

Foreword and Acknowledgements

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The present volume results from the conference “Die Nation bilden. Nationalmuseen und Nationalgalerien als Vermittlungsorte der Nation im langen 19. Jahrhundert in Europa” (Shaping the Nation: National Museums and National Galleries as Sites for Mediating the Nation in the Long Nineteenth Century), hosted by Friedrich-Alexander-Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg (FAU) in the spring of 2022. Due to the global pandemic, the conference was held online, though originally the Germanisches Nationalmuseum (GNM) had generously offered its hospitality.

The conference was part of the research project “Modellierung von Kulturgeschichte am Beispiel des Germanischen Nationalmuseums: Vermittlungskonzepte für das 21. Jahrhundert” (Shaping Cultural History: The Example of the *Germanisches Nationalmuseum* and Curatorial Lessons for the Twenty-First Century), a collaboration initiated by the Department of Art History at FAU with the GNM. From 2018 to 2023, the Volkswagen Foundation funded the research projects of six Ph.D. candidates in several different humanities disciplines, simultaneously enabling these early career researchers to gain hands-on professional experience (see <https://www.kunstgeschichte.phil.fau.de/?p=12810>). The research group explored the history of the GNM, its collections and its exhibitions from its inception to the present day. Our driving concern was to explore how this museum, from its establishment in 1852 onward, has modelled cultural history; how, in so doing, it has shaped our ideas of the past; and what conclusions we can draw from these observations to guide curatorial work in museums today. The fellows received training in technology and management skills as well as in museological work, and they were given an opportunity to test new approaches to visitor engagement using the GNM's holdings. As a joint project, they developed the online exhibition *Frauenwelten* (Women's Worlds). Each fellow explored a different topic, contributing a distinct point of view to this kaleidoscopic digital project (<https://frauenwelten.gnm.de/>).

In order to contextualize the research of the doctoral students, we organized several conferences and workshops that dealt with concepts key to the study of cultural history, museology, and the process of nation-building. The outcomes of the workshops “Geschmacksbildung im Zeitalter der Nationenbildung. Das Museum als Ort der (ästhetischen) Erziehung und Volksbildung” and “Regionale und nationale Identitätsbildung im Museum. Regionalmuseen in Nationalstaaten im 19. Jahrhundert” will be published in a

digital format by Marina Beck, the project's coordinator, who is currently finishing her *Habilitationsschrift* on nationalist themes in nineteenth-century military museums.

As director of the project I would like to thank Daniel Hess, Director General of the GNM, for his support throughout, as well as the Volkswagen Foundation for funding the project along with the publication of the conference proceedings. Special thanks are due to the authors of the individual contributions, to Julia Oswald for her meticulous editing, and to Mirjam Galley for her supervision of the book project. Above all, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Marina Beck for her great care, patience, and hard work in making this inspiring conference happen.