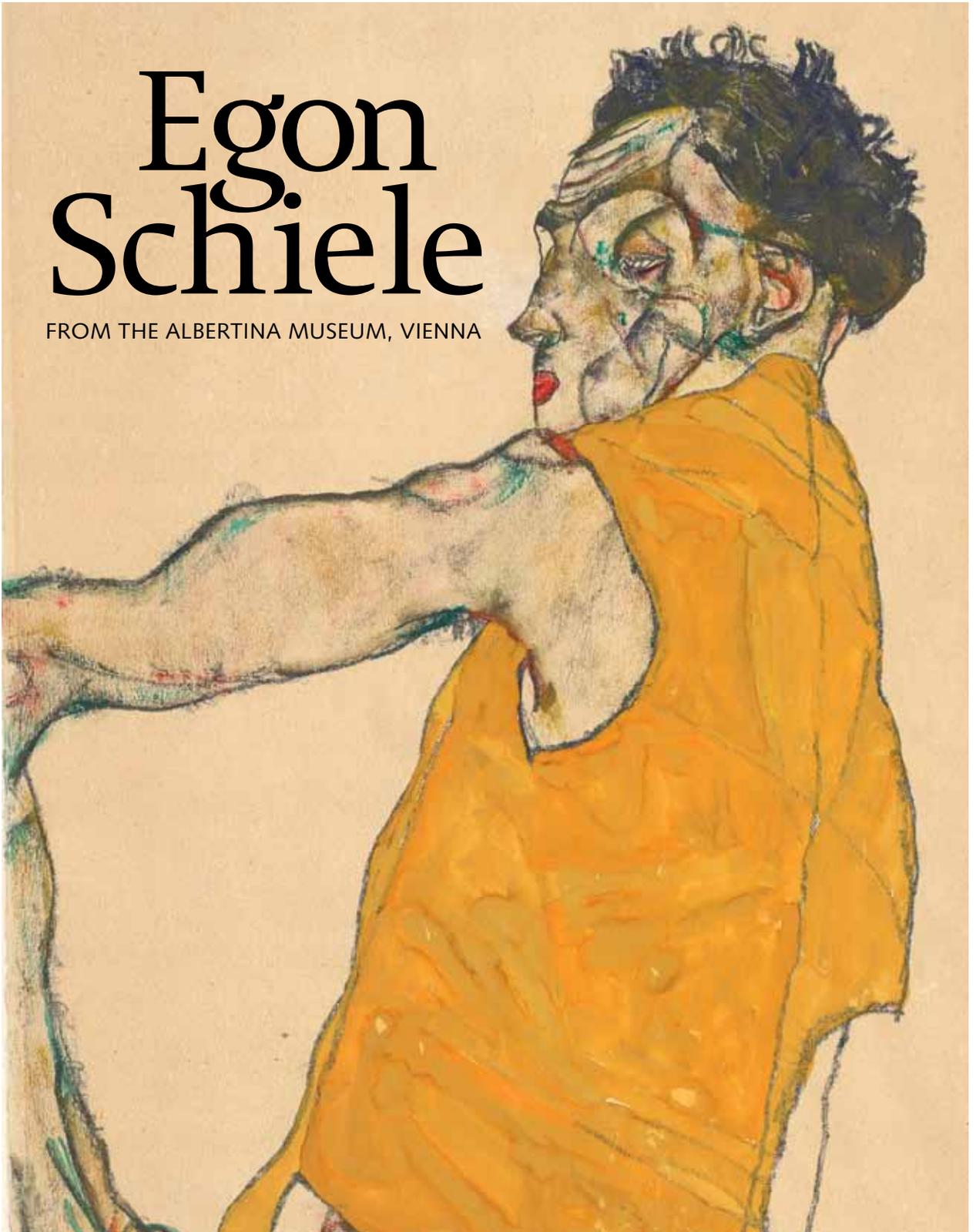


# The Guggenheim Museum Bilbao

presents on October 2, 2012

## Egon Schiele

FROM THE ALBERTINA MUSEUM, VIENNA



15 GUGGENHEIM  
BILBAO 1997-2012

## *Egon Schiele from the Albertina Museum, Vienna*

- Opening and closing dates: October 2, 2012–January 6, 2013
- Curator: Klaus Albrecht Schröder
- Galleries: 305, 306, 307

*Egon Schiele* is a sweeping vision of the creative universe of one of the 20th century's most important artists through approximately one hundred drawings, gouaches, watercolors, and photographs on loan from the Albertina Museum, Vienna. This institution boasts one of the world's largest collections of historical graphic work, including the most important compilation of works on paper by this great Austrian Expressionist.

This show offers a unique perspective on Schiele's stylistic evolution over the course of an intensely prolific decade, cut short by his untimely death at the age of 28, which underscores the decisive role that this artist's graphic work played in shaping the history of art and consolidating his own international reputation.

Covering every stage of his career—the early pieces produced while studying at the Academy of Fine Arts, Vienna, works heavily influenced by Gustav Klimt and Viennese Modernism, and the output of his final years in which he made a break with naturalism, characterized by a radical use of color and new, unsettling motifs such as explicitly erotic nudes or portraits of children—*Egon Schiele* is a singular, fascinating review of the oeuvre of an artist who revolutionized art history.

In his tragically short life and barely ten years of independent artistic activity (1908–1918), Egon Schiele produced a surprisingly rich artistic legacy comprising over 2,500 works on paper and more than 330 paintings on panel or canvas, not to mention his sketchbooks. Unlike Gustav Klimt (1862–1918), whose drawings served as rough drafts or sketches for his paintings, Egon Schiele treated his works on paper as independent works of art. Indeed, his works on paper show greater freedom and expressiveness than his pictorial output.

Egon Schiele developed a highly personal, characteristic technique thanks to his decorative use of flat surfaces and the flowing ornamental lines of the Viennese Secession style. The expressionistic body language, gestures and mimicry seen in his work was inspired by medical photographs which documented women suffering from hysteria, patients of Dr. Jean-Martin Charcot's Parisian clinic at the Salpêtrière, and by the erotic photography produced in Otto Schmidt's studio. In his creations, Schiele returned the female nude and other themes such as the ailing body or the pathological disintegration of personality to a new and different limelight on the stage of art. Schiele's work was also influenced by theosophy and Spiritism as well as ghost photographs, which he viewed as evidence of our own mortality. For example, many of his figures are surrounded by white halos or auras, the "light that comes out of all bodies".

## The early days and the embrace of Viennese

Despite his family's increasingly acute financial troubles and his poor grades, Egon Schiele was admitted to the famous Fine Arts Academy of Vienna, the most prestigious art school in the kingdom, when he was only sixteen years old.

In the late 19th century Vienna was an elegant and aristocratic city, an economic powerhouse bursting with vitality, and in the years leading up to World War I it experienced an unprecedented cultural boom. Sigmund Freud, Gustav Mahler, Ludwig Wittgenstein and Gustav Klimt were just some of the many world-renowned figures who walked the streets of Vienna in those days.

Full of curiosity and fascination, the young Egon Schiele watched this cultural effervescence with intense interest. He received a solid education at the academy, where he learned how to accurately draw the human figure and other skills. However, he grew increasingly disenchanted with the school's conservative philosophy and the outdated historicist style of the "Ringstraße era".

Although most of the young Schiele's early works were landscapes, he soon showed an interest in self-portraiture, an unusual genre at the time. Even at this tender age, some of the pieces from these early years included in the exhibition, such as *Self-portrait* (1906) and *Self-Portrait with Headband* (1909), reveal that the artist was already starting to move away from the teachings of academicism and embracing the modern concepts inspired by the Secession, Vienna's answer to international modernism spearheaded by Gustav Klimt, such as the use of flowing ornamental lines. Klimt's influence is patent in four delicate sketches for postcards that were never printed and are displayed as a group. In one of them, *Two Men with Halos* (ca. 1909), Schiele portrays himself dressed in black.

An eloquent example of his rejection of academicism is found in one of his first and loveliest nudes from this early period: *Reclining Female Nude* (1908), in which a female figure resting in a semi-prostrate pose gives the entire work an irresistibly fluid cadence.

A series of portraits produced in 1909-10, including *Portrait of the Painter Anton Faistauer* (1909) and the magnificent watercolor *The Cellist* (1910), show that the artist had already developed a unique, unmistakable style. Although certain characteristic Art Nouveau elements are still present, these works provide a glimpse of what would later become his signature expressionistic body language; on the one hand, Egon Schiele defined the figure, and on the other he caused the object to omit it by adopting unusual perspectives, striking a perfect balance between realist imitation and the purest abstraction.

## First tastes of success and prison

The year 1910 marked the beginning of an intensely prolific and creative period in which he produced a series of portraits of children characterized by their raw, natural realism—some of the most poignant pieces in his entire oeuvre—such as *Three Street Urchins* (1910), *Black-haired Nude Girl* (1910) and *Seated Nude Girl* (1910). The Austrian artist freed the erotic representation of the nude from the constraints of caricature or pornographic photography, eliminating the historical antagonism between the beautiful and the ugly and returning this genre to a new and different limelight on the stage of art.

In 1911 Egon Schiele and his young companion and model, Walburga “Wally” Neuzil (1894-1917), moved to his mother’s hometown of Krumau, the modern-day Český Krumlov, a small medieval town in southern Bohemia full of picturesque nooks, where they hoped to lead a calmer, more peaceful life than in Vienna.

Although today Krumau owes much of its fame to the urban landscapes that Schiele painted there, the artist’s common-law living arrangements and his frequent use of children and adolescents as models flew in the face of the conservative townspeople’s values, and he was eventually forced to leave. Egon and “Wally” would later move back to the countryside, this time to the town of Neulengbach located 35 km west of the capital.

Schiele was gradually making a name for himself in artistic circles, and in 1912 he participated in exhibitions in Vienna, Budapest and Munich. However, in April of that year his life took a dramatic turn when he was arrested and taken to the Neulengbach jail for kidnapping a minor, the daughter of a naval officer. Even though the accusation turned out to be groundless, the artist was accused of “exhibiting erotic nudes” because the children who visited him saw the sketches of nudes sitting around his studio; eventually he was sentenced to 24 days in prison. One of his drawings was even burned in a symbolic act.

While serving his sentence (April 19-27 of that year), Schiele sketched a series of watercolors that reflected the panic he felt, some of which—*I Feel Not Punished but Cleansed!* (*Nicht gestraft, sondern gereinigt fühle ich mich!*, 20-IV-1912) and *The Door into the Open* (*Die Tür in das Offene*, 21-IV-1912)—can be seen in this exhibition.

### **Success and demise**

Following this unpleasant episode, the artist left Neulengbach and, after traveling to several places, returned to Vienna for good. Over the course of 1913 and 1914, Schiele—aided once more by the critic Arthur Roessler—took part in numerous exhibitions across Germany, in Munich, Hamburg, Breslau, Stuttgart, Cologne, Dresden and Berlin. However, his works were also shown in Rome, Brussels and Paris, and Egon Schiele’s prospects for an international career looked very promising.

By mid-1913 Schiele’s drawing style was characterized by irregular penciled outlines and the apparent instability of his figures on the pictorial surface, as we can see in *Female Torso with Raised Shirt* (1913). Around 1914 he began to exhibit a tendency towards schematization and geometry that was anything but natural. One example is the splendid gouache *Redemption* (*Erlösung*, 1913), where the volume and plasticity of the head contrasts with the flatness of the textile elements, and another is *Kneeling Female Nude with Outstretched Arms* (1914) which expresses the existential uncertainty about human gender by eliminating all facial expressions or gestures of the portrayed woman as well as all contextual references.

That same year, Schiele started working in his studio with the photographer Anton Josef Trcka and produced a series of photographs that can be seen in this exhibition. The theatrical dramatization of the poses struck by the artist and his typically Expressionist gestural language speak volumes of his contribution to these images.

The outbreak of World War I (1914–1918) suddenly crushed all of Schiele's hopes and dreams. Though initially deemed unfit for duty, he was eventually called up in June 1915. However, thanks to the support of friends and a few officers who admired his talent, he was never sent to the front and instead was assigned desk jobs in Vienna and Lower Austria, where he was able to draw and even had a studio for a time. That same year he was married in Vienna to Edith Harms, one of the daughters of a petit-bourgeois family who lived across the street from his studio in the Austrian capital.

Edith and her sister Adele both posed regularly for Schiele. In *Portrait of Edith Schiele* (1915), the artist captured the poignant, melancholy facial expression of his young bride, and in *Portrait of the Artist's Sister-in-Law Adele Harms* (1917), with stunning naturalism he portrayed Adele in an elegant dress of black-and-white stripes, focusing his attention on the ornamentation of her figure.

The 1915 work *Seated Couple*, a portrayal of two lovers in which the man hangs from the woman's arms like a ragdoll, skillfully reflects the artist's deep-seated conviction that human beings are essentially alone in the world and that the chasm between men and women is unbridgeable. This existential pessimism, which evolves into the allegory of an encounter between life and death, would remain with the artist for the rest of his career.

In 1917 his work was featured in shows in Amsterdam, Stockholm and Copenhagen. In March 1918, during the 49th Exhibition of the Vienna Secession, "a show conceived to exhibit the new Austrian art," Schiele occupied a prominent position that marked the pinnacle of his artistic and financial success: he managed to sell many of his pictures and received commissions for several new works.

Schiele had always longed for peace and had great plans for the days after the end of the conflict; he hoped to promote a new humanist education for the younger generation and participate in the construction of a new, better world. Sadly, in the fall of 1918 his wife Edith came down with the Spanish flu, which decimated Europe and claimed millions of lives, and she died on October 28 while she was six months' pregnant. While caring for her, Egon also caught the disease and died three days later. He was just 28 years old.

Yet even in the course of such a short-lived career, Egon Schiele managed to make a unique contribution to the development of 20th-century art.

### **Historical context and educational spaces**

Egon Schiele was born in Austria on June 12, 1890, the same year that Vincent van Gogh (1853–1890) passed away in France. In those times Austria was not the small Alpine republic it is today but the great central European empire of the Habsburgs, with a territory one-third larger than that of modern-day Spain. By the late 19th century the heyday of that territory, in constant expansion since the Middle Ages, had already come and gone, and since 1867 it had been divided into two regions with identical rights: Austria and Hungary. Franz Joseph I, Emperor of Austria, King of Hungary, and the last respected symbol of the unity of the "Danubian Monarchy", had already occupied the throne for 42 years when Egon Schiele entered the world.

In the late 19th century and the years leading up to World War I, Vienna experienced an unprecedented cultural boom.

This show is accompanied by an educational space in both the exhibition galleries and along the third-floor corridor that will offer visitors additional details about the artist's life in the context of the social and political transformation of Austria, a nation with a thirst for modernity that has produced some of the greatest advances in the humanities (Sigmund Freud and his theories on sexuality and psychoanalysis), sciences (medical research into mental illnesses and women's health) and arts (formation in 1897 of the Secessionists, which included representatives of architecture, design and visual arts).

The educational space will also reveal Schiele's relationships with other artists and intellectuals and explain how they influenced his creative process, such the man he considered his mentor, Gustav Klimt. Every day the Museum will offer a nonstop screening of the documentary entitled *Sex and Sensibility: The Allure of Art Nouveau*, directed by John MacLavery in 2012 for the BBC, which sums up all of these ideas.

## Catalogue

The Guggenheim Museum Bilbao has published a fully illustrated catalogue to accompany this exhibition which features reproductions of the works in the show as well as an essay by the curator and director of the Albertina Museum, Klaus Albrecht Schröder, on the central motifs and formal principles that dominate Egon Schiele's work, detailed entries on each piece in the exhibition, and a complete biography of the artist.

### Cover image (detail):

Egon Schiele (Tulln, Austria, 1890–Vienna, Austria, 1918)

Self-portrait in yellow vest (Selbstbildnis in gelber Weste), 1914

Opaque colour, pencil on Japanese vellum

48,2 x 32 cm

Albertina, Wien

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1. Egon Schiele (1890–1918)

*Self-portrait*, 1906

Charcoal

45.5 x 34.6 cm

Albertina, Wien Inv. ESA1106r



2. Egon Schiele (1890–1918)

*Self-portrait with headband*, 1909

Pencil, coloured chalk on drawing paper

40 x 29.8 cm

Albertina, Wien Inv. 30771



3. Egon Schiele (1890-1918)

*Self-Portrait Pulling down an Eyelid*, 1910

Chalk, watercolor, opaque color on brown packing paper

44.3 x 30.5 cm

Albertina, Vienna, inv. no. 30395



4. Egon Schiele (1890-1918)

*The Cellist*, 1910

Black chalk, watercolor on packing paper

44.7 x 31.2 cm

Albertina, Vienna, inv. no. 31178



5. Egon Schiele (1890-1918)

*Gerti in front of Ochre-Colored Drapery*, 1910

Pencil, opaque color on Japanese vellum

55.1 x 34.7 cm

Albertina, Vienna, inv. no. 27943



6. Egon Schiele (1890-1918)

*Two Crouching Girls*, 1911

Pencil, watercolor, opaque white on primed Japanese vellum

41.3 x 32 cm

Albertina, Vienna, inv. no. 27945



7. Egon Schiele (1890-1918)

*Blond Nude Model, Sitting on Brown Cloth, 1912*

Watercolor, opaque color, pencil on primed Strathmore Japanese vellum

32 x 48.2 cm

Albertina, Vienna, inv. no. 31177



8. Egon Schiele (1890-1918)

*The door to the open (Die Tür in das Offene), 21-4-1912*

Watercolour, pencil on primed Strathmore Japanese vellum

48.,3 x 32 cm

Albertina, Wien Inv. 31160



9. Egon Schiele (1890-1918)

*Redemption (Erlösung), 1913*

Opaque color, pencil on Japanese vellum

48 x 32 cm

Albertina, Vienna, inv. no. 29764



10. Egon Schiele (1890-1918)

*Reclining Female Nude with Legs Spread Apart, 1914*

Pencil, opaque color on Japanese vellum

31.4 x 48.2 cm

Albertina, Vienna, inv. no. 26667



11. Egon Schiele (1890-1918)

*Self-Portrait in Yellow Vest, 1914*

Opaque color, pencil on Japanese vellum

48.2 x 32 cm

Albertina, Vienna, inv. no. 31157



12. Egon Schiele (1890-1918)

*Old Houses in Krumau, 1914*

Opaque color and pencil on Japanese vellum

32.5 x 48.5 cm

Albertina, Vienna, inv. no. 31158



13. Egon Schiele (1890-1918)

*Seated Couple, 1915*

Watercolor, pencil, embossing, mounted on cardboard

51.8 x 41 cm

Albertina, Vienna, inv. no. 29766



14. Egon Schiele (Tulln, Austria, 1890-Vienna, Austria, 1918)

*Portrait of the artist's sister-in-law Adele Harms, 1917*

Black chalk, brush, opaque colour on Japanese vellum

43.8 x 28.5 cm

Albertina, Wien Inv. 25659

