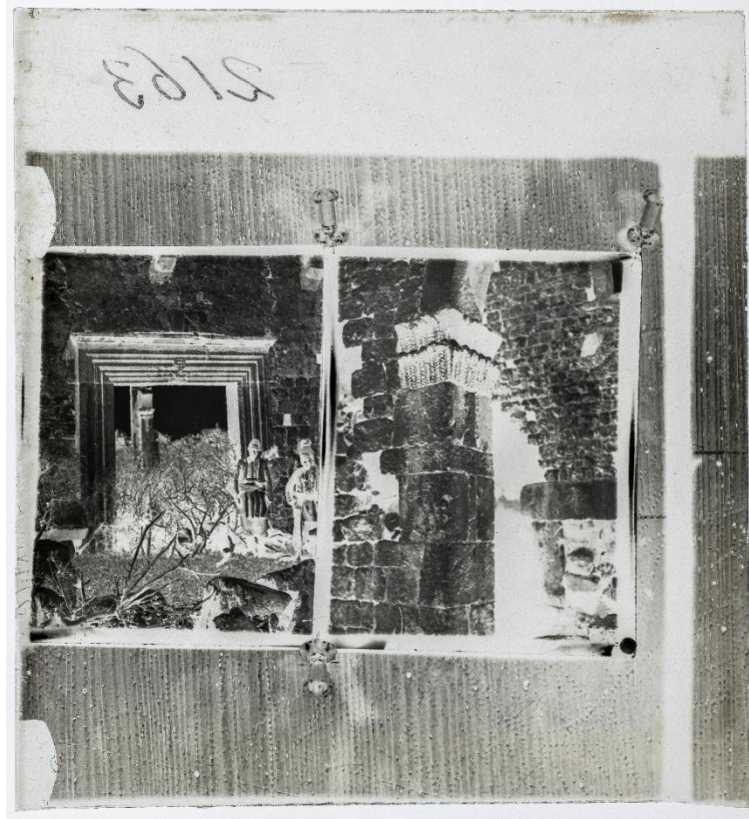


Worlds of Images – Images of the World: Josef Strzygowski and his Institute

Gernot Mayer

Lecture, organized by the Research Group on Archives of Art Historians

Thursday, 26 March 2026, 18:00 ECT / 9:00 AM Pacific Time (US and Canada), online



Josef Strzygowski (1862–1941) remains one of the most polarizing figures in art history. He was a pioneering comparatist who expanded the traditional art historical scope, but his later writings are marred by antisemitism, racism, and overt support for National Socialism. This lecture offers a new perspective on Strzygowski's complex legacy by shifting the focus from his writings to his use of images. While extensive scholarship has examined both his problematic ideology and his contributions, ranging from early studies of Islamic art to an emphasis on a global scope, most accounts rely almost exclusively on his written works. What would it mean to read Strzygowski through the pictures he used, collected, published, and projected?

Drawing on the rich holdings of the Department of Art History at the University of Vienna, this talk will examine the photographs and glass slides that structured Strzygowski's teaching and research. These visual traces delineate underexplored areas of his work and illuminate the thematic breadth of the "First Institute of Art History" under his directorship. The presentation will center on a series of glass slides that were created for a lecture by Strzygowski on the subject of film. This collection raises the question of whether Strzygowski's method of comparative art research can be understood as well as an image-based approach (*bildwissenschaftlicher Ansatz*). The goal is not rehabilitation or condemnation, but a critical, grounded encounter with the visual practices that shaped Strzygowski's vision of a global art history.