

**Klimt
Schiele**
Drawings



Royal
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of Arts

Foreword

1918 was a momentous year that saw the collapse of Austria-Hungary and the end of the First World War, as well as the deaths of Gustav Klimt and Egon Schiele. A century later, both artists are counted among the most pioneering figures of their time, not only in Vienna but in all of Europe. Each opposed the rigid canons of academicism, each devoted himself to the uncomfortable and the unusual, each prepared the ground for Modernism. Together, the two artists' work may also be understood as the expression of their epoch's crisis: not only was an era of stability drawing to its close, but empires and the societies that supported them were also coming to an end.

The oeuvre of Gustav Klimt – the older of the two artists and the great, influential figure of Austrian art at the turn of the century – was informed by the tension between tradition and progress. Klimt occupied a singular position as a draughtsman and his achievements were to play a decisive role for subsequent generations. His sensual, erotic studies and his enigmatic allegories of mourning and suffering paved the way for Egon Schiele's uninhibited, pitiless representation of humanity.

Schiele's career began when Klimt's had long since reached its climax. In October 1906 Schiele, then sixteen years old, was the youngest student to enrol at the Akademie der Bildenden Künste in Vienna. From the beginning, his talent was chiefly evident in the fields of drawing, watercolour and gouache. The abandonment of false modesty and, ultimately, the deliberate violation of established taboos became his aesthetic principles. Schiele's way of presenting

himself – often as the picture of misery in an emaciated body, distorted by rickets, with cramped limbs – strikes us as a symbol of man's isolation from society, embodying the innate loneliness of the human condition.

Klimt and Schiele are both closely associated with the Albertina Museum, through the number and quality of their works in the museum's pre-eminent collection of works on paper, as well as decades of documentation and scholarly assessment of their drawings at the world-renowned institution. Publications and exhibitions prepared at the Albertina are considered landmarks in research into their work.

The collaboration between the Albertina Museum and the Royal Academy of Arts provides the basis for the first exhibition dedicated to the work of both artists in the United Kingdom. More than one hundred items selected for the show come from the Albertina, which is able to present the unique position of both pioneers as no other collection could by drawing on its abundance of outstanding master drawings.

Following our institutions' previous collaboration in 2014 on the exhibition 'Renaissance Impressions: Chiaroscuro Woodcuts from the Collections of Georg Baselitz and the Albertina, Vienna', we are delighted to be working together again and would like to extend our deepest gratitude to all those who have contributed to the realisation of this historic undertaking.

The exhibition would not have been possible without the generous support of Ömer Koç and Jake and Hélène Marie Shafran and we are much



indebted to them. Our sincere thanks are owed to Kathleen Soriano, former Director of Exhibitions at the Royal Academy, and Senior Curator Adrian Locke for initiating and establishing this exhibition with the Albertina. It was curated by Désirée de Chair and Sarah Lea of the Royal Academy in collaboration with Christof Metzger and Eva Michel of the Albertina Museum, assisted by Rebecca Bray and Rhiannon Hope. Our strong appreciation is extended to both our institutions' teams,

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From Exception to Quintessence

Elizabeth Clegg

The Albertina, through its generous loan of works on paper by Gustav Klimt and Egon Schiele (on the centenary of their deaths) to venues in Moscow, Boston, and now London, has offered visitors to the recipient institutions an opportunity to make much the same discovery as awaited those who came to see the catalogued drawings on view, and on sale, in Vienna in the spring and summer of 1919.¹ For surely no less evident now than a century ago is the truly exceptional character of the work on display: a sensual and intellectual distinctiveness found here in even more concentrated measure than in the same artists' work as painters.

For Klimt, as for Schiele, in the pursuit of their careers (of which three phases are evoked in this essay), the capacity to bring forth the exceptional, be it on paper or on board or canvas, was to prove no less a blessing than a curse. Securing the approval of a rare critic, dealer or collector willing to ensure remarkable new work of persuasive commentary, prominent display or a prompt sale was an experience all too often followed by the forceful expression, from those not so minded, of repugnance, outrage – or mere bewilderment.

As early as 1899 exasperation at this Viennese 'routine' induced Klimt to inscribe his alluring allegory of the 'naked truth' with Friedrich Schiller's advice on the futility of seeking to 'please the many'.² Among the most gravely momentous of such reprisals was Klimt's resolve – on learning of the 'pornographic' character widely imputed to drawings he had shown in Vienna in 1910 –

never again to exhibit any of his work in the city.³

Schiele could not risk such a gesture. And he was undoubtedly chastened by his most extreme clash with aesthetic and moral convention, which in 1912 incurred three weeks in a provincial gaol.⁴ He nonetheless held fast to his belief in the artist as inherently exceptional. He had claimed as much in the manifesto intended to accompany the 1909 Viennese exhibiting *début* of the *Neukunstgruppe*; and the idea was still implicit in his lovingly crafted plans of 1917 for a scheme to support the reassembled 'creative forces of Austria'.⁵

As Klimt was repeatedly, and Schiele intermittently, to discover, the exception that proved so resistant to absorption into the socio-cultural context of Vienna might very well be acclaimed abroad – from Rome to Stockholm – as the quintessence of Viennese art. And approval of this sort could be manifest not only in critical exuberance, but in museum acquisitions and prestigious awards.

During what were to prove the last eight months of Schiele's career, when he had come to see himself as Klimt's true successor, he acquiesced in an effective reconciliation with one of the chief institutions of Viennese art life.⁶ But, at so uncertain a time, it would have been hard to foresee where such a move might lead. And so it was not until Vienna had lost both of its exceptional artists, and an effort at their posthumous reclamation was underway, that the notion of a convergence of the exception and the quintessence was widely embraced there, too.

Fig. 2

Front cover of a guide to the Austrian sections at the Paris Exposition Universelle, with design by Alfons Mucha (1860–1939). Published in Paris, 1900. Printed card, 20.5 x 10.5 cm. State Library of New South Wales, Sydney



Austria, as much of the world envisaged it, was evoked in Paris by Ludwig Baumann's neo-Baroque *hommage* to Fischer von Erlach, shown cradled in the lap of Alfons Mucha's seductive allegorical figure (fig. 2).¹⁴ But this Pavillon de l'Autriche, one of twenty temporary edifices ranged along the Left Bank of the Seine to form a much frequented 'Quai des Nations', housed only work by the Prague and Kraków artists' societies,¹⁵ in addition to displays on Dalmatia, historic Viennese interiors, Austrian music and musicians, and the Austrian postal and telegraphic services. Austria, as an entity embraced within the vast survey of contemporary art that filled the newly inaugurated Grand Palais on the Right Bank, the 'Exposition Décennale', was restricted to the Viennese Artists' Society, the Viennese Secession, and an ad-hoc grouping of 'Austrian artists living in Paris'.¹⁶

As installed here, the Secession had succeeded in firmly distinguishing itself from the older Viennese association through assembling its

far less numerous exhibits in two much smaller spaces, one of these an octagonal chamber with grey wall fabric, purple-stained woodwork, and yellow silk drapery and upholstery in a Koloman Moser design. While Klimt's *Philosophy* was clearly its prime focus, the room could immediately be absorbed as a harmoniously cohesive whole, not least on account of Josef Hoffmann's flair for thematic and chromatic pairing: Klimt's *Sonja Knips* was here 'matched' with a no less striking portrait by Józef Mehoffer.¹⁷ The observation that this aspect of the Secession's display left no doubt as to its grasp of 'the art of elevating art'¹⁸ encapsulated the achievement of the Klimt-Moser-Hoffmann triumvirate in one of its earliest incarnations.

The advantages accruing to the Viennese Secession through its presentation in Paris were rapidly apparent, not least in the now much stronger expression of interest from like-minded societies and individuals across Europe.¹⁹ But this in itself was soon to alarm Secession members (and there were many) whose views had not kept pace with those of the advance guard. While the immediately following years were to include early high points in Klimt's collaboration both with Hoffmann (the allegorical frieze he created for the 'Beethoven Exhibition' of April–June 1902) and with Moser (who installed, with peerless refinement, the one-man show of his work as draughtsman and painter in the final months of 1903), this period was to end, in June 1905, in an irreparable institutional schism. Soon, however, a now independent and informal Klimt-Gruppe would find new ways to startle and challenge Vienna.

1906–11: a frame and a network

Egon Schiele, twenty-eight years Klimt's junior and resident in Vienna only from the autumn of 1906, when he was admitted to study at the city's Akademie der Bildenden Künste (Academy of Fine Arts), appears to have had no direct contact with the older artist until the winter of 1910.²⁰ By that time Schiele had already moved into and then again out of his own most overtly Klimtian phase, a development initiated through an enthralled encounter with the master's work at its most alluring: in the Klimt Room at the 1908 Kunstschau. This extensive display of fine and applied art had been the Klimt-Gruppe's first

the derivative character of most exhibits ('the influence of Klimt is unmistakable'), though he found Schiele and several others to be 'unusually talented'. He was not alone in treating the Neukunstgruppe indulgently.²⁶ But it was him that Schiele in due course sought out.

Roessler then soon became the linchpin of Schiele's evolving social and professional network, although his protégé remained open to offers of help from elsewhere. While the budding artist was the more obviously advantaged, through the critic's already extensive art-world connections, both within and beyond Vienna, the critic's own fascination with a talent he might nurture and, above all, promote in his own published writing was also to be very well served.²⁷ It is surely no coincidence that the marked transformation in Schiele's work over the course of 1910 should have occurred when he was first able to profit from Roessler's willingness to open doors for him. Appropriately, one of the first truly accomplished testaments to Schiele's new style was the portrait of Roessler that he completed in October of that year (fig. 4):²⁸ both modish and grotesque, and already with the prominent flexed hands that were to distinguish Schiele's figures for some time. While retaining the square format he had adopted for his earlier, Klimtian portraits and still clearly indebted to a Klimtian linearity in the 'seismographic' contour of the upper arms and shoulders, this image has much in common with the sombre, 'ungainly' portraits then being produced by Schiele's Viennese contemporaries Max Oppenheimer (at this time a close friend) and Oskar Kokoschka (whose meteoric rise to fame would encourage many to assume it was from his work that Schiele's own 'derived').

Illustrated in the first essay that Roessler was able to devote to Schiele – the March 1911 origin of many of the catchphrases to which he, and others, would repeatedly return (the artist as a sort of 'outlaw', his capacity to 'see death beneath the skin')²⁹ – the portrait almost certainly featured in the one-man show that Schiele was offered for April–May by the highly regarded Galerie Miethke, the prestige of the venue compensating for the brevity of the exposure.³⁰ Schiele was astute enough to see that the chief value of this happy turn of events lay in the interest he might now elicit from commentators, publishers and gallerists abroad, above all in



Fig. 4
Egon Schiele, *Arthur Roessler*, 1910. Oil on canvas, 99.6 x 99.8 cm. Wien Museum, Vienna

Germany (where Roessler had already had some success in raising Schiele's profile). Meanwhile, he responded with particular delight to a review by Ludwig Abels in the leading germanophone daily in Budapest (where the Neukunstgruppe would later try its luck). While finding that Schiele, as a painter, had merely exchanged the influence of Klimt for that of Kokoschka, this commentator lauded him as a draughtsman, finding 'worthy of Degas' his mastery of the 'art of omission'. No less encouraging was the generosity of his conclusion, acclaiming 'the young Egon Schiele' (still only twenty) as 'one of the best hopes of new Viennese art!'³¹

1912–18: the view from abroad

Following the rapturous response he had found in Rome in 1911,³² Klimt enjoyed a new level of international celebrity as little short of an epitome of Austrian art. Yet almost all the work he now produced remained unseen by the public in Vienna.³³ Instead, a good many of these new paintings toured Europe, from one important show to the next, none more so than the imposing allegorical composition *Death and Life* (fig. 5). An entirely new creation when sent to Rome, this was subsequently seen, and much remarked, in Dresden, Budapest, Mannheim, Prague and (in a reworked version) Berlin, before arriving in Stockholm in 1917.³⁴

The speed with which Schiele appeared to advance at the start of this period was a feature both of the character of his work and of the contexts in which it was shown. His own now greater acceptability in Vienna was symptomatic



EDVARD
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1911.

an alternative to the stifling Historicist aesthetic of the Ringstrasse, the boulevard that encircles the old centre of Vienna. From January 1898 the Secession publishes the journal *Ver Sacrum*, which will feature many of Klimt's drawings and designs during the six years of its existence.

Klimt's Faculty Paintings

Klimt's struggle against the conservatism of state patronage can be seen in the reaction to his three allegories of Philosophy, Medicine and Jurisprudence, commissioned as ceiling paintings for the University of Vienna in 1894. *Philosophy*, Klimt's first work in this series, known as the Faculty Paintings, is shown in an unfinished state at the seventh Secession exhibition in 1900, with an incomplete *Medicine* presented a year later. The nude figures in both cause outrage in Vienna, although the paintings are positively received when exhibited abroad.

The Beethoven Frieze

In 1902 Klimt successfully exhibits his *Beethoven Frieze* (see cat. 13). The mural, originally made for the fourteenth Secession exhibition honouring the composer, later has a profound effect on Schiele. Following the success of the *Beethoven Frieze*, in November 1903 the Secession dedicates its eighteenth exhibition to Klimt. Klimt designs the poster and displays around eighty works, including many drawings and the three partially finished Faculty Paintings.

A time of transformation for Klimt

1904 marks an important shift in Klimt's artistic method: he abandons packing paper as a support in favour of smooth Japan paper, and switches his medium from chalk to pencil. In 1905, in the face of relentless criticism directed at the Faculty Paintings, Klimt returns all monies paid to him by the state and requests to receive his works back, finally completing them in 1907. He decides not to accept any more state commissions, declaring: 'Enough of this censorship. I am taking things into my own hands. I want to make my escape.'

A difference of opinion over the Secession's artistic direction prompts Klimt and his supporters to abandon the association, forming an informal 'Klimt-Gruppe' instead. In 1907 a selection of Klimt's erotic drawings, until then rarely seen outside his studio, is included in a Wiener

Werkstätte limited-edition publication of *Lucian's Dialogues of the Courtesans* (cats 99, 100).

1908–10: Schiele enters the Viennese art scene

In 1908, at the age of eighteen, Schiele participates in his first group exhibition, presenting ten small-scale landscape paintings and drawings in the Imperial Hall of Klosterneuburg Abbey. In the same year, the Klimt-Gruppe organises the first Viennese Kunstschau, an exhibition showcasing the latest of Austria's artistic production, with Klimt's monumental painting *The Kiss* as its centrepiece. The event represents a crucial moment in Schiele's own formation as an artist: he is deeply impressed by Klimt's exhibited works. The following year, he depicts himself alongside Klimt in a touching double portrait (fig. 29).

Following an invitation to participate in the second Kunstschau in 1909, Schiele and a group of classmates decide to withdraw from the conservative Akademie, and to found the Neukunstgruppe in an attempt to launch their own careers. Schiele's four works at the Kunstschau reveal his great admiration for, and emulation of, Klimt's style. In December the Neukunstgruppe has its first exhibition, at



Fig. 29
Egon Schiele, *Two Men with Halos*, 1909. Pencil and ink wash on drawing paper, 15.5 x 9.9 cm. The Albertina Museum, Vienna

precarious: the prices that he is able to charge for his paintings are a fraction of Klimt's. In an attempt to find an additional source of income, Schiele takes lessons in woodcut and etching, but he finds the processes too time-consuming. In early 1914 he meets Edith Harms (fig. 31), whose respectable middle-class family live opposite his studio; he separates from Wally in November, but continues to use her as a model. In December his second Viennese exhibition is staged at the Galerie Arnot. Here, he shows sixteen paintings and a selection of watercolours and drawings.

1914–18: the First World War

The outbreak of war initially has little impact on either artist: Klimt is too old for conscription and Schiele fails two army medicals. But after a third test, in May 1915, Schiele is pronounced fit for service. Before beginning his military training, on 17 June Schiele marries Edith, who insists that he give up Wally as a model. Despite Schiele's deployment away from the Front and his commitment to pursuing his art, the constraints of military life cause his artistic output to drop considerably.

In early 1916 Klimt and Schiele participate in the Wiener Kunstschau at the Berlin Secession,

where their paintings hang opposite one another. From March Schiele is stationed as a military clerk at the prisoner-of-war camp in Mühlring, Lower Austria. Here he produces numerous portraits of Russian captives, as well as landscapes and nature drawings. The progressive Berlin magazine *Die Aktion* commissions drawings and writing from Schiele and, in September 1916, devotes an entire issue to his work (cat. 86).

In summer 1917 Schiele participates in the *Kriegsausstellung* (War Exhibition) in Vienna. In the autumn he is instrumental in the completion of the purchase of Klimt's *Beethoven Frieze* by the Lederer family, which he has helped to orchestrate since 1915. To rebuild the arts after the war, Schiele develops the idea of establishing a new artist association similar to the Secession, called 'Kunsthalle'. The plan gains great approval from Klimt and other contemporaries, but lacks the funds to get off the ground.

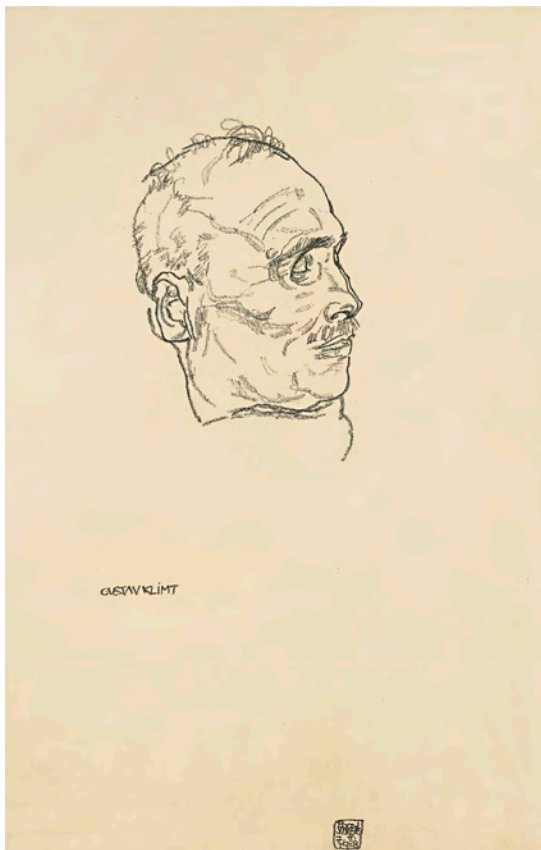
1918: the final year

On 11 January 1918 Klimt is hospitalised after a stroke. He dies of pneumonia on 6 February and Schiele makes three final drawings of him in the morgue (fig. 32). Following Klimt's death, Schiele is invited to organise a section of the Secession's forty-ninth exhibition.

In April approval comes through for Schiele's transfer to the Heeresmuseum (Army Museum) in Vienna, enabling him to fulfil his military responsibilities while devoting considerably more time to his art. In July, after failing to rent Klimt's now-vacant studio, he takes on new premises, also in the thirteenth district, with the intention of turning his old studio into an art school.

On 28 October, six months pregnant, Edith dies after contracting pandemic influenza. Shortly afterwards, Schiele also falls ill and dies three days later, on 31 October.

Fig. 32
Egon Schiele, *The Dead Gustav Klimt*, 1918. Black chalk on paper, 47 x 30 cm. Leopold Museum, Vienna



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