



Music (study), 1895
 Oil on canvas, 37 x 44.5 cm /
 14 1/2 x 17 1/2 in.
 Munich, Bayerische
 Staatsgemäldesammlungen –
 Neue Pinakothek

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 Fritz Waerndorfer
**Joseph Maria Olbrich (l.), Franz
 Hohenberger, Koloman Moser
 and Gustav Klimt (r.)**, 1899
 In the garden of Fritz Waerndorfer's
 villa at 59 Weimarer Strasse in
 Vienna's 18th district
 Photograph. Imagno/ÖNB

II.
'Sacred spring'
and the dawn
of a new era:
the Vienna Secession

Christoph Grunenberg

*"The Secession -
the birth of a new era"*
KOLOMAN MOSER, 1911/12



to colour harmony. The environment is thus kept as still and discreet as possible" (Zuckerkindl 1903/04b, pp. 341, 344).

The restrained classicism of these installations created a supportive decorative background without competing with the works of art, anchoring the paintings in space while powerfully enhancing the *Flächendekor* (two-dimensional décor) of *The Kiss*, 1907/08, and recent portraits, including *The Portrait of Adele Bloch-Bauer I*, 1907. The opulence of Klimt's art of the period found sympathetic enhancement in the controlled architectonic order set against the "decorative-ornamental sensuality" and the "protean element, the ornamental principle in itself" of his linear ornament (Hevesi 1906a, p. 450f.).

The Kunstschau did not receive the same attention as earlier exhibitions, its decline in popular appeal being in direct relation to the broad acceptance of that of the achievements of the Secession and the Wiener Werkstätte. The *Gesamtkunstwerk* might not have failed, but it now found its most successful manifestation in sophisticated decorative schemes and interior designs rather than in ambitious artistic visions. In this respect, the exhibition contained the germ, as Carl Schorske argued, for "an explosive reassertion of painting as the medium of instinctual truth", which emerged between the first and second Kunstschau in the following year and coincided with the emergence of the Expressionists Oskar Kokoschka and Egon Schiele (Schorske 1975, p. 41). The Secession had forcefully broken with the past and rung in a new age for art. The next generation followed in their footsteps but, at the same time, felt compelled to replace aesthetic refinement and the penetration of life by exquisite beauty with a more forceful and raw form of creative expression.

Beyond ornament

The birth and triumph of the Secession coincided with the evolution of the artist Gustav Klimt, who was both progenitor and midwife to the most significant period in Austrian art of the 20th century. As a member of a community of kindred spirits and propelled by the exhilaration that came with the artistic insurgence against the old and outdated, he liberated himself from the chains of historicism and a naturalistic style. In the final years of the 19th and first decade of the 20th century, Klimt achieved a unique blend of dark symbolism, human allegory, expressive realism and Jugendstil ornamentation, which resulted in a substantial body of highly moving and intensely ornate paintings, at the centre of which stood the female figure.

The Kiss (detail), 1907/08
(see ill. pp. 142/43)

