

The Museum of Modern Art

For Immediate Release
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VIENNA 1900: ART, ARCHITECTURE & DESIGN

July 3 - October 26, 1986

VIENNA 1900: ART, ARCHITECTURE & DESIGN, the first major exhibition in the United States encompassing the complete range of Viennese painting, decorative objects, graphic design, and architecture produced between 1898 and 1918, opened at The Museum of Modern Art on July 3, 1986. Both visually seductive and intellectually provocative, the exhibition of approximately 700 works offers a unique glimpse into the special world of Vienna at a time when the city played a critical role in the birth of modernism.

Organized by Kirk Varnedoe, adjunct curator in the Department of Painting and Sculpture and professor at the Institute of Fine Arts, New York University, VIENNA 1900 includes masterworks drawn from exhibitions of Viennese culture shown recently in Vienna and Paris along with a large number of previously unexhibited works from international collections.

The exhibition, which continues through October 26, has been generously supported by Mr. and Mrs. Ronald S. Lauder and the Lauder family. Additional support has been received from the National Endowment for the Arts and The International Council of The Museum of Modern Art. An indemnity for the exhibition has been provided by the Federal Council on the Arts and the Humanities.

Included in the exhibition are emotionally charged, often erotic works by painters such as Gustav Klimt, Oskar Kokoschka, and Egon Schiele, on loan from great Viennese collections. A rich array of silverware, jewelry, bookbindings, furniture, fashion design, and ceramics reveals how the concern for total

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design preoccupied Viennese artists at the turn of the century. Architectural models and drawings, including one full-scale reconstructed facade, represent key buildings by the major architects Otto Wagner, Josef Hoffmann, Adolf Loos, and Joseph Maria Olbrich.

The first of the seven sections that comprise VIENNA 1900 is devoted to painting from the years 1898-1907, focusing on the work of Klimt and the circle of the Vienna Secession. The Secession, a group of nineteen artists with Klimt as their president, had defected from the leading conservative artists' society in order to exhibit the most advanced work of Austrian and foreign artists and to achieve unity among all the arts through their collaborative efforts. This is seen in the Jugendstil design of the period, ranging from the Secessionist publication Ver Sacrum to examples of fabric design, decorative arts, and furniture.

The next section--in a sense the culmination of the first--is a room devoted to Klimt's great "Golden Style," c. 1906-09. The artist's love for lavish decoration, and his special mix of disturbing sensuality with seductive glamour, appears in his masterful paintings of women, from the fictional Salome to the sister of the philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein.

The third section examines the revolution against Jugendstil and the shift to a new geometric or rationalized design, c. 1902-04, as demonstrated in graphic design, decorative arts, and furniture--works often stemming from the collaborative design workshop, the Wiener Werkstätte. This new style was best exemplified by the modular, geometric design of Hoffmann and Kolo Moser. In the catalog accompanying the exhibition,* Kirk Varnedoe writes, "For Hoffmann and Moser the challenge from the outset was to recover richness from

reduction--to rephrase simplicity with a reticent elegance that would render superfluous the conventional luxuriance they were eliminating."

In the fourth section, folk influences and a turn toward expressionism, 1908-15, are illustrated primarily by graphic design and the decorative arts. This shift away from geometry toward a more ornate, elaborate vocabulary of form was apparent at the pivotal "Kunstschau Wien" exhibition of 1908, and is shown here as well in jewelry and fashion designs from the Wiener Werkstätte.

The fifth section, of drawings, features especially the work of Schiele along with that of Klimt and Kokoschka, all of whom created stunning and often unsettling bodies of graphic work, independent of their paintings. For such proto-Surrealist artists as Alfred Kubin or Klemens Brosch, drawing was a primary means of expression.

The sixth section is devoted to major paintings of 1907-18 by Kokoschka and Schiele, as well as late paintings by Klimt and early expressionist work by the ill-fated young Richard Gerstl and the composer Arnold Schoenberg. A new patronage had developed around Schiele and Kokoschka, whose work confronted matters of high seriousness to the exclusion of any decorative appeal. Varnedoe compares their portrait painting styles: "Kokoschka's subjects produce perturbations that agitate the world around them, but the language of gestures and the silence of emptiness in Schiele's best portraits evoke a different kind of nervous pathology; the cramping confinement of alienation."

The final section of the exhibition is devoted to architectural drawings and models by the four major architects working between the 1890s and World War I. Loos and Hoffmann were exact contemporaries and lifelong antagonists; and Wagner and Olbrich, decades apart in age, were fruitful collaborators. Wagner was one of the great pioneers of modern architecture in Europe, and his

combinations of new technologies and familiar building types formed the principles of a new generation. Olbrich, architect of the Secession's exhibition hall, died young; but Hoffmann and Loos went on to form a classic antithesis in early modernism, between a decorative style and one morally opposed to all ornament.

The exhibition in Vienna (March - October 1985) focused on Viennese art and society from 1873 to 1930. Entitled Traum und Wirklichkeit (Dream and Reality), it was organized by Dr. Robert Waissenberger, director of the Historical Museum of the City of Vienna, and Professor Hans Hollein. The Paris exhibition (February - May 1986), Vienne: naissance d'un siècle, was organized by Gérard Regnier of the Musée National d'Art Moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, and focused on the years 1880-1938. The Museum of Modern Art's presentation of the early modern period contains many of the masterworks shown in these previous exhibitions, but is substantially different in conception.

Catalog and Handout:

VIENNA 1900: ART, ARCHITECTURE & DESIGN is accompanied by a major catalog of the same title. Authored by Kirk Varnedoe, it provides an overview of all the visual arts of early modern Vienna, discussing the work of the major artists in detail.*

In addition to the exhibition catalog, a handout in the form of a sixteen-page newspaper is available. Giving the appearance of a Viennese paper, it covers the cultural and intellectual developments of the period, as well as offering an orientation to the exhibition.

Concert Series:

On Wednesday and Sunday evenings in September and October, the Museum and The 92nd Street Y are presenting Vienna 1900: A Festival of Music. A distinguished roster of musicians will participate in a unique series of concerts devoted to turn-of-the-century Viennese music. The programs, which have been generously sponsored by Mr. and Mrs. Milton Petrie, offer an overview of the period's outstanding repertoire, including works by Alban Berg, Franz Lehar, Gustav and Alma Mahler, Franz Schmidt, Arnold Schoenberg, Anton Webern, and Alexander Zemlinsky. World-renowned soloists and chamber ensembles appear together in eight extraordinary evenings of music-making. Concert dates are September 7,

10, 24, and 28, and October 5, 15, and 19, at 8 p.m. Subscriptions to the eight-concert series are \$140 (\$120 Museum members), and may be reserved in advance by sending payment and a stamped, self-addressed envelope to the Department of Membership, The Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, New York, NY 10019.

Ticket Information:

Tickets for admission to the exhibition are available on a same-day basis. These may be purchased at VIENNA 1900 ticket booths in the Lobby for \$6.00 (includes \$5.00 general admission). No advance or specially timed tickets are necessary. The Museum's pay-as-you-wish policy on Thursday evenings does not apply to VIENNA 1900.

Viennese Café

A Viennese Café, an open-air pavilion designed with architectural detailing of the period, has been created for the Sculpture Garden in conjunction with the exhibition. The Café offers Viennese coffees and pastries, along with wine, beer, and other beverages. Sponsored by the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber and designed and constructed in cooperation with the Museum, the Café is open during the Museum's public hours through the period of the exhibition.

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*Vienna 1900: Art, Architecture & Design by Kirk Varnedoe. 240 black-and-white and 114 color illustrations. 264 pages. Published by The Museum of Modern Art. Clothbound \$50, paperbound \$19.50.

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For further information or photographic materials, contact Jeanne Collins or Jessica Schwartz, Department of Public Information 212/708-9750.