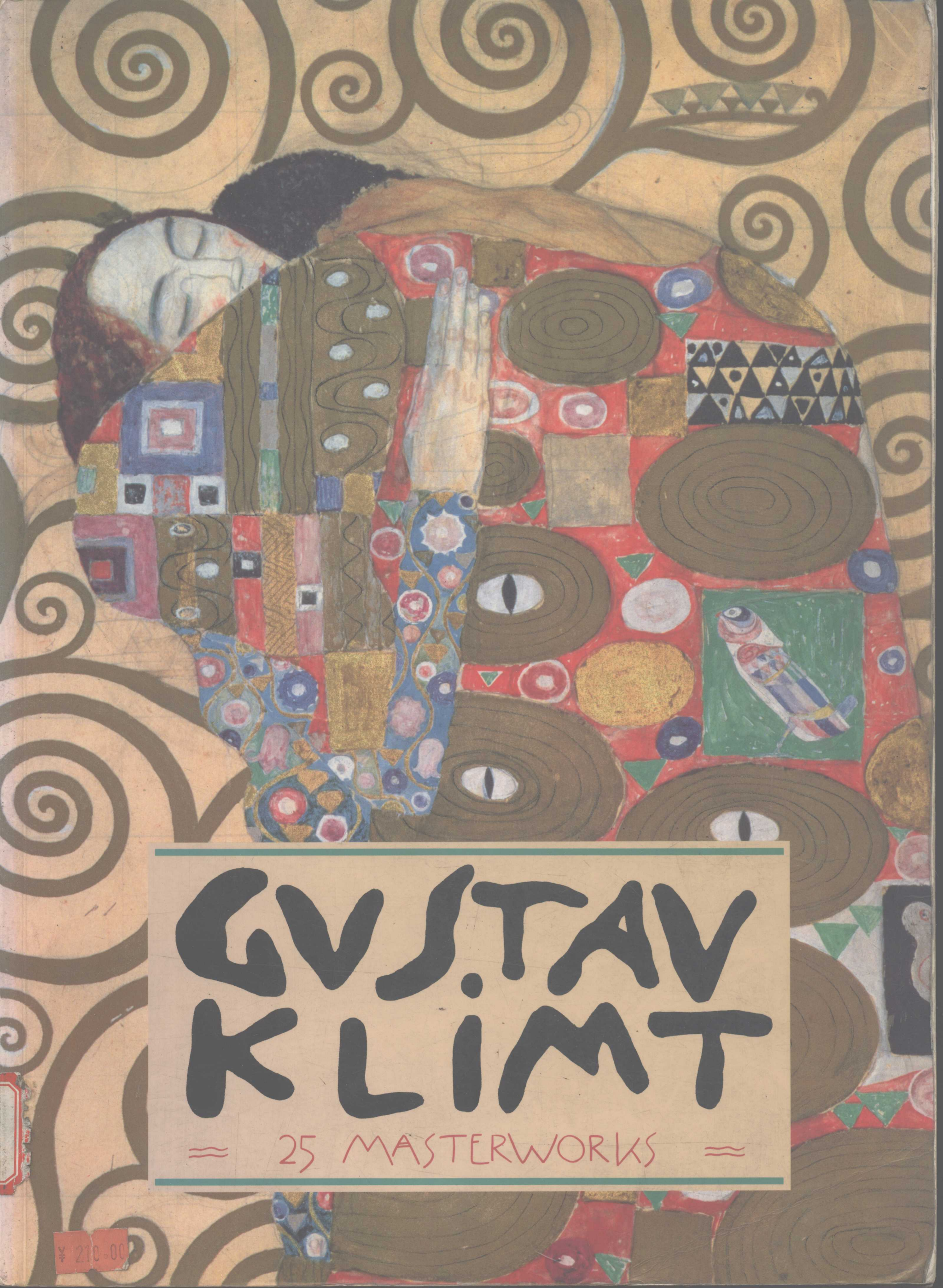

GUSTAV KLIMT

≈ 25 MASTERWORKS ≈

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Fig. 1. Gustav Klimt in the garden of his Josefstädterstrasse studio, c. 1912–14

GUSTAV KLIMT

25 MASTERWORKS

JANE KALLIR

HARRY N. ABRAMS, INC., PUBLISHERS

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The following publications have served as the principal sources for the information and quotations contained herein:

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Alice Strobl. *Gustav Klimt: Die Zeichnungen.* (3 vols.) Salzburg: Verlag der Galerie Welz, 1980, 1982, 1984

All illustrations have been referenced in accordance with their listings in the catalogue raisonné by Fritz Novotny and Johannes Dobai (see above). The designation "destroyed" refers to a group of paintings, stored at the Schloss Immendorf, burned by retreating German troops during the closing days of World War II.

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INTRODUCTION

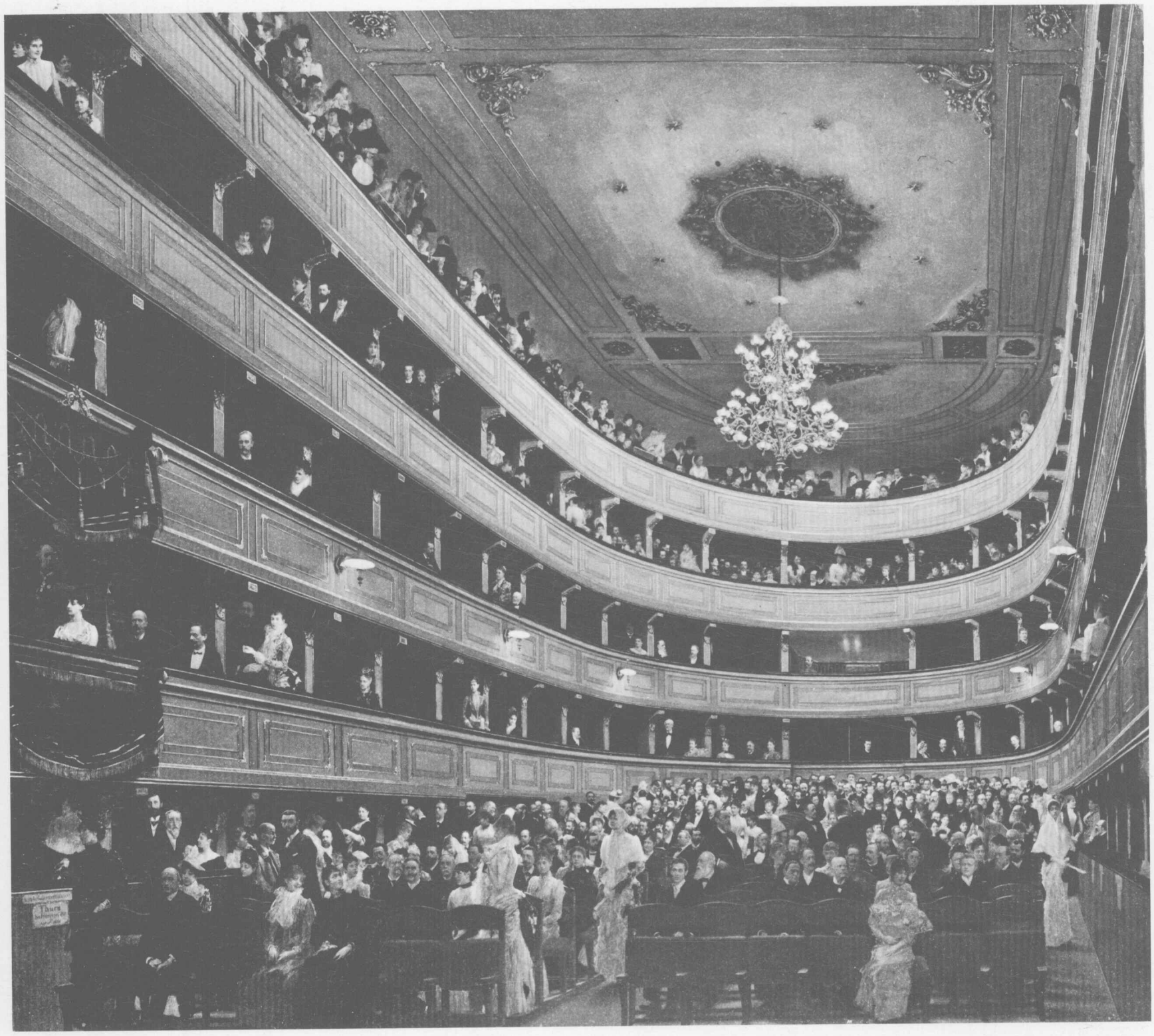

Fig. 2. *Auditorium of the Old Burgtheater, Vienna*. 1888–89. Gouache on paper, 32 1/4 × 36 1/4" (82 × 92 cm.). Historisches Museum der Stadt Wien (N/D 44)

Gustav Klimt was born in 1862 in Baumgarten, then a suburb of Vienna and today part of the city's 14th District. Despite the rural visions conjured by the term "suburb," Baumgarten was less a bucolic enclave than a way station for the poor, and Klimt's early years were spent in dark, odoriferous *Mietskasernen* (rental barracks), the tenements typical of the era. His father had come to Vienna from his native Bohemia (a noted crafts center) to seek his fortune, but instead managed to eke out a meager existence as a gold engraver. The economic crisis of 1873, brought on by a Viennese stock market crash, sent the family into a financial tailspin from which it never fully recovered. The death of Gustav's five-year-old sister Anna the following year caused his mother, a high-strung woman who had dreamed of a stage career, to have a nervous breakdown. Klara, his elder sister, was also depressive, and Klimt (who never married) was to spend his entire life in the company of these slightly neurotic women: his mother and two unwed sisters, Klara and Hermine. A fourth sister, Johanna, married a bookkeeper, Julius Zimpel; their son, Julius Jr., was a talented craftsman and, for a brief period before his premature death in 1925, co-director of the Wiener Werkstätte (Vienna Workshop).

Given the Klimt family's financial straits, all hopes were pinned on the success of Gustav and his two younger brothers, Ernst and Georg. After eight years of primary school (*Bürgerschule*), Gustav received a scholarship to the Kunstgewerbeschule (School of Applied Arts), which had been founded in 1867 on the model of England's South Kensington School and Museum (forerunner of today's Victoria and Albert Museum) in order to improve the status and international stature of Austrian crafts. The Kunstgewerbeschule was essentially a trade school, and Gustav's logical options were either to enter industry or to teach. However, during this period Vienna was experiencing a phenomenal building boom centered on the broad circular boulevard, the Ringstrasse, that had recently replaced the ancient ramparts surrounding the inner city. The Ringstrasse boom had created a wonderful market for painters, who were lured by the dozens to decorate the new public structures and private palaces, conceived in pseudo-historical styles (Gothic for the city hall, Neoclassical for the parliament) that lent an air of pompous artificiality to the entire era. At one end of the professional spectrum was Hans Makart, who got the choicest commissions and set all Vienna awhirl with his sensuous but decorous nudes and adjunct crazes such as "Makart hats" and "Makart bouquets" (arrangements of dried flowers and feathers). At or near the other end of the spectrum was Gustav Klimt's teacher Ferdinand Laufberger, whose contributions to the Ringstrasse are today all but forgotten, though at the time they kept his Kunstgewerbeschule workshop buzzing.

It did not take Laufberger long to recognize that Gustav Klimt, the most talented of his students, and his brother Ernst, who had entered the Kunstgewerbeschule in 1878, had a future as decorative muralists. They and their classmate Franz Matsch were invited to contribute to Laufberger's commissions, and by 1880 they had begun to receive assignments in their own right. The *Künstlerkompagnie* (Artists' Company) of Matsch and the two Klimt brothers was formulated along the medieval workshop principle espoused by Laufberger, and the individual hands of the contributors can scarcely be discerned in their early work. In 1883, the trio opened their own studio, and for the next few years they spent much of their time traveling around the Austrian empire painting curtains and murals for provincial theaters. Sensing that the Ringstrasse boom could not last forever, the group longed to work in the capital, and finally, in 1886, they received one of their first major commissions: the staircase decorations for Vienna's new Burgtheater. As a sideline, they were also asked to create a pictorial record of the old Burgtheater before it was torn down, an assignment that blossomed into a sort of who's who of Viennese society, rendered with photographic fidelity in Klimt's large gouache of the auditorium (fig. 2). The staircase frescoes and the gouache earned the artist his first serious accolades: he received the Gold Service Cross from the Emperor Franz Josef for the former in 1888, and the Emperor's Prize for the latter in 1890. Already, in 1887, Klimt had been hailed as Makart's logical successor, and this position seemed confirmed when, in 1890, the *Künstlerkompagnie* was given the older artist's final decorative commission, left unfinished at his death in 1884: the spandrels for the staircase of the Kunsthistorisches Museum (Art History Museum). The company's previous work, a virtual encyclopedia of historical theatrical imagery, had prepared them well for this assignment, which required detailed study of period costumes and works from the museum's collection. Klimt's taste for iconographical borrowing, honed during this formative period, was to remain with him all his life. To the Kunsthistorisches Museum spandrels he added another element that was to become a hallmark of his later style: the development of a prototypical female beauty, a very contemporary persona whose vibrant immediacy belied the historical accuracy of her costume (fig. 3). Here, for the first time, Klimt's approach was immediately distinguishable from that of his partners.

In 1892, celebrating over a decade of successful collaboration, the *Künstlerkompagnie* moved to a new studio on the Josefstädterstrasse. It was, as it turned out, one of the last moves the group would make together. That summer, Klimt's father was felled by a stroke (instilling in the artist a lifelong fear of succumbing to a similar fate), and in December his brother Ernst died of pericarditis. These events left Klimt deeply shaken and triggered an artistic withdrawal that lasted some five years. During the period between 1892 and 1897, the number of public

Fig. 3. *Art of Ancient Greece I (Athena with Nike)*. 1890–91. Oil on stucco, 90 1/2 × 90 1/2″ (230 × 230 cm.). Spandrel in the Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna (N/D 48)

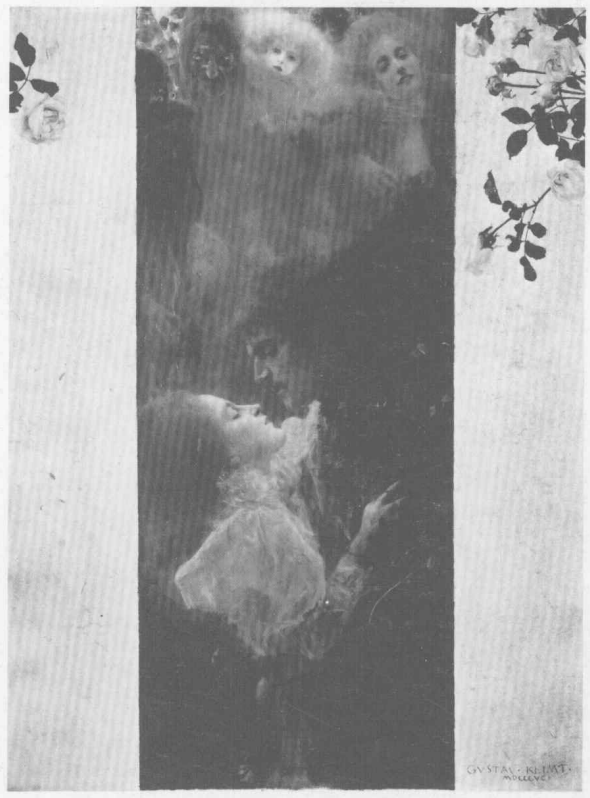

Fig. 4. *Love*. 1895. Oil on canvas, 23 5/8 × 17 3/8″ (60 × 44 cm.). Historisches Museum der Stadt Wien (N/D 68)

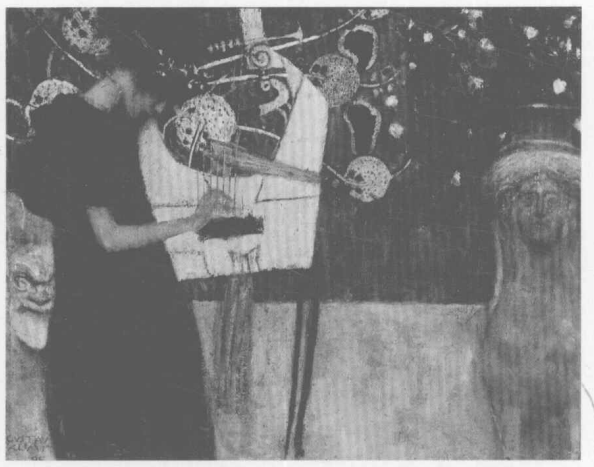

Fig. 5. *Music I.* 1895. Oil on canvas, $14^{5}/_{8} \times 17^{1}/_{2}$" (37×44.5 cm.). Neue Pinakothek, Munich (N/D 69)

Fig. 6. *Schubert at the Piano.* 1899. Oil on canvas, $59 \times 78^{3}/_{4}$" (150×200 cm.). Destroyed (N/D 101)

Fig. 7. Poster for the First Secession Exhibition. 1898

commissions undertaken by him dwindled to almost nothing, and his collaboration with Matsch effectively ceased. At one point Matsch discreetly vacated the Josefstädterstrasse premises, which Klimt would occupy by himself until 1914, when he moved to his final studio in Vienna's Hietzing district. It was Matsch alone who, in 1892, received the next significant commission to come their way: the ceiling paintings for the auditorium at the University of Vienna. However, when, in 1893, Matsch's preliminary sketches were rejected by the Ministry of Culture and Education, Klimt's participation was solicited. This last, disastrous collaboration between the one-time partners was, as it transpired, to prove a turning point in Klimt's evolving career, for by the time his three University canvases were finished, he had left Matsch's conventional world far behind. Influenced by foreign symbolists such as Jan Toorop, Ferdinand Khnopff, and Ferdinand Hodler, Klimt had developed a far more personal approach to allegory that categorically rejected the rote historicism of the Makart era (figs. 4, 5).

As Klimt's art became more idiosyncratic, more removed from the public arena of the Ringstrasse, his lifestyle itself became more remote, his thought processes unfathomable. He was not exactly a hermit: according to a set routine, he had his breakfast (including a large portion of whipped cream) every morning at the same café, where colleagues were always welcome to join him with the proviso that they refrain from talking about art. From here he went to his studio, where he worked until evening with nothing but a plate of fruit for sustenance and a bevy of models (retained regardless of whether they were needed) for companionship. Cats played freely among the drawings that littered the floor, sometimes multiplying to the point where friends surreptitiously removed a few in order to reduce the population. At night, Klimt frequented artists' taverns or went home to supper with his mother and sisters, eating in silence and then going directly to bed. He was not a man of many words, either spoken or written. He did not like to answer letters, and when the accumulated correspondence had reached a certain mass, it (like the cats) was simply removed. Despite his multitudinous social and professional contacts, only the sketchiest accounts of his personality have been preserved. Bearlike in both strength and appearance, the rotund, bearded artist was, according to one acquaintance, thoroughly "animalistic": he even smelled like an animal. Tanned like a sailor, according to another, he was an enthusiastic athlete, whose interests included wrestling, bowling, and rowing; he took long walks almost daily. His closest companion was Emilie Flöge (plate 5), with whom he spent almost every summer on the Attersee, yet even today it is not known whether they were merely good friends or, as has often been maintained, lovers. As to Klimt's other relationships with women—the society beauties who posed for him, and the poor unfortunates who bore his illegitimate children (some fourteen of whom made claims on his estate)—all that survives is a scattering of facts and a huge amount of innuendo. Klimt once advised those who wanted to know about him to look at his art, and indeed the obsessive love of privacy with which he shrouded his life has left us little choice.

An unlikely rebel, the good-natured Klimt nonetheless grew increasingly alienated from the conventional forces that dominated Viennese art circles. In this he was not alone, for many of the younger artists felt that the Künstlerhaus (Artists' House)—the sole local outlet for the promotion of contemporary art—was unfairly biased in favor of its older, more established members and too set in its ways to maintain adequate contact with foreign developments. After a few discouraging attempts at reform, the progressive minority, led by Klimt, decided to secede from the Künstlerhaus. The Secession's founding, in 1897, could hardly have come at a more propitious moment. The boom period that had brought the Ringstrasse to completion and Makart to glory had also created a new class of self-made millionaires, would-be aristocrats who, lacking the imprimatur of hereditary nobility, sought to buy into culture through a wholehearted support of the arts. Within a few months of its founding, the Secession had attracted a sizable financial contribution from the industrialist Karl Wittgenstein (whose daughter would later be painted by Klimt, plate 8) and persuaded the City of Vienna to donate land for a new building. By the end of 1898, the building was complete, and with its successful

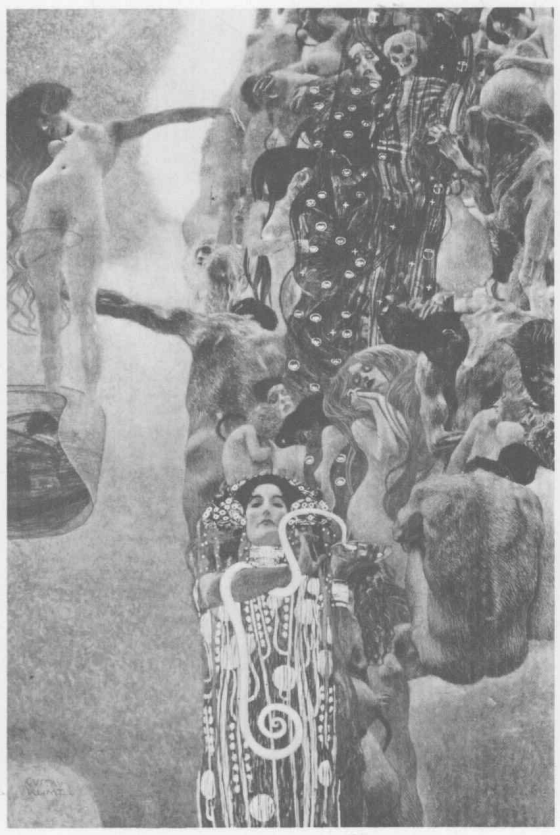

Fig. 8. *Philosophy*. 1899–1907. Oil on canvas, 169 1/4 × 118 1/8″ (430 × 300 cm.). Destroyed (N/D 105)

Fig. 9. *Medicine*. 1900–1907. Oil on canvas, 169 1/4 × 118 1/8″ (430 × 300 cm.). Destroyed (N/D 112)

Fig. 10. *Jurisprudence*. 1903–1907. Oil on canvas, 169 1/4 × 118 1/8″ (430 × 300 cm.). Destroyed (N/D 128)

second exhibition (the first had taken place the previous spring in rented quarters), the Secession was almost instantly established as a force to be reckoned with.

The Secessionists, united in their opposition to the status quo, formulated a far-reaching program of exhibitions and publications designed to shake the Viennese out of their complacency. Early Secession images were intended to be provocative, and they did not fail. Klimt's poster for the opening exhibition in 1898, boldly depicting a young Theseus in symbolic battle with a retrograde Minotaur (fig. 7), was censored for its exposed genitalia, while his painting of *Pallas Athena* (plate 2) raised a small tempest of controversy. However, these episodes were relatively innocuous compared to the scandal that greeted his first painting for the University of Vienna, *Philosophy* (fig. 8), when it was exhibited at the Secession in 1900. In order to understand the campaign that was subsequently waged against Klimt, it is necessary to momentarily resurrect the body of knowledge—entailing classical Greek and Latin—and its attendant imagery, comprising generally understood mythological, historical, and biblical themes, that served as common ground for allegorical painting in the nineteenth century. Today's public, having largely jettisoned such arcane studies, has a far more fluid approach to metaphor than did Klimt's peers, to whom the idea of presenting *Philosophy* in a universalized, non-historical setting was anathema. It is significant that some of the most vocal critics of *Philosophy* and the second University painting, *Medicine* (first exhibited in 1901)—professors who after all knew better than anyone what these disciplines were all about—repeatedly complained that the paintings had nothing to do with their purported themes. These learned gentlemen simply could not recognize a subject not cloaked in the conventional iconography, despite the fact that each of the paintings addressed its particular topic quite directly. For this reason, ironically, few grasped the one aspect of the paintings that was truly shocking: for if there was a secret message hidden in Klimt's tangle of bodies—the newborn infants, embracing lovers, despairing elderly, the ill and dying, the dead—it is that man is born to suffer and die, and human attempts to intervene—philosophy and medicine—are of no avail. Even less conciliatory is the last University canvas, *Jurisprudence* (fig. 10), painted when Klimt was already bombarded with assaults on the first two pictures and exhibited for the first time in 1903. Departing from the compositional structure of the two prior paintings, *Jurisprudence* has at its center an emaciated, pain-wracked male nude—the criminal—ensnared in the tentacles of an octopuslike creature that might better be named "Injustice." Even if one prefers to interpret the octopus as the criminal's guilty conscience, as did the contemporary critic Ludwig Hevesi, it is

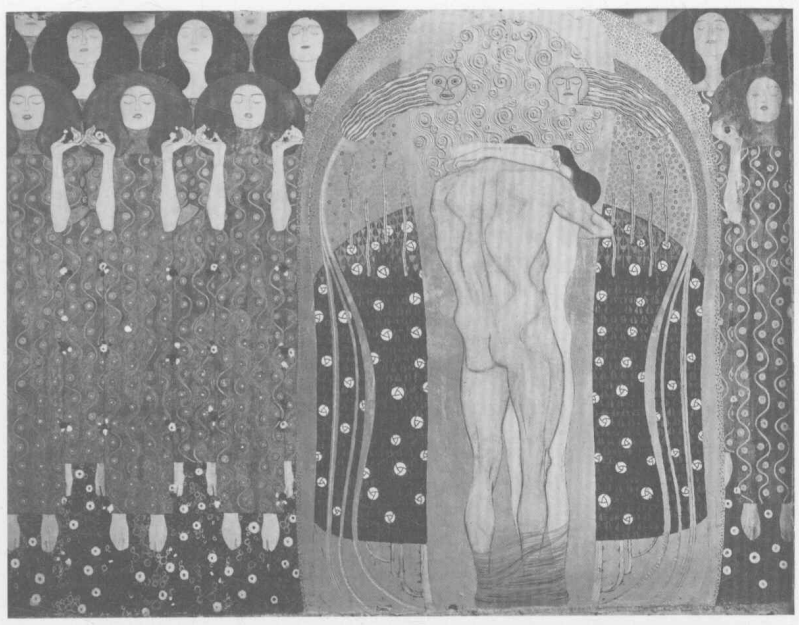

Fig. 11. The Beethoven Frieze: *The Hostile Forces*. 1901–1902. Casein on stucco, height 86⅝″ (220 cm.). The Secession, Vienna (N/D 127)

Fig. 12. The Beethoven Frieze: *The Chorus of Angels/A Kiss for the Entire World*. 1901–1902. Casein on stucco, height 86⅝″ (220 cm.). The Secession, Vienna (N/D 127)

Fig. 13. Cartoon for the Stoclet Frieze: *Expectation*. c. 1908–1910. Mixed media on paper, 76×45¼″ (193×115 cm.). Österreichisches Museum für angewandte Kunst, Vienna (N/D 152-B)

Fig. 14. The Stoclet Dining Room. c. 1910–11. Mosaic. Palais Stoclet, Brussels (N/D 153)

clear that the rule of law—represented by three very tiny figures in the distant background—is here as nothing compared to the barbaric forces that determine man's fate.

The controversy surrounding the University paintings—which haunted Klimt for five years, flaring up whenever he exhibited one of the three works—effectively terminated his career as a public muralist. Nonetheless, the desire to combine art and architecture lived on in the concept of the *Gesamtkunstwerk* (total artwork), which, as formulated by the Secessionists, represented the highest level of artistic brotherhood and collaboration, a fine-tuned merging of talents in pursuit of a whole greater than the sum of the parts. This idealistic aim was most successfully realized in the Secession's 1902 Beethoven Exhibition, a tribute to the composer that united Max Klinger's well-known statue, Klimt's specially commissioned Beethoven Frieze (figs. 11, 12), and paintings by lesser Secessionists in a customized setting by the architect Josef Hoffmann. The Beethoven Exhibition was widely acknowledged as an aesthetic triumph, but over the long haul the *Gesamtkunstwerk* proved better suited to the rather more mundane world of interior decoration. Seeking to bring their ideas of enlightened environmental design into the homes of the Secession's well-to-do patrons, Hoffmann and the artist Koloman Moser in 1903 founded a separate organization, the Wiener Werkstätte. The conventional easel painters within the Secession resented this development, for they felt that the Wiener Werkstätte gave an unfair financial advantage to Klimt and the other artists associated with it. A

succession of minor incidents brought to a head the conflict between the two divergent factions, and in 1905 the *Klimtgruppe* quit the Secession, more or less abandoning their ambitious exhibition program together with the building that had made it possible. That same year, Klimt finally renounced the University commission and, with the help of the collector August Lederer (see plate 21), bought back his three canvases from the Ministry of Culture and Education. In one fell swoop he was forced to relinquish both the old world of official patronage and the new world of artistic brotherhood that had replaced it. It was perhaps the saddest aspect of his life that, to the end of his days, he retained an abiding faith in both.

With the Secession split, Klimt's retreat into the private sphere—to some extent ordained already when he broke with Matsch—was complete. He had long ago acquired a coterie of affluent patrons who assured his economic well-being. By the standard of his forebears, Klimt was rich; his average fee for a portrait was 20,000–30,000 kronen, roughly ten times the annual income of a working-class family. His mother and sisters, whom he supported, had no need to fall back on the earnings of brother Georg, a goldsmith like his father. Success brought Klimt into contact with surroundings very different from those of his boyhood. Alma Mahler (widow of the composer and a legendary *femme fatale*) recalled that he was something of a stranger to elegant drawing-room society. His *Bildung* (education) could not compare with that of the upper classes, and though he made a show of erudition, supposedly quoting Petrarch and Dante while he painted, his use of heavy Viennese dialect marked him as the tradesman's son he was. It may be that his habitual shyness, and the resultant paucity of personal information about him, were really the result of a singular loneliness. The leader of an entire generation of artists, Klimt was truly at home only in his studio. It was here that, in his last years, he found the solace denied him by the outer world.

When, some three years after leaving the Secession, the *Klimtgruppe* finally mustered the forces for a comprehensive exhibition—titled simply *Kunstschau* (art show)—the effect was less that of a joyful reunion than of a post-mortem. Though Klimt was undeniably the star of the show, with sixteen of his latest works displayed in a special room, it was the Expressionist Oskar Kokoschka, exhibiting here for the first time, who represented the wave of the future. Kokoschka and the slightly younger Egon Schiele (who debuted at a second *Kunstschau* in 1909) quickly moved away from the ornamental excesses of Klimt's style, stripping off the decorative fill that had become the elder artist's trademark to expose the void that had always been implicit in his *horror vacui* (figs. 15, 16). Klimt, for his part, stepped back from a direct confrontation with the void, relinquishing the philosophical thrust of the University paintings in favor of the surface glitter epitomized by his 1908 icon, *The Kiss* (plate 13). Torn between content and form, he embraced the latter, only to find that it led him nowhere. Klimt was not able to make the great leap: to perceive form *as* content and thereby progress toward true abstraction. He was thus ultimately unable to solve the riddle of *fin-de-siècle* art, for the alternative path—content as form—would be explored not by him, but by the Expressionists. The great paradox of Klimt's career was that, while he failed to effectively link up with later modernism, he nonetheless anticipated its two principal trends: abstraction and Expressionism. That he could not, in the end, categorically choose one over the other is as much a strength as a weakness, for the resultant dualism charges his entire oeuvre with a rare and powerful tension.

On January 11, 1918, Klimt suffered the fate that, ever since his father's death in 1892, he had always feared. The stroke left him partially paralyzed but able to speak, and he seemed to be making a good recovery when, in early February, he was transferred to a special clinic to receive a waterbed treatment for his bedsores. As a result, he developed pneumonia, from which he died on February 6. All Vienna mourned the loss of a man whom, despite past misunderstandings, it now rightfully recognized as its greatest painter. The most succinct epitaph was written by Egon Schiele, the leader of the next generation:

> An artist of unbelievable perfection
> A person of rare depth
> His work a shrine

Fig. 15. *Portrait of Friederike Maria Beer.* 1916. Oil on canvas, 66 1/8 × 51 1/8″ (168 × 130 cm.). Private collection (N/D 196)

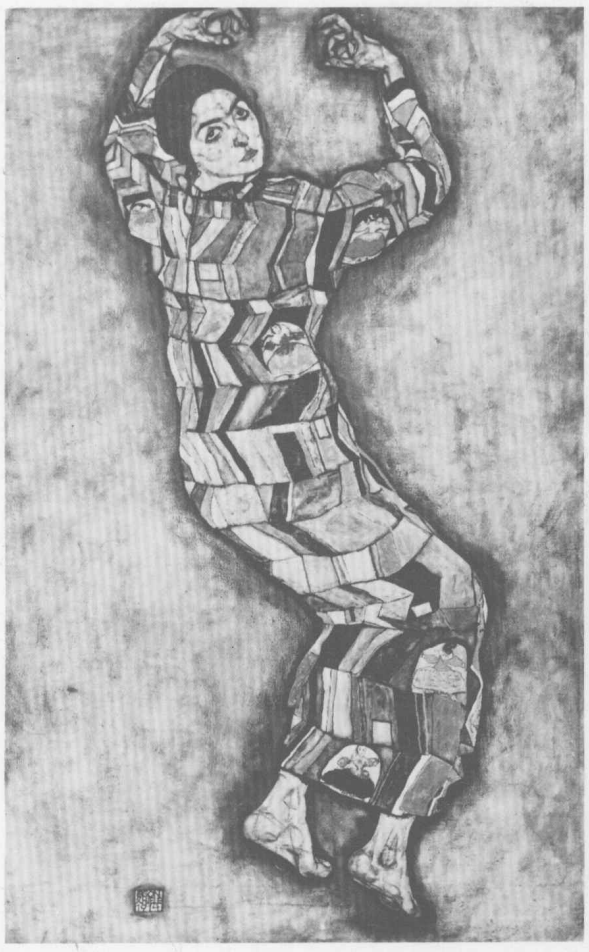

Fig. 16. Egon Schiele. *Portrait of Friederike Maria Beer.* 1914. Oil on canvas, 74 3/4 × 47 3/8″ (190 × 120.5 cm.). Private collection (Kallir 192)

PLATE I

PORTRAIT OF SONJA KNIPS

1898

Oil on canvas, 57 1/8 × 57 1/8" (145 × 145 cm.)

Österreichische Galerie, Vienna

(N/D 91)

The *Portrait of Sonja Knips* was in many senses a breakthrough painting for Gustav Klimt. The period preceding it—some five years of relative inactivity—had been one of consolidation and growth, as the artist slowly weaned himself from his academic background and struggled toward his own revolutionary style. The portrait marked a firm break with the glamorous—but implicitly decadent—world of the theater, in which he had made his early name, and his first significant entry into the social stratum that fostered the rise of the Secession and later the Wiener Werkstätte. As a privately commissioned work, the painting also heralded Klimt's progressive withdrawal from the public arena of his previous activity as a muralist. It was the first in the long series of portraits depicting society ladies that was to become the mainstay of the artist's later reputation and economic well-being. Whereas formerly his work had been more or less evenly divided between male and female subjects, he was hereafter to paint women almost exclusively.

In other ways, too, the Knips portrait presaged Klimt's future development. Though the painting is not yet as fanciful or stylized as the work from the subsequent "gold" period, the musty pastels and soft, milky textures constitute a clear departure from the conventional realism of his earlier years. The influence of the American painter James McNeil Whistler is unmistakable and was remarked upon as early as 1903, though it is thought that Klimt could only have known his work from reproductions at the time. The triangular semi-profile pose and square format were to appear as recurrent compositional devices in Klimt's later portraits. A subtle competition between the subject and her inanimate surroundings—the suffocatingly high-collared dress, the striking floral arrangement—is also indicative of the sort of pictorial tension that Klimt would exploit to great effect in his mature work.

PLATE 2

PALLAS ATHENA

1898

Oil on canvas, 29 1/2 × 29 1/2" (75 × 75 cm.)

Historisches Museum der Stadt Wien

(N/D 93)

Like the *Portrait of Sonja Knips* (plate 1), *Pallas Athena* was included in the inaugural exhibition of the Secession's building at the end of 1898, but unlike the serene portrait, which contemporary critics dubbed "the lady in pink," it became an immediate center of controversy. This controversy, foreshadowing the far greater scandal that would greet the showing of *Philosophy* (fig. 8) two years later, focused on the artist's untraditional treatment of a traditional subject, the Greek goddess of wisdom. Klimt had proved himself capable of painting a perfectly acceptable Athena some eight years earlier, when covering the spandrels of the Kunsthistorisches Museum (fig. 3), but this latest incarnation of the subject was another matter entirely. Possibly his experiences as a muralist had first prompted him to question the "reality" of conventional representational art, for in decorative commissions the concrete—yet abstract—architectural setting tends to undermine the three-dimensional illusion of the artist's painted world. It was not just family loyalty, nor his own background as the son of a goldsmith, that prompted Klimt to have his brother Georg design a special gilded frame for the 1898 *Pallas Athena,* or to echo the frame by allowing real gold to leach into the painting itself. These devices enabled him to duplicate, in miniature, the contradictions inherent in a large-scale architectural commission, giving the resultant canvas a tectonic immediacy that brought it directly into the world of the viewer.

Klimt's formal innovations generally had direct bearing on the content of his work, and the confrontational aspect of his Athena underscored a message that, if properly understood, could not help but rankle. This Athena was not just a wise woman, she was a dangerous woman. (Are not all wise women dangerous? a contemporary misogynist might have asked.) She was no longer the benign protector of the Secession seen in Klimt's poster for that organization's first exhibition (fig. 7), but an avenging warrior whose frontal stance (unlike the profile view presented in the poster) offered a direct challenge to the uncomprehending public. Like the slightly later *Nuda Veritas* (Naked Truth, fig. 17)—whose very image she holds in her hand—Athena promised exposure of cherished illusions and confrontation with unpleasant realities.

Fig. 17. *Nuda Veritas (Naked Truth).* 1899. Oil on canvas, 99 1/4 × 22" (252 × 56.2 cm.). Theatersammlung der Nationalbibliothek, Vienna (N/D 102)


PALAS ATHENE
GVSTAV
KLIMT
1898

PLATE 3

JUDITH I

1901

Oil on canvas, 33 1/8 × 16 1/2" (84 × 42 cm.)

Österreichische Galerie, Vienna

(N/D 113)

Formalistically, *Judith I* recapitulated many of the same principles already manifested in the *Pallas Athena* of 1898 (plate 2). Again, a decorative frame, designed jointly with brother Georg, tested the boundaries between illusion and reality, but Klimt went even further in allowing two-dimensional decorative elements to intrude into the body of the painting. He began to refine a vocabulary of abstract shapes—floral medallions, golden eggs and scales, undulating zigzag loops—that would, in years to come, feature ever more prominently in his work. Surprisingly, for all its radical elements, *Judith* was received far more favorably than *Pallas Athena* when, in 1901, it was shown at the Secession's tenth exhibition. By this time, of course, the scandal surrounding *Athena* had been dimmed by the horrors of the University paintings, and *Judith* was certainly tame by comparison with *Philosophy* (fig. 8) or *Medicine* (fig. 9), which premiered in the same 1901 show. Yet as one contemporary critic noted, the general acceptance of *Judith* was as illogical as the rejection of the University paintings or, several years earlier, of *Athena*. For was not Judith a woman as dangerous as Athena, if not more so? Did she not, despite her deceptively alluring dream trance, wield the severed head of Holofernes as proof of her deadly capabilities?

Iconographically, *Judith I* marks an important way station in Klimt's development of the *femme fatale*, a recurrent motif throughout his career. Unlike Athena, who seems to merge with her abstract surroundings, Judith remains very much a flesh-and-blood presence. She was, indeed, a creature of Klimt's time, as was not lost on his contemporaries. "She is one of those beautiful Jewish socialites whom one meets everywhere and who, sweeping along in their silk gowns, attract men's eyes at all the premières," noted the writer Felix Salten. "One often encounters such slender, glittering Jewish women and longs to see these decorative, flirtatious and playful creatures suddenly hurled toward a torrid destiny, to detonate the explosive power that flashes in their eyes." Klimt's artistic realization of the prevalent fantasy of sex with a dark and dangerous Jewess eloquently expressed the comingled strains of misogyny and anti-Semitism that characterized *fin-de-siècle* thought. Unlike Athena, Judith did not challenge Viennese preconceptions, but rather catered to them. The subject's sensuous abandon—suggestive of post-coital torpor—explicitly eroticizes her murderous act, playing on the then-common male fear of female sexuality. To complete the picture, one need only add that the literature of the day seriously maintained that sex was a female vice which, left unchecked, would rob man of his intellectual capabilities—which would, as Judith had, sever brain from body.