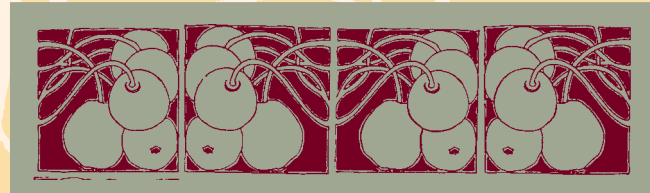


Vienna Modernism 1890 – 1910



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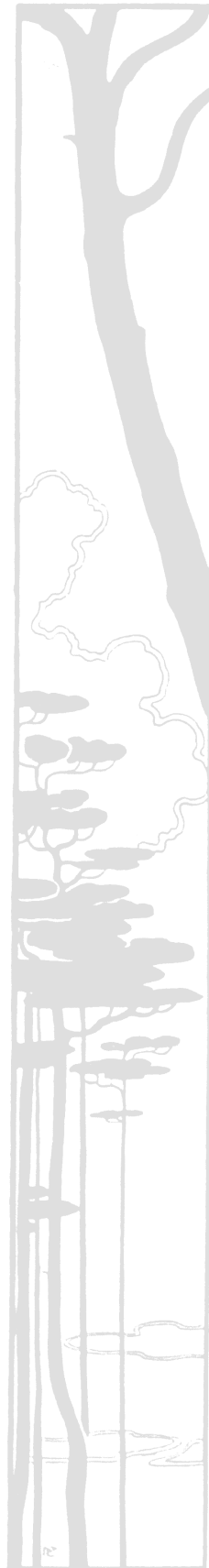


Vienna Modernism and its place in history

Intensive academic interest in Vienna Modernism, the artistic and cultural developments of the two decades between 1890 and 1910, started in the 1960s. In the time immediately following the Second World War, artefacts from this period could be acquired on the art market at relatively low prices. Architecture was undoubtedly the discipline which aroused most interest and the appreciation for this fin-de-siècle architecture had been shown even earlier on.

The momentum for the booming interest in Vienna Modernism came from abroad, aided greatly by the work of cultural scholars such as Carl E. Schorske, who taught in the United States. It is Schorske, in particular, who can be called the pioneer of research into Vienna Modernism. His magnum opus, "Fin-de-Siècle Vienna", is still a standard reference work on this period. The next phase in the evolution of in-depth research was triggered by the large-scale exhibitions on the subject which were organised in the 1980s: *Arte in Vienna in Venice* (1983), *Traum und Wirklichkeit in Vienna* (1985) and *L'Apocalypse joyeuse in Paris* (1986). In all three exhibitions, an enthusiastic public was given insights, through an unusually comprehensive selection of exhibits, into the historical developments and the artistic achievements of the epoch as well as the ensuing trends leading up to 1938.

Vienna Modernism became the research topic par excellence. The nearer we moved to the end of the 20th century, the more interest centred on the glamour of the era 100 years ago. The question of "How could there be such a concentration of unsurpassed excellence in art and culture in only two decades?" became the decisive question for researchers. It also induced many tentatively to examine the possibility of such a climax reoccurring in our days. Scholars sought and still are seeking to identify the conditions that allowed this "status of excellence".



a clearly noticeable return to the feminine element in culture, and by the vehemently expressed striving for emancipation of a contemporaneous women's movement. The reaction was a hatred of women in all shades and colours. The crisis of Jewish identity was a product of the constantly increasing anti-Semitism of the German-Nationals and Christian-Socials.

Although scholars agreed that Vienna was not the only place where Modernism achieved sweeping successes, it was still common practice to regard "Vienna as the focal point of European Modernism" (Nautz/Vahrenkamp). Scholars consider that European Modernism reached its purest and most concentrated expression in Vienna at the turn of the century. The foundations of 20th century thought were not created in Vienna alone, but what would this century have been without Freud's psychoanalysis, without Arnold Schoenberg's twelve-tone music, without Arthur Schnitzler's "soul-scapes" or without Gustav Mahler's music and his interpretation of the music of his contemporaries.

Even after almost two decades of intensive research, the debate on the status of Vienna Modernism has by no means been concluded. Recent publications, written under the impression of Post-Modernism, which is generally regarded as the outcome of a crisis, convey a different picture of Modernism. For the French Germanist Jacques Le Rider Modernism also contains aspects of uprooting and crisis. Le Rider calls it the crisis of liberalism, the crisis of masculinity and the crisis of Jewish identity. After the stock-exchange crash of 1873, liberalism – to which all the major proponents of Vienna Modernism were committed – had lost ground and had been ousted from power by the political parties for the masses. Men were put into a state of uncertainty both by the ideas of the theoretician of matriarchy, Bachofen, who prophesied that there would be

It was also during the era of Vienna Modernism that crisis was accepted as an element of development, as a potential way of life. More recently, scholars have ceased to believe in continuous progress, in the final achievement of harmonious uniformity in some far-away future. They have begun to consider the conscious acceptance and appreciation of diversity, contradiction and heterogeneity as valuable in their own right. This changed outlook is also a lesson drawn from what has been experienced in the history of the 20th century.

Not only are findings formulated more precisely now, the focus of research is also increasingly placed on the Viennese phenomenon of multi-culturality and on the co-existence of highly contradictory mindsets. After all, Modernism met with severe resistance on the part of conservative contemporaries. At any rate, the discussion on Modernism in Vienna is obviously going to continue for a while yet, which can only benefit the exploration of the many areas which have not yet been adequately studied and documented.

Vienna – setting the scene

Vienna – a city which breeds polarity

It would be erroneous to believe that the turn of the century was a period of triumphant upswing or unwavering faith in the future. Quite the contrary: the intellectual and cultural climate oscillated between extreme highs and lows, between firm belief in progress and gloomy prophecies of doom. People were fascinated by the achievements and possibilities of technology and industrialisation. However, there were also great concern about the limits of mechanisation, urbanisation, and all the problems connected to them. As the general view of life became more rational, the longing for irrationality found increasingly vehement expression. Salvation ideologies were having a field day.

The cultural pessimism of Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889–1951) and the strange and absurdly hopeless world of Franz Kafka (1883–1924) are crystallised manifestations of the collapse of customary edifices of ideas. Wittgenstein thought that it was everyone for himself now that socio-cultural order had broken down. Arthur Schnitzler (1862–1931), physician and playwright and, thus, twofold therapist of his world, portrayed Viennese society on its way to decline and death. The underlying mood was one of hopelessness and resignation.

The state and society were moving from stability to instability. People lived their lives in a saturated feeling of security, because, from the late 1860's, they experienced an unusually long period of peace. Moreover, relative affluence made many look to the future with confidence. And yet, under the untroubled surface, there was seething unrest: there were a number of unresolved political and social problems – such as the issue of nationalities or the issue of social inequalities which was festering at all levels. Crisis management failed because of a lack of holistic approaches. The century came to a close and with it the optimistic attitude towards progress. The conviction that

everything was possible had to be thoroughly reconsidered. In addition, developments were asynchronous. A wave of modernisation that hit the Dual Monarchy later than other regions made the century stumble as it approached the finishing line.

This is why Vienna Modernism is both linked to the glory of Klimt's paintings and superlative achievements in the field of science, and is also overshadowed by aberrant political phenomena such as virulent anti-Semitism, by political tension and disputes, particularly between the various nationalities. The excellence of artistic and scientific feats was able to eclipse these problems, but not to resolve them. The turn of the century was a period of transition, ambivalent in many ways, in which all the seeds for the disasters of the 20th century were sown. In the two decades between 1890 and 1910, Vienna was an eldorado of the arts, inseparably linked to rare highlights in music and literature. Names such as Egon Schiele (1890–1918) and Oskar Kokoschka (1886–1980), Gustav Mahler (1860–1911) and Arnold Schoenberg (1874–1951), Carl Menger (1840–1921) and Hans Kelsen (1881–1973) are synonymous with world class in culture and the humanities. It seems plausible that it was this very contrast of polarities, of progressive and reactionary, of libertarian and conservative, of “dream and reality” (György Lukács), which gave rise to the particular intellectual climate and the creative atmosphere that made for what was remarkable about this period. There are those who believe that Modernism consisted in this combination of fundamental opposites.

Whenever one examines areas of political and cultural life in that era, one is constantly fascinated to discover the “antinomies of Modernism” (Johannes Weiß). Peace policies for a world of tomorrow stood side by side with an insensate urge to destroy, emancipation (of women, fringe groups, minorities) was counterbalanced by vile mechanisms of suppression. All this was accompanied by a general longing for harmony, for a cessation of antinomies, for a way of salvation which would solve all questions.

This dream of harmony also finds expression in the general trend towards a *Gesamtkunstwerk* or ‘symbiosis of the arts’, combining art, science and metaphysics. Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900) and Richard Wagner (1813–1883), Hermann Bahr (1863–1934) and Gustav Mahler, as well as Gustav Klimt (1862–1918) and his successors, the artists of the Secession and the *Wiener Werkstätte*, were looking for a ways to achieve totality of art. Actually, the results can be seen as many drafts for a pluralist world. Norbert Leser, the political philosopher, developed a theory of ambivalence in this context, while Schorske deliberately presented the cultural bloom of Modernism against the backdrop of political disintegration.

The representatives of Modernism did not want to their conception of art to be seen merely as a contrast to former trends or styles, i.e. as a normal change when one generation succeeds another, but they also wanted it to gain recognition as a futuristic principle. Like the concentric circles which ripple outwards from a stone thrown into water, Modernism in Vienna was first mentioned in the essays of Hermann Bahr, then went on to conquer literature, exert a shaping influence on the visual arts in the Secession movement and pave the way for Expressionism, which set out to progress beyond Modernism in the decade after 1900. Hermann Bahr himself declared later that he had erroneously mistaken the red hue of the sunset of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy for the first flush of dawn.

A major element of Vienna Modernism was no doubt its penchant for subjectivity. The high value placed on the individual, which was left over from the liberal era, created the biosphere for the world of thought of Sigmund Freud (1856–1939), and also for the tenets of the Vienna School of Economics and its main representative Carl Menger, which was based on methodological individualism.

At this time of change, the natural sciences were mainly dominated by an empirical approach, the world being perceived as an entity in its totality, far removed from any metaphysical concept of philosophy or the natural sciences. Ernst Mach (1838–1916), the physicist and philosopher,

may be regarded as an exemplary proponent of this approach.

Others concerned themselves with a restricted section of the world: Karl Kraus (1874–1936) and Ludwig Wittgenstein analysed the domain of language, Adolf Loos’ (1870–1933) radical examinations were restricted to architecture, the *Wiener Kreis* (Vienna Circle) around the philosopher Moritz Schlick (1882–1936) concentrated on whether statements were true or false.

It would be a mistake to describe Vienna Modernism as an indigenous creation which bloomed in complete isolation from the European culture around it. Germany provided decisive influences: Friedrich Nietzsche and Richard Wagner played an important role, and the cultural worlds of Paris and Rome had an impact on what was happening in Vienna. Hermann Bahr, a man of letters and an essayist, almost served as a “switchboard”: he reported in Vienna what others thought or wrote elsewhere. The Cambridge school of thought made a lasting impression on the work of the philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein. The conceptions of Adolf Loos, the architect, were finetuned and polished after he had studied buildings in Paris and Chicago. The idea for the *Wiener Werkstätte* (Vienna Workshops) was actually imported from Great Britain and was seen as an answer to historicism and a means of overcoming it. Hence, Vienna Modernism should be assessed in the light of influences from abroad and against the backdrop of the political and societal backwardness latent in Austria.

In its turn, Vienna Modernism had a considerable effect beyond the borders of Austria. One has to recall, in this context, the Stoclet Palais in Brussels, a synthesis of the arts created by the great Josef Hoffmann (1870–1956) and the *Wiener Werkstätte*. Joseph Maria Olbrich (1867–1908), who designed the Secession building, was of seminal importance for the Darmstadt artists’ colony *Luisenhöhe*. Gustav Mahler conducted in numerous major cities in Europe and the United States, Oskar Kokoschka’s paintings began their triumphant conquest of galleries in Germany. In the late 1920s, when the threatening spectre of

anti-Semitism took on an increasingly more substantial form in the wake of economic decline, Austria's intelligentsia started to emigrate. Among them were the law expert Hans Kelsen, who went first to Germany and then to the United States, and the ingenious economist Josef Schumpeter (1883–1950). Ludwig Wittgenstein found a new spiritual home in Cambridge. By 1938, the last traces of Vienna Modernism had vanished. Those of its representatives who had the means emigrated, mostly to Great Britain or America, and it was there, that interest in the roots of Vienna Modernism originated.



View of the neo-Gothic Votivkirche

This gave rise to the – entirely logical – question as to the factors that encouraged this outburst of creativity. One can certainly understand the desire for a repetition of such a period of extremely concentrated intellectual and artistic creation. Researchers devoted their attention to the issue of a “creative environment“, partly with the ulterior motive, that – once identified – it could be created a second time. The intensity of their investigation helps one to understand assessments as that of Alan Janik, who dubbed the two decades between 1890 and 1910 a “Silicon Valley of the mind”. Meanwhile, a number of theories have been formulated about the “conditions of excellence” (the term used by the *Österreichische Forschungsgemeinschaft*, which has been studying the history of Vienna around 1900 for more than a decade). The Austrian historian Robert A. Kann (1906–1981), who taught in the United States for many years, preferred to have the prerequisites defined. It is remarkable to note – and almost an irony of history – that at the time the artists themselves perceived the atmosphere in Vienna as a hindrance rather than as something which furthered their art.

The main proponents of Vienna Modernism belonged to the younger generation and were born into liberal middle-class families. Their fathers had acquired standing by their successful economic undertakings in the liberal era. They

did not feel restricted by the barriers erected by a society focused on the aristocracy, but they felt threatened by the increasing power of the proletariat. These young proponents came from an inhomogeneous section of the population but reacted to the world about them with a demand for homogeneity.

They loathed the mixture of styles in Historicism, and they reviled the random stylistic diversity of the *Ringstrasse* era. The artistic style that people such as Karl Kraus, Adolf Loos or Arnold Schoenberg opposed and condemned was exemplified by Makart's copiously lavish interiors, by the obsession with decoration – which they considered superficial – found in bankers' mansions, and the unbridled proliferation of linguistic arabesques. The purists of language, sound and form were exploring the limits of their discipline, they were fighting for purity. Since a work of art was considered a completely autonomous entity, any association with an everyday functional purpose was denounced as a sacrilege.

One of the reasons for the superlative intellectual achievements of that era is believed to have been the tensions and the exchanges of ideas between the provincial metropolises of the Dual Monarchy and its capital, Vienna. These were the circumstances which acted as a ferment for the creative boost at the turn of the century. The sub-metropolises served as rehearsal stages for the cosmopolitan central stage – Vienna.

Another element which was thought to have contributed to this springtime of creativity was the repressive attitude taken by the Catholic Church against anything new. This is considered to have kindled a spirit of resistance – creativity born out of opposition.

Vienna – residential city and small-town metropolis

Vienna, the imperial residence of the Habsburg dual monarchy, had hardly any tradition relating to the middle classes. Vienna had always been a city of aristocrats and nobles, and a temporary residence of the court, where the ruler spent the winter. It had never been possible for the middle classes to establish themselves there and so leave their imprint on the city. This deep-felt lack of a middle-class tradition became very obvious when the decision was taken to construct a new city hall. Vienna imitated the style of Western-European middle-class metropolises and trade centres. The city deliberately wanted to make up for previous omissions. Historians interpret the splendid buildings on Ringstrasse and the temples of culture of the liberal era as middle-class sacral buildings. The tendency to sacralise cultural venues, which is still felt today, may well be traced back to a feeling prevalent in the middle classes in the last quarter of the 19th century that they had a great deal to catch up on.

In the second half of the 19th century, an imposing wave of modernisation hit Vienna in the wake of the demolition of

the city fortifications. It was as though the city had been freed of its fetters. Spacious buildings, broad, tree-lined streets, and modern transport routes were constructed. Swift progress was made in the creation of the infrastructure needed by a modern metropolis, and of facilities for the supply of water and energy. New means of transport, such as railways, bicycles and cars, replaced the horse as a yardstick for the speed of travelling. It is said that nothing encouraged the emancipation of women as



The Vienna City Hall modelled on western European city halls and built in the neo-Gothic style

much as the bicycle. Railways, in their turn, improved the mobility of poorer sections of the population and led to a rapidly growing influx of people to the big cities, especially Vienna.

These developments stood in sharp contrast with the widespread impoverishment of the lowest echelons of society. The abject poverty of the brick workers, the increasing pauperisation of the proletarian masses living in the suburbs, and serious mishaps in social development were more than the government could cope with in the post-liberal era. Many negative consequences were even exacerbated by the retrograde attitude of the leadership of the country, for it was thought that dirigistic measures were adequate for mastering these problems. Another factor in the equation was a highly sophisticated bureaucratic system which had a stabilising effect on the situation. Some historians even regard it as positively “technocratic” (Wolfgang Mantl).



The Heinrichshof opposite the opera house

Around 1900, a morbid atmosphere of doom spread in Vienna. One of the reasons for this was the fact that new societal classes were aspiring to the political limelight and claiming the right to participate in political life. The new political parties for the masses – the Christian Socials and the Social Democrats – were very successfully undermining the political basis of the former elites. These parties took up the role of defenders of the poor, and the future perspectives they offered foresaw a new mass culture. This new mixed bag of political developments was further stirred up and intensified by the conflicts between the different nationalities, which the fossilised administration was unable to cope with. The bureaucrats could provide no answers to the national problem or the social question; policy makers offered visions of varying quality but no realistic solutions oriented on a middle-of-the-road perspective.



The building of the Gartenbaugesellschaft, in the background left the Palais Coburg-Gotha



Cable car to the Sophienalpe

Half a century before, everyone had known where his or her place was. The town dwellers and the rural population had a clear sense of where they belonged and had an equally clear idea of the powers that determined their lives. The state and its helpers, the aristocracy and the church, were a clearly defined power club, and the population had learned to live with it. As society became increasingly secularised and segmented, a loss of orientation occurred and the removal of distinctive differences made people doubt everything and everyone. District Mayor Trotta, the protagonist in Joseph Roth's (1894–1939) novel *Radetzky*, is a good example of a man representing law and order, whose ideas about the world have been predefined by many generations and who is deprived of his security and authority by a sudden, swift process of change. However, the administration, and bureaucracy still exerted a tranquillising influence, calming the stormy waters and thus preventing an implosion. This subcutaneous knowledge of the preserving effects of bureaucracy made the civil servant a literary figure par excellence. Often knowledgeable about literature and sometimes even a secret writer himself, the civil servant became the guarantor of the survival of a body politic which had long since become decrepit in political terms. The dream of any head of government, the delusion upheld by the declining monarchy, was that the country could be governed through apolitical cabinets composed of civil servants, or, in other words, that unchangeability could be perpetuated.

Schorske used a Freudian model to explain the discrepancy between political fossilisation and the cultural movement towards Modernism. He thought that fin-de-siècle art and culture served as a surrogate, as sublimation to the citizen who was unable to become politically active.

There were no ideas as to how the crisis could be overcome and no forums where the crisis could be discussed. Particularly among the conservatives, there was no tradition of discussion as there was in western democracies. In addition, the reform of Catholicism was still standing on very shaky legs. Ignaz Seipel (1876–1932), a moral theologian in Salzburg, may be considered to have been one of the far-sighted priests-cum-politicians who were able to interpret correctly the many signs of change and were ready to accept change as unavoidable.

The turn of the century also generated the vocabulary that provided the slogans for the atrocities of the 20th century and can thus be held responsible for having supplied the leitmotifs. Ideas that gave rise to the evil deeds in the middle of the 20th century were born as terms and concepts during the fin-de-siècle. The term “degenerate“, for instance, was coined by Max Nordau (1849–1923), the confirmed Zionist and the Paris correspondent of the *Neue Freie Presse* in Paris, to describe the elements he considered negative in his time. We all know the way in which this term was used later on.

Vienna was also the breeding ground of a wide-spread anti-Semitism, which resulted in the two-fold discrimination of the progressive Jewish intelligentsia. To be Jewish and at the same time progressive was not considered socially acceptable. In order to overcome this barrier of disapproval, the Jewish intelligentsia learned to assess the situation with a great deal of sensitivity and reacted to it with far-sighted changes and utopias. Probably, it was this potential of intellectual tension which made Vienna the place where immigrants from Eastern Europe yearned to go. These restless young people, who had grown up in the bibliophilic Jewish traditions of Eastern Europe, considered the “flight to the realm of the intellect” as a way to escape discrimination and ghettoisation. In the Zionism of Theodor Herzl (1860–1904), the young Jewish population found an alternative to group discrimination. His vision of the historical Jewish state which only needed to be restored, met with criticism even among his own followers. Especially the educated Jewish bourgeoisie, who were eager to be assimilated and felt very much at home in the German language and culture, professed scepticism regarding a pioneering life in an unknown environment.



Ideas and states of mind

Books create new worlds of thought

„THE INTERPRETATION OF DREAMS” BY SIGMUND FREUD

„In the following pages I shall demonstrate that there is a

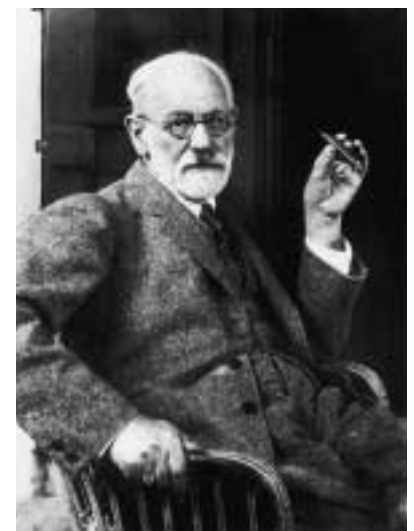
psychological technique which makes it possible to interpret dreams, and that on the application of this technique every dream will reveal itself as a psychological structure, full of significance, and one which may be assigned to a specific place in the psychic activities of the waking state.” This is how Sigmund Freud started his book “The Interpretation of Dreams”, which had been published in November 1899 but, on its cover, showed the year of publication as 1900, as though it wanted to ring in the new century with the insights it contained. Only the very modest number of 600 copies were printed, and it took eight years to sell them. Freud had reflected and worked on this book through four years of self-observation and self-analysis. It was undoubtedly one of his very subjective works. Throughout his life, Freud was convinced that dreams provided the only access to the realm of the unconscious. Even if his successors and opponents have whittled away at his theory, the fundamental significance of his work remains uncontested. “The Interpretation of Dreams” was always Freud’s favourite.

Freud’s scientific work was hardly given the recognition it deserved. Reactions to the “Studies in Hysteria”, which he

published in 1895, were not all friendly. However, Freud was unwavering in his conviction that the exploration of his patients’ dreams had to precede the treatment of neuroses. In 1916, he explained in one of his lectures that: “...the study of dreams is not only the best preparation for the study of neuroses, the dream itself also constitutes a neurotic symptom, with the invaluable advantage that all healthy persons exhibit it.” He was, of course, aware of the provocation this statement contained and anticipated the criticism that was sure to come. In order to convince the critics he avoided giving patients’ dreams as examples. He used his own dreams instead, fully aware of how much of himself he was revealing in the process. The existence of the unconscious had been known before Freud, but Freud’s work provided the key for decoding some of its messages. Freud convincingly proved that dreams were a form of wish fulfilment. He interpreted distorted dream content as wishes which were unacceptable to the dreamer and disguised by dream censorship. Freud’s analysis of the dream was so profound that later theories hardly had anything to add to it. Even today, the interpretation of dreams has remained one of the most important tools of psychoanalysis. By differentiating between dream and reality, Freud discovered and described an inner world of which before him only poets had been vaguely aware of. In former times, it had been held that dreams could foretell the future, but this belief was repudiated by Freud: “And



Cover of Sigmund Freud's book "Interpretation of Dreams" with the publisher's imprint of 1900



Portrait of Sigmund Freud from the year 1929

“Judaism” and “Woman and Mankind” – was finally published under the title of “Sex and Character” in 1903, Freud’s criticism was worded even more scathingly. He rejected Weininger’s anti-Semitism, misogyny and strange philosophical aberrations.

what of the value of dreams in regard to our knowledge of the future? That, of course, is quite out of the question. One would like to substitute the words: in regard to our knowledge of the past. For in every sense a dream has its origin in the past. The ancient belief that dreams reveal the future is not indeed entirely devoid of the truth. By representing a wish as fulfilled, the dream certainly leads us into the future; but this future, which the dreamer accepts as his present, has been shaped in the likeness of the past by the indestructible wish.“

THE CASE OF OTTO WEININGER

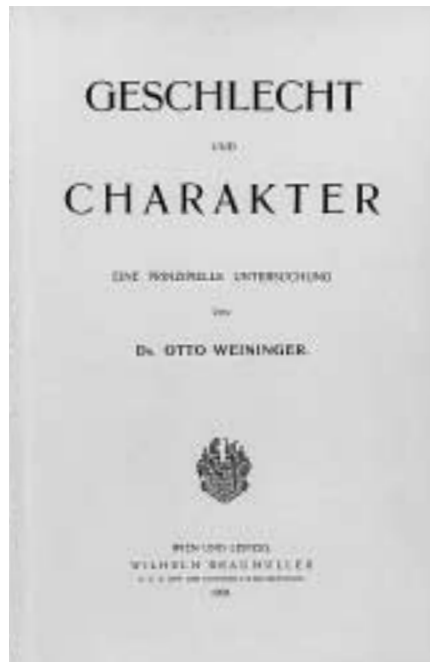
In June 1902, Otto Weininger (1880–1903), a student of philosophy, was awarded the title of

Doctor of Philosophy upon the completion of his thesis “Eros and Psyche”. Without his knowledge of Sigmund Freud’s work, Weininger could not have written his thesis. Hermann Swoboda, a friend of Weininger’s, was a regular visitor at Freud’s practice at No 19, Berggasse and supplied the student with the latest insights and discussion topics. But in spite of the topical nature of the material, Weininger’s doctoral supervisor, Friedrich Jodl (1849–1914), was unwilling to recommend the work to a publisher, since the thoughts it contained were too extreme and the language used positively excessive. Impatiently, Weininger turned to Freud in the hope that the latter would recommend his work for publication, but Freud refused. He did acknowledge that the young man was serious about his undertaking, but otherwise criticised him severely. When Weininger’s book – with three additional concluding chapters: “Woman and Her Significance in the Universe“,

For Freud, the publication of this work resulted in an unpleasant dispute about copyright with his colleague Wilhelm Fließ from Berlin. Fließ felt that his own theory of human bi-sexuality had been passed on to Weininger and his friend Swoboda owing to an apparent indiscretion on

Freud’s part. The affair even gave rise to offensive pamphlets against Freud. Karl Kraus was an admirer of Weininger’s and defended him in the periodical *Die Fackel*. Particularly when it came to misogyny, Kraus was hardly less fervent than his admired Weininger. In all seriousness he stated: “Important human beings have only ever loved prostitutes“, it being quite obvious that in his dictionary “human being” did not include women.

Be that as it may, the result was that Weininger was first considered to be a student of Freud’s and then a dissident. In addition, Weininger’s book – no doubt because it stated quite openly what many men thought – was an incredible success: 28 editions were published between 1903 and 1932. For Freud’s opponents, Weininger’s concoction of ideas became a weapon in their argument against Freud’s pan-sexualism and, indeed, against psychoanalysis in general. Karl Kraus made his own contribution by disseminating Weininger’s theories in *Die Fackel*. The Italian



Title page of Otto Weininger’s book “Sex and Character“, published in 1903

dictator Benito Mussolini once commented: “Weininger has made many things clear to me.”

Freud thought that Weininger, who committed suicide in a spectacular manner in the very year his book was published, was an infantile neurotic, albeit an extremely gifted one. Weininger’s book is an involuntary record of a self-analysis and should be banned from circulation as a medical findings report. Unfortunately, the man who wrote sentences as confused as “Woman has no ego, woman is nothing.” held remarkable fascination for the men of his time, who found themselves in a crisis of identity owing to external factors.

THEODOR HERZL’S VISION OF A JEWISH STATE



Theodor Herzl (right)

segregation, complete separation from all other inhabitants of the respective state was the cure-all. In Vienna, anti-Semitism had an additional, peculiar, clerical note, which was exacerbated by the struggle for power of the Christian Socials. The politicians in that party used anti-Semitism as a cheap propaganda engine which roused the basest instincts – and they used it successfully. The small shopkeepers and craftsmen, whose existence was threatened by industrialisation, were only too happy to believe anti-Semitic slogans.

Racial anti-Semitism, based on the pseudo-scientific ideas of Arthur Gobineau, gained an increasing number of adherents among the Pan-Germanist students. Renowned scholars, such as the physician Theodor Billroth (1829–1894) debased themselves by promoting this Social Darwinism. Many students’ associations introduced a so-called “Aryan clause”, important thinkers suffered a *damnatio memoriae* because of their Jewish origin. The politician Georg von Schönerer, a Pan-Germanist and formerly very critical of the social situation, quickly recognised that this evil-minded agitation was politically effective and became the bellwether of racial anti-Semites. Around the turn of the century, numerous abusive anti-Jewish pamphlets were published, and they sold extremely well.

With the Dreyfus Affair, involving a Jewish French officer in an alleged espionage scandal, the problem became more obvious to all who carefully observed the events of the day. Theodor Herzl, a journalist who was born in Budapest but lived in Vienna, covered the Dreyfus trial for the *Neue Freie Presse* daily as a correspondent in Paris, was so disturbed by the anti-Semitic rabble rousing in France that he completely distanced himself of any notion of assimilation and propagated the foundation of an independent Jewish state in Palestine in his book “The Jewish State: A Modern Solution to the Jewish Question” (1896). The very next year he organised the first Zionist World Congress and became President of the Zionist World Organisation. Until his death in 1904, Herzl indefatigably fought for the realisation of his vision. 52 years after his book was published it was realised when the State of Israel was founded.

Institutions as vehicles of renewal

THE GOLDEN AGE OF THE SECESSION

The curtain was raised on fin-de-siècle art when a group of artists left the Vienna *Künstlerhaus* association and founded the Secession movement. This group of artists, who wanted their art to diverge radically from preceding art trends, built a new art gallery on a plot of land in Friedrichstrasse, near the *Naschmarkt*. The City of Vienna had put this plot at their disposal. In next to no time, Joseph Maria Olbrich designed and built the new building for their exhibitions, which completely satisfied all the expectations of the Secessionists. The population of Vienna was less enthusiastic about it, disrespectfully dubbing it the “Golden Cabbage”. The Secession building – bearing the inscription

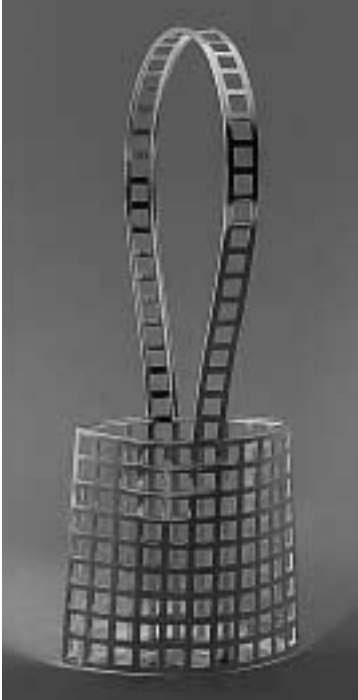


Cover picture of the first number of the periodical *Ver sacrum*

“To every age its art, to art its freedom” over the entrance – and the periodical *Ver sacrum*, which they founded at the same time, were the forums where the young rebels presented themselves to the public. Every year, they organised an exhibition providing an overview of contemporary art in Austria and abroad, the exhibits representing the latest art trends. Even the first exhibition was a triumphant success. Hermann Bahr raved about it: “We have never seen the likes of this exhibition! An exhibition without a single bad painting! An exhibition in Vienna which is a summary of all modern painting! An exhibition which shows that we have artists in Austria who need not shy away from comparison with the best artists in Europe! A miracle!” The miracle was to last for more than a decade. The Secession ensured that the art scene remained vibrant, and it kept to its programme of always showing the latest trends. For instance, in the exhibition of 1908/09 it was no longer one of the doyens of art, such as Klimt, who created a public stir, but the young Expressionists Egon Schiele and Oskar Kokoschka. Just how much of a public outcry they caused may be gleaned from a remark made by the heir to the throne, Franz Ferdinand (1863–1914), who said, in reference to one of Oskar Kokoschka’s works



Gustav Klimt, uncensored draft of a poster for the first Secession exhibition



*Basket designed
by Josef
Hoffmann*

presented in an exhibition at the Hagenbund in 1911, that one should break every bone in that fellow's body. At any rate, the Secession was a forum for young artists who did not comply with fixed expectations but went radical new ways.

THE FOUNDATION OF THE WIENER WERKSTÄTTE

From the beginning, the Secessionists had always had a great respect for arts and crafts. Their belief in the *Gesamtkunstwerk* or a 'symbiosis of the arts', which was to "comprise all areas of life", led them to put arts and crafts on an equal footing with the work of a painter or sculptor. Josef Hoffmann expressed the Secessionist point of view as follows: "It can never be sufficient merely to acquire paintings, even if they are truly magnificent. Unless our towns, our houses, our rooms, our cupboards, our tools, our clothes and our jewelry, unless our language and our feelings express the spirit of our time in a clear, simple and beautiful manner, we fall incredibly far behind our predecessors, and no lie will dissimulate these weaknesses."



*Dagobert Peche, special gift
for Josef Hoffmann on the
occasion of his 50th birthday*



*Michael
Powolny,
chocolate
boxes and
figurine*

In 1903, in order to satisfy the demands of this philosophy, Josef Hoffmann, Kolo Moser (1868–1918) and Fritz Waerndorfer founded the *Wiener Werkstätte*, which was to be devoted to the design and sale of arts-and-craft products. The *Wiener Werkstätte* was modelled on the British "Guild of Handicraft" which was based at Essex House in London and, in keeping with the ideas of John Ruskin and William Morris, produced affordable arts-and-crafts products which were in deliberate contrast to machine-produced articles.

In the course of time, the *Wiener Werkstätte* produced a plethora of beautiful objects which even the less well-off could afford, and which ensured that the undertaking was profitable. The quality of these products was the outcome of the co-operation between craftsmen intimately familiar with the materials and processing methods and excellent artists, who provided the designs. Gradually, they had a group of customers who felt it their duty to acquire the products of the *Wiener Werkstätte*, also in order to be associated with their philosophy of art. However, this concept could only be successful in a time when the economy was flourishing. With the onset of the economic crisis in the late 1920s, the *Wiener Werkstätte* declined as it lost the customers able to buy its beautiful products. In 1932, the institution, which had wanted to make good design available to ordinary people, finally had to close its doors.



*Casket designed by
Kolo Moser*

VIENNESE CAFÉS AND VIENNESE SALONS

In 1897, the *Griensteidl* café closed down. This institution had been a home for young writers, a popular meeting point which everybody sorely missed, regardless of whether or not they belonged to the decadent circle of writers and poets whose favourite haunt was the coffee-house. The *Griensteidl* was first and foremost an important meeting place for the *Jung Wien* (Young Vienna) circle of writers and literati. Hermann Bahr, Hugo von Hofmannsthal (1874–1929), Arthur Schnitzler or Richard Beer-Hofmann (1866–1945) were to be found at the *Griensteidl*, as were the journalists or critics who wrote for leading periodicals, such as *Moderne Dichtung* (Modern Poetry). Karl Kraus was a figure apart and ultimately became a critic of the group. With reference to the in-word “décadence”, he coined the term “decadent coffee-house Modernism”. When the



Title page of the third edition of Karl Kraus’ “Literature Demolished”

daily day, those who figured or wanted to figure prominently in the city’s cultural scene were to be found in a café. The café was a place for exchanging news, a social sphere where one could sit alone and work and yet not feel lonely. The café was a substitute for family life, for a debating society and, in some cases, for a heated flat. At the café, contacts did not immediately imply commitments, encounters could take place without consequences. The café offered a setting for the fleeting moment, it was the fuelling for creative verbal thrust and parry.

Few of the unbridled young writers had the entrée into the salons of Viennese society ladies. At Franziska Wertheimstein’s (1844–1907) villa in Döbling, Ferdinand von Saar (1833–1906), and also the young Hofmannsthal were received and supported. Bertha Zuckerkandl’s (1864–1945) salon was open to all the modern intellectuals. The lady of the house herself was a refractory journalist and essay writer and as such she took care of the young geniuses. In later years, Alma Mahler-Werfel (1879–1964) followed these examples. The conservative element in Vienna, which strictly rejected the creations of these young writers and painters who were so prone to excess, met at the salon of Pauline Metternich (1836–1921). The latter supported the wild diatribes against Otto Wagner (1841–1918) and Gustav Klimt in the publications on which she had an influence.



Reinhold Völkel, Café Griensteidl, in the foreground right Peter Altenberg sitting at a table

Griensteidl was closed down, Kraus quipped that Vienna was now being “demolished into a big city”. He was also quite pleased to see this literary genre wither away, although it did not die but gave rise to a number of important works in the coming years.

The fact that the demise of the *Griensteidl* made quite a stir in Vienna’s cultural life goes to show what importance the Viennese cafés had in terms of culture. Around 1900, the drawing rooms of Vienna’s cultural elite were very infrequently turned into a “salon”. Usually, in fact even

As neutral places of encounter, but also as stages where the lady of the house could dazzle and shine, these salons had an important part to play in what issues the city discussed and in what manner. If a topic was discussed in a salon,



Franziska Wertheimstein, patron of young writers, photograph after a platinotype based on a painting by Franz von Lenbach

nobody could ignore it. The hostesses acted as trend-setters, although the impact an individual “social lioness” had on society must not be overrated. Her influence hardly exceeded the limited scope generally permitted to a woman. Nonetheless, close tabs were kept on who was invited to which house, and on who changed camps and dared to frequent another salon. Karl Kraus, for instance, told Sidonie Nadherny (1885–1959), his confidante of many years, that Rainer Maria Rilke (1875–1926) paid him only infrequent visits, but instead was a frequent guest of the “Thurns and Schwarzwalds”. Kraus was especially irate about the salon of Genia Schwarzwald (1872–1940), a reformer of education and notable humanist. He hardly missed an opportunity to offend Genia Schwarzwald or to mock her “broad motherliness”. For instance, he wrote: “Maria likes to associate with Mrs. Sch. And one hears there are all kinds of other mélanges.” By ‘Maria’ he meant Rilke and ‘Sch.’ refers to Schwarzwald. However, Adolf Loos, Oskar Kokoschka and Egon Wellesz (1885–1974) were constant callers at the Schwarzwald home.



*Grand Dame
Bertha Zuckerkandl,
photograph by
d'Ora-Benda*

*Rosa Mayreder,
fighter for
women's rights*



The image of women in Vienna Modernism

The gender issue played an important part in the intellectual climate of the city. In Vienna, as everywhere else in the world, women were laying claim to a better place in a male-dominated world. In emancipatory movements, they expressed their desire for more education, more self-determination and more civic and political rights. In many cases, women at that time were still denied their subjectivity, their existence as human beings in their own right. Women who publicly presented their demands to society in no uncertain terms were dismissed time and again as nuisances and importunate petitioners. However, the women's issue was given greater topicality by the male identity crisis. This crisis had its roots in an inability to cope with apparent threats. Otto Weininger's life and work may serve as a prototype for this way of thinking. When talking about the cultural crisis, he was guided by one leitmotif: the battle between the sexes. For him, woman was matter without a soul, matter which was in contradiction to the ascetic mind. Misogynists such as he deliberately presented woman as the opposite of reason and technology. Weininger was unable to find a way out of the tension between “redeeming femaleness” and reactionary, allegedly intact maleness. This is why, for him, suicide provided the only escape from his restrictive definition of the roles of the sexes.

The duality of Modernist thought, the conciliatory co-existence of conceptual pairs, of mind and body, of reason and madness – yes, of dream and reality – was a fertile ground for the development of Freud's theories. However, it

also led to an extreme hatred of women, to the formation of a negatively stylised image of woman that made her the natural enemy of the male ego. In this way, woman was made a topic of research, she was downgraded to the status of a 'problem' and thus again robbed of her self.

Despite Otto Weininger and his positively racist hatred of women, despite Sigmund Freud and his overemphasis of hysteria as a female phenomenon, more and more intellectual women spoke up, were not to be deterred in their convictions and gathered like-minded companions around them. Women were no longer willing meekly to accept what life brought them, they refused to be disciplined by society, to be reduced to 'the female nature'. They cancelled their contracts as lovely mirrors, as decorative background for men. They wanted to take an active part in progress and development. They were weary of their seat in the wings as an inspiring muse. Men reacted with considerable alarm. The creative woman, who claimed self-actualisation as a right, was depicted as a demon threatening to men, the tools of male power-perpetuation were used to belittle or eliminate her creative achievements. The relationship of Gustav Mahler to his



Alma Mahler-Werfel, the muse of geniuses, photograph by d'Ora-Benda

much younger wife Alma, a talented musician and probably creative composer, is a typical example. When Mahler decided to marry the young girl, he brutally and selfishly spelled out who was to be the creative one in the relationship: "How do you envisage such a married couple of composers? Have you any idea of how ridiculous and degrading such a strange rivalry would certainly be for both of us? What if you are just 'in the mood' but I need you to look after the house, or to run an errand for me, or to – as you write – look after the details of life for me? there can be no doubt that, if we are to be happy, you have to become what I need you to be, my wife and not my colleague. Does this mean the termination of your life, do you believe you will have to renounce the indispensable fulfilment of your being if you totally renounce your music in order to possess mine, and to be mine? Henceforth you have only one vocation: making me happy! ... You must surrender yourself to me unconditionally, – structure your future life in all its details according to my needs, to my person, and desire nothing in exchange but my LOVE! Alma, what this is I cannot tell you, I have already talked too much about it! ..."

Alma Mahler sought refuge in the role of the muse. She allowed her life to be determined by men who admired her and channelled her creativity into the careful selection of the geniuses she considered worthy of her affection.



Postcard from Peter Altenberg's collection, "The absolutely ideal legs! The 13-year-old Evelyn H..., PA 1916"

The literary figure Gina Kaus, photograph by Trude Fleischmann



This element of Vienna Modernism and, particularly, its literary heroes, reduced women to sexual creatures, to mirrors reflecting admirable male qualities. Peter Altenberg (1859–1919), an admirer of girlish femininity, very clearly delineated the boundaries for women. He

explained what they should be like: "... A woman has to be for us in some way like an Alpine forest, something that exults us and frees us from our inner enslavement, something exceptional that gently and instinctively leads us to our own heights, as a good fairy guides the poor lost wanderer in the fairy-tale. ..."

The maximum that society would allow women, who were thirsting for education and bursting with ideas, was to establish a creative environment, to foster salon culture. A passage written by the elegant journalist and conversationalist Milan Dubrovic (1903–1994), even though it might have been meant to be charming and positive, reveals how much or, rather, how little room the male hierarchy was ready to concede to women: "At that time, all the salon-sibyls in Vienna had one talent in common: the ability to stage-manage 'society', to bring together people who were eminent, clever, eloquent or particularly talented and noteworthy. Science, literature, art and journalism induced them to spend, in mutual loyalty, a few companionable hours of stimulating intellectual exchanges. Another trait all these ladies possessed was the vitality their position required, the gracious gift of animating others by their mere presence and personal charisma, of reconciling opposites, of establishing new links, of organising the seating arrangements so as to preclude any calculable animosities or sensitivities. To put it in a

nutshell: the gift of perfectly mastering the role of the ideal hostess."

The intellectual climate in which women were only attributed a role as reflectors of male importance had a lasting impact on the recognition of art created by women. Many intelligent women who wanted to write had a very restricted access to the media. Some used a male pseudonym or, if they worked under their own names as essay or feuilleton writers, they have been forgotten and not considered a worthy topic for research. Thanks to the good

social position of their husbands, Rosa Mayreder (1858–1938) and Maria Lang (1885–1934) found it relatively easy to get their work published, and most of their work has been researched. But who knows the essays of Carola Bruch-Sinn (1853–after 1898), Marie Herzfeld (1855–1940) or Marie Weyr (1864–1903)? Leopoldine Kulka (1872–1920), Henriette Fürth (1861–1938), and Emilie Mataja (1855–1938) have also been completely forgotten. The books by Lina Loos (1892–1950) or Gina Kaus (1894–1985), both formerly popular beauties of Viennese society only rarely appear in print. As long as Lina Loos, the beautiful daughter of a café-owning dynasty and the idol of numerous Viennese writers, was married to Adolf Loos, she was at the centre of café conversations and all the writers bent over backwards to please her. After her separation from Loos she had enormous difficulties becoming established as an actress and writer. Gina Kaus, the adopted daughter and long-standing lover of the banker Josef Kranz (around 1862–1934), who later went bankrupt, published her works under the pseudonym Andreas Eckbrecht. Even today, the first thing that reference books say about her is that she was friendly with Karl Kraus and, only afterwards, that she also wrote popular light novels.

Summers in the Country – “Soulsapes for the Artists“

Spending the summer not only in a spa, but simply in the country was a fixture in the annual schedule of Viennese society. During the *Biedermeier* period, people moved to the suburbs, and settled down in Hietzing near the Emperor’s summer residence, Schönbrunn Palace, or ventured out on a day trip to the countryside. From the middle of the 19th century, the well-to-do middle classes rented summer villas in the area around the Schneeberg or Rax mountains in southern Lower Austria, or – again guided by the wish to be in the vicinity of the Imperial household – in Ischl, which Emperor Franz Joseph favoured in summer because of the good hunting it offered. Ischl became the Emperor’s summer residence, the second residence of many aristocratic families and the place where opinion-makers, socialites and those seeking the limelight yearned to be. Owing to the presence of so many international guests, the formerly modest spa was transformed into a luxury summer resort.

Writers enthused about the countryside. Karl Kraus was one of them, but he also mocked the strange compartments resulting from the mix of rustic simplicity, high nobility and those who wanted to be in the swim. The masters of operetta, such as Johann Strauss, the Younger (1825–1899) or Franz Lehár (1870–1948), used part of their far from negligible income to acquire splendid summer villas. The cream of the acting profession – for instance Alexander Girardi (1850–1918), who played at the *Burgtheater* and Charlotte Wolter (1834–1897), to name but two – spent their summers in Ischl.

The legend that the resort was responsible for the birth of the “salt princes” – the sons of Archduchess Sophie, the mother of Emperor Franz Joseph, were born only after she had taken the waters in Bad Ischl – made Ischl a fashionable spa which nevertheless preserved a certain *Biedermeier* flair. It was probably not a coincidence but a deliberate stage-management that Emperor Franz Joseph celebrated his engagement with Elisabeth, Princess of Bavaria, in Ischl. The strange historical significance of Ischl reached its tragic culmination in 1914. It was in Ischl that Franz Joseph signed the ultimatum to Serbia and thus triggered a European catastrophe.

Another outpost of Viennese high society was Reichenau, at the foot of the Schneeberg-Rax massif. Once the Imperial offspring, Archduke Rudolf and Archduchess Gisela, began to spend the summer in the bracing mountain air, the place became a favourite summer residence for physicians, lawyers and artists. The fact that one could travel from Vienna to Reichenau relatively quickly by railway certainly contributed to its popularity.

The ultimate meeting place for fashionable society in Reichenau was the *Thalhof* hotel, owned by Carl Weissnix and his wife Olga. The two had cleverly managed to transform their house into a fashionable country spa for bon-vivants from Vienna.

Among their regular guests were the Freud, Engländer (i.e. Peter Altenberg) and Schnitzler families. Olga Weissnix (1862–1897), the daughter of a Viennese inn-keeper, developed into the ideal hotelier’s wife. She gained the entrée into the most prestigious circles, organised charity events and made a regular institution of the theatrical summer season in Reichenau. And she carried on an extensive correspondence – more than 300 letters – with Arthur Schnitzler, with whom she had a “metaphysical friendship”. The judgement she passed on the standard of the average summer guests she so carefully looked after was not exactly flattering: “The people I got to know there, were – with few exceptions – ... only people who did not think of or were not capable of doing anything apart from merrily skimming the surface of life without ever troubling themselves with a single deeper thought.”

Gustav Mahler also appreciated the creative environment in the country. During his years as a conductor he devoted the summer months to composing. He wrote his 2nd symphony on the Attersee in his “composing cottage“, and the 3rd symphony was also created in the Salzkammergut. In the Ausseer Land he started working on the 4th symphony, but still in 1898 he acquired a house in Maiernigg on Wörthersee, where he had a “composing cottage” built. He spent the summers in Maiernigg, intensively working, completed his 4th symphony there and wrote four more symphonies in the years to come.



The Gustav Mahler’s composing cottage in the garden of his house in Maiernigg on the Wörthersee, Carinthia

In 1914, after Mahler’s death, his widow, Alma, had a house built on the Kreuzberg in Breitenstein. At the time when the house was completed, she was embroiled in a passionate affair with Oskar Kokoschka, who painted a fresco for her above the huge fireplace. Several legends have grown up about the geniuses who admired Alma and visited her in this house. The place also saw the beginning of her affair with the writer Franz Werfel (1890–1945), who came from Prague – she was still married to the architect Walter Gropius (1883–1969) at the time. In later years, she furnished a study in the house for Werfel so that he could work without being disturbed.

The Visual Arts – beauty in decline

From the middle of the century, but in particular after the demolition of Vienna’s fortifications and the subsequent building boom, historicism dominated all spheres of art. Everything was modelled on the past, the different styles of previous centuries were copied more or less skilfully and adapted to current needs. Painting showed the influence of Hans Makart’s (1840–1884) exuberance and penchant for decoration. The court in Vienna and the *haute bourgeoisie*, only too eager to follow its example, let their taste be ruled by Makart’s aesthetics. The latter’s sophisticated mix of styles, his pseudo-bourgeois world resembling a stage set and decorated with billowing textiles and palm fronds, caused no agitation. His art remained on the surface:

beautiful appearance, surrogates, the complacency and affluence of the bourgeoisie were easily integrated into the mansions of the *nouveaux riches*. Only a few painters started to break the fetters of resignation and melancholia at an earlier stage. Some of Anton Romako’s (1832–1889) works, for example, contained unmistakably psychological elements, before Freud

presented the findings of his psychoanalytical research. Romako’s influence is discernible even in the works of Kokoschka, who saw some of his pictures in the house of the collector Oskar Reichel.

The second decade of Modernism is even more strongly characterised by an atmosphere which Hermann Broch (1886–1951) described as a “joyful apocalypse”. Broch was keenly aware of the weary atmosphere in the declining dual monarchy. In 1908/09, he remarked critically, that “ the senile garrulity of this culture shows that it is drawing to its end. Art has become a smooth purée, and culture means spooning purée...”



Anton Romako,
Portrait of Isabella Reisser,
1884/85



Gustav Klimt, Portrait of
Margaret Stonborough-Wittgenstein, 1905

Gustav Klimt and his theme: Women

It is virtually impossible to find the key to Gustav Klimt's oeuvre in what he wrote or said about himself, since he left hardly any written testimony concerning his intentions or his work. He had an almost pathological aversion to writing; there is no evidence that the great lover who was given to erotic dalliance ever wrote a single love letter. Only a few postcards of really meagre austerity testify to his rare attempts at writing. Friends report that he would leave letters unopened for weeks. He had no mastery of either the written or the spoken word.

The Klimt brothers are commonly believed to have inherited their artistic talent from their mother. She came from a lower middle-class background, she liked singing and she sang well. Klimt's lifelong, close relationship with his mother was of great significance; he lived with his mother and later with his sisters until he died. He remained a bachelor and was being obviously terrified by the thought of entering into a permanent relationship; his attitude to women was highly ambivalent. For many years, Emilie Flöge, whose sister Helene had married Klimt's brother Ernst, was his companion and he felt a deep affection for her; nevertheless the relationship is assumed to have been purely platonic. His desire was aroused by the sweet Viennese girls from the suburbs who were neither intelligent nor self-assured, by the many models who were his companions for short periods. The fact that he did not disdain sexual love is evidenced by the great number of his illegitimate children. There are records which establish that he had at least 14 children. It is true that he spent many summers with Emilie Flöge and her family in her house at Kammer on the Attersee, but she remained the woman he always worshipped from afar and only called to his deathbed.



*Gustav Klimt,
Portrait of Emilie Flöge, 1902*

The portrait of Emilie Flöge painted in 1902, can be considered a key work in Klimt's oeuvre after the turn of the century. Her face and hands are portrayed with realistic detail, her body and dress are represented as a two-dimensional ornament with floral decoration. In this portrait, as in many later works, we find two different forms of expression which nowadays command our greatest admiration. The women portrayed were less enthusiastic about their likenesses. We know that Emilie Flöge disliked her portrait. Margaret Stonborough-Wittgenstein, a sister of the philosopher, hid her likeness from curious eyes in a store cupboard.

For Emilie Flöge, who together with her sisters had opened a fashion salon at the end of Mariahilferstrasse, Klimt designed a number of dresses and he drew patterns for the fabrics she used. In accordance with the tenets of the "Holy Spring" and in compliance with the principles of the *Wiener Werkstätte* (Vienna Workshops, the arts and crafts co-operative of the Secession) these were "reform dresses" or in other words simple and comfortable garments which gave the wearer full freedom of movement. They were an open challenge to corsets and tightly laced bodices. For Emilie Flöge, Klimt also designed notepaper and labels, and he advised her to entrust the interior decoration of her salon to



*Emilie Flöge with
Gustav Klimt;
she is wearing one of
the dresses he designed*



*Gustav Klimt,
Portrait of Sonja
Knips, 1898*

*Gustav Klimt,
Portrait of Adele
Bloch-Bauer,
1907*

and yet very apt. Freud's hypothesis was that, at the turn of the century, living out one's sexual drive was tabooed; consequently sexual desire had to be sublimated and sublimation generated outstanding artistic achievements. So it was the very repression of sexual life that generated the wealth of cultural creation. It is not quite justifiable to turn the argument on its head and conclude that the intensity of sublimation was proportional to the number of outstanding cultural achievements, nor that cultural achievement is entirely dependent on sublimation.

the artists of the *Wiener Werkstätte*. The fashion salon where Emilie Flöge at times employed up to 80 seamstresses, which remained a legend up to the time of the economic crisis in the inter-war period, was soberly furnished in black and white, thus providing an ideal backdrop for the colour creations of Emilie Flöge, who was also a highly capable businesswoman. Her customers belonged mainly to the liberal and in part also Jewish *haute bourgeoisie* of Vienna. Emilie Flöge herself was the best possible model for Klimt's creations. This is evidenced by the brilliant photographs of Madame d'Ora, whose name was actually Dora Kallmus (1881–1963). The most



impressive of these photographs were taken at Villa Oleander in Kammer on the Attersee.

Klimt's contemporary Sigmund Freud furnished an explanation for the tensions in Klimt's private life and the artistic creations generated by them. It was an explanation unheard of at the time

Klimt's revolt against the art of his forebears, against the apostles of the *Ringstrasse* era began with his spectacular exodus from the *Künstlerhaus*, Austria's leading artists' association. With a number of like-minded artists he founded the Secession. "Holy Spring" – *Ver sacrum* – was the programme the young artists wrote on their banner. *Ver Sacrum* was also the title of the journal issued by the group. This elitist and high-quality publication survived only for a few years. Each number was a synthesis of the arts composed of pictures and text which fitted into a larger whole.

Klimt's life and career were changed by a major commission: In 1894, the University of Vienna invited him to design the ceiling paintings for the great hall of the new university built by Heinrich von Ferstel in the neo-Renaissance style on the Ringstrasse avenue. In 1900/1901, he submitted his drafts and caused a veritable art scandal which divided the city into two camps: champions and



*Emilie Flöge, the
fashion designer
and for many years
Gustav Klimt's
companion,
photograph by
d'Ora-Benda*



*Egon Schiele, Hermits,
1912, self-portrait of Schiele
(left) with Gustav Klimt*

opponents of Klimt fiercely confronted each other, scheming and lobbying enthusiastically for and against him. Nobody who wished to be somebody in cultural life could remain aloof. The journalist and feuilletonist Bertha Zuckerkandl was one of the greatest champions of Klimt's bold designs, and her voice carried weight in Vienna's cultural life.

Klimt was deeply hurt by the vileness and spite of the propaganda campaign against his work and responded with an unprecedented move: He bought back his pictures and never again responded to a public invitation of tenders. By that time he was receiving regular commissions for works from a sufficient number of knowledgeable and affluent collectors in Vienna.

The thematic design and arrangement of the striking 'faculty pictures' for the University of Vienna leave a deep impression on the beholder; apart from which they mark a major step forward in the artist's personal development: Klimt had evolved from a painter of decorative art into a brilliant painter of human character. Unfortunately, during the last days of World War II, Klimt's original paintings were destroyed by a fire at Schloss Immendorf, where they had been sent for safekeeping.

Klimt's subject was woman. He depicted women of a fascinating variety of types, ranging from the "aloof, high-society woman" to the "sweet young girl". This typology mirrored his own, highly ambivalent relationship to women. The ladies commanding adoration surrounded by the shining golden ornament of a halo, the sweet girls from the suburbs encircled by a blossoming proliferation of colours.

His personal relationship to eroticism is most clearly expressed in his drawings. Klimt, a rustic type, whom Egon Schiele described as "stocky, dour and sunburnt", knew many women and their feelings. In his drawings and paintings he depicted not only beautiful society women. He ventured onto forbidden ground, daring to depict taboo subjects in a manner never seen before: He painted pregnant women in the nude without any intention of depicting something ungainly or repulsive. His sensitive and reverent attitude to life prompted him to choose "Hope" as the title of one of these paintings. Nor did he shy back from depicting female homo-eroticism or from painting to rid himself of his fear of the all-powerful woman, of the magna mater, of those demonic, malevolent female figures with androgynous attributes. The *femmes fatales* depicted, for instance, in the Beethoven Frieze at the *Wiener Secession*, are the antitheses of the sweet young girl and complete his depiction of the female enigma and the female mystique. In Klimt's works, men play at best a marginal role.

*Gustav Klimt's design
for the faculty painting
"Medicine"*



The unsettling force of Egon Schiele and Oskar Kokoschka

The Secessionists wished to reconcile art and life. The wild young painters put an end to this alliance between truth and beauty, creating a new unsettling and exciting concept of beauty and ruthlessly discarding Secessionist aesthetics. Schiele annihilated the concept of beauty upheld by the *Jugendstil* artists, at the same time abandoning the concept of goodness inherent in the concept of beauty. Expressionists do not hesitate to depict people torn between extremes. Provokingly and ecstatically they commit to canvas the tension of the moment. Egon Schiele's themes are Eros and Death. He monitored his own development in an impressive number of self-portraits. Klaus Albrecht Schröder called them "life-generated self-portraits". In his self-portraits Schiele asks what he is: ascetic or dissolute? With these pictures he penetrated the



Oskar Kokoschka, The Dreaming Boys, Sleeping Woman, 1908

previously forbidden spheres of instinctual life. It is interesting to note that Klimt left not a single self-portrait.

Both Schiele and Kokoschka left the Secessionist style behind, while also building on it. The Secessionists had started a process of 'sacralising' works of art. Schiele demanded: "My pictures must be placed in structures resembling temples." Both artists broach new themes and take new approaches which initially confused the beholder. When works by Kokoschka were first shown at the *Kunstschau* (Art Show) in 1908, Richard Muther wrote about them in *Die Zeit*: "The *enfant terrible* here is Kokoschka ... (his) tapestry designs are abominable, beer-tent style, crude Red Indian art, ethnographic museum, Gauguin gone haywire ... and yet ... This *enfant terrible* is really a child not a poser..." In his cycle "The Dreaming Boys" Kokoschka replaced Klimt's rich ornamentation with a pictorial language influenced by folk art. Both Kokoschka and Schiele were beset by existential fears. According to Arthur Roessler (1877–1955), Schiele's friend and a collector of his works, Schiele dreaded "loneliness with a fear bordering on terror".



Oskar Kokoschka, Still Life with Wether

Schiele was not interested in nature as such; he was interested in physicality also in nature. He gave nature bodily features. The eminent Schiele connoisseur Rudolf Leopold detects an ‘anthropomorphisation’ of nature, for instance when Schiele makes a tree-trunk bulge into the shape of a head and equips it with human means of locomotion. The few paintings of nature he created are pervaded by a strong feeling of hopelessness. In the picture *Versinkende Sonne* (Setting Sun) this feeling is conveyed by the unbelievable chill emanating from the foreground.



*Egon Schiele,
self-portrait in the nude*

Klimt, too, had painted sexual themes, but through the use of ornamentation they were stylised. Schiele violated the prevailing artistic canon both in form and substance. There is nothing he finds embarrassing and especially his nude drawings are blatantly realistic.

Klimt, Schiele and Kokoschka formed an artistic triad of mutual influence and fertilisation. Klimt's Beethoven Frieze influenced both Schiele and Kokoschka, Schiele's nudes inspired Kokoschka. Rudolf Leopold calls Schiele and Kokoschka expressionistic artists who incorporate the ugly into their works with a view to enhancing their emotional impact. An artist such as Kokoschka thus confronts the beholder with a disrupted and sick counter-world. His perspective of the world shattered every expectation of beauty, grace or glossy superficiality.



*Egon Schiele,
Setting Sun,
1913*



Egon Schiele, Small Tree in Late Autumn, 1911

Both Schiele and Kokoschka use dark, subtly shaded tones and tend to paint themes relating very often to death and transience, such as Kokoschka's icon of decline *Das Stilleben mit dem Hammel* (Still Life with Wether) of 1910. Schiele in particular oscillates between the extremes of Eros and Death and, like medieval artists, presents life as a road to death. Impetuous and desperate, he never hesitates to make pain visible. This applies also and in particular to his drawings in which he reveals himself as a master in the art of omission. He needs but a few strokes to create three-dimensionality.



Egon Schiele, Female Nude drawing

Arnold Schoenberg, the painting composer

Arnold Schönberg, portrait of Alban Berg, 1910



In 1910, the composer Arnold Schoenberg presented himself at Heller's art salon as a painter. He had long been known, though not accepted,

as a composer. There is little doubt that he had been aware of his talent as a painter at an early age. However, he did not devote himself seriously to painting until 1906. Approximately 70 oil paintings and 160 water colours as well as drawings are extant from the period between 1906 and 1912. It is thought that Richard Gerstl, who spent two summers (1907 and 1908) with the Schoenberg family in Gmunden, instigated Schoenberg to take up painting.

Schoenberg's oeuvre is divided into two main categories – portraits and “visions” – the latter being of decisive importance. The first pictures in this category were undoubtedly painted a few weeks after Gerstl had committed suicide. Gerstl's relationship with the Schoenberg family was anything but relaxed, since a love affair had developed between him and Mathilde Schoenberg. Schoenberg was deeply hurt; he thought of committing suicide and wrote his will. It was Gerstl who killed himself. It remained unclear whether he was driven to commit suicide by the fact that he was having an affair or because it had ended. After Gerstl's death, Schoenberg painted a growing number of visions. After 1910, Schoenberg wished to make money as a portrait painter, even requesting Emil Hertzka (1869–1932), the Director of the *Universal Edition* publishing house, to inquire about commissions for him. He argued that, “it must be much more interesting to be painted by or to own a painting by a musician of Schoenberg's reputation, than by some artisan whose name would be forgotten within another 20 years, whereas Schoenberg's had already gone down in the history of music.” Unfortunately, Schoenberg, who was, in

fact, trying to add to the family income, was not successful with this idea, his self-assurance in dealing with potential patrons being a severe drawback.

The reviews of Schoenberg's paintings were not over-enthusiastic; at best he was considered a counter-pole to the Secessionists. After 1912, Schoenberg cut back on his painting, but repeatedly produced self-portraits. Many of his contemporaries occupied themselves with Schoenberg's "visions", attempting to find out what lay behind them. Wassily Kandinsky (1866–1944) thought that Schoenberg was painting "intuitively perceived heads to express those feelings he could not express in music". Schoenberg's biographer Richard Specht perceived the paintings "of an ecstatically visionary and at the same time depressed spirit as the strong and utterly artistic urge to give form to the visions of an unworldly Ego that was worlds away". There is no denying a spiritual kinship with Freud's interpretation of dreams.



Richard Gerstl, Self-portrait, head and shoulders, 1901



Arnold Schoenberg, "Tears", from the visions cycle

The world of literature

Arthur Schnitzler and Hugo von Hofmannsthal, the chroniclers of a society in decline



Maximilian Lenz, *the Sirk Corner, 1900*

Arthur Schnitzler, the son of a well-known Viennese physician, initially continued in his father's footsteps and studied medicine. Having obtained his degree, he worked for several years as a general practitioner and internist. From his school days, however, he had taken the writing of short novels and dramas seriously. His occupation with psychiatry at a time when this discipline was especially popular, inter alia due to the research work done by Richard Krafft-Ebing (1840–1902), had had a decisive influence on his work as a writer. Schnitzler himself wrote a scientific work on the treatment of neuroses. He occupied himself with the "vast landscape" of the soul not only in the wake of Freud, but already at an earlier stage. As early as 1893, he published his



Portrait of Arthur Schnitzler after an etching by Ferdinand Schmutzer

"Anatol" series – a dramatic form he frequently used – in which some of his recurrent types, such as the sweet young girl and the bored parvenu, appeared for the first time. Repetition makes these characters appear in clearer relief: for example the military officer who, against his better judgement, thinks that he must save his honour in a duel. In *Liebelei* (Playing with Love), which appeared in 1895, his criticism is directed at high society, in which the love of a young girl from the suburbs is carelessly discarded for a brief dalliance with a society lady. The novella *Leutnant*

Gustl (None but the Brave) is a poignant example of Schnitzler's mastery in describing this careless treatment of the deep feelings of others and the senseless deaths in duels prescribed by a long outdated code of honour.

Schnitzler's view of the world is ironic and bitter, his melancholia is concealed only by keeping up appearances. In light conversation he lays bare the tragic feeling of doom pervading a society governed by superficiality and frivolity and given to vain hedonism. He has no patience with such pathetic behaviour and hones his subtle dialogue to dissect the alleged values attached to concepts such as aristocratic aloofness and countenance.

His characters are morbid melancholics and incapable of love; Anatol is the embodiment of a world of resignation. In *Der Reigen* (La Ronde) Schnitzler weaves these characters into a dance of fatuous society posers, twirling towards the abyss like puppets, blinded by vanity and inanity in a world that is crumbling around them.

He is aware that the patriarchal family structures are falling apart; in his plays nobody commits adultery out of passion, in

Hugo von Hofmannsthal

the thralls of an *amour fou*, but out of a whim and for the sheer pleasure of deception. His characters are distorted images of a liberal, progressive bourgeoisie whose visions already foundered in the stock-market crash of 1873.

His irony does stop short, however, of the simple people, such as old Weiring in *Liebelei*; their tragedies are not glossed over with polite phrases. These simple people are the only ones who continue to have feelings which Schnitzler respects.

Schnitzler's analysis of the anti-Semitism of the "respectable" middle-classes, on the other hand, is bitter and merciless. In 1918, his dream of a reconciliation and co-existence of Jews and non-Jews finally came to an end. The time after World War I was no longer his world; there was no place in his imagination for its total loss of direction.

Whereas Schnitzler portrayed the middle-class milieu, Hugo von Hofmannsthal portrayed the world of the aristocracy. Claudio Magris, the Italian Germanist, wrote that Hofmannsthal "wished to counteract the course of events with the redeeming magic of words". It is an inward escape from reality, a flight into aestheticism. This escape from reality is effected by a transfiguration of reality. Hofmannsthal very early developed a feeble narcissism that was closely related to the literature of *Décadence*. In 1895, the 21-year-old poet wrote: "I cannot shift the weariness of entirely forgotten peoples from my eyelids."

The poet perceived himself as the last heir of a baroque and sensual theatre tradition which fascinatingly and again and again impressively presented the medieval mystery play of man's exposure to death. Hofmannsthal transformed the agony and decay of his real world into a play of appearance and illusion. In his *Jedermann* (Everyman) the vehicle of escape from the present is a pseudo-naivety leading to a world of fairy-tale make-believe. Hofmannsthal describes the homo austriacus overshadowed by presentiments of death but gracefully mincing to the abyss.



One of the writer's principal motifs is faithfulness and preservation and the denial of time and the change it brings with it. This attitude ultimately leads to motionlessness, paralysis, mental petrification. The static element prevails, the dynamic element is denied. It is their infatuation with detail that causes Hofmannsthal's characters to linger motionless. Prompted by his profound knowledge of the Habsburg tradition he spreads the message that the culmination point has been reached, and all that one needs to do to preserve it is to linger. His response to the future was to glorify a past that was dead and gone. He loved the 18th century as a time of new intellectual departures – which it actually was – though it could no longer have any relevance to the new 20th century. The site of his favourite myth was Venice, the city which even in the 18th century had ceased to be more than an historical setting of itself. His oeuvre is the swan song of the Habsburg empire; in his play *Der Schwierige*, the Difficult Man is the embodiment of an obsolete type who nonchalantly opted for restraint, moderation and self-effacement.



Scene from a performance of Hofmannsthal's "Everyman" in front of the Salzburg Cathedral in 1998; Gert Voss in the title role, Isabel Karajan as "Good Works" and Sibylle Canonica as "Faith"

Karl Kraus, the radical pessimist

Kraus, that most vicious yet most unerring critic of his epoch, was merciless. From his linguistic judge's bench he prosecuted relentlessly and rigidly, sarcastically and bitingly whatever deviated from his way of thinking. The principal targets of his criticism were the journalists, whom he called "Journaille". His rostrum was *Die Fackel*, a magazine which first appeared in 1899 and which until his death in 1936 he wrote entirely on his own. He loved Johann Nestroy and the Viennese operetta, but he loved Jacques



Karl Kraus, photograph by d'Ora-Benda

Offenbach even more. He repeatedly presented the latter's libretti at public readings, and contemporary witnesses as well as old recordings testify to the fascination of his presentation.

Kraus fought against the demons of hypocrisy, against chauvinism and against bourgeois ideals. He moralised quite cruelly against each and every facet of typically Viennese art and especially against those artefacts that radiated even the ghost of the charm of impressionistic magic. He loved wholesale condemnation and accepted that it meant the loss of many nuances.

Kraus found his great critic in Anton Kuh (1891–1941) whose brilliant, linguistic

talent equalled his own; the culminating point of their argument was an off-the-cuff speech given by Kuh at the *Wiener Konzerthaus* under the motto "Zarathustra's Ape". For 90 minutes, Kuh reviled the editor of *Die Fackel*, which resulted in Kraus bringing several actions for defamation against him. Kuh called Kraus a "Buddha", whose works were "a series of down-gradings, uprootings and polemic attacks".

Kraus was not interested in visions and forward-looking ideas, he lacked the synthetic dimension and preferred to lead a campaign of literary extermination against the Habsburg empire. The play *Die letzten Tage der Menschheit* (The Last Days of Mankind) is a vicious death dance; and the view it adopts is so one-sided that everything is reduced to a degenerate puppet parade. Kraus undoubtedly correctly identified the superficiality and emptiness that determined so much of life, but he was not prepared to believe in ideas to remedy them. Kraus was not a champion of progressive ideas, but a deeply conservative dreamer, merciless in his exclusiveness, the defender of a fictitious humanism. His misogyny and his polemics against the destruction of the world by Jewish-capitalist forces make this radically pessimistic though linguistically sensitive author one of the difficult men of the epoch. The German scholar Wendelin Schmidt-Dengler said of Kraus: "For Kraus language was the only unquestionable authority; he equates linguistic morals with morals as such and the exposure of the misuse of language with the exposure of an offence."

Peter Altenberg, the quintessential coffee-house writer

The author and literary figure Peter Altenberg defies categorisation. He is neither a poet nor a novelist, he left no epic work and no drama. His whole oeuvre resembles lightly dabbed little printings, sketchy and atmospheric snapshots. He expended his literary gifts on the small format, on sensitive essays.

Altenberg's life is legendary; he himself worked harder on the creation of this legend than on any of his literary creations. What constituted his flair, his reputation as a café denizen who could only breathe in tobacco-filled rooms and would have been unable to live outside this special atmosphere, was boosted by the reports of his contemporaries. He lived his life publicly and notoriously at cafés, such as the *Central*, *Grabencafé*, *Grabenkiosk*, at a number of night-spots, such as the *Fledermaus*, and in his sparsely furnished room in the *Grabenhotel*. It was common knowledge that he had a penchant for very young, almost boy-like girls.



Peter Altenberg's room in the Grabenhotel

Danube. His real name was Richard Engländer and he was the son of wealthy parents. He eked out a living by writing theatre reviews and small sketches. When, owing to his bad health, he was yet again in a sanatorium, he would apply for money to his friends. In his old age, he had a virtual phobia of starving and he never hesitated to demand regular financial support from his friends and patrons, insisting relentlessly on their honouring any promises they might have made while in their cups. When he died, his bank balance amounted to no less than 100,000 crowns.

The titles of his books reveal the pattern of his life: *Was der Tag mir zuträgt* (What the day holds in store), *Märchen des Lebens* (Fairytale of life), *Bilderbögen des kleinen Lebens* (Illustrated broadsheets of the little life). His writings appeared in approximately 50 different journals. He described moments in life in bizarre and very charming little stories, almost like snapshots of situations. He was fascinated by photographs: at the end of his life, his room in the *Grabenhotel* was virtually papered with the photographs of young girls whom he had admired – in vain. Like a religious believer with his little devotional pictures, he would add short texts and the pleas of a dreaming lover to these photographs. The adoration of the unattainable, the almost sacral transfiguration of trivialities make up the unmistakable charm of Altenberg's compositions.



His infatuation with an aunt of Konrad Lorenz (1903–1989), the behaviourist and winner of the Nobel Prize, had prompted him to choose Peter Altenberg as his nom de plume, for the aunt had her family seat in Altenberg on the

„Architekt Adolf Loos und Peter Altenberg! Zwei, die so weit und so lang! 1911 Peter Altenberg“

Modernist Architecture

Otto Wagner, the trailblazer of modern ideas on architecture



Otto Wagner's station in Karlsplatz today

With his plans and completed buildings Otto Wagner, the architect and town planner, introduced distinctive new elements into the cityscape, and yet only very few of his splendid projects were actually realised. Josef Hoffmann commented this fact as follows: "After laborious and nauseating struggles, he was able to carry out only a very small number of his projects. These include the structures of the city railway, the only ones of their kind that have not disfigured a city but, on the contrary, have created a series of the most attractive townscapes imaginable, the Nussdorf lock with municipal offices, the church at Steinhof, and the Post Office Savings Bank, which was the first real office block."

Wagner was born in 1842 and came of a *haute bourgeoisie* Vienna family. As his first commission he co-operated with



The station in Karlsplatz under construction

Otto Thienemann on the design of the *Grabenhof*. This building, which was designed in the tradition of historicism, is still one of the highlights on the Graben boulevard.



Otto Wagner, façade of St. Leopold at Steinhof

Otto Wagner, St. Leopold at Steinhof, view of the church interior



Wagner was very successful with his subsequent buildings and had the distinction of receiving a number of public commissions, such as the marquee for the celebrations on the occasion of the silver wedding of the imperial couple.

In about 1890, he finally turned his back on historicism, which in later publications he dismissed as “eunuchs’ architecture”. His design principles for city planning began to take shape, when he was commissioned to draw up a general plan for regulating the whole municipal area of Vienna. With statements such as, “art has the task of adapting the face of the city to contemporary humanity” or “art consequently has the task to bring the needs of construction into consonance with artistic demands“, he prepared the ground for 20th-century functionalist building. His points of departure for city planning were axuality and symmetry. In this he adhered to the historical tradition of the development of Vienna’s cityscape which was dominated by the monumental buildings of the Baroque era. Otto Wagner obviously had an intimate knowledge of Fischer von Erlach’s (1656–1723) ideal designs.

In 1894, he was commissioned to construct the city railway and the suburban line. He worked out an overall engineering and artistic concept for this large-scale railway architecture, which is at best equalled by the art-deco sections of the Paris Metro. After 100 years, his bridges are still in working order and meet the requirements of modern traffic volumes. The stations, many of which were destroyed

in World War II, are among Vienna’s special attractions. The excellence of Otto Wagner’s planning is also evidenced by the fact that some sections of his railways have been incorporated into Vienna’s modern underground network.

Draft of St. Leopold at Steinhof, water colour over pencil drawing by Wagner





Otto Wagner, façade of the Postal Savings Bank

In 1899, Wagner submitted a study entitled *Die Moderne im Kirchenbau* (Modernist Church Building) in which he summed up his ideas on modern sacral building. Wagner designed all his buildings to fit into the existing historical environment, or in other words, his designs blended with the buildings that already dominated the cityscape. When he was commissioned to build the church at Steinhof, at a focal point in the west of the city, he knew that any design would have to correspond to Fischer von Erlach's *Karlskirche*. For this reason he opted for a building with a domed central space, his principal arguments being a cost/benefit analysis and the fact that more people would be able to see the high altar from a central space than they would from a nave. The Church of St. Leopold at Steinhof is an object lesson in Wagner's perfectionism as regards taking account of the church-goers' needs. Since



Otto Wagner, main hall of the Postal Savings Bank

this church was built for the patients of a psychiatric clinic, Wagner's design included countless details to meet their special requirements. To prevent infection, he designed easy-to-clean holy-water stoups. To facilitate the cleaning of the main body of the church, the floor slopes slightly

towards the altar. The pews are short enough to allow the orderlies to reach individual patients without difficulty. To separate male from female patients, he created a three-portal system with separate entrances. Wagner's artistic conception of the Church at Steinhof can be traced back to the domed structure of St. Peter's Cathedral in Rome and its entrance area to that of antique temples.

Wagner's modern concept of building which also found expression in the use of new construction materials manifested itself even more clearly in the Post Office Savings Bank, a building completed in 1906. From his own notes we learn that: "The façade ... is to be ... clad in panels. The projected cubage of these panels can be relatively small, but the projected material should be of high quality (such as Laas marble) ... The result ... will be approximately the following: The stone cubages will be reduced to 1/10 to 1/50 ... The monumental effect will be enhanced by the precious material, the costs will be massively reduced and the construction time will be brought down to the short period desired."



*Otto Wagner,
residential building
on Linke Wienzeile*

For both St. Leopold's Church and the Post Office Savings Bank Wagner used very thin marble plates; the bolts which were not actually needed to fix the slabs, are a decorative feature on the façade. By using ornamentation which was supposedly constructional in nature, he avoided *l'art pour l'art* ornament. The Post Office Savings Bank is a particularly good example of how Wagner solved practical problems with supreme artistic sophistication. Cases in point are the furnishings designed for the bustle of business transactions or the highly functional hot-air heating system, the individual elements of which almost have the character of sculptures. With the careful arrangement and sequence of the rooms – starting with the flight of steps, via the portal and the entrance hall into the domed hall which is flooded with light – Wagner succeeded in giving a sacral and aesthetic dimension to a functional building for money transactions, a dimension which has yet to find its peer. The banality of money transaction is beautified by a visual experience, the optical attraction of which was further enhanced by setting the building back from the Ringstrasse avenue in the parallel street.

Wagner's achievements were widely acclaimed by contemporary critics. When the Post Office Savings Bank was completed, Ludwig Hevesi (1842–1910) wrote: "This building is a milestone in the history of functional and office building in Vienna, and it proves that even for such buildings the best concepts are not to be expected from

construction offices, but from individual, capable and, if necessary, inventive artists whose talent is equal to every aspect of the undertaking."

The last decade of Wagner's life – he died in 1918, a few months before the end of World War I – was soured by distressing arguments about his project for a City Museum. His designs were criticised in a sometimes very personal and defamatory manner by conservative circles, in particular by the heir to the throne Archduke Franz Ferdinand. The defeat of this building project has come to symbolise the end of Viennese Modernism.



*Perspective of Wagner's
second villa in the
suburb of Hütteldorf*

Adolf Loos and his „horror of a house“



Oskar Kokoschka,
Portrait of Adolf
Loos, 1909

The completion of the house in Michaelerplatz – the statement “horror of a house” was made at a meeting of the Vienna City Council – for Goldman & Salatsch, the gentlemen’s outfitters, was the culminating point in the work of the architect Adolf Loos. He had rejoiced when he received the commission: “My first house! A real house! I’d never have dreamed, I’d build a house in my old age.” Adolf Loos, the son of a sculptor, came from Brünn (Brno). He went to the state trade school in Reichenberg and, for a few semesters, studied at the Technical College in Dresden. He spent the time between 1893 and 1896 in America, where he was deeply impressed by the high-rise architecture of Chicago. In 1896, he came to Vienna, and since he received no building commissions, he wrote essays and articles about architecture. In 1898, he published the essay *Die Potemkinsche Stadt* (The Potemkin Town) in one of the first issues of the periodical *Ver sacrum*. In this essay he polemicalised forcefully against the contemporary style of

building. He primarily criticised historicism, but never condemned good and time-tested traditions. Loos was not a revolutionary, his basic attitude being conservative and bound by tradition. In 1914, he commented: “Let us get accustomed to building the way our fathers built and have no fear of being thought old-fashioned.”

Loos’ attitude to arts and crafts was inflexible. Contrary to the ideas upheld by the *Wiener Werkstätte*, he wished to keep art strictly separate from craft. As a result, he distanced himself increasingly from the Secession, although the art critic Ludwig Hevesi categorised him as a non-Secessionist rather than as an opponent of the Secession.

*The house built
by Adolf Loos for
Goldman &
Salatsch in
Michaelerplatz*



Gradually Loos received minor commissions, such as the interior design of the *Café Museum*, the *Kärntner Bar* (1907) and *Kniže*, the gentlemen’s outfitters on the Graben. He could not earn a fortune from these commissions, and since he attached great importance to an elegant appearance, he was constantly in debt. He himself claimed that he had received several of these

commissions in order to reduce his debts. In any case, the commission to build a house in Michaelerplatz marked a breakthrough in every respect. It also confirmed the validity of his spatial concept as exemplified by the sales room he had designed for Goldman & Salatsch in 1903. The interiors he had created for previous principals apparently met both their functional and their aesthetic requirements. Leopold Goldman (1870?–1944) knew exactly with whom he was dealing. The contract concluded between Loos and Goldman is legendary for its succinctness: “1. We award the

commission for the building at the corner of Kohlmarkt and Herrengasse to the architect Adolf Loos. 2. Should anybody submit a better ground plan than Adolf Loos, the latter shall withdraw from this agreement. 3. The decision on the ground plan shall be taken by us. The façade is not a subject of discussion.” It was this very façade which caused a storm of protest and an unprecedented scandal in the history of Viennese architecture. Otto Wagner remarked very aptly: “We forbore publicly to take up the cudgels for the work which is being so harshly attacked, because we, too, consider that it has its flaws. I can assure you, however, that its designer is more of an artist than the designers of many a mansion left in peace because it had nothing at all to say.”

The chief critic of this monument of Modernism was the emperor himself. The functionality of Loos’ building was planned meticulously and consistently, and the space available was used ingeniously. In his planning, Loos was guided by the fundamental idea of “building from the inside out”. But everyone was in an uproar over the façade, which admittedly was unusual. On the one hand, it was magnificent, with its tall columns in the entrance area, on the other hand, it was ascetic as regards the design of the upper stories. In 1910, Adolf Loos had to defend his work against his opponents in the legendary lecture “Ornament and Crime”. The building stood the test of time up to the thirties, when the gentlemen’s outfitter fell victim to the economic situation.

Josef Hoffmann, the all-round artist



Picture of Josef Hoffmann in his old age, photograph by Franz Hubmann

Josef Hoffmann, who was born in 1870, was an all-rounder. He built houses, designed furniture and functional objects, and there seemed to be no limit to his creative imagination. His designs for the *Wiener Werkstätte* were perfectly suited to any given material, functional and of great aesthetic appeal. Hoffmann had studied at the Academy of Arts in Brünn (Brno) and Vienna. His teachers, Carl von Hasenauer (1833–1894) and Otto Wagner, were still influenced by historicism. However, after a trip to Italy,

Hoffmann distanced himself from historicism and, under the influence of western European *art nouveau* and the “Arts and Crafts Movement“, joined the Secessionist artists. After the turn of the century, he received his first



The Sanatorium Purkersdorf designed by Josef Hoffmann

important commissions for the re-designing of the interiors of villas in the fashionable 19th district inter alia from Kolo Moser and the painter Carl Moll (1861–1945). The culminating point of this first purist period was the construction of the *Sanatorium Purkersdorf*.

In later buildings he used the best materials available, such as marble, high-grade timber or mother-of-pearl marquetry, as decorative elements. The culmination of this period is the *Palais Stoclet* in Brussels which is unostentatious and yet complex in its design, with its very original façade and sumptuous interior décor. In the same period he designed the *Villa Primavesi* in the Vienna suburb of Hietzing. However, this villa has meanwhile been fundamentally altered.



Wooden model of the Palais Stoclet in Brussels, made by the master-class for design at the University of Applied Art

Vienna – the world capital of music

At the turn of the century, Vienna again reached the heights as a city of music as in the period of Viennese classicism a hundred years before. The city was home to Anton Bruckner (1824–1896), Johannes Brahms (1833–1897), Arnold Schoenberg, Alban Berg (1885–1935), Gustav Mahler, and Richard Strauss (1864–1949). This phenomenal contemporaneity of outstanding talents was accompanied by a somewhat strange flourishing of social trends and fashions in musical life. The concert and opera goers were strictly divided into two schools of thought – the rather conservative groups, who were followers of Richard Wagner and his cult of the genius, and the followers of Johannes Brahms, who were liberal and open to new trends. They praised and had a greater appreciation of the music of Schoenberg. There was no link between the two poles. Every music lover had to take sides; it was out of the question to admire both heroes. As a consequence, Richard Wagner was performed in exemplary productions at the Court Opera, while the music of Alexander Zemlinsky (1871–1924) was enthusiastically acclaimed in private circles.



Emil Orlik, portrait of Gustav Mahler

Gustav Mahler and Alfred Roller

In April 1897, Gustav Mahler made his debut as a conductor at the Court Opera – in a repertory performance of Richard Wagner’s *Lohengrin* – and was received with enthusiasm by the critics. Karl Kraus wrote enthusiastically: “A new conductor has just taken up his post, a veritable Siegfried, whose expression leaves one in no doubt that he will swiftly set to rights the former mis-management.” The ten years in which Mahler conducted at the Court Opera, of which he became the director in May 1897, were a golden age in the history of the opera house. Mahler launched into this task with passion and found an ideal partner in the brilliant stage designer Alfred Roller (1864–1935). Roller, who came from the Secessionist circle, shared Mahler’s perception of opera as a synthesis of the arts which emerges from the



Alfred Roller

Otto Böbler,
silhouettes of
Gustav Mahler
conducting



interaction of music, singers, chorus and orchestra as well as the stage set. Mahler cherished his task and took it extremely seriously. During every season, he conducted approximately one hundred performances. He worked intensively on new productions and took meticulous and dutiful care of the repertoire and the singers. He built up an ensemble of singer-actor personalities who fitted in with his concept of opera productions. Erik Schmedes (1868–1931), one of the star singers, commented on his new director: “This is a stage director and conductor in whom the singer can place blind trust. I don’t look at him when he is conducting, but the feeling that he is conducting is a support to the singer and protects him against any hazards. Mahler is a stern critic ... so any praise from him is doubly welcome.”

The first joint production corresponding to the concept of a synthesis of the arts was the performance of Richard Wagner’s *Tristan und Isolde* on 21 February 1903. There followed four years of triumphant progress before the customary combination of envy, criticism and professional intrigue forced them to give up.

When Gustav Mahler took up his job at the Court Opera, he was already a successful conductor and a universally recognised composer. Mahler was born in the Bohemian village of Kalischt (Kaliste) in 1860, as the son of a Jewish vendor of spirits. At the age of 15, he took up his studies at the conservatory of the *Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde* (Society of the Friends of Music). His friendship with Anton Bruckner and Hugo Wolf (1860–1903) dated from his student days. At that time, Bruckner was at best considered an outstanding organist, his symphonic works being brusquely rejected. Hugo Wolf was a fellow student of Mahler’s, the two young men being principally united by their joint admiration for Richard Wagner’s genius.

Mahler’s career as a conductor started very conventionally in provincial towns in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, such as Bad Hall, Laibach (Ljubljana) and Olmütz (Olomuc). In 1883, he was engaged as *Musikdirektor* at the Court Theatre of Kassel. Between 1885 and 1888, he conducted in Prague and Leipzig. Leipzig was also the town where he was first successful with his compositions. He wrote his

first symphony, which contains a number of quotations from earlier works. For the following three years, he was the director of the Royal Hungarian Opera House in Budapest, where he stood his test as an opera conductor and won the admiration of Johannes Brahms with a performance of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart’s *Don Giovanni*.

Subsequently he was engaged at the Hamburg *Stadttheater* and had to limit his composing to his summer holiday. The 2nd Symphony was written on the Attersee, the 3rd Symphony, which captures the atmosphere of the landscape, again in the Salzkammergut. He also set a number of poems from *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* (The Youth’s Magic Horn) to music. These songs met with incomprehension at performances in Berlin.

Costume design by
Alfred Roller, “The
Little Moor“

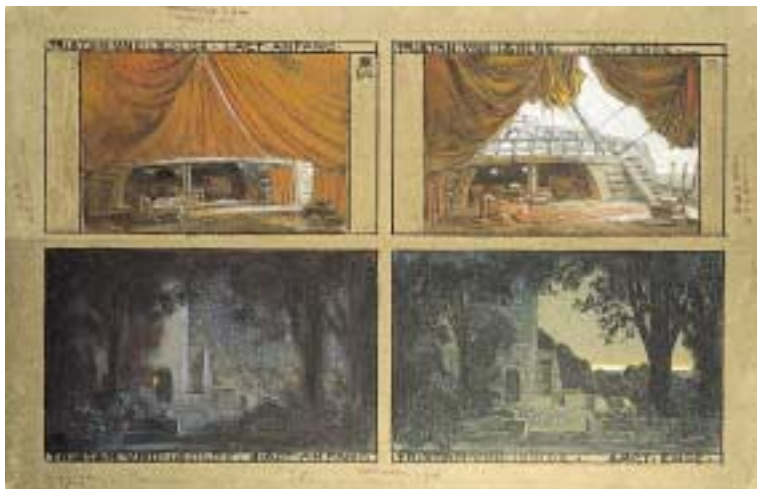


Between 1898 and 1901, Mahler also conducted the philharmonic concerts in Vienna. In these concerts, he did not only perform his own works, which met with a cool response from the critics, but he even dared to modify the masterpieces of the classic composers – introducing for example the part of a b-flat clarinet into the *Meistersinger* prelude – which earned him the severe censure of the critics.

In March 1902, Mahler married Alma Maria Schindler, the daughter of the landscape painter Emil Jakob Schindler (1842–1892) and the step-daughter of Carl Moll. It was in these artistic circles that he met Alfred Roller. Hermann Bahr described the result of Roller’s ingenious translation of music into images as “sounds solidified into images”.

In 1907, a press campaign was launched against Mahler, typically during his absence on a concert tour abroad. Mahler’s distress, combined with the onset of a heart complaint, caused him to resign his post of conductor at the Court Opera. In the few years still left to him, he conducted mainly in America. After the death of his elder daughter, he sold his house on the Wörthersee and purchased his third composing cottage at Toblach (Dobbiaco) in the South Tyrol. His last great works, the 9th Symphony and *Das Lied von der Erde* breathe a mood of leave-taking. Mahler died on 18 May 1911, in his 51st year.

Unrealised stage designs by Alfred Roller for Tristan and Isolde



Arnold Schoenberg and his circle

The premiere of Arnold Schoenberg’s Chamber Symphony op. 9 for 15 Solo Instruments on 5 February 1907 ended in a major scandal. Schoenberg himself perceived the work as the culmination of his first creative period, but the audience and the critics heaped scorn on him. Schoenberg wrote to Arnold Rosé (1863–1946), the brilliant interpreter of numerous chamber music works: “Having more or less recovered from the agitation of the past week and having regained the calmness of mind required to withstand the onslaught of the snarling dogs of the press, I feel prompted once again to express my heartfelt thanks to you for taking up the cudgels for my works.” Schoenberg’s symphony in one movement was intended as a step towards the “emancipation of dissonance”. His work exploded like a bomb in Vienna’s concert life, the public regarding the composer as a “devil of Modernist music” and nobody, neither friend nor foe, at first being able to grasp his free floating tonality and atonality. A new musical style had been born.

Schoenberg defended himself against his opponents, who accused him of producing cacophony, by arguing that he was bored by over-long compositions. This was an obvious allusion to the works of Bruckner and Mahler. In Schoenberg’s eyes, the latter in particular must have turned into an example to avoid, since a few years before, he had still spoken of Mahler with the greatest respect.

Schoenberg thought the world of Brahms, whom he continued to call “the Progressive”, even after World War II; this epithet signified that Brahms had played a major part in the development of new music. In Brahms’s music Schoenberg discerned a technique of “developing variation”, the principle of “musical prose” and multi-stepped harmony; he likewise perceived a “musical logic” which, by way of modification and variation, builds a musical structure out of small melodic-rhythmic motifs.

Brahms was Schoenberg's ideal in his critical analysis of music up to his own time, for Brahms was striving for a controlled inclusion of all the structural levels. Schoenberg perceived himself as a "conservative revolutionary". In 1923, he said of himself: "I do not wish to figure as a musical bogeyman but rather as somebody who naturally develops a correctly perceived good, old tradition."

In the following years, Schoenberg created the model of reduced orchestral forces. He also reduced the volume of his works by keeping them short and by avoiding repetitions or sequences. His compositional style was to be devoid of clichés, of unnecessary trivialities.

Anton von Webern (1883–1945) took Schoenberg's Chamber Symphony as his model, perceiving the work as inspiration for further musical experiments. Between 1909 and 1913, Webern wrote a number of radical, small orchestral pieces, the compositional density of which gives them an Expressionist character. Schoenberg's pupil Alban Berg also experimented with this aphoristic style when setting to music Peter Altenberg's terse postcard texts. Berg, too, was scorned for these works, his musical ability being seriously called in question, and, for some time, his confidence was shaken.

Schoenberg stepped up his efforts to introduce method and musical laws into his composing. Almost simultaneously with Joseph Matthias Hauer (1883–1959) he developed a "method of composition with 12 tones related only to one another". The two composers and music theorists knew of each other's work and examined each other's standpoints. The difference between them was that Schoenberg was primarily interested in music, whereas Hauer's concern was to create a world view. Berg found it hard to make

Schoenberg's concept his own, whereas Webern went beyond Schoenberg and brought twelve-tone music, which was also defined as "democracy in the parliament of tones", to its perfect form.

Around 1910, the formulation of new principles of structure and design in both music and painting seems to have been in the air. Schoenberg dissolved customary tonality and established new rules in his "Theory of Harmony" which was published in 1911. In the same year, Kandinsky published his treatise "Concerning the Spiritual in Art", in which he laid the groundwork for the road to abstract art and with which he sparked off renewed discussion.



*Richard Gerstl,
Arnold Schoenberg*