



Iris Bruderer-Oswald

The Inner Sound of Art

Wilhelm Wartmann and
the Kunsthaus Zürich

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**Wilhelm Wartmann
and the Kunsthaus Zürich**

Translated by
Katherine Bird and Wolfgang Hübner

For Louise, Cosmas, and Vincent Koronéos-Wartmann

In memory of our mother (1923-2022)

**This book was created in collaboration
with Markus Bruderer**

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Preface

The learned eye and so much more

Throughout the course of history, founding directors of museums are most often - through a process of mythification and mystification - turned into epic heroes. Wilhelm Wartmann however, the first director of the Kunsthaus, can by any means and without mythification be called a legendary personality.

He was a true polymath, almost a classical *'Uomo universalis'*, who was not only an ardent art aficionado, but also a dedicated musician and passionate dancer, befriended with artistic luminaries such as the unrivalled Munch, Kokoschka, and Hodler. He honoured tradition but was unafraid to join the contemporary discussion. He ensured that the Kunsthaus opened itself up to art from outside Switzerland and thus achieved international renown.

For more than 40 years, he put his heart and soul into the museum. He turned the Kunsthaus into a place that Pontus Hulten would much later describe as *'a house for tomorrow'*. He was a larger-than-life museum director with a remarkable track record that is intimidating for any of his successors but inspiring to anyone who has a love of art and an interest in the genesis of the Kunsthaus.

Today a museum director is expected to be a Jack of all trades - or as we will have it in respectively Belgium and Switzerland *'a sheep with 7 legs'* or *'an egg-laying-wool-milk-pig'*. Both expressions refer to a person that combines a myriad of different qualities. In the case of the museum director: from being an excellent manager, mediator, and fundraiser to a visionary art connoisseur and sensitive curator. I am sure that multi-faceted Wartmann would have mastered all of those skills and more. He most definitely possessed one of the more old-fashioned essential qualities: *'a learned eye'*.

"In painting one has to have learned eyes" is one of the Paradoxa formulated by Cicero, a phrase that was taken up eagerly by authors writing on painting in the Italian Renaissance and rephrased by Dutch theorists of the seventeenth century such as Franciscus Junius. In his treatise

"The painting of the ancients", Junius talks about the necessity of *'een Konstgheleerd oogh'*, an *'art-learned eye'* and argues for informed viewing as the essential skill on which critical aesthetic judgments must be based. As he puts it: "it doth then appeare that it is not enough we should have eyes in our head as other men have, but it is also required here that we should bring to these curiosities *'eruditos oculos'*, that is, *'learned eyes'*, as Tullie [Cicero] termeth them."¹

Or as we would have it today: Those in possession of *'learned eyes'* have an unerring visual instinct combined with or underpinned by knowledge, experience, and expertise. *'Informed intuition'* as the late artist Elaine Sturtevant would have it, combined with a trained eye. Although he was never subjected to a test, we can with certainty say that Wilhelm Wartmann undoubtedly possessed a set of those eyes. He knew how to look and famously put the work of art at the centre of his life.

We can no longer learn from Wartmann's view and vision in real life, as teletransportation does not yet exist and he passed away many years ago. This excellent biography however allows all of us indirectly, via a printed detour, to be touched by his infectious enthusiasm and fierce attentiveness for works of art. I am sure that this book, a written monument to the man who laid the foundation of the Kunsthaus Zürich as we know it, will continue to delight, provoke, and stimulate a plethora of readers for many years to come as it offers a kaleidoscope of stories and insights into Wilhelm Wartmann's work.

Ann Demeester
Director Kunsthaus Zürich

Foreword

“The way to the source leads against the current.”

Confucius

Whoever visits the Kunsthaus Zürich’s collection will encounter a life-size portrait of a man with a jaunty moustache. He leans against a table and gazes on the viewer with a mischievous smile. The painting is dated 1923 and is by the Norwegian artist Edvard Munch. The sitter is Wilhelm Wartmann (1882-1970), the first Director of the Kunsthaus Zürich. For forty years, from 1909 to 1949, he managed the museum’s fate.

As I read through Wartmann’s notes, one of his thoughts caught my eye: “I don’t know whether I am such a consummate diplomat that the countless words I have spoken at the Kunsthaus over the past forty years could really have served only one purpose, namely to conceal the thought of how much if anything of what is there would be necessary and useful to preserve?”² Who is this person? My interest was piqued.

In the library of the Kunsthaus Zürich, the librarian Thomas Rosemann points me towards the archive that Wartmann compiled during his long tenure. The encounter with the rich collection is overwhelming. A labyrinthine world lies before me. Wartmann’s public life is meticulously documented in the basement of the Kunsthaus, where countless copy books - carbon copies of the curator’s outgoing correspondence - open a cultural window in time. It is only at second glance that I realise the richness of the minutes from the meetings of the Zürcher Kunstgesellschaft (Zurich Art Society). The aesthetic handwriting of the artists’ letters makes my heart beat faster.

These documents are only one side of the coin: in following my way to the source, I pursue the traces of the living. After a long search, I find Wartmann’s two daughters - unfortunately, the younger daughter, Gabriele, died in May 2011, while Louise lives in Paris. I ask my friends in Paris for help and we discover a telephone number for a family called Koronéos-Wartmann.

One day I call the number and a soft, cultivated voice answers. We arrange a first meeting in Paris. The conversation in a café touches Louise; she seems visibly surprised to hear about and speak of her father, who died such a long time ago in Zurich. Everything is so far away, the memory has faded.

I tell her about my idea of writing her father's biography. After numerous visits, she refers me to the family's personal archive that for decades the family has cherished and cared for. A short time later, Louise dies in August 2013.

I remain in touch with her husband, the Greek philosopher Cosmas Koronéos. He tells me about Wartmann's friendship with the artist Edvard Munch and how his visits to Munch's Norwegian studio left a deep impression. The Bauschänzli in Zurich, where the two friends often conversed at length, remains a place of remembrance. There is something moving about these stories that have been handed down - the past shines through into the present.

Before his death in September 2015, Cosmas encouraged me to select suitable materials from the family's personal archive for a book about the Director of the Kunsthau Zürich before they were disposed of. By unearthing the private documents, we can weave a thread of life. In detailed work, mosaic stones are gathered that follow the stations of a life's journey, and that form the image of a person moving through his times.

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This book is not only a book of encounters, it is also a book of discoveries. Countless people have been involved for short or long sections of the journey. They have contributed in many different ways to creating this biography.

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Introduction

“One cannot escape the world more certainly than through art, and one cannot bind oneself to it more certainly than through art.”³

Johann Wolfgang Goethe

The right person in the right place at the right time

“I was 26 years old ... when I started work at the end of April ... at the small Künstlerhaus on Talstrasse. On that day, Colonel Ulrich, President of the Zürcher Kunstgesellschaft (Zurich Art Society), came with the iron merchant Kisling, President of the Exhibition Committee. They showed me the cramped workspace in the small office, greeted me with a handshake and said that I would see what there was to do. That’s how it stayed for forty years. No rules! No employment contract! For the best part of my life, I had nothing in writing, just the handshake of those two gentlemen on the first day of my employment.”⁴ In spring 1909, the Zürcher Kunstgesellschaft selects a new secretary and curator. At that time, few would have suspected that Wilhelm Wartmann would prove to be the right person in the right place at the right time. After a major scandal at the Kunsthhaus, the Kunstgesellschaft needed to calm the waves and steer itself back into peaceful waters. The young doctor of art history was predestined for this task. Born in provincial East Switzerland, he studied from 1903 to 1909 in Paris, renowned as a cultural capital, where he discovered the latest trends in contemporary art.

At the beginning of the 20th century, the city of Zurich is opening up to art and culture, and a spirit of change is in the air. Finally, a prestigious museum building in Zurich is awaiting an appropriate exhibition. This proved to be a unique opportunity: Wartmann is convinced that he has found a position that matches his abilities.

The success of his 40-year term in office proves him right. He purposefully opened the Zurich collection to foreign art, and by doing so laid the foundation for the Kunsthhaus Zürich’s international significance today.

The institution

Wilhelm Wartmann takes up his post almost simultaneously with the opening of the new Kunsthaus. He writes the history of the institution, and its history writes itself with him. His exhibitions reflect contemporary discourse, but also continue to weave traditional threads. His institution develops into a focal point for contradictory interests and expectations. This biography is framed by his boundary-pushing art-historical, academic, journalistic, and social commitment and its embedding in its contemporary historical context. It closes in on the head of an institution and a complex human personality. The search for clues focuses on how the Kunsthaus Zürich is expanding and changing, the threads he is weaving, and how he uses his academic knowledge and character traits to achieve his goals. The Kunsthaus's extensive archive was created under his aegis and, along with the family's personal archive, forms the basis for this book.

In 1940, Wartmann reflects on the significance of the Kunsthaus and its dominance over all other concerns in his life. "My work at the Kunsthaus is not business, but a task ... I am always bound by this task, I cannot organise my private day as I wish ... And this bondage is somehow ... the meaning of life and the reason for being here and ultimately being able to enjoy life somehow."⁵ This passage from a letter formulates a central aspect of Wartmann's self-image. He is tied to the Kunsthaus with his heart and soul, and everything else has to take second place to this task. He will travel any distance in his Mercedes-Benz to organise an exhibition. No hour of the night will prevent him from writing a letter to secure a painting. His extensive network of contacts connects him with artists, museum directors, art dealers, collectors, and art lovers. The centre of his life is the work of art. Questions about the creation and origin of art drive his life.

The written and the spoken word

Wilhelm Wartmann writes throughout his life. The historian collects a large part of his own writings, which form the basis of the Kunsthaus archive and the family's private archive. Texts are sources that preserve the past. His father, an editor of sources on Swiss history, may have been a role model for him. "When I started school, I was asked about his profession. I said, 'My father is a scribe.' From the time I was a child, I always saw him standing at his desk, writing with a quill pen on small pieces of paper and then again on large sheets."⁶

This book is based largely on Wartmann's original quotations, which reveal much about his personality in their often verbose, somewhat circuitous wording and linguistic structure. The handwritten documents were not always easy to read, and his handwriting became increasingly spidery and illegible over the years. The historian Ernst Gagliardi, a contemporary, writes: "Unfortunately, your card from Chantilly only reached me today, as I was in Italy for 14 days. To be honest, I was only able to decipher it approximately, so I only have a rough idea of what it was about."⁷

Contemporary history

Wilhelm Wartmann's biography cannot be separated from the political events of his time. Two world wars mark turning points in his personal life and in the development of the Kunsthhaus. They constrict and restrict life. Although Switzerland is spared from warfare, it is affected by the political situation in Europe. The historian Wartmann reacts sensitively to the changing circumstances of the times. A statement about the Bernese painter Niklaus Manuel Deutsch also applies to him, "Anyone who wants to study the artist Niklaus Manuel Deutsch and understand him and his work cannot avoid becoming familiar with the turbulent history of his home country, city and state of Bern and the Swiss Confederation, which not only provides a more or less picturesque backdrop for his thinking and work, but is rather the ground on which he comes into being, exists and passes away."⁸

In retrospect, Wartmann sees his work at the Kunsthhaus as a comprehensible sequence of self-determined, influenced, or predetermined events. His perseverance, his *constantia*, brings him closer to the goals he set and the decisions he made.

In his farewell speech in 1950, he reflects, "I have occasionally been asked what kind of fortuity it was that brought me from Paris to Zurich and to the Kunsthhaus. I believe that actually there is no such thing as chance if we do not want to understand the whole world and the whole universe in its incomprehensibility and infinity, which astronomers calculate so precisely for us, as the result of chance. Even the small experiences and great fates of small self-aggrandising individuals seem to be, if not predetermined, at least prepared by the experiences, achievements and fate of their fellow human beings and themselves."⁹

Friendships with artists

During his years studying in Paris, Wilhelm Wartmann's horizons broadened. Henri Bergson's lectures on *Creative Evolution*, Wilhelm Worringer's *Abstraction and Empathy* and Wassily Kandinsky's *Writings* opened up an unknown world and formed an epistemological foundation. These sources reveal illuminating insights into the creative artistic process. For Wartmann, they are a starting point that would develop in concentric circles. He increasingly turns away from historical-analytical evaluations and discovers the aesthetic questions of his time: the creative process itself and the artist struggling for expression become the focus of his interests.

His friendships with Ferdinand Hodler, Edvard Munch, and later Oskar Kokoschka are milestones in his biography. Personal encounters with artists as well as studio visits with in-depth discussions set new standards for artistic development. In empathy with the artist, Wartmann tries to catch a glimpse of creative moments. Does not Henri Bergson praise intuition as a force that brings forth the work of art? Wartmann is on the trail of this source of creativity, it is his motivation in life.¹⁰

The composition

This research work is based on a stringent chronology that emphasises its processual character. The individual sections are self-contained and independent treatises. They open up a kaleidoscope of stories and insights into Wilhelm Wartmann's work, as well as the highlights of his activity. The Expressionist zeitgeist resonates like a *cantus firmus* through all the chapters.

This book revolves around a cultural focal point, with a dual perspective being an important aspect. The official documents speak the administrative language of the Kunsthhaus, while the private archive provides a glimpse into the thought processes, personal ideas, and thoughts behind Wartmann's activities and decisions.

Wartmann is a keen observer, with a seismographic sense for artistic quality. His success proves him right: Which other director of an art institution has been portrayed by Edvard Munch?

The scientific context

Wilhelm Wartmann is one of the central figures in Swiss cultural life in the first half of the 20th century. While Richard Kisling, who was President of the Exhibition Committee of the Kunsthaus Zürich from 1909 to 1917, was commemorated with a biography in 2008,¹¹ a scholarly reappraisal of Wilhelm Wartmann's achievements is still outstanding. His importance has so far been reflected in necrologies,¹² in individual essays on artists such as Edvard Munch,¹³ Oskar Kokoschka,¹⁴ or his contemporaries. In recent years, art history has increasingly devoted itself to the scientific study of outstanding art mediators such as museum directors, collectors, or gallery owners, as exemplified by studies on Franz Meyer, Zurich;¹⁵ Arnold Rüdinger, Basel;¹⁶ Alfred Lichtwark, Hamburg;¹⁷ Alfred Flechtheim, Berlin;¹⁸ Ludwig Justi and the Nationalgalerie, Berlin;¹⁹ and the most recent publication on Julius Meier-Graefe, Paris.²⁰

Wilhelm Wartmann is rightly considered one of the most important museum directors in Switzerland. This art history biography pays him the tribute he deserves.



Youth and Education

Jakob Wilhelm Wartmann, known as Willi (Willy), is born in St. Gallen on 20 July 1882, the youngest child of Hermann Wartmann and Louise, née Hochreutiner. He is baptised as a Protestant in St. Gallen with the well-known historian Gerold Meyer von Knonau (1843-1931) as his godfather. In a school essay, Wilhelm recalls his early childhood: “I first saw the light of day in a house on Langgasse. When I was two years old, we moved to the apartment where we still live (Notkerstrasse 15). We liked it very much, because there was a meadow in front of and behind our house, and we were very close to our grandmother’s home, which was in the old Bürgli. Her property was much larger then than it is now. The secondary school had not yet been built, and the whole area was a meadow with fruit trees. There was also a barn and a large chicken coop. It all looked like a farm. Later, Notkerstrasse was built right through the middle of it, and shortly afterwards construction began on the new Bürgli.”²¹

The Wartmann family

The Wartmann family, whose name originally means “man on the lookout, guard,” have been citizens of St. Gallen since 1577; it is one of the city’s oldest families. Grandfather Jakob Wartmann (1803-1873), the son of a bookbinder, studies theology in St. Gallen then turns to teaching religion, German, natural history, history, and geography at a boys’ school. He founds the St. Gallen Natural History Museum, accumulates a comprehensive scientific library, writes textbooks on natural history, and advocates for establishing a vocational school in St. Gallen. In later years, he works as the administrator of the municipal library and museum. His marriage with Anna Nette Helena Weibratha Wild (1802-1877) brings forth three sons and one daughter: Friedrich Bernhard (1830-1902), Viktor Theodor (1832-1922), Jakob Hermann (1835-1929), father of Wilhelm, and Karoline (1841-1925).

The Wartmann family maintains a close relationship to Luise Hochreutiner-Scherrer, their maternal grandmother, who lives in the old Bürgli, and from 1886 in the new Bürgli, just outside the city gates.



Fig. 1: Hermann Wartmann (1835–1929), the father

She regularly receives guests from home and abroad in her “salon.” Wilhelm remembers “how she, as the lady of the house and estate, held the reins firmly in her hands in the ironmonger’s shop or in the old Bürgli, and sometimes even got personally involved with the polecat traps.”²²

Wilhelm’s father, Hermann Wartmann, born in St. Gallen in 1835, studies at the philosophical faculties of the universities of Zurich, Bonn, and Göttingen, where he comes into contact with the academic movement promoting the systematic exploration of medieval sources. This motivates him to research St. Gallen’s historical sources, and he publishes four volumes of documents from the Abbey of St. Gallen. He finds his life’s work as an actuary for the St. Gallen Commercial Directorate, in publishing historical and commercial writings for the St. Gallen Historischer Verein (Historical Society) and the Allgemeine geschichtsforschende Gesellschaft der Schweiz (General Historical Society of Switzerland). He maintains an open and hospitable house and corresponds extensively with the leading historians of his time. In 1909, he is awarded an honorary doctorate by the University of Bern.

Together with his brother Friedrich Bernhard, who was headmaster of the cantonal gymnasium and Director of the Museum für Naturkundliche Sammlungen (Museum of Natural History Collections), he becomes a leading figure in the cultural life of the city of St. Gallen.

Wilhelm’s mother, Helene Luise Hochreutiner, is from a wealthy St. Gallen business family. Her father runs an ironmongery in Markt-gasse, while her mother entertains society in her home.²³ While studying in Zurich and Paris, Wilhelm corresponds frequently with his mother until her untimely death in 1905.

The City of St. Gallen

In the 1880s, St. Gallen is an economically flourishing city. The dominant pillar of the economy is the embroidery industry, with businesses such as spinning mills, weaving mills, and the finishing and processing industry dependent on it. The city’s merchants are particularly adept at responding to changes in fashion and market conditions – a prerequisite for the embroidery industry to flourish – and this was probably due to the commercial activities of Hermann Wartmann, the actuary of the Commercial Directorate.

As a result of the economic boom, the city's population doubles in these decades, St. Gallen grows in all directions; the villas on the Rosenberg today still bear witness to the wealth of the embroidery barons. Culture also benefited from this boom: in 1857 a new theatre is built on the Bohl; in 1877, with Hermann Wartmann playing a decisive role, a museum for natural history specimens and art objects is established on the Brühl, in the immediate vicinity of the Wartmann family home; and in 1909 a concert hall is built.

Wilhelm Wartmann grows up in this economically prospering world with his three older siblings Stephanie Luise (born on 22 September 1866), August Hermann (born on 5 April 1870) and Anna Frida (born on 5 April 1875). In 1884, Wilhelm's father buys a building with three apartments at Notkerstrasse 15, in the new museums quarter. In mid-March 1885, the family moves into the top two floors, and from July 1885 the family of Wilhelm's brother-in-law Debrunner lives on the second floor. The ground floor apartment is rented out. J. Debrunner, who has returned to St. Gallen from Paris, takes over the Hochreutiner ironmongery in Marktgasse, where he has completed his apprenticeship.



Fig. 2: Helene Luise Wartmann-Hochreutiner (1845–1905), the mother



Fig. 3: The Wartmann family's residence, Notkerstrasse 15 in St. Gallen

Wartmann grows up in an upper middle-class household. His father's extensive library is an invitation to read. It is "as open to a boy's wandering desires as a boundless pasture [...], just like the hills of eastern Switzerland, the shores of Lake Constance and the Rhine and the Appenzell mountains" with their "historical sources" and the "beguiling forest of poets [...] of all Indo-European peoples," Wartmann recalls.²⁴ Political and economic topics encourage conversation, and for years the tradition of reading historical or literary works aloud, such as a biography of Alfred Escher or *Buddenbrooks*, the newly published novel by Thomas Mann, is maintained. His mother is artistically talented, as evidenced by the few drawings that have survived. Hermann Wartmann cherishes the domestic music tradition. "My mother-in-law, who was always happy to give presents, gifted an upright piano in addition to our baby grand for the large, more agreeable parlour of our new apartment, so that we could now play not just four-handed but eight-handed, which was something the members of the immediate family are more than capable of. That was the joy of our Sundays and holidays, and my music cabinet was no less richly stocked than my library."²⁵ The city's cultural life enriched family life.

Education

Wilhelm's school education begins in spring 1889 when he enters Class 1d of the municipal school in the Unterer Graben district of St. Gallen. His primary school reports show him to be an "intelligent, hard-working and well-behaved pupil."²⁶ Father and son bond on hikes in the surrounding area and further afield, in central Switzerland, to Constance and Walensee; equipped with a vasculum from his uncle Bernhard, he learns to appreciate the beauty of nature. Decades later, he passes on his enthusiasm for the secrets of nature to his two young daughters on family hikes, as his daughter Louise recalls.²⁷

In 1895, Wilhelm transfers to the cantonal school, a neo-Renaissance building built by Felix Wilhelm Kubly on the Oberen Brühl in 1855. The east wing houses the boys' secondary school, the central section the gymnasium and the vocational school, the west wing the natural science collection, and the city library is on the first floor. The large hall on the second floor is used for exhibitions by the Kunstverein (Art Association) and also serves as a concert hall.²⁸ Wilhelm chooses the gymnasium, where the classical languages Latin and Greek dominate. Classics such as Virgil, Horace, Cicero, Sallust, Livy, Homer, Herodotus, Xenophon,

Thucydides, Sophocles, and Aeschylus are studied. In German lessons, the *Nibelungenlied* and the dramas of Lessing and Schiller are emphasized. He has fond memories of French lessons, and is familiar with French literature from his father's library.

Music plays a major role in the Wartmann family, and playing the violin in the school orchestra is just as much a duty as singing lessons.

The cadet system is in full swing, with the pupils forming a military-style unit. The city of St. Gallen is known throughout Switzerland for its cadet corps, and participation in the cadet programme is compulsory for students aged 13 to 19.²⁹

In 1886, at the age of 20, Luise, Wilhelm's eldest sister, moves to Paris with Gottlieb Siegrist, where they continue to run the business they took over from their uncle J. Debrunner, the *Dépôt d'articles anglais pour reliure et papeterie*. The family ties are strong, and in summer Luise comes to St. Gallen for a few weeks with her children Georges and Maurice, while Frida and Willi visit the Siegrist family in Paris. A letter from April 1900 reports on the fascination of the big city: "You are in Paris! Do you know what that means? In the famous and infamous Paris! In Lutetia, which was besieged by Caesar, in the walls that the Normans stormed, by the river where Abelard sat, in the Paris of the St Bartholomew's Day Massacre, in the city of the Roi Soleil, in the Paris of 1789 and 1804, amidst the relics of the Commune ... In the Louvre, I have so far thoroughly studied several rooms of ancient statues and drawings by old masters, I was in the Musée de la Marine and the collections from ancient Egypt ... After dinner, we go to the grand boulevards or to the theatre ... I went to the World's Fair on Thursday two weeks ago and only found three small buildings completed; I went again last Thursday; two of them were closed again, otherwise there was no change."³⁰

The final school-leaving examinations take place on 5 April 1902. Wilhelm Wartmann achieves an outstanding average grade of 5.9,³¹ and his annual reports document his above-average intelligence. In



Fig. 4: Wilhelm Wartmann as a cadet

accordance with tradition, the school-leavers are celebrated with song and a procession around the Oberen Brühl.

Studying in Zurich

Zurich is the obvious choice of university for Wilhelm Wartmann as his father is well acquainted with the professors there and a close friend of the history lecturer Gerold Meyer von Knonau. On 19 April 1902, he enrolls at the University of Zurich³² and meets some of his colleagues from St. Gallen. Wartmann comes to a city on its way to becoming a metropolis. In 1893, eleven suburbs are incorporated into the city, which requires the administration of a full-time city council and a city president. The unification of the city is followed by a large influx of people to Zurich, and the depression of the 1880s is followed by a period of economic prosperity. A construction boom begins, rental apartments are built, companies are founded, and an electric tram runs through the streets. Zurich develops into a city of commerce, banks, and large insurance companies. By 1900, it has 150,000 inhabitants, and ten years later the figure has already risen to 190,000.³³

The student finds a room at Gemeindestrasse 4 in the Hottingen district and is happy to escape the confines of St. Gallen. "I realised a long time ago that the best way to get to know the place you call home is by being far away from it, but Zurich is very beautiful; everything here is wider, broader and more splendid than in St. Gallen, the Rosenberg is represented by the Zürichberg ... the 'Rechberg' is a magnificent stone patrician house from the rococo period, this is where the city of Zurich used to accommodate the envoys of foreign powers, and now some of the university lectures have been moved there. Instead of the bow-legged rococo chairs and tables and the dignified diplomats, you now find square school desks and students in the rooms."³⁴ He attends university classes with great motivation.

"Yesterday, on the dot of the academic quarter, Prof. Meyer strode briskly to the lectern and began to speak. I have been able to follow and keep up with the lectures on modern history very well so far; they are about the situation in Italy, and I have already studied Burckhardt's 'Culture of the Renaissance in Italy' ... Yesterday I was at Seefeldstrasse, at Dr Brun's, Prof. Hitzig-Steiner's and in front of the still closed doors of Prof. Blümner and Kägi. What I heard there worried me a little. Until now, I had always imagined that I could progress on the basis of my previous gymnasium education in the humanities in all directions at once, in



Fig. 5: Wilhelm Wartmann, student in Zurich, 1903

parallel, or in ever-widening concentric circles ... Dr Brun now said in the conversation that 25 hours were definitely the limit, and Prof. Hitzig told me that I could expect a lot of work for the philological seminar. When I counted my hours at home, I had 34, and I had been convinced that I had limited myself to the essentials, not just to the necessary. Consequently, I cancelled the two hours in the German seminar (Otfried) and will probably have to cancel the Old High German (Heliand) altogether. I also very reluctantly have to give up my only philosophical lecture: On the Relationship between Religious and Moral Culture (1 hour).³⁵ What Wartmann does not want to give up is learning the Sanskrit language with Prof. Adolf Kaegi.³⁶

The contact between lecturers and students at the university is friendly, the students visit the professors in their private homes, and there is a collegial exchange between them. "Yesterday, after dinner, I went on a blossom tour. None of my dinner companions had any sympathy for such an intangible pleasure solely for the nose and for a hike to areas 'where the night revels in scents' but where the beer taps are not exactly bubbling at every corner ... At about half past nine I got up, climbed a little further up the mountain and finally stretched out under an apple tree near the forest ... Here I busied myself with breaking down the abstruse sounds of the summer night into their underlying har-

monies, until the wicked buzzing of the mosquitoes in the immediate vicinity became too dominant.”³⁷

As a “non-native of Zurich,” he is impressed by the spring festival known as *Sechseläuten* in April 1902: “On Sunday the 20th, I went for a walk with three gentlemen from my dining companions into the Sihl valley ... At half past nine, a hatch opened high up in the grey roof of the thick tower of St. Peter’s and a narrow, deeply split blue-and-white flag came out; on the other side the red-and-white Swiss flag appeared ... Soon the festival flags were also fluttering around the towers of the Fraumünster and Grossmünster ... The Sechseläuten was somewhat different from what I had imagined it would be, according to the album. The motto for this year, ‘Coming down from Mount Olympus’, was written on the posters, but anyone hoping to see the Greek gods in person was mistaken. In modern times, the festive procession of the guilds has gradually become an ordinary fancy-dress parade of uncertain character, and is now half a carnival procession and half a general cultural and historical showpiece.”³⁸

Military service

In July 1902, Wilhelm Wartmann reports to the barracks in Aarau to commence his training as an infantry recruit in the 1st platoon of the 3rd company. “Our platoon was ordered to the guardhouse on Friday evening, where we had to stay for 24 hours and were not allowed to take off anything except our rifles, knapsacks and caps. Three shifts were designated for guard duty, each of which had to stand for two hours. About twelve men were constantly in the guardroom and on picket duty, which means that they had to be ready to go out with their rifles at any moment; in the guard room, the scenes are quite picturesque, just like in the theatre; some play cards in a soldier’s style, others stare into the dark and nurture their homesickness, etc.; I took the whole operation as romantically as possible.”³⁹ Wartmann unexpectedly falls ill with appendicitis and is admitted to the *Krankenanstalt Aarau* (cantonal hospital), which meant that he had to break off his training.⁴⁰

Wintersemester 1902/03

The lectures by Prof. Johann Rudolf Rahn, a pioneer of the preservation of historical monuments in Switzerland, deepen Wilhelm Wartmann’s interest in archaeology: “On Saturday evening, Prof. Rahn gave a lecture

in situ, in the Lower Loch itself, about the Carolingian crypt under the choir of the Fraumünster Church; this crypt was admittedly best seen when one closed one's eyes and listened to the speaker's words; at around 8 o'clock, after the Antiquarian Society's meeting room, we went over to the Meise [restaurant]."⁴¹ He indulges his enthusiasm for Latin and Greek in his philological studies: "For next Tuesday, I have to study about fifty pages of a Latin monk's chronicle for the hist. exercises; I'm looking forward to it and would like to show the history students how to treat a Latin text conscientiously and lovingly."⁴² Wartmann is a regular guest at the Tonhalle (Concert Hall), visits art exhibitions at the Zürcher Kunstgesellschaft's (Zurich Art Society) exhibition building, at the Künstlerhaus on Talgasse, such as the exhibition of the artistic estate of the Basel landscape painter Hans Sandreuter, the estate of Arnold Böcklin, or works by contemporary Berlin artists.⁴³ After three semesters in Zurich, the student wishes to change universities. His father, who draws on his time in Bonn and Göttingen, suggests a German university. Wilhelm has other plans, however; fascinated by the French language and culture, he is drawn to the Sorbonne in Paris. Hermann Wartmann sees this as a temporary solution to broaden his son's horizons and is persuaded.



Fig. 6: Wilhelm Wartmann, soldier in the Swiss Army

Studying in Paris

It is late autumn before Wilhelm Wartmann is finally able to set off for Paris, as Hermann Wartmann recalls: "On 4 November (1903), Willi left for Paris to continue his studies there, having first completed his military service, which had been so unpleasantly interrupted the previous year."⁴⁴ The young man from St. Gallen immerses himself in the Paris of the Belle Époque. The bourgeoisie lives in prosperity and financial security, and most of them are looking to the future with optimism. Politically, France is a democracy, technologically an industrialised country, and culturally its capital is the centre of Europe. This prosperity