GUSTAV KLIMT INTERIORS

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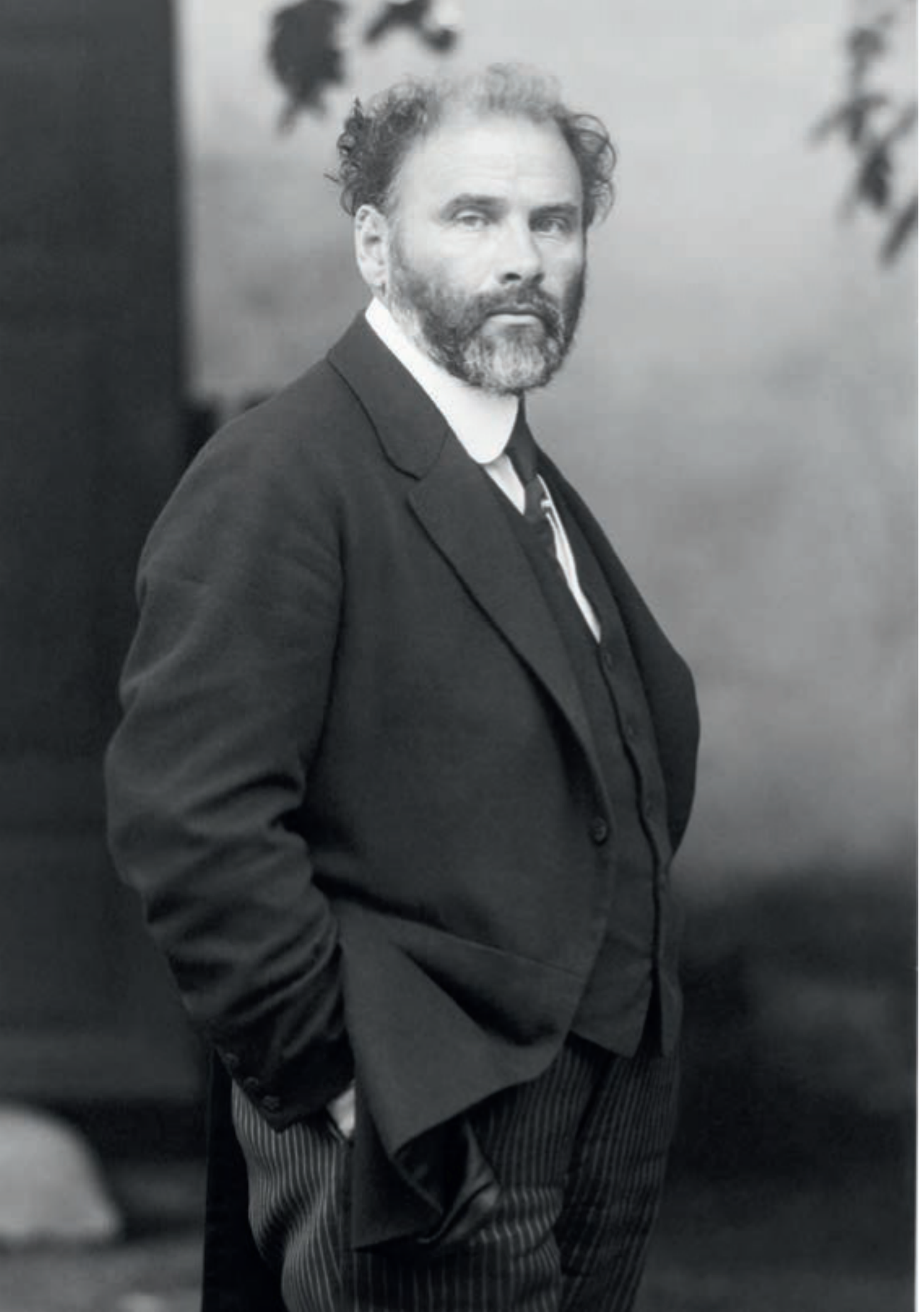

FOREWORD

Gustav Klimt (1862–1918) is one of the greatest artists ever to emerge from Austria. His richly detailed and highly sensual paintings are beloved around the world, and are central to the identity of the Neue Galerie New York. We have been fortunate to organize several major Klimt exhibitions since our museum opened in 2001, and all have been extremely popular. The Klimt portrait of Adele Bloch-Bauer, sometimes called the Woman in Gold, is the centerpiece of the Neue Galerie collection. It arrived in June 2006, after a lengthy and trailblazing restitution case, and was displayed with four other works by the artist. The painting remains on permanent view.

Moriz Nähr, Gustav Klimt in front of his studio, Feldmühlgasse 11, 1917. Neue Galerie New York

Klimt was a leading figure in Viennese society and a superior portraitist, and it is intriguing to consider how his works looked when they were installed in early exhibitions and in the homes of his patrons. The Adele portrait, for instance, was originally installed in a kind of shrine setting at the home she shared with her husband, Ferdinand Bloch-Bauer. The idea for this book, then, was to present the paintings *in situ*, through evocative black and white period photographs in which the art seems to burst forth in a blaze of color. Seeing them gathered here, they offer an almost magical type of access to a rapidly disappearing world.

The organizer of this project and principal essay author is the distinguished Klimt scholar, Dr. Tobias G. Natter. We have worked with Dr. Natter on several Klimt projects, including the exhibition “Klimt and the Women of Vienna’s Golden Age” (2016), and he brings a unique perspective to the artist’s work based on his decades-long study of the oeuvre. He has also organized “Oskar Kokoschka: Early Portraits from Vienna and Berlin, 1909-1914” (2002) and “The Self-Portrait, from Beckmann to Schiele” (2019) for the Neue Galerie, and authored the comprehensive monograph *Gustav Klimt: The Complete Paintings* (2012, expanded edition 2017) We offer him our sincere thanks for creating this exciting project, along with the gifted designer of this book, Judy Hudson.

As always, our greatest thanks are reserved for the President and Co-Founder of the Neue Galerie, Ronald S. Lauder. He approved this project when it was first proposed, and has been an ardent champion of its realization. Ronald Lauder shares in my excitement at seeing Klimt’s work brought to life in this extraordinary fashion. Of course, it would be impossible to assemble in a single exhibition the many works portrayed in these pages. But this book allows us to see them all together, gracing the marvelous homes of Klimt’s patrons, as well as the first exhibitions devoted to the artist, and shining forth with their special brilliance. I hope you enjoy their visual splendor as much as I do.

RENÉE PRICE
Director, Neue Galerie New York

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The Wiener Werkstaette of America showroom, designed by Joseph Urban, with *The Dancer* (1916–17) by Gustav Klimt, photo taken ca. 1922. MAK-Austrian Museum of Applied Arts, Vienna. Archiv der Wiener Werkstätte. Photo: © MAK

TOBIAS G. NATTER

Gustav Klimt *in Situ*: The Art of Presentation

Now as ever, Gustav Klimt is considered Austria's most famous artist. Countless publications have underlined his outstanding position, addressed his personality, and analyzed his work. But there are still new aspects to be discovered. That is especially true in the context of the rich photographic materials on Klimt, which are being evaluated systematically for the first time here in order to bring fresh insights into the painter's work, his early exhibitions, and the private domestic worlds of his collectors.

To the extent that art historians have addressed Klimt and photography, they have focused primarily on the person. What did Klimt look like? How did he have himself portrayed? What poses did he adopt? Did he take photographs himself? These are, doubtless, exciting questions, especially because Klimt claimed as his motto: "There is no self-portrait of me. I am not interested in myself as the 'object of a picture' [. . .]. Anyone who wants to know anything about me—as an artist, which is all that matters—should observe my paintings attentively and try to recognize from that what I am and what I want."[1]

The present publication pursues Klimt's aim. His paintings are its focus. However, a new perspective is opened by viewing his thrilling oeuvre from the point of view of the photographic materials assembled here. It provides a gateway to recognizing what Klimt wanted, what defined him, and why he became, more than any other artist, the leading figure and epitome of Vienna around 1900.

1
Gustav Klimt, *Portrait of Adele Bloch-Bauer I*, oil, gold, and silver on canvas, 1907. Frame designed by Josef Hoffmann. Neue Galerie New York. Acquired through the generosity of Ronald S. Lauder, the heirs of the Estates of Ferdinand and Adele Bloch-Bauer, and the Estée Lauder Fund

THE PHOTO MATERIALS: DOCUMENTATION AND PUBLICITY

The photographic materials assembled for the present volume span roughly the period from the founding of the Vienna Secession in 1897 to Klimt's death in 1918. They are unusual primarily for three reasons. First, these images come from a time when photography, which was invented in the nineteenth century, was still a young and rarely used medium. Second, they document a period when Klimt was elected the founding president of the Secession and became the standard bearer for Viennese *Jugendstil*, when his paintings, his exhibitions, and the scandals they often triggered, made him the focus of more public and private attention than any other artist. Third, with the founding of the Wiener Werkstätte in 1903, the ambitions of *Raumkunst* (spatial art) cumulated, while the concept of art was expanded so that "high," or fine, and "low," or applied art, intersected.

2
The Austrian Art Pavilion at the World's Fair, Vienna, 1873. Photo: Michael Frankenstein & Comp. Wien Museum, Vienna

Photography, which since its invention had sparked a revolution in the generation of images documenting the modern world, also transformed the situation in Vienna around 1900. As was the case everywhere in Europe, the many possibilities created by photography led to new applications for it. Photo studios became commonplace. The new and relatively inexpensive technology permitted a broad strata of society to have portraits made, a privilege that had been reserved for the nobility and church for centuries. Its possibilities spread into unanticipated areas. One of them affected the publishing industry and the market for magazines, which expanded around 1900, where photography had an enormous impact on all aspects of editorial illustration.

Reporting on art events also changed. As part of these novel explorations of the world, art exhibitions were also photographed for the first time. The first exhibitions in Vienna documented by a still camera were large events with a particular public interest and large financial backing such as the 1873 World's Fair in Vienna. After world exhibitions in London and Paris, it was the fifth world's fair and the first in the German-speaking world. More than 50,000 companies transformed it into a trade show for industry, technology, and art, shown in separate national pavilions. For the audience of millions that would stream through it, photographs depicting hundreds of subjects were taken, including of the art pavilions. Photographs show the paintings hung close together there, often poorly lit, in several rows one above the other, with opulent wall coverings and dark dadoes [Fig. 2].

But such photographic documentations of art exhibitions were initially exceptional events, like the world's fair itself. The Vienna Secession, founded in 1897, was the first to document all of its exhibitions in words and images. Until then, newspaper woodcuts had been most common. One example of such a xylographic reproduction method was made for the opening by Emperor Franz Joseph of the twenty-fifth annual exhibition of the Wiener Künstlerhaus in 1897, for which a drawing first had to be produced [Fig. 3]. By choosing the modern medium of photography, the Secession was demonstrating that it was forward-looking. At the same time, the young artists' association ensured that these exhibition photographs would be disseminated, namely, in the Secession's own journal, *Ver Sacrum* (Sacred Spring).

Ver Sacrum provided an important marketing instrument.[2] The journal—which appeared in six volumes from 1898 to 1903, initially monthly, then biweekly—was highly respected throughout Europe. It was read attentively, especially in artists' circles, and was distinguished as one of the leading design magazines for its choice of subjects, typography, and illustrations. At the same time, it became a treasure trove of photographs with works by Klimt.

It was, however, not only art exhibitions that were disseminated in journals. Art and lifestyle magazines with broad target audiences sought to promote modern domestic worlds. In our context, the most important of them was the journal *Deutsche Kunst und Dekoration* (German Art and Decoration). It was published in Darmstadt from 1896 onward, and its publisher, Alexander Koch, positioned it as an organ for modern interior design, crafts, and *Wohnkultur* (domestic culture). The full title of the journal was *Deutsche Kunst und Dekoration: Illustrierte Monatshefte*

3
Emperor Franz Joseph at the opening of the twenty-fifth annual exhibition in the Vienna Künstlerhaus, March 24, 1897, newspaper woodcut. Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Bildarchiv, Vienna

4
Advertising postcard for the eighteenth exhibition at the Vienna Secession dedicated to Gustav Klimt, November–December 1903. Private Collection

für moderne Malerei, Plastik, Architektur, Wohnungskunst und künstlerische Frauen-Arbeiten (German Art and Decoration: Illustrated Monthly for Modern Painting, Sculpture, Architecture, Domestic Art, and Artistic Works by Women). Thanks to detailed contributions, not least on Vienna, it was "probably the most important art journal in the German-speaking world."[3]

Due to an exclusive contract between Alexander Koch and the Wiener Werkstätte, *Deutsche Kunst und Dekoration* provided outstanding visual materials on the domestic worlds of early Klimt collectors. In most cases, it was the Wiener Werkstätte, which was modeled on the British Arts and Crafts Movement, that designed and furnished these homes.

Frequent reports on exhibitions in Vienna and modern domestic worlds were also provided by *Dekorative Kunst: Illustrierte Zeitschrift für angewandte Kunst* (Decorative Art: Illustrated Magazine for Applied Art), which was founded in 1897 and was published from 1899–1900 onward under the title *Die Kunst: Monatshefte für freie und angewandte Kunst* (Art: Monthly for Free and Applied Art). But artistic activities in Vienna were followed closely not only in Germany; magazines outside of the German-speaking realm also published reviews, for example, the legendary *The Studio: Illustrated Magazine of Fine and Applied Art* in London.[4] With regard to the visual materials relevant here, of the Austrian journals *Das Interieur: Wiener Monatshefte für angewandte Kunst* (The Interior: Viennese Monthly for Applied Art), published from 1900 onward, should be emphasized. Its editors were always aware that their publishing success also depended on the "goodwill of those fortunate people who are in a position to have their homes furnished in a modern and beautiful way" who provided access to their spaces.[5] Many of Klimt's early collectors were clearly happy to do so.

The aforementioned magazines shared a commonality in that photography contributed to satisfying their readers' insatiable hunger for visual participation. Famously, a picture is worth more than a thousand words; it conveys authenticity and inclusion. The present compilation has benefited from this trove of photographs in particular.

Original prints of these photographs are, by contrast, found only rarely today. The photographic archive of the Österreichische Nationalbibliothek (Austrian National Library) and the company archive of the Wiener Werkstätte in the MAK–Museum für angewandte Kunst (Museum of Applied Art) in Vienna especially preserve such vintage prints. As a rule, however, photographs of rooms of the time can only be accessed indirectly via reproductions in the journals mentioned.[6] Some photographs have also survived in the form of postcards, which were an especially popular medium at the time. For example, the Vienna Secession regularly published postcards of its exhibitions, such as the Klimt solo exhibition in 1903 [Fig. 4]. A few of the photographs of rooms reproduced in the plate section are rare finds from private collections.

EARLY SECESSION EXHIBITIONS: NEW ART IN A NEW FRAME

After the founding of the Vienna Secession in 1897 [Fig. 5], the Secessionists declared their three main goals in the catalogue for the opening exhibition: "Offering the public an elite exhibition of specifically modern works" to lessen the public's ignorance "about the powerful

art movement abroad," and seeking to be pioneering in the "field of artistic arrangement."[7] No one should be expected to have to wander through exhibitions room by room until she or he is overwhelmed by the mass of mediatory and has "lost the fresh sense of the pleasure of the few good exhibits."[8]

Klimt and the Secession developed an especially close connection. Klimt designed the poster for the opening exhibition and the cover of the accompanying catalogue. In the years that followed he exhibited his own works at the Secession; he represented it both internally and to the outside world and was increasingly regarded as a walking advertisement for the association. At the same time, the Secession offered its rooms as a platform for some of the most important Klimt exhibitions, which ensured, both, for the Secession and the artist, a lively reception, an affluent public, and often enough controversial reporting and scandals, in which the building with its gilded laurel wreath on the Karlsplatz in Vienna was like a rock in a storm.

Klimt regularly participated in various Secession exhibitions: the first (1898), second (1898), fourth (1899), fifth (1899–1900), seventh (1900), tenth (1901), thirteenth (1902), and fourteenth (1902).[9] Each of these exhibitions proved to be an event. The Secession satisfied its expectation for itself—presenting an "elite exhibition of specifically modern works of art"—brilliantly each time. This was in part because many of Klimt's newest works were first presented here. Their reception by the public and the domestic and foreign press, which regularly reported on them, was usually mixed. But it was not just that Klimt's paintings demanded of the public a willingness to accept the new; the way they were framed was also unusual and innovative.

5
The secretary's office of the newly founded Vienna Secession, 1898. Austrian Archives / brandstaetter images / picturedesk.com

6
Left: Gustav Klimt, *Judith I*, 1901, oil and gold leaf on canvas, with the original frame designed by Klimt. Belvedere, Vienna. 1954 purchase from Berthe Hodler, Geneva. Photo: Johannes Stoll / Belvedere, Vienna

7
Above: Gustav Klimt, Studies for *Judith I*, Strobl 709 & 3428, pencil on paper. Belvedere, Vienna. Photo: Johannes Stoll / Belvedere, Vienna

Following models throughout Europe, in Vienna, too, a question was asked more urgently: What is a suitable and "good" picture frame, what are its features, and wherein lies its function and aesthetic use?

Around 1900, no important painting was sold, much less displayed, without a decorative frame. The issue of the picture frame became more urgent and could no longer be separated from innovative art and the Secession's specific goal to be pioneering in the "field of artistic arrangement." After visiting the first Secession exhibition in 1898, a critic noted insightfully that "examples of tastefully designed frames standing advantageously. Here one finally begins to see that the frame and the painting must once again form a whole."[10]

We do not know whether the reviewer was referring specifically to Klimt and to the *Bildnis Sonja Knips* (Portrait of Sonja Knips), which was exhibited at the time [Fig. 9 and Plate 3]. But that portrait marked not only a turning point in Klimt's portraiture, it is also considered one of his first Secessionist paintings. And it forms the sought-after new unity by means of an individually designed frame partially covered with metal relief appliqués and painted gold. The frame no longer simply defines the painting's boundaries with the inside and the outside but also locates it on the wall and within the room.

Klimt's frame for *Judith I*, a painting from 1901, was also created in the same spirit [Fig. 6]. This depiction of the biblical Judith is a key work of Viennese painting on the theme of the femme fatale: "enigmatic forces seem to slumber in this enticing woman, energies, intensities that would no longer be possible to be stopped once they had been set aflame."[11] At the same time, Klimt's painting is a perfect example of the new concern with the frame. The upper third of the decorative frame of *Judith I* is encased in gilded sheet copper; the title of the painting, *Judith und Holofernes* (Judith and Holofernes), was embossed in the metal in modern typography. More than twenty designs by his own hand demonstrate that Klimt understood a priori that the painting and frame formed a unity [Fig. 7].

The frame for Klimt's *Judith I* was executed by his brother Georg Klimt, a metal sculptor who had made the bronze entrance doors for the Vienna Secession. It is in keeping with the aesthetic concept of the Secession, to rethink and ultimately to abandon the separation of design and execution. It was eliminated in favor of an overall artistic interweaving of "high" and "low" art. Klimt's innovation on that path is also evident from the fact that he did not adhere to a solution once he had found it. When Klimt returned to the subject of the biblical heroine and strong woman in 1909, not only were the composition and design of *Judith II* completely new but also its decorative frame had been reconceived. This time it is a purist, unembellished frame with wide, almost coarse wooden bars on the left and right that fulfill a dual task. They serve, on the one hand, to balance the painting's extremely vertical format and, on the other hand, to offer a near *arte povera* unpretentiousness that contrasts with and heightens the wealth that Klimt compresses on the canvas with expressive forms, colors, chords, ornaments, and patterns. It is almost an estrangement with the goal of increasing perception [Fig. 8].

8
Gustav Klimt, *Judith II*, 1909, oil on canvas. Galleria d' Arte Moderna di Ca' Pesaro, Venice. Photo: Cameraphoto Arte, Venice / Art Resource, NY

THE BEETHOVEN EXHIBITION AND VIENNESE SPATIAL ART

The fourteenth Secession exhibition, held in 1902, also known as the Beethoven exhibition, proved to be especially important for the development of Viennese *Raumkunst*.[12] By their own account, the Secessionists resolved to break up customary picture exhibitions with an "event of a different kind."[13] Twenty artists were invited to contribute exhibits created especially for the show. It is worth reviewing the various objectives of the exhibition. First, it was intended to pay homage to Ludwig van Beethoven and his music but also in a metaphorical sense to appreciate genius and thus artistry and the outstanding position of art in general. But the exhibition was also a sensation for the way it implemented *Raumkunst*: artists were not invited to submit existing works but to design new ones, specifically on the subject of the exhibition, with an eye to a great whole: to the *Gesamtkunstwerk* (total work of art) and *Raumkunst*—two central categories of modern art in Vienna around 1900.

The result was an exhibition experience that Europe had never before seen. The show is rightly considered the most ambitious and most complex Secession exhibition ever staged. It marked a climax in uniting first-class individual contributions into a large whole. It placed particular emphasis on assembling the exhibits together by means of *Raumkunst*. Klimt's contribution was the *Beethovenfries* (Beethoven Frieze), which was nearly 100 feet long, arguably the most important work in the entire exhibition [Plate 11].

The intended turning point away from "usually recurring picture exhibitions" was immediately understood by the public. This was also true of fellow artists from abroad, as the example of Auguste Rodin demonstrates. In 1902, the French sculptor, who had long been an associate member of the Secession, came to Vienna especially to view the exhibition.[14] In a letter to his Viennese confidante, the cultural journalist Berta Zuckerkandl, Rodin therefore specifically announced: "Dear friend, I am in Prague and thus free to come to Vienna to meet your mission-conscious architects."[15] Rodin was unfamiliar with its curatorial concept from Paris. In a thank-you speech for the Secessionists after touring the exhibition, he praised the "deliberate anonymity of your beautiful exhibition"—by which he meant subordinated the individual contributions to the general idea of the exhibition, which by his own account moved him deeply.[16]

The attention paid to *Raumkunst* in designing the Secession exhibitions was also perceived by others from abroad. So did, for example, the widely read and highly acclaimed *Neue Züricher Zeitung* (New Zürich Newspaper) when it reviewed a solo show of the Swiss painter Ferdinand Hodler at the Vienna Secession in 1904: "Anyone who is a guest of the Viennese Secession is well accommodated," since the design of the space is "executed in the most sensitive way and always adapted to the individuality of the artist in question," because the interior architects of the Secession congenially adopt the essence of the works to be exhibited in their *Raumkunst*.[17] Many people have registered that the Secession exhibitions sought to be something different from just a more or less tastefully assembled presentation of the most recent domestic and international artworks. They attentively pursued not only celebrating the individual work of art but also turning the exhibition as a whole into an artwork—often astonishing even the artists whose work was being exhibited.

THE KLIMT SOLO EXHIBITION OF 1903

The first Secession exhibition already conveyed that the Secession intended to be more than just a building and exhibition venue by itself becoming *Raumkunst*. That is true exemplarily of the thirteenth Secession exhibition in 1903, which was dedicated to Klimt. It was only the second time in the history of the Secession that its rooms were made available for a solo exhibition by a member. Works by Klimt from the previous six years were shown, that is, beginning with 1897, the year the Secession was founded. The Secessionists set themselves the goal of having "cleared the way" for Klimt and having given him "the courage and self-confidence to explore his most characteristic qualities and to create, without concerning himself with success or failure, only that to which he rightly feels compelled by his heart."[18]

During those six years Klimt had been working continuously on the three *Fakultätsbilder* (Faculty Paintings) for the great hall of the University of Vienna. They had weighed more heavily on him than any of his other works. The first two paintings *Philosophie* (Philosophy) and *Medizin* (Medicine) had already been exhibited in the Secession in various states. Now all were hanging together for the first time, including the still unfinished painting *Jurisprudenz* (Jurisprudence). Most of the photographs of the exhibition concentrate on the large central hall with the three paintings. Its walls were painted white—an innovation for an exhibition and at the same time the generous hanging marked a radical rejection of the usual concepts for displaying art. A look back at the overflowing and lavishly decorated exhibition spaces of the world's fair in 1873 speaks volumes.

Forty paintings in all were distributed in the various rooms of the Secession. For some of the key paintings, supplementary frames had been designed, as is evident for an exhibition photograph showing *Pallas Athene* [Fig. 9 and see ill. on p. 41]. Similar double framings can also

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The portrait of Sonja Knips in the eighteenth exhibition of the Vienna Secession dedicated to Gustav Klimt in a gallery designed by Koloman Moser, 1903. Künstlerhaus im Wiener Stadt- und Landesarchiv, Vienna