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World ornament

The legacy of Gottfried Semper's 1856 lecture on adornment

SPYROS PAPAPETROS

Surrounded by a world full of wonder and forces—whose laws he is aware of and strives to resolve, yet never unravels, laws that thrust towards him as individual fragmentary harmonies and sustain his feelings in a continuous state of unfulfilled excitation—man conjures up the perfection that eludes him through play and builds for himself a miniature world in which the cosmic laws appear in their most narrow and compact form, yet complete in themselves, and in this respect perfect. And it is through such play that man fulfills his cosmogonic instinct.

—Gottfried Semper, “Prolegomena” to *Style**

What if adornment, one of the most visually ostentatious categories of object-making, was reimagined as an eclipse from visibility? Could artifacts that are intimately associated with display, such as jewelry and other bodily enhancements, ultimately persevere precisely through the practices of absconding: hiding things, either to permanently occlude them, or to uphold them for a future reappearance? And then how would historical scholarship, the system of retrieving and studying such artifacts, figure in this process: would it illuminate or obliterate the very objects that it aims to propel once again into the spotlight?

Historians suggest that so many archaeological specimens of bodily decoration are available for study because at a certain point such artifacts were safely hidden or buried underground, either as part of ritual

funerary practices or to protect such precious articles from looting and pillaging.¹ The spectacular adornments discovered in the burial chambers of Egyptian pyramids, the masses of jewelry uncovered by Schliemann under the city walls of Troy, or the countless fibulas recovered in Roman tombs, were some of the artifacts amassed in archaeological discoveries throughout the nineteenth century that might have reinforced adornment's implicit dialectics of concealment and illumination. Thought forever lost or merely mythological, entire civilizations were revived less through the recovery of massive architectural monuments, but rather by restoring the glimmer of small and seemingly marginal articles, such as golden buttons, finger rings, hairpins, headbands, and metal brooches. Archaeologists observe that such minute decorative items are found much less frequently in sites dating later than the eighth century; historians attribute such absence to the edict of Charles the Great against “heathen burials”—a practice that endured for centuries after the rise of Christianity.² But could this very ban on the subterranean practice of adornment have propelled its expansion to rituals performed above-ground? And could similar prohibitions have facilitated adornment's periodic rise through a series of spectacular revivals, which from the early modern period onward become increasingly *cosmic* in proportion?

The cosmic scale in the production of adornment is most evidently displayed in the rich historiography on the issue of bodily ornamentation during the second half of the nineteenth century. Next to the decorative specimens recovered in archaeological excavations, contemporary scholarship thrived on articles of bodily adornment gathered from ethnographic expeditions in European colonies around the world—from Africa, to South America, to South East Asia. For a moment, the world appeared reunited by its ornament, as if the core and substance of the universe was concentrated

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*Gottfried Semper, *Der Stil in den technischen und tektonischen Künsten; oder, Praktische Aesthetik: Ein Handbuch für Techniker, Künstler und Kunstfreunde*, 2 vols. (Frankfurt am Main: Verlag für Kunst & Wissenschaft, 1860; Munich: F. Bruckmann, 1863), p. xxi. English edition: *Style in the Technical and Tectonic Arts*, trans. by H. F. Mallgrave and M. Robinson (Los Angeles: The Getty Research Institute, 2004), p. 82 (translation modified).

1. Karl Hadaczek, *Der Ohrschmuck der Griechen und Etrusker* (Vienna: Alfred Hölder, 1903), pp. 1–2.

2. *Gold und Silberschmuck nach Originalen der Strassburger historischen Schmuck-Ausstellung von 1904*, ed. Robert Forrer (Strassburg: Ludolf Beust, 1905).

on its glittering surface. An endless number of books, treatises, surveys, and catalogues, as well as museum displays and traveling exhibitions attempted to trace the trafficking of decorative treasures around the globe and to diagram patterns of development that were themselves ornamental. Such historiographic schemes act as ideograms not only of ornamental evolution, but also of larger cosmic transformations. The fabric of the world was constantly changing. Sartorial theorists of culture, from Carlyle to Humboldt and from Semper to Warburg, assayed to fathom that new texture by dissecting its mobile edges—the inorganic appendages of clothing, adornment, and fabric accessories. Their overextensive yet minute investigations are as reflective as the gleaming articles they scrutinize.

But how, then, is this cosmic expansion of adornment in turn-of-the-century historiography and material culture related to the so-called ban or abolishment of ornament from modernist art and architectural practice, which was to follow only a few years later? Could it be that the very textual profusion and institutional display of adornment does not unearth, but in fact reburies ornament with funerary pomp and circumstance? Could the showcasing of decorative artifacts in the cabinets of anthropological museums and the colorful folios of scholarly publications proclaim that ornament is an object of archaeological inquiry with no place in the pristine spaces of modern habitats? But could this phenomenal eclipse also be construed as another manifestation of the original epistemological structure of adornment in its inherent dialectics between hiding and revealing, a dialectic that makes possible its periodic bursts into luminosity?

The epigram from Semper's *Style* in the beginning of this article suggests how human artifacts can act as miniature models of the world and its inscrutable operating principles. Every man-made structure is essentially an ornament in its capacity to diagram and symbolically connote analogical relations with the cosmos. But if in the antique such cosmological correspondences would be mediated by anthropomorphic or zoomorphic imagination—as in the human and animal signs of the Zodiac on the frieze of a Renaissance palazzo, as analyzed by Warburg—then in Semper's post-Newtonian universe the same cosmic analogies would be converted into geometric axes supporting the celestial mechanics of the universe. Such transition in the analogical capacity of adornment towards a less visible system of correspondences constitutes a theoretical form of absconding. Adornment survives and preserves its analogical relation to the world by being enclosed not only by the solid walls of ancient

funeral monuments, but also by the transparent barriers of modern physics.

Based on a series of readings of Semper's writings on adornment by turn-of-the-century authors, who include art historians, evolutionists, and anthropologists, this study attempts to demonstrate that adornment, in its modern guise, still fulfills man's "cosmogonic instinct," as envisioned by the nineteenth-century architect, and yet it engages a more abstract level of representation. This subtle shift in the cosmic influence of adornment is diagrammed in the notes of one of Semper's most incisive yet hardly acknowledged readers, who as an emerging Renaissance art historian was bewildered by the "fragmentary harmonies" of ornamentation still echoing in his own era.

Warburg reads Semper

A set of perpendicular axes with all four cardinal points marked by a capital letter; a horizontal arrow pointing to the left, next to a vertical line segment; farther down, the small drawing of a tree crossed by a symmetrical axis, and below all of the above, the minuscule figure of a man with arms semi-extended (fig. 1): All four of these small drawings are part of a page among Aby Warburg's index cards filled with manuscript notes from his reading of Gottfried Semper—more specifically, Semper's 1856 lecture "On the formal principles of adornment"³ and the architect's "Prolegomena" to his voluminous *Style*, which includes the passage excerpted earlier as an epigram.⁴

Semper's lecture on adornment was published without illustrations; perhaps at a point when the architect's theoretical exposition of his formal theory was becoming too abstract, the art historian felt the need to illustrate it himself with his own drawings. The manuscript notes indicate that the four axes at the top of the page represent the two pairs of opposite cosmic forces: gravity (*Schwerkraft*) versus "growth force" (*Wachstumskraft*), as well as movement versus resistance. Semper envisions these four axes radiating from "four

3. Gottfried Semper, "Über die formelle Gesetzmässigkeit des Schmuckes und dessen Bedeutung als Kunstsymbol," *Monatsschrift des wissenschaftlichen Vereins in Zürich* 1 (1856):101–130. For further bibliographic details, see notes in the translation of the second section of the lecture published in this issue. Warburg's notes are from the original publication of Semper's lecture in 1856.

4. For Warburg's notes on Semper's 1856 lecture, see *Aesthetik*, Warburg Institute Archive (hereafter cited as WIA), Zettelkästen (ZK) 041/021140-154; for Warburg's notes on Semper's *Style*, ZK 041/021155-158.

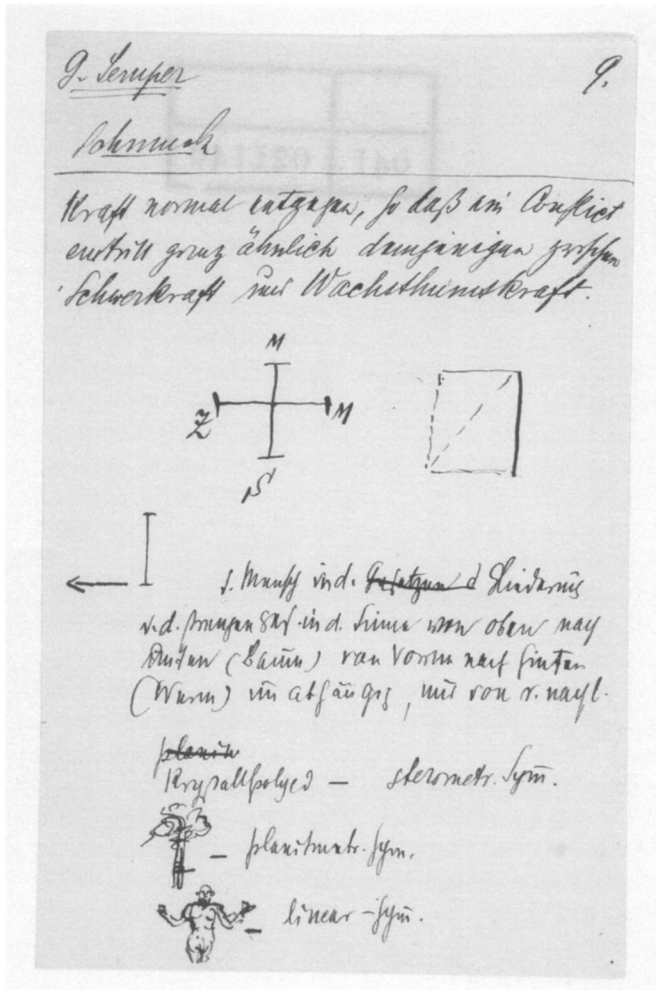


Figure 1. Aby Warburg, manuscript notes and sketches from Gottfried Semper's 1856 essay on adornment (notes marked "Berlin, Fall 1890"), Warburg Institute Archive, Zettelkasten Aesthetik WIA, ZK 041/021149.

centers" combined in "two pairs."⁵ The horizontal arrow jotted underneath that diagram perhaps suggests the direction of resistance, which is perpendicular to the axis of growth. Finally, the formal product of the struggle between movement and growth is shown in Warburg's sketch of a little tree, an entity that, according to Semper, demonstrates "planimetric" symmetry, in contrast to the "linear" symmetry of man. Man is the only living being that moves perpendicularly to its axis of growth, unlike

fish, for example, or the "worm that moves from front to back," as Warburg mentions in his notes.⁶

Warburg's illuminated page thus delineates a model of cosmic growth and transformation. Like the bewildered man described in the prolegomena to *Style*, the art historian has difficulty comprehending the architect's abstract theoretical universe, and so he converts it into a graphic model that miniaturizes the cosmic principles of natural morphology and physics. Orientation becomes ornamentation, and Semper's laws of cosmic symmetry turn into graphic yet reflective jewels.

This *reflective* mode of scholarship mirrors the glittering object of the art historian's and the architect's investigation. It is significant that the main term used by Semper to connote adornment throughout his 1856 lecture read by Warburg is not ornament but *Schmuck*, a concrete artifact pertaining mainly to bodily enhancement, such as a piece of jewelry, a necklace, or a headdress—decorative articles mostly related to female adornment, though men would also wear similar artifacts in other cultures or time periods. For Semper, then, discussions of ornamentation should not evolve around disembodied geometric shapes, but objects that have weight and physical dimensions and which through their very movement and direction inscribe themselves into the world.

Semper in fact begins his lecture with an etymological definition of the Greek word *Kosmos* (also transcribed by Warburg in the first page of his notes), which means both adornment and (world) order.⁷ Semper's source could be Humboldt's *Kosmos*, the natural philosopher's universal history of the world written after his trip to America, the first volume of which includes a two-page excursus on the extensive semasiology of the Greek word.⁸ Yet the architect may have also consulted primary sources, since his library contained a fairly complete series of ancient

6. Warburg (ibid.), WIA, ZK 041/021148-149. Semper mentions a "water snake," but not a "worm" in his 1856 essay (ibid., p. 119); however, there is reference to worms in Semper's prolegomena to his *Style*. See Semper, *Der Stil* (1860), p. xxxvii; and *Style* (2004), p. 92 (see the note for the epigraph). Since certain parts from the second theoretical section of Semper's 1856 essay on adornment are relative to certain sections from his "Prolegomena" to the *Style*, in these notes Warburg might be synthesizing his reading of both texts.

7. Semper (see note 3), p. 101; and Warburg (ibid.), WIA, ZK 041/021141.

8. Alexander von Humboldt, *Kosmos: Entwurf einer physischen Weltbeschreibung* (Stuttgart and Tübingen: Cotta, 1845-1862), 5 volumes. Humboldt's *Kosmos* exists in the list of books that Semper took with him to London. See copies of Semper's library lists in Wolfgang Hermann Papers, Special Collections, The Getty Research Institute.

5. Semper (see note 3), p. 118; and Warburg (ibid.), WIA, ZK 041/021148-149.

Greek authors. Schneider's 1819 Greek lexicon (part of Semper's library) interprets *Kosmos* as "Schmuck" (adornment), "Ordnung" (order), "Anordnung" (hierarchy or arrangement), as well as "Einrichtung" (direction or faculty).⁹ Other contemporary dictionaries would expand the word into a cosmic plethora of meanings, from "honor" or "distinction" to "horse ornament" (*Pferdeschmuck*).¹⁰ Foremost for Semper, however, *Kosmos* mainly signified three distinct worlds or parallel cosmic faculties, which could ultimately converge into one epistemological system.

The first was the faculty of ancient philology, the source of Semper's Greek etymologies (which even if not always accurate remained prescient in their embellished associations). This was the world of ancient Victories and Graces, of decorative wreaths and Attic acroteria from which the architect drew his vocabulary of forms. But this ancient world was gradually receding to an allegorical background and ran the risk of becoming meaningless or merely "ornamental" if it was not supported by the architect's second world, the world of natural science: an eclectic assemblage of Newton's and Lagrange's universal astrophysics and Schopenhauer's natural philosophy or metaphysics (a sample of which was diagrammed in Warburg's sketches). This was the world of comet tails and ancient slingshot projectiles whose trajectory and form Semper had studied based on his knowledge of physics and mathematics during the period of his British exile.¹¹ His lecture on adornment presented a further opportunity to demonstrate that the cosmic principles diagrammed in these high-flown investigations also informed the design of small artifacts that moved much closer to the surface of the earth. Be it a missile or a jewel, the very form of a well-designed object could for the architect restore or at least *indicate* order and lawfulness in a world that seemed no longer to have either.

But alongside the cosmic views offered by philology and physics, Semper also witnessed the intrusion of a third world, viewed at large through the lens of

ethnographic science.¹² His daily visits to the 1851 International Exhibition of industrial art at the Crystal Palace—itsself a microcosm of nations—provided the architect with an ethnological inventory of decorative and architectural forms as well as a methodological model for consolidating a variety of world cultures into a single ornamented structure.¹³ For Semper, ethnography supplemented the cosmic architectural theories of Vitruvius by proving that ultimately "man" had more than one axis of symmetry, thus reconfiguring his orientation beyond the limits of classical order.¹⁴ It is no accident that the very first example of bodily adornment in the architect's lecture are those of the Botocudo tribe of Eastern Brazil, as recounted in numerous ethnological descriptions.¹⁵ As Semper describes, the Botocudo protract their lower lip and earlobes to "alarming lengths" by inserting in them "wooden plugs, bones, sea shells and the like" (fig. 2).¹⁶ Empathy theorists often describe decorative objects as imaginative extensions of the bodily self. For the Botocudo, however, the added object is not an extension but an insertion; the body itself has to protract and literally incorporate the artifact. Frame and content are inverted: The human limb is now the decorative frame or addition to the inorganic core. Semper also mentions similarly invasive piercing techniques using wood or metal sticks as practiced in Mexico and in Peru, as well as scarification practices in Australia. The origin of what Semper calls the "drive for decoration" (*Verzierungstrieb*), therefore, lies not in empathetic self-contentment and pleasure but in the painful stretching of the body to limits that lie beyond its normative periphery.

12. For the relation of Semper's work to ethnological theory, see H. F. Mallgrave, "Gustav Klemm and Gottfried Semper: The Meeting of Ethnological and Architectural Theory," *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics* 9 (Spring 1985):68–79; and "Semper, Klemm, e l'etnografia—Semper, Klemm, and ethnography," *Lotus International*, no. 109 (2001):118–131.

13. Gottfried Semper, *Wissenschaft, Industrie und Kunst: Vorschläge zur Anregung nationalen Kunstgefühles bei dem Schlusse der Londoner Industrie-Ausstellung* (Brunswick: Vieweg und Sohn, 1852). English translation by H. L. Mallgrave and Wolfgang Herrmann, in *Gottfried Semper: The Four Elements of Architecture and Other Writings* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

14. On Semper's apopasmatic commentary on Vitruvius, including his observations on the relation between architecture and astrology, see his "Bemerkungen zu des M. Vitruvius Pollio zehn Bücher der Baukunst," in *Kleine Schriften*, ed. Manfred and Hans Semper (Berlin and Stuttgart: Spemann, 1884), pp. 191–212.

15. On an early nineteenth-century ethnographic account of the Botocudo, see Maximilian Wied-Neuwied's memoirs from the years 1815–1817, *Reise nach Brasilien* (ca. 1825), ed. Wolfgang Joost (Leipzig: Graphische Werke Zwickau, 1987).

16. Semper (see note 3), p. 103.

9. Johann Gottlob Schneider, *Griechisch-Deutsches Wörterbuch* (Leipzig: Hahn'sche Verlag, 1819), vol. 1, p. 785. Mentioned in Semper's book list.

10. For these significations of "Kosmos," see the dictionary by Franz Passow (on which the well-known Greek lexicon by Lindel and Scott was originally based). Franz Passow, *Handwörterbuch der griechischen Sprache* (Leipzig: Friedrich Christian Vogel, 1831), vol. 1, p. 1333.

11. On the tails of comets, see Semper, *Der Stil* (1860), p. xxxvi; and *Style* (2004), p. 99 (see the note for the epigraph). On ancient projectiles, see Semper, *Über die bleiernen Schleudergeschosse der Alten* (Frankfurt: Verlag für Kunst und Wissenschaft, 1859).



Figure 2. Ear and lip plugs of the Botocudo—"Image of original Botocudo physiognomies next to a mummy-head" from Maximilian, Prinz zu Wied-Neuwied, *Reise nach Brasilien in den Jahren 1815 bis 1817* (Frankfurt a. M.: H. L. Brönnner, 1820–1821), plate 17.

Semper also examines apotropaic costumes in several ancient cultures, including the Gorgon mask of the ancient Greeks. Contrary to what is normally described as decoration, here the purpose of adornment is not to attract but to repel, to ward off connections with the external world. Accordingly, Semper also mentions the practice of wearing amulets, speculating that perhaps the very origin of decoration lies in the structural component, such as a clasp or a chain, that attaches the talisman to the body; this frame could operate as the origin of the "aesthetic conception of jewelry," Semper states, if the amulet is replaced by a gem and the "setting" becomes autonomous from its original content.¹⁷ Decoration, then, designates a frame around a ritual object that ultimately absorbs the symbolic core of that artifact, including some of its magical or animistic associations.

A similarly revealing moment unfolds when Semper argues that in the pierced lips and massive bone pendants of the Botocudo one can see the "rudimentary precursors" (*Rudimente*) of the "graceful ear pendants favored by the Hellenic beauties."¹⁸ Here, it is as if the drive for decoration changes direction from pain to pleasure, and bifurcating to accommodate both

repulsion and attraction. Perhaps the very origin of beauty and animation traditionally attached to adornment in the West in fact has an ugly and repellent core (as later Freud, and more recently Hubert Damisch, would argue).¹⁹ This ancient content might eventually emerge as another frame surrounding the gems of modern adornment with a darker aura whose presence would not tarnish, but instead amplify their prestigious character. Ethnography had recovered the primordial "rudiments" of symbolic function on the modern surface of adornment. The task of the architect, then, was to recombine the vectors traced by the three faculties of ethnography, philology, and physics into a composite model diagramming the current dynamics of the world.

The three adornments

The "awe-inspiring" qualities in the implementations of the Botocudo and other tribal or archaic societies have for the architect an "inarticulate" quality²⁰: They represent a formless or prelinguistic stage in

19. See the analysis of beauty and its relation to the Gorgon mask (following Freud's *Theme of the Three Caskets*) by Hubert Damisch, *The Judgment of Paris*, trans. John Goodman (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1996).

20. Semper (see note 3), p. 117.

17. Ibid.

18. Ibid.

the evolution of adornment that later will develop into a universal language of more regular decorative patterns.²¹ As Semper argues, “the same feeling seems to have guided all nations to the same forms. The New Zealander wears a helmet crest almost identical to that of the ancient Hellene.”²² Based on such extensive similarities supported equally by ethnography, philology, and physics, Semper traces three structural categories of “Schmuck” according to the form of cosmic movement that each type portrays.

First, the pendant (*Behang*) is an oscillating apparatus usually with a free end, such as an earring or a medallion hanging from a chain that has a periodic form of movement (fig. 3). In its suspension, the pendant accentuates the cosmic law of gravity and is therefore deemed a “macrocosmic” ornament.²³ Embodying the oscillation between movement and equilibrium, pendants emphasize symmetry and therefore often appear in pairs. Apart from jewelry, Semper also classifies fabric folds in garments as pendants, since they are earthbound and hang symmetrically. For the same reason Semper classifies hair, from the long braids of the Greeks or even the beards of the Assyrians, as pendants.²⁴ The aesthetic value of the pendant derives from its vertical suspension, which accentuates the curvatures of the face, neck, and other body parts it decorates. But it also has psychological value since it externalizes the character and temperament of the carrier²⁵: the hanging earrings of a nervous woman, for example, would move spasmodically and oscillate too much. The pendant, then, not only measures, but also moderates the carrier’s internal and external movements, translating decorum into decoration. A few decades after Semper, Warburg would expand the pendant’s circumference from psychology to epistemology and redraw its oscillating apparatus as an ideogram of periodic change.

21. On the linguistic parameters of the study of ornament in Semper and Riegl, see Debra Schafer, “Ornament and Language,” in *The Order of Ornament, The Structure of Style: Theoretical Foundations of Modern Art and Architecture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 60–102.

22. Semper (see note 3), p. 113.

23. Semper (see note 3), p. 106. In his analysis of Semper’s 1856 essay, Mallgrave mentions that Semper in fact borrows the terms “macrocosmic” and “microcosmic” from Adolf Zeising’s writings on aesthetics and theories of human proportion, even though the architect strongly opposed Zeising’s idealist aesthetics. See H. F. Mallgrave, *Gottfried Semper, Architect of the Nineteenth Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), p. 271.

24. Semper (*ibid.*), pp. 107–108.

25. *Ibid.*, p. 106.

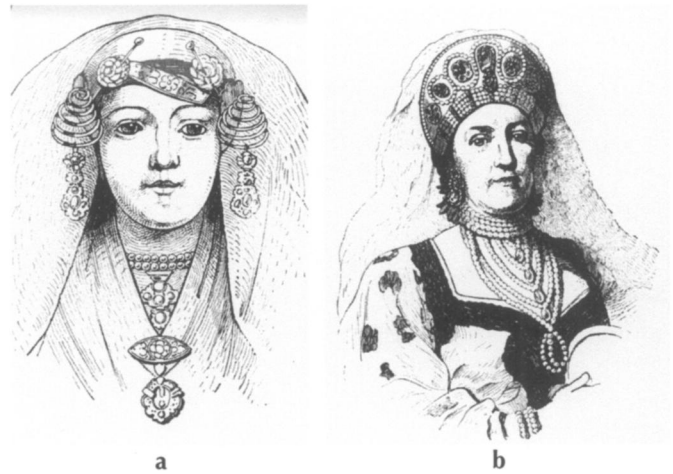


Figure 3. a. Pendant adornments from Holland and b. Annular adornments from Russia (Catherine the 2nd) from Hermann Barth, *Das Geschmeide: Schmuck und Edelsteinkunde*, vol. 1, *Die Geschichte des Schmuckes* (Berlin: Verlagsbuchhandlung Alfred Schall, 1903), pp. 264 and 188, plates XI and VIII.

Semper’s second category of adornment is the ring, or annular ornament, which includes necklaces; ear-, finger-, or toe-rings; as well as head-, knee-, or arm-bands and waist chains—all of which emphasize bodily proportions. If the pendant connected the body with the macrocosm, the ring’s microcosmic significance is its delineation of the relationship that each individual body part has with another.²⁶ Annular enhancements, such as arm- or leg-bands, can also provide bodily support or emphasize stoutness and power. Semper mentions the “bone bangles” worn by the Kaffirs on the upper arm “that dig deep into the muscle” and were sometimes made by animal or human (enemy) jaws.²⁷

From an implement of bodily power, the ring can bestow or accentuate social or even political power upon the individual that wears it. According to Semper, the annular ornament always appears in a radial regular arrangement connected with eurhythmy, and therefore it concentrates all attention to the body part it encircles. For the same reason, the most prominent annular ornaments are the ones attached to the head, such as the headbands and crowns worn by kings and other rulers.²⁸ The ring absorbs all attention to itself, yet it can also

26. *Ibid.*, p. 109.

27. *Ibid.*, p. 112.

28. *Ibid.*, p. 109.

reflect that energy back into the world. It is the fulcrum of centripetal and centrifugal relationships; therefore it functions as a symbol of social formations.

While it appears to be static, the annular ornament has a potent form of virtual movement. A necklace, for example, can expand from its narrow periphery and become a surface that covers a larger area of the body, such as the Egyptian breastplates illustrated by Semper in his *Style*. The addition of pendants can aid that expansion of the annular object, as demonstrated, for example, by the medieval waist chains or girdles from which keys, swords, crosses, and miniature prayer books were suspended.²⁹ Similarly, the ring could also be linked to the origin of clothing, since in certain tribal cultures men or women attach pieces of fur, fabric, or other objects around a waist string to create small articles of clothing. The ring, then, is an *Ur-object*, both a concrete artifact and a diagram of radial expansion.

While both pendants and rings connote a certain form of movement, the ornament that is most intimately connected with mobility constitutes a third, yet unnamed category for Semper, who therefore invents the term “directional ornament” (*Richtungsschmuck*). This form of adornment, such as the loose appendages of headgear, whether feathers of a plumed hat or the crest of a military helmet, emphasizes the direction of movement in the carrier’s body. Although neither rhythmic nor symmetrical, Semper calls the directional ornament “the most spiritual” (*die geistigere*) of all ornaments because it projects “the grace, movement, character and the expression of appearance.”³⁰

There are two forms of directional ornament: “flying,” such as the helmet crests of the Hellenes and the Etruscans; or “static,” such as the serpent in the brow of Egyptian pharaohs or the rigid helmet ornaments of the Assyrians (fig. 4).³¹ On the one hand, in its rapid oscillations, the flying directional ornament acts as a portable tachometer by showing not only the direction, but also the speed of the carrier, whether animal or human. On the other hand, while it is not itself *moving*, the static *Richtungsschmuck* diagrams the movement of the carrier like a quill that writes on air. In doing so the directional adornment creates a second virtual outline on top of the bodily contour, augmenting the visual circumference of the human or animal figure.

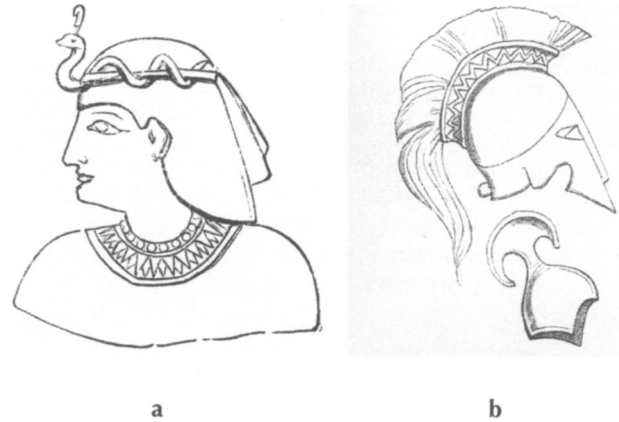


Figure 4. Static and flying directional ornaments: a. “The Aspis of Egyptians” b. “Greek and Assyrian helmet decorations;” all illustrations from Gottfried Semper, *Der Stil in den technischen und tektonischen Künsten; oder, Praktische Aesthetik: Ein Handbuch für Techniker, Künstler und Kunstfreunde*, Bd. 1, *Die Textile Kunst* (ca. 1860) 2nd edition (Munich: Bruckmann, 1878), p. 77 (left) and 25 (right).

Semper emphasizes the importance of directional ornaments in military apparatuses, especially the headgear affixed to military horses and their riders, such as those portrayed in the battle scenes of the Assyrian reliefs from Nimrud that the architect would have encountered in the British Museum during his exile in London in the early 1850s.³² In the Assyrian reliefs, the bodies of the warriors and their horses appear to be gradually substituted by the eidetic signs of their accessories. It is as if the directional adornments turn movement into an ornament by transforming the battlefield into an arena of traveling lines, dots, and patterns. This projective type of movement becomes particularly effective when the contours of the galloping horses are doubled or tripled (as happens in several of the Nimrud reliefs) and where the viewer can reconstruct the trajectory of movement by recombining the traces of the rhythmically repeated ornaments (which ostensibly anticipate both the method and the iconography of Muybridge’s later chronophotographic experiments with horses).

It is no accident that directional ornaments are intimately associated with the visual hierarchy of the battlefield and its highly dynamic order. One of the

29. For similar examples, see Hubert Stierling, *Der Silberschmuck der Nordseeküste* (Neumünster in Holstein: Karl Wachholtz, 1935).

30. Semper (see note 3), p. 113.

31. *Ibid.*, pp. 113–114.

32. For an early description of these reliefs, see Austen Henry Layard, *Nineveh and Its Remains* (London: J. Murray, 1849).

earliest significations of the Greek *Kosmos* was that of the spatial expression of military organization.³³ Before the war waged *against* ornament, there is the war represented *by* the cosmic side of ornament itself. Directional adornments essentially act as the banners of such battles. They were the signs of a world in flux, in which regular formations, like the ones portrayed by rings and pendants, were gradually substituted by more complex geometries that broke previous modes of visual and social arrangement. While directional adornments might have ultimately led to the disappearance of classical ornamentation, they also point towards the infinite new directions that its eclipse could precipitate.

The movement of accessories

But let us now redirect our attention to the reader with whom this inquiry originally started. The lengthiest passage Warburg transcribed from Semper's essay on adornment concerns the architect's description of fabrics as directional ornaments: "Whenever garments [*Gewand*] are still, they are macrocosmic ornaments," but "whenever they are fluttering in the air, they become directional decorations."³⁴ Fabrics thus oscillate between the periodic movement of pendants and the more linear movement of directional ornaments; in both cases they evoke a certain mood (*Stimmung*) or even "pathos."

Warburg copies a full paragraph of Semper's discussion of fabrics verbatim: His own pen here becomes the "directional ornament" prescribing the trajectory of his own scholarly research. Indeed, Warburg's four pages of notes from Semper's *Style* are dated as "Florence, November 1888,"³⁵ precisely the period when the young scholar was studying under August Schmarsow in the German Art Historical Institute in Italy. Could we then imagine that it was perhaps Schmarsow, an art historian with a strong theoretical interest in spatial organization and compositional principles, who suggested that the young student read Semper in the first place?³⁶

Warburg's fourteen pages of notes from Semper's 1856 essay on adornment are dated "Berlin, fall 1890,"³⁷ when Warburg was deep at work on his dissertation on the representation of "accessories in motion" in Quattrocento painting, which he completed in 1891. In fact, Warburg cites a sentence from Semper's lecture among the addenda of the author's working copy of his published dissertation. "The aesthetics of pure beauty have their material foundation in Dynamics and Statics"³⁸: Semper's phrase not only reveals the material origin of an older form of aesthetics, but also speaks for the foundation of a new aesthetic science that takes into consideration active forces, both in equilibrium and movement. Even though Warburg's dissertation had very little to do with "pure beauty," Semper's statement resonates deeply with the pictorial dynamics in Botticelli's *Birth of Venus* and *Primavera* that Warburg was analyzing in his dissertation.³⁹ Therefore, while the art historian makes no explicit reference to Semper's three categories of adornment in his dissertation, the directional links between his research in the pictorial representation of accessories and Semper's analysis of *Schmuck* are evident.⁴⁰

We do not refer here to actual pieces of jewelry, such as the necklaces worn by the Graces in the

his dissertation. See Ernst Gombrich, *Aby Warburg: An Intellectual Biography* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), p. 80. Gombrich devotes more space to Semper's essay in his own study of ornamentation, in which he links Semper's "a priori speculations" to Goethe and Aristotle. See E. H. Gombrich, *The Sense of Order: A Study in the Psychology of Decorative Art* (London: Phaidon, 1994), pp. 48–49.

37. Warburg (see note 4), WIA, ZK 041/021140.

38. Aby Warburg, Dissertation Handexemplar (printed proofs of the published dissertation with handwritten annotations by Aby Warburg), WIA III.40.1.1.2, p. 10.

39. For the published dissertation, see Aby Warburg, *Sandro Botticelli's "Geburt der Venus" und "Frühling": eine Untersuchung über die Vorstellungen von der Antike in der italienischen Frührenaissance* (Hamburg and Leipzig: Leopold Voss, 1893). The dissertation including an edited version of Warburg's addenda was published in Aby Warburg, *Gesammelte Schriften. Die Erneuerung der heidnischen Antike: Kulturwissenschaftliche Beiträge zur Geschichte der Europäischen Renaissance*, ed. Gertrud Bing with the cooperation of Fritz Rougement (Leipzig-Berlin: Taubner, 1932), pp. 1–60 and 302–328. English edition: Aby Warburg, *The Renewal of Pagan Antiquity*, introd. Kurt Foster, trans. David Britt (Santa Monica: Getty Research Institute for the History of Art and the Humanities, 1999), pp. 89–156.

40. Warburg does, however, mention Semper's "Richtungsschmuck" and his lecture on adornment in his next big essay on *Costumi Teatrali* written in 1893, when he describes ornaments designed to be seen in profile during festive or theatrical processions: Aby Warburg, "The Theatrical Costumes for the Intermedi of 1589" in *The Renewal of Pagan Antiquity* (ibid.), p. 399, n. 121.

33. For the association of *Kosmos* with forms of military arrangement, see the etymological analysis of the word by Claus Haebler, "KOSMOS: Eine etymologisch-wortgeschichtliche Untersuchung," in *Archiv für Begriffsgeschichte* 11 (1967):101–118.

34. Semper (see note 3), p. 114; and Warburg (see note 4), WIA, ZK 041/021145

35. Warburg (ibid.), WIA, ZK 041/021155.

36. Warburg's connection to Semper has hitherto hardly been studied. Ernst Gombrich briefly mentions Warburg's reading of Semper's 1856 essay during the period in which the scholar was writing

Primavera, or Botticelli's depiction of decorative dress trimmings, which art historians have analyzed.⁴¹ Instead, in Warburg's interpretation, each of the two paintings ostensibly operates as an ornament based on the structural logic implied in Semper's three categories of adornment. Warburg's point of departure is the architect's category of directional ornaments in fabric. Like the warrior scenes of the Assyrian reliefs, the complex mythological representations composed by Botticelli transform into arenas of swirling curves as all figures included in the painting are essentially reduced to their mobile accessories and perform as eidetic signifiers of agitation and stasis. In this context, we could re-view the *Birth of Venus* in its entirety, in which hair and accessories frantically gyrate around the static axis of the marmoreal Venus, as a pictorial annular ornament. And does not Warburg's conclusion on Botticelli's oscillation between "melancholy stillness" and "vehement agitation"⁴² in fact turn the painting into a form of pendant, periodically alternating between two diametrically opposed (yet intimately connected) psychological forms of pictorial decorum?

But there are also crucial differences between Semper's and Warburg's conceptions of the relationship between the human carrier and the article of adornment. In an aesthetic aphorism written in October 1890 citing his reading of Semper's 1856 essay, Warburg writes:

In the case of adornment [*Schmuck*], the expression represented [by that artifact] stands in no organic relation to the carrier [*Träger*], as long as the external aspects are not the natural result of the carrier's momentary power and the relations occasioned by his or her will.⁴³

In contrast to Semper's account of the female subject and her earring, for Warburg there is no transparent relationship between the ornament and the carrier's subjective emotions. Warburg emphasizes the independence of the inorganic adornment against the organic self, as if the decorative artifact was a self-activated object with a will and expression of its own.

Such phenomenal autonomy is central to Warburg's reconceptualization of Semper's *Schmuck* into an "accessory-in-motion" (*Bewegtes Beiwerk*), similar to the whirling fabrics and windblown hair depicted in Botticelli's paintings. A common element between *Schmuck* and *Beiwerk* is precisely the "added" or supplementary character of ornamentation: the process of bringing into representation something more than what the organic body has to offer by means of an inorganic addendum. In several of his dissertation drafts, Warburg characterizes the same accessories, as depicted in painting or literature, as "extensive dynamic additions" (*Zusätzen*).⁴⁴

As Warburg demonstrated in his minute analyses of descriptions of accessories in antique and Renaissance texts, ornaments proliferate through addition and continuous embellishment. Renaissance authors and artists tended to "accessorize" the accessory by drawing another curve, another squiggle, another *fioritura* in the already ornamented fabric of antiquity. This self-propelled method of growth constitutes the supreme law of the accessory, yet exists outside of Semper's "lawful" formations. Warburg's *Beiwerk* appears to obey no authority and moves even "against the natural course of things."⁴⁵ The only principle obeyed by the mobile accessory is that of aberrant change, which is incompatible with Semper's ordered picture of the universe. Writing approximately thirty-five years later than the architect, Warburg perhaps realized that the world and its art forms were becoming increasingly *ornamental*, but not *ornamentative* according to Semper's cosmic principles. Decorative appendages were no longer embodiments of world order, but of a generalized disorder that would further stir the art historian's cosmological anxiety.

Perhaps Warburg rediscovered the cosmic order of adornment, absent from the Renaissance as well as the art of his own period, through his later study of ornament in the pottery, costumes, and festive rituals of the South American Pueblos, which he visited during 1895 and

41. For example, Horst Bredekamp, "Fallende Flammen," in *Botticelli Primavera: Florenz als Garten der Venus* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 1988), pp. 40–46.

42. From Warburg's later essay on the artist, "Sandro Botticelli," in Warburg, *Renewal* (see note 39), pp. 157–164.

43. "Beim Schmuck steht der dargestellte Ausdruck in keinem organischen Verhältnis zum Träger, insofern als die Oberfläche nicht der natürliche Erfolg der augenblicklichen Kraft u.[nd] des Willensverhältnisses des Trägers ist." Aby Warburg, *Grundlegende Bruchstücke zu einer monistischen Kunstpsychologie*, WIA III.43.1.3, 43, aphorism number 100, dated October 6, 1890.

44. Aby Warburg, Dissertation on Botticelli, preliminary drafts WIA III.38.1.2. Warburg uses the similar term "dynamic additional forms" (*dynamisierende Zusatzformen*) in the philosophical aphorisms added later to his dissertation and titled "Four theses." Warburg, *Gesammelte Schriften* (see note 39), p. 58.

45. "A. *First half of the Quattrocento*: . . . Movement of the drapery against natural preconditions (Naturliche Voraussetzungen zuwider) . . . B. *Second Half of the Quattrocento*: . . . Movement of the drapery contrary to the natural course of things (d. natürl. Verlauf zuwider)." Quoted in Gombrich, *Aby Warburg* (see note 36), p. 48. For the original see WIA, ZK Ae. *Aphorismen*, March 27, 1889.

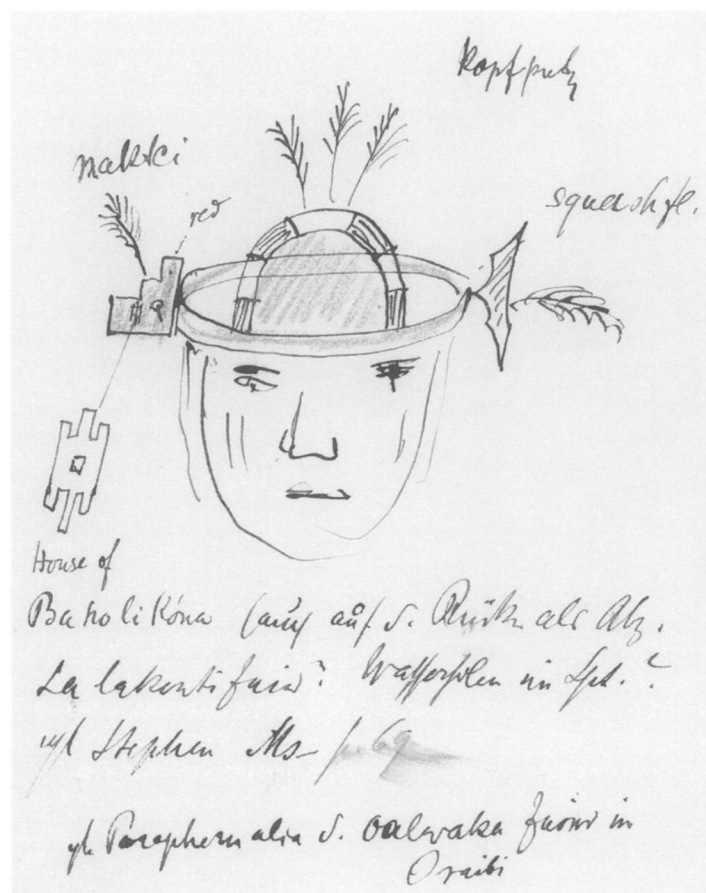


Figure 5. Aby Warburg, sketch of annular Moki headgear (Kopfschmuck) with the inscription "house of Baholi Kóna," Warburg Institute Archive, Zettelkasten *Americana*, WIA, ZK 040/020934.

1896. By painting the cosmological symbol of the "World-House" on their elaborate headgear, the pueblo dancers appear to carry the world on their heads. They further communicate with the universe via the use of feathers (*bahos*) that function as directional antennae (fig. 5). Even the stovepipe hat worn by Uncle Sam in Warburg's well-known photograph of the American Renaissance man in the streets of San Francisco is also a cosmic directional ornament, merging with the cupola of a neo-Renaissance rotunda and extended by the wires of electricity poles punctuating the new technological cosmos.⁴⁶

46. Aby Warburg, *Images from the Region of Pueblo Indians of North America*, trans. Michael P. Steinberg (Ithaca/London: Cornell University Press, 1995), p. 54. For the German edition, see Aby Warburg, *Schlangenritual. Ein Reisebericht*, introd. Ulrich Raulff

Even if several of the ceremonial adornments from Pueblo festivals recorded in Warburg's sketches bear morphological similarities with Semper's rings, pendants, and directional ornaments, the art historian's study of Pueblo ornament reinforced the ideographic capacities of adornment that were only tentatively suggested in his dissertation. For Warburg, all three of Semper's categories of *Schmuck* act as ideograms of not only physical, but also conceptual movement; while grounded in real artifacts, they express modes

(Berlin: Wagenbach, 1996). On the relation between wireless media and technological imagery in the context of Warburg's lecture, see Thomas Hensel "Kupferschlangen, unedliche Wellen und telegraphierte Bilder; Aby Warburg und das technische Bild," in *Schlangenritual: Der Transfer der Wissensformen vom Tsu'ti'kive der Hopi bis zu Aby Warburgs Kreuzlinger Vortrag*, ed. Cora Bender, Thomas Hensel, and Erhard Schüttelpelz (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2007), pp. 297–360.

of relationality and being in the world. If the paintings of Botticelli were essentially pendants oscillating between psychic inertia and the “Baroque mannerism of movement,” then in the studies of Pueblo culture, the pendant signifies the conceptual oscillations between polarities, such as Paganism and Christianity, obscurity and enlightenment, or magic and reason.

In a preliminary drawing of a pendulum in movement, which accompanies his aesthetic aphorisms written during the period of his American trip, Warburg has overwritten his sketch with the word “Umfangsbest. [?—illegible] (fig. 6).⁴⁷ The term *Umfangsbestimmung*—literally, the “definition of a periphery”—signifies a “conceptual horizon,” a way of describing or inscribing the world within a visible outline or mental shape, which is reminiscent of the Pueblo “World House” symbol.⁴⁸ This page filled with Warburg’s notes on the symbolic function of adornment is a rare instance in which the figure of the pendulum appears not only textually juxtaposed, but also graphically superimposed with the notion of *Umfangsbestimmung*. This coincidence reinforces the view that Warburg’s *Umfangsbestimmung* is itself a dynamically oscillating category. Like the Pueblo “world house,” it demarcates a conceptual horizon that is simultaneously open and closed and which therefore ultimately fails to define anything. Could it be that this oscillating limit also delineated the hypothetical end points of the practice of adornment?

On the adornment of people

The pendant might also symbolize the legacy of Semper’s lecture on adornment beyond Warburg, for the architect’s short 1856 essay eventually created its own trail in the historiography of adornment. That textual legacy, however, would bifurcate between two antithetical pathways already crossed by the architect:

47. The preliminary diagram corresponds to aphorism No. 399, dated April 13, 1900 (Florence), which includes both the terms “Umfangsbest.[immung]” and “Umfang,” either as “Spiel—Umfang” or “Klarer Umfang” (“play perimeter” or “clearer perimeter”), as well as the terms “Schmuck” and “sym.[bolisches] Objekt.” WIA, ZK Ae *Aphorismen* and Warburg, *Grundlegende Bruchstücke*, WIA III.43.2.1.

48. For a different interpretation of the term “Umfangsbestimmung” based on Warburg’s early reading of Kant in a seminar by Theobald Ziegler in Strasburg, as well as Warburg’s use of the term in the preparatory notes for his 1923 Kreuzlingen lecture, see Gombrich, *Aby Warburg* (see note 36), pp. 77–78, 218–219. On “Umfangsbestimmung” as epistemological horizon as well as *Kosmos*, see Bernd Villhauer, *Aby Warburg’s Theorie der Kultur: Detail und Sinnhorizont* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2002), pp. 68–71.

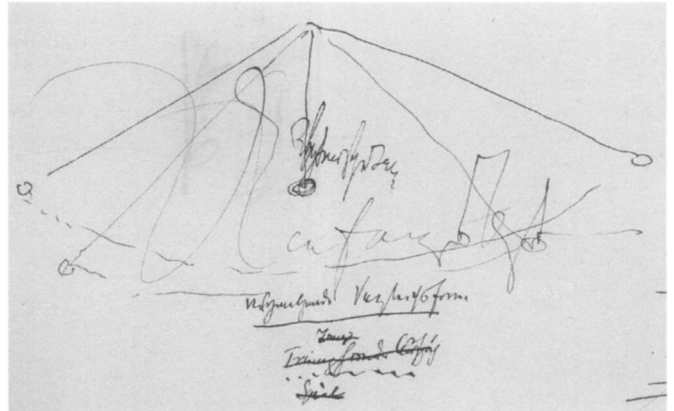


Figure 6. Aby Warburg, sketch of a pendulum as “Umfangsbestimmung.” Warburg Institute Archive, Zettelkasten Ae.[stheik]-Aphorismen, Nr. 399. WIA, ZK [not numbered].

first, the irregular polyrhythmy of the Botocudo, and second, the classical order of the ancient world.

But even the classical world had to change and be updated for the modern user. The first text based on Semper’s three categories of bodily adornment is a little-known book published in 1871 and titled *The Human Adornment* (*Der menschliche Schmuck*) by J. Matthias, a German lecturer in applied arts.⁴⁹ The book makes a “contribution,” as announced in its subtitle, “to the education of taste in domestic and commercial circles.” It is essentially a guidebook on how to avoid the imminent threat of “Schmuck” becoming a sign of bad taste (*schlechter Geschmack*) when proper rules are not applied; in this way Matthias turns Semper’s ornamentative rules into a set of practical regulations. “[He] wants to reawake the sense of beauty in housewives,” comments Warburg in his brief notes on Matthias’s book: “he is based on Semper without citing him” (*basiert auf Semper ohne zu citieren*), Warburg further criticizes Matthias’s unscholarly attitude.⁵⁰

Indeed, while Matthias classifies all forms of female bodily adornment according to Semper’s three structural categories of rings, pendants, and directional ornaments, he never mentions Semper’s name. Not only the

49. J. Matthias, *Der Menschliche Schmuck. Form, Farbe und Anwendung. Ein Beitrag zur Bildung des Geschmacks in häuslichen und gewerblichen Kreisen* (Leipzig: Verlag von H. Haessel, 1870).

50. Aby Warburg, bibliographic notes: “J. Matthias. Der menschliche Schmuck; will der Schönheitssinn d[er] Hausfrau wecken; basiert auf Semper ohne zu citieren.” Aby Warburg, *Gerät-Tracht* WIA, ZK 29A 010/004528.

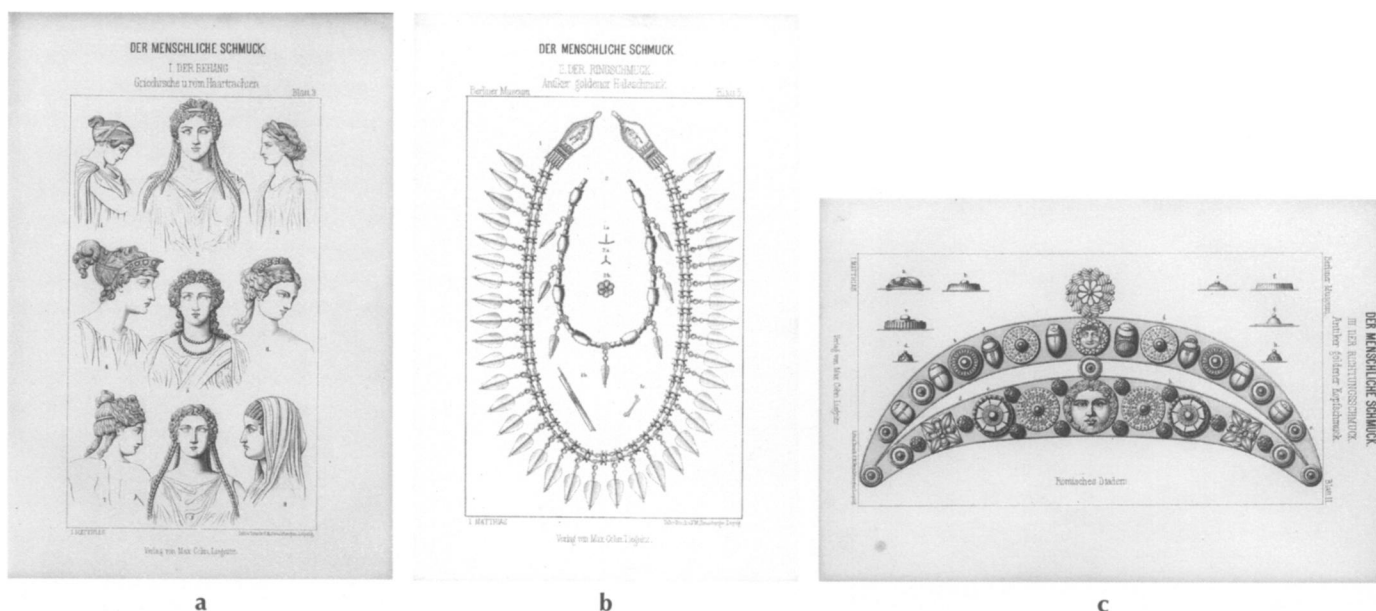


Figure 7. Illustrations of ancient pendants, rings, and directional ornaments. a. Greek and Roman coiffures and headdresses; b. Antique gold necklaces; and c. Antique gold diadem. J. Matthias, *Der Menschliche Schmuck. Form, Farbe und Anwendung. Ein Beitrag zur Bildung des Geschmacks in häuslichen und gewerblichen Kreisen* (Leipzig: Verlag von H. Haessel, 1870), plates 3, 5, and 11.

architect's name, then, but also his cosmological agenda has disappeared from this "practical" application. Matthias's only *original* contribution is a group of illustrations of jewelry and clothing copied from ancient Greek artworks exhibited in the archaeological Museum in Berlin (fig. 7). And while he extensively refers to modern attire, Matthias offers no illustrations of contemporary clothing or adornments. Divested of their cosmological significance, the ancient garments and hairstyles illustrated by the author turn into fragments of a cosmic order that eludes the modern *user* of ornament. Their unconverted residue of meaning is now retailored into allegorical ornaments—the putti, graces, and nymphs that inundate Neo-Renaissance artifacts (including many of Semper's own designs)—which, like Warburg's mobile accessory, are endlessly reproduced as floating signifiers of antiquity in nineteenth-century "commercial circles."⁵¹ Perhaps Matthias's shameless plagiarism of Semper's essay was another instance of the mechanical copying of ornament (now extended to its theories), with no concern whatsoever for the original source. Semper's own essay had fallen victim to the very

thoughtless *ornamentality* that he and Warburg were resisting.

However impoverished an account, Matthias's *Human Adornment* is typical of an abundance of histories and theoretical treatises on jewelry and bodily ornamentation that were published during the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries. Like Matthias's volume, some of them seem to reproduce mechanically previous histories or theoretical treatises of ornamentation. Yet, unlike Matthias, who catalogued forms of adornment according to Semper's nonhistorical classification, the majority of these surveys examines "Schmuck" chronologically and according to geographic regions, following the model set by Owen Jones in his *Grammar of Ornament*.⁵² Like Jones's *Grammar*, a

51. On the relationship between allegory and cosmic ornamentation, see the chapter "The Cosmic Image" in the classic study by Angus Fletcher, *Allegory: The Theory of a Symbolic Mode* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1964), pp. 70–146.

52. Owen Jones, *The Grammar of Ornament Illustrated by Examples from Various Styles of Ornament* (London: B. Quaritch, 1868). For a comparative world approach, see *Völkerschmuck*, ed. Martin Gerlach, intro. and captions by Michael Haberlandt (late curator at the Naturhistorisches Museum, Vienna) (Wien-Leipzig: Verlag von Gerlach & Wiedling, 1906); for the English edition, see *Primitive and Folk-Jewelry* (New York: Dover, 1971). For a more focused study of European ornament, see Ernst Bassermann-Jordan, *Der Schmuck* (Leipzig: Klinkhardt & Biermann, 1909). For a history of jewelry, see Hermann Barth, *Das Geschmeide: Schmuck und Edelsteinkunde*, vol. 1, *Die Geschichte des Schmuckes*, and vol. 2, *Das Material des Schmuckes* (Berlin: Verlagsbuchhandlung Alfred Schall, 1903).

number of these “world histories” start with “primitive ornament” in tribal cultures, which are often compared to artifacts from the early history of Europe. For example, a necklace from the Neolithic period made of mussel shells, fishbone-vertebrae, and perforated boar or wolf teeth would be cited next to the so-called “Kaffir chain” from South Africa made of hanging vegetal roots, twigs, bird feathers, hairballs, white glass balls, and the mouthpiece of a European tobacco pipe (fig. 8).⁵³ As in the arrangements of a bird that collects natural materials from its environment, the African necklace creates a portable ecology. Like Semper’s eurhythmic annular ornament, the Kaffir chain is less an object than a field made out of pendants pieced together on a string. This ornament does not represent the cosmos, but rather *is* the cosmos through its assemblage of fragments from a variety of different worlds.

This Atlas-like quality also applies to turn-of-the-century European historiography of world adornment. Following Semper, historians create their own selective versions of the world by piecing together in a chain ornaments from various parts of the globe. Such methodology is espoused by the second book on “Schmuck” that is based on Semper’s 1856 lecture, Emil Selenka’s *Der Schmuck des Menschen* (*The Ornament of People*), published in 1900 in Berlin.⁵⁴ Building upon the accounts by Semper and Mathias, Selenka’s book is also mentioned in Warburg’s bibliographic notes.⁵⁵

Selenka was a celebrated professor of zoology and animal morphology at the University of Erlangen, as well as an amateur cultural anthropologist. During the 1870s and 1880s, he traveled extensively with his wife throughout the German colonies in the South Pacific, including Malaysia, Java, and Sumatra, as well as India and Japan, collecting material for his zoological research.⁵⁶

53. See, for example, the exhibition catalogue of gold and silver jewelry (note 2), pp. 1, 4. 54. Emil Selenka, *Der Schmuck des Menschen* (Berlin: VITA Deutsches Verlagshaus, 1900).

54. Emil Selenka, *Der Schmuck des Menschen* (Berlin: VITA Deutsches Verlagshaus, 1900).

55. See Warburg’s bibliographic note “Emil Selenka, *Der Schmuck des Menschen*, Berlin,” in *Gerät - Tracht*, WIA, ZK 29A 010/004526. Warburg’s notes include other bibliographic references to Selenka, such as his articles on miming and physiognomy, “Ueber die Mimik” and “Die Sprache des menschlichen Angesichts” published by the anthropological society in Munich in 1890. Aby Warburg, *Ausdruckskunde* WIA, ZK 001/000070 and 000074.

56. See the posthumous biographical account by A. A. W. Hubrecht included in *Menschenaffen (Anthropomorphae) Studien über Entwicklung und Schädelbau*, ed. Emil Selenka (Wiesbaden: C. W. Kreidel’s Verlag, 1903), part V.

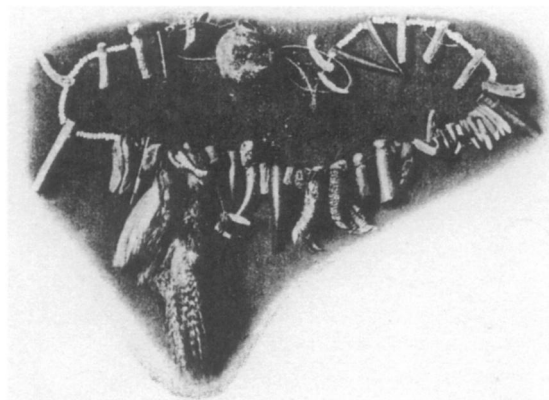


Fig. 7. Kaffernhalskette aus Südafrika.

Halsband mit angehängten Wurzel- und Holzstückchen, durchbohrten Zähnen, Stachelschweinborsten, Vogelfederbüscheln, Geweihenden, Tierklauen, Haarballen, weissen europäischen Glasperlen und quer durchbohrtem Mundstück einer europäischen Tabakspfeife. Sammlung August Camissar.

Figure 8. Kaffir neckchain from South Africa. “Necklace with fixed root- and wood-pieces, perforated animal teeth, porcupine bristles, bird feather flocci, animal claws, hairballs, white European glass pearls, and a cross perforated mouthpiece of a European tobacco pipe” (Collection August Camissar). *Gold und Silberschmuck nach Originalen der Strassburger historischen Schmuck-Ausstellung von 1904*, ed. Robert Forrer (Strassburg: Ludolf Beust, 1905), p. 4.

His observations from these trips were first presented in gatherings of the ethnological society in Munich and were then collected in a traveling memoir titled *Sonnige Welten* (*Sunny Worlds*), first published in 1896 and then republished several times until the late 1920s. In his memoir, Selenka records local customs in clothing, architecture, decoration, and theater, using photographs and drawings made specifically for the volume with an emphasis on the way that people distinctly decorate themselves with bodily and clothing ornament.⁵⁷

Selenka was also a preeminent evolutionist who specialized in the development of primates or *pithikanthropoi* (*Menschenaffen*), as well marine echinoderma, which he studied during his travels to the German colonies in East Asian islands.⁵⁸ Among his scientific colleagues was the evolutionist and pioneer

57. Emil Selenka and Leonore Selenka, *Sonnige Welten: Ostasiatische Reise-Skizzen (Borneo, Java, Sumatra, Vorderindien, Ceylon, Japan)* (ca. 1896), 3rd rev. ed. (Berlin: C. W. Kreidel’s Verlag, 1925).

58. *Studien über Entwicklungsgeschichte der Tiere: Menschenaffen (Anthropomorphae) Studien über Entwicklung und Schädelbau*, ed. Emil Selenka (Wiesbaden: C. W. Kreidel’s Verlag, 1898–1911).

animal ecologist Karl (or Carl) Semper, professor of zoology and comparative anatomy at the University of Würzburg, who, like Selenka, was also a marine biologist⁵⁹ and had traveled extensively in East Asia before Selenka.⁶⁰ This Karl *Gottfried* Semper is in fact the nephew of the architect and son of the architect's oldest brother Johann Carl Semper.⁶¹ Karl Gottfried Semper lived in the Philippines and the nearby islands from 1858 to 1865, where he collected material for his groundbreaking studies on the influence of the environment—marine, terrestrial, or aerial—in animal organisms.⁶² However, like Selenka, Karl Semper also wrote two popular memoirs featuring ethnographic observations from the Philippines and the German colonies in the Palau Islands.⁶³ In these accounts (which

59. His most important evolutionist study is Carl Semper, *Die Verwandtschaftsbeziehungen der gegliederten Thiere* (Würzburg: Druck und Verlag der Stahel'schen Buch- & Kunsthandlung, 1875). Carl Semper was also known for his opposition to the other popular German evolutionist of that period, Ernst Haeckel. See Carl Semper, *Der Haeckelismus in der Zoologie (Ein Vortrag)* (Hamburg, W. Mauke's Söhne, 1876). For the history of academic research in zoology and contemporary anatomy including the activities of Carl Semper and Emil Selenka, see Lynn K. Nyhart, *Biology Takes Form: Animal Morphology and the German Universities 1800–1900* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1995).

60. Karl Semper had in fact published some of Selenka's research on natural history in his ten-volume series on the scientific results from research travels to the German colonies in the Philippines. See *Reisen im Archipel der Philippinen, Wissenschaftliche Resultate*, ed. Carl Semper (Wiesbaden: C. W. Kreidel 1868–1916), vol. 4, section 1: "Die Sipunculiden" by J. G. de Man, C. Bülow, und Emil Selenka (1883).

61. See the genealogical tree of the Semper family, "Stammtafel der Familie Semper" by Erwin Theodor Semper (Hannover, March 1884) (Wolfgang Herrmann Papers, Getty Research Institute, Series VIII). Several historians and commentators have stressed Semper's relation to natural history (Cuvier in particular), but do not mention his nephew, who remains a "lost relative" in existing literature on the architect. On Semper and natural science, see Andreas Hauser, "Der Cuvier der Kunstwissenschaft: Klassifizierungsprobleme in Gottfried Sempers Vergleichender Baulehre," in *Grenzbereiche der Architektur*, ed. T. Bolt, K. Grunder, P. Maggi et al. (Basel: Birkhäuser Verlag, 1985), pp. 97–114.

62. For Karl Semper's most well-known publication, which established the foundations of environmental and ecological science, see Karl Semper, *Animal Life as Affected by the Natural Conditions of Existence* (New York: Appleton & Co., 1881). For his study of the development of colors in butterflies, see *Diptera from the Philippine Islands brought home by Dr. Carl Semper and described by C. R. Osten Sacken* (Berlin: Carl Fromholz, 1882).

63. Carl Semper, *Die Philippinen und ihre Bewohner (Sechs Skizzen) nach einem im Frankfurter geographischen Verein 1868 gehaltenen Cyclus von Vorträgen* (Würzburg: A. Stuber, 1869). Carl Semper, *Die Palau-Inseln im Stillen Ocean (Reiseerlebnisse)* (Leipzig: Brockhaus, 1873). For the English edition, see *The Palau Islands in the Pacific Ocean*, trans. Mark L. Berg (Guam: Micronesian Research

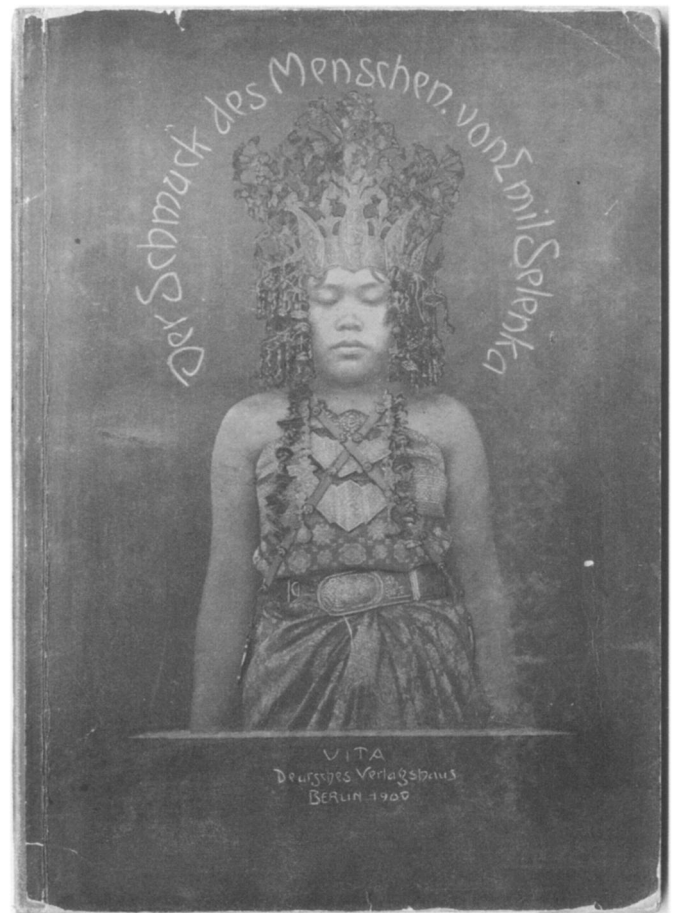


Figure 9. Emil Selenka, *Der Schmuck des Menschen* (Berlin: VITA Deutsches Verlagshaus, 1900), book cover with photograph of a bride from Sumatra.

were published with no illustrations) Karl Semper makes numerous observations on the dress, decoration, and the hairstyles of the natives in full ornamental detail, with a methodology that echoes the accounts offered by Selenka, as well as the observations on adornment of tribal cultures by his architect uncle. We might then assume that Selenka's professional liaison with Karl Semper played a role in Selenka's use of Gottfried Semper's 1856 essay on adornment in the zoologist's own studies of bodily ornamentation.

The hidden link between the two Sempers and Selenka becomes evident in Selenka's *Der Schmuck*

Center, University of Guam, 1982). See also Carl Semper, "Trip through the Northern Provinces of Luzon," in *German Travelers on the Cordillera (1860–1890)* (Manila: The Filipina Book Guild, 1975), pp. 17–34.

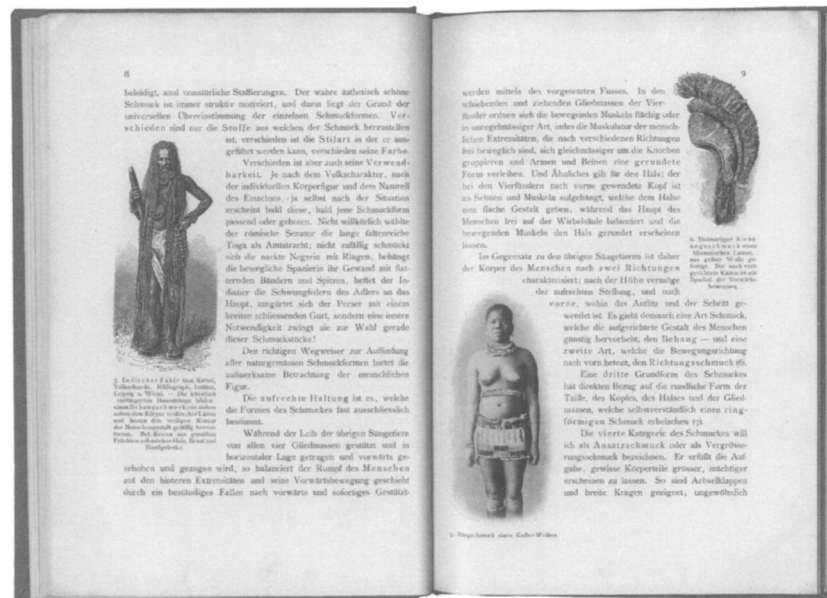


Figure 10. Page spread with Semper's three categories of adornment. Left: Indian Fakir with hair braids as pendants. Center: Kaffir woman in ring ornament. Right: Helm-type directional ornament of the Tibetan Lamas. Emil Selenka, *Der Schmuck des Menschen* (Berlin: VITA Deutsches Verlagshaus, 1900), pp. 8–9.

des Menschen, published in 1900 as an appendix to the evolutionist's earlier anthropological work. Selenka created this slim volume by recycling part of his published material on South East Asia and by adding photographs and drawings from all other continents outside Europe, such as North and South America, Oceania, and Africa (fig. 9). Like Semper, Selenka views ornament as a universal language—an art of communication via images (*Bildersprache*).⁶⁴ The scientist argues that even if spoken languages might have had a common origin, with time their differences become inevitable, and so too is this the case with gestural signs, which take on different meanings among cultures. Only ornament is a natural language whose “basic words” (*Grundworte*) can be understood by everyone, provided one knows how to pronounce those words properly—a skill, which, according to the evolutionist, is more prominent in cultures untouched by modern civilization.

The process that enables the universal comprehensibility of “Schmuck” is the psychological law of empathy (*Einfühlung*), a concept that Selenka draws from two articles by Theodor Lipps on the symbolism of clothes

(*Kleidungssymbolik*) and “the formal beauty of the human body.”⁶⁵ We understand all accessories and bodily apparatuses as extensions of ourselves; decorative artifacts have to obey the same laws as the human body, otherwise neither their carrier nor other subjects would take pleasure in them.⁶⁶ To present this universal language, Selenka employs the three structural categories of Semper, which he reclaims in non-Western fashion. A page spread in the introductory chapter of the book displays all three of Semper's original types in the form of tribal artifacts: first, pendants become the long braids of the Indian fakir; in the center, waist rings and armbands proportionally divide the body of an African woman; and finally, on the top right, a directional headdress worn by the Tibetan Lamas measures the speed of air flows in the East (fig. 10).⁶⁷ Unlike Matthias, here Selenka acknowledges Semper and pays tribute to the originality of the architect's formulation.⁶⁸ But while he refers to the

65. Theodor Lipps, “Über die Symbolik unserer Kleidung,” in *Nord und Süd* (Deutsche Monatsschrift) (Breslau: S. Schottlaender), vol. 33, no. 99, June 1885; and “Über Formenschönheit, insbesondere des menschlichen Körpers,” in *Nord und Süd*, vol. 45, no. 134, May 1888.

66. Selenka (see note 54), pp. 12–13.

67. *Ibid.*, pp. 8–9.

68. *Ibid.*, preface, unpaginated.

64. Selenka (see note 54), pp. 1–3.

manifold signification of *Kosmos* as “lawfulness” (*Gesetzmässigkeit*) and “world order,” the evolutionist, like Matthias, makes no reference to the principles of natural science invoked by Semper.⁶⁹ From now on, adornment and the cosmos do not refer to the universe in general, but rather to specific territories of the globe.

To demonstrate the applicability of Semper’s purportedly “universal” language, Selenka orchestrates a mosaic of illustrated examples. However, images such as the one of the three “black graces” clad only with a waist chain and intertwined in a “ring ornament,” inadvertently betray the classical Greek origins of that language, as well as the ill effects of its translation (fig. 11).⁷⁰

Several of the selected illustrations highlight the performativity (*Leistung*) of tribal adornment. The capacity of directional ornaments to indicate both direction and speed is evident in the single tall feather attached to the headbands of Malaysian warriors or the feathered headgear worn by Native Americans in battle.⁷¹ The structural support provided by annular ornaments is manifested in the rational use of ankle- and toe-rings worn by Tamil women in India (in all toes but the big one), whom Selenka praises for making the use of shoes obsolete (fig. 12).⁷² In its mixture of organic and inorganic tissue, the foot of the Tamil woman appears as the cropped replica of an anthropological relic. Instead of demonstrating structural support, the decorated foot appears to be weightlessly floating from its ground. And yet the same enhanced appendage provocatively marks its own territory, both as intrusion and exclusion from geographic and cultural boundaries.

Perhaps the most uncanny capacity of annular forms of adornment to “support” bodily extremities can be found in Selenka’s drawn illustration of a necklace made of mutilated human fingers, worn by Appalachian Indians during magic rituals (fig. 13).⁷³ Without explaining its symbolic properties, Selenka uses the strangely “human” necklace as an illustration of the eurhythmic symmetry and “unsurpassable beauty”

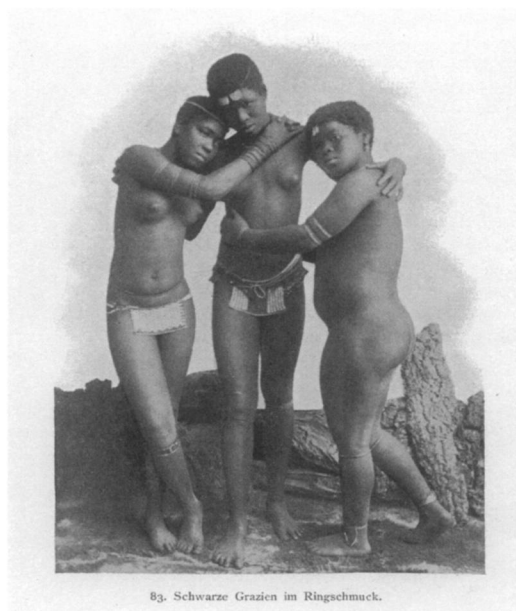


Figure 11. “Black graces in annular ornament” from Emil Selenka, *Der Schmuck des Menschen* (Berlin: VITA Deutsches Verlagshaus, 1900), p. 63.

of Semper’s “rational” annular ornament, comparing it to the necklaces made of human teeth worn by cannibals, Indian necklaces made of Kauri-mussels, as well as the splendid Roman necklaces with precious stones then fashionable among his contemporary *salon Damen* (an original Etruscan example of such necklaces was illustrated in Semper’s *Style*).⁷⁴ Selenka’s drawing illustrates another instance in which adornment’s visual demonstration obscures its symbolic properties.

Yet, in spite of such dark spots, the same “finger” necklace displays a number of unconventional possibilities, revealing how adornment can not only enhance, but also redistribute a number of corporeal hierarchies. In its ornamental use of organic appendages, the annular adornment appears to *wear* the human body, rather than the other way around. Similar to the ear plug of the Botocudo, frame and content are reversed. As opposed to a self-contained microcosmic ring, the necklace is instead a directional adornment, with each of its finger pendants pointing to an alternate direction. Like Warburg’s mobile accessories, such reattached

69. Ibid., p. 6.

70. The caption reads: “Schwarze Grazien im Ringschmuck.” See Selenka (note 54), p. 63.

71. Ibid., pp. 41–42.

72. Ibid., p. 29. A similar photograph of a heavily decorated foot appears in *Sonnige Welten* (see note 57), p. 131.

73. Selenka (see note 54), pp. 19–20. This necklace was discovered by John Gregory Bourke in 1876 and was later transferred to the National Museum in Washington. Cora Bender, “A Man Made Better out of Place: Captain John Gregory Bourke (1846–1896) as a Source of Aby Warburg’s Schlangensymbol,” in Bender et al. (see note 46), p. 161.

74. Gottfried Semper, “Metallurgy,” in *Style* (2004; see the note to the epigraph), p. 832.

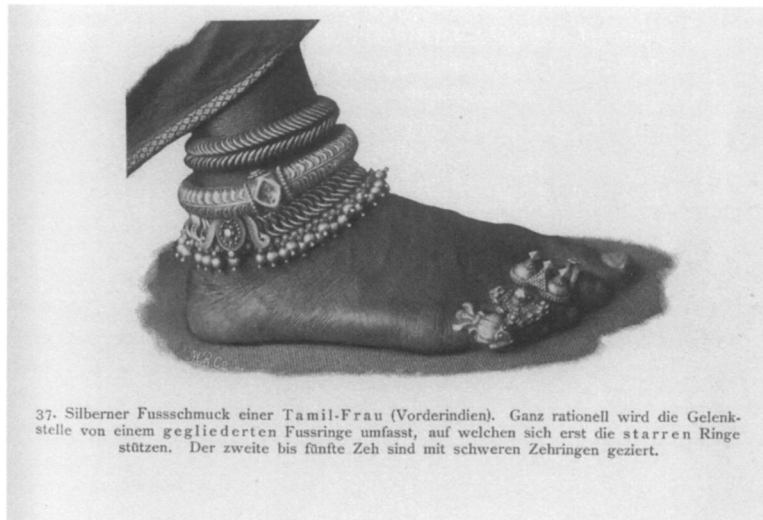


Figure 12. "Silver foot ornament of a Tamil woman (Indian subcontinent). The area of the joint is braced by a subdivided foot ring in an entirely rational manner. [. . .] The second to fifth toes are adorned with heavy toe-rings." From Emil Selenka, *Der Schmuck des Menschen* (Berlin: VITA Deutsches Verlagshaus, 1900), p. 29.

appendages act as signifiers of an ancient animistic practice of adornment in which body parts and their ornamentative extensions become gradually autonomous and exhibit an organizational logic of their own.

Three "additional" adornments (leading into none)

A similar sense of autonomy and increasing disengagement from the organic body applies to Selenka's three ostensibly "new" categories of adornment attached to Semper's original triad. This is perhaps Selenka's most genuinely "ornamental" contribution to Semper's theory of adornment, since these additions essentially replicate the architect's three forms, yet also render them increasingly superficial. In fact, Selenka's additions start with an "addition," an ornament that the amateur anthropologist names "Ansatzschmuck"—"Ansatz" signaling an appendix, rudiment, or hub. These ornaments do not show direction, movement, or equilibrium; instead they merely enlarge the circumference of the body in several directions. They include large hairdos, tall headdresses, high epaulets, or fluffy plumage and thick furs worn around the shoulders and waist to increase size. Such appendices strive towards personal "enlargement" (*Vergrosserung*) by capitalizing on the inflation of mass, yet they can also lead to exaggeration. Selenka compares them to the

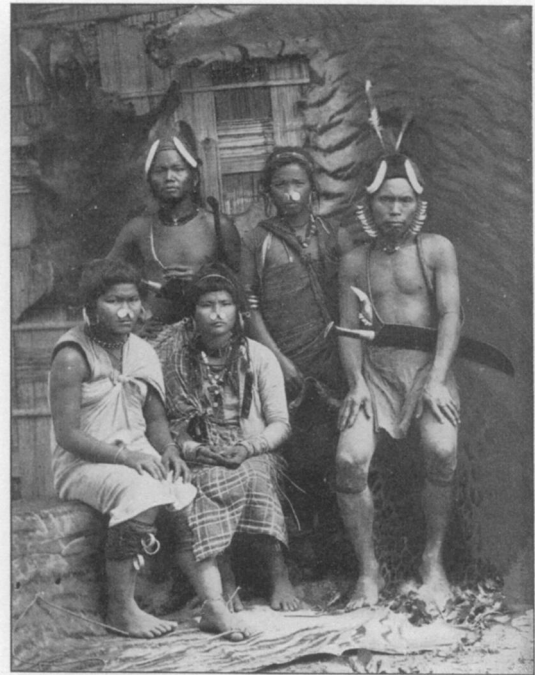


Figure 13. "Neck-band worn by a Magician [Medicine-man] of the Appalachian Indians [Cheyenne tribe] (drawing from Ratzel, *Völkerkunde*). The rhythmic elements consist of dried human fingers." Emil Selenka, *Der Schmuck des Menschen* (Berlin: VITA Deutsches Verlagshaus, 1900), p. 20.

cylinder hats worn by his contemporaries (similar to the one worn by Uncle Sam in Warburg's photograph from San Francisco), which grant their male carriers an almost supernatural vertical dimension.⁷⁵ The second additional category traced by Selenka is the local "color ornament" (*Farbschmuck*), which designates patches of color, such as flowers inserted in hair or other body parts with no structural function. This is the most impressionistic, superficial, and mobile of all ornaments, used in particular by the Japanese, as Selenka observes.⁷⁶

The anthropologist's final addition is the category of "clothing ornament" (*Kleidungsschmuck*). This is not an ornament *attached* to clothing, such as fibulas or pins that hold together the various pieces of a dress, but an ornament *made by* clothing: a form of adornment that shows how certain parts of the dress can replicate all other categories of adornment by creating its own rings (such as the fabric trimmings of a waistcoat or the hem of a blouse), pendants (the loose end of a necktie), and directional ornaments (turbans or other headdresses made out of fabric, or the tail of a long dress).⁷⁷ By *recladding* previous forms of adornment, clothing ornaments are adornments of the second degree; they reclothe the cloth, a gesture reminiscent of Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus* (*The Tailor Retailored*, also one of Warburg's most cherished books throughout his life). While several sartorial theorists, including Carlyle, would argue that in the development of human civilization adornment (*Schmuckung*) precedes clothing (*Kleidung*), Selenka's *Kleidungsschmuck* shows that there is no definitive limit between the two: His clothing adornments demonstrate how clothing can essentially *retailor* all previously solid objects of adornment into a more pliable and increasingly superficial form.

In its additions, refinements, and global extensions, Selenka's worldview of adornment might appear more inclusive than that of Semper. However, similar to Matthias, Selenka's standards on what constitutes (good) adornment and what does not are more rigid. Semper never aesthetically judged the disfiguring ear and lip plugs of the Botocudo or the scarification practices of Australian tribes. Selenka, however, cites a series of examples in which articles of adornment do not conform to any "lawful" principles, thus producing what the scientist calls "non-ornament" (*Unschmuck*): nose-rings or longer nose-pendants, facial and bodily scarifications, as well as some of the excessively ornamented headgears



86. Naga (Ostbengalen). — Der Kopfschmuck aus Tierzähnen soll den Krieger schrecklicher erscheinen lassen. Der Beinschmuck der Weiber ist unschön, die in den Nasenflügeln und ausgeweiteten Ohrläppchen getragenen Scheiben eine Verunstaltung.

Selenka, *Der Schmuck des Menschen*.

5

Figure 14. Head and nose ornaments as illustration of "Unschmuck" "Naga (East Bengali).—The decoration of the head made of animal teeth makes the warriors appear terrifying. The bone adornments of the women are unbeautiful; the discs worn on the sides of the nose and the enlarged earlobes [are] a deformation." Emil Selenka, *Der Schmuck des Menschen* (Berlin: VITA Deutsches Verlagshaus, 1900), p. 65.

of tribal people are part of this aberrant "an-ornament" (fig. 14).⁷⁸ In Lipps's terms, such ornamental aberrations would provoke a "negative empathy," a painful affect associated with the deformation of bodily proportions. It is precisely excess and "unlawful" use that impel the regulation and gradual diminution of adornment. Indeed, Selenka seems to praise Japanese women, who with their innate sense of decoration, he claims, wear only minimal "Schmuck" in their hair and no jewelry at all, while their kimono constitutes a whole-body *Kleidungsschmuck*.⁷⁹ This insistence on moderation and decorative simplicity

75. Selenka (see note 54), pp. 44–48.

76. *Ibid.*, pp. 49–52.

77. *Ibid.*, pp. 53–54.

78. *Ibid.*, p. 60.

79. *Ibid.*, p. 66.

portends not only the limitation, but also the eventual eclipse of ornament, despite Selenka's apparent celebration of its world expansion.

The evolutionist calls his account a "life-history" (*Lebensgeschichte*) of adornment.⁸⁰ However, this is the history of a life approaching its end. While praising the ornamental sensibility of non-Western peoples against the Westerners, whom he omits from his narrative, Selenka makes clear that what he calls "the ornament of people" is ultimately the ornament of *those* people who live in an exotic periphery of the world. Towards the end of the book, a single illustration of the bronze statue of an antique spinstress from the Glyptothek in Munich functions as an allegorical reference to an ancient model of perfection that had become obsolete. Gradually, all forms of *Schmuck* would become *Unschmuck*—unwieldy "an-ornament" with no distinct formal principles. In the process of its universalization, bodily adornment was also becoming *rudimental*—a mere fossil of its former function. Both Semper's and Selenka's evolutionist views of modern adornments as "rudiments" of earlier vital forms suggest a process of atrophy—a gradual devolution that reduces ornament to a detachable appendage that could eventually be removed.

Perhaps it is no accident that on the cover of Selenka's book, a young Sumatran "bride" appears to carry the title *The Ornament of People* as a round "additional ornament" (*Ansatzschmuck*) on top of her elaborate headgear (fig. 9). It is as if the linguistic addition extends the limits of the material one, even if this circular protraction essentially traces the periphery of a disappearing world. Ultimately, the luminous halo of the ring of letters heralds the phenomenal eclipse of ornament to be announced a few years later by another author who, like Warburg, Matthias, and Selenka was also a reader of Semper: the architect Adolf Loos.⁸¹

Cosmic (after)glow

"Practical, conventional, new": these are the exhortations of today, states Selenka in the conclusion of his narrative on tribal adornment.⁸² The new generation

has "cleaned up" ornament, which is now to be found in museums. Though himself a scientist, Selenka blames natural science (*Naturwissenschaft*) for the demise of adornment and the "increased circulation" it has produced in contemporary metropolitan life.⁸³ The disorientating means of traffic throw men against each other in a distorted multitude of conflicting images and ideas; there is no time or space, no distinct rhythm or axes of symmetry upon which the individualizing contours of adornment can develop.⁸⁴ It was precisely the ostensible "opening" of the world, which began in the late Renaissance upon the discovery of America by Columbus, that essentially foreclosed the cosmic qualities of adornment. The dissolution of distance led to the destruction of individual cosmic faculties. The miniaturization of the world, as implied in the discoverer's well-known diary motto "el mundo es poco," which might have enhanced the cosmic qualities of adornment also harbored the code for its eventual demise.⁸⁵

Thus far Selenka's almost parochial lament seems to add nothing new to the late nineteenth-century despair for the dissolution of the ancient *Kosmos*, including Warburg's bereavement for the "murdering" of *Denkraum* by modern wireless technologies, as expressed in the conclusion of his Pueblo lecture.⁸⁶ Yet for Selenka, the dissolution of classical order does not necessarily imply the end of ornamentation. Adornment continues to exist, though in order to survive, it had to move back into the background of nature: "the forest, the sea, the rocks, the clouds, or the stars of the firmament" from which the ancient *Kosmos* had originated.⁸⁷ Could this retreat into the background then reveal something essential about the modern condition of ornamentation: that ornament has in fact not disappeared, but has absconded itself by withdrawing into a cosmic landscape?

In contrast to Selenka, we could then argue that this all-absorbing landscape is *not* the sea or the heavenly firmament, but the spectacularly decorated background of the metropolis—the very environment that the scientist held responsible for the fracture of ornamentation.

80. Ibid., p. 61.

81. I refer to the well-known essay by Adolf Loos, "Ornament and Crime" (*Ornament und Verbrechen*) written in 1908 and delivered as a lecture in Berlin in 1910. See Adolf Loos, *Sämtliche Schriften*, ed. Franz Glück (Vienna: Verlag Herold, 1962), vol. 1, pp. 276–288. For Loos as a reader of Semper, see his 1898 essay "The Principle of Cladding" (*Das Princip der Bekleidung*), in *Sämtliche Schriften*, pp. 105–112.

82. "Praktisch, konventionel, neu," so lautet die Parole." Selenka (see note 54), p. 68.

83. Ibid., p. 70.

84. Ibid., p. 69.

85. Selenka cites Columbus's famous 1503 diary entry in Italian. See Selenka (note 54), p. 71.

86. Warburg, *Images* (see note 46), p. 54.

87. "Der Kulturmensch streifte ab den Schmuck seines Leibes; in kostlicherem Schmucke prangt ihm Wald und Meer, Fels und Wolke, das Sternzelt, der Kosmos," Selenka (see note 54), p. 72.

Precisely what Selenka had bemoaned as the “jumbled” representations of contemporary city life could in fact transform into the peripheral glow surrounding modern bodies—that indistinct halo emanating from mobile outlines whose clouds Warburg tried to dispel through his inquiry into representations of “accessories in motion.” With the invention of his three categories, Semper had strived to anchor that proliferating cosmic energy into identifiable and “lawful” formations, yet his readers, Warburg and (inadvertently) Selenka, point to forms of ornamentation that are nonregulated, increasingly distant from the body, and gradually more akin to an ambient surface. There are perhaps no more rings, pendants, or identifiable directions; there remains only an animated field of constant excitation diffused inside a uniformly iridescent background. Adornment is ultimately represented not by a series of concrete three-dimensional artifacts, as Semper had envisioned, but by a luminous atmospheric layer, a form of glow that mediates in between the body and the world and is distributed equally among subjects and objects. It is precisely this indistinct relationality between articles of adornment and their human “carriers” enhanced by the shine of their extensible contours that portends an animated epistemology of the surface.

Let me conclude with a postscript, or textual *Ansatzschmuck*, from the historiography of adornment that further probes the nature of that mediating luster. Historians tell us that during the late Renaissance, as we approach the Baroque, there is a definitive change in taste concerning the form of jewelry. Instead of the strong patterns of gold and enamel ornament that followed the rules of “classical drawing,” jewels began to be filled entirely with diamonds and other precious stones. Against the overflowing glow of the gems, the actual shapes of the ornament became less important, and their geometric designs less clear.⁸⁸ It is as if the painterly effects of the stones spill out of their metallic frames and blur all outlines—in the manner of jewels painted by Rembrandt. Instead of clearly circumscribed shapes, the decorative artifact creates a gleaming surface where nothing can be seen in detail. There are no longer circles or squares, rings or pendants: only a field of pure luminosity.

88. “Der Stolz an streng klassischer Zeichnung und Form, die die Freude an gold glänzendem Email verblasen—an ihre Stelle treten der Wunsch nach blitzenden Diamanten, die Freude am Glitzern der facettierten Edelsteine.” Forrer (see note 2), p. 31.

This microcosmic change that occurred five centuries ago may offer a glimpse of the oncoming future of adornment. Semper had perhaps already sensed the advent of that cosmic glow in his reference to the “third” Grace of antiquity, Aglaia, whose name precisely denotes splendor, luster, glitter, beauty, or shine (*Glanz*), and whose ambivalent absence from contemporary aesthetics Semper had bemoaned in his lecture.⁸⁹ The architect classifies the “shining” of the colored surface as one of the “dominant” components of architecture—an element that is “small” in terms of mass, yet of “capital” significance.⁹⁰ Semper had also associated this seemingly abstract quality with the directionality of the resplendent adornments attached to the military horses of the Assyrians and Greeks. “It is finery glittering in movement”—writes the architect about these animal decorations⁹¹—a phrase suggesting that even within this gleaming haze there is a sense of direction.

This peripheral form of luminosity could then be construed as the combined outcome of Semper’s diagrammatic *Richtungsschmuck* and Selenka’s peripheral *Ansatzschmuck*, both of which granted an expanded spatial contour to the human body. But here, the human subject is no longer the “carrier” (*der Träger*) of adornment, but the “follower” who is carried away by the very power of his or her inorganic extensions. The conceptual radius or *Umfangsbestimmung* of human adornment might still be represented by a pendulum, as evoked in the ideogram sketched by Warburg; yet that pendant no longer hangs from the neck of a human carrier but remains suspended in mid-air by the sheer buoyancy of its own shine.⁹²

Returning to the original epigram by the architect who launched this essay, “man” still strives to “fulfill his cosmogonic instinct” through a type of “play” that

89. Semper (see note 3), pp. 125–126. On Semper’s etymological references to Aglaia, see translator’s notes in this issue.

90. *Ibid.*, pp. 120–121.

91. *Ibid.*, p. 125.

92. Selenka was certainly not the last reader of Semper to use the architect’s three categories of adornment, but perhaps was the last to acknowledge Semper as their author. Several later writers on adornment who refer to pendant, annular, and directional ornaments cite Selenka as their source, but do not mention Semper (for example, Basserman-Jordan [see note 52]). Selenka’s essay on world adornment was never translated into English, but became known to English-speaking audiences through the work of psychoanalyst J. C. Flugel who quoted Selenka extensively and used several illustrations from Selenka’s book in his well-known study of the psychology of clothing (which was mentioned by Jacques Lacan in his seventh seminar on the *Ethics of Psychoanalysis*). See J. C. Flugel, *The Psychology of Clothes* (London: Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psychoanalysis, 1930).

produces miniature models of the world." Yet, the human subject no longer seeks to fathom or demystify the laws of nature in the three-dimensional form of its artifacts; instead, it strives to replicate the "wonder" and incomprehensibility of its technological surroundings on the smooth surface of its shining artifacts. Semper's formal principles of adornment implied a reflective analogy with cosmic phenomena, while contemporary ornamental surfaces suggest a homology—a complete absorption by the glowing texture of the external world. There is, then, an impulse to abscond inherent within the very shimmer and visual splendor of adornment, whose epistemological dark spots act as epicenters for its beguiling eclipse and periodic recovery.