

# **“Ein Nationalmuseum im vollsten und schönsten Sinne des Wortes”**

**The 1861 Description of the Bavarian National Museum  
by Wilhelm Weingärtner**

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In 2006, the *Bayerisches Nationalmuseum* (Bavarian National Museum) edited a *Festschrift* to celebrate the first 150 years of its existence.<sup>1</sup> It was partly modelled on an even more robust publication by the *Germanisches Nationalmuseum* (Germanic National Museum), from 1978.<sup>2</sup> The 875 pages of the 2006 volume attempted to compile all information about the museum that was available at that moment. There are essays on key moments of the museum's history, on the personalities that left a particular impact on it, on its various collections, and on related institutions, not least its branch museums all over Bavaria. There is also a complete list of publications edited by the museum and a short list of the literature devoted to it. Special emphasis is placed on the years immediately following the museum's foundation, which had been planned since 1853 but was only realized in 1855. An appendix consists of key documents linked to that foundation.

Curiously, the earliest among the scholarly publications on the museum escaped the attention of the primary editor, Ingolf Bauer, and of the contributors to the volume, myself included. It was published by Wilhelm Weingärtner in May 1861,<sup>3</sup> seven years before the appearance of the first text published by the museum itself, its guidebook of 1868.<sup>4</sup> Nor is Weingärtner's article quoted in two other important publications on the early history of the museum, Michael Kamp's 2002 dissertation *Das Museum als Ort der Politik. Münchener Museen im 19. Jahrhundert*<sup>5</sup> and Barbara Six's *Denkmal und Dynastie*, from

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1 Eikelmann et al. 2006.

2 Deneke and Kahsnitz 1978.

3 Weingärtner 1861.

4 “Das bayerische Nationalmuseum” 1868. The *Vorwort* is signed by Aretin, while the information was compiled by Josef Alois Kuhn and Joseph Anton Meßmer.

5 Kamp 2002.

2012.<sup>6</sup> In the meantime, the present author has mentioned Weingärtner's article on some occasions, namely, his references to certain objects from the museum's collection.<sup>7</sup>

Earlier descriptions of the new museum appeared in the *Neue Münchener Zeitung* in September/October 1855 and May 1858.<sup>8</sup> The former, divided into five parts, is signed 'G', and the latter 'AZ'. Together with Weingärtner's 1861 contribution, these deepen fundamentally our understanding of the appearance and the founding principles of the young institution. However, the newspaper articles are equally omitted from the 2006 *Festschrift*.<sup>9</sup>

While nothing is known about the monograms that accompany these articles from the 1850s, Wilhelm Weingärtner, for his part, belonged to the early generation of art historians. He published an 1858 monograph on the origins and development of church buildings (*Ursprung und Entwicklung des christlichen Kirchengebäudes*), followed two years later by a book on church towers (*System des christlichen Thurmbaues. Die Doppelkapellen, Thurmkapellen, Todtenleuchten, Karner, altchristlichen Monasterien, Glocken- und Kirchenthürme in ihrem organischen Zusammenhange und ihrer Entwicklung*). In 1861, an essay on Silesian, and in particular Breslau (today Wrocław), architecture (*Charakteristik der Schlesischen, besonders Breslauer Architekturen*) appeared in the *Zeitschrift des Vereins für Geschichte und Alterthum Schlesiens*. In 1863, an article on the late Gothic sculptures of Breslau was presented in two parts (*Die Breslauer Sculpturen am Ende des XV. und zu Anfang des XVI. Jahrhunderts*). In addition, Weingärtner published on antique sculpture, including the Monte Cavallo Dioscuri in Berlin, as well as on art of the nineteenth century.<sup>10</sup>

Given the preferences of its author, it comes as no surprise that the article on the Bavarian National Museum, *Die Kunstdenkmale der altchristlichen und romanischen Periode im k. bayerischen Nationalmuseum zu München*, concentrates on its medieval holdings. However, one should remember that the institution was generally perceived at the time of its foundation (and possibly by some still today) as a museum dedicated to the Middle Ages.<sup>11</sup>

6 Six 2012.

7 Among them, in the article on the so-called Rosenheim retable quoted in Weingärtner 1861, 110.

8 'G' 13/20 September 1855; 'C' 21 September 1855; 'G' 2/3 October 1855; 'AZ' 18 May 1858 (the article itself is dated 11 May 1858).

9 The 1855 article is quoted by Kamp and Six, however. In Kamp's thesis, the reference to the section published on 20 September 1855 is missing: Kamp 2002, 93, no. 296; but see 98, no. 311. On the basis of the 1855 article, Six even attempts a reconstruction of the first rooms of the museum; Six 2012, 539–541. The 1858 article is only quoted by Six 2012, 338, no. 1162.

10 See Schultz 1861, 304. In addition, Schultz mentions several shorter articles for the *Göttinger Gelehrte Anzeigen*. For details on the other publications, see below.

11 On 13 September 1855, 'G' praises any undertaking offering a complete vision of medieval culture ("jedes Unternehmen, dessen schöne Aufgabe es ist, uns durch Sammlung, Nachbildung und Restaurirung ein reiches und vollständiges Bild der mittelalterlichen Cultur des deutschen resp. des bayerischen Volkes aus zahlreichen Kunstdenkmälern und ihren Überresten zu entfalten"), going on to describe the foundation of Aretin's new museum; 'G' 13/20 September 1855.

## The Author

Weingärtner's publication on the Bavarian National Museum is remarkable for several reasons. First of all, it seems to be a comment coming from outside both the museum and the intellectual circles around it – in contrast to the appraisals in the *Neue Münchener Zeitung*, an organ close to the Bavarian government.<sup>12</sup> Weingärtner's article was published in Vienna in the *Mittheilungen der K. K. Central-Commission zur Erforschung und Erhaltung der Baudenkmale*, a forum Weingärtner opted for on several occasions – among them the presentation of the private collection of medieval art assembled by Karl Rolas du Rosey in Dresden.<sup>13</sup> In 1863, the journal posthumously released his articles from the same year on the Breslau sculptures. Weingärtner's two previous books were published in Leipzig and Göttingen, respectively. As we will see, he depended on Karl Maria Freiherr von Aretin, the founder of the museum, for access to its holdings, but their contact seems not to have been particularly close. The details are difficult to judge, since almost no pre-1945 correspondence has been preserved at the museum.<sup>14</sup> It seems no coincidence, though, that only one of Weingärtner's titles found its way into the library of the Bavarian National Museum – namely, the 1860 book on church towers – and even this one, not directly but as a gift from one of the first curators of the museum, Joseph Anton Meßmer.<sup>15</sup> The latter figure is known today above all because he completed, in 1869, the first handwritten inventory of the museum's holdings, again concentrated on the Middle Ages. In 1868, he co-authored the first guidebook to the museum.<sup>16</sup> Meßmer shared with Weingärtner an interest in early Christian architecture, and so his copy of the book bears quite a few annotations.

Weingärtner, for his part, seems almost forgotten today – even the documentation at the *Deutsche Nationalbibliothek* (German National Library) in Leipzig is short, not to mention partly erroneous.<sup>17</sup> However, an obituary by Alwin Schultz, published in the same 1861 volume of the Vienna *Mittheilungen* on the occasion of Weingärtner's premature death, offers quite a number of details.<sup>18</sup> Born in Breslau on 30 April 1831, he studied German literature in Breslau, Berlin, and Munich. In 1858, he presented in Göttingen his doctoral thesis dedicated to the pronunciation of the 'Gothic' language during the period of Ulfila, the fourth-century theologian more commonly known as 'Wulfila' (*Die Aussprache des Gothicen zur Zeit des Ulfila*). Gravitating more and more from literature to art and archaeology, he published that same year a book on the origins of church buildings as well as his second thesis (*Habilitation*), likewise at Göttingen. After teaching art

12 See Kamp 2002, 101.

13 Weingärtner 1860.

14 The acquisition files are an exception to that rule. It comes as no surprise that Weingärtner is not mentioned therein.

15 Bayerisches Nationalmuseum, Bibliothek, code Archit LH 67570 W423, "Geschenk d. H. Prof. Meßmer".

16 "Das Bayerische Nationalmuseum" 1868.

17 Deutsche Nationalbibliothek, <https://d-nb.info/gnd/117268747>.

18 Schultz 1861, 304.

and archaeology there,<sup>19</sup> he moved in January 1860 to Breslau and in April 1860 to Munich, where he sought to obtain approval to teach. The essay on the museum is the fruit of that stay, which cannot have been long: in that same year, he also spent quite some time in Dresden, and in autumn he moved on to Italy to collect material for a major work on Romanism and Byzantinism. He died in Milan on 21 July 1861.

## The Accessibility of the Newly Founded Museum

The second factor that makes Weingärtner's 1861 contribution and the preceding newspaper articles so remarkable is that they attest to the arrangement and – at least to select visitors by appointment – the accessibility of the objects at that early date. Prior to the 12 October 1867 inauguration of the first proper building for the museum, on *Maximilianstraße*, the objects were assembled at *Herzog-Max-Burg*, an existing palace of the Bavarian kings. A provisional installation of the first six rooms had already been realized in March 1855, and visits to it by the royal founder of the museum, King Maximilian II (r. 1848–1864), are documented at that time and again in 1858.<sup>20</sup> In parallel, 'G' described the 1855 display in these rooms, and 'AZ' reported on its enlarged state in 1858. There are no known illustrations of these inaugural arrangements of the collection. And, above all, there is no certainty about a more general accessibility of the museum; strangely enough, the topic is discussed neither in the 2006 *Festschrift* nor by Kamp and Six.

What we know, however, is that new objects constantly entered the collection. Consequently, in 1857 plans for a larger space were drawn up. According to the historian Karl Otmar Freiherr von Aretin, great-grandnephew of Karl Maria von Aretin, the rooms were by that time overcrowded and unsuitable to be visited by the public.<sup>21</sup> This implies that the public would not be permitted to see the collection from this point until the completion of the new building, in 1867/1868, a possibility supported by the fact that the *Brockhaus' Reise-Atlas München* of 1860 excludes the name of the institution, though featuring several other museums.<sup>22</sup> In Georg Kaspar Nagler's much more ambitious guidebook *Acht Tage in München. Wegweiser für Fremde und Einheimische*, published in Munich in 1863,<sup>23</sup> the description of the *Herzog-Max-Burg* makes no reference at all to the works of the museum preserved there.<sup>24</sup> The Bavarian National Museum is mentioned separately, but with regard to the architecture of the new building, not yet completed.<sup>25</sup> However, another guidebook, Friedrich Morin's *Neuester Wegweiser durch München und seine Umgebungen für Fremde und Einheimische*, from 1862, is more explicit. It makes an important distinction, confirming that, though the collections were still closed to the public, anyone interested in viewing them would only need to seek permission from Aretin himself. On the

19 File on his (brief) activity in the archives of the university, code 4.V.c.92. Warm thanks to Christine Hübner and Anne-Katrin Sors for their assistance on this.

20 Karnapp 2006, 61–62, with nos 9 and 34; Aretin 2006, 74, with no. 16.

21 "für einen Publikumsverkehr gänzlich ungeeignet"; Aretin 2006, 78.

22 Lange [1860].

23 The volume has 228 pages.

24 Nagler 1863, 103.

25 Ibid., 115–116.

given day, between 11 a.m. and 1 p.m., Aretin himself would then lead the visitor around. Morin adds that at this date the installation was still provisional and that some works were even displayed on the floors. He also reports that the transfer of objects to the new building was already underway and that, there as well, Aretin would be much disposed to sacrifice his time to lead knowledgeable people around.<sup>26</sup>

Weingärtner had visited the premises shortly before. In his article, he sheds further light on the circumstances of these early encounters and on the character of the display. On one hand, he similarly stresses the provisional nature of the arrangement,<sup>27</sup> including the fact that the chronology of the objects had not yet been established in any way and that he had to rely on information delivered orally by Aretin for provenance and acquisition details, which would imply an absence of labels. He also emphasizes that, for the purposes of preparing his text, he would have needed more time than the eight hours conceded to him; apparently Aretin had to accompany visitors at all times.<sup>28</sup> Weingärtner further mentions an inscription on the back of a work,<sup>29</sup> suggesting that he was allowed to handle at least certain items. The character of Weingärtner's visit would also explain why even the closest circle of experts was barely familiar with this collection.<sup>30</sup> It might be added that Meßmer became curator only in 1865 – at the time of Weingärtner's visit, he was teaching at the local university – and thus Aretin worked basically alone; a second curator, Josef Alois Kuhn, was likewise installed in 1865. Aside from Aretin, only one person was active at the museum from its beginnings, namely, Kaspar Feldhütter. Born on 1 June 1794, he was almost sixty years old when he was hired by the museum on 1 January 1854 – more than a year before its official foundation. With his previous profession given as *Bader* (a sort of nonmedical practitioner), he was employed as the *Museumsdiener* (museum attendant). In this capacity, he also acted as the institution's first conservator. Behind this employment was the relationship between director Aretin and Feldhütter's daughter Maria; the couple had children in 1851, 1853, and 1857, before finally marrying on 4 November 1862. Kaspar Feldhütter only retired in November 1875, at the age of more than eighty, though mention of poor health had been made as early as 1871.<sup>31</sup> Beyond the anecdotal, these circumstances underline the extent to which the establishment of the museum was a personal matter for and of Aretin.

26 Morin 1862, 111: "da Baron v. Aretin mit der aufopferndsten Bereitwilligkeit selbst den Führer macht". I'm very grateful to Barbara Six for having drawn my attention to this important source.

27 "nur annähernd vereinigt".

28 Weingärtner 1861, 109.

29 *Ibid.*, 111.

30 "die bis jetzt noch kaum im allerengsten Kreise der Fachgenossen bekannt war"; *ibid.*

31 In his sixteen and a half years of service prior, he took fewer than eight days off; due to his poor health, he was not able to lend full services in his final years. These and more details in his personal files: Munich, Hauptstaatsarchiv, MK 30758. Feldhütter had also worked alongside Aretin on the restoration of Blutenburg Castle in 1855–1857; *ibid.*, MA 75185 and Abt. V, Nachlässe und Sammlungen, NL Aretin, 33, 10. In a ministerial report of 18 October 1862 that relies on police information, Kaspar Feldhütter is presented as a once dealer of paintings and now a servant of the National Museum; *ibid.*, MA 75185. The same file reports on the marriage and relationship between Aretin and Maria Feldhütter. I owe my warmest thanks to Barbara Six for having suggested that I consult these files.

In addition, Weingärtner describes arrangements made for visitors rather than for storage purposes. He tells us that fragments of manuscripts were preserved “under glass” and that, for the sake of comparison and completeness, related drawings, prints, and photographs were displayed alongside the originals.<sup>32</sup> He similarly notes the many gesso replicas that represented (*sind repräsentirt*) objects that could not themselves be put on view. As for architectural fragments, Weingärtner reports how these were arranged side by side and one on top of the other.<sup>33</sup> More broadly, he stresses the purpose of the museum: to be – or, maybe better, become – a public collection.<sup>34</sup> It might be added that Weingärtner mentions that a new and proper building for the museum was well underway.<sup>35</sup> Work had started in 1859.<sup>36</sup>

## The Scope of the Museum and References to Specific Works

As pertains to the collection itself, it is reflective of the general preferences of the period that Weingärtner centres his attention on paintings as well as on the applied arts, such as objects of ivory and bronze, textiles, and stained glass. With the exception of two monumental crucifixes,<sup>37</sup> large-scale sculptures barely play a role in his essay – a remarkable fact given that, thanks to the groundwork laid by Aretin, the Bavarian National Museum was among the largest collections of wooden sculpture of the late Gothic period in Germany. ‘G’ did them greater justice in his 1855 article, acknowledging, among other comments, the importance of the dedication relief from the Lawrence Chapel at the Old Court in Munich and the “great beauty” of the Virgin from Seeon – two of the centrepieces of the museum until this day.<sup>38</sup>

Weingärtner lamented in an earlier publication that no German government had undertaken to form a collection of medieval art, and thus he reports his surprise and satisfaction to see Bavaria filling this gap.<sup>39</sup> He moreover notes his appreciation that the scope of the new museum went beyond the Middle Ages by including works from the Renaissance and the Baroque (*Zopfzeit*)<sup>40</sup> – a choice that was surprising at that date. This remark is complemented by the information given by ‘AZ’, who tells us that, by 1858, the installation continued into the time of King Maximilian I (r. 1806–1825), i.e. the beginning of the nineteenth century.<sup>41</sup> Somewhat surprisingly, Weingärtner does not mention at all

<sup>32</sup> Weingärtner 1861, 114.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 115.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 109.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> See Karnapp 2006, 67.

<sup>37</sup> Weingärtner 1861, 113. Modern inv. nos MA 153 and MA 152.

<sup>38</sup> ‘G’ 21 September 1855.

<sup>39</sup> Weingärtner 1861, 109. He refers himself to his article on the collection of Karl Rolas du Rosey, Weingärtner 1860.

<sup>40</sup> Weingärtner 1861, 109.

<sup>41</sup> “dass Frhr. v. Aretin [...] die Aufstellung dergestalt erweitert hat, daß im ersten Stockwerke zwölf Säle mit Gegenständen von der Zeit Kaiser Maximilians I. an bis zu König Max Joseph I. von Bayern besetzt [...] sind”; ‘AZ’ 18 May 1858.

the parallel establishment of the Germanic National Museum in Nuremberg, in contrast to 'G', who asked, rhetorically, on 20 September 1855 whether Munich should trail behind Nuremberg, despite the equal importance of the two institutions' treasures.<sup>42</sup>

While works like Byzantine paintings left the permanent display many decades ago,<sup>43</sup> Weingärtner offers lengthy discussions and descriptions of several works that are still today considered highlights of the collection, such as the ivory with the Resurrection and Ascension of Christ (today better known as the *Reider panel*),<sup>44</sup> the so-called casket of Empress Kunigunde (Weingärtner ascribes this name to a different object, possibly in error<sup>45</sup>),<sup>46</sup> and the small bronze figures of the Four Elements<sup>47</sup> – all works from the collection of Martin Joseph von Reider, acquired the very year of Weingärtner's visit, in 1860.<sup>48</sup> Among the other objects Weingärtner describes in detail is an "altarpiece with the Coronation of the Virgin and the apostles", one of the earliest works of its kind.<sup>49</sup> Today, it is largely known as the *Rosenheim retable*, though this provenance may be incorrect; in light of this possibility, it is even more interesting that Weingärtner himself speaks of "Rosenhain".<sup>50</sup> The altarpiece is painted in a very peculiar style, a detail that did not escape his attention. On the basis of information that has since become available, we no longer agree with all of Weingärtner's assessments of works in the Bavarian National Museum. However, as further proof of the sharpness of his eye, he was able to correct the dating of the Reider panel, from the eighth century to the fifth or sixth century.<sup>51</sup> Indeed, the ivory is today believed to have originated around the year 400. The dearth of comparable objects makes the lucidity of Weingärtner's judgement even more remarkable.

Since the documentation concerning the early accessions of the museum is highly incomplete, Weingärtner's article, as well as those in the *Neue Münchener Zeitung*, offer a very helpful *terminus ante quem* for the museum's acquisition of a number of objects. Moreover, these publications contain valuable information about the condition of these works in 1860. These data have yet to be systematically integrated into the object files and the collections-management database of the Bavarian National Museum.

42 "und endlich, sollen wir noch auf Nürnb ergs vielbesprochenes Germanisches Museum hinweisen, um zu fragen, ob München bei gleichem Reichthum des Materials hinter Nürnb erg zurückstehen dürfe, müsse und wolle?"; 'G' 20 September 1855. On 20 September 1855, 'G' already cited the role of Rudolf Maria Bernhard von Stillfried-Rattonitz (1804–1882), who, as head of the *Königliches Hausarchiv*, directed a huge project to document the history of the house of Hohenzollern – and can be considered an example for Aretin in several respects.

43 Weingärtner 1861, 111, describes several works of this kind, among them MA 371.

44 Ibid., 110. Modern inv. no. MA 157.

45 To the fragments of an ivory casket from the same Reider collection. Modern inv. no. MA 174–MA 176; *ibid.*, 114.

46 *Ibid.*, 110–111. Modern inv. no. MA 286.

47 *Ibid.*, 111. Modern inv. no. MA 194–MA 197.

48 For a history of the Reider collection and the circumstances of its acquisition, see Weniger 2012a. See also Weniger 2011.

49 Modern inv. no. MA 2363.

50 Weingärtner 1861, 114–115. See also Weniger 2012b.

51 "eine Annahme, die durch nichts sich rechtfertigen lässt"; Weingärtner 1861, 110.

## Bavarian versus National

What is most important in the context of the subject of this volume, however, is the emphasis Weingärtner places on the untenability of, and resulting efforts to overcome, the museum's originally narrow focus on Bavaria.<sup>52</sup> In his 1861 article, Weingärtner considered the character of the museum to be not just Bavarian but national in the fullest and truest sense of the word.<sup>53</sup> Such an assessment of the southern German museum carries special weight when expressed by this writer from Prussia. It is echoed in an article signed 'Herwegen' in the *Unterhaltungs-Blatt der Neuesten Nachrichten* of 1867 that describes the new institution as a German historical museum, without any reference to Bavaria at all. In fact, Herwegen stresses his desire that every visitor would leave the museum more 'German' than he or she had entered it.<sup>54</sup>

It must be remembered, however, that also King Maximilian II himself had looked beyond the confines of his state, and even those of the *Deutscher Bund* (German Confederation), when he proposed the name 'Nationalmuseum' on 30 June 1855. In the same letter, he advised Aretin to take three French institutions as examples: the *Musée des Souverains* (Museum of Sovereigns) at the *Musée du Louvre* (Louvre Museum), the *Musée de Cluny* (today the *Musée de Cluny – musée national du Moyen Âge* / Cluny Museum – National Museum of the Middle Ages), and the *Musée national de Versailles* (today the *Musée de l' Histoire de France* / Museum of French History).<sup>55</sup> Weingärtner's remarks certainly do justice to Aretin. Alongside publishing his book *Alterthümer und Kunst-Denkmale des bayerischen Herrscher-Hauses* in 1854,<sup>56</sup> Aretin had started the institution as a *Wittelsbachisches Museum* (Wittelsbach Museum), a collection of objects linked to the ruling house of Bavaria. However, he gave up this focus at a very early stage – years before Weingärtner's visit – and pivoted to amassing works for their quality, for this purpose going also beyond Bavaria and the German Confederation, as some interesting acquisitions of Italian and Netherlandish art prove.<sup>57</sup> His role model became the South Kensington Museum (today the Victoria and Albert Museum) in London,<sup>58</sup> in lieu of the French institutions named by

52 "Der ursprünglich bei der Gründung desselben festgesetzte einseitige streng bayerische Gesichtspunkt [...] hat sich im Laufe der Zeit als unhaltbar erwiesen [...] und ist auch tatsächlich bereits überschritten"; ibid., 109.

53 "ein Nationalmuseum im vollsten und schönsten Sinne des Wortes"; ibid.

54 Herwegen 1867; see Kamp 2002, 132.

55 Karnapp 2006, 60; appendix 3 to Eikelmann et al. 2006, 759. For the concept of 'nation' in this context, see in particular Six 2012, 329–388, passim.

56 'C' describes the publication as a royal initiative to make more widely accessible the results of the art-historical research precipitated by the establishment of the new museum: "Um aber die kunsthistorischen Resultate des Unternehmens zugleich weiteren Kreisen fruchtbar zu machen, wird auf Befehl des Königs mit dem Museum ein literarisches Werk in Verbindung stehen, welches [...] speciell die bedeutendsten Monamente des Wittelsbachischen Hauses ediren wird. Zwei Hefte davon sind unter der Redaction des Frhrn. v. Aretin in prachtvoller Ausstattung bereits erschienen"; 'C' 13 September 1855. In addition, Nagler 1862, 116, mentions a certain connection ("In einem gewissen Zusammenhange") between the museum and the publication. On the publication project, see Six 2012, 227–327, passim.

57 See Weniger 2006a; Weniger 2006b.

58 See Kamp 2006, 92.

King Maximilian II. That Aretin had been trained as a historian, rather than an art historian like Weingärtner, makes this shift of direction even more remarkable. Discussion of whether the focus of the Bavarian National Museum should be local or international would continue to mark the museum – even until this very day.

As for the name, curiously enough the first two parts of the 1855 article by 'G' still refer to the "*Wittelsbachisches Museum*". In the second one, dated 20 September, a footnote is attached to the title, reporting the king's apparent wish to rename the institution "*Bayrisches Nationalmuseum*". Part 3 of the article, published the following day, already takes up the museum's new and still current name.

## The Bavarian National Museum among the Institutions of Its Time

Aretin's first and only publication on the museum was the 1868 guidebook. When he mentioned the South Kensington Museum in its preface, he stressed that the industry of the time would benefit from a collection of exemplary works drawn from all periods of culture.<sup>59</sup> The importance assigned to the *Vorbildersammlung* (collection of prototypes) would later lead to a bifocal approach to object display at the museum, with a traditional art-historical sequence on the main floor and an arrangement by classes and types of works on the other. Only on the main floor would objects of many different types – from sculptures and paintings to textiles, furniture, and applied art – continue to offer a cohesive image of the period they sought to represent, as had been envisaged by Aretin. This bifocal approach still marks today's museum, and discussions of whether to maintain this structure persist among scholars at the institution. These debates had not yet taken shape by the time of Weingärtner's visit in 1860, and one must also note that the 1867 installation in the new building was chronological in character. Discussions around the arrangement of the collections began with the arrival of Aretin's successor, Jakob Heinrich von Hefner-Alteneck – as will be the subject of the contribution that follows.

The singularity and the innovative character of Aretin's approach was explicitly identified and praised in the early comments on the nascent museum by 'G' in 1855 and by 'AZ' in 1858. The former stresses that, to his knowledge, a strict chronological order had never before been realized in any museum,<sup>60</sup> while the latter highlights the museum's conception to offer a complete panorama of a given period, contrasting this curation strategy to examples from other museums.<sup>61</sup> It would be up to the learned scholar Weingärtner

59 "welchen Nutzen eine Sammlung von Vorbildern aus allen Culturperioden für die Industrie unserer Tage haben musste"; Weingärtner 1861, IV.

60 "Die Einrichtung des Museums [...] ist so getroffen, daß die einzelnen Kunstwerke und Alterthümer nicht nach ihren Gattungen, sondern in universaler Gruppirung nach der Chronologie der Jahrhunderte aufgestellt sind, einmal um den Gesamtüberblick der Culturentwicklung einer bestimmten Epoche in ihrem inneren Zusammenhang und allen Eigenthümlichkeiten zu erleichtern [...]. Diese erste streng chronologische Aufstellungsart ist unseres Wissens noch in keinem der bestehenden Museen zur Anwendung gekommen"; 'G' 13 September 1855.

61 "So stellt schon beim Eintritt in jedwedem Raum ein culturhistorisches Gesammtbild der jeweiligen Zeit sich dar, da die Objecte nicht etwa wie in naturhistorischen und anderen Sammlungen nach ihren Kategorien

to doubt the exactness of this apparent order by undertaking a more nuanced analysis of the collections and their display.<sup>62</sup>

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