

KLIMT LANDSCAPES



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PAGE 2: Gustav Klimt, 1892. Photograph by Karl Schuster. This photograph was inserted into the sketchbook given by Klimt to Sonja Knips, 1897-1900 (see ill. on pp. 82–83). Belvedere, Vienna

PAGES 6–7: Gustav Klimt in the garden of his studio at Josefstädter Strasse 21, April/May 1911. Photograph by Moriz Nähr. Neue Galerie New York, Gift of C. M. Nebehay Antiquariat, Vienna

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PREFACE

I began collecting art as a very young teenager and it quickly became a passion of mine. New York in the 1950s was, in many ways, the center of the art world, although it was still competing with Paris. So it was the perfect time and place for my introduction to this new world. My first collections focused on Art Nouveau, especially the decorative arts along with Art Nouveau graphics.

I purchased book after book on this genre to learn more about it. There was one book in particular that fascinated me by Maurice Pillard Verneuil. I still remember opening the book and paging through it when I stopped cold. I had come across a painting by Gustav Klimt titled *The Kiss*. In all honesty, I had never seen a painting like this before. The colors and the emotion conveyed in this one painting mesmerized me. I had to find out more about him, but almost all the Klimts on public view were at the Belvedere museum in Vienna.

Sometime after that initial introduction, I was on one of my first trips to Europe with my parents. We were in the South of France and I asked them to let me travel to Vienna on my own. When I arrived, I went directly to the Belvedere and, once again, it was Klimt's portraits that captivated me. I remember buying every book the gift shop sold on the artist.

When I returned to the United States, I discovered that The Museum of Modern Art had one Klimt painting, but I was surprised that it wasn't a portrait. It was a painting of—of all things—trees, called *The Park* (1909). I was just as mesmerized by these trees as I was by his portraits.

As time went on, I purchased both portraits and landscapes by Klimt and I was eventually offered a Klimt painting of a house called *Forester's House in Weissenbach II (Garden)* (1914), which hangs today in the Neue Galerie near our most famous painting, also by Klimt, the portrait of Adele Bloch-Bauer.

In many ways, the same life and emotion that Klimt put into portraits can be seen in his landscapes. I also believe that just as Klimt's portraits hold their own with any of the Old Masters, his landscapes do as well. And just as these portraits define twentieth-century art, so too do the landscapes. Together, they make Klimt, in my mind, one of the most important artists of the twentieth century.

But what makes these landscapes truly unique is that they capture the entire complexity that is Austria—from the energy of that marvelous era between 1900 and 1918 to what followed.

They also capture my fascination with the Vienna of this period. To see both Klimt's portraits and his landscapes together now in the Neue Galerie is nothing short of magic and I hope you enjoy this as much I do.

My thanks go to our director of curatorial, Janis Staggs, who has been with the Neue Galerie since its inception. The loans she has assembled convey the beauty of the Austrian countryside that Klimt captured. I also want to extend my gratitude to the entire Neue Galerie staff, led by director Renée Price. They have all contributed to realizing this exhibition, and their efforts on behalf of the Neue Galerie always make me very proud.

Ronald S. Lauder
President, Neue Galerie New York



Estée Lauder posing with Gustav Klimt's 1914 *Forester's House in Weissenbach II (Garden)*

FOREWORD

Through my work as Director of Neue Galerie New York, as well as my being born and raised in Vienna, I have long been acquainted with the work of Gustav Klimt. In my view, he is the quintessential Austrian artist, combining a reverence for tradition with a strong drive toward innovation in painting. Because of my intense familiarity with Klimt, I have sometimes wondered what he was like as a person, and even whether we would have gotten along as peers. Although he was known to be a very private person, and irascible at times, there is one fact about him that makes me think we would have shared common ground: his feeling for nature. Klimt loved nothing more than his summers on the Attersee, or the time he spent in his lavish garden. As an avid gardener myself, I share with Klimt a passion for the wonders of nature. As a result, I feel a connection across the ages with this extraordinary artist.

With “Klimt Landscapes,” the Neue Galerie is moving beyond the familiar territory of the artist’s portraits and allegorical works. Here, our focus is on his landscapes, and what magnificent works they are. It is a privilege to gather these paintings into an exhibition, and to explore their origins and impact in the present volume as well.

Klimt was hardly the first artist to go into nature to draw inspiration. Artists from Camille Corot to Caspar David Friedrich built their reputations on their landscapes, and the tradition of *plein air* painting was notably popularized by the Impressionists. But for Klimt, nature provided much more than an aesthetic challenge, a desire to capture his surroundings. It was also a place of respite, one that kept

the pressures of his life in Vienna and numerous financial obligations at bay. Klimt venerated nature, and his immersion in it, particularly during his annual summer sojourn to the countryside, resulted in many luminous, color-saturated paintings.

I wish to thank the lenders who helped make this exhibition possible. We are most grateful to the host of institutional and private lenders, including Dr. Martha Tedeschi, Harvard Art Museums; Jane Kallir; Michael Lesh; Dr. Alicja Knast, Národní Galerie Praha; Dr. Monika Faber, Photoinstitut Bonartes; Elizabeth Szancer; Dr. Glenn D. Lowry, The Museum of Modern Art; Dr. Matthew Hargraves, Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art; and Dr. Matti Bunzl, Wien Museum. We also offer our thanks to those lenders who wish to remain anonymous. Our curator, Janis Staggs, and the exhibition designer, Bill Loccisano, have created a fine survey of Klimt’s landscapes, bringing fresh insights to the task of presenting this work. Finally, I wish to thank the staff of the Neue Galerie, and especially our President and Co-Founder, Ronald S. Lauder, for all their dedicated efforts to realize this special project.

A famous quote by Klimt reads, “There is always hope, as long as the canvases are empty.” I find it intriguing that the artist equated the empty canvas not with anxiety or any sense of fear, but with hope. It suggests the sense of endless possibility that exists for all of us. And it gives me perhaps one more reason to feel that Klimt is someone I may well have considered—and do consider, in my own way—a friend.

Renée Price
Director, Neue Galerie New York

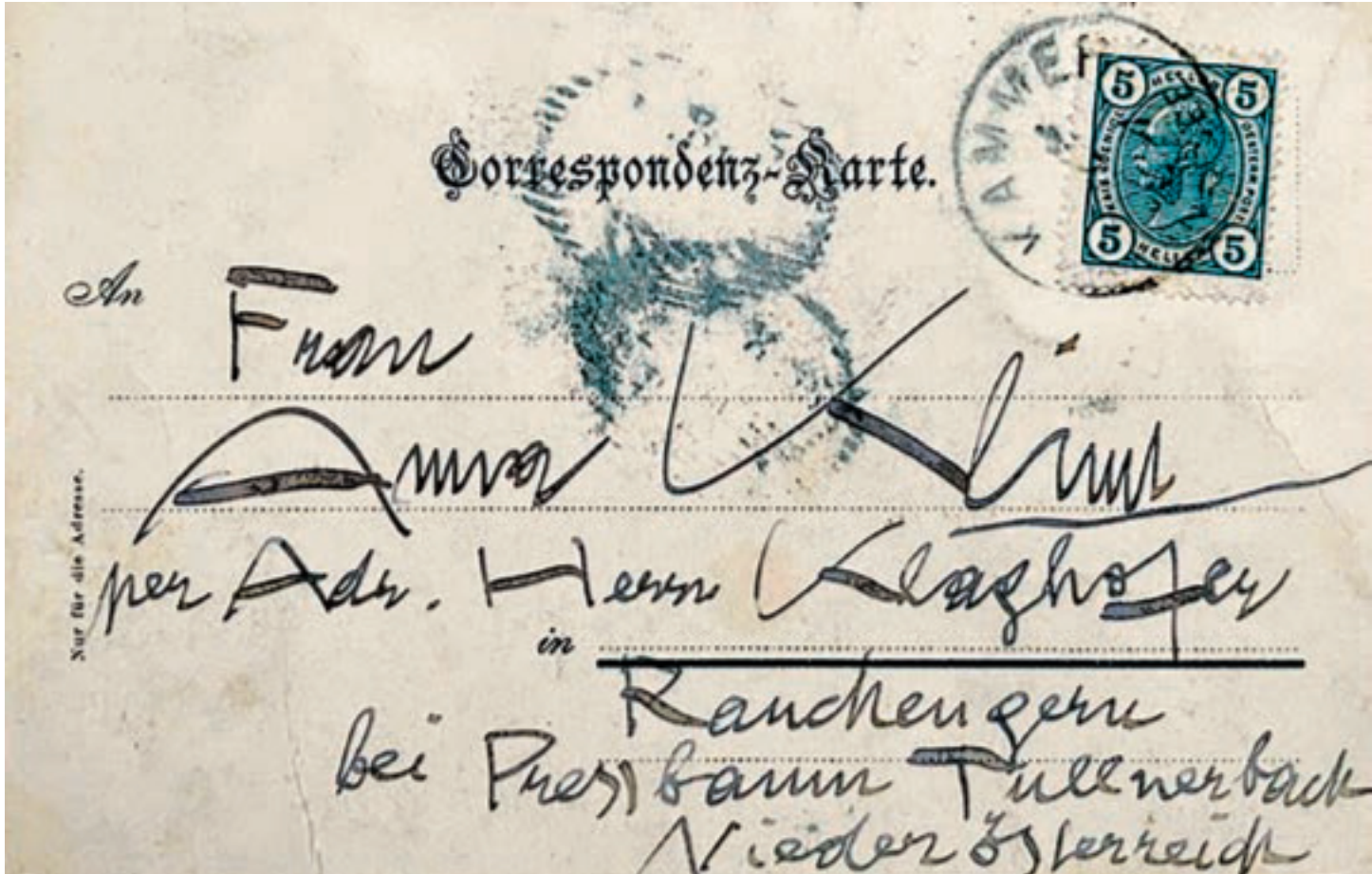


Gustav Klimt, *Litzbergkeller*, 1915–16

Oil on canvas

Private Collection

Photo: Azoor Photo / Alamy Stock Photo



This page and opposite: Postcard depicting Litzlberg/Attersee sent by Gustav Klimt to his mother, Anna Klimt
Private Collection



The message reads:

*Danke für die Zeichnungen
 Bester Dank für die Gratulation—
 es geht uns vorzüglich. Bevor der
 Krondorfer (?) zu Ende ist bitte zu
 schreiben, herzlichen Gruß*

Thank you very much for the
 congratulations—we are doing great.
 Before the Krondorfer (?) is over,
 please write, warm greetings.

Signed by mother (probably Barbara
 Flöge), Pauline Flöge, Lentschi
 (Helene Flöge), Gustav Klimt,
 Helene Flöge, and Emilie Flöge

“VACATION WORK”

**FROM
GESAMTKUNSTWERK
TO PURE COLOR**

Janis Staggs



1. From left: Joseph Maria Olbrich, Franz Hohenberger, Koloman Moser and Gustav Klimt in the garden of Fritz Waerndorfer, Weimarer Strasse 59 (formerly the Karl-Ludwig-Strasse 45) in Vienna's eighteenth district, 1899

Photograph by Fritz Waerndorfer
Austrian National Library, Vienna





2. Koloman Moser, view of the Klimt gallery (room 22) at the "Kunstschau Wien," 1908
From: *Dekorative Kunst* (September 1908)

At the peak of his career, Gustav Klimt was honored with a room dedicated to his work at Vienna's 1908 "Kunstschau" (Art Show), held from June to November. Organized by a group of former members of the Vienna Secession, the show was a survey of contemporary Austrian art across a range of genres, encompassing everything from paintings to decorative arts, and from children's art to fashion. Here, sixteen paintings were displayed in the Klimt room, including two that are recognized today as icons of modern art, both of which were in his "Golden Style"—*The Kiss* [Fig. 2]

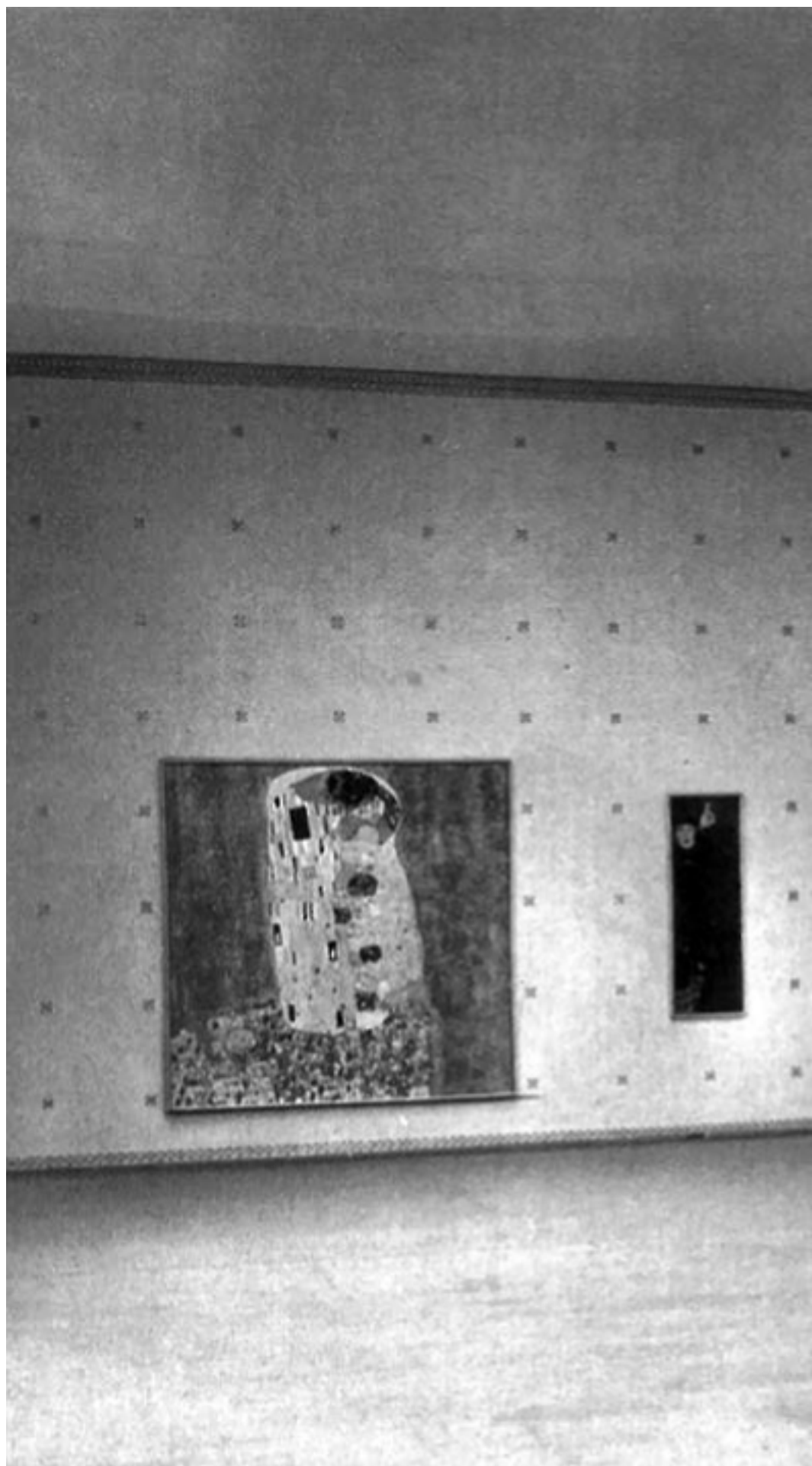
and *Portrait of Adele Bloch-Bauer I*.¹ Six of the others were landscapes. In reviewing this presentation (and the "Internationale Kunstschau" of 1909), critic Franz Servaes enthused about the landscapes: "Klimt stands virtually alone in rendering to such sublime and resonating effect Nature's lavish abundance...in colors at times alight, as luminous as the very stars themselves."² How did an artist renowned for his depictions of Viennese society women earn such distinction as a landscape painter?



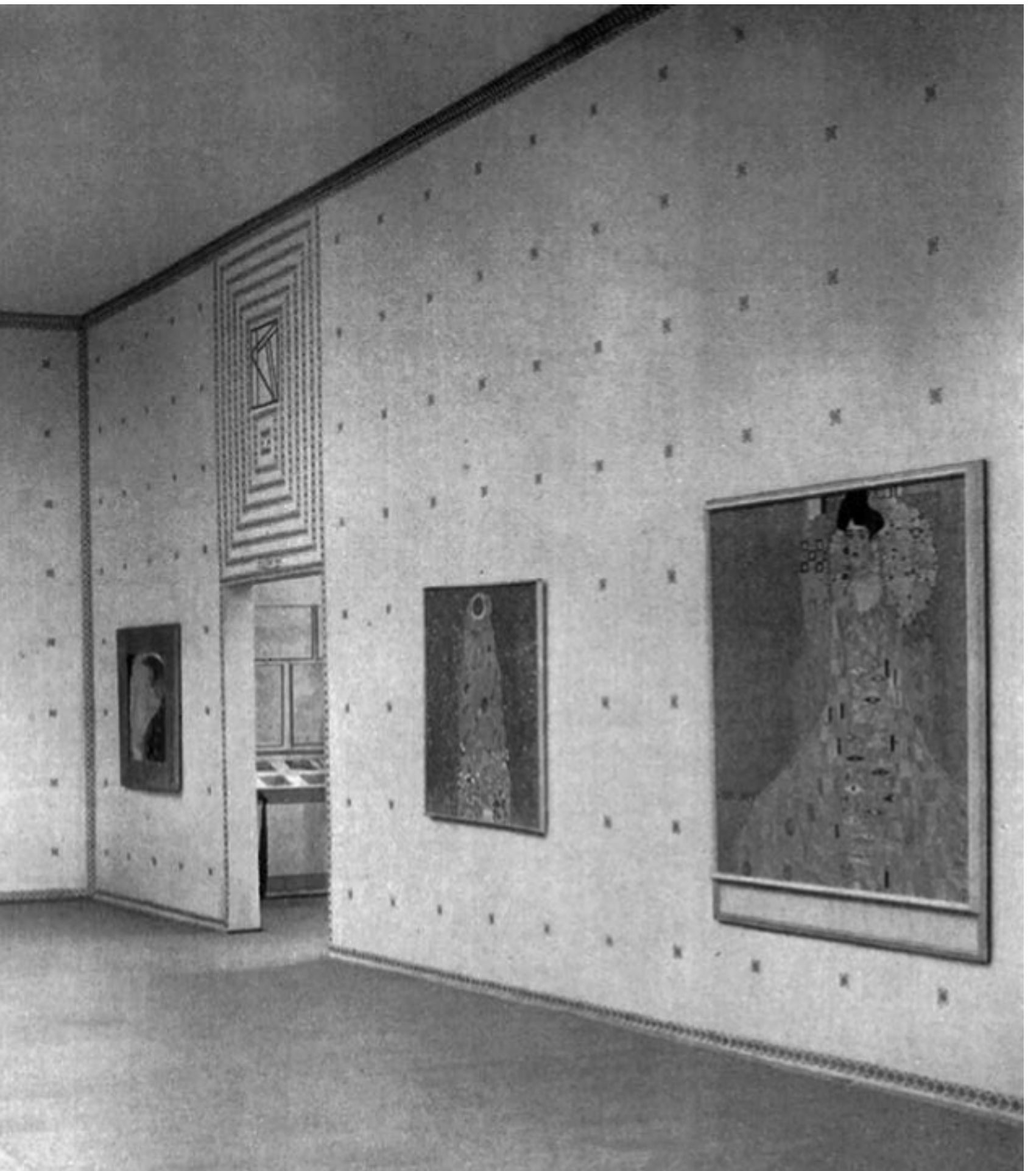
3. Gustav Klimt in the Fourteenth Vienna Secession exhibition, the so-called "Beethoven" exhibition, April 1902
Courtesy Asenbaum Photo Archive

This acclaim is especially surprising given that Klimt had only embraced a pursuit of nature about a decade earlier. He built his reputation after the turn of the century on sensuous portraits of Vienna's female elite; he labored over them for countless hours in his studio, producing numerous studies on paper for each. By contrast, practically no studies exist for the landscapes and most appear to have been painted by working directly on the canvas, making compositional alterations in the process. Klimt's academic training did not include landscape painting and he felt free to experiment, taking an interest in optical aids and other innovations. Over time, his stylistic approach to these works evolved from *Stimmungsimpressionismus* (atmospheric impressionism) to a more decorative style and ultimately one reflective of an expressive and liberated painterly manner.

Klimt only adopted the genre of landscapes in earnest toward the middle of his career. These works were undertaken almost exclusively during the summer and primarily for his own pleasure, hence the appellation "vacation work." Yet the two pursuits are inextricably linked. Like the portraits, the landscapes sold well and were an important source of income. The wealthy sitters for his commissioned portraits were often enthusiastic purchasers of his landscapes. Furthermore, at the 1908 "Kunstschau" presentation, Klimt's landscapes were interspersed between his commissioned portraits and other depictions of women, thus underscoring a link between these genres, the patrons who collected them, and women and nature³ [Fig. 4].



4. Koloman Moser, view of the Klimt gallery (room 22) at the "Kunstschau Wien," 1908
From: *Die Kunst* 8 (1908), 523







5. Gustav Klimt, *Portrait of Adele Bloch-Bauer I* (detail), 1907

Gold, silver, and oil on canvas

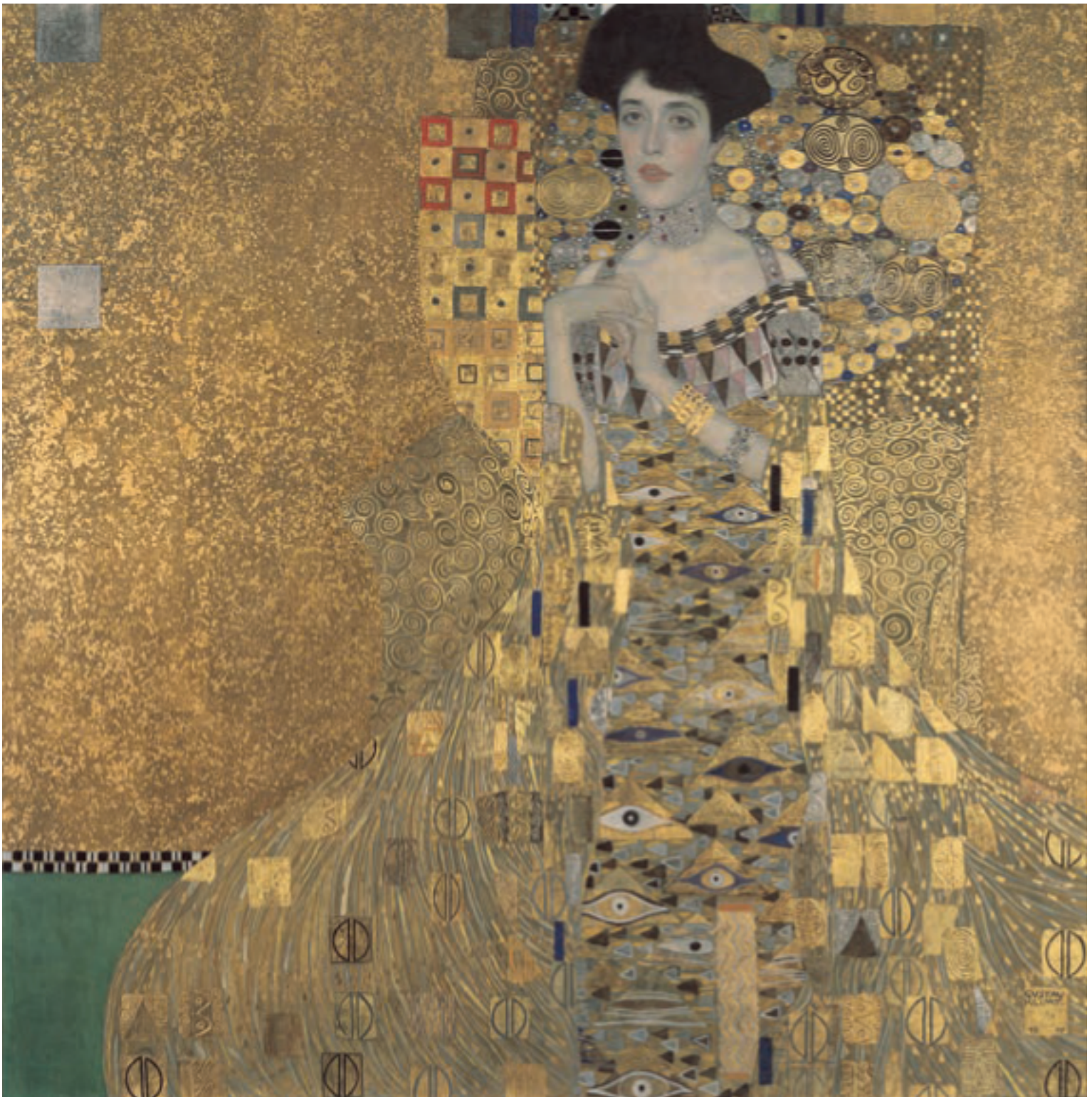
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Acquired through the generosity of Ronald S. Lauder, the heirs of the Estates of Ferdinand and Adele Bloch-Bauer, and the Estée Lauder Fund

Photo: Hulya Kolabas

Klimt's journey from celebrated mural artist to portrait and "mosaic painter" (*Mosaikmaler*), to becoming a painter in pure color, forms the arc of this story. The decorative held a special allure for Klimt for a decade. Between 1898 and 1909, metallic bronze, gold, platinum and silver finishes were a hallmark of his work, and this culminated in his striving to create an overarching *Gesamtkunstwerk* (total work of art), widely recognized as the dining room mosaic frieze for the Palais Stoclet in Brussels. After completion of this *chef d'oeuvre*, Klimt was liberated from the ornamental and thereafter "painted only in color."⁴ For Hugo Haberfeld, this transformation is visualized by comparing the 1907 and 1912 portraits of Adele Bloch-Bauer [Figs. 5–7].⁵ Landscapes are at the crux of this evolution. His experience of the *Sommerfrische* (literally "summer freshness"), a summer holiday in the countryside, influenced his portraiture and other work, and these sojourns enabled him to embrace a new way of seeing and working.

This essay, and the others included in this volume, situate Klimt's landscapes in the context of his oeuvre, and explore the development of this extraordinary body of work. Various disciplines informed his artistic progression. He was influenced by the example of fellow artists and avant-garde art trends of his time, and his paintings speak to his close collaborations and friendships with practitioners of architecture, the decorative arts, photography and even fashion. Klimt fully embraced the *Gesamtkunstwerk* and created works that embody a unity of artistic forms. This examination of these conjunctions offers a nuanced interpretation of Klimt's devotion to the landscape and how it led to an epiphany for the artist. Ultimately he eschewed the decorative in favor of a more painterly and liberated manner, and this transition coincided with the 1908 "Kunstschau."



6. Gustav Klimt, *Portrait of Adele Bloch-Bauer I*, 1907

Gold, silver, and oil on canvas

Neue Galerie New York

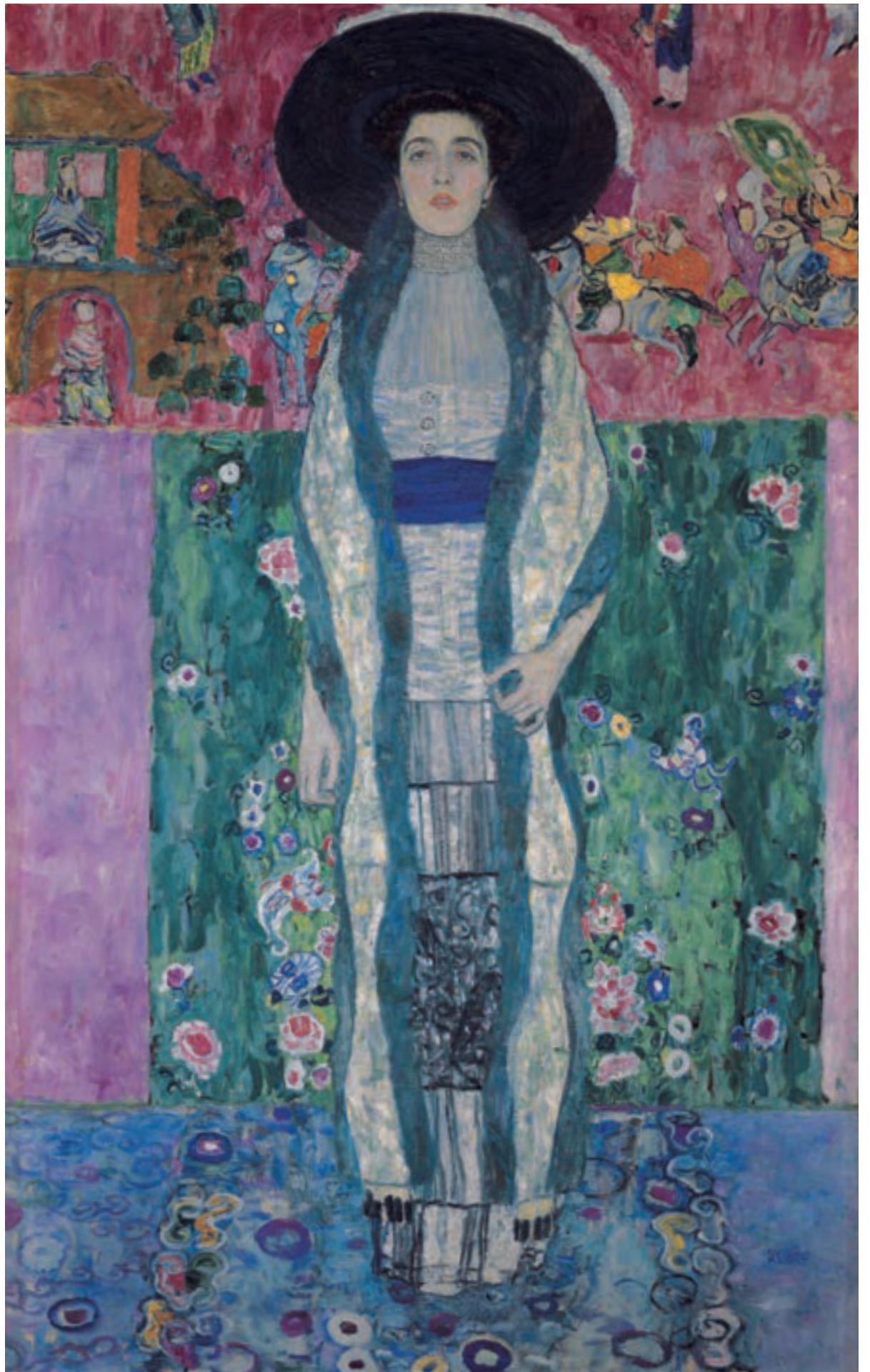
Acquired through the generosity of Ronald S. Lauder, the heirs of the Estates of Ferdinand and Adele Bloch-Bauer, and the Estée Lauder Fund

Photo: Hulya Kolabas

7. Gustav Klimt, *Portrait of Adele Bloch-Bauer II*, 1912

Oil on canvas

Private Collection





8. Birthplace of Gustav Klimt, Linzerstraße 247, Vienna's fourteenth district, 1918

Photograph by Moriz Nähr

Austrian National Library, Vienna

EARLY LIFE

Gustav Klimt was born on July 14, 1862, and grew up on the outskirts of Vienna in Baumgarten bei Wien, in what was then Vienna's thirteenth and today part of the fourteenth district [Fig. 8]. Raised Catholic, he was the second of seven children—he had four sisters and two brothers⁶—and the eldest son born to Anna (née Finster) and Ernst Klimt, a goldsmith and engraver. His father found it difficult to support a large family on a craftsman's earnings. Instability and growing up in rented spaces in communal settings defined his childhood years. The Klimts moved frequently—at least seven times between 1862 and 1890.⁷ As an adult, Klimt seems to have countered the memory of these disruptive and impoverished circumstances by charging large sums for his pictures, preferring to remain in the same studio for as long as possible, and favoring solitude and quiet over a crowded and boisterous home or work environment. Yet family was a point of consistency and stability for the artist; he lived with his mother until her death in 1915, and his two unmarried sisters, Hermine and Klara, until his death in 1918. Klimt also fathered and financially supported six (although one died shortly after birth) children that he acknowledged with three mistresses (Marie Zimmermann, Maria Učická, and Consuela Camilla Huber) over the course of his lifetime.⁸ Nonetheless, his

most cherished relationship was a youthful flirtation that evolved into a platonic friendship with his sister-in-law, Emilie (Midi) Flöge, a noted women's fashion designer.

After completing primary school, Klimt enrolled at a Bürgerschule (trade school) instead of a Gymnasium (grammar school), where he received vocational training. At times, the Klimt family was quite destitute. Klimt's sister Hermine recalled that following the stock market crash and the ensuing economic crisis of 1873, "there wasn't even any bread at home, let alone presents"⁹ at Christmas that year. What was available at home was the opportunity to learn a specialized skill. Klimt "began his education traditionally in home apprenticeship."¹⁰ Klimt and his brothers, Ernst and Georg, all showed artistic talent and contributed income to the family coffers as soon as they were able to work. All the Klimt brothers studied art partly because of the need to provide financial assistance to the family. There were various career options open to those who pursued this profession, such as working for industry, as a private artist, or as a drawing teacher. If they could land a position at a government institution, one benefit would be a guaranteed income and a pension.

KUNSTGEWERBESCHULE (1876–83)

On the advice of relatives and teachers, Klimt applied to Vienna's Kunstgewerbeschule des Österreichischen Museums für Kunst und Industrie (School of Arts and Crafts of the Austrian Museum of Art and Industry, today the University of Applied Arts Vienna at the MAK-Museum of Applied Arts, Vienna). The Kunstgewerbeschule was founded in 1867 and Rudolf von Eitelberger served as the school's first director. The school's curriculum was comprehensive. Art from all periods and cultures was studied and the approach was pragmatic. Students drew plaster casts in the morning, attended lectures in the afternoon, and took life drawing at night. This vocational method of teaching prepared its graduates with the ability to earn a living as artisans or craftsmen. Klimt's talent for this type of work was manifested in his adroit academic drawings [Fig. 9].

Klimt easily passed the entrance exam and received a scholarship, which enabled him to attend for free. In the autumn of 1876 when he was fourteen years old, he enrolled at the school and remained for seven years, taking classes in drawing and painting. As per Klimt's own recollections, he spent the first two years taking preparatory courses under Professors Michael Rieser and Ludwig Minnigerode, who were both painters, and graphic artist Karl Hrachowina. Subsequently Klimt studied under Ferdinand Laufberger and later with Julius Viktor Berger at the Fachschule für Zeichnen und Malerei (Technical School for Drawing and Painting) after the former's unexpected death in 1881.¹¹ From Laufberger, Klimt gained experience working with live models. Laufberger also trained his students on the technical aspects of mural painting, which prepared Klimt to undertake his earliest commissions. There was a certain prestige associated with mural paintings, which were often displayed in prominent locations where the public could view them.

Prior to his graduation from the Kunstgewerbeschule in the summer of 1883, Klimt and his younger brother Ernst, along with fellow student and painter Franz Matsch, notified Eitelberger that they had formed a *Compagnie* (company or partnership) [Fig. 10]. Although often referred to in the literature as the *Künstler-Compagnie*, as per research undertaken by Markus Fellingner, this appellation or moniker was applied by Christian M. Nebehay in 1969 and was not the name adopted by the artists themselves to describe their relationship. The trio, who instead referred to themselves as the *Atelier Gebrüder Klimt und Franz Matsch* (Studio of the Klimt Brothers and Franz Matsch), began working together as early as 1879,¹² and shared a studio after graduation.¹³ They had enrolled at the Kunstgewerbeschule with the intention of becoming drawing teachers, but based upon their talent were urged to become painters instead.



9. Gustav Klimt, *Rudolf von Eitelberger on His Deathbed*, 1885

Gouache, pencil and watercolor on paper
Wien Museum



10. Class of Ferdinand Laufberger at Vienna's Kunstgewerbeschule (School of Arts and Crafts), ca. 1885. First row from left: Ferdinand Laufberger, Gustav Klimt, Ernst Klimt; Back row at left: Franz Matsch

Neue Galerie New York
Gift of C. M. Nebehay Antiquariat, Vienna



11. Gustav Klimt, Design for a curtain for the Municipal Theater Karlsbad (Karlovy Vary), 1884–85

Oil on canvas

Belvedere, Vienna

2005 loan from the Association of Friends of the Belvedere

For more than ten years, the Atelier Gebrüder Klimt und Franz Matsch flourished. They touted the advantages of their collective method of painting and committed to working together in the same style, guaranteeing their clients a uniformity in their completed projects. Even today, it is nearly impossible to tell their early work apart, so closely did they copy each other. Generally, the trio did not sign their paintings. They viewed themselves as painter-deco-

rators and avoided developing individual artistic identities for a time. They honed their skills by copying Old Master paintings at the Kunsthistorisches Museum.

With the endorsement of Laufberger, the artistic trio was referred to architects Ferdinand Fellner and Hermann Helmer, who built their reputation on theatrical undertakings. Fellner and Helmer hired the Klimt brothers and Matsch to



12. Gustav Klimt, *Tranquil Pond*, 1881

Oil on canvas
Private Collection
Painters / Alamy Stock Photo

create decorations for provincial theaters in the Austro-Hungarian empire. Their talent and amiable approach earned the trio many commissions, such as designing curtains, ceiling paintings, and other theatrical elements, that were installed in cities throughout the Austro-Hungarian Empire, including the concert hall in Karlsbad (Karlovy Vary) (1880, demolished in 1966), the municipal theater in Brünn (Brno) (1881), the municipal theater in Reichenberg (Liberec) (1882) in Bohemia, the municipal theater in Rijeka (Fiume) (1885) in Istria, and the municipal theater in Karlsbad (Karlovy Vary) (1886) [Fig. 11].¹⁴ The quality of their work, distinguished for its reliance on academic training and a neo-historical approach, burnished their reputations and soon they were selected for prestigious projects in Vienna.

Simultaneous with his realizing these architectural decorations, Klimt made his first forays in the genre of landscape.

The earliest documented landscape paintings by Klimt date to 1880–81 [Fig. 12]; they were unknown for a time since they remained in the family's possession and were only publicly exhibited about seventy-five years after Klimt's death. There is no site associated with these pictures. While it is possible that they were made while the artist was engaged with Fellner and Helmer in provincial locations, they could also represent scenes of the more rural and forested environs of Vienna, such as the Lobau, the Wienerwald (Vienna Woods), or the Prater, the former imperial hunting grounds that were opened to the public in 1766 under the reign of Emperor Josef II, all of which remain popular places of recreation and relaxation to this day. Among these possibilities, perhaps the most likely is the Prater, as its grounds were revamped in the early 1870s in preparation for the 1873 World's Fair in Vienna; after the fair, artists were allowed to use some of the former pavilions as studios.

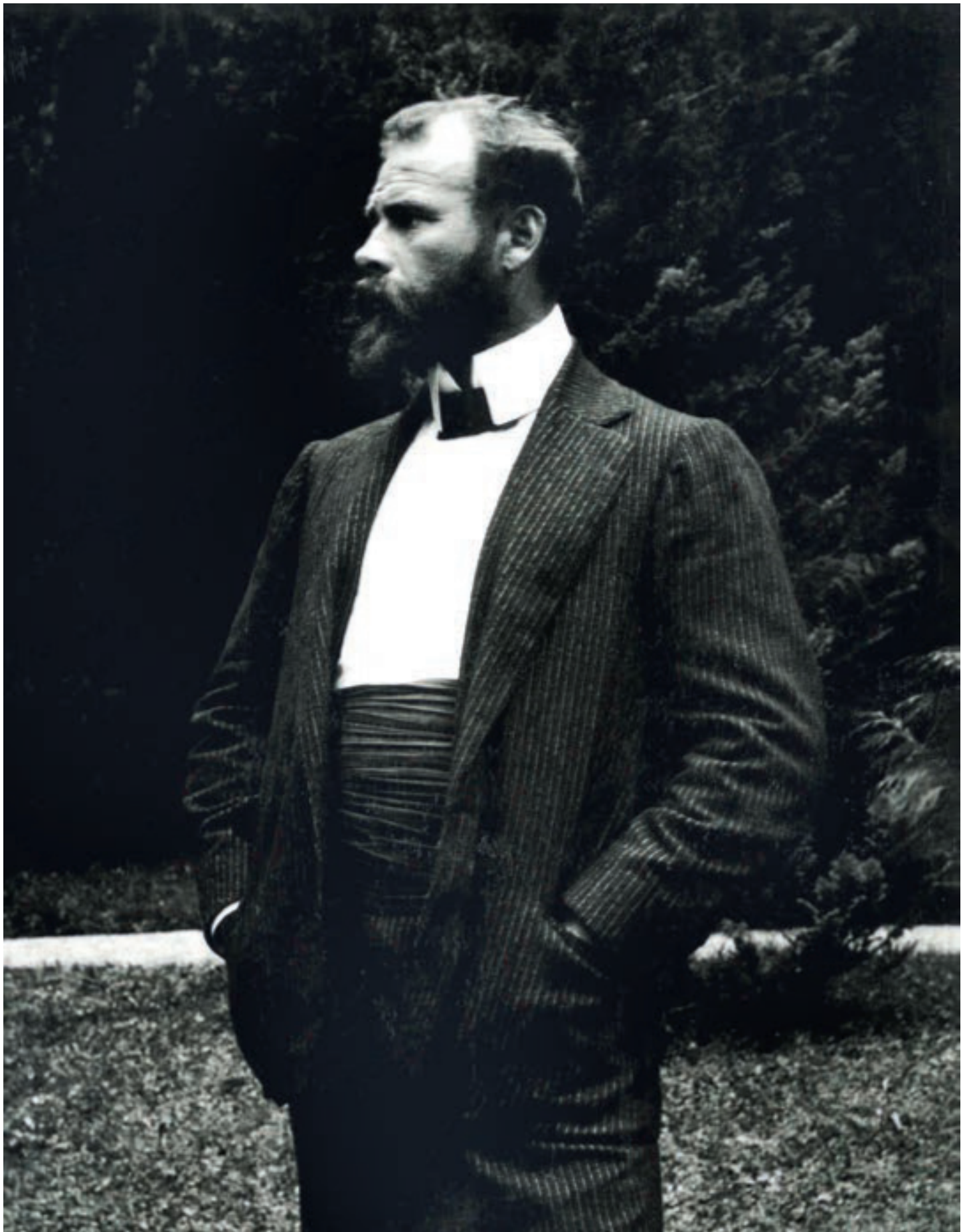


13. Tina Blau, *Spring in the Prater*, 1882

Oil on canvas
Belvedere, Vienna

Various artists in the nineteenth century painted forest scenes in these bucolic urban areas, including Ferdinand Georg Waldmüller, Emil Jakob Schindler, and Tina Blau, who became renowned for her Prater pictures. Blau's monumental *Spring in the Prater* [Fig. 13] caused a scandal when submitted for exhibition to the Künstlerhaus in 1882. The Künstlerhaus, or Genossenschaft bildender Künstler Wiens (Cooperative Society of Fine Artists in Vienna), was Vienna's most prestigious artists' organization at the time. For art to be included in one of its shows, it had to be approved by a jury. Even if a work was accepted, there was no guarantee that it would be installed in a way that people could actually view and appreciate properly as works were hung salon style—floor-to-ceiling and frame-to-frame. Although initially rejected, Blau's painting was accepted after the intervention of painter Hans Makart. The appearance of this picture was so convincingly realistic that it was described as “a hole in the wall, through which one believed one could see into open nature!”¹⁵ Klimt would have been around twenty years old at the time, was most likely aware of the dispute, and might well have seen Blau's painting.

For Klimt, his initial attraction to the subject of landscapes could be attributed to the high esteem that Waldmüller, Schindler, and Blau enjoyed at the time. Likewise, it could reflect a desire to experiment with the style known as *Stimmungsimpressionismus*, mood or atmospheric impressionism, associated with the circle of artists around Schindler who painted *en plein air* between around 1870 and 1900. The emergence of this group can be traced to the dominance of the French avant-garde following the initiative of the Barbizon School of painters to work directly in nature and to focus on more humble and mundane depictions of rural life and settings. Such scenes found resonance elsewhere as efforts to modernize quickly altered both the city and countryside. Although Vienna lagged behind its European counterparts in instituting technological innovations, such urban and rural transformations were undertaken during Klimt's lifetime. Thus, Klimt's brief early study of the landscape genre could be linked to a desire to document the more rustic areas of Vienna on the cusp of major change, when important building and engineering projects reshaped the city and beyond, and attributable to a curiosity to work in an unfamiliar genre.



14. Gustav Klimt, 1904

Neue Galerie New York

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