



**EGON SCHIELE**

**PORTRAITS**

**NEUE  
GALERIE**  
MUSEUM FOR GERMAN  
AND AUSTRIAN ART  
**NEW YORK**





**JANE KALLIR**

## Patronage and Portraiture in the World of Egon Schiele

At the time of Egon Schiele's birth in 1890, portraiture—a genre that had sustained European artists since the Renaissance—was in crisis. Not only had photography surpassed painting in mimetic accuracy, but photography's relative accessibility and low cost had diminished the aura of privilege that formerly attached to the painted portrait. Furthermore, industrial capitalism was undermining the economic dominance of the aristocracy, and with it the system of direct artistic patronage that once fostered portraiture. Throughout much of Western Europe, dealers now mediated between artists and newly rich bourgeois collectors.

Austria-Hungary, however, was in many respects more backward than the rest of Europe. The Empire industrialized relatively late, and the tradition of aristocratic patronage lingered longer there than elsewhere. A mid-nineteenth-century growth spurt (the so-called *Gründerzeit*, or founders' age) triggered a boom in Imperial building projects that provided employment for both architects and artists. The young Gustav Klimt got his professional start painting curtains and interior murals for provincial theaters before graduating to the Viennese capital, where his frescoes for the Burgtheater earned him the Emperor's Gold Service Cross. This was followed, in 1890, by a commission to decorate the staircase spandrels at the new Kunsthistorisches Museum. In 1894 Klimt was hired to paint allegories of three faculties—*Medicine*, *Jurisprudence* and *Philosophy*—for the University of Vienna.

Imperial patronage imposed certain limits, of course, one of which was that its recipients had to hew to a fairly conservative standard of taste. This was a problem at the Künstlerhaus, the only venue in Vienna devoted to the exhibition and sale of contemporary art. As Klimt and others of his generation began to stray from the historicist paradigm favored by the Austrian establishment, the fight for creative autonomy became inseparable from the need to develop new sources of financial support. Unlike France and Germany, Austria lacked a network of professional dealers prepared to sponsor and market modern art. It was largely left to the fin-de siècle Viennese avant-garde to promote their own innovations.

The Künstlerhaus's monopoly on the display of contemporary art was also an economic monopoly. By controlling access to exhibitions at home and abroad, the conservative majority channeled the attendant income for its own benefit. After an escalating series of internecine squabbles, the organization's more forward-thinking members finally withdrew in 1897. Thus was born the Vienna Secession.

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Egon Schiele, *Portrait of the Painter Hans Massmann*, 1909, oil and metallic paint on canvas. Kunsthaus Zug, Stiftung Sammlung Kamm (Kallir P. 149)

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Egon Schiele, *Portrait of Dr. Oskar Reichel*, 1910, watercolor, gouache, and black crayon on paper. Private Collection (Kallir D. 638)

7

Egon Schiele, *Portrait of Dr. Erwin von Graff*, 1910, oil, gouache, and charcoal on canvas. Private Collection (Kallir P. 161)

also endeavored to secure portrait commissions for his protégé. No less a personage than the elderly architect Otto Wagner offered himself as a subject. "I'll give you some advice," Wagner told Schiele:

*Paint a series of portraits of famous Viennese personalities—painters, sculptors, architects, graphic artists, musicians, poets, critics, prominent collectors, intellectuals, maybe even politicians. At least one dozen, preferably two. As soon as you have them together, you can become famous in a single stroke, get further commissions, and find buyers for your other paintings.<sup>8</sup>*

But the portrait projects concocted by Loos, Roessler, and Wagner did not always turn out well. Loos, who inveigled sitters by promising to buy the finished paintings if they were dissatisfied, ended up owning many of Kokoschka's early portraits.<sup>9</sup> Wagner lost patience with Schiele after a few sittings; the artist cut the head out of the incomplete canvas<sup>10</sup> and sold it to Roessler for a pittance. Oskar Reichel [Fig. 6], one of several collectors introduced to Schiele by Roessler, refused to purchase his portrait.<sup>11</sup> Others, such as the gynecologist Erwin von Graff (who let the artist draw his patients; Fig. 7; Plates 40–42) and the art publisher Eduard Kosmak [Fig. 8; Plates 43–44], assumed that their portraits were payments for services rendered. Kosmak not only never paid for his painting, but evidently absconded with a group of watercolors submitted by Schiele for reproduction in a portfolio.<sup>12</sup>







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Egon Schiele, *Portrait of the Publisher Eduard Kosmack*, 1910, oil on canvas. Belvedere, Vienna (Kallir P. 165)

One need only compare the early portraits of Kokoschka and Schiele to those of Klimt to understand why the younger Expressionists were less successful than the master. It was not just that they dispensed with the decorative element; their paintings had almost no color whatsoever. Refusing to make any concessions to the sitters' social ambitions, both artists produced works based solely on their own personal interpretations. It would later become a point of pride for Kokoschka that he could paint people not as they were, but as they would become. However, in 1910, there was not much market for portraitists who had the uncanny ability to age their subjects by several decades. Kokoschka's and Schiele's portraits were hardly flattering, and it is not surprising that almost all their sitters were men.<sup>13</sup> The wealthy society ladies who doted on Klimt stayed away in droves.<sup>14</sup>

As Roessler, who wrote for the socialist *Arbeiter Zeitung*, noted, "The hearts of the bourgeoisie and the aristocracy were unmoved by Schiele's pictures."<sup>15</sup> That may have been well and good from Roessler's political standpoint, but who else was going to buy the artist's work? Certainly not the proletariat. In fact, Schiele's first patrons were a sundry mix. There was Reichel, a physician whose stellar collection included many paintings by Kokoschka and the groundbreaking nineteenth-century Austrian artist Anton Romako. Though well off, Reichel was not above taking advantage of Schiele's impecunious habits to drive hard bargains. Carl Reininghaus [Fig. 9], probably the wealthiest of the group, was an heir to an industrial fortune with a taste for erotica. Heinrich Benesch [Fig. 10; Plates 56, 57, and 65], on the other hand, was a railroad inspector with relatively little

In tandem with the Goltz episode, Schiele's relationships with his original cadre of collectors began to fray. By 1913, Reichel had more or less stopped buying the artist's work. Reininghaus, who was on familiar "Du" terms with Schiele, had also cooled to him at this point.<sup>23</sup> Mainly, the problem seems to have been Schiele's constant demands for money, and his relative ingratitude for the resulting largesse. "One sacrifices when one loves," he retorted when Roessler complained that his prices were too high.<sup>24</sup> Although Roessler always maintained that he was acting selflessly on Schiele's behalf, in fact he expected some consideration for his efforts. Instead, as the artist's fortunes rose, Roessler felt increasingly passed over. "I don't think it's nice of you to care so little for your old friends," he wrote. "Or do you only come to me when you are in trouble?"<sup>25</sup> Benesch, too, felt taken for granted. "It is bitter to be treated as an expendable commodity by a friend," he said.<sup>26</sup>

Schiele could afford to jettison his early collectors because they had largely been supplanted by a wealthier contingent. Some of the Klimtgruppe's patrons were starting to come around. Magda Mautner von Markhoff, a longstanding benefactor of the Wiener Werkstätte, felt compelled to add a Schiele landscape to her collection, even though she found his figural work "quite alien."<sup>27</sup> August and Serena Lederer, introduced to the artist by Klimt, never quite warmed up to the young painter, but their son Erich was infatuated (not least because Schiele introduced him

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Egon Schiele, *Portrait of Erich Lederer*, 1912, oil and gouache on canvas. Kunstmuseum Basel, Gift of Mrs. Erich Lederer in memory of her husband (Kallir P. 235)



12

Egon Schiele, *Erich Lederer in front of a Window*, Győr, 1912, watercolor, gouache, and pencil on paper. Private Collection (Kallir D. 1000)





13

Egon Schiele, *Elisabeth Lederer, Seated with Hands Folded*, 1913, gouache and pencil on paper. Private Collection (Kallir D. 1232)

to his female models). Toward the end of 1912, Schiele approached the collector Franz Hauer, a self-made man who owned the Griechenbeisl, a popular Viennese tavern. Until his premature death from appendicitis in 1914, Hauer was Schiele's single most important collector, acquiring a total of nine oils and uncounted works on paper. Around the same time, Josef Hoffmann introduced Schiele to Heinrich Böhler, a wealthy steel heir looking for an art teacher. Not only did Böhler supply Schiele with paint, canvas, and models when they painted side by side, but he also became a dedicated collector of the artist's work and paid him a monthly stipend during World War I.

As might be expected, Schiele's new patrons prompted an upsurge in his portrait activity. Over the Christmas holiday in 1912–13, he created a striking painting of Erich Lederer [Fig. 11]. This commission occasioned not only a number of preliminary studies, but several independent watercolors depicting Erich [Fig. 12] and his older sister Elisabeth [Fig. 13]. Schiele made drawings of Böhler [Fig. 14] and Hauer, also the subject of an etching [Fig. 15]. (Roessler, who bankrolled the artist's short-lived etching experiment in the spring of 1914, was likewise portrayed in a print; Fig. 16.) And in October 1914, Friederike Beer-Monti, the girlfriend of Heinrich Böhler's cousin Hans, commissioned a portrait [Fig. 17]. (Two years later, Beer-Monti had her portrait done by Klimt, earning herself a place in history as the only person to be painted in oil by both artists.)



**FAMILY AND ACADEMY**











3 PORTRAIT OF A LADY IN PROFILE FACING RIGHT, 1907





4 PORTRAIT OF A YOUNG LADY, 1907



5 PORTRAIT OF A LADY WITH NECKBAND AND LOCKET, 1907





20 PORTRAIT OF THE PAINTER KARL ZAKOVŠEK, 1910

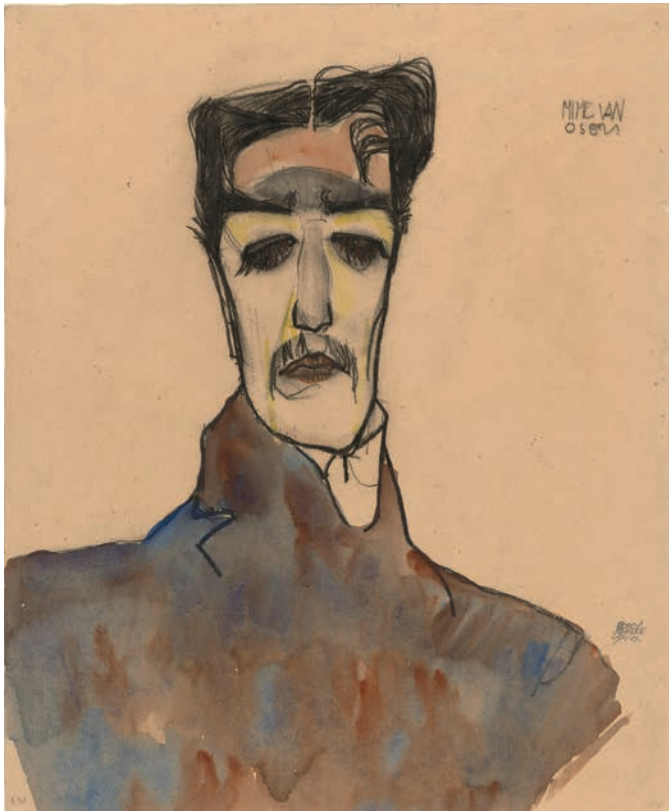


21 PAINTER ZAKOVŠEK, 1910



22 PORTRAIT OF THE PAINTER ZAKOVŠEK, 1910





23 MIME VAN OSEN, 1910



24 RECLINING MAN (MAX OPPENHEIMER), 1910





25 PORTRAIT OF THE PAINTER MAX OPPENHEIMER, 1910







**SITTERS AND PATRONS**







46 FRAU DR. H[ORWITZ], 1910



47 FRAU DR. HORWITZ WITH LARGE HAT, 1910



69 PORTRAIT OF A WOMAN (LILLY STEINER), 1918



70 PORTRAIT OF GUIDO ARNOT, 1918

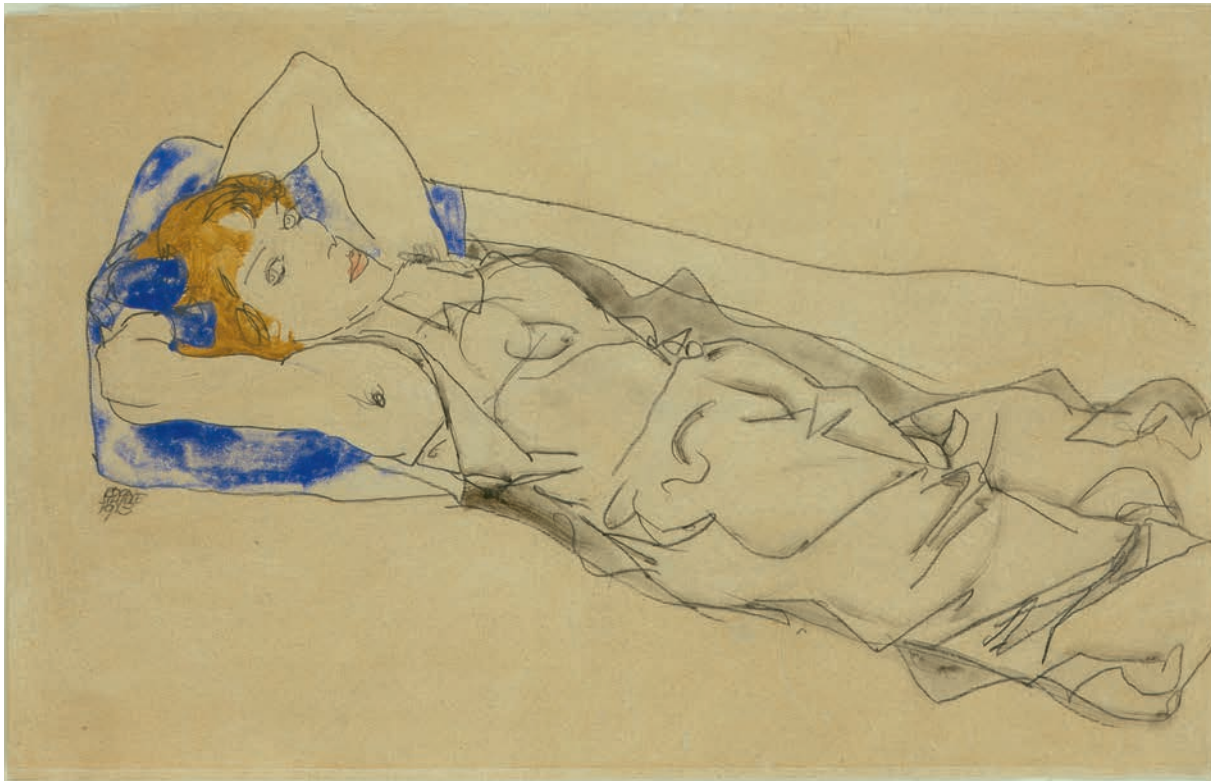




71 SEATED WOMAN, 1918



77 WALLY IN RED BLOUSE WITH RAISED KNEES, 1913



78 STUDY OF A FEMALE FIGURE (WALLY NEUZIL) RECLINING AGAINST A BLUE CUSHION, HER ARMS RAISED AND HELD BEHIND HER HEAD, 1913





79 PORTRAIT OF THE ARTIST'S WIFE, STANDING (EDITH SCHIELE IN STRIPED DRESS), 1915





93 KNEELING SEMI-NUDE, 1917



94 RECLINING WOMAN WITH GREEN STOCKINGS, 1917





104 SELF-PORTRAIT WITH RED EYE, 1910





105 SHAW OR THE IRONY (SHAW ODER DIE IRONIE),  
poster for a lecture by Egon Friedell, 1910 (published 1912)



106 SELF-PORTRAIT, HEAD, 1910



Egon Schiele, *Prisoner*, 1912, watercolor and pencil on paper. Albertina, Vienna (Kallir D. 1188)



# Egon Schiele's Prison Diary

Arthur Roessler published *Egon Schiele im Gefängnis* (Egon Schiele in Prison) in 1922, four years after Schiele's death. Although Roessler claimed that the text was written by Schiele himself, Roessler described the book as "the fallout in words and drawings of the experience of [Schiele's] twenty-four days [in prison]." Most scholars believe that the diary is, in fact, compiled from various sources, including retellings by Schiele to Roessler of his experience, and that it involves at least some degree of interpretation.

Schiele not only purportedly kept a diary while in jail but also created a series of thirteen so-called prison drawings, which include haunting self-portraits and views of his prison cell and the jail. Notably, poetic titles are inscribed on each work, such as *Nicht gestraft sondern gereinigt füh' ich mich!* (I Feel Not Punished by Cleansed!). It is entirely possible that Schiele did not add these titles until after his imprisonment and upon the advice of Roessler himself.

## **Foreword by Arthur Roessler to First Publication of Egon Schiele's Prison Diary, Vienna 1922**

From Vienna on 9 May 1912, Egon Schiele wrote me at Tarbole on Lake Garda; he was in a state of the most painful inner disorientation: ". . . I am wretched, I tell you, innerly so wretched! For twenty-four days I was under arrest. Do you know nothing about it? Have experienced everything and will write you in detail about it soon."

The following pages contain the verbal and sketched account of the experiences of those twenty-four days. The time that has passed since then and the death of the artist make Schiele's arrest sufficiently remote that it now appears as that which, in reality, it always was: the ill-intended blunder of overly enthusiastic moral busybodies and the pitiful martyrdom of an artist who was misunderstood in his lifetime.

Schiele saw himself forced to tread paths completely overgrown with the weeds of prejudice. If a spontaneous scheme did sometimes open before him, he discovered all too soon that deceitful delights also exist, that morasses, too, are carpeted with blossoming flowers. For Egon Schiele's life as a fellow human among humans, the dry words of Sister Hadwiga hold true: "Thus, being human, so live also in misery as a human."



Egon Schiele, *The Single Orange was the Only Light*, 1912, gouache, watercolor, and pencil. Albertina, Vienna (Kallir D. 1179)





Egon Schiele, *My Wandering Path Leads over Abysses*, 1912, gouache, watercolor, and pencil on paper. Albertina, Vienna (Kallir D. 1191)