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VIENNA 1900

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At the End of an Ancient Monarchy, Birth of a New Culture



Koloman Moser. Commemorative Postage Stamp for Emperor Franz Josef's Jubilee, 1908. Österreichisches Museum fuer angewandte Kunst, Vienna

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Rising from a flood plain near the river Danube, the walls of the city of Vienna long stood as the last ramparts of Western Europe, looking toward the Orient. At these walls the Turkish invasion finally foundered in 1683 — a victory that established the ruling Hapsburg monarchy as the defender of Christianity, and initiated a grand epoch of Catholic Baroque culture in Central Europe. Under Maria Theresia (ruled 1740-80) and her son Joseph II (1780-90), the governmental structure of the Austrian empire was established: a strong Catholic monarchy joined to an all-pervasive and efficient administrative bureaucracy. But already, in the resistance of Hungarians and Slovaks to Joseph's efforts to impose German as the language of the empire, the intractable problems of this vast, complex realm were evident.

First the victories of Napoleon, then the combination of the power of Prince Metternich and the weakness of the Hapsburg heirs, shaped Austrian life in the first half of the nineteenth century — a period of neoclassical style and burgher piety known as the "Biedermeier" epoch, which would later be seen as a privileged moment of pre-industrial calm. That era closed with the revolutions of 1848, which wound up ushering onto the stage two new forces, in problematic collaboration and contention: first, an aggressive new middle class, emboldened by the profits of industrialization and impatient with the power held by the church and the throne; and second, a new emperor, the young Franz Josef I. Only eighteen when he took the throne, he was to rule the empire for nearly seven decades, presiding over a period of immense conflict and sweeping change — the final epoch of the age-old dynastic rule he had inherited.

The Ringstrasse Era

In 1860, the principle of a constitutional monarchy was established, allowing representative government — and the newly prosperous middle classes — a share of power. The emperor's authority was further compromised following Austria's defeat by Prussia at Koeniggratz in 1866. A dual Austro-Hungarian empire was established, with semi-independent legislatures at Vienna and Budapest overseeing the eleven national groups of the realm, scattered among the many territories that stretched from the Veneto to Russia. Over the follow-

ing decades the prerogatives of the Austrian throne would be circumscribed on the west by Bismarck's new German Empire, on the east by Budapest's desires for autonomous rule over its minority lands, and from within by the energetic rise of a new liberal politics.

Nowhere was the new secular, burgher ascendancy more evident than in the capital, Vienna, which began to expand dramatically with the increasing influx of immigrants from the provinces; and nothing so clearly symbolizes the shifting interplay in the new Austria, between the forces of tradition and those of change, as Vienna's major boulevard, the Ringstrasse. The architecture of this broad new thoroughfare, girding the metrop-



Hans Makart (1840-1884)

olis along the site of the old city walls, yoked a pragmatic and even ruthless drive for modernization to the affectations of imitative historical style. (For more on the Ringstrasse, see p. 14.) The new-money spirit of the Ring, progressive and expansive but also often apparently crass and uncreative, seemed the essence of the epoch — a period dominated by forces of liberal politics that began to lose their élan only in the 1880s.

The dominant artist of the epoch — a "prince" of taste who even governed ladies' fashion — was Hans Makart, a painter of fleshy allegories and Rubensian historical tableaux. Makart's grandest moment, and a supreme instance of life as theater in Vienna, came in his scenographic orchestration of the vast, costumed parades honoring the twenty-fifth anniversary of Franz Josef's marriage



Elisabeth, Empress of Austria (1837-1898)

to the Empress Elisabeth, in 1879. These celebrations, with their confident pomp, seem in retrospect the high-water mark of an era of boom and bust, of aggressive, often risky expansion (as signaled by the stock-market crash of 1873), and of a certain liberal dream of secular, "progressive" consensus.

Discontents

Whatever the achievements of the Ringstrasse era, by the late 1800s its failures and hypocrisies were becoming more widely criticized. Its "costume" style of facades was increasingly seen as symptomatic of an untenable compromise between a more thoroughgoing commitment to the modern on the one hand, and a more tenacious respect for tradition on the other. Leaders such as Victor Adler and Karl Lueger, and their new political parties (the new-left Social Democrats and the new-right Christian Socialists), fashioned around 1890 what the historian Carl Schorske has called "politics in a new key" — a more shrill, confrontational, and demagogic style of appeal to the masses.

The new politics brought to the fore a panoply of problems. The diverse nationalities and language groups in Austria-Hungary were buffeted by opposing urges — some seeking local self-determination (especially in the Slovak lands) and others (especially among the Viennese educated elite) dreaming of cultural, if not political, fusion with the German Empire. Racial and ethnic tensions, as well as distaste for new cosmopolitan values and doubts about new business structures, found disturbing voice in the explicit anti-Semitism of Lueger and others. Especially among workers, artisans, and small-business owners threatened by economic change, this "new key" drew a powerful response.

The continuity of the Hapsburg dynasty, and the viability of the constitutional monarchy, were meanwhile both brought into doubt. Franz Josef's

'Young Vienna' and Modern Literature

In the 1890s, as the arts of Vienna embraced the Germanic version of Art Nouveau known as Jugendstil ("youth-style," after the Munich magazine *Jugend*), its writers were equally concerned to find the voice of youth. The leading Viennese poets and writers of the new movement were, like the painter Gustav Klimt, men in their thirties, with the exception of the precocious adolescent Hugo von Hofmannsthal. The group was known collectively as Jung-Wien (Young Vienna).

These writers pursued an "impressionism" that had little to do with the naturalist visions of sunlit landscapes we might associate with this term. Their "impressionism" entailed a devotion to the ephemeral feelings of the

moment, a reaction against naturalism in favor of a self-consciously "decadent," inward-turning cultivation of neurasthenic sensibility. Their inspirations — consonant with the air of exotic refinement and musky sensuality we find in some Secessionist art — stemmed more from the world of Baudelaire than from that of Monet.

Their 'impressionism' entailed an inward-turning cultivation of neurasthenic sensibility.

Like the artists' clubs that were the breeding ground of the Secession's revolt, the writers' group found its home in the Viennese cafes. Their heated debates gave to their favorite spot, the Cafe Griensteidl, the nick-

name "Cafe Megalomania." When the place was torn down in the urban renovations of the later 1890s, the critic Karl Kraus made it the symbol of a whole movement, in his essay "The Demolished Literature." Favorite cafe reading was the feuilleton, a brief essay of impressions and opinion, frequently by one of the city's leading

tomatic, he felt, of the moral slackness of the day. Kraus's position is telling, for he was no friend of the Secession, while the Secession found many of its early defenders in the aesthetic orbit of Jung-Wien.

The urbane writings of Jung-Wien, often tinged with the savor of the erotic, were displaced by a new tone after 1900. Hofmannsthal passed through a crisis regarding the adequacy of language to express private experience; new voices like that of Robert Musil explored a subjectivity more darkly complex in its mediation between the libido and the larger world; and, as in other areas such as the Secession's Beethoven exhibition, epic themes assumed a greater appeal. ■



ARTHUR
SCHNITZLER
1862–1931

Arthur Schnitzler's plays and novels probe the psychological makeup of turn-of-the-century Viennese bourgeois society. Freud, who used Schnitzler's brilliantly characterized protagonists as examples of types of psychological behavior, told him: "You know through intuition—or rather through detailed self-observation—everything that I have discovered by laborious work on other people." Such insight was, however, not pure intuition, since Schnitzler had himself studied medicine and had shown particular interest in psychology.

As a playwright Schnitzler was an innovator in dramatic form, building his plays from kaleidoscopic sequences of images. And in his novella *Leutnant Gustl* (1901, known in English as *None But the Brave*), Schnitzler experimented with the literary form known as the interior monologue — the first to do so in the German language.

Schnitzler was a master at revealing the Viennese proclivity for social role-playing and for self-deception. He saw in them the roots of the failure of human communication, a failure as disastrous for the individual as for society at large. Schnitzler shared Freud's fascination with the power of instinctual drives. In his plays he treated erotic encounters as archetypes of human relations, convinced that sexual love alone was strong enough to break down social hierarchies. His most famous play, *Reigen* (*Merry-Go-Round*, written 1897, privately published 1900), is built on ten dialogues between lovers of unequal station whose chain of affairs involves many levels of society. In his later life and work he would return to the more traditional morality of his upbringing.

Unlike many other Jews of the Viennese intelligentsia, Schnitzler never abandoned his Jewish faith. In his highly autobiographical novel *Der Weg ins Freie* (*The Road to the Open*, 1908) and in the play *Professor Bernhardi* (1912), he dealt with the dilemmas of being Jewish in contemporary Austria. ■

HUGO VON HOFMANNSTHAL 1874–1929

At the age of sixteen, writing under the pseudonym "Loris," Hugo von Hofmannsthal stunned literary circles with the lyrical beauty of his poetry. The contrived elegance of the short verse dramas he wrote between 1891 and 1899 is considered a highlight of "decadent" aestheticism and German literary Jugendstil. Yet in 1892 in *Der Tod des Tizian* (*The Death of Titian*) and in 1893 in *Der Tor und der Tod* (*Death and the Fool*), Hofmannsthal had already begun to see the limitations of aestheticism. This eventually led to a crisis, culminating in his famous "Chandos-Brief" ("Letter of Lord Chandos") of 1902, written in the persona of an imaginary Philipp, Lord



Chandos, to Francis Bacon. In it, Hofmannsthal renounced his cultivated aestheticism and sharply questioned the adequacy of language to communi-

cate deeper experience.

Hofmannsthal then turned to larger dramatic forms. Anticipating Ludwig Wittgenstein's conviction that facts alone can be expressed linguistically, while ethics can only be enacted, Hofmannsthal saw the theater as the best medium for promoting the ethical concerns that had become central to his art. For *Elektra* (1903) and *Oedipus and the Sphinx* (1906), he found inspiration in the theater of ancient Greece — even if he saw antiquity through the eyes of one who admired the theories of Freud. For his allegorical plays, such as *Jedermann* (*Everyman*, 1911), he was influenced by the Catholic tradition, medieval mystery plays, and the theater of the Spanish Baroque.

His disillusionment with the adequacy of words and with linguistic

convention led Hofmannsthal to give new form to the art of pantomime. Working together with the dancer Grete Wiesenthal, he wrote scenarios for, and produced, several pantomimes. In his 1911 essay "Ueber die Pantomime" ("On Pantomime"), Hofmannsthal exalted the expressiveness of the human body. Gestures, in his opinion, could express man's total existence, his true personality and experience, far better than words.

Hofmannsthal is probably best remembered as librettist for the operas of Richard Strauss. *Der Rosenkavalier* (1911) and *Die Frau ohne Schatten* (1919) are the better-known examples of this fruitful collaboration. After World War I, Hofmannsthal, the producer Max Reinhardt, and the stage designer Alfred Roller founded the Salzburg Festival. ■

PETER ALTENBERG 1859–1919

Peter Altenberg's work as poet, essayist, and critic appeared in some fifty periodicals throughout the German-speaking world. His sketches were presented at the Kabarett Fledermaus (see p. 9), and the texts he wrote for his postcards inspired songs by the composer Alban Berg.

Part jester, part philosopher, Altenberg was a true bohemian who lived in a tiny, memorabilia-filled room in the Grabenhotel, and spent most of his daily life in coffeehouses, bars, and cabarets, where he gathered material for his vignettes of Viennese life. Life and work were inextricably linked for Altenberg. Although associated with the literary circle Jung-Wien, Altenberg did not share their aestheticizing, "decadent" tendencies. Fascinated by the pace and transitoriness of urban life, Altenberg's "impressionism" lay in depicting reality as fleetingly perceived by the senses. His were not the universal themes of life and death, but rather fragments of existence—"extracts of life," in his words—seen with a tender eye for the lovable trivia of daily life, and written



in the form of quick prose sketches, in the "telegram-style of the soul."

Peter Altenberg's complete honesty and the total consonance between his life, his personality, and his writing attracted the friendship and admiration of two of the sharpest opponents of aestheticism: the critic Karl Kraus and the architect Adolf Loos (who wrote a touching eulogy at Altenberg's death). ■

ROBERT MUSIL 1880–1942

While his advocates tend to speak of Robert Musil in the same breath as Proust, Mann, and Joyce, the authors he himself preferred were Tolstoy, Dostoyevsky, and Balzac.

Musil turned to writing only after rejecting a military life and a career in civil engineering, and after studies in philosophy and in experimental psychology, culminating with a thesis on Ernst Mach's theory of knowledge. Musil had keen descriptive powers, yet his acute observation of appearances only served his approach to a deeper truth. "I see sometimes with the eyes of reason, and sometimes with those other eyes," says the protagonist of his first novel, *Die Verwirrungen des Zoeglins Toerless* (*Young Toerless*, 1906). This partially autobiographical work created a scandal with its frank description of youthful brutality and homosexuality in a military academy. Yet the real theme of this novel, as of his other works, is the polarity between the rational and the mystical.

After World War I, except for a short time in the civil service, Musil



worked freelance, writing essays, dramatic criticism, and several plays. His major work, *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften* (*The Man Without Qualities*), a three-volume opus of over two thousand pages on which he worked during the last twenty years of his life, remained unfinished at his death in 1942. In it Musil proved himself an unrelenting analyst of Austrian society and culture on the eve of World War I; "Kakania," the place of the novel's action, is the fictional counterpart of the collapsing Hapsburg empire.

The annexation of Austria by Germany in 1938 drove Musil into exile in Switzerland, where he spent the last years of his life. ■

The Secession



Alfred Roller. Poster for *Secession XVII*. 1903. Lithograph, 6'2 3/4" x 25" (188.9 x 63.5 cm). Private collection, courtesy Serge Sabarsky Gallery, New York

At the end of the nineteenth century, art exhibitions in Vienna were controlled by the Kuenstlerhaus, a private, conservative exhibiting society that exercised considerable influence on public taste and government policy. In May 1897, a group of nineteen artists, who had previously been trying to work for change from within, broke away from the Kuenstlerhaus and formed a new organization, called the Secession, with Gustav Klimt as president (and the aged watercolorist Rudolf von Alt as honorary president). Among the other young defectors were the architects Josef Hoffmann and Joseph Maria Olbrich and the graphic artist and designer Koloman Moser. The Secessionists' goals were twofold: to show the most advanced work of Austrian and foreign artists in regular exhibitions; and to achieve unity among the arts, to realize the ideal of the *Gesamtkunstwerk*, or total work of art, through collaborative efforts.

Emblazoned on the facade of the Secession's new exhibition hall, designed by Olbrich, were the words "Der Zeit ihre Kunst, der Kunst ihre Freiheit" ("To the Age, Its Art; to Art, Its Freedom"). The open interior space with movable partitions was an

important innovation of Olbrich's plan. The windowless solemnity of the facade, however, evoked, as he intended, a "temple of art."

Ver Sacrum

The regenerative purpose of the Secession was expressed in the title of its official publication, *Ver Sacrum* (*Sacred Spring*). The name refers to a Roman ritual of consecration, in which the elders, in times of national danger, pledged their children to the divine mission of saving society. In Vienna, it was the young generation themselves who pledged to save culture from what they saw as the philistinism of their elders.

Ver Sacrum appeared once a month from 1898 to 1900 and thereafter bimonthly until 1903. On its lavishly illustrated pages there were discussions of art, samples of music, and literary contributions by Rilke, Hofmannsthal, and Maeterlinck; emphasis was placed on the harmonious integration of picture and text. Gustav Klimt, Josef Hoffmann, Joseph Maria Olbrich, Koloman Moser, the designer Alfred Roller—all collaborated to embellish the magazine. The vignettes and page decorations drew on stylized neo-Greek motifs, on Jugendstil, with its emphasis on curvilinear natural forms, and on the abstract rhythms of Japanese design. *Ver Sacrum* exemplifies the high importance the Viennese avant-garde placed upon decorative design—not only in posters and books, but in all the applied arts.

Koloman Moser

At first an illustrator and later a painter, Koloman Moser was perhaps the most original graphic designer of the Vienna Secession. Besides his extensive work for *Ver Sacrum*, he also

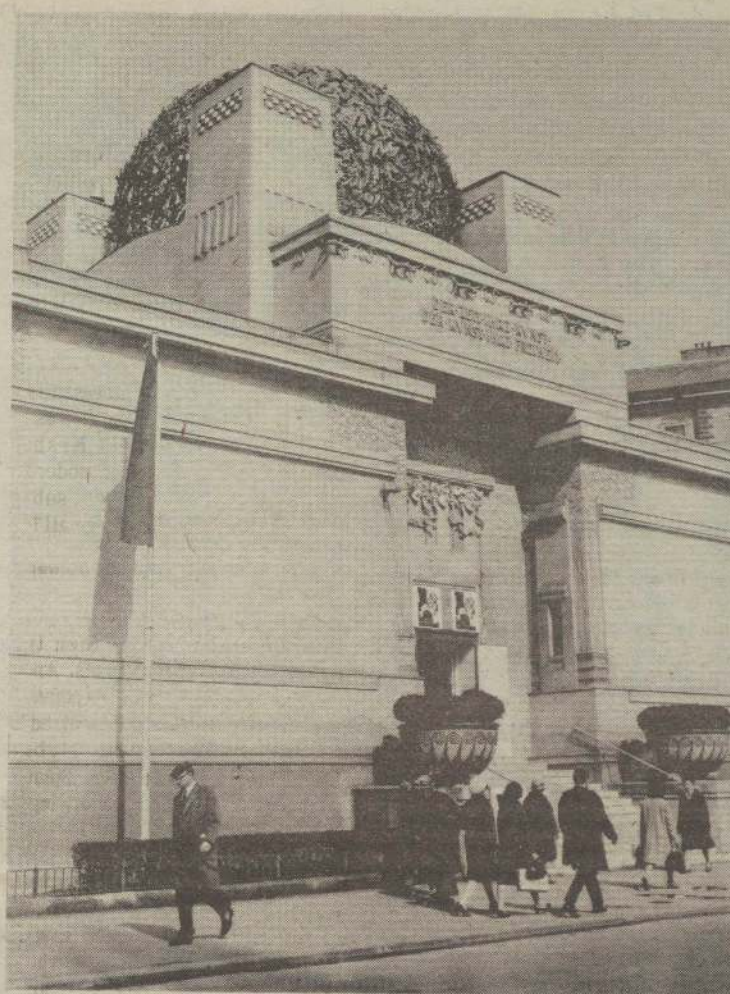


Koloman Moser. "Vogel BueLOW" Fabric Sample (detail). 1899. Fabric, 50% x 37" (128 x 94 cm) overall. Oesterreichisches Museum fuer angewandte Kunst, Vienna

created around 1900 an extraordinary series of fabric and wallpaper designs, in which the repetitive patterns announce a newly rigid ordering of the viscous curvilinearity of Jugendstil. The effects of figure-ground reversal in these patterns anticipate by decades the popularization of similar perceptual conundrums by M. C. Escher.

Klimt's Allegorical Paintings

The ideal of the *Gesamtkunstwerk* was realized on the grandest scale at



Joseph Maria Olbrich. Vienna Secession Building. 1897-98

the fourteenth Secession exhibition, in 1902, organized around the monumental statue of Beethoven by the German sculptor Max Klinger. Josef Hoffmann transformed the exhibition space into a temple-like setting, and Klimt painted a great allegorical frieze, inspired by Beethoven's Ninth



Alfred Roller. Cover of *Ver Sacrum*. 1898. Lithograph, 11 1/2 x 11" (29.6 x 28 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York

Symphony, on the upper walls. Preparatory drawings for the mural are on view in this exhibition.

Klimt's greatest challenge as a painter of large-scale allegorical subjects was his commission for three works for the ceiling of the Great Hall of the University of Vienna: *Philosophy*, *Medicine*, and *Jurisprudence*. Klimt was well qualified for the task; earlier, as an architectural decorator, he had painted the ceilings of Ringstrasse buildings in a

more a measure of Vienna's artistic conservatism than of Klimt's daring. His vision of untempered nudity and psychic anxiety, mingling morbidity with eroticism, touched a raw nerve.

Klimt abandoned his fight to have the panels accepted, and in 1905 bought back the commission. These events marked a split between the Viennese avant-garde and official patronage, and a defeat for the young generation's ideals of a grand new public art.

The three huge paintings were destroyed in a fire at the close of World War II. Preparatory studies for two of them are included in the exhibition.

Pallas Athene

It was in the smaller paintings of the late 1890s that Klimt began to develop his rich ornamental style and combine images from many different sources. In *Pallas Athene* (1898) Klimt drew upon ancient, exotic, and sacred material to find a new means for expressing the uncertainties and anxieties inherent in modern life. Like Freud, whose discoveries were linked to a passion for archaic culture and archaeological excavation, Klimt employed symbols from antiquity to reveal instinctual, and most especially erotic, forces—as Hugo von Hofmannsthal also did in *Elektra* (1903). The virgin goddess Athene, protector of the people (and



Gustav Klimt. *Pallas Athene*. 1898. Oil on canvas, 29 1/2 x 29 1/2" (75 x 75 cm). Historisches Museum der Stadt Wien

conservative style that satisfied the taste of his institutional clients.

By the time he undertook the university paintings, Klimt was no longer the dutiful decorator but a progressive artist commenting darkly on the human condition. The complicated canvases for the ceiling, exhibited one by one at Secession shows from 1900 to 1903, aroused violent controversy,

patron of the Secession, as well as the Austrian parliament), appears before us in iconic frontality, shimmering in gold. Behind her are the lightly drawn figures of a Greek vase painting. The metal frame, executed by Klimt's brother Georg, is worked in spiral patterns inspired by designs of the ancient Mycenaean treasures recently discovered. ■

Vienna's Critical Intellectuals

Throughout Europe in the later nineteenth century, there was a widespread revulsion against the limitations of a worldview based on materialist, positivist values—a worldview that seemed associated not only with the success of a certain kind of inductive modern science, but with the domination of industrial capitalism. In several key instances, science itself seemed to raise the challenge. Discoveries such as Roentgen's identification of X ray, in 1895, for example, suggested that faith in the solidity of the material world was a treacherous illusion. Diverse and contradictory thinkers seemed to offer a similar lesson: Ernst Mach, who held ephemeral sensation as the only reality; Arthur Schopenhauer, whose early nineteenth-century espousal of a world-denying fatalism found a newly receptive audience; and the occultists, who suggested grand spiritual truths beyond appearances. All these notions conflated to support the new rebellion

that called for art, too, to abandon prosaic naturalism.

In Vienna, thinkers such as Alois Riegl—who rejected the imitation of nature as a criterion for ranking art,

Here the Enlightenment tradition seems to meet an almost Oriental will to refine and transcend the mundane.

and valued minor ornament as highly as grand representations in estimating the mentality of a society—were at the forefront of this change in values. The particular Viennese con-

tribution was a sharp skepticism about the truths transmitted by language. The most powerful Viennese thinkers, rather than retreat into hermetic mysticism as an antidote to banal "rational" confidence, sought to construct more rigorous systems of discrimination between fact and illusion, and to draw more stringent limits for dependable structures of meaning—sometimes to the point of declaring abstinence from speech superior to a corrupt and fallible communication.

In this school of thought, as in so much of Viennese art, we are reminded of Vienna's special place on the frontier between West and East. Here the Enlightenment traditions of systematic critique and logical analysis seem to meet an almost Oriental will to refine and transcend the mundane. An urge to asceticism was the other, complementary side of the more familiar coin of Vienna's love of semi-Byzantine splendor. ■

LUDWIG WITTGENSTEIN 1889–1951

Ludwig Wittgenstein, widely regarded as one of the foremost philosophers of his time, also excelled in the fields of music, architecture, and engineering. Educated by private tutors, he grew up in the refined climate of Vienna's cultural elite. His father, Karl Wittgenstein, was one of the wealthiest industrialists of the empire and one of the earliest and most faithful patrons of the Secession. His sister Margaret Stonborough-Wittgenstein introduced the young Ludwig to the works of the philosophers that most influenced his intellectual development: Schopenhauer, Kant, and Kierkegaard. Wittgenstein then studied at Cambridge under Gottlob Frege and Bertrand Russell, whose investigations into the mathematical basis of logic encouraged his own approach to philosophical problems through the logical analysis of language.

Wittgenstein's first book, *Tractatus logico-philosophicus*, was written during World War I (in which Wittgenstein served as a volunteer) and published in 1921. The treatise deals

with the nature and limits of language as it relates to reality. With his so-called "picture theory" Wittgenstein argued that, while facts can indeed be communicated by "deliberately constructed verbal representations," the most crucial meaning of the world—its ethical value—cannot be articulated through language. (This dichotomy between outer fact and inner value parallels the critic



Karl Kraus's rigorous distinction between the factual and poetic uses of language; see p. 6. Kraus's strong ethical stance had, in fact, been an important influence on Wittgenstein, who was an avid reader of Kraus's journal *Die Fackel* and liked to write in Krausian aphorisms.) The *Tractatus* concludes: "Whereof one cannot speak thereof one must be silent."

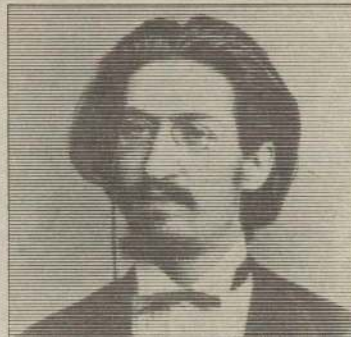
ERNST MACH 1838–1916

Ernst Mach is most widely known today as the man whose name is used to designate units of supersonic speed. Yet at the turn of the century Mach's ideas were influential on philosophers, writers, and artists, as well as scientists. His stress on immediate sensation provided, for example, the intellectual foundation for "impressionism" in Viennese literature (see p. 2).



A doctor of mathematics, Mach taught widely in the sciences (first in Graz, then Prague, and finally Vienna), and his approach to philosophy was above all that of a physicist. Influenced by David Hume's empiricist philosophy, Mach mistrusted hypothetical theory and rigorously opposed metaphysics. He believed that knowledge could be acquired only through personal experience. In his influential book *Contributions to the Analysis of Sensations* (1886), Mach articulated his idea of the "irrevocable ego," the

FRITZ MAUTHNER 1849–1923



Around the turn of the century, a disillusionment with language and its expressive limits affected a broad range of Viennese writers, including Robert Musil, Arthur Schnitzler, and Hugo von Hofmannsthal. Fritz Mauthner, however, was the first to shape the systematic investigation of language into a philosophy. Influenced, like Ernst Mach, by the empiricism of the British skeptics Francis Bacon and David Hume, Mauthner shared Mach's aversion to metaphysical beliefs. He felt that, in a world of changing values, concepts such as truth and knowledge were subjective and could have no validity as absolutes.

Mauthner recognized that language, based on cultural conventions, was an adequate tool for day-to-day communication, and as such indispensable for survival. But he found it unsuited to the definition of either thought or sensory impressions in all their authenticity. In his *Contributions to a Critique of Language* (1901-03), Mauthner concluded that silence was the only solution; he termed this the "suicide of language." (A parallel may be seen in Hugo von Hofmannsthal, whose similar despair over language culminated in an artistic crisis, which led to his renunciation of the lyrical forms; see p. 2.)

As a novelist, satirist, and as theater critic for the *Berliner Tageblatt*, Mauthner's weapons were irony and satire, in his mind the most effective tools of language. He employed them to debunk what he called "word superstition"—the use of preconceived metaphysical concepts, such as "race" and *Volk*—and to denounce the danger of such vague, yet potent ideas as vehicles for dogmatism and intolerance. ■

ALOIS RIEGL 1858–1905

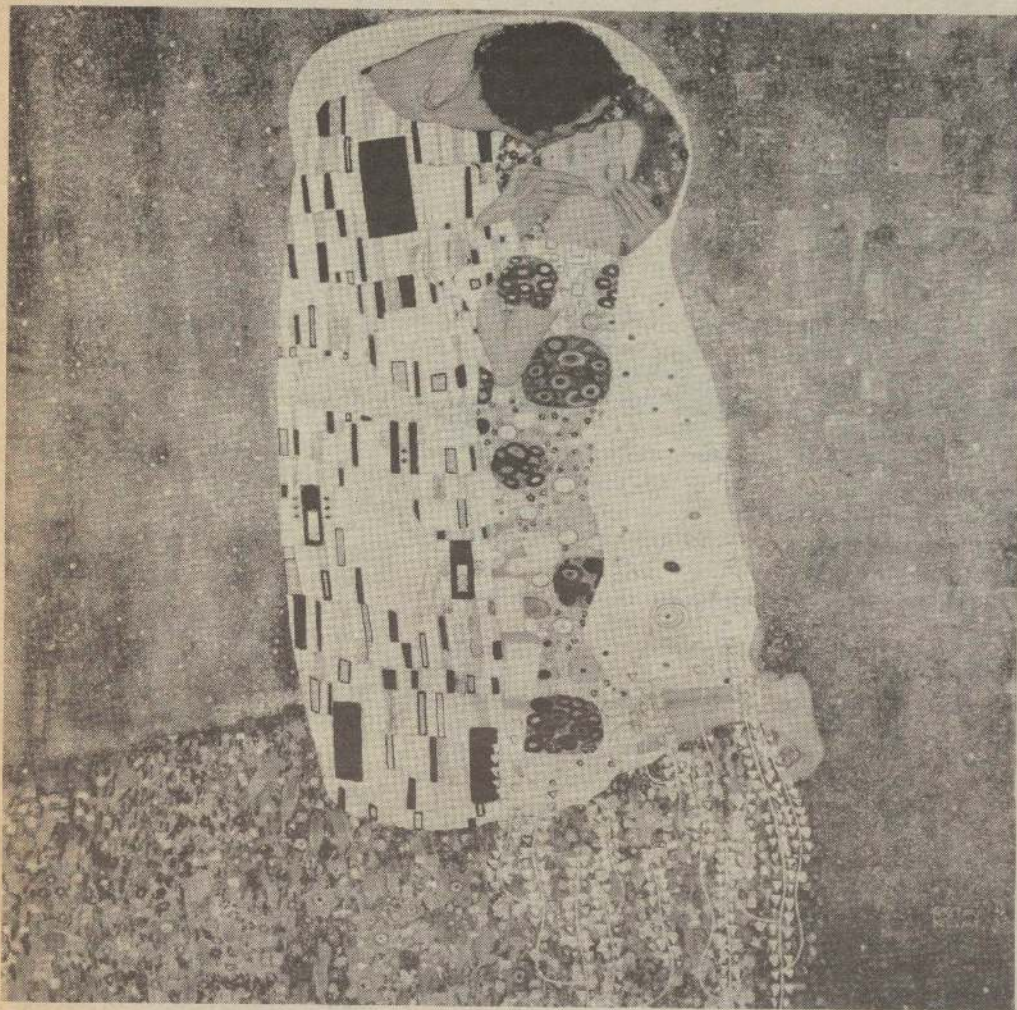


Alois Riegl and his contemporary Franz Wickhoff are considered the founders of the Vienna School of art history. Through his writings, and in particular his books *Problems of Style* (1893) and *Late Roman Art Manufacture, Based on Finds in Austria-Hungary* (1901), Riegl opened up the field of art history to new areas of investigation and to a new interdisciplinary approach.

At a time when scholarship in art was based almost exclusively on considerations of style, and when the classical was the only accepted canon of beauty, Riegl did away with the supremacy of Greco-Roman art. For Riegl each manifestation of art was to be judged, not according to some canon of perfection, but on its own merits and in the context of "the leading intellectual tendencies of its time." He revived interest in hitherto neglected areas of artistic creativity, such as the pre-classical art of Greece, late Roman painting, Baroque art, and early nineteenth-century Biedermeier design—all of which had previously been considered to be only incomplete or decadent versions of nobler forms of classicism.

Together with the artists of the Secession, Riegl was instrumental in breaking down the distinction between "high" and "low" art. His pioneering work in the history of ornament was consonant with the prominence of ornamentation in Jugendstil design and architecture—and with the abstract patterns of ornament in some of Klimt's paintings, which virtually take over the visual field, and help break down naturalism. For Riegl the need for decoration was "one of the most elementary needs of man." He opposed the earlier German theoretician and architect Gottfried Semper's influential premise that the form of a work of art is determined by the demands of its material, and refuted the notion that the imitation of nature was the motivating force behind the creative process. Riegl argued instead that developments of style grow out of an inherent energy within the forms themselves, evoked by what he identified in a famous term as *Kunstwollen*—literally, a "will to art"—which he saw as the product of powerful, if often not wholly conscious, cultural forces special to each age. ■

Klimt's 'Golden' Style



Gustav Klimt. *The Kiss*. 1907-08. Oil and gold on canvas, 70 1/2 x 70 1/2" (180 x 180 cm). Oesterreichische Galerie, Vienna



Gustav Klimt. *Adele Bloch-Bauer I*. 1907. Oil and gold on canvas, 54 1/4 x 54 1/4" (138 x 138 cm). Oesterreichische Galerie, Vienna

Gustav Klimt's father was a goldsmith, and the tradition of artisanship in precious metals remained strong in his family. Some of his early works (such as *Pallas Athene*; see p. 3) featured not only golden elements in the images, but also prominent hammered-metal frames. But it was apparently only after his experience of the sixth-century Byzantine mosaics in Ravenna, on trips in 1903 and 1904, that Klimt began to see the grander expressive possibilities he explored in his "golden" works of about 1907-10.

The hard, glittering surface of these works assertively rejects the atmospheric ambiguities of *fin-de-siècle* Symbolist art. But the rich patterning creates new kinds of confusion for the eye, and the mood of the "golden" pictures involves a complex alchemy. Drawing on a tradition that included everything from Mycenaean metalwork to Renaissance altarpieces and Japanese screen paintings, Klimt evoked a particularly worldly kind of otherworldliness, an alloy of barbarism and decadence in which lust for materials, high spiritualism, and chic elegance were all commingled.

In *Salome (Judith II)* of 1909, Klimt used metallic accents to give concrete immediacy to legendary exoticism — complementing the seductively exposed flesh of the fatal woman, and lending a perverse glamor to the gory motif, with its severed head at lower right. (Judith, like Salome, is the protagonist in a biblical story of decapitation; she beheaded the Babylonian general Holofernes, while Salome requested from Herod the head of John the Baptist.)

However hard-edged, this bejeweled style was attached to the feminine spirit in Klimt's work, and some of its most stunning manifestations lie not in the domain of fantasy, but in the exceptional portraits he made of elegant Viennese ladies. The supreme example is his portrait of Adele Bloch-Bauer of 1907. Here Klimt combines a subtle psychological characterization, in the oddly ill-at-ease twining of the hands and the specifically unglamorous slackness of the physiognomy, with a bristling opulence. Never was more brilliant form given to the Viennese dream of an Eastern splendor that surpassed the rational. In the shadowless golden light that emanates from the picture, the floating variety of forms — checks, spirals, eye-forms, chevrons, meanders, and lozenges — look backward to the primal authority of prehistoric glyphs and forward to the delicate fantasy world of Paul Klee.

Klimt's interest in Eastern art, his attempt to meld artisanal decoration with high art, and his desire to find a modern style that fused sensual and spiritual appeals, all suggest parallels with other artists, such as Matisse, in the same period. But Klimt's special feel for eye-befuddling brilliance and patterned complexity rejected the search for synthetic simplicity found elsewhere in early modern art; and his

acute sense of sophisticated sexual energies, both languorous and tautly strung, could not be satisfied by the earthier physical affirmations of vitalist thought, so influential in his day. The world of dream, and of ambiguity, was his preferred domain, even — or especially — in the gleaming surfaces of these elaborately materialist works.



Gustav Klimt. *Salome (Judith II)*. 1909. Oil on canvas, 69 1/2 x 17 1/2" (175.9 x 45.5 cm). Galleria d'Arte Moderna Ca' Pesaro, Venice

Thus in the most celebrated of all Klimt's works, *The Kiss* of 1907-08, the lovers float above the world in an enclosing nimbus of light, and the melding of opposites is conjured in the coming together of the darker rectangles of the man's robe with the clustered ovals of the woman's — a primordial language for basic principles of constructive reason and biological fertility, suspended within the overall patterned energies. A sweetened, on-erotic intensity that might be called psychedelic permeates this lyrical vision, in which elements of high naturalism and abstract ornament, flowered softness and metallic gleam, seething coiled energy and floating weightlessness, come together to suggest the transports of love as fusion and dissolution. ■

Supporters and Opponents of the New Art

Especially in the early years of the Secession, the forces of innovation in Viennese art found remarkably little resistance. The prime land accorded the rebel group for its building, and the appointments of major Secession figures to teaching positions in state schools, are only the most evident instances of encouragement from high places. Moreover, the antagonism we associate with the eruption of modernism elsewhere in Europe — an antagonism between the avant-garde and an established bourgeoisie — was at first largely absent in Vienna. The Austrian capital has not been traditionally known as an easy environment for genius, as the sufferings of musicians from Beethoven to Mahler attest. Yet only with a conservative turn in governmental policy, after about 1903, did a sense of

exclusion or truncated opportunity begin to mark the outlook of the major Viennese artists.

The new art of the turn of the century seems to have found its most crucial support among the sons and daughters of the businessmen and industrialists of the Ringstrasse era. Their inherited money was used to

to them on other fronts.

The young rich redirected their energies from the public sphere to the cultivation of private sensibility. This shift is perhaps best seen in the very different careers of the architects Otto Wagner — who most frequently found commissions in public-works projects and built primarily

The Austrian capital has not been known as an easy environment for genius.

banish the taint of historicist vulgarity that marked the first decades of industrial wealth. Many of these new fortunes belonged to Jewish families, who found in patronage of the visual arts an avenue of assimilation into a Viennese culture traditionally closed

ly in the city — and Josef Hoffmann — who worked exclusively on private commissions, often for grand villas outside the urban center.

Though the early modern artists of Vienna were targets of critical abuse — especially in the case of

Klimt — they also attracted a loyal coterie of writers and intellectuals who voiced support and were helpful in obtaining clients. Vienna's most acerbic critical voice, however, Karl Kraus, was set against the decorative aesthetics of the Secession and the Werkstaette. Kraus belonged to a separate wing of the Viennese intelligentsia — a circle of professionals and scholars that came more to the fore in the "second wave" of early modern art in Vienna, with the patronage of more disquieting work produced by Oskar Kokoschka and Egon Schiele (see pp. 11 and 13). These new patrons rejected the emphasis on tasteful orchestration that had united the fine and applied arts in the early years of the century and sought an art that challenged, rather than comforted, their sensibilities. ■

PATRONAGE

The variety of social backgrounds among the supporters of Viennese art is suggested by the contrast between the cool elegance of Margaret Stonborough-Wittgenstein in the portrait by Klimt and the disheveled bohemianism of Peter Altenberg, as painted by Kokoschka (p. 13). While Klimt became the painter of the moneyed elite, Schiele and Kokoschka were patronized mainly by a different stratum of society, which included men like Altenberg, the composer Arnold Schoenberg, and the architect Adolf Loos. Schiele's favorite collector was Heinrich Benesch, whose modest salary as a civil servant allowed him to acquire only those paintings that Schiele had planned to destroy.

Collectors of paintings also functioned as promoters of their avant-garde artists. Egon Schiele, for example, met most of his clients through his patron, the art critic Arthur Roessler. And private art collections further provided Viennese artists with important exposure to recent artistic developments outside Austria. Thus Schiele was introduced to Ferdinand Hodler's work at the house of his patron, Carl Reininghausen, while the collection of Oskar Reichel gave Schiele and Kokoschka the opportunity to study works by Manet, Gauguin, van Gogh, Toulouse-Lautrec, and Munch.

Of all the arts, architecture is by its very nature the most dependent on patronage. Joseph Maria Olbrich's Secession building was largely the result of the financial assistance of Karl Wittgenstein, father of the philosopher and founder of a steel combine — and one of the earliest and most persistent sponsors of the new art movement. In 1903 Victor Zuckerkindl, brother-in-law of the influential art critic Berta Zuckerkindl, fulfilled Josef Hoffmann's dream of being able to create the *Gesamtkunstwerk* with the commission for the Purkersdorf Sanatorium. Two years later, the Belgian financier Adolphe Stoclet entrusted Hoffmann with the design and building of his mansion in Brussels.

The Wiener Werkstaette virtually owed its existence to the wholehearted support of Fritz Waerndorfer, heir to one of the largest textile concerns of the empire. His generous financial support offset the effects of the Werkstaette's chronic mismanagement, until he was driven into bankruptcy. After that, the major clients of the Werkstaette joined as shareholders in the concern, thus keeping it afloat by their double support until 1932. ■

KARL KRAUS

1874–1936

Writer, poet, journalist, would-be actor, and polemicist, Karl Kraus was a mordant adversary of Gustav Klimt and the Secession, the artists of the Wiener Werkstaette, and the writers of Jung-Wien. His 1896 polemical essay "Die Demolierte Literatur" ("The Demolished Literature") denounced as *Kaffeehaus-Dekadenz-Moderne* their tendency to disguise reality behind the aestheticizing screen of art. That made him an ally of the architect Adolf Loos, who — a staunch moralist like Kraus — had rejected the fake historicizing styles of the Ringstrasse. Both ridiculed what they saw as the tyranny of taste. Although Kraus was at odds with many of the first generation of turn-of-the-century Viennese artists, he maintained a strong following among such younger artists as Oskar Kokoschka and Arnold Schoenberg. His journal *Die Fackel* (*The Torch*), which he founded in 1899, and wrote single-handedly from 1911 until his death in 1936, be-



came Kraus's pulpit from which he relentlessly denounced the hypocrisies of Viennese society. Police and military corruption, the superficiality of the operettas of Franz Lehár, Herzl's Zionism, Freud's psychoanalysis, and the poetic aestheticism of Hugo von Hofmannsthal, as well as just about everything by and about Hermann Bahr, were the repeated targets of Kraus's scathing wit. He

brought the same passion to his defense of the underdogs of society as to the praise of the neglected works of his favorite authors, standing up as strongly for prostitutes and homosexuals as for Offenbach's operettas, the writing of the earlier Austrian satirist Johann Nestroy, and the late works of Goethe.

Kraus's most virulent attacks were aimed at the press, in particular the writers of feuilletons (brief essays of opinion; see p. 2). He argued that their dishonest and narcissistic mingling of fact and personal opinion would lead inexorably to the distortion of truth and disruption of creative fantasy. Kraus saw himself as the defender of integrity. In its name he fought for a strict separation between imaginative prose and factual reporting.

Kraus did not share his generation's skepticism concerning the power of words to convey personal experience (see p. 2). On the contrary Kraus strongly believed in the correspondence between language and ethical thought. He saw in the abuse of language a clear indication of person-

al as well as societal depravity — a moral sickness which he thought had led to the disasters of World War I. This at least was the basic thrust of *Die letzten Tage der Menschheit* (*The Last Days of Mankind*) of 1919–22, his epic, collage-form satire on World War I, in which he indicted the murderous alliance of ink, death, and technology ("Tinte, Tod, und Technik").

Although Jewish by birth, Kraus, like Otto Weininger, whom he admired, converted to Christianity and adopted a sharply critical attitude toward everything Jewish. Some saw therein the reason for his unrelenting opposition to the so-called *goût Juif* of the Secession and its patrons and supporters.

Kraus remained publicly silent about Hitler's rise to power. However, in his final work, *Die dritte Walpurgisnacht* (*The Third Walpurgis Night*), completed before his death in 1936 but not published until 1952, he saw the horrors of the rising Third Reich, which he treated elliptically — by reference to Goethe's *Faust*, and through an analysis of language and speech in political propaganda. ■

HERMANN

BAHR

1863–1934

Hermann Bahr, the apostle of the modern movement in Vienna, was the author of forty plays, ten novels, and several dozen volumes of prose, and the most knowledgeable Goethe commentator of his time. Yet Bahr is mainly remembered today as a critic of his contemporary culture. As an early champion of the Secession, he was an important mediator between the artists and their public, as well as between the Viennese and the international art scene.

Bahr was enthusiastic for everything new. For him being modern meant being two steps ahead of his time and being "at every time a rev-



olutionary" — an ambition that won him the nickname "der Mann von Uebermorgen" ("the Man from the Day After Tomorrow"). However, his constant changes of allegiance led

also to the criticism that he lacked character. As a young student in Vienna, Bahr revolted against the liberal beliefs of his family by his Pan-Germanic, anti-Semitic, and pro-Bismarckian sentiments. In 1884, while studying economics in Berlin, he turned to socialism, in which he saw the "central science of life."

Visiting Paris in 1888, he became fascinated by Symbolism and subjectivity, the artificial and the mystical, as he found them in the works of Joris-Karl Huysmans and Maurice Barrès. Bahr celebrated the decadent movement as "nervous romanticism," a "mysticism of the nerves." His new gods — Ibsen, Strindberg, Nietzsche, Stendhal, Verlaine, and Wilde — were the models for "die Moderne," the modern movement that Bahr promoted in his book *Die Ueberwindung des Naturalismus*

(*The Overcoming of Naturalism*) of 1891.

Already a pivotal member of the Jung-Wien literary group (see p. 2), Bahr joined the Secession at its inception in 1897 and became a literary advisor of its journal *Ver Sacrum*. A loyal supporter of Klimt, he published *Gegen Klimt* (*Against Klimt*, 1903) as a testimony to the polemics that surrounded Klimt's work. From 1897 to 1900 Bahr wrote innumerable articles on the Secession, after which he considered the movement established and no longer in need of defense.

Bahr later came to believe that the cultural energy he had seen as youthful and promising in Viennese art and literature of the turn of the century had in fact proved to be only the last gasp of a dying culture. Seeking a title for his collected works, he suggested "Alt-Oesterreich" ("Old Austria"). ■

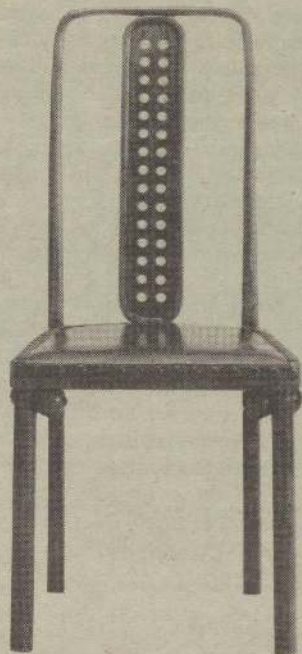
The Wiener Werkstaette and Geometric Style

In 1903, Josef Hoffmann and Koloman Moser founded the collaborative design enterprise the Wiener Werkstaette (Viennese Workshop). Uniting the best craftsmen under optimum working conditions, the aims of the Werkstaette were clearly expressed by Hoffmann in an article written in 1904: "We want to establish an intimate connection between public, designer, and craftsman, to create good simple articles of household use. Our point of departure is purpose, utility is our prime consideration, our strength must lie in good proportions and use of materials.... The work of craftsmen must be measured by the same standard as that of the painter and the sculptor...."

The Werkstaette program clearly reflected the Secession's intent to strive for unity in the arts. But even more essential to the workshop idea was the English Arts and Crafts movement that had developed in the mid-nineteenth century. The writings of the Englishmen John Ruskin and William Morris had stressed the social responsibility of art and the moral nature of handicrafts. Their ideas had been amplified around 1900 by Charles Robert Ashbee, who established the Guild of Handicrafts in London, and Charles Rennie Mackintosh, working in Glasgow. Both designers had participated in the eighth Secession exhibition, in 1900, where their furniture and interior designs deeply impressed the Viennese public, and Hoffmann continued to correspond with Mackintosh. The link between the British and Austrian design movements was further reinforced by the Anglophile tastes of the Werkstaette's patron, Fritz Waerndorfer. It was Waerndorfer who underwrote the initial expenses for establishing the Werkstaette, enabling Hoffmann and Moser to include bookbinding, work in gold and silver, and leather, as well as furniture.

Most frequently, Wiener Werkstaette furniture is noted for its severe rectilinearity and elegant detail. Designs often featured decorative inlay, which accentuated the lines of the piece without disrupting its contours. The inlaid desk by Koloman Moser when closed forms a solid rectangular block; it opens to provide drawers, compartments, and writing space. A dazzling all-over geometric pattern enlivens the flat surface planes and camouflages the points where the hinged pieces fit together. On the front, Moser inset ebony, mother-of-pearl, ivory, and gold leaf to compose an "antique"-inspired tableau of two figures and dolphins.

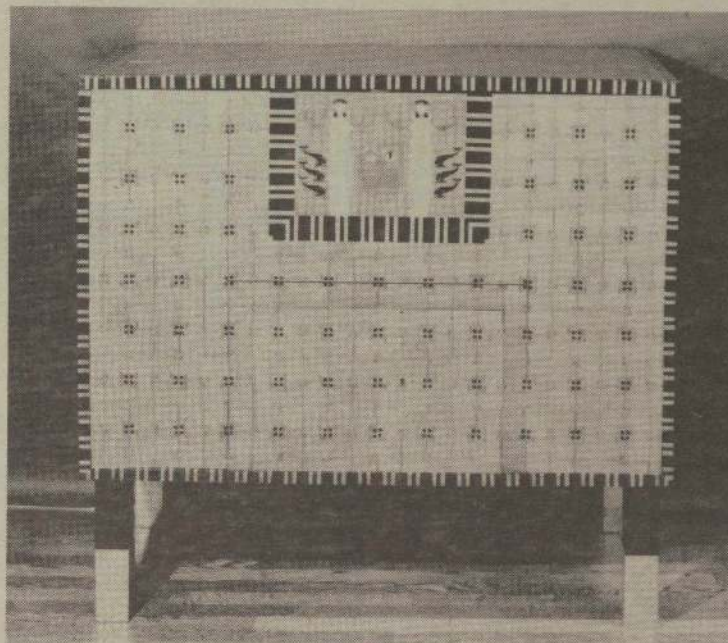
The Werkstaette furniture designs coincided with a new appreciation in Vienna for the simplicity of Biedermeier—the neoclassical style of Austrian furniture and architecture of about 1810-45. Respect for the plainness of Biedermeier may be sensed in the bentwood furniture made by the firm of Thonet Brothers in Vienna. Wagner, Moser, and Loos all admired



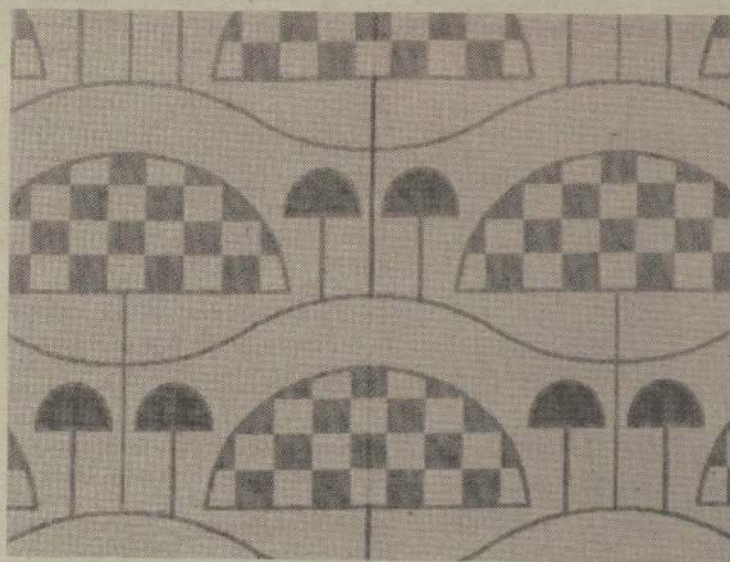
Josef Hoffmann. "Purkersdorf" Side Chair. c. 1904. Wood and leather, 39½ x 17¼ x 16½" (100 x 45 x 43 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York

the simple clarity of the unpretentious mass-produced work of Thonet. In turn, they designed furniture very much in this spirit for specific clients and also for general production by Thonet and the rival bentwood manufacturer J. & J. Kohn.

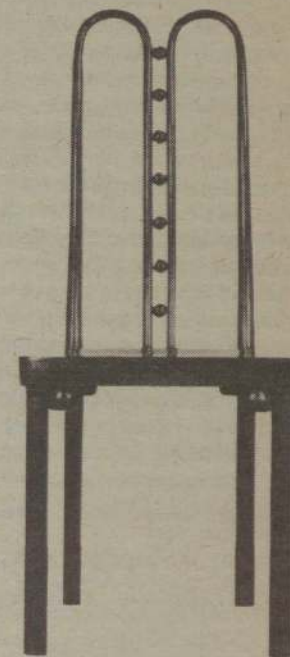
The characteristic products of the first few years of Wiener Werkstaette design were punched-metal and hammered-metal objects. The challenge for the designers was to elicit richness from reduction. Koloman Moser's elegant cruets and stand (1904) exemplify such an ideal. The silver stand is punched into a crisp design of squares, precisely measured so that each opening is twice the width of the supporting strip. A double "ribbon" of squares acts as the handle for the low rectangular base. Set against the burnished silver are the two cruets—smooth, conical sweeps of glass with spherical



Koloman Moser. Writing Desk. 1902. Inlaid wood and metal, 43½ x 47 x 23½" (110 x 119.2 x 60.6 cm). Private collection, New York



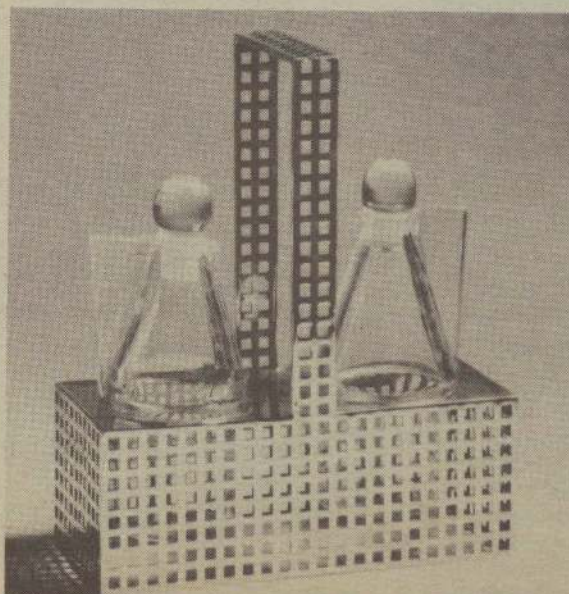
Josef Hoffmann. "Mushrooms" Fabric Sample. 1902. Fabric, 36 x 46½" (91.5 x 118.2 cm). Collection Backhausen & Soehne, Vienna. © Backhausen & Soehne



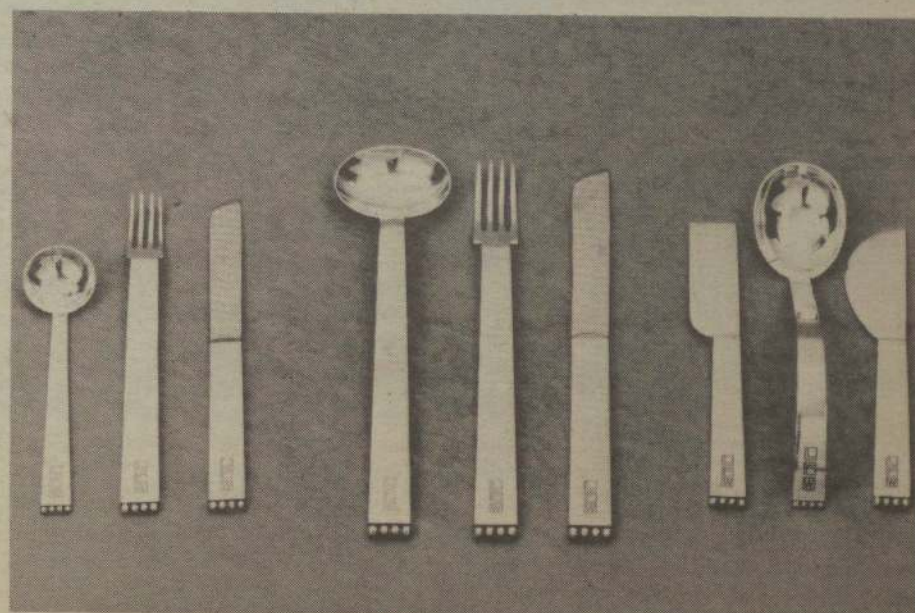
Josef Hoffmann. "Seven-Ball" Side Chair. 1906. Wood, 44 x 16½ x 16" (111.8 x 41.9 x 40.7 cm). Collection Tim Chu

tops and right-angled handles. Typical of many Werkstaette pieces, the spare geometry of this design is enriched by the fine materials crafted scrupulously by hand.

In principle, the rigorous purity of design is appropriate for useful objects which would be distributed to a broad public. In practice, however, their lavish materials and costly handwork make them available only to an elite. As the Werkstaette grew and expanded, it became an international purveyor of fine silks, fashions, and decorative ceramics and silver, often highly ornate. Its promise of reforming life for the common man through better design was never fulfilled. But in the best productions of the Wiener Werkstaette's early years, simplicity and luxury become complementary principles that define a modern sense of material pleasure. ■



Koloman Moser. Cruets and Stand. c. 1904. Silver and glass, 6¼" (17.2 cm) high. Private collection



Josef Hoffmann. Cutlery for Lilly and Fritz Waerndorfer. c. 1906. Silver; middle group: spoon, 8½" (21.8 cm) long; fork, 8½" (21.6 cm) long; knife, 8½" (21.5 cm) long. Oesterreichisches Museum fuer angewandte Kunst, Vienna

The Aesthetics of Nationalism

The inflections of "folk-style" apparent in Viennese art and design around 1908 signaled a complex pattern of reactions against the metropolis and its values. On one level, these stylizations spoke with a strongly conservative voice — expressing a veneration for the greater continuity and solidity of rural life as a reaction against the rapid ascendancy of urban, secular, industrial society. As such, they were part of a quasi-official style, reflected most obviously in the picturesque peasant brigades in the parades for the emperor's jubilee in 1908. This conservatism stressed the state as an organic collective, determined by local bonds of blood and tradition — more deep-seated

than the "universal" legal and rational values previously touted by liberal politics. (Ironically, it was just such particularism, on the part of the empire's self-assertive ethnic minorities, that threatened Austria-Hungary's stability.)

Stress on ethnic costume and rustic decorative style in Austria (a force that revived popular forms of the country's Baroque age as well) attached itself to the broader wave of militant nationalism that swept Northern Europe beginning in the late nineteenth century. This movement looked to the sagas and traditions of the North as sources of a rude vigor, impervious to what was seen as the corrupt and effete decadence of modern

times. The eclectic historicism that marked the Ringstrasse era, and the multifaceted Anglomania that was apparent in the avant-garde around 1900, thus gave way to a more assertive Pan-Germanism — a sentiment that reached its height in the years of

nance) was among the most sinister aspects of this new, anti-socialist, anti-universalist *Heimatkunst* (literally, "homeland-art," known as *Provinzkunst* in Austria), with its veneration for Germanic home and hearth.

Folk-style in Viennese art could,

Conservatism stressed the state as an organic collective, determined by bonds of blood and tradition.

World War I. A strong streak of anti-Semitism (based in part on the stereotyped image of the Jew as exemplar of modernity by virtue of rootlessness and engagement with capitalist fi-

however, have quite different implications. Gustav Klimt's interest in "barbaric" ornament, Emilie Floege's attraction to peasant lacework of the Slovak provinces, the high estimation

of children's art by the young Oskar Kokoschka and others in his circle — all these were signs of a radical revaluation of untutored art as the direct expression of primal imagination. These tendencies connected to the broader climate of interest in "primitive" style that had been announced by Paul Gauguin in France, and that was particularly evident in expressionist circles in Munich. Such attention to the "low" styles of popular prints and rural devotional imagery was the opposite of conservative local chauvinism, as it disrupted hierarchies and cultural boundaries — melding East and West, old and new, in an effort to find unconventional signs of the basic energies of creativity. ■

THEODOR HERZL

1860–1904

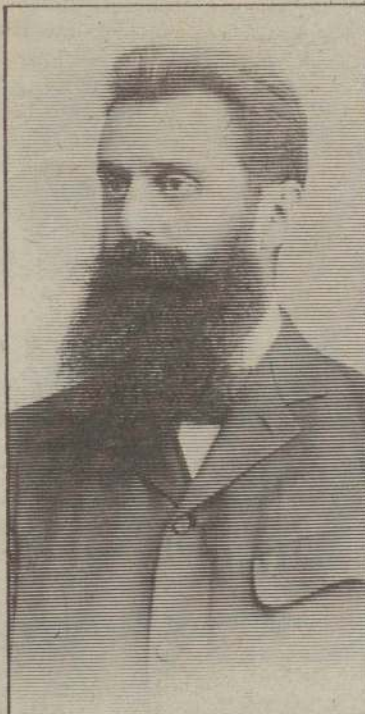
"Zionism aspires to create a publicly guaranteed homeland for the Jewish people in the land of Israel"; thus read the program for the first Zionist congress, in Basel in 1897. Just over fifty years later (on May 14, 1948), the State of Israel was proclaimed. Behind the idea, and instrumental in building the movement that achieved it, was the utopian dreamer and man of action Theodor Herzl, the founder of political Zionism.

Born in Budapest, Herzl was brought up in the liberal tradition. But as an ardent Germanophile, he worshipped Bismarck and Richard Wagner, and as a student of law in Vienna he even joined a Pan-Germanic fraternity. It was there that Herzl suffered his first major anti-Semitic humiliation, when his name was erased from the fraternity's membership list. Like many Viennese Jews of the upper bourgeoisie, Herzl was convinced that assimilation — total absorption of the local intellectual, cultural, and even gentile religious background — would be the Jewish people's only viable strategy against anti-Semitism. Very much the fashionable dandy, dreaming of aristocratic or ambassadorial rank, he shared many of his society's prejudices against Jews.

Herzl's stay in Paris in the early 1890s, as correspondent of the *Neue Freie Presse* (the voice of Austrian liberalism and the most influential newspaper in Vienna), provided the background for his conversion from cosmopolitan aesthete to dedicated Zionist. Expecting to visit the land of *égalité* and *fraternité*, Herzl was shocked to find France in the throes of growing anti-Semitism — which came to a head during the Dreyfus trial (1893-95). The experience awoke in him aspirations of leadership, and he decided to become the defender of the Jews. Rejecting rational solutions, Herzl dreamed (according to his diary) of defending Jewish honor in duels with major anti-Semitic figures — or of converting Jewish children en

masse to Catholicism, in exchange for a Papal pledge of protection.

Gradually, however, Herzl recognized that assimilation could not be the solution for an increasingly race-related anti-Semitism. (Ironically, the



idea for a Jewish state came to him during a performance of Wagner's *Tannhauser*.) In his book *The Jewish State* (1896), Herzl wrote that the Jewish problem was political — and not, as generally believed, religious or economic — and that the solution could only be found on the level of international politics. His idea of a return to a Jewish homeland rekindled a long-standing hope of Orthodox Jews and brought back to life an idea, considered even by Napoleon as early as 1799, of a Jewish state in Palestine.

Herzl brought to these dreams a new systematic approach and an irresistible personal drive. Living a double life — as the feuilleton editor for

In the Secession two tendencies were evident from the very beginning: the "stylists" around the central figure of Gustav Klimt, and the "naturalists" around the painter Josef Engelhart. After the departure of Klimt and the other "stylists" in 1905, the "naturalists" increasingly extolled the simple forms of Germanic folk art in contrast to the "effeminate" influences from abroad, be they Impressionism or Symbolism.

In stark contrast to the cosmopolitan aesthetic culture of the artists associated with Klimt or the writers of Jung-Wien, such *Provinzkunst* was rigorously anti-urban and anti-modern. Hermann Bahr, the champion of Jung-Wien who in the eighties and nineties had advocated the psychological approach of aestheticism (see p. 6), became — with his 1899 essay "Die Entdeckung der Provinz" ("The Discovery of the Provinces") — one of the propagators of *Provinzkunst*. In literature, theater, and art, this new outlook offered heroes of earthy peasant stock instead of sensitive urbanites. True defenders of the native culture of the fatherland, ready to fight and die for *Blut und Boden* ("blood and soil"), these heroic peasants became the new ideal; and the *Provinzkunstler* ("artist of the provinces") — inspired by the ethical lessons of fairy tales and Northern legends and sagas — was seen as the sole interpreter of the folk soul. For the lower middle class, uncomfortable in the new urban culture, such veneration of rural life

and a "purer" past provided an escape into the utopia of an idealized, pre-industrial society.

Polemics between the country and the cities were virulent in innumerable periodicals of the time. Published



Hubert von Zwickle. Postcard for Emperor Franz Josef's Jubilee. 1908. Lithograph, 5 1/2 x 3 1/2" (13.4 x 8.9 cm). Collection Leonard A. Lauder

under the telling titles of *Heimat* (Homeland), *Das Land*, *Heimatschutz* (Protection of the Homeland), *Der Gral* (The Grail), and *Neue Bahnen* (New Paths), their constant objective seemed to have been to assail the city

as an avaricious whore. The periodical *Der Kyffhaeuser* (the name of a mountain in the nationalistic myth of Barbarossa) was founded with the specific aim of advancing the premises of the extreme right-wing politician Georg von Schoenerer's German nationalist movement. On the cover of its first issue, in 1899, this magazine called itself the "battlefield for German politics, culture and art."

In literature and poetry the same battles were waged. Whether in the German Julius Langbehn's widely influential anti-modern tract *Rembrandt as Educator* (1890) or in the architectural articles of Alfred Lichtwark, the message was the same: only a return to the spirit of peasant art could provide the vital energy necessary for the revival of a healthy national art. Lichtwark's praise for the nobly unpolished forms of the houses made by fishermen and farmers gave rise to two very different interpretations. A modernist such as Josef Hoffmann (who had provided the architectural renderings for an article by Lichtwark) could draw on the spirit of simplicity for a purified monumentality, while others saw in Lichtwark's writing the license for a profusion of picturesque detail. But the mannered artificiality of *Provinzkunst* was its least noxious aspect; its more consequential impact lay in the virulent attacks on the intellectual, cultural, and ethical foundations of liberalism — forebodings of a darker future. ■

the *Neue Freie Presse* (delighting Viennese society with the wit and intelligence of his writing) and as the charismatic ambassador of Zionism — Herzl relentlessly pursued his dream. He organized the World Congress of Zionists, founded a Zionist periodical, and traveled extensively to gain support for his idea (visiting, among others, Emperor Wilhelm II, Sultan Abdul Hamid II, and Pope Pius X). Convinced that the "promised land

is where we carry it," Herzl was even prepared to accept England's offer of Uganda as a homeland for the Jews. The land he envisioned was to be built on models of the liberal tradition; in it, every language would be spoken — except Yiddish, which for him was stigmatized by its use in the ghettos.

Herzl's secular approach, opposed by many Orthodox Jews and by assimilationists reluctant to accept the idea of Jewish statehood, nonetheless took

hold powerfully in the ghettos of Eastern Europe. It was not until his funeral, when thousands of Jews came from all over Europe to mourn their leader, that many of Herzl's contemporaries fully understood how powerful the movement had become in only eight years. And some may have realized, with Stefan Zweig, "how much passion and hope this lone and lonesome man had borne into the world through the power of a single thought." ■

Kunstschau and the Kabarett Fledermaus

In 1905 Gustav Klimt led a group of artists in defecting from the Secession, further fragmenting Viennese artistic life. The "Klimt Group" decided to hold an independent exhibition in 1908, to coincide with the celebration of the sixty-year anniversary of Emperor Franz Josef's reign. Staged on rented land in temporary pavilions designed by Josef Hoffmann, *Kunstschau Wien 1908* (Vienna Art Show 1908) marked the most complete expression of the desire to extend art into every realm of life. The Wiener Werkstaette and the Kunstgewerbeschule participated along with the Klimt Group. Besides the rooms devoted to painting and design, there was also an outdoor theater, and even a complete house prototype by Josef Hoffmann, ready to sell.

The displays at the *Kunstschau* announced dramatic shifts in Viennese aesthetics. Instead of the severe, impersonal geometry that had dominated the first years of Wiener Werkstaette design (see p. 7), a more eclectic, often Romantic sensibility now dominated, in the form of elaborate, brightly colored designs that looked to folk art and children's art for their inspiration.

Styles that were held to be specially characteristic of Northern lands (as opposed to the classical heritage of the Mediterranean), or particular to Austria, were taken as models from the past. Thus such disparate modes as a flowery neo-Baroque and a self-conscious archaism could appear side by side, united in their rejection of any "rational," reductive plainness. Where architecture had seemed to dominate design from around 1902 to 1905, a more fanciful emphasis on complex surface pattern now emerged, drawing on spirals and filigree patterns found more often in embroidery and metalwork. On the one hand this suggests trivialization, pandering to a taste for the merely cute and picturesque; but on the other hand, these designs also often contained the marks of a new energy that would give rise to expressionism.

In Carl Otto Czeschka's illustrations for *Die Nibelungen*, several of the new directions in Viennese art were implicit. The attention lavished



Bertold Loeffler. Poster for Kabarett Fledermaus. 1908. Lithograph, 24 3/4 x 17 1/2" (63 x 43.5 cm). Historisches Museum der Stadt Wien

on this book, which was part of an ambitious series of illustrated tales for young readers, typifies the new interest not only in Northern legends and sagas but also in art by or for children. Drawing on the patterns of peasant embroidery and on a style of medieval manuscript illumination, Czeschka stressed a "barbaric" congestion of patterns, and sought nobility in a certain willed stiffness of line and pose.

Kabarett Fledermaus

In 1907, the Wiener Werkstaette built for itself a theater/restaurant, the Kabarett Fledermaus. Inspired by the artists' cabarets in Paris, the Fledermaus was intended to extend the

The cabaret featured a mixed program of experimental dance, theater, and poetry readings as well as more popular entertainments. During the second week of performances, the twenty-one-year-old Oskar Kokoschka attempted to project a sequence of images in a shadow drama entitled *The Speckled Egg* (a kind of cinematographic allegory).

Josef Hoffmann designed the interior of the Fledermaus as well as its furniture and silver. In the theater room, he used gray and white marble, prefiguring the deluxe feel of the Palais Stoclet interior (see p. 15). But covering the bar-room wall were over seven thousand randomly sized tiles of every color, arranged like a large mosaic in a crazy-quilt design. The tiles of riotous color and comic content were made by Bertold Loeffler and Michael Powolny of the Wiener Keramik.

The rambunctious humor of the bar's decor is due in part to the Fledermaus club spirit. But it reflects, too, the wider turning away from classicizing dignity toward styles more picturesque and varied, from the earlier Secessionist clarity toward a new emphasis on figural fantasy.

Fashion

The subject of women's clothing involves the larger issues of feminism and ultimately even nationalism. The fashionable silhouette of the tightly corseted ladies of the 1880s was regarded in progressive circles as an unhealthy and constricting deformation of the body. Whalebone and laces

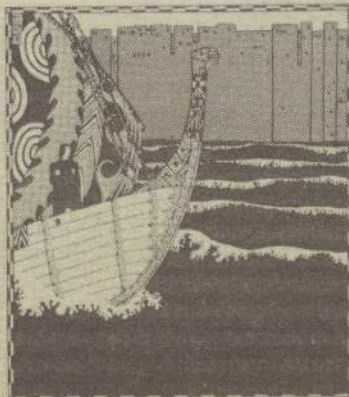
such clothes could be made more appealing if the plain, straight lines of the Reform dress were redefined by the style of the Napoleonic empire or the more "antique" look. The resulting Rational dress of Floege and Gustav Klimt was promoted by the fashion department of the Wiener Werkstaette.

The major talent shaping Werkstaette fashion was Eduard Josef Wimmer-Wisgrill, Vienna's answer to the star of Paris couture, Paul Poiret. Wimmer-Wisgrill's designs and those of his Werkstaette colleagues show a constant dialogue with French fashion. Poiret in turn admired Hoffmann's work, visited Vienna in 1912, and purchased quantities of fabric from the Werkstaette.

The fabric workshops, and eventually the special Werkstaette stores dedicated to fashion, were among the most prominent and profitable aspects of the enterprise. The success of Wimmer-Wisgrill and the Werkstaette fashions among German and Austrian patrons was due not only to the quality of design but also to the social need to beat Paris at its own game. And when the war came, the Werkstaette was expected to take the lead in redefining a properly Germanic mode; in the folio of approved designs for 1914-15, the slim elegance of the previous years switches to a suitably sturdy look.

Jewelry

Josef Hoffmann, Koloman Moser, and other Viennese artists applied to brooches and bracelets the same principles that governed their larger projects. One of the key principles of the Wiener Werkstaette was that good craftsmanship and design were more important, and ultimately more valuable, than expensive materials. Thus the Werkstaette stressed well-worked jewelry of original design, fashioned from silver more often than gold and using beautiful semi-precious stones rather than valuable gems. Intricate structures and a special attention to the colored patterning of variegated stones make Hoffmann's brooches distinctly Viennese in their appeal, and remind us that — as in the case of fashion — elegant glamor was central to the aesthetic aims of much of the early modern art in Vienna. ■



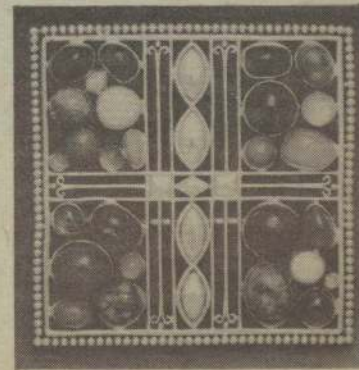
Carl Otto Czeschka. Two-Page Illustration from *Die Nibelungen* (Vienna: Gerlach & Wiedling, 1920; original ed., 1908). Lithographs; each, 5 7/8 x 5 3/8" (14.8 x 13.5 cm). Collection Ronald and Hilde Zacks, Hamden, Connecticut



Bar-room of the Kabarett Fledermaus, c. 1907

group's cultural mission into the performing arts. In its two active seasons, the Fledermaus became the haunt of the Viennese avant-garde. Discarding the cultish solemnity of the *Ver Sacrum* years, the cabaret set a more playful tone.

were to be discarded, and dresses were to fall away from the body to allow for free movement. This new "Reform" dress was at first the costume of resolutely unfashionable feminists. But the dress designer Emilie Floege among others realized that



Josef Hoffmann. Brooch. 1908. Silver, partially gilded, with lapis lazuli, coral, opal, almandine, turquoise, chrysoprase, agate, moonstone, and karnel, 2 1/2 x 2 1/2" (5.5 x 5.5 cm). Private collection

Dreams and Sexuality

Dreamy eroticism seems in some respects the key to the fluid lightness of much of Viennese art, fantasy blurring the line between the desired and the actual. But eros and the unconscious were equally near the heart of the most disrupting and disturbing innovations of early modern Viennese culture. The realm of the dream, evoked by Gustav Klimt in the fluid lines of pliant languor, took on an unsettling concreteness in the more grotesque visions of Alfred Kubin; and the melding of narcissism with sensuality that gave *fin-de-siècle* art its allure was transformed by Egon Schiele into a more extreme form of corporal self-obsession. In all these cases, the taste for fantasy commingled with nightmarish apprehension, the savor of sensuality was never far removed from the threat of pain, and the role of art was seen in terms of both confrontation and consolation. Such art has often been held to show that Vienna was the appropriate, if not the necessary, setting for Sigmund Freud's ideas re-

garding the ambiguous power of unconscious sexuality in human affairs.

Freud's studies of cases of hysteria led him to the specific recognition of the repressed sexuality of women of the Viennese upper and middle classes. The disparity between the social facade and inner trauma of these women in turn pointed to the painfully

■ ■ ■
Fantasy
commingled
with nightmare;
sensuality was
never far removed
from pain.
■ ■ ■

evident hypocrisies to which sexuality gave rise in the culture of the day. Celebrated in verse and image, the erotic was given little if any expression in "proper" Viennese society. Young men exploited the lower-class working women known generically as *suesse Maedel* ("sweet young things")

in a form of casual prostitution, while upper- and middle-class women were expected to remain innocent until marriage. The interest in adolescent girls that we find in such Viennese figures as Adolf Loos, Peter Altenberg, and Egon Schiele thus suggests not only the new awareness of the onset of sexuality, but also an ongoing fascination with the stimulations of innocence and with unequal relationships outside social convention.

Klimt's portraits (see p. 5) record one aspect of this world, its elite of financially and intellectually privileged women. Schiele's drawings display another side, the available, raw-boned models from the fringes of society; and Kokoschka's cruel fantasies of primal male/female confrontation give full vent to the darker energies Freud found. It is not only the general mingling of dream and eros, but the specific mixture within this imagery — of desire and danger, glamor and unease, the chic and the shocking — that seems attuned to the Viennese temper. ■

OTTO WEININGER

1880–1903



At twenty-four, Otto Weininger was convinced that he had identified the key to human nature. He argued the point in his contentious first book, *Sex and Character* (1903), an expanded version of *Eros and Psyche*, his 1902 dissertation in philosophy and psychology for the University of Vienna. The book included a highly controversial compendium of philosophical and para-scientific ideas from Plato, Aristotle, Kant, and Schopenhauer—as well as a restatement of Freud's concepts on bisexuality and the "castration complex," ideas which had been brought to Weininger's attention through the indiscretion of one of Freud's clients.

Weininger's theories are based on the assumption that the "feminine" and the "masculine" are independent principles which, mixed in varying proportions, determine the gender and character of living organisms. The masculine, in his view, is guided by rationality and creativity and the feminine by irrational and destructive forces. Woman exists for and by her sexuality alone. This concept of the fatal woman coincides with turn-of-the-century Symbolist views, expressed in such paintings by Gustav Klimt as *Judith I* and *Salome* (see p. 5). Whereas Klimt couches the deadly danger of his *femmes fatales* in the allure of erotic attraction, the puritanical Weininger only sees doom for a society in the fatal grip of destructive feminine values.

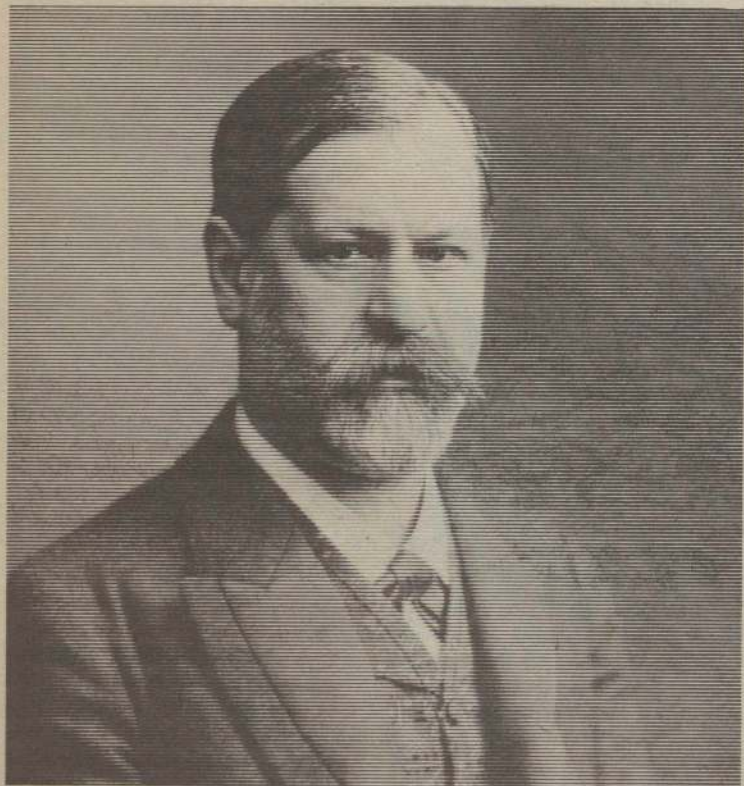
In one chapter of *Sex and Character*, Weininger—a born Jew who had converted to Protestantism—developed a bitterly anti-Semitic thesis. He identified "the Aryan race" with the masculine principle and "the Jewish race" and culture with the despised feminine principle. Weininger used Freud's concept of the castration complex as the basis for his contention that Jews, like women, lack ego and thus self-esteem.

Weininger committed suicide at the age of twenty-four. More the Romantic "decadent" than he wanted to admit, he chose for his final act the house where Beethoven had died.

A scathing controversy arose over the virulent anti-feminist and anti-Semitic ideas in *Sex and Character* (and over questions of authorship and plagiarism). Far more widely circulated than Freud's books, Weininger's led to misconceptions about psychoanalysis in general. Karl Kraus's defense and interpretation in *Die Fackel* helped Weininger's ideas gain special currency among Viennese intellectuals and artists. The philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein, the composer Arnold Schoenberg, and even Freud himself acknowledged the austere rigor of Weininger's argument. Later, his ideas fell on more dangerous ground, as they were adapted to serve Nazi racial ideology. ■

SIGMUND FREUD

1856–1939



Almost a century has passed since Sigmund Freud opened his private medical practice. Living and working at Berggasse 19 in Vienna, he developed the techniques in the treatment of neuroses which he was to call psychoanalysis. By his own admission psychoanalysis did not "drop from the skies ready made"; psychology and psychiatry have their roots in the shamanistic dawn of time, and the concept of the subconscious had come down in philosophy from Plato, via Leibniz and Schopenhauer. Freud contributed a systematic approach to the under-

standing of subconscious motivation. He recognized that some physical disorders were of psychic origin, and were due to a process of resistance and repression in the subconscious strata of the mind.

The birth of psychoanalysis occurred, according to Freud, in the years 1895–1900, when he wrote what he considered his major work, *The Interpretation of Dreams* (published 1900). He was convinced that the investigation of dreams had opened up the "royal road to a knowledge of the unconscious activities of the mind."

Freud's approach relied on several new techniques which together constituted the essence of the psychoanalytical process: the interpretation of "free association," the elucidation of the hidden content of dream imagery (which he saw as fulfilling, in disguised form, the desires of waking life), and the investigation of early childhood memories. In particular Freud revealed that the many cases of hysteria among women of the Viennese upper bourgeoisie were rooted in frustration over unavowed sexual desire. Freud was convinced that a neurosis would be healed once its deeper reasons were understood, and that a trauma could be mastered by re-experiencing its cause—through the psychoanalytic process of "transference," in which the patient shifts the focus of the original emotion onto the representative figure of the therapist.

Freud came to psychoanalysis relatively late in life. Under the spell of Darwinian evolutionary theory and Goethe's nature philosophy he chose science over law and began medical studies in Vienna at age seventeen. He preferred research, but took up medical practice because of financial need. In 1885, in Paris, Freud witnessed Jean-Martin Charcot's treatment of hysteria through hypnosis. Back in Vienna he and Joseph Breuer developed their own treatments, which they published in *Studies on Hysteria* (1895). Five years after *The Interpretation of Dreams* Freud published his most explosive ideas in *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (1905), further developing his insights into the sexuality of children, and their obsession with their parents in what he called the Oedipus complex.

Although Freud's theories were sharply criticized, his fascination with the life of the psyche was shared by a generation of thinkers. This growing sensitivity to psychological states was, according to Carl Schorske, a central aspect of the late nineteenth-century reaction against the rationalist beliefs of Austrian liberal culture. The writers Robert Musil and Arthur Schnitzler, to name just two figures among many in the arts, were clearly involved in uncovering the deeper layers of human consciousness; and they shared with the painter Gustav Klimt an interest, parallel to Freud's, in intertwined obsessions with death and sex.

Notwithstanding those currents of interest, only three hundred and fifty copies of *The Interpretation of Dreams* had been sold two years after it was published. Freud found refuge from disappointment in his fascination with archaeology (which attracted him because of its obvious parallels with the process of psychoanalysis). More important, in order to escape what he felt to be intellectual isolation, Freud started in 1902 a series of informal gatherings with like-minded psychologists: the Psychological Wednesday Society, which grew in 1908 into the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society and then in 1910 into the International Psychoanalytic Association. The latter was beset from the beginning by dissent and defection.

Despite his lifelong love-hate relationship with Viennese society, Freud left the city only unwillingly, after the Nazis took over Austria in 1938. He died one year later, in England, of the cancer that had plagued him for the last sixteen years of his life. ■

Drawing

Line played a dominant role in the development of early modern art in Vienna, from the sinuous tendrils of Gustav Klimt's organicism to the more tortured contours of Egon Schiele's and Oskar Kokoschka's figures. Draftsmanship was thus a key talent for the Viennese artists. It often served as a major, independent form of expression, and it yielded some of the most arresting work of the period. As a private and intimate mode, it was also a primary vehicle for the realization of the Viennese concerns with the worlds of eros and of the dream.

Carl Otto Czeschka's *Nude with Drapery* (1909) shows a version of the spare, shadowless linear style that dominated the figure drawings of Klimt and others in the early twentieth century. Czeschka's love for elaborate arabesque comes through, however, in the complexly patterned fabric, and gives the drawing a decorative energy quite different from that found in the soft, interwoven outlines of Klimt's insistently erotic nude studies.

Oskar Kokoschka's ink drawings for his play *Moerder Hoffnung der Frauen* (*Murderer, Hope of Women*) are among the most extraordinary images of early modern Vienna. The savagery of their near-abstract vocabulary of spiked, scar-like lines looks years ahead, anticipating in surprising ways Picasso's drawings connected with his *Guernica* (1937). The



Egon Schiele. *Two Girls Lying Entwined (Two Models)*. 1915. Pencil and gouache, 12½ x 19" (31.9 x 48.2 cm). Graphische Sammlung Albertina, Vienna

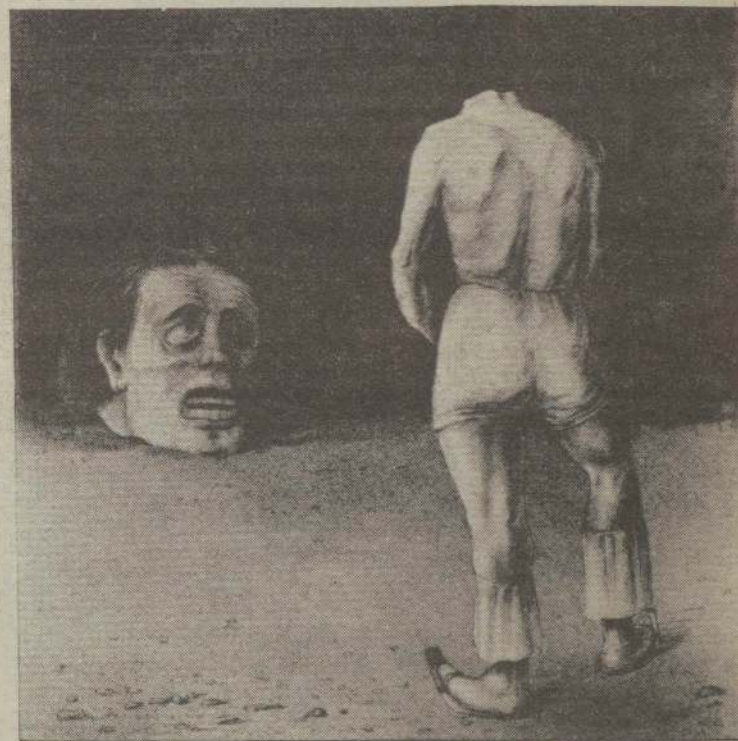
turned them out in quantity. Yet, far from being "potboilers," these drawings are consistently inventive, and marked by a special energy that is in some ways fresher and more authoritative than that of his more ambitious paintings.

Two Girls Lying Entwined (Two Models) typifies Schiele's exceptional ability to command arrangements of bodies in the most complex, interlocked, and foreshortened poses. His sense of the paper shape, as both compressing volume of space and graphic

grappling, dissatisfied human gesture is set against the hollow unresponsiveness of the puppet—a sign perhaps that Schiele, inheritor of the full-bodied sensual emphasis of Klimt, was also attuned to modern metaphors of the depersonalized and vacant spirit.

Alfred Kubin's extraordinary fantasy drawings, first appearing around 1900, when he was still a teenager, directly reflect the fascination with dreams and the unconscious that marked Central European thought in the late nineteenth century. Though they contain echoes of other graphic artists from Hieronymus Bosch to Odilon Redon, Kubin's early works have a unique, hallucinatory strangeness, much admired by the German Expressionist painters in Kandinsky's circle and premonitory of aspects of Surrealism.

In Kubin's twilight world, the mood of reverie is often jolted by cruel or violent notes. An eerie light, as in *Self-Consideration* (1902), may also lend a calm, lyric glow to images built from impossible incongruities. The huge head on the horizon at the left



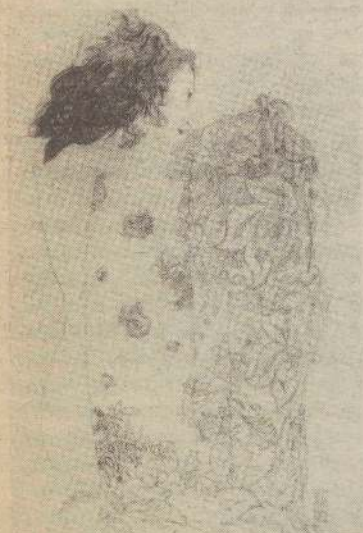
Alfred Kubin. *Self-Consideration*. 1902. Pen and ink, wash, and spray, 8½ x 9" (22.5 x 22.7 cm). Graphische Sammlung Albertina, Vienna

surface, yields an image that is powerful not only in sculptural terms but as a colorful, rhythmically decorative design. His line is, moreover, specific in its attention to the particularities of tousled hair, crumpled petticoats, and bony anatomy, yet rich in its abstract qualities, and virtually unparalleled in its combination of swift spontaneity and decisive economy of means.

Not only in the exacerbated intensity of Schiele's numerous drawings of himself, but in all his renderings of the nude, a distinctive sensibility emerges, mingling a raw, often painful erotic energy with a special sense of hard-edged glamor. Often, as in the drawing at hand, live figures seem paired with doll-like dummies, and the

stares back at a perfectly attentive, but headless, body—its own? The sense of a psyche divided against itself, and of disproportion between mind and body in self-confrontation, is brought home with disturbing immediacy in the smooth chiaroscuro handling of the ink washes, lending to this impossible vision the implacable, seamless quality of a photograph.

Like the younger draftsman Klemens Brosch, Kubin subscribed to the idea advanced by the German sculptor Max Klinger in an essay of 1893: that the graphic mediums in black and white offered the best way to communicate a fantasy vision of another world, or a deeply subjective and critical view of our own. ■



Carl Otto Czeschka. *Nude with Drapery*. 1909. Pencil, 24½ x 18½" (61.2 x 46 cm). Graphische Sammlung Albertina, Vienna

play in question was performed at the second *Kunstschau* exhibition, in 1909. Its ritualized drama of desire and blood lust served notice that the dream-like fantasies of Kokoschka's first works had suddenly turned to an explicitly nightmarish expressionism. Similarly, these drawings, and other contemporary studies of raw-boned street urchins, showed his departure from a brightly colored, fairy-tale illustration style toward a more harsh and aggressive manner.

Egon Schiele was an extraordinarily prolific draftsman. His numerous erotic drawings sold quickly, and he



Oskar Kokoschka. Drawing for *Moerder Hoffnung der Frauen* (*Murderer, Hope of Women*). c. 1908. India ink, 10½ x 7½" (25.5 x 20 cm). Private collection

Ideals of Unity: Music and the Visual Arts

Vienna's venerable status as the cultural hub of Central Europe depended far more on its contributions to music and theater than on the history of its visual arts. The liveliness in the visual arts announced by the formation of the Secession reflected in part the self-assertion of a new class of supporters of culture, excluded from the more established and limited world of musical and theatrical patronage (see p. 6).

The creative forces in music were nonetheless often closely intertwined with those in painting and architecture, at the turn of the century. Virtually every Viennese creator of the time was affected by the music and writings of the composer Richard Wagner, and one of Wagner's central tenets was that modern art should call on creative talents of every kind — musicians, painters, designers, and so on — to collaborate in works that

would enthrall the total sensory response of the viewer. This was the ideal of the *Gesamtkunstwerk*, the total work of art, that so captured artists' imaginations. In one of the most ambitious attempts by Viennese

In both domains
a search for grand
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dissonant art.

artists to realize this ideal — the 1902 Secession exhibition built around Max Klinger's sculpture of Beethoven (see p. 3) — Gustav Mahler participated by creating an arrangement of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony for wind

instruments and by conducting its performance in the exhibition hall. Writers such as Carl Schorske have more-over shown how the imagery of Mahler's work, and his reception by a hostile Viennese establishment, have parallels in the paintings of Gustav Klimt and in the scandals that they provoked.

Suggestive parallels continue when we compare the shift in Viennese musical generations, from Mahler to Arnold Schoenberg, with the shift in painting, from Klimt to the younger Egon Schiele and Oskar Kokoschka. In both domains a search for grand harmonies gave way to a more dissonant art. And in both instances a master/student relationship, and bonds of affection, bridged the shocking transformation from an aesthetic still marked by *fin-de-siècle* romanticism to a radically confrontational expressionism. ■

GUSTAV MAHLER 1860–1911

The musical achievement of Gustav Mahler has to be assessed under the aspects of his two careers: the one creative, as composer, the other interpretive, as one of the leading conductors of his time.

His compositions combined the final flowering of German musical Romanticism with premonitions of later twentieth-century developments, foreshadowing such major innovations as the dissolution of tonality. Idolized by the young musicians of the Schoenberg school for his emphasis on spontaneous creativity, Mahler in turn was one of their strongest supporters.

Mahler's entire musical oeuvre is couched essentially in the symphonic form. This is true even of his songs and song cycles. Intensely rhetorical and autobiographical, his work resonates with recollections of the children's songs, folk music, military marches, and sounds of nature of his early youth in the small bohemian village of Kalitz, halfway between Vienna and



Prague. Those influences were to affect his compositions as strongly as the musical legacy of Richard Wagner. Among the first to incorporate undisguised elements of popular songs into symphonies (such as the French song "Frère Jacques" in his Symphony No. 1 of 1888), Mahler wanted his music to capture the mundane experiences of life as well as its metaphysical aspects. A client of Freud and devotee of Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, Mahler was intensely preoccupied with philosophical, even mystical notions and with questions of life and death. As early as his Symphony No. 2 (1894) he devoted a major

work to the theme of resurrection, while his Symphony No. 8 (1907) expresses his belief in the redemptive power of love.

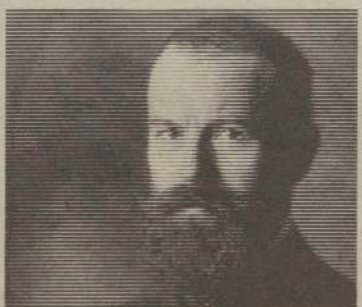
Among his contemporaries Mahler found little understanding for his compositions. It was in his capacity as conductor, and in particular as artistic director of the Vienna Court Opera (1897–1907), that he achieved worldwide recognition. He made the Court Opera the premier opera house in the world through its complete overhaul: reshaping the repertoire, redefining the staging of opera productions, and hiring and firing singers to establish a distinguished ensemble.

1907 was the year of "the three blows of fate," which Mahler believed he had foretold in his Symphony No. 6 in 1905: the death of his child, his forced resignation from the opera, and the first signs of the heart disease that was to kill him four years later. Although Mahler spent the last years of his life in New York, conducting the New York Philharmonic Orchestra and performances at the Metropolitan Opera, he never cut his ties to Vienna. He returned there fatally ill, and died on May 18, 1911. ■

ALFRED ROLLER 1864–1935

The designer Alfred Roller was one of the founding members of the Vienna Secession. He was editor of their journal *Ver Sacrum* and taught at the Kunstgewerbeschule.

In collaboration with Mahler, during four extremely fruitful years at the Court Opera (1903–07), Roller revolutionized opera production. By clearing the stage of the clutter of naturalist and historical detail that encumbered late nineteenth-century productions, Roller wanted to lead the public's attention back to the essence of the play. Roller's guiding principle was that "each play carries within it-



self the laws of its production." Operating through suggestion rather than illusion, he intended his stage sets not to create a reality of their own, but to serve the poetry and music of the work. Roller's simplified decors and use of permanent elements in his stage sets, such as the famous Roller towers

(framing the stage on either side and easily adaptable to every production requirement), allowed faster scene changes to preserve the dramatic flow of action and music. The major element in his creations was the sensation of space itself, manipulated through his pioneering use of stage lighting and color.

When Mahler left the opera in 1907, Roller departed too. He enjoyed a world-wide reputation working at the Metropolitan Opera in New York and with Max Reinhardt in Berlin, as well as in productions of the operas of Richard Strauss in Dresden and Vienna. Together with Reinhardt and Hugo von Hofmannsthal, at the end of World War I Roller helped establish the annual Salzburg Festival. ■

ARNOLD SCHOENBERG 1874–1951



Arnold Schoenberg twice opened up new possibilities for composition: first by breaking away from conventional harmony — a step he called "the emancipation of dissonance" — and then by developing the twelve-tone system.

His first compositions show the largely self-trained Schoenberg still under the spell of Richard Wagner. After a period in Berlin, during which he worked on the tone poem *Pelleas und Melisande* while supporting himself by conducting a cabaret orchestra, Schoenberg returned to Vienna in 1903. There he taught composition to students such as Anton von Webern and Alban Berg. Reacting against his Romantic beginnings, Schoenberg now aimed at greater simplicity and economy, and increasingly purged his music of subjectivity and self-expression. In 1908, in the final movement of his *String Quartet No. 2*, Schoenberg ventured for the first time into the sphere of atonality — a technique of musical composition that does away with traditional harmony. He introduced *Sprechstimme*, a type of vocal utterance midway between speech and song, with instrumental accompaniment, in his song cycle *Pierrot Lunaire* (1912, premiered that same year in Berlin), and it became yet another trademark of the Schoenberg school.

Performances of Schoenberg's music provoked such scandals that the

composer was prompted to found, in 1918, the Society for Private Musical Performances; applause was forbidden and only sympathetic critics were admitted. Under its auspices, over one hundred fifty new works by contemporary composers were presented during the following three years.

After World War I, Schoenberg found, in the twelve-tone system, the new kind of order he had sought for his atonal compositions. Although he did not invent the system, Schoenberg brought it to prominence, using it first in *Five Pieces for Piano*, Op. 23 (1923) and working with it in most of his subsequent compositions.

The rise of Nazism revived Schoenberg's allegiance to his Jewish background; he chose an Old Testament subject for his twelve-tone opera *Moses und Aron* (1932). In the early 1930s he emigrated to the United States, teaching at the University of Southern California and UCLA. There his music gradually became less hermetic and more emotional, admitting again the feelings he had banished from his compositions since about 1907. ■

ANTON VON WEBERN 1883–1945

In his departure from the tonal system, Anton von Webern was the most radical of Arnold Schoenberg's students. His formative years had been colored by the Romanticism of Richard Wagner, but his contact with Schoenberg made him explore the new possibilities which atonality offered. Deeply committed to the pursuit of new forms of musical expression, Webern aimed at the highest density of expression in the shortest possible form. His *Five Pieces for Orchestra*, Op. 10 (1913) are most characteristic of what he called his "aphoristic"

style: the pieces range in length from about fourteen seconds to a little less than two minutes.

In 1924 Webern was quick to follow Schoenberg's lead into the twelve-tone system, applying it for the first time in his *Kinderstueck* for piano solo. His subsequent compositions were entirely set within his own modified version of the twelve-tone (or "serial") system. Yet within that formal rigor Webern's music always remained extremely sensitive, reflecting personal experience and his deep, pantheistic feeling for nature.

Webern's wholehearted pursuit of the serial system made him a hero to a later avant-garde, an inspiration to composers such as Pierre Boulez and Karlheinz Stockhausen. ■

ALBAN BERG 1885–1935

Alban Berg is often called the "Romanticist" of the Schoenberg school. Even after he joined this group in 1904, Berg was more hesitant than Anton von Webern in renouncing the traditional tonal system. His compositions during those years still owe much to Wagner and Mahler. By 1912, however, in *Five Orchestral Songs*, Op. 4, Berg had taken the step into atonality. Short and concise like the postcards by Peter Altenberg that in-

spired them (see p. 2), the works astonish through their exceptionally complex orchestration.

Berg is best known for his two operas: *Wozzeck*, the first full-length atonal opera (1917–22, after Georg Büchner's play *Woyzeck*) and *Lulu* (1929–35, after two plays by Frank Wedekind) — written entirely in the twelve-tone system. (Unfinished at Berg's death, the last act of *Lulu* has been, since 1979, performed on the basis of his ample sketches and notes.) Both are powerful psychological dramas for which Berg himself prepared the librettos. ■

Later Painting

With the performance at the 1909 *Kunstschau* exhibition of Oskar Kokoschka's cruelly violent drama *Moerder Hoffnung der Frauen* (*Murderer, Hope of Women*; see p. 11), it was clear that a new kind of art was on the rise in Vienna. Kokoschka had worked for the Wiener Werkstaette, and his first illustrated book was dedicated to Klimt; but he soon quit the Werkstaette, and was brought into the circle of its opponents, including the architect Adolf Loos (see p. 15) and the critic Karl Kraus (see p. 6). Eventually he went on to Berlin, in a move that was symptomatic not only of the livelier art market then expanding in Germany, but also of the greater receptivity of the German cities to the harsh new energies of expressionism. The wealthy elite of Vienna clung to the sense of elegance and good taste that had been implicit in the Secession and the Werkstaette, and self-consciously stressed by many of the *Kunstschau* artists.

Expressionism first appeared in Vienna in the brief career of Richard Gerstl, a young painter strongly affected by local exhibitions of the work of Vincent van Gogh and Edvard Munch. Gerstl was an intimate of the composer Arnold Schoenberg and his family (a failed affair with Schoenberg's wife precipitated Gerstl's suicide in 1908), and he inspired Schoenberg himself to draw and paint. Schoenberg had no formal training in art, but his self-portraits, caricatural fantasies, and visionary "gazes" (abstracted faces) were treasured by artists such as Wassily Kandinsky as art born from necessity rather than tutored ability.

Among the earliest and greatest works of expressionism in Vienna are the portraits done by Kokoschka and Schiele in the years 1909-11. Strongly different in conception, the works of the two emerging artists were equally radical in their renunciation of decorated elegance for a more strident and psychically charged approach to their sitters.

Kokoschka's portrait of Peter Altenberg of 1909 is by legend the record of this bohemian writer and poet (see p. 2) responding to a provocation that had disturbed him at a cafe. The figure emerges dramatically from a void defined only by the slashing, scratching life of Kokoschka's brush, and his venous flesh seems shaken to near dissolution by a quivering internal energy. The lunging gesture and bulging eyes are conjoined with a disregard for either flattery or decorative finish that is characteristic of all the early Kokoschka portraits—a series that projects the disturbed psychic energies of an extraordinary world of scholars, creators, and dissipated aristocrats.

While Kokoschka divorced these sitters from their mundane surroundings by setting them in a turbulent atmosphere that seemed to bristle with ambient energy, Schiele's con-



Oskar Kokoschka. *Peter Altenberg*. 1909. Oil on canvas, 29 1/2 x 28" (76 x 71 cm). Private collection



Egon Schiele. *Dr. Erwin von Graff*. 1910. Oil on canvas, 39 1/2 x 35 1/2" (100 x 90 cm). Private collection

centration on character and psychology took the form of a radical emptying out of the pictorial space that left his subjects alone in a whitened vacuum. In early portraits like that of Dr. Erwin von Graff, the constricted gestures of bony anatomy and outsized hands communicate a semaphoric message of cramped alienation from within a denuded environment, the aesthetic and psychological antithesis

of the luxuriantly full spaces of Klimt (see p. 5).

Klimt continued to paint lovely society portraits, but the special intensity of the "golden" works was not maintained, and his most personal works of the period after about 1910 are the imagined scenes he painted, such as *The Maiden* of 1912-13. Here the soft fullness of an all-consuming dream state is conjured in loose, float-

ing forms of luscious color—a fantasy free of the morbidity and sexual tensions seen in his earlier allegories, yet full of an indulged eroticism so vividly sweet as to be disquieting in a different way.

Schiele and Kokoschka were deeply concerned, as Klimt never was, with self-portraiture. Schiele's numerous self-portraits, both in drawings and in paintings, point up the particular sense of the theatrical associated with expressionism in Vienna—the artist's assuming of allegorical

guises, and the projection of himself as actor in violent dramas of frustrated communication. In the broadly miming gestural language of the portraits, as in this sense of self, Kokoschka and Schiele make evident a Viennese self-consciousness about communication and inner truth (see p. 4); they transform into something modern and problematic the notions of the costume and of the facade that had formerly seemed only the outmoded concerns of the Ringstrasse generation (see p. 14). ■



Gustav Klimt. *The Maiden*. 1912-13. Oil on canvas, 6' 2 3/4" x 6' 6 3/4" (190 x 200 cm). The National Gallery, Prague



Richard Gerstl. *Two Sisters (Karoline and Pauline Fey)*. 1905. Oil on canvas, 68 1/2 x 59 1/2" (175 x 150 cm). Oesterreichische Galerie, Vienna

The Ringstrasse, Problematic Symbol of an Age

Old Vienna was a tightly packed network of small streets, bound in by encircling military fortifications. When the young Emperor Franz Josef came to the throne after the revolutionary tumult of 1848, he became persuaded that these walls were anachronistic and that the time had come to modernize Vienna. In 1857 he ordered the old walls torn down. On the open military glacis they had overlooked, a huge new boulevard, the Ringstrasse, was laid out around the city's edge.

The boulevard project was doubtless influenced by the similar work then being done in Paris by Napoleon III and his architect Baron Haussmann, and it involved a similar commingling of strategic with economic concerns, and governmental with private finance. But where Haussmann's boulevards were notable for their homogeneity, the Ringstrasse's hallmark was the eclectic diversity of its architecture. Each of the major institutional structures along the street was built in a mode thought appropriate: the Parliament in a Greek style to recall Athenian democracy, the Rathaus (City Hall) in Gothic guise to suggest the medieval epoch of burgher civic rule, the University of Vienna buildings in the Renaissance mold to honor the humanist pursuit of knowledge, and so on. Rich residential districts were also developed, where

apartment houses in imitation Renaissance and Baroque *palazzo* styles flattered the self-image of those with new industrial wealth.

Though the major part of the Ring was built in the 1860s and 1870s, additions continued piecemeal into the 1890s and even beyond. By then, however, the political forces that had shaped the project — a loose and often contentious combination of imperial and liberal bourgeois interests — had been supplanted. The major urban reforms of the nineties and the first years of the new century were instigated by a new populist politics, less focused on the inner-city, well-to-do world defined by the Ring and more concerned with the vast working suburbs then being assimilated into municipal government.

For all the improvements it had brought, including better water services and circulation, the urbanism of the liberal era was criticized by the new politicians as the self-serving and short-sighted scheme of a parvenu class. For those in the arts, too, the imposing edifices came to be regarded as monuments to philistine hypocrisy, which sought to dissemble modernity in the false "costume" facades of noble historical styles. One of the most trenchant attacks came in Adolf Loos's article "Die Potemkinsche Stadt" ("Potemkin's City," published in the July 1898 issue of the Secession



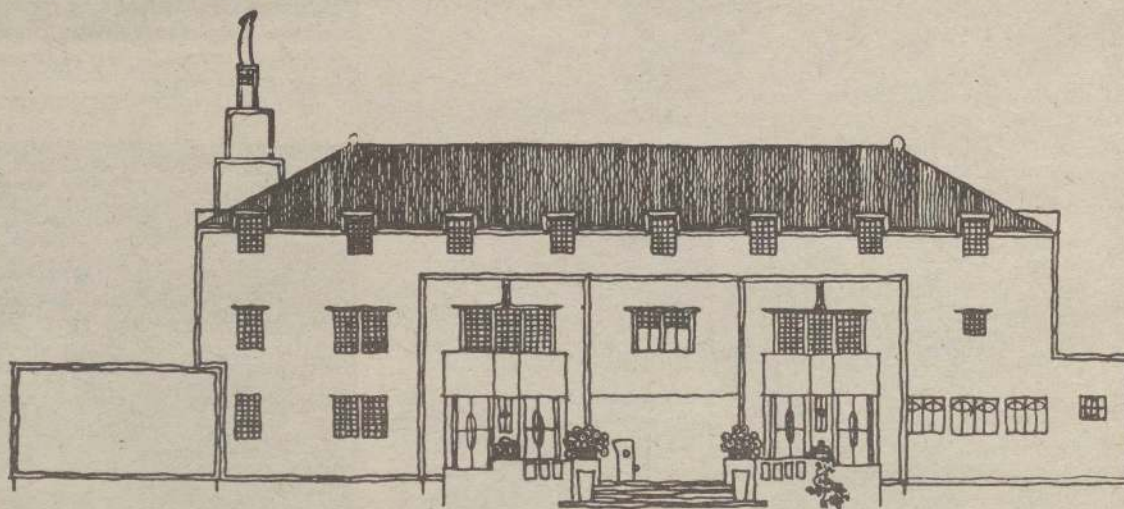
View of the Ringstrasse; left to right: Parliament, Rathaus (City Hall), University of Vienna, and Burgtheater. c. 1888

journal *Ver Sacrum*). Loos compared the decorated facades of the Ring buildings to the fake building fronts that a Russian minister, Potemkin, had once ordered erected along the travel route of Catherine the Great, to convey the illusion of prosperous provincial villages.

An oppressive inheritance for Loos's generation of young modernists, the Ringstrasse ensemble has nonetheless survived, and prospered. Like Haussmann's boulevards, this broad, tree-lined avenue seemed almost predestined for the demands of the age of the automobile. As the

major artery of circulation in the inner city, and as the site of such institutions as the great Art and Natural History Museums, the State Opera and the City Theater (not to mention the ubiquitous cafes), the Ringstrasse remains today Vienna's most distinctive public space. ■

ARCHITECTURE AND REFORM



Josef Hoffmann. Palais Stoclet, Brussels. Garden facade, preliminary design. c. 1905-06. Pen and ink, 4 1/4 x 8 3/8" (11.2 x 22.2 cm). Museum moderner Kunst, Vienna

No other art form seemed so immediately linked to Viennese creators' dreams of modern reform as architecture. Otto Wagner's writings, which espoused a new "honesty" in building, based on rational principles of functional efficiency, were key texts in the imagination of a generation that looked to art as the agent of an all-embracing transformation of life. The more direct relationship of exterior to interior, the abolition of imitative styles and superfluous ornament — these were principles of the new architecture as well as metaphors for a new attitude toward man and society.

The texts of Viennese architecture are not, however, always in line with the buildings. Architects such as

Wagner and his younger admirers Josef Hoffmann and Adolf Loos shaped their work in ways that simultaneously reinterpreted the classical tradition and found new forms — expressive and even theatrical, rather than straightforwardly "honest" — for modernity. In Vienna, the reductive elimination of ornament was often only a prelude to the invention of new ornamental motifs, and the purging of historicism set the stage for a more complex manner of quoting and subsuming historical references. The decorative, eclectic ways of the Ringstrasse, loudly deplored around 1900, might be said to haunt the Viennese search for a modern architecture.

Gustav Klimt, Hoffmann, and the

other original members of the Secession dreamed of finding support for large-scale public projects in which, as in medieval cathedrals, architecture would draw back under its aegis all the arts of painting, sculpture, and so on — arts that had been relegated by the modern market to small-scale private expression. This was a dream that (with the exception perhaps of Wagner's Steinhof Church) went unrealized; only the collaborative Secession exhibitions or exceptional private commissions like the Palais Stoclet suggested what these artists envisioned on a larger scale.

Modern Viennese architecture set out to reconcile several conflicting needs and desires. The simplicity of

anonymous rustic styles was to be brought into harmony with the authority of high traditions, and a spare denial of vulgarity was to be balanced against the demands for luxury of an elite clientele. The issues raised in these attempts, of the tensions between country and city values, or between social consciousness and interior life, are perhaps even more revealing than the less ambiguous and more confident rhetoric of the would-be modern reformers. And the disjunctions and disparities — notably in the self-conscious separation between facade and interior — are perhaps the most fascinating aspects of Vienna's role in an emerging modern architectural movement. ■

CAMILLO SITTE 1843-1903

Before the criticisms of the Ringstrasse at the turn of the century, Camillo Sitte, a professor at Vienna's Kunstgewerbeschule (School of Applied Arts), had rebuked the failings of this effort at modernization, in his book *City Planning According to Artistic Principles* of 1889. Sitte's ideal urban forms were the protectively enclosing spaces of older towns. He felt that the wide, long-view vectors of Haussmann-style boulevards — like the Ringstrasse — elicited only anxiety (specifically, *Platzangst*, or agoraphobia, the fear of open spaces).

Nostalgic for what he felt was the nurturing collective solidarity of traditional small-town society, Sitte felt that avenues like the Ring would intensify the sense of alienation and fragmentation that modern life entailed. As the historian Carl Schorske has shown, Sitte's communitarian critique of the Ring differed sharply from the objections of more self-consciously modern architects such as Otto Wagner and Adolf Loos, who found the street and its buildings too indebted to — rather than too removed from — tradition. These opposed critiques were moreover symptomatic of the broader turn-of-the-century rejection of the liberal era the Ring represented, a rejection that came from conservatives and progressives, the political right and left simultaneously.

Architecture

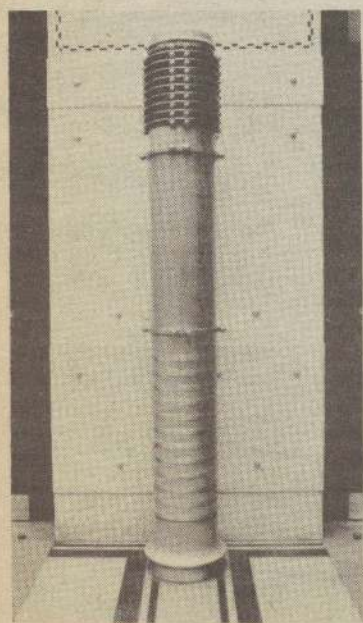
The four major architects working in Vienna around 1900 were Otto Wagner, Joseph Maria Olbrich, Josef Hoffmann, and Adolf Loos. Wagner, the oldest, is considered the "father" of modern Viennese architecture. His buildings were the first outstanding examples of the modern style in Vienna and earned him an international reputation. Olbrich, the designer of the Secession's exhibition hall (see p. 3), was Wagner's young protégé, with whom he collaborated on urbanization projects in the 1890s.

Another prize pupil of Wagner's was Josef Hoffmann, who became a professor at the Kunstgewerbeschule in 1899 and a favorite of Secession supporters. Hoffmann enjoyed a steady flow of commissions from wealthy clients; under his leadership, the Wiener Werkstaette determined what was tasteful for Viennese society (see p. 7). Adolf Loos, an exact contemporary of Hoffmann's, was an architect whose early reputation rested mostly on his biting cultural criticism. A dedicated enemy of the Secession's aestheticism, Loos later championed the more raw and aggressive work of the painter Oskar Kokoschka (see p. 13).

Otto Wagner

Wagner influenced an entire generation through his teaching and writings. In his 1895 book *Modern Architecture* he insisted that the primary focus of the architect should be on satisfying the practical functions of a building, that choice of materials should be determined by their cost and ease of maintenance, and that structure should be simple and economical.

His competition design for the Postal Savings Bank (built in 1904-06 and 1910-12) combined the nobility of traditional materials with details that suggest the energies of modern industry. Wagner made a point of declaring



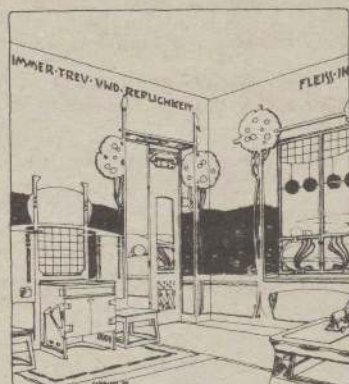
Otto Wagner. Warm-Air Blower from Main Hall, Postal Savings Bank. c. 1906. Aluminum, 8'2½" (250 cm) high. Oesterreichische Postsparkasse, Vienna

the artifice of the stone facade on this vast masonry structure. Emphasizing the array of metal bolt heads that held the stone cladding panels, he made from basic technology a new kind of decorative element. For the glass-roofed main hall, he adapted the look of the great train stations. Among the most striking features of this room are the aluminum hot-air blowers whose unconventional appearance and audacious exposure seem a premonition of the "high-tech" future.

Joseph Maria Olbrich

Although Olbrich worked closely with Wagner, the younger man's taste leaned to the dreamier decoration of Jugendstil, evident in the illustrations he contributed to the Secession publication *Ver Sacrum*. He also designed the Secession building, with its temple-like facade and movable interior walls, and while it was under construction in 1898 became involved with domestic architectural projects.

For the Villa Friedmann at Hinterbruehl, near Vienna, Olbrich was brought in to replace the original architect. (The owner wanted to have his home completed in "Secession-style.") Olbrich simplified the structure and carefully tended to details of decor. In the children's room, for example, Olbrich called for furniture, woodwork, wall paintings, and windows to blend



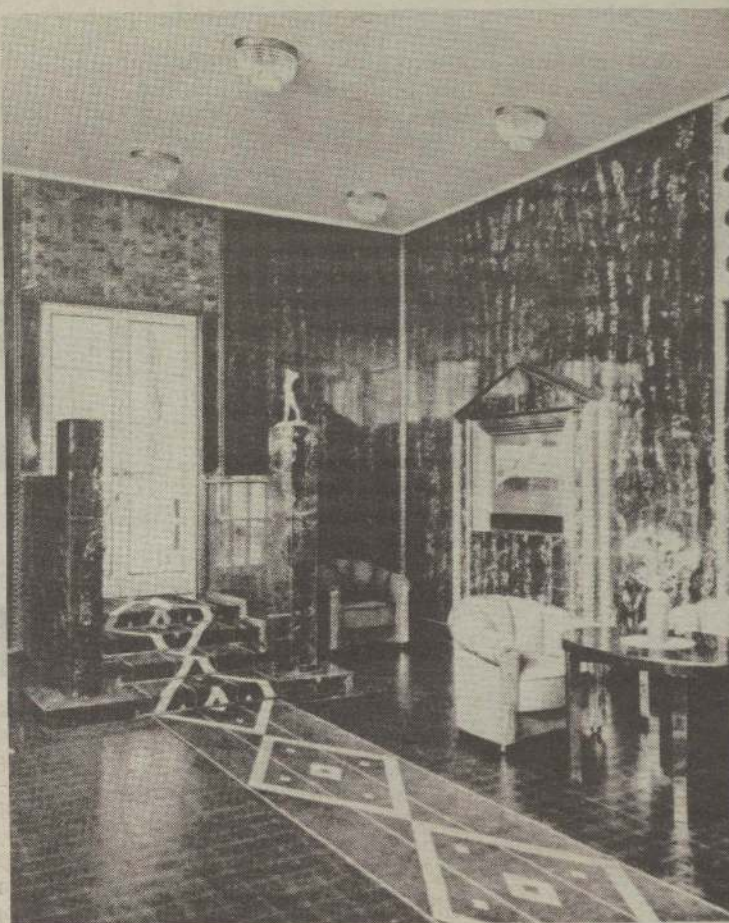
Joseph Maria Olbrich. Villa Friedmann, Hinterbruehl. Perspective of a child's room. 1898. Ink and pencil, 6½ x 5¾" (16.5 x 14.7 cm). Staatliche Museen Preussischer Kulturbesitz mit Museum fuer Architektur, Modebild und Grafik-Design, Berlin

together in cozy harmony; an earnest message on the landscape-like walls exhorted the young to be loyal, honest, and industrious.

Olbrich had been planning a series of villas to be built in the fashionable wooded area above Vienna called the Hohe Warte. However, when the Grand Duke of Hesse invited him to help create an artists' colony at Darmstadt, he left Vienna in 1899 and relinquished to Hoffmann the projects on the Hohe Warte.

Josef Hoffmann

One of the villas that Hoffmann completed on the Hohe Warte attracted the attention of Adolphe Stoclet, a wealthy Belgian who was living in Vienna during 1903-04. Upon his father's death, Stoclet was forced to re-



Josef Hoffmann. Palais Stoclet, Brussels. Music room. 1905-11

turn to Brussels, and he commissioned Hoffmann to build a house for him there. The Palais Stoclet (1905-11) is the most stunning realization of the Viennese ideal of *Gesamtkunstwerk*, the total work of art. Stoclet imposed no budgetary restrictions so that Hoffmann and his Wiener Werkstaette colleagues were free to indulge their imaginations and talents on a lavish scale.

The Stoclet exterior is composed of sweeping flat planes of marble, crisply bound by gilded moldings. For the splendid interior, different marbles and marquetry woodwork were

coordinated with special textiles, wallpapers, and furnishings by the Werkstaette. The dining room features a three-part mosaic frieze by Gustav Klimt (executed by Leopold Forstner) in marble, semi-precious stones, and colored glass. Hoffmann planned all the furniture and silver and designed the garden as well — its terraces and pergolas, summerhouse, tennis courts, garden chairs, and tables.

Every aspect of the Palais Stoclet was intended to harmonize with the architectural concept. To test the effect, each entire room was assembled

first in Vienna before any pieces were shipped to Brussels. As one commentator observed in 1909, "This is the new Viennese art — an art which exports whole houses."

Adolf Loos

Opposed to Hoffmann's opulent orchestration, Adolf Loos argued against the tyranny of the total-design architect and the imposition of "style." "We already possess the style of our time," he wrote; "It may be found wherever the artist hasn't yet stuck his nose in." Best known for his scathing criticism of the use of ornament (especially his essay "Ornament and Crime" of 1908), Loos was in fact not against all ornament. Like Wagner (and Louis Sullivan in America), he disapproved of decoration that was meaningless or unnecessary or which confused our understanding of a building's function.

Loos had designed several interiors around 1900 and received his first commission for a complete building in 1908 from the English-style tailoring firm he himself favored, Goldman & Salatsch. The building he devised looks directly across the Michaelerplatz toward the Hofburg, the Imperial Palace. Many critics at the time considered the radical bareness of Loos's upper stories an insult to the traditions of historic Vienna, as represented by the ornate Baroque style of the Hofburg. Loos defended his plain walls and windows as being true to venerable, if not prestigious, styles of Viennese architecture. "I kept the plaster surfaces as simple as possible because the burghers of Vienna also built in a simple style." Characteristic of Loos is his combination of this burgher strictness with the classicizing arcade and lavishly veined stone of the lower stories. Like Hoffmann and others of this generation, Loos sought not just simplicity, but also a new sense of purified elegance, free from what he saw as the vulgarity of bourgeois historicism. ■



Adolf Loos. Haus am Michaelerplatz (Goldman & Salatsch Building). 1909-11

Ancient Monarchy, New Culture

Continued from front page

only son, Crown Prince Rudolf, committed suicide with his lover, a young society lady, at the royal hunting lodge at Mayerling in 1889. The Empress Elisabeth, always a troubled and distant consort, was assassinated by an anarchist in 1898. The aging emperor, ever more psychologically isolated, found it difficult either to resist the pressure for greater democracy (universal suffrage was finally granted in 1907) or to contend with a faction-torn parliament. These internal tensions were only magnified by the ever more bellicose international climate of the early twentieth century, as Austria-Hungary's unique geographical position — opening onto the Orient, the Russian Empire, and Western Europe as well — made it a key, if no longer militarily dominant, player on the European stage.

Final Glitter, Final Darkness

Three times in the 1890s the demagogic Christian Socialist Karl Lueger (known as "Handsomen Karl") received the votes sufficient to make him mayor of Vienna; three times Franz Josef refused to approve the appointment, in significant part because of Lueger's outspoken anti-Semitism. In 1897 the emperor finally ceded, and a new era of populist politics came to the enlarged municipality of Vienna. In the same year a parliamentary crisis, over the long-standing problem of the German language's dominance as the official and legal tongue, caused the emperor to dissolve the legislature and rule by decree. From this point on, an even more marked gulf divided the symbolic theater of the emperor's venerable, paternal authority from the volatile realities of a rapidly changing Vienna, Austria's fractious internal dissension and its entanglement in European politics.

Yet it was in the same year, 1897, that the formation of the Vienna Secession announced a period of unparalleled creativity in Viennese cultural and intellectual life. All of the brilliant achievements wrought within the next twenty years by Vienna's cosmopolitan citizenry — the innova-



Karl Lueger (1844-1910)

tions of Sigmund Freud, Gustav Mahler, Alois Riegl, Ludwig Wittgenstein, and the other thinkers and artists cited in this publication — seem in retrospect to have been set within a larger tableau of impending doom. Intimations of decadence and despair are not hard to find interwoven with the golden fabric of Vienna's brilliance, not least in the suicides that recurrently punctuate the chronicle of its notables. Indeed, one of the dialogues apparent within all the Viennese arts of the period is that between the elaboration of seductive surface ornament and the probing of darker, more anguished and alienating inadequacies of modern life. These poles, of eros and neurosis, of the indulgent and the intransigent, became the hallmarks — opposed yet entwined — of the legacy that survived the eventual destruction of Vienna's "golden age."

When Franz Josef's nephew and heir, the Archduke Franz Ferdinand, was assassinated at Sarajevo in 1914 by a young Serbian nationalist, Austria's intransigent position drew along its ally Germany, and eventually unleashed the great war which many (with eagerness as well as foreboding) had long anticipated. Franz Josef died in the depths of the war, in 1916, and the empire itself was dissolved in the defeats of 1918. That year had a terri-

ble finality in the arts as well, as the architect Otto Wagner, the designer Koloman Moser, and the painters Gustav Klimt and Egon Schiele all died before the new Austrian republic had established itself. A great epoch had ended, and the diaspora of Vienna's modern genius had begun — only to be finalized by the wave of emigration with fascism's rise in the 1930s.

Retrospect

Only since the 1960s has the convergence of studies on the great Viennese figures — Theodor Herzl, Ludwig Wittgenstein, Karl Kraus, and others, as well as artists such as Klimt and Schiele — pieced back together the scattered elements, to bring to full public awareness the rich heritage bequeathed by turn-of-the-century Vienna. The diverse and often contradictory implications of this legacy risk being overwhelmed, however, by the very power of our new fascination with this special time and place. Our retrospective sense of the combined glamor and doom of the last years of Hapsburg rule can create a romantic aura, a seamless "spirit of the time," and find the marks of fate in its every aspect — leading to the myth of a society so fraught with the ambivalent energies of modernity that it virtually required an apocalyptic end as its only appropriate consummation.

The works of the Viennese creators, in their complexity and specificity, resist such simplifications. No all-embracing romance of the lost empire, nor any simple label such as "the cradle of modernity," is adequate to the challenging variety of experiences provided by these works of art. Similarly, the brief background provided here is not intended to "explain" Vienna, or to level achievements in very different fields to a vague common denominator, but only to point to the stunning, often paradoxical constellation of achievements that transformed Vienna's place in the Western imagination — from a capital of waltz-like Old World charm to a key site of origin for the culture of our times. ■

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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LECTURES

Carl E. Schorske, Dayton-Stockton Professor of History Emeritus, Princeton University, will speak on September 25 at the Museum. James Shedel, Associate Professor of History, Georgetown University, will speak on October 2. For further information, inquire at the Lobby Desk.

These lectures are made possible through the generosity of the Austrian Institute, New York. Related lectures, films, concerts, and exhibitions are being offered by the Austrian Institute, 11 East 52 Street. For further information, call (212) 759-5165.

PUBLICATIONS

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Posters:

Gustav Klimt
Emilie Floege, 1902
Farm Garden with Sunflowers (The Sunflowers), c. 1905-06
Hope II, 1907-08
Salome (Judith II), 1909

Otto Wagner
Steinhof Church, perspective drawing, 1902

Postal Savings Bank, competition design, 1903

\$10 each (Members, \$7.50)

CONCERTS

The Museum and the 92nd Street Y will collaborate in presenting a festival of concerts in September and October in the Museum. Distinguished musicians will participate in this series devoted to turn-of-the-century Viennese music, generously underwritten by Mr. and Mrs. Milton Petrie. For further information, inquire at the Lobby Desk.

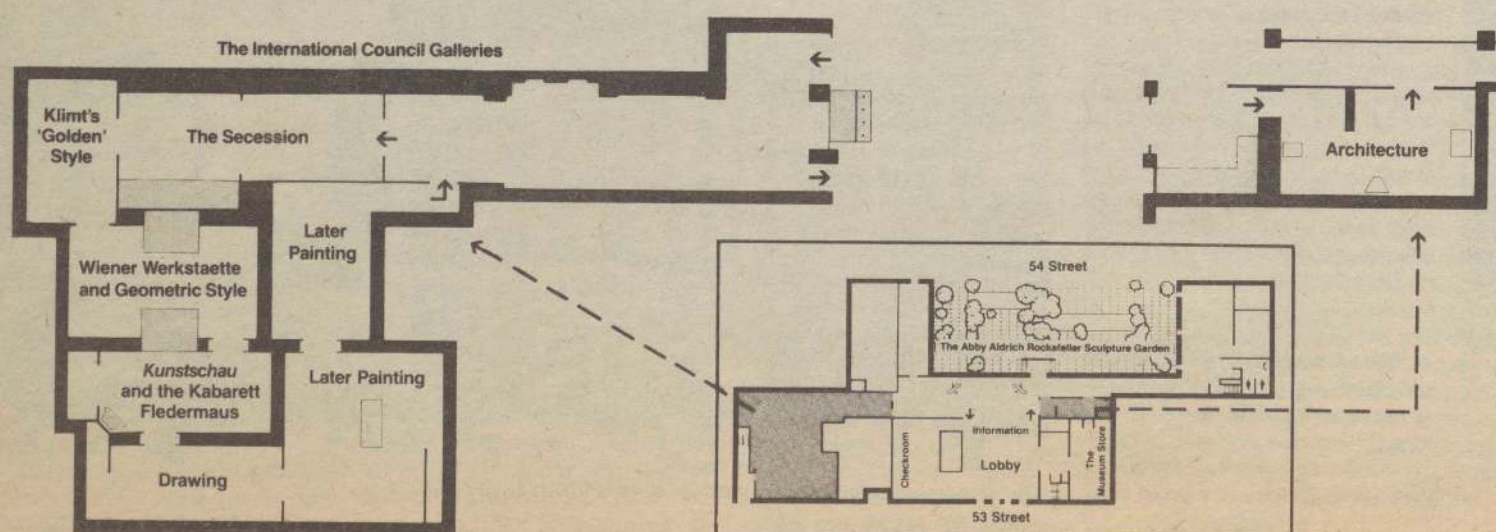
FILMS

For information on film programs in the Museum related to the exhibition, inquire at the Lobby Desk.

CAFE

A Vienna 1900 Cafe, sponsored by the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber, is open in The Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Sculpture Garden.

FLOOR PLAN OF THE EXHIBITION



VIENNA

1900

Written by Gertje Utley (all articles on pp. 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, and 12 except lead article on each page), Emily Bardack Kies (pp. 3, 7, 9, and 15), and Kirk Varnedoe (pp. 1, 5, 11, 13, 14, and lead articles on pp. 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, and 12). Special thanks to Prof. Dale Harris for editorial advice.

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