa durch unzweckmässige Anlage der Kirche leer ausgeht—bleibt nichts übrig, die Kranken noch zu halten];" Feldegg, "Literatur," *Der Architekt* 11 (1905): 16.
  105. Ludwig Hevesi, "Otto Wagner's moderne Kirche," *Pester Lloyd*, Octo-

- ber 8, 1907, 1–2; Schönthal, “Die Kirche Otto Wagners,” 2; and Wagner, “Kirche der Niederösterr. Landes- Heil- und Pflege-Anstalten.”
106. Wagner, “Kirche der Niederösterr. Landes- Heil- und Pflege-Anstalten,” 400: “damit die unter den Kranken verteilten Pfleger erforderlichenfalls leicht eingreifen könnten.”
107. *Ibid.*, 405: “Der Baukunst unserer Zeit sucht, wie gezeigt wurde, Form und Motive aus Zweck, Konstruktion und Material herauszubilden. Sie muss, soll sie unser Empfinden klar zum Ausdruck bringen, auch möglichst einfach sein. Diese einfache Formen sind sorgfältig unter einander abzuwägen, um schöne Verhältnisse zu erzielen, auf welchen beinahe allein die Wirkung von Werken ‘unserer Baukunst’ beruht.”
108. See Topp, *Architecture and Truth*, 14–15.
109. Many of the pavilions at Steinhof contained isolation cells for single patients despite the belief on the part of many progressive psychiatrists that they were cruel and should be eliminated from asylums. The planners went to some length to defend their decision to include them. See “Schlussbericht des Landesauschusses (Beilage 50),” 95–96. The practice of parceling out different aspects of a hospital’s design to different designers (and often employing hospital design experts for internal spatial arrangements and architectural generalists for external articulation) was not uncommon. Annemarie Adams, in her account of hospital architecture in interwar North America, describes a situation in some ways the reverse of that at Steinhof: modern interiors designed by specialists were “cloaked” with historicist exteriors, sometimes designed by different architects. Adams, “Modernism and Medicine: The Hospitals of Stevenson and Lee, 1916–1932,” *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 58, no. 1 (1999): 58. See also Yanni, “Linear Plan for Insane Asylums,” 39.
110. “Bericht des niederösterreichischen Landesauschusses vom 9. Juli 1901,” 3; and Briggs, “Am Steinhof,” 708.
111. Bryant, “Industrial Culture and the Gesamtkunstwerk,” 95–103; and Bryant, “Projecting Modern Culture,” 68–80.
112. Lane, *National Romanticism*, 133; and Renate Ulmer, “Die Darmstädter Künstlerkolonie als lebensreformerisches Projekt,” in Kai Buchholz et al., *Die Lebensreform*, vol. 1, 483–88.