

The background of the cover is a vibrant blue. On the left side, there are large, angular shapes in a pale yellow or cream color. Scattered across the blue field are several white, trapezoidal shapes, each with a red triangular corner cut out. The text is centered in the upper-middle part of the image, overlaid on one of the white shapes.

CUBISM
CONSTRUCTIVISM
FORM ART

Gustav Klimt
Sketch design "Knight"
for the mosaic frieze in the
dining room of Palais Stoclet, 1911
MAK – Austrian Museum
of Applied Arts /
Contemporary Arts, Vienna



Form Art: Modernism in the Habsburg Empire

Agnes Husslein-Arco

When considering the idea of Modernism in Austrian art history around 1900, the temptation is to focus mainly on Viennese Modern art. This begs the question of how such a development could have been confined to one specific place, when the Habsburg Empire was, in fact, composed of a multi-ethnic conglomeration of countries. It therefore follows that reciprocal influences must have existed within this unique cultural region and we should, consequently, seek to identify Modernism in the Austro-Hungarian Empire as a whole.

Cubism—Constructivism—Form Art at the Lower Belvedere revisits an idea that was essentially framed in Oswald Oberhuber's 1993 exhibition *Wille zur Form* (literally: The Will to Form). Oberhuber was convinced, even then, that non-representational art in Austria, Poland, the former Czechoslovakia, and Hungary needed to be assigned a special role. The current exhibition picks up this argument and embarks on some art-historical detective work in the former crownlands of the Habsburg Monarchy. It thus enables an interpretation that provides a common context for artists such as František Kupka, previously considered an exception to any rule, or the special status of Czech Cubism or the "form art" of the Vienna Secession. Art that was previously seen as an isolated phenomenon, without obvious models and with no apparent legacy, is thus reinstated with its own environment and sphere of influence.

This special approach to art through form and its articulation, which paved the way to non-representational form art, must also be considered as an alternative model to abstraction. A strong emphasis on drawing education in schools, aiming to foster a fundamental understanding and awareness of the surrounding world, laid the foundations for this artistic articulation. Drawing instruction focused on basic geometric shapes, which would be combined into ever more complex structures, and ultimately into both representational and non-representational visual creations.

The exhibition also sheds light on some exciting connections, which spread from the visual arts into everyday life. For, at the time—very much in the spirit of the *gesamtkunstwerk*—divisions between different art forms were

erased. A wide array of exhibits portray a cultural-historical region, which, for all the fundamental diversity of approaches, will demonstrate to the viewer the common features and foundations of the Habsburg Empire as a cultural area. The compositional devices of form art emerge as a trait they all shared.

The impact and significance of form art has certainly been far-reaching. Connections can be drawn with the work of Oswald Oberhuber, effectively the intellectual father of this exhibition. Its influence can also be seen in Fritz Wotruba's oeuvre, which absorbed these traditions and formal influences. And even the Concrete and abstract art can be understood as a further development of form art, drawing on and assimilating its ideas.

I am, of course, extremely grateful to all the lenders and supporters of this exhibition. Indeed, the project, especially the catalogue, can be upheld as an excellent example of cross-border collaboration. My particular appreciation goes to the curator Alexander Klee, who has shown tremendous commitment to ensuring the exhibition's success.

Finally, I would like to conclude my introduction with a quote from Robert Zimmermann, whose definition of form art is still valid today: "As only forms can absolutely please or displease (§ 55), art is required in its expressions of the spirit to focus on form, and so in meeting this requirement all art is by necessity **form art**."¹

1 Robert Zimmermann, *Allgemeine Aesthetik als Formwissenschaft* (Vienna, 1865), vol. 2, p. 138, § 283.



Fig. 4
Adolf Hölzel
 Analysis of Old Masters
Ver Sacrum, vol. 15, 1901
 Belvedere, Vienna, Library

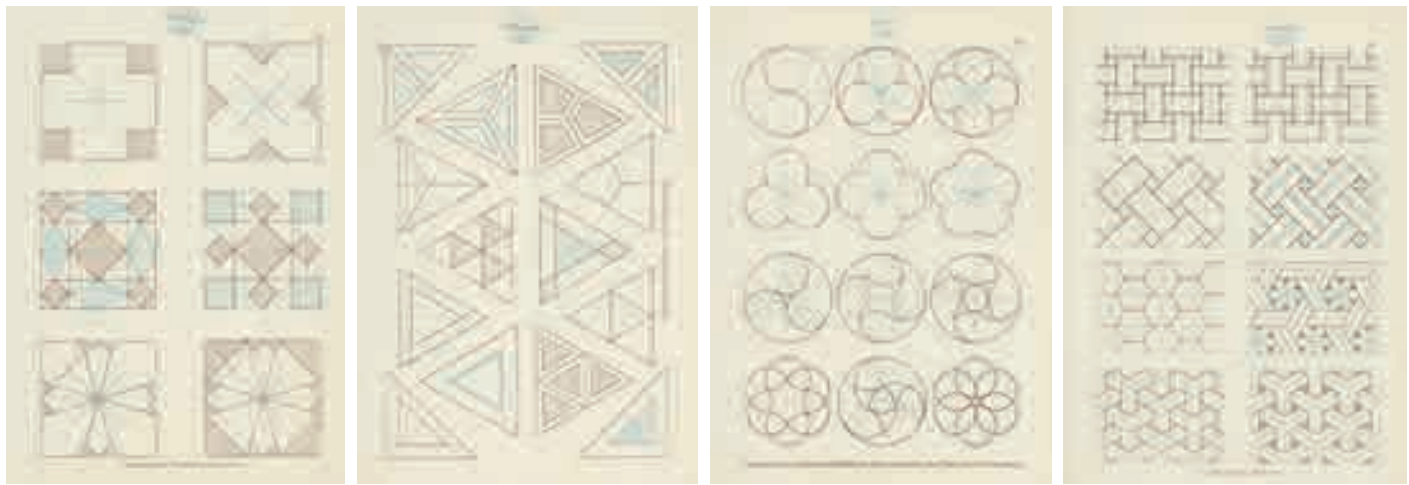
cultivation of “empty” instrumental music, a statement to which Zimmermann responds in a subsequent article.³⁵

Zimmermann’s rejoinder to another critique of the treatise *Vom Musikalisch-Schönen* by his friend Eduard Hanslick also comes as no surprise: “The aesthetician rightfully assumes that every external artistic manifestation is only the reflection of a purely internal ‘artwork of ideas.’ Yet the speculative aesthetician wrongly claims that each art form must construct this ‘artwork of ideas’ in the same way as does the poet. The composer’s ‘artwork of ideas’ is made of tonal ideas, that of the visual artist out of form ideas; only that of the poet is expressed in word ideas.”³⁶

Comparable approaches can be found in the work of Zimmermann himself, who, like Ernst Mach, had studied the music theories of Hermann von Helmholtz.³⁷ He regarded forms in music as tones³⁸ or melodies that he relates to the other arts, for example painting and

sculpture, albeit without developing the form analogies identified by Mach.³⁹

Zimmermann believed that art did not require any content. Tones can be beautiful without expressing a feeling, just as lines, forms, and colors can be beautiful without depicting an object.⁴⁰ Analogies can be drawn here with the “tonal forms” of Mach, who said: “If two series of tones be begun at two different points on the scale, but be made to retain throughout the same ratios of vibration, we recognize in both the same melody, by a mere act of sensation, just as readily and immediately as we recognize in two geometrically similar figures, similarly situated, the same form.”⁴¹ While Mach defines the melody in music in the relationship of sounds, Adolf Hölzel regards varying forms in a picture as a “form melody” (fig. 3). The proximity of art to the ideas of Gestalt psychology is reflected in a statement by its founder Christian von Ehrenfels. Building on Mach’s theories, Ehrenfels writes in his fundamental essay: “Not



Figs. 5–8

Anton Anděl

Das geometrische Ornament, Ein Lehrmittel für den elementaren Zeichenunterricht an Real- und Gewerbeschulen, entworfen und mit Unterstützung des k. k. Ministeriums für Cultus und Unterricht veröffentlicht (Vienna, 1876), plates XVI, XVIII, LX, LVII

only the similarity of kindred products of nature but also that of the products of human creation rests in large part, when considered from the standpoint of their stylistic affinity, upon Gestalt qualities. What we call a feeling for style in a given province of art almost certainly consists principally in nothing other than the capacity to grasp and to compare Gestalt qualities of the relevant category."⁴²

In line with Gestalt psychology, then, art demonstrates that these "Gestalt qualities" are transportable. This is a principle that art historians, for example Alois Riegl⁴³ or Heinrich Wölfflin,⁴⁴ have employed to define stylistic traits.

These ideas about form were also shared by artists and applied to works of art history, for example by the Czech Cubists,⁴⁵ or by Adolf Hölzel, who, based on the example of paintings by the old masters, demonstrates the importance of form in art in his essay "Über Formen und Massenvertheilung im Bilde" in *Ver Sacrum*,⁴⁶ the organ of the Vienna Secession (fig. 4).⁴⁷ In the eyes of both Zimmermann and Herbart, content had no bearing on whether art pleases or displeases, for this is based on psychological fact. "Aesthetics as a pure science of form is a morphology of the beautiful. By showing that only forms please or displease it demonstrates that everything that pleases or displeases does so through form. [...] § 74. The first part of aesthetics as a science of form, the general theory of form, is dedicated to seeking out the forms that generally and essentially please and displease."⁴⁸ This applies not only to the appreciation of art but also to the practical aestheti-

cian, the artist. "In view of the fact that aesthetic forms are at the same time norms, they are the major premises of art theories, practical aesthetics [...]. While the material has no bearing on the theory of form, it is crucial for the theory of art. For on this it depends how far the goal, being the realization of forms, can be successfully achieved."⁴⁹

Comparable views are reflected in Anton (Antonín) Anděl's⁵⁰ portfolio *Das geometrische Ornament*,⁵¹ which was published in German and Czech. Using images, this explained both simple and complex geometric forms as examples for teaching (figs. 5–8).

The fact that these were not isolated instances is demonstrated by the theoretical writings of landscapist Emil Jakob Schindler, who called for a thorough training in elementary schools based on geometric drawing.⁵²

Seen from this perspective, works by many of the artists in the Habsburg Empire appear in a new light. This might have been a (perhaps even *the*) catalyst behind the planarity of Viennese Jugendstil and its specific approach to form and frequent geometricization. Form art can thus be seen against the backdrop of the philosophy of Herbart and the Herbartian Robert Zimmermann.⁵³

In Vienna it was the Secession above all that disseminated and propagated form art, from 1900, acting almost in tandem with the Vienna School of Applied Arts, and, with some of the same people active in the Wiener Werkstätte and Galerie Miethke, gave it international significance.



Fig. 7

Pavel Janák

Vase, c. 1911

Artěl, sold on commission
by the Wiener Werkstätte

MAK – Austrian Museum of Applied
Arts/Contemporary Arts, Vienna



Fig. 8

Josef Hoffmann

Wiener Werkstätte sales stand for postcards and Épinal prints at the Kunstschau, Vienna 1908

From Peter Noever (ed.), *Der Preis der Schönheit: 100 Jahre Wiener Werkstätte* (Vienna, 2003)

factures for furniture, ornamental cast-iron, and glass production from 1840 onwards, also strengthened the artistic exchange.¹⁷ Viennese manufacturers working in the field of applied arts, such as Ludwig Lobmeyr (1829–1917) or Michael Thonet (1796–1871), initially only established operations that supplied semi-finished products, but these were soon expanded to become independent production sites.¹⁸ In this, they benefited not just from the quality of Bohemian and Moravian craftsmen, but also from the results of an initiative to train designers for the applied arts industry that had emanated from Vienna: Rudolf von Eitelberger (1817–1885), born in Olmütz (Olomouc), founder and first director of the Austrian Museum of Art and Industry in Vienna, which was created in 1864, considered the promotion of the Bohemian and Moravian arts industry as one of his responsibilities.¹⁹ The founding of the Prague Museum of Applied Arts, supported by the Prague trade association and the mother institution in Vienna, was based as far as possible on the Viennese model, which also shows in the new building erected opposite the Rudolfinum between 1897 and 1899. Thus a close relationship was es-

tablished between the institutions in Vienna and Prague, which would turn out to be significant both scientifically and economically (fig. 8).

In addition to the collections of applied art, an extensive network of dedicated colleges for the applied arts developed in the final decades of the nineteenth century throughout the Austrian half of the Habsburg Monarchy. Through these educational institutions in the provinces, the School of Applied Arts of the Austrian Museum of Art and Industry, founded in 1867, not only sought to influence taste, but also to work toward improving the quality of arts industry products in all provinces of the monarchy, by training its designers.²⁰ It speaks for the importance accorded to Bohemia and Moravia in this context, that a second school of applied arts—the Umělecko-průmyslová škola (UPŠ)—was opened in Prague in 1885. The UPŠ represented one of the leading institutions in the promotion of the arts industry. Then there were the dedicated colleges that focused on specific aspects of local production, for example, glass in Haida (Nový Bor), Steinschönau (Kamenický Šenov), and Gablonz (Jablonec), textiles in Grulich (Králíky) and Teplitz



Fig. 9
Pavel Janák
 Artěl exhibition stand at the Jubilee Exhibition of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Prague, 1908
 From Jiří Fronek (ed.), *Artěl 1908–1935: Tschechischer Kubismus im Alltag* (Prague/Leipzig, 2011)



Fig. 10
Karel Mašek
 Picture postcard of Prague, 1908
 Artěl, with cover by Wiener Werkstätte
 Museum of Decorative Arts in Prague

(Teplice), and ceramics in Znaim (Znojmo). The density of educational institutions is a sign of Bohemia and Moravia's potential in the field of the applied arts, which the central government in Vienna wanted to foster. The teachers for these colleges were trained at the School of Applied Arts in Vienna, and thus brought knowledge of the latest trends in the applied arts to the provinces, where they taught students, who in turn often found their way to Vienna. The creative exchange between Vienna, Bohemia, and Moravia, which had already begun during the period of Historicism, also proved fruitful during the Vienna Modernism period of Secession and Jugendstil: Gifted students from the Vienna-led teaching institutions in Bohemia and Moravia became architects or designers for the applied arts in-

dustry, not just in Vienna but also in their Bohemian or Moravian homelands. From this fertile ground emerged the force that contributed to the foundation and running of the Artěl group. The nationalization of the Prague Academy of Fine Arts in 1896 resulted in the UPŠ School of Applied Arts losing its unique status—as well as most of its professors. Among the new professors, Jan Kotěra (1871–1923) stood out. A student of Wagner's, Kotěra was influential in the school's reorientation as an international platform of the Art Nouveau movement. In 1900, the UPŠ took over the representation of Czech art at the World Exhibition in Paris, winning the Grand Prix there. For Czech Cubism, which was to decisively shape the style of the Artěl group, the school became a focal point of the



Fig. 17

Fritz Wotruba

Church of the Holy Trinity in Vienna-Mauer, view from north-east

Design: Fritz Wotruba, 1967, detailed design: Fritz Wotruba and architect Fritz Gerhard Mayr, construction 1974–76

Belvedere, Vienna, on permanent loan from Fritz Wotruba Private Foundation, Photo Archive



Fig. 18

14th Exhibition of the Vienna Secession, 1902
Portal with one of the two overdoor reliefs
by Josef Hoffmann (neither relief exists
today)

From *Deutsche Kunst und Dekoration*,
vol. X, April – September 1902

- 1 Fritz Wotruba, typescript, n.d. (1959), estate of Fritz Wotruba, Belvedere, Vienna, permanent loan from the Fritz Wotruba Privatstiftung (abbreviated in the following as NFW). Thanks to Gabriele Stöger-Spevak. Printed in, among others: Otto Breicha (ed.), *Fritz Wotruba. Figur als Widerstand. Bilder und Schriften zu Leben und Werk* (Salzburg, 1977), pp. 134–37.
- 2 Fritz Wotruba, "Rede zur Eröffnung der ersten Kunstaussstellung in Alpbach" (1948), in: Otto Breicha (ed.), *Um Wotruba. Schriften zum Werk* (Vienna, 1967), p. 87.
- 3 Wotruba, 1967 (see note 2), p. 84.
- 4 Wotruba was concerned with showing "the mental [...], the spiritual condition of the creature." Fritz Wotruba, "Interviews; ORF 28.4.1971," in: Gustav Peichl (ed.), *Wotruba. Hommage à Wotruba* (exh. cat., Akademie der bildenden Künste Wien) (Vienna, 1985), p. 15.
- 5 See. Otto Breicha, *Fritz Wotruba. Werkverzeichnis. Skulpturen, Reliefs, Bühnen- und Architekturmodelle* (St. Gallen, 2002).
- 6 Fritz Wotruba, *Ich versuche ...*, typescript, n.d., NFW.
- 7 Fritz Wotruba, "Schlusswort," in: *ibid.*, *Überlegungen. Gedanken zur Kunst* (Zürich/New York, 1945), p. 61.
- 8 Parents: Adolf Wotruba (April 30, 1855, Neuhaus/Bohemia – January 12, 1928, Vienna); Marie, née Kotsis (August 27, 1860, Nagymegyér/Hungary – April 8, 1939, Vienna). Siblings: Karl (September 6, 1884, Vienna – 1945/48 [?], Philadelphia, installer; married Rosalia née

- Wohlmuth on August 23, 1926); Franz (December 22, 1886, Vienna – August 20, 1917, died in battle at Zavrč/Slovenia; dental technician, married Antonia on July 6, 1916, née Weiser); Adolf (May 31, 1889, Vienna – 1949, Philadelphia; owned a tailor's business in Philadelphia); Maria Hedwig (October 17, 1892, Vienna – February 9, 1953, Vienna; master tailor); Natalie Rosa (October 2, 1894, Vienna – April 7, 1980, Vienna; ladies' tailor; married on August 26, 1922 Hermann Drexler [March 18, 1881, Vienna – June 2, 1967, Vienna], one child: Lia, born on March 4, 1923); Alexander (December 4, 1897, Vienna – March 27, 1923, in prison at Stein a. d. Donau); Robert (1891, Vienna – August 31, 1944 [declared dead], parish clerk/book binder). See documents and certificates in the NFW archive; registration papers of the Vienna municipal and provincial archives, MA 8; superintendent of schools (*Stadtschulrat*) for Vienna (abbreviated in the following as SSR).
- 9 These, as well as all other documents of Wotruba's, derive from the NFW archive unless otherwise indicated.
- 10 City superintendent of schools (provincial superintendent of schools), identification documents: state schools, districts 1–12, 1917–1921, Vienna city and provincial archive, A9/1.
- 11 Identification document (see note 10).
- 12 Leaving certificate, July 15, 1921, NFW.
- 13 Georg Stiehler, "Zur Lage: Zeichen-, Kunst- und Werkunterricht," in: *Kunst und Jugend*, yr. 3, bkt. 6, 1923, p. 127.

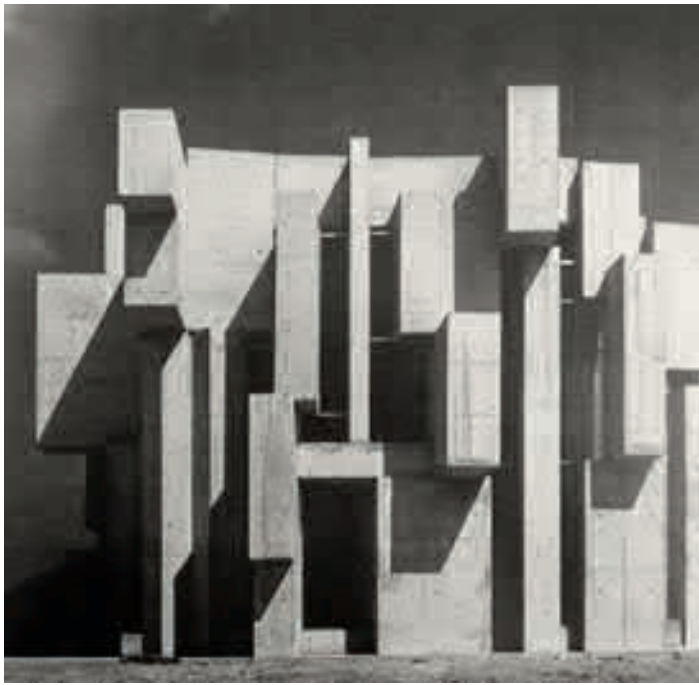


Fig. 19

Fritz Wotruba

Detail of the south-facing facade of the *Church of the Holy Trinity* in Vienna-Mauer

From: Rupert Feuchtmüller, *Wotruba: Die Kirche in Wien-Mauer* (Vienna, 1977)

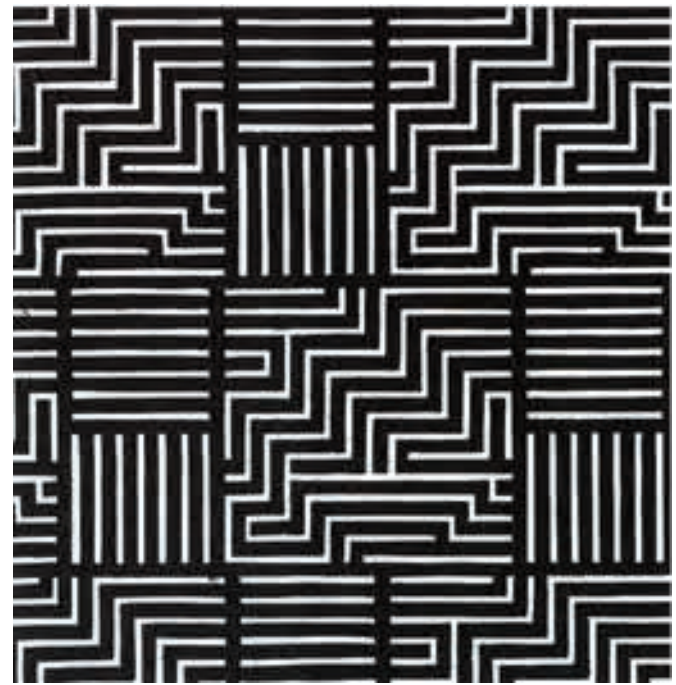


Fig. 20

Josef Hoffmann

Pattern design, year and whereabouts unknown

Former collection of Fritz Wotruba, Vienna

From: Matthias Haldemann, *Dialog mit der Moderne: Fritz Wotruba und die Sammlung Kamm* (Zug, 1998)

14 Rolf Laven, *Franz Čížek und die Wiener Jugendkunst* (series by the Akademie der bildenden Künste Wien, vol. 2) (Vienna, 2006).

15 Emil Schwarz, "Grundgedanken zum selbstschöpferischen Gestalten im Zeichen- und Kunstunterricht," in: *Kunst und Jugend. Deutsche Blätter für Zeichen-, Kunst- und Werkunterricht*, 5th ed., vol. 1 (1925), p. 1.

16 Laven 2006 (see note 14), pp. 37, 86–99; Cizek: "Ich bin ein Künstler [...] Ich bin kein Pädagog [sic], sondern: Wecker, Hervorrüfer, Anreger und Förderer!" in: *ibid.*, p. 9. Cizek studied architecture at the Vienna University of Technology, then painting at the Academy; *ibid.*, p. 15.

17 Franz Cizek, *Curriculum Vitae*, typescript, 1946, n.p., Wiener Stadt- und Landesbibliothek, manuscript collection. Franz Cizek, too, owned numerous pedagogical books and works on art education, for example, books by Alois Riegl, James L. Tadd, Walter Crane, Curt Weymann, Wilhelm August Lay, and Christoph Natter.

18 Laven 2006 (see note 14), p. 13.

19 Cizek 1946 (see note 17).

20 Cizek 1946 (see note 17).

21 *Kunstgewerbeschule Wien. Ausstellung von Schülerarbeiten aus Anlass der Vollendung des 60. Bestandjahres der Anstalt* (exh. cat., Österreichisches Museum, Vienna) (Vienna, 1929), p. 20.

22 Cizek 1946 (see note 17).

23 Leopold W. Rochowanski, *Der Formwille der Zeit in der angewandten Kunst* (Vienna, 1922), p. 8; Laven 2006 (see note 14), p. 163.

24 Laven 2006 (see note 14), p. 167.

25 Franz Wotruba, Fritz's brother, likewise attended the secondary school on Zeltgasse, from 1897 to 1900. Drexler later requested a duplicate of his leaving certificate; NFW.

26 Certificate of marriage, June 13, 1967, SSR. In 1953, he was given the official title of school director in retirement and in 1958 the title of superintendent for schools. Letter from the Vienna school board president to Drexler, May 15, 1953; letter from the Vienna school board to the central finance office, April 21, 1958; both SSR.

27 Data sheet, Hermann Drexler, October 9, 1945, SSR. Hermann Drexler's father Karl Anton Drexler was a trained stonemason. "Kleiner Abstammungsnachweis" (identification of ancestry), May 15, 1939, SSR.

28 Survey, September 6, 1945; letter from Drexler to the city school council, September 6, 1945; both SSR. Documentation on this matter could not be found in the archives of the Vienna Academy of Fine Arts or the archives of the University of Applied Arts Vienna.

29 *Adolph Lehmann's allgemeiner Wohnungs-Anzeiger für Wien und Umgebung*, vol. 2 (Vienna, 1921/22), p. 221. At the time he was registered as residing at Mariannengasse 25 (with his mother Anna Drexler, née Wolf), and later with Natalie Drexler at Kaiserstraße 34. Cf. *ibid.*, vol. 1 (Vienna, 1928), p. 240.

30 Application form for a teaching position, September 27, 1927, SSR.

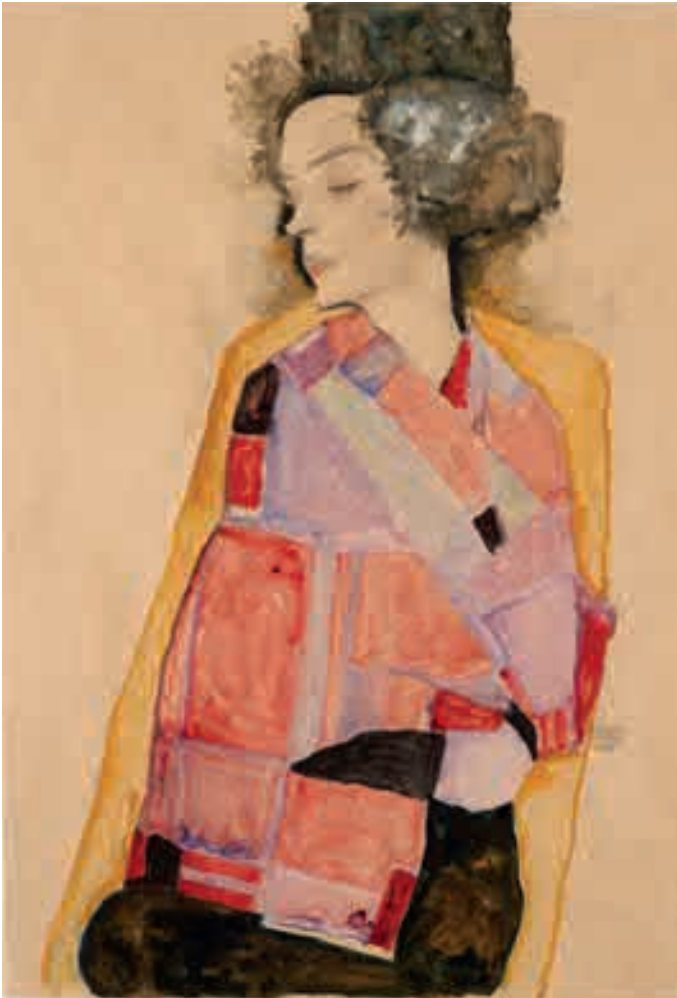


Plate 10
Egon Schiele
Gerti Sleeping, 1911
Gouache, water-based paint, and pencil on paper, 45.7 × 31.7 cm
Private collection, courtesy of Richard Nagy Ltd., London



Plate 11
Egon Schiele
Blonde Woman with Red Muff, 1911
Gouache, watercolor, and pencil on paper, 44.7 × 30.4 cm
Private collection, courtesy Richard Nagy Ltd., London



Plate 12

Gustav Klimt

Fritza Riedler, 1906

Oil on canvas, 153 × 133 cm

Belvedere, Vienna



Plate 29

Alois Bilek

Abstract Composition, 1914

Watercolor on paper, 26.9 × 19.8 cm

Belvedere, Vienna – on permanent loan from the Rotter Collection



Plate 30

Alois Bilek

Composition, 1913

Charcoal and watercolor on paper, 49.2 × 60.5 cm

Galerie hlavního města Prahy / Prague City Gallery



Plate 39

Pablo Picasso

Woman's Head – Fernande (first edition), 1909

Bronze, height: 40 cm

COLLET Prague | Munich



Plate 40

Pablo Picasso

Portrait of Fernande Olivier, 1909

Oil on canvas, 65 × 54.5 cm

Städel Museum, Frankfurt a. M., property of Städtischer Museums-Verein e.V.



Plate 82

Josef Hoffmann

Sanatorium Purkersdorf, model, 1904

Linden, pear and Finnish birch veneers, 41 × 190.6 × 112.7 cm

Vienna University of Applied Arts, Art Collection and Archive



Plate 83

Josef Hoffmann

Wall light for Sanatorium Purkersdorf, 1904/05

Glass and sheet metal, chrome-plated, 32.5 × 32.5 × 11.5 cm

Made by the Wiener Werkstätte

Ernst Ploil, Vienna



Plate 84

Koloman Moser

Dresser for his own house on Hohe Warte, 1901

Softwood, painted white (originally white and blue), iron, 179 × 111 × 53 cm

MAK – Austrian Museum of Applied Art / Contemporary Art, Vienna





Plate 158

Unknown artist

Chess pieces, c. 1925

Wood, carved and painted, 5.3–22.8 × 2.5 × 2.5 cm

Wien Museum



Plate 254
Lajos Kassák
Décor de Scène, 1926
 Collage on board, 22 × 18.5 cm
 Courtesy of Galerie Le Minotaure



Plate 255
Lajos Kassák
Décor de Scène, 1926
 Gouache and collage on laminated board, 24.5 × 19.5 cm
 Courtesy of Galerie Le Minotaure



Plate 256

Lajos Kassák

Advertisement Kiosk/Reklámkioszk makett, 1924

Reconstruction: Jóláthy Attila, 1977

Wood and plexiglass model, 53.3 × 33.6 × 38 cm

Petőfi Literary Museum – Kassák Museum