National College of Art and Design

Visual Communication

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Exhibition Posters for the Viennese Secession
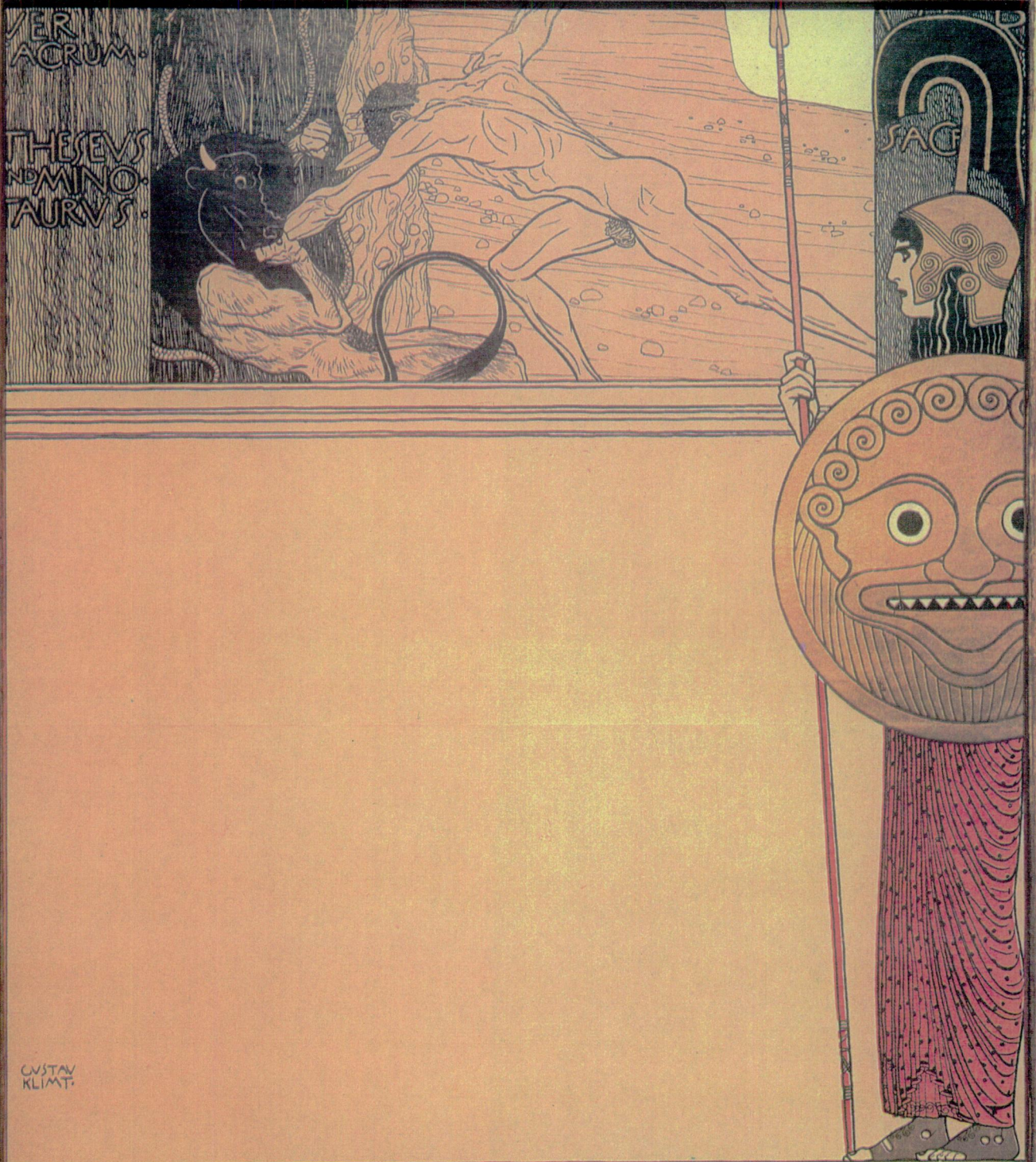
by

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Chapter 1   The Sacred Spring Begins

The first chapter deals with the artistic position of Austria prior to the turn of the century. Reasons are stated for the formation of the Secessionist group in March, 1897 and how they progressed in the early stages. Gustav Klimt was the designer of the poster to announce their primary exhibition a year later. This poster is discussed in depth and the detail given to it is justified by the fact that Klimt was one of the most uniquely talented members of the Secession. His influence can be seen throughout the arts in Vienna at this time, and later, Alfred Roller and Ivan Mestrovic were to design posters which were inspired by Klimt.

Chapter 2   National and International Influences

Ver Sacrum was the name give to the Secessionist periodical and this chapter opens up with an explanation as to why the movement required such a publication. Following that, i concentrate upon the Secessionist posters which avoided the implementation of new styles and tended to depend on previous artistic influences. Joseph Maria Olbrich was the designer of the new Secessionist building and the poster to advertise the first show in the new premises. This graphic piece followed in such close succession to Klimt's design, it is likely that Olbrich was influenced by it. Other artists who borrowed foreign styles included, Johann Viktor Kramer, Max Kurzweil and Friedrich Konig. These Secessionists drew their inspiration from international figures such as, William Morris, Aubrey Beardsley and, to a certain degree, from oriental sources.

Chapter 3   Eclecticism

Alfred Roller and Koloman Moser exhibited a versatility throughout their Secessionist posters and such variety of style was to become a trademark of the movement. Influences seen in their designs include International Art Nouveau, the Glaswegian art of Charles Rennie Mackintosh and Islamic calligraphy. Their ability to absorb a diverse range of styles was matched with multi-talented personalities. In the spirit of the Viennese Secession, Roller and Moser could apply themselves to a broad selection of different art forms, from stage set design to graphic art. Their eclecticism is explored in Chapter 3.

Chapter 4 An Artistic Revival With Expressionism

In this final chapter, Egon Schiele is the main topic for discussion. His 49th Secession exhibition poster, in1918, came twenty years after Klimt's first design and it is difficult to believe from the differences in their posters that these two artists held great admiration for one another's work. Schiele approach to art came in the form of Expressionism and it is unlike any other style that i have previously discussed. A strong artistic temperament, combined with the tensions of a war- torn Europe, resulted in a crude, yet powerful, art form. His creativity can only be matched by Gustav Klimt. These two men provided an axis around which the Secession revolved.

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Introduction

The Vienna Secession came into existence on the 27th of March, 1897. This particular movement possessed an uniqueness unrivaled by its European counterparts. Prominent artists, such as Klimt, Moser, Kurzweil, Moll, Roller, Hoffmann and Wagner were all members of the prestigious Kunstlerhaus prior to their formation of the Secession. Between them and their companions, they were to display some distinct traits which were perhaps peculiar to these Austrian artists. Firstly, we have the exceptional art of Gustav Klimt and his protege, Egon Shiele. Their ability to devise a specialised approach towards design allows them to be recognised as the finest creators of art in Austria this century. While Schiele was heavily influenced by Klimt in his early career, he later developed his own expressionistic style

Other artists, such as Kolomann Moser and Alfred Roller in particular, exhibited an ecleticism throughout their Secessionist work. These men borrowed and absorbed a broad spectrum of styles, from both national and international sources. Although the artistic influences made may have not been original, Moser and Roller implemented them in an innovative fashion. Many of the remaining Secessionists also copied foreign styles, but not with the same success.as Moser and Roller.

Graphic design is not an area that we readily associate with the Vienna Secession. Architecture, fine art and interior design are usually the most widely discussed subjects, at least in the English language. While most of these areas had a particular Secession style to them, the Viennese approach to graphic art is more difficult to define. All the artists that I include in this essay share at least one common denominator, in that they all designed posters to advertise a Secessionist exhibition. In some cases, more than one design was commissioned. Throughout the history of the movement, we are offered a broad variety of posters which can, however, be divided into three main groups; the strikingly creative approach of Klimt and Schiele ;the eclecticism of Moser and Roller ;and finally a heterogenous group of artists who attain various degrees of success.

Austria, at the end of the 19th century, was ripe for this type of an artistic revival. Its' political status as an Empire, rather than a state, allowed for this consumption of diverse styles. Vienna was also ideally situated, geographically, to absorb material from both western Europe and oriental or Islamic cultures. This melting pot approach to art, combined with the creative tension present in the State, allowed the Secessionists scope to devise such varied art not seen collectively elsewhere in Europe.
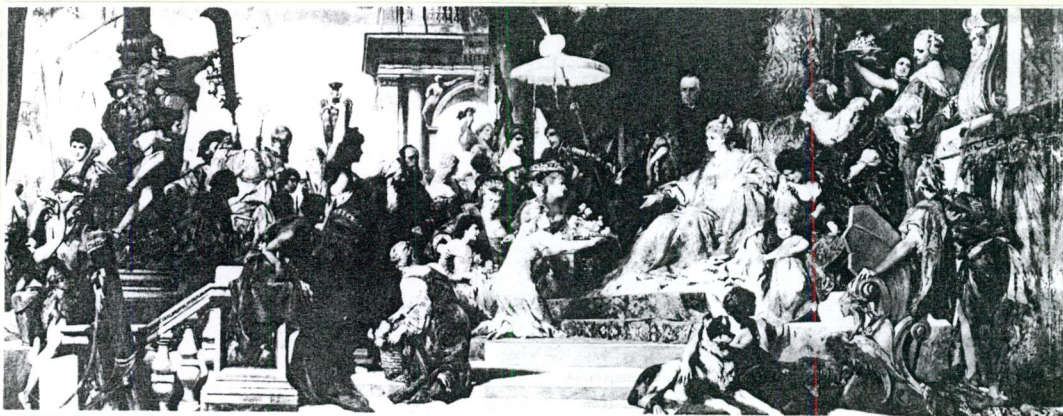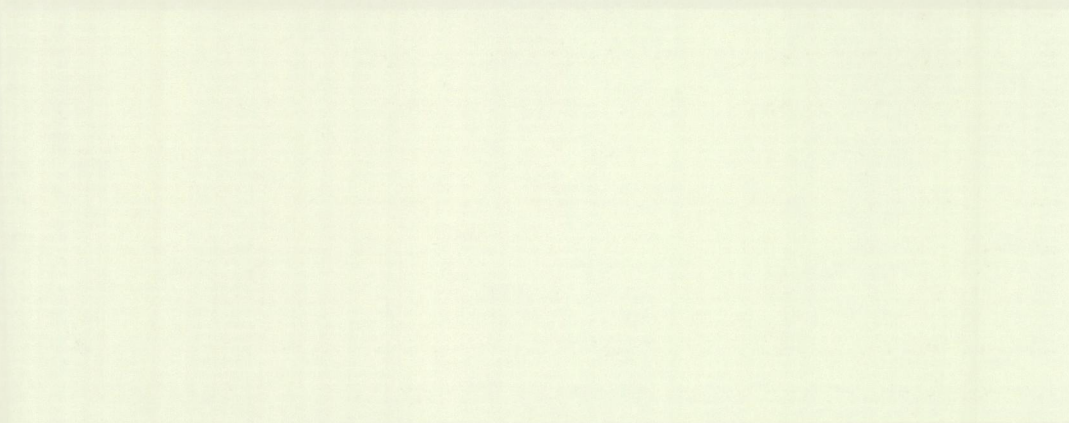
Figure 1 -'Venice Honours Caterina Cornero', Hans Makart (1872-3)

Chapter 1   The Sacred Spring Begins

Austria was but one of the many European nations which was to undergo an immense revival in the arts, around the year 1890. France is attributed as harbouring the initial stages of these changes, while Vienna was later to take centre stage as a city of innovative art, craft and architecture. Prior to this time it was undoubtedly rooted in the traditions and values of the past. The Emperor of Austria, and practically all of central Europe, Franz Joseph 1 was a personification of the "Golden age" he so strongly supported and the arts played a significant part in the maintenance of this imperial stance. Unfortunately for those who exhibited desires for artistic change, this area was dedicated to the memory of such artists as Rubens, Veronese and Titian. The Kunstlerhaus, or Austrian Society of Architects, Artists and Sculptors, was the main establishment of its kind in the country. Membership of such a group signified superiority and great artistic status. Hans Makart (1840-1884) was the most renowned president of the Kunstlerhaus and he strongly advocated the styles of the early masters. These influences can be noted in his painting of 'Venice Honours Caterina Cornero' (1872-3) [fig 1]. In general, the members of the Association tended to be historical painters and monumental sculptors.

This great reverence towards the past provided no scope or space for new ideas within the Kunstlerhaus and in turn, this left many dissatisfied with the state of art in Vienna, and indeed, the Empire. However, outside the terms of this particular organisation, two artistic groups met and discussed the various problems which were presenting themselves to the modern designer. The Blaues Freihaus Cafe was the meeting place for both the Haagen Society, formed in 1876 and the later established Seven Club (1895). These societies provided a starting point for what was to become the Secession movement. Although many of the artists involved in either the Haagen Society or Seven Club also remained in the Kunstlerhaus, their need to remove art from the hands of commerce and replace it where it could be accessible to one and all, was far greater than their desire to belong to an association whose grip was firmly held by the bourgeois.

On the 27th of March 1897, the Union of Creative Artists of Austria, or the Vienna Secession, was formed and for a time this group remained part of the Kunstlerhaus. But within a short period of time discontent amongst the young artists with regards to their treatment by the Alten or elder members was so great that twenty one artists resigned. Included in these names were Klimt, Olbrich, Moll, Moser,
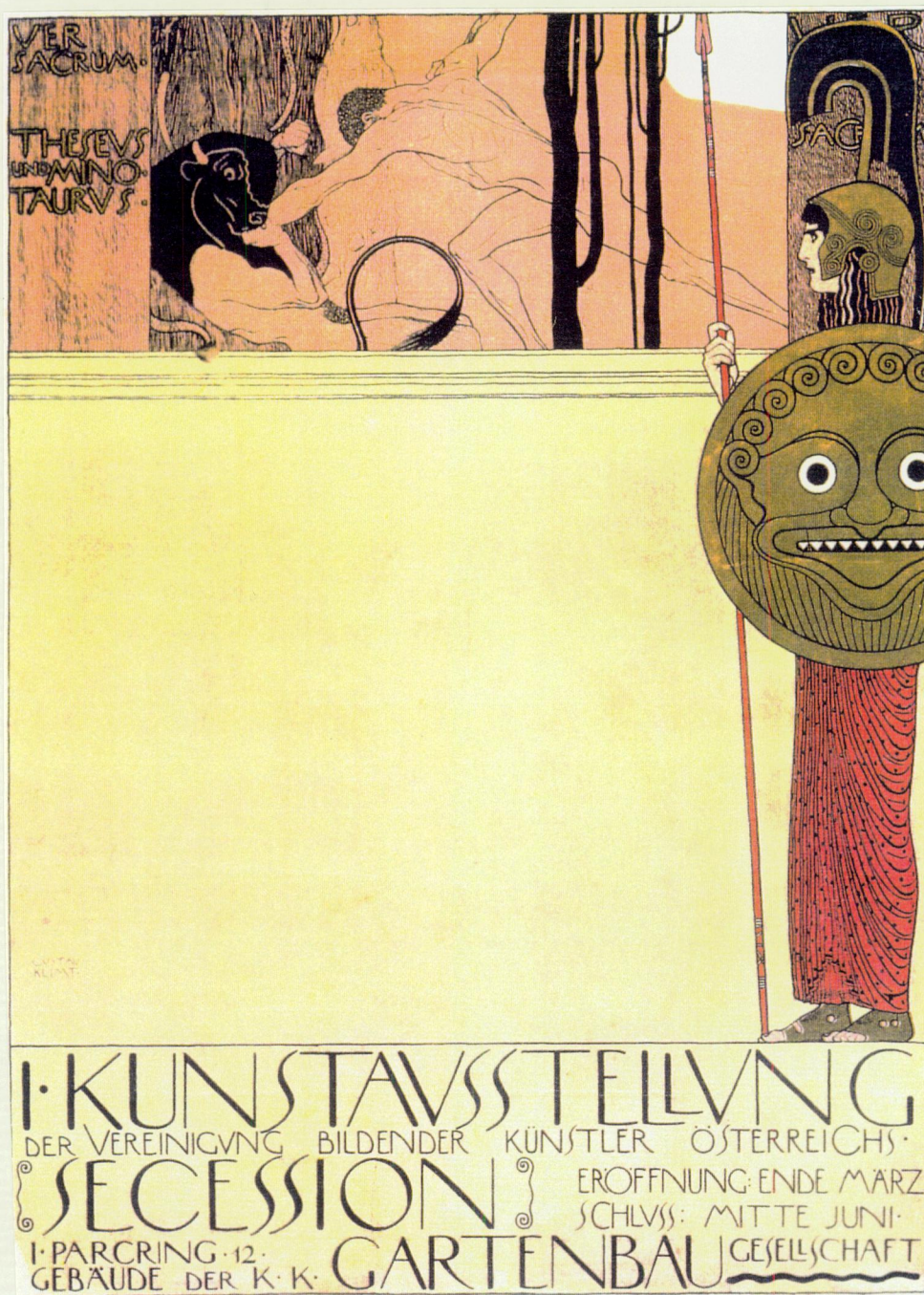
CONCLUSION

Figure 2 - '1st Secession exhibition poster' ,Gustav Klimt, (1898)

Roller, Hoffmann, Kurzweil and eventually, in 1899, Wagner was the final member to withdraw. In June, the new union held its' first meeting and an exhibition was planned for March 1898. So swiftly were the Secessionists plans put into production that they hoped to have their own show-rooms ready in time for their second exhibition. But in the meantime, the first showing was to be held at the Gartenbaigesellschaft or Gardener's Association. Several well known international names such as Klinger, Mucha and Rodin were invited to exhibit, as this was part of the Secessionists' theory that foreign art could only enrich and not intrude upon the Austrian artists and general public.

Just prior to the opening of the exhibition we get a taste of graphic design within the Secession. This came in the form of Gustav Klimts' (1862-1918) poster [figure 2] which was to advertise the event. The subject matter for this piece is obviously inspired by the conflicts and upheavals he and his fellow Secessionists were experiencing in Vienna prior to the formation of the movement. We see three figures from Greek mythology. In the foreground, Athena, patroness of the arts, Goddess of wisdom and a guiding light to brave warriors, looks on in profile, as Theseus is about to murder the Minotaur with one final blow. There can be no doubt as to whom the fighting figures refer and perhaps once the Secession gains ground in terms of artistic merit, Klimt is suggesting what he hopes will be their eventual victory over the Alten. In fact, here the Goddess represents the motto of the Secessionists, which was in turn to be inscribed over the doors of their exhibition rooms;

'Der Zeit ihre Kunst, der Kunst ihre Freiheit'

Translated, this means, to every age its' art and to every art its' freedom. This statement was made by Ludwig Hevesi, the Austrian journalist and author who had announced the formation of the Secession. He continued to chronicle the events of the movement and is credited for providing the greatest literary insight into this artistic period in Austria.

Appropriately so, the compositional features of this design are perhaps as striking as the images used. Already an unusual approach has come to light, thus demonstrating how graphic design was able to lend itself to the new Secessionist styles, and break away from the more traditional layouts. Klimt's use of space in this first poster was unpresidented and the large, white area serves three main purposes. As it is positioned between Athena and the warriors, a feeling of depth is created. Also, it provides an additional area for text as well as being a device which attracts attention. Three elements are annexed to this blank space; Athena, the warriors and the text block. The geometry of the white area is echoed throughout the poster as we
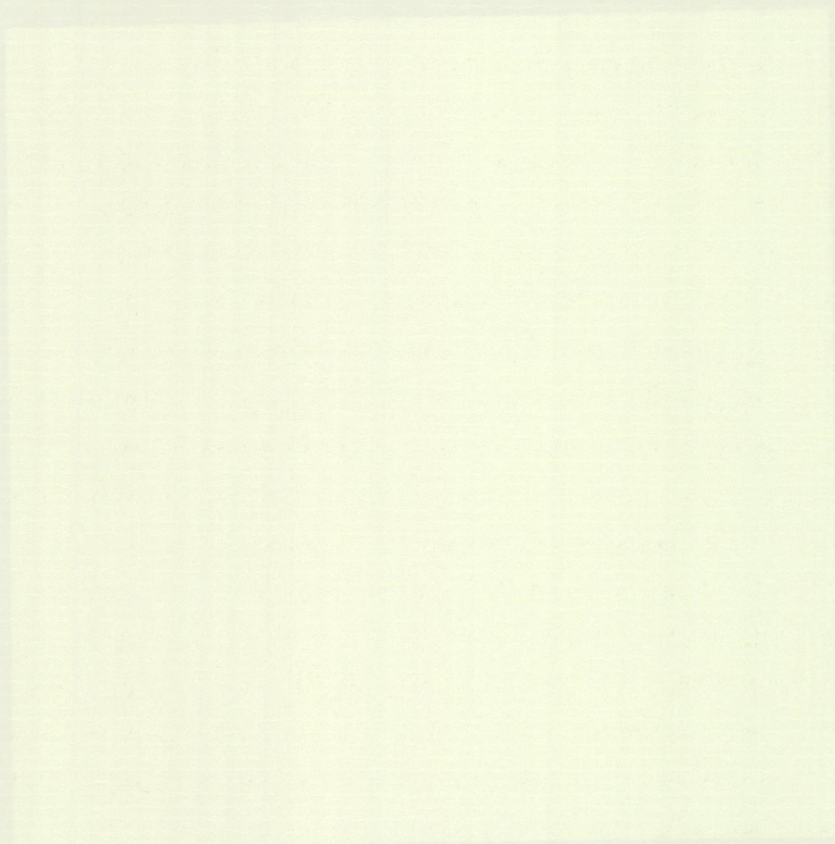
Figure 3 -'Pallas Athene', Gustav Klimt, (1898)

can break the composition down to a selection of flat shapes. They comprise of a square, three rectangles and a partial circle. Reading further into each section, we can see more evidence of basic shapes. The Gorgon's head, on the shield, which is there to ward off evil, contains a series of spiral and line designs. Should this item have been depicted in full, it may have been the only area on the poster where we could find a practically symmetrical design. However, Klimt has managed to balance out the various elements despite his preference for a strong asymmetrical format.

Returning to the use of shape and pattern within the poster, we notice that Athena herself is emersed in multiple lines which indicate the folds of her gown, while we find spirals again, repeated on her helmet. The simplicity of clearly defined line reigns throughout the poster. Even the contours of the fighting warriors are reduced to line, while the bone and muscle formation on their bodies are stated with finer, short and precise black line. A Grecian influence is perhaps evident here in Klimts' fighting figures. The artist is known to have an extensive knowledge of Greek and Egyptian art and this style is reminiscent of the popular approach used through-out the ages on Greek crafts and decorative items. However, Klimt manages to com-bine this foreign flavour with his own techniques and the overall result is that of a strong design. The head of the Minotaur is dominated by black, with a minimum amount of positive, white line exposed to show his ferocious features. The back-ground is segregated with various densities of patterned lines and this helps to sug-gest more perspective. Klimt has succeeded in creating several depths of field via flat surfaces and their positioning, with a total compositional arrangement emerging as what was then seen to be a sensational approach to poster design. Hermann Bahr quotes from Pirchens"Gustav Klimt' and says that this artist had

"the art of omitting everything that was unnecessary"

and this first Secession poster is clearly a fine representative of this statement.

Another important area of this poster is the typography block, which Klimt has situated in a separate area to the base of the design. Athena stands upon the line that divides the type from the image. The large print directly below this division announces the new art exhibition. Klimt has used three main type or point sizes for his text. "Kunstausstellung Secession" is draughted out in the largest letters and their slim lined openness echo the geometric and refined qualities of the image above. Smaller type indicates the duration of the exhibition, the venues' address and other such information, while the actual title of the exhibition deserves mid-sized lettering. There seems to be no format to the layout of the text. Spacing, or a lack of it, causes a degree of awkwardness for the reader. Nevertheless, it is legible and compliments
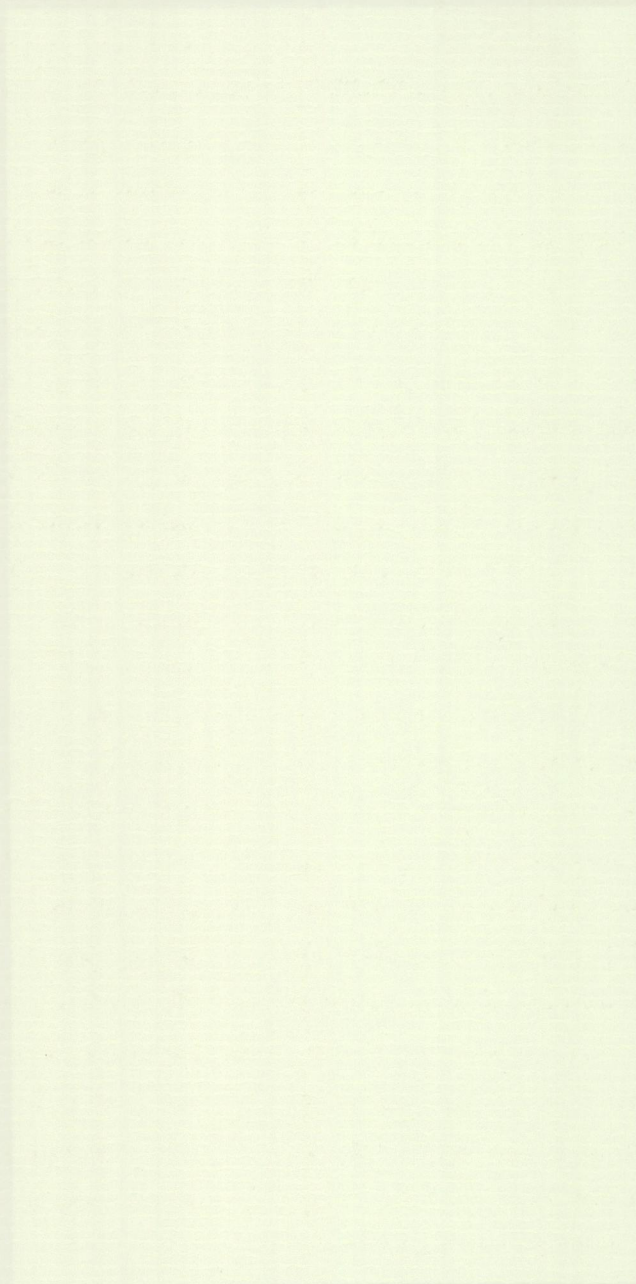
Figure 4.-'Judith and Holofernes', Gustav Klimt, (1901)

his image adequately. Klimt has even included the spiral, line and dot design features amongst his text, which he has also used in his illustration. Later on, the artist uses similar type styles in such pieces as 'Nuda Veritas'(1898) and 'Pallas Athene'(1898) [fig 3].

This first show lasted from the 26th of March until the 15th of June 1898 and is generally credited as being an all round success. European art dominated the rooms at the 'Gartenbaigesellschaft' -534 pieces in total, though the Austrians' work displayed compared favourably with their foreign counterparts. Klimt's poster design had some censorship imposed on the illustration before it was deemed suitable to use. He was obliged to make an addition of a tree, which ran parallel to Athenas' sphere and covered what the officials deemed to be the indecent parts of Theseus body. This was neither the first or last time that Klimt had to face controversy. Although this was Klimt's only poster contribution to the Secessionist exhibitions, this and his work in general were to hold much influence over his companions and his predecessors. Later we see how Alfred Roller's design for the 14th poster in 1902 contains many elements which are obviously derived from the work of Klimt. Discussed in detail in Chapter 3, this design announces Klimt's controversial Beethoven Frieze to the public. Roller has used a figure in his design which shows a great likeness to that of 'Music' [fig 5]-the lady with which Klimt depicts this art form in the Frieze. On comparing the two, we see that both ladies offer us similarities in their overall shape and stance. Their profiles are etched out with sharp angular features, while wearing costumes that are rectangular and filled with pattern. Klimt and Roller have used active backgrounds and it is not the only time that we see evidence of strongly applied pattern in Klimt's work. His pieces 'Pallas Athene'(1898) [fig 3] and 'Judith and Holofernes'(1901) [fig 4] are but two examples of how subjects have been submersed in decorative design. Roller has attempted to imitate Klimt's approach in a similar, but more graphic, style. A huge variety of pattern engulfs the figure in the poster and in certain areas, it is difficult to tell her apart from the background. Later on, I intend to discuss this design in greater detail in Chapter 3. Also, I will comment on the general eclectic personality of Roller, alongside another Secessionist, Kolomann Moser.

Ivan Mestrovic(1883-1962) is a poster designer who also shows evidence of being influenced by Klimt. Over twenty years Klimt's junior, Mestrovic exhibited work in a Secessionist show prior to the split in the movement. However, he did not become a member until 1906. Born in Slavonia and a sculptor by trade, he presents us with a poster [fig 7] dominated by a classical profile. It advertises the 35th exhibition in 1910, where his work was on display along with five other artists. Mestrovic may not have had much experience in the area of graphic design, nor the ability to

Figure 5- 'Music', Beethoven Frieze,
Gustav Klimt, (1902)

Figure 6 -'14th Secession exhibition poster'
Alfred Roller, (1902)

equal Klimt's innovative layout, but I feel that he has improved upon the classical elements by simplifying the image. Also, he uses some creative typography, which could owe its' origins to the work of Klimt.

As with the first Secessionist poster by Klimt, Mestrovic uses Grecian linear features, with a broader black line reserved for the profile and the prominent bone structure. Hair has become a decorative element. Small spirals and a ripple formation could be paralleled with Athena's helmet and hair. There is also a remarkable use of spirals in the text, as the word Secession becomes a design entity in itself. All letters, except for the 'I', have received a circular, curving treatment and their controlled consistency saves them from becoming over obtrusive. The use of the spiral is prevalent throughout Klimt's work. The 'Stoclet Frieze'(1905-1909) [fig 8]is but one design that contains pieces which bare witness to this very fact.
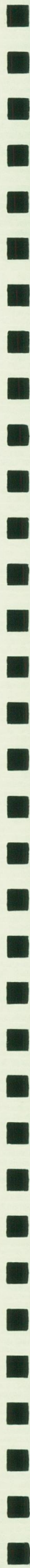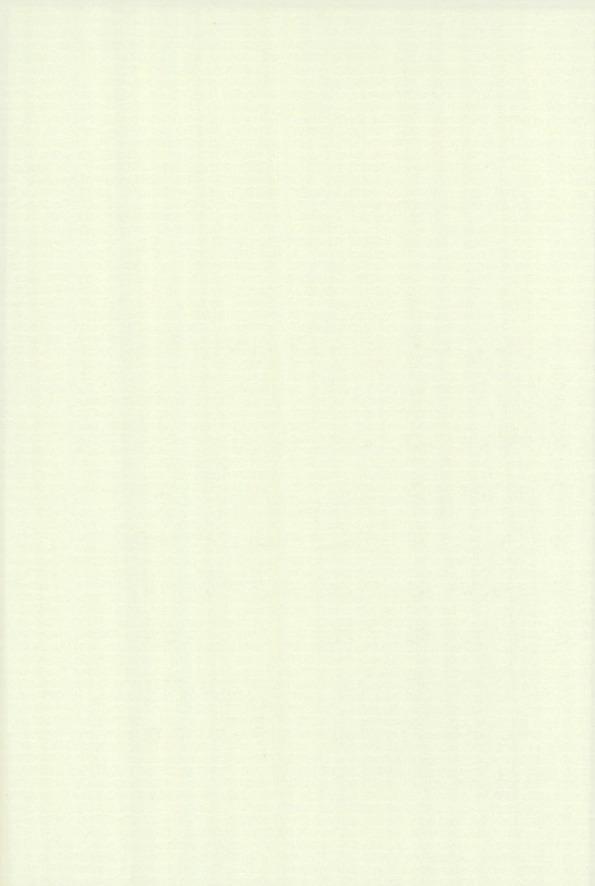
Figure 7 -'35th Secession exhibition poster',

Ivan Mestrovic, (1910)

Figure 8 -'Stoclet Frieze', Gustav Klimt, (1905-09)

Chapter 2   National and International Influences

Although the first exhibition provided the public with a chance to view the new ideas and styles of the Secessionists, there had already been another format from which these artists had made their views known. This came in the shape of 'Ver Sacrum', the periodical which had been in publication since January 1898, containing works from various Secession members. As well as wanting to have their own exhibition building, they believed that to have their own journal was an important factor should their movement achieve international acclaim and interest. At the first Secession show in 1898, 'Ver Sacrum' was brought to the visitors attention by devoting the entire eleventh room to its' promotion. The title, Hevesi claims, is taken rom Uhlands' poem about the Sacred Springtime experienced by the Romans.

" You are the seed of a new world.
That is the Sacred Springtime that God wills."

The title reinforced the contributors hopes that this art may not only cause a revival of thought and ideas amongst artists, but also amongst the public, in the world outside. Another important point made by the Secessionists in this periodical is that they believed in equality throughout all areas of the arts. Craftsmen and artists alike were capable of producing work worthy of like judgement. Graphic art was deemed of no less importance than fine art or architecture, but it is clear to see that the volume of graphic design available is minute in comparison with the two forementioned areas. The exhibition posters were rarely designed by pure graphic artists and their external influences helped to enrich the medium.

Joseph Maria Olbrich (1867 -1908) designed the poster [fig 9] to announce the second exhibition. Both the show and the opening of the new Secessionist building occurred simultaneously and Olbrich was chiefly responsible for the design of the later. A student of Otto Wagner, Olbrich had used an architectural style unfamiliar to the Viennese public. Predominantly white in colour and topped with a gold leaf crown, it was by no means discrete in appearance. It Was closely situated to the baroque historical headquarters of the Kunstlerhaus and now the two associations extreme differences were stated architecturally. In general, both the critics and the public did not react favourably to this new style but this was not detrimental to the success of the second show.
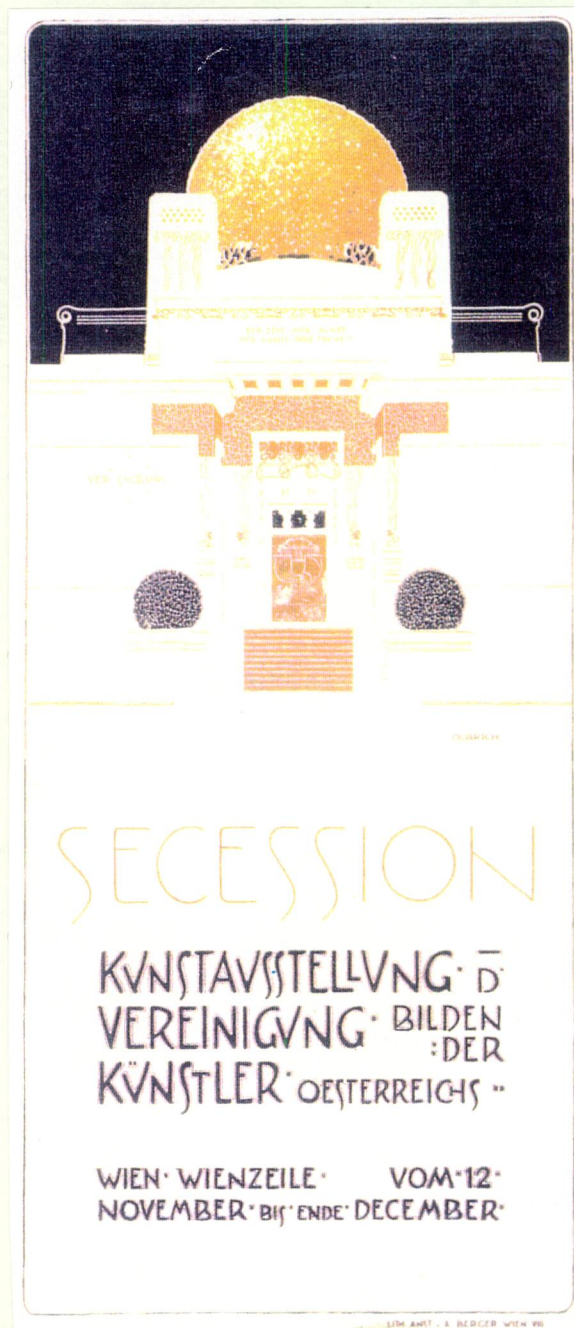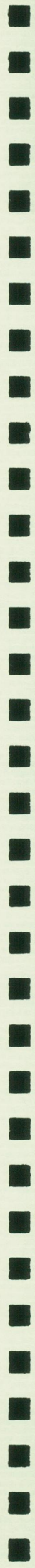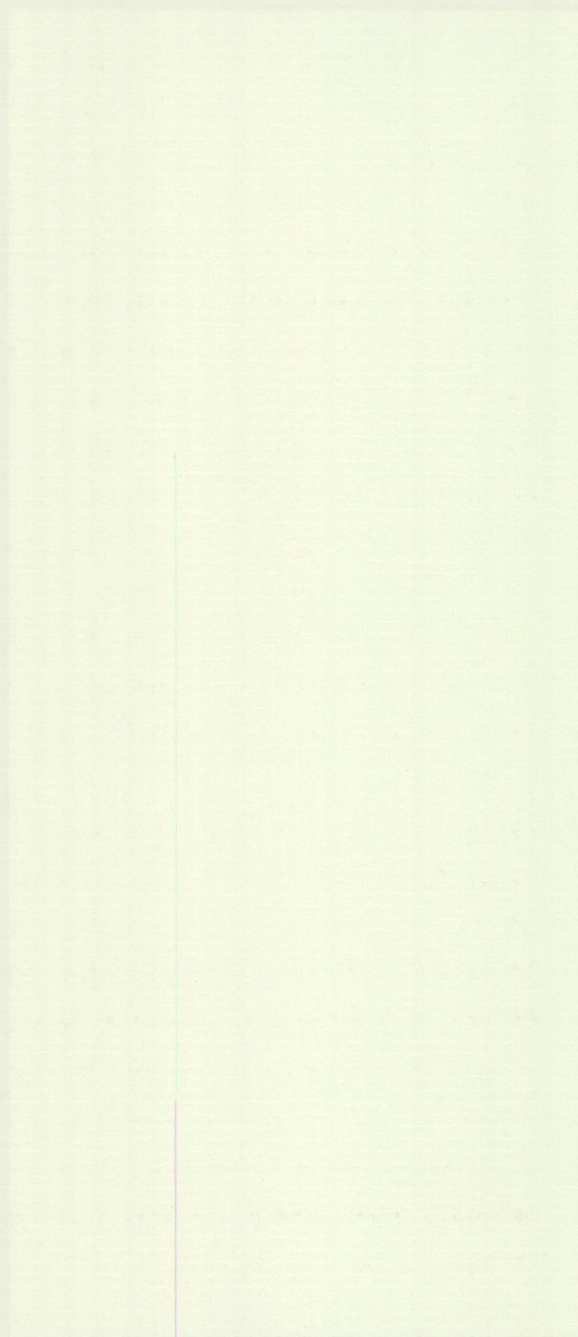
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Figure 9 -'2nd Secession exhibition poster', Joseph Maria Olbrich, (1898)

Olbrich was one of several poster designers, whose contribution, although notable, could not be seen as sensational or an advancement of the graphic style. His solution is perhaps typical of an architect and the interpretation of the building is quite narrative of its' actual structure. Other artists, such as Johann Viktor Kramer (1861-1949) could be critisized for reverting back to designs which obviously drew their inspiration from, by now, dated material. The 17th and 21st posters of Max Kurzweil(1867-1916) and Friedrich Konig(1857-194) seem to lack an individual style. While Konig's typography is interesting, both illustrations fail to show a strength in terms of their own ability as designers. Like Kramer, Kurzweil's idea seems to be derived from the paintings of influential, but nevertheless, bygone, artists. The figure he uses is composed in such a way that we might associate it with the works of the pre- Raphaelite Brotherhood. Aubrey Beardsley may, in particular, could be seen as inspiration for his poster. however, Beardsley's subjects were never as harshly etched or lacking in colour as the woman Kurzweil has chosen to depict. This drawing, juxtaposed with such a rigid typeface, causes this particular poster, in my opinion, to be near the end of the Secessionist pile in terms of success. Friedrich Konig's poster, a year and a half later, does not regress to a previous style and manages to contain a certain flavour of the period in which it was created. The illustration breaks no new ground, but the typography remains its' saving grace. Here, we see yet another variation in the approach to poster text

Returning to Olbrich's design, we find that he has opted to use a frontal view of the Secessionist building as subject matter. This provides the onlooker with an almost totally symmetrical composition. The text in the two lower blocks has not been centred, but the overall volume of type is evenly distributed. A dark sky envelopes the contours of the roof and dome, and the remainder of the building is described by line and pattern. Above the entrance we see Helvesi's quotation inscribed, while the words 'Ver Sacrum' are also stated on the exterior. All the informative text lies below the illustration and floats happily in a white space that bleeds on down from the buildings' walls. The preciseness of the drawing is reflected in Olbrichs' type. For the main volume of text, he has opted to use a heavier, complicated script. The bold letters are almost fully outlined, except in some cases, the areas above and below them have been left open. What with the dense sky and the various dark segments in the building, Olbrich has chosen well by deciding to use a typeface which balances out this volume in his design. There are several decorative elements within the text worth mentioning and perhaps this would be an opportune time to reintroduce Klimt's first Secession poster for comparison.

First of all, let us examine the word 'Secession' in both posters. Klimt has indicated its' importance by placing it, written in large letters, between two decorative spiral devices. Generally we sense that Klimt has placed less importance upon the
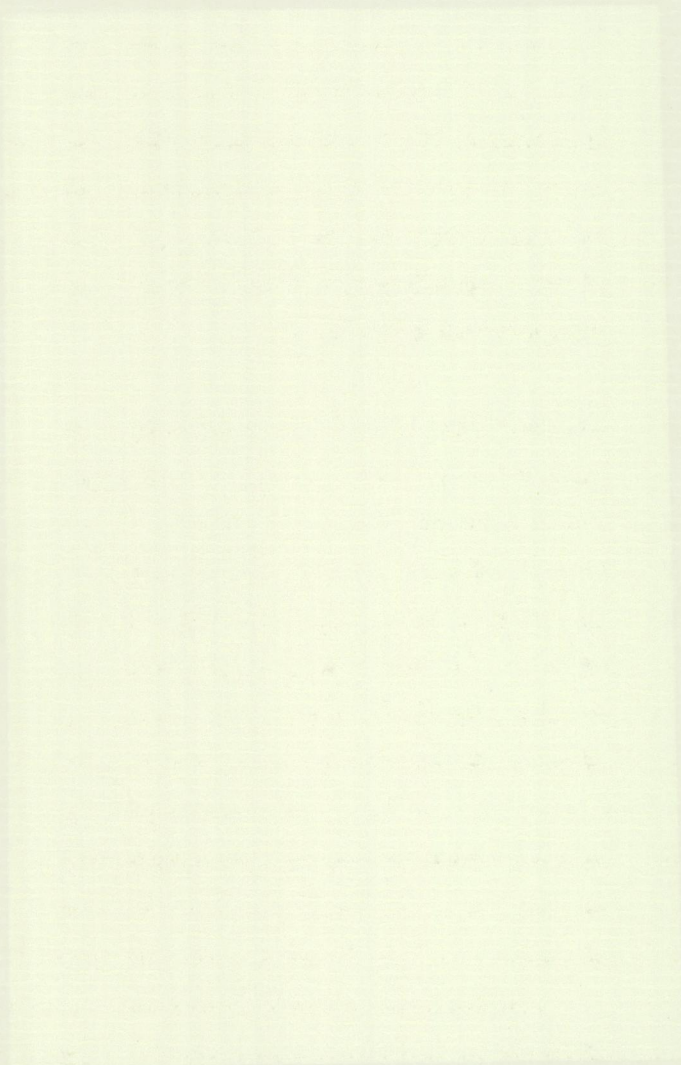
Figure 10 - '11th Secession exhibition poster', Johan Viktor Kramer, (1901)

positioning of his text and its' utilisation as a design element. Olbrich's finely tuned 'Secession' rests, centred, above the justified blocks of exhibition information. The balance and composure of his illustration is tastefully reflected in his type layout. On the other hand, Klimt's typesetting, in my opinion, is random and distracting. Some words are centred and others are ranged left, leaving a jagged or uneven edge next to the margin. Small type is sandwiched between the larger letters and empty spaces sit awkwardly around the words. In an immediate comparison, Olbrich's text could be deemed unadventurous and predictable, though a closer examination shows much consideration for this area of the poster. Like Klimt, he has used wide, open lettering for the word 'Secession'. His 'O' is practically a full circle and the 'W' seems to be within the confines of a square. The horizontal bar in Klimt's 'A' is placed unusually high, as is the mid-line in the 'E' in both cases. Generally, Klimt has used slightly less rigid approach to the smaller text and the inconsistencies of hand draughted type become more evident here. Perhaps it is Olbrichs training as an architect that has allowed his lettering to appear more regular.

Both artists have used devices such as the shelving of one 'L' on top of another, when they occur concurrently. The unusual 'S' shape appears in the two posters and this was popular with Austrian designers at the time. The letter 'S' is worth particular attention as we can see its' sliver like qualities reflected throughout the Secession graphics. Twenty years later, a similar style surfaces in Egon Schiele's 49th poster. The slimness of this 'S is possibly what saves Klimt's type from becoming too broad and open. Olbrich's Secession 'S's are almost design features in themselves. They slink and disappear below the base line upon which they are written. Amongst the text blocks they seem like animated oceanic creatures. The general variety of Olbrich's letters in both size and style may even overpower the simplicity of the illustration which lies above it. The inactivity of this poster is in contrast with the death blow which is about to be struck in Klimt's narrative piece. Although Klimt's approach to the drawing is immaculate and straightforward, we are clearly aware that this is not merely a reference to Greek mythology, nor has he used a traditional layout.

From the 18th of May, until the 23rd of June, Johann Viktor Kramer was the first founder member of the Secession, and indeed the first artist ever, to have a collective exhibition in his honour. Kramer had travelled extensively in Spain, Italy and North Africa, and this show concentrated on his visits to the later area. Appropriately, the poster to accompany the 11th exhibition was designed by Kramer [fig 10] , though his foreign journies do not appear to have influence his choice of subject matter. His design shows a graphic, non-tonal, rendering of red anemones, with a text block set ina amongst the foliage. A decorative border has been added around the exterior and we cannot help but be reminded of the work of William Morris. An
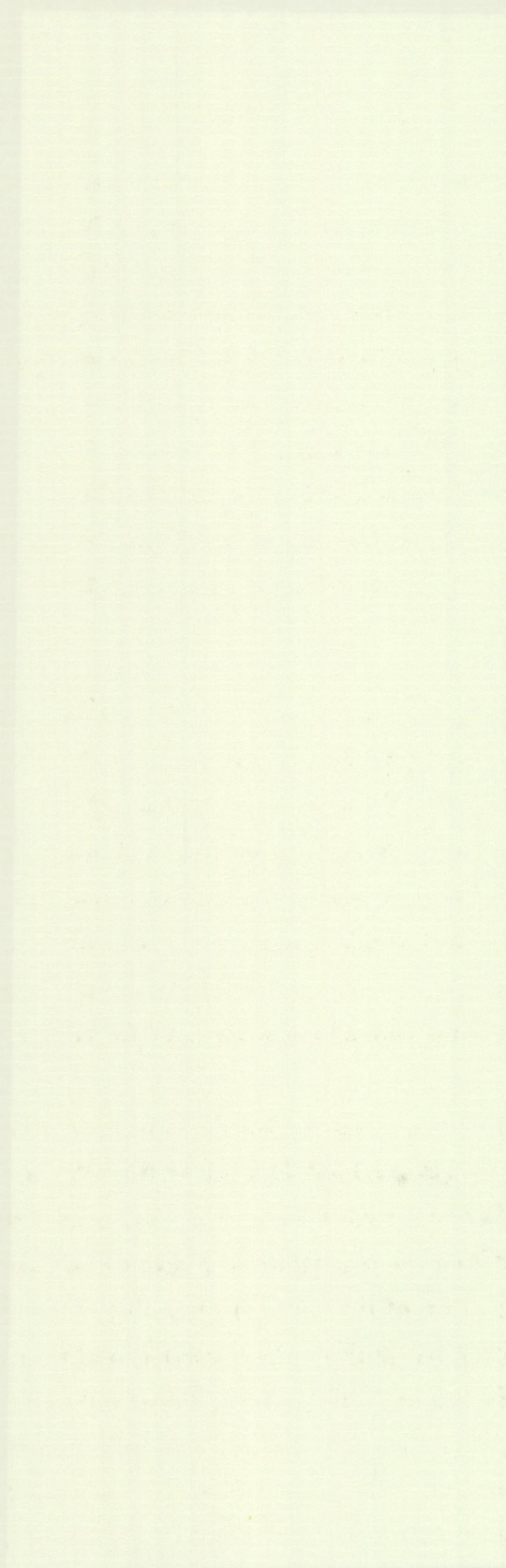
Figure 11 -'17th Secession exhibition poster', Maximilian Kurzweil, (1903)

essence of his prints and fabrics is evident here in Kramers rendering of the flowers. Repeat pattern on the border gives the poster a more picture-like feel to it. This frame suggests that it may be ready for household hanging, rather than displayed to announce a new exhibition Practically a symmetrical layout, the poster has few factors which could cause it to be too mondain for its purpose.

A relatively unknown founder member of the movement was the designer of the 17th poster [fig 11]. Unknown in the sense that Maximilian Kurzweil lived a quiet life, in comparison to many of his outspoken companions. Also, he left only a small amount of work behind him. While he trained as a painter, he also worked in the area of graphic design and his poster is, indeed, a very graphic piece of work. In yet another oblong format, a female figure stands to one side, her torso not quite in profile and her face turned towards us. The composed stance and gentle expression are in contrast with the harshness of her long black hair. It hangs heavy around her shoulders, and the white lines that suggest highlights, seem forced and lack fluidity. Similar comments could be made about the garments. They drape awkwardly as they fall to the ground.

A decorative section extends down from the top of the poster. It resembles a pattern which has been derived from the use of an unbroken line, and then the individual areas coloured in. The forms are unattractive and help in no way to inhance the young lady who stands in front of them. In the foreground, we have an isolated textblock and Kurzweil presents us with the most regulated typeface yet. Letters have been kept quite angular, and curves or arcs are minimalised. This block is coloured in brick red, while the extra information below is in black type. The same red is used in the decorative pattern, along with a lime green and light brown.

Yet another artist who used the female form as subject matter for a design was Friedrich Konig. He designed the 21st poster [fig 12] for the exhibition which ran from the 14th of November until the 13th of December, 1904. Konig has clearly divided the text block from the illustration in a manner that could be influenced by oriental art. The typeface shows similar qualities to that of one used by Alfred Roller in his 14th poster. Konig has justified the textblock, and only the word 'Secession' receives prominence in height. This, in turn, allows for some much needed space amongst the lettering. Like Kurzweil's subject, this lady is almost in profile, though her head is turned towards us. The gown is wrapped around her form and the wind, it appears, has extended the fabric out to occupy a large area of the illustration block. Some of the material remains out of sight and this 'cut-off' feature also has associations with oriental art. Patterns that appear on her gown are similar to those found in Roller's 14th poster, except that Konig repeats them in different sizes and without the circle.
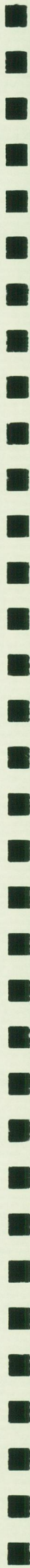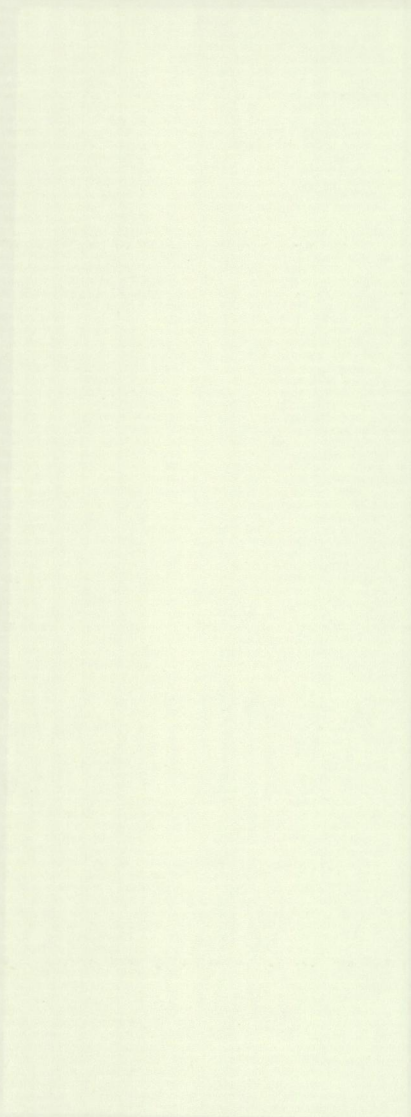
Figure 12 - '21st Secessionist exhibition poster', Friedrich Konig (1904)

Chapter 3   Eclecticism

Founder members and prominent Secessionists until the group split in 1908, Koloman Moser (1860 - 1918) and Alfred Roller (1864 - 1935) must be noted for their extensive involvement in the movement throughout the first twenty three exhibitions. Both studied at the Academy of Creative Arts, and later they were to teach at the School of Applied Art in Vienna (Kunstgenerbeschule), the most receptive academic institution with regards to Secessionist ideas. After 1897, Moser practically dedicated himself to the applied arts and established the Wiener Werkstatte in 1903 with Joseff Hoffmann and Fritz Waerndofer. Roller's primary talent lay in the area of set design. He was responsible for the tremendous changes which occurred at the Vienna State Opera over a period of ten years, while Gustav Mahler held the post of Director.

The above descriptions, however, are by no means sufficient should the reader require a true insight into the capabilities of these particular Secessionists. Applied art and set design were but two areas in which Moser and Roller could work. Between them, other areas included, stained glass window design, postage and bank note design (Moser designed both of these between 1906 and 1916, and are acclaimed to be the finest Austria has ever seen), graphic and poster design, illustration and general painting. In addition, they contributed in various ways to the exhibitions. Moser was either primarily responsible for, or involved in the interior design of no less than fourteen of the 'pre-Secession Split' exhibitions. Roller also made an attempt at this area of design for the Segantini Memorial exhibition in 1901. Roller was responsible for five of the Secessionist posters, while Moser managed to do three.

Although neither could rival the talent of their co-founder, Gustav Klimt, nor come close to the future individualistic work of Egon Schiele, Roller and Moser rose above many of their fellow members for their sheer versatility alone. The ability to absorb current artistic influences, combined with an international outlook, enabled the two designers to present a plethora of ideas to the Viennese public. One must admit that many aspects of these ideas could not be considered original. Their general adaptability to different sources could be viewed as talent itself, and therefore we must award them the merit they rightly deserve. They produced significant designs which provide us with an insight into the Secessionist mind. Also, their outlook, perhaps, typified the artistic stance of Vienna. This was a city, ideally situated geographically, to absorb the influences of Asia and Western Europe. Its political
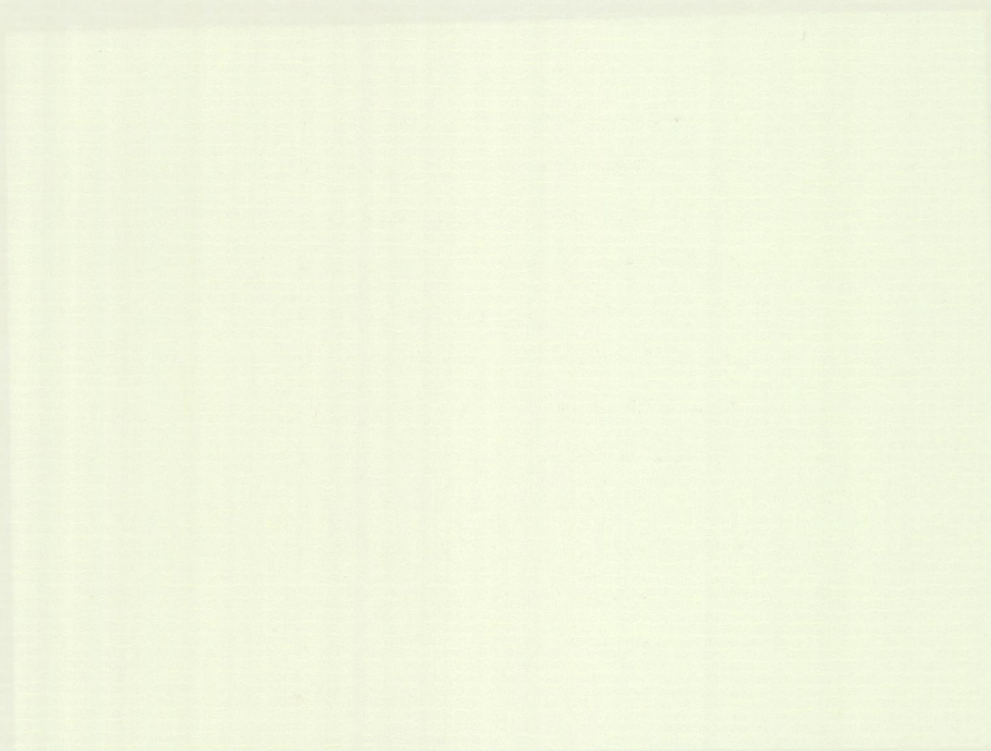
Figure 13 -'4th Secession exhibition poster', Alfred Roller(1899)

history as an Empire, rather than a constant state, also allowed for such an excess of varied social and artistic thought. A closer examination of the work of Alfred Roller and Koloman Moser should allow one to illustrate these points.

Roller, to begin with, was set designer extraordinaire. His first poster (measuring 63cm by 95cm) in 1899 [fig 13], contains the Secessionist's symbol floating in a star filled sky, with its' reflection in the sea below. The design is uncomplicated and

provides us with a calmness after the rigid, by comparison, posters by Klimt and Olbrich. It also helps us to prepare for the international art nouveau style. Let us examine this fourth design. Blue is the obvious choice of colour, as the frame is filled with water and sky. The night-time setting dictates the sky blue shades that the artist uses and the stars twinkle around the freestyle Secession lettering. This is the first use of the Secessionist's symbol in their posters. Its illuminated moonlike qualities cause three stark lines of light to hit the water and break up as they near the on-looker. Once again we see another typestyle being used. In this instance, the unrefined calligraphic style of lettering, placed closely together, causes the text to appear a little bulky. However, it manages to balance out the light reflected on the opposite side of the page. An unusual choice of poster format, Roller has placed the main image and text side by side, as opposed to the more popular layout of text below image. This later method was favoured throughout the Secession by the majority of its poster designers. The reason for this could safely be attributed to an oriental influence. Japanese wall hangings were usually placed upon pillars, unlike in the West, where the wall is favoured for decoration purposes. This, in turn, dictated the shape of these hangings and an oblong format seems like a natural solution.

In the next design I have chosen for discussion, we see Roller opting for dramatically new dimensions in this 9th poster in 1901 [fig 14]. He has used a strong vertical size of 190cm by 63.5cm. We can see that the length is almost exactly three times greater than the width. Roller has utilised this oblong rectangular shape well with a statuesque figure which compliments the length of the poster. The upper torso takes on a stylised human form as it emerges from the stone. However, the lower half becomes slab like and lacks bodily features. We have here, perhaps, the most simplified and graphic treatment of the human form so far from the Secessionist posters that I have discussed. Although later designs also reduce the body down to pure geometric form and outline, this figures' interpretation by Roller shows human definition kept to a minimum, while successfully retaining some male characteristics. Neutral brown and orange colours dominate the poster, while a light ochre is reserved for areas such as the Secessionist symbol and text. Cloud formation could be compared with fragmented paving stones, but their diminishing size, as they fade
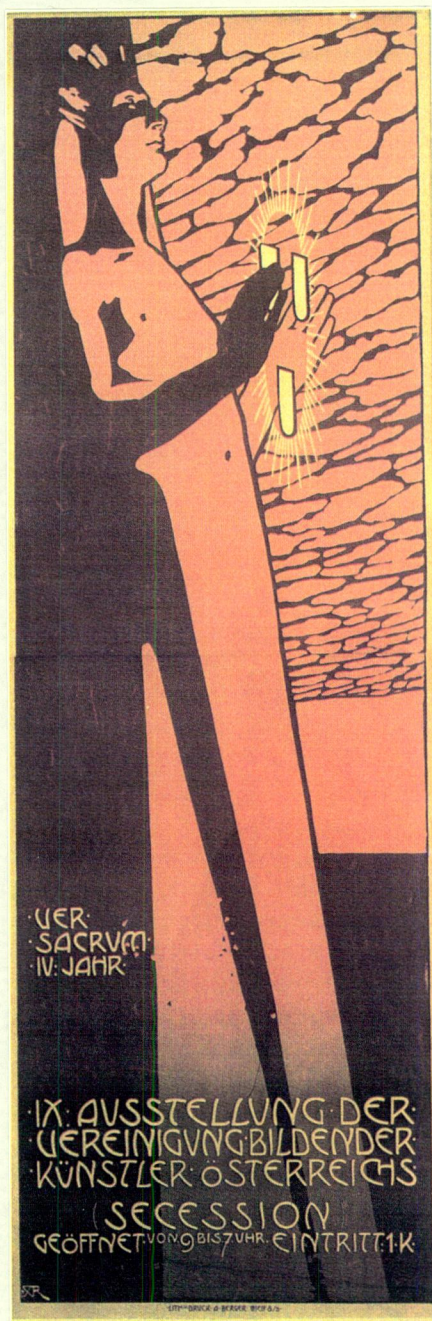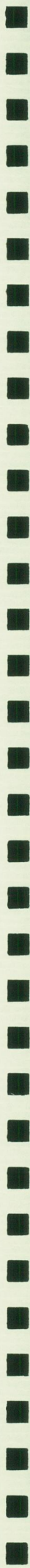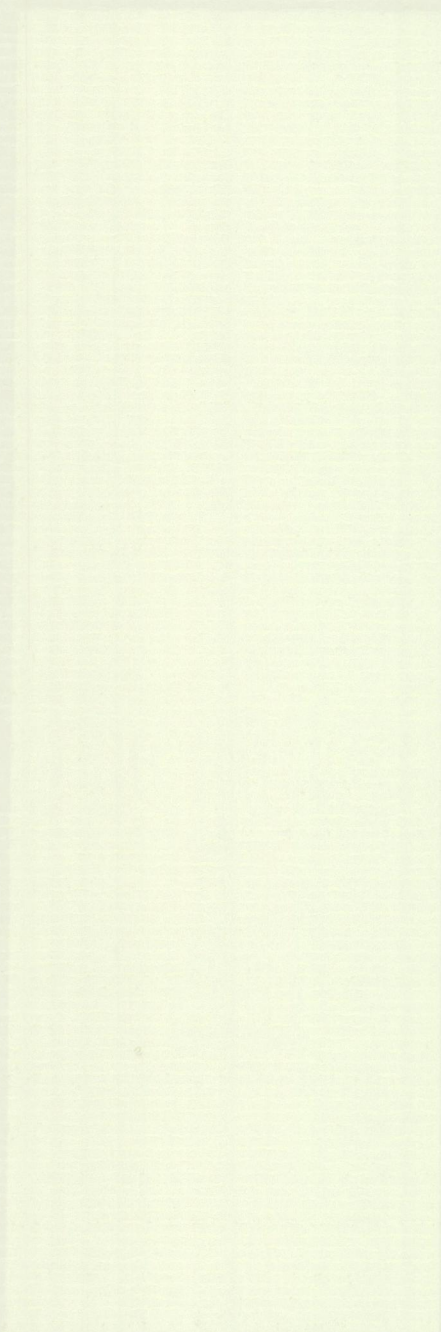
Figure 14 -'9th Secession exhibition poster',Alfred Roller(1901)

into the distance, helps to give the design an unusual perspective or vanishing point. We look up at the figure, almost in profile, but is who adequately turned towards us to see an oblique version of the shining symbol , positioned between his hands. The sky also stretches overhead, but connects with our eye level as it meets the horizon line. Roller has favoured a low placement of text. Only the information concerning Ver Sacrum remains aloof from the main block. No special treatment is given to the word 'Secession', except that it receives a line of its' own and slightly more spacious lettering. Point size remains practically constant , especially when compared with some of the earlier posters, when large text was juxtaposed with others half, or even quarter its height. One could debate which method-is more favourable.

In contrast to the thirteenth show, the following exhibition in 1902, was staged as one monumental work of art, dedicated to Beethoven. Max Klinger's statue of the composer was the centre piece, while a vast array of artists, such has Klimt, Andri, Hoffmann, Auchenteller, Konig, Roller and Moser contributed to the other rooms. With this exhibition, the Secessionists had, once again, provided the critics with a large amount of material, ripe for discussion. Klimts' Beethoven Frieze received the most criticism and it was much later before it was accepted as one of his finest works. Alfred Roller returns again with another poster design for this exhibition [fig 15]. We see a heavily stylised angel, bowing, as she appears to offer a white globe. There is a large variety of repeat pattern throughout the design, while the text is confined to a flat area below the angels outstretched arm. The oblong format, in this case 91cm by 35cm, used in recent posters, is continued for this asymmetrical design. We are confused by the number of shapes within the angels wings' and body. In total, eight different types of pattern occupy this creature. Zig-zag bands, running parallel, represent her fallen hair, while fine curved lines rest upon the back of her head. Whether these are part of a headdress or just more hair, one cannot be sure. Next to them we see a chequered patch at the neck, which may be jewellry or an extension of the transparent gown she seems to be wearing. Although maybe not apparent initially, the angels' profile is continued, after it disappears behind the fabric. A simple line describes her awkward pose. Only one leg is visible, and should the other run parallel to it, we may well wonder how this body manages to stay standing in such a sloped position. We may also question why Roller has bothered to include the outline amidst so much pattern. We find further geometric designs in the wings and background, and the only large flat area of colour is reserved for the text. More curious peculiarities occur in this rather chunky, curvaceous typeface. The central horizontal line in the 'E' has become a dot. Roller makes all the lines to be of equal length, except for the one which contains the word 'Klinger'. This is truly a text block, and its tidy nature benefits the heavily patterned area that surrounds it. Orange, red and green, in semi-dull tones predominate the picture, while white is
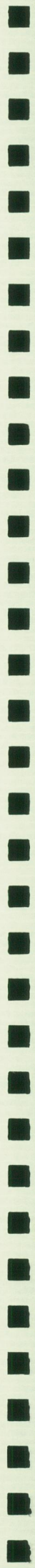
Figure 15 -'14th Secession exhibition poster', Alfred Roller(1902)

applied to small areas, like that of the globe and the words 'Secession', 'Klinger' and 'Beethoven'. While 'Secession' remains the same length as all the other lines, this device is enough to give the viewer instant recognition as to what the poster advertises.

The next poster by Roller provides quite a contrast to the Beethoven frieze, and a move away from the influence of Klimt. The 16th exhibition poster, in 1903 [fig 16] is almost purely a typographical solution. Roller has not used any illustrations in this design, and only the centrepiece of the Secessionist symbol occurs; spaced and repeated. The most outstanding feature of this poster is the treatment of the Secession S's. The three letters extend down from the top of the layout. Perhaps now I could mention the various international influences on the Austrian typography of this time, along with an explanation as to why this country was capable of accepting and reflecting so many different typestyles.

While Roman type was in use prior to the turn of the 16th century, and, eventually became an acceptable and widely used typeface throughout most of central Europe, two major countries in particular refrained from conversion. After England renounced the black letter type in the first half of the 17th century, Germany and the Austrian Empire remained the only two loyal supporters of Gothic print in the Western part of the continent. It was to take the unlikely candidate of the German Nazi Party to enforce change upon the entire country. Initially, the Nazis, too, had used the black letter for their propaganda posters and literature, seeing it to be a pro-nationalistic choice for the people. However, as their future plans included world domination, a more internationally recognisable form of type was deemed necessary so that their message could be received in a more legible fashion.

Like its neighbour, Austria managed to maintain the Gothic script a long time after the Roman character became widespread. A lack of dependency upon Roman type allowed the Austrians scope to readily absorb a variety of styles from abroad. Returning to Roller's 16th poster, his elongated Secession S's contained the essence of Islamic calligraphy, with a strong downward slant, while the main text block makes an immense reference to Eastern lettering. Each character has been carefully described. A slim white line and its slightly bulbous head carves out the shapes of otherwise rectangular units. The entire ornamental effect of this type has clear associations with Arabic or Islamic scripts. We can see a slight emergence of this influence in his earlier 14th poster, but in general, there can be no doubt as to the fact that these foreign typographical flavours help to breakdown the barriers and allowed for such a variety of scripts throughout the Secession.
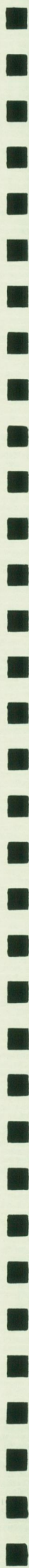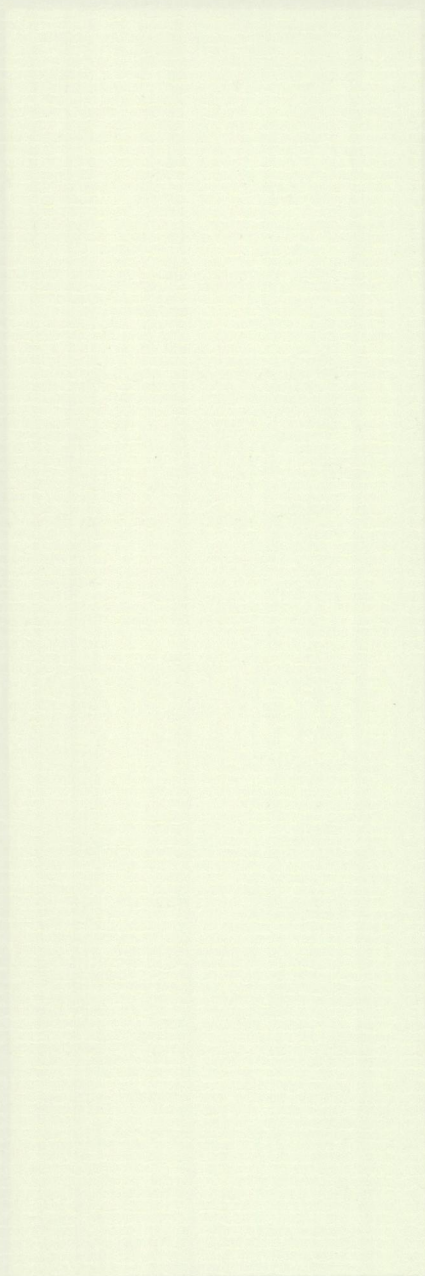
Figure 16 -'16th Secession exhibition poster', Alfred Roller (1903)

Now I would like to regress to the 5th exhibition, from November 1899, to January 1900, and discuss the equally versatile work of Alfred Rollers' counterpart, Kolomann Moser. In this instance, the subject of the poster [fig18] rests upon the words 'Kunstausstelling der'. Folds of hair envelope the figure, which seems to distort the fact that the body appears to be masculine. also, we notice the delicate nature of the wings that protrude out from behind his back. This swirly style is a hallmark of the international Art Nouveau and is reminiscent of many other designs which appeared around the end of this century, especially in countries like France and England. Alfons Maria Mucha [fig 17] was a designer who was also well known for his use of hair as a decorative element in his posters. What with the Secessionist's correspondence with foreign art movements, it is reasonable to presume that Moser was influenced by his artistic counterparts.

Our first impression of Moser's design must be that it is awash with movement. The eye cannot rest easily on one particular place without being forced onto a further point on the page. This is understandable seeing as the figure, its' hair, wings, and the flora are all involved in the one network of linear fluidity. We can follow the line of the hair, down from the face, which connects with the intertwined feet and plant stem, and leads us, full circle to the intricate wings. Although the text occupies quite a large space, its prop like position prevents it from being instantaneously noticed, while the busy nature of the illustration also distracts attention from it.

The word 'Secession', which, like the rest of the text is hand rendered, is styles in such a way that despite the existence of a dividing line between it and the drawing, it almost blends with the decorative elements below it. Moser shows some typography traits previously exhibited by the other Secessionists in their posters, like the shelving of L's, one on top of another. However, on the whole, he manages something close to a split personality in his approach th type. I have mentioned before the inclusion of several different typestyles by designers in their posters, such as that in Olbrich's layout. Moser seems unsure of his styles and manages to display variations of the one letter without obviously changing the typeface. Certain letters, such as N, S and E seem to change from one text block to another.

Kolomann Moser was the one and only artist to be responsible for the poster, catalogue and interior decoration at an exhibition, at least up until the twenty third show, which was the final one before there was a split amongst the Secession members. Moser's previous poster design has not in the least prepared us for his huge change in approach and style. Less than two and a half years had elapsed since he produced his heavily stylised Art Nouveau poster and now he offers rigid geometric forms, repeat pattern and a typeface which has almost been regulated. Moser is not

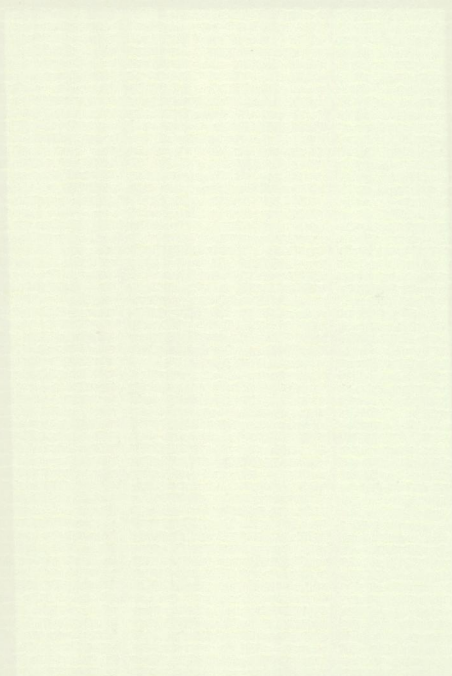Figure 17 -Cigarette paper advertisement,
Alfons Maria Mucha, (1897)

Figure 18 -'5th Secession exhibition poster',
Koloman Moser(1899)

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the first Secessionist to show a dramatic change in style. In a shorter time period, Alfred Roller gave us his starry seascape(4th poster) and then the stone like figure with the Secession symbol for the ninth exhibition. Although in both instances the changes are evident, and shorter formats are exchanged for distinctly oblong layouts, Moser's second design, in 1902 [fig 19] shows a more remarkable difference in approach. Let me examine it independent of its' predecessor

Totally symmetrical in design, three female forms dominate the upper half of the poster. I use the word 'form' in the broadest sense, as only their slimness and slight features indicate their sexual identity. Transparent blue halos surround their heads, while a thin white circle connects all three together. The figure in the middle appears to be positioned behind the others, yet her centre piece, a geometric droplet reversed and filled with small triangles, is not obstructed by the other halos.In fact, they have been indented in order that the full centre shape is visible. This is solely a design feature, perhaps, as these shapes do not appear to have any particular relevance. However, the three figures themselves are of significance as they are representative of

The colouring is also unusual. Prussian blue, white and pink are used predominantly for the genii, with the background, text, extra shapes and the forementioned centre pieces restricted to the blue and a brick red. A blue and white chequer board pattern is repeated several times amidst the grid where the text has been placed. It occurs in both the negative and the positive and adds to a confusing network of squares and varying lengths of type.In the main block of text, the lines are set so close together, words almost merge. With some instances, like where the three N's rest on top of each other, the individual letter is sometimes sacrificed for the sake of pattern. While certain traits remain constant with previous Secession type styles. The' L's have been shelved together and the diagonal of the 'N' intersects the right vertical almost midway. Moser's letters have a strong geometric feel to them. Assembled together, this typeface makes for curious pattern formations. In terms of typography alone, the differences between this and Moser's fifth poster, are emense. On the whole, there could be no real comparisons made. The choice and execution of image further enlarges the great divide between these two designs. Fluidity is replaced with rigidity, and the free flowing line of the seated figure is swopped for three, almost expressionless, maidens.

Moser, in this piece was definitely influenced by Mackintosh. This Scottish designer had one of the principle exhibits at the eight show, which ran from the 3rd of November to the 27th of the same month, just a year previous to the emergence of Moser's 13th poster. Moser was one of three which organised this exhibition and in
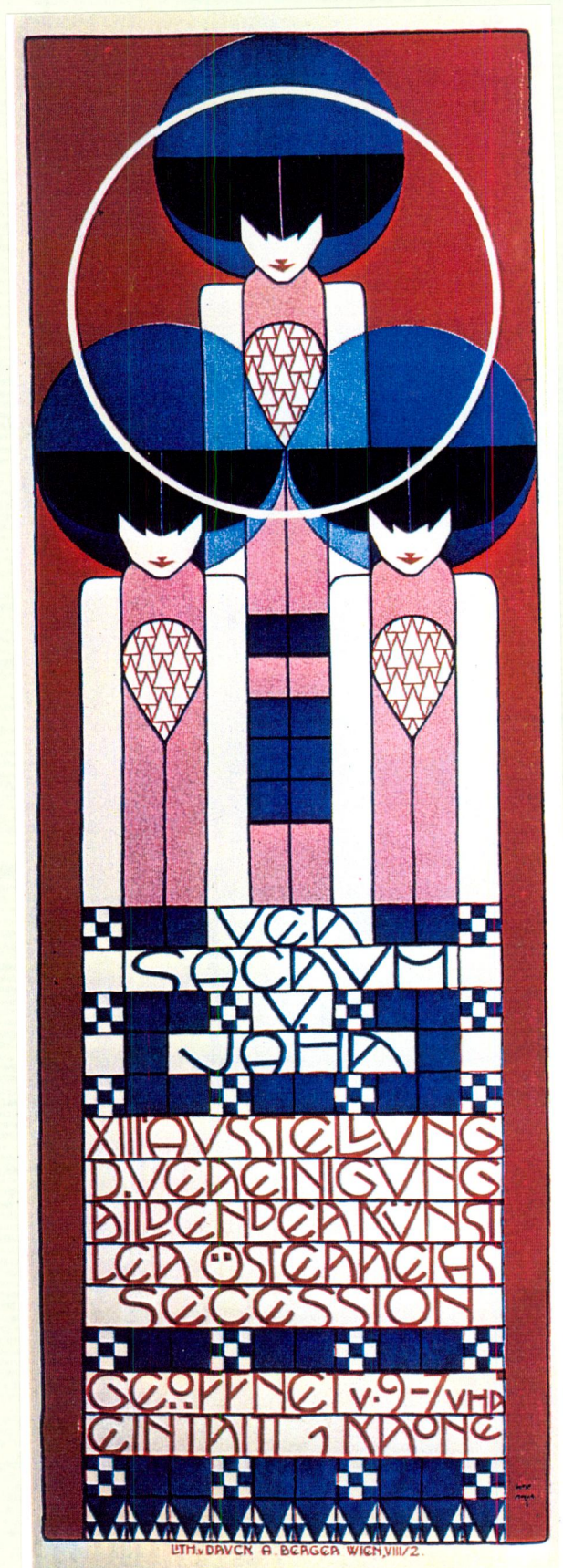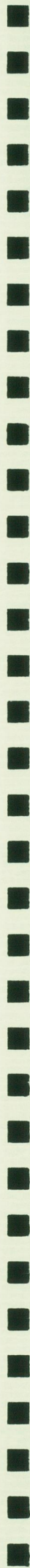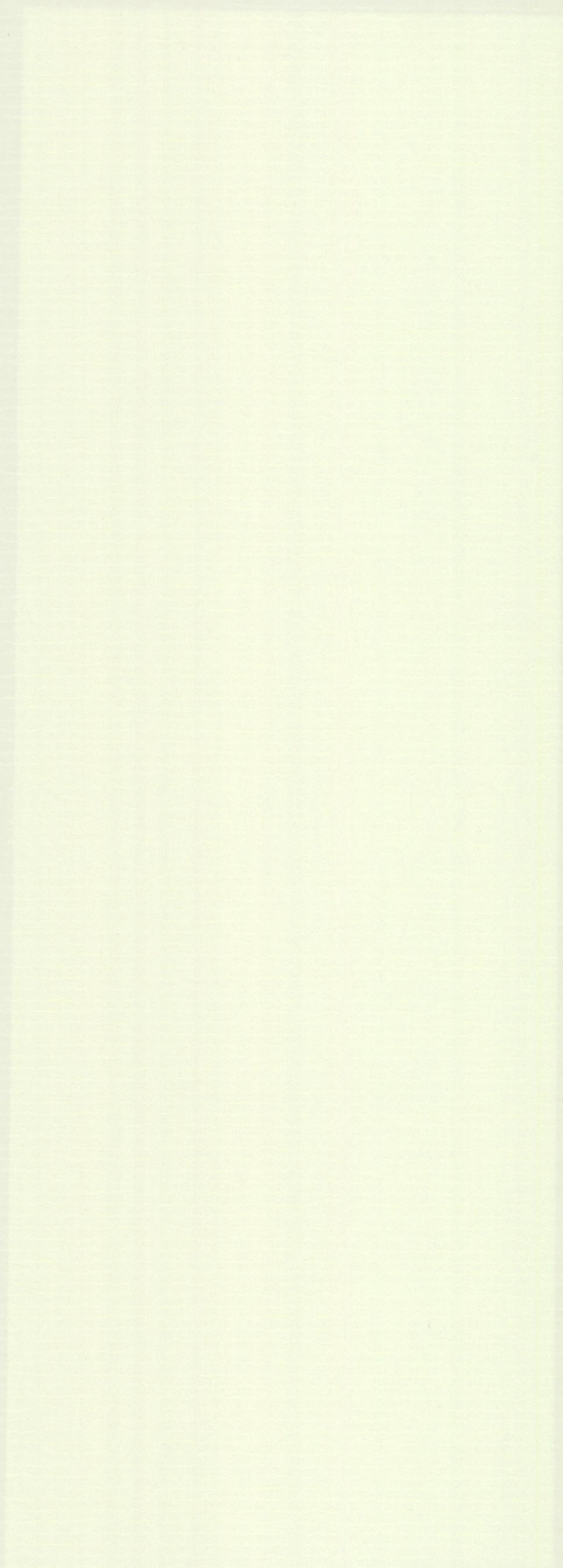
Figure 19 -'13th Secession exhibition poster' , Koloman Moser, (1902)

it Mackintosh was to design the entire Scottish room. Many of the Secessionists admired the work of the 'Glasgow Four', and their reverence towards them dictated that the Viennese artists saw their work as being in a more advanced state than theirs.

Egon Schiele was born in Austria, on the 12th of June 1890, and although his life was short (d: 1916), he produced an amazing 360 paintings during his artistic period. Like Klimt, in the early days, he painted formal portraits of the well to do Viennese ladies, but not to such a great extent. However, Schiele did not manage to gain the respectability Klimt had earned at a young age. At twenty-two he was arrested for immorality on the grounds that he kept nude drawings in his home, and showed them to the young models he would have posing for him. His imprisonment, although brief, was to have a lasting and damaging effect on his artistic pride and indeed, his public profile. As time progressed, he gained some positive acclaim through various commissions. Sadly, it was not until a long time after his death, that Austria realised it's immense loss. Klimt and Schiele's artistic careers could be said to contrast. Klimt started with academic and public recognition, but was to end up flanked by controversy. Schiele's work, on the otherhand, always managed to remain under the critical eye of the censor, but towards the end of his life, his paintings were more widely accepted and appreciated.

Although never a member of the Secession, Schiele organised the 49th exhibition in 1918 and designed the poster to advertise it. [fig 20] Ironically, this was to be his most prominent show, promoted by a totally uncontroversial design. At this exhibition, the main room was devoted to his paintings and in general it was a huge artistic and financial success for all the artists involved. Like Klimt, Schiele's subject matter for his only Secessionist poster implemented a theme derived from antiquity. The scene takes place in a Biblical setting and is based upon a painting he had completed the previous year, entitled 'The Friends', or 'Round the Table'. Alterations were made to various elements in the Last Supper theme, as it was deemed unsuitable for a poster of this kind. The eating and drinking utensils featured in the painting are replaced with books, although the wine carafes remain.

This painting could almost be viewed as an accurate prediction of what was to follow, in more ways than one. It is a group celebration of the participant's work, with Schiele himself seated at the head of the table. His fellow artists are suggested as being, from the lower left, Paris von Gutersloh, George Merkel, Schiele, Felix Albrecht Harta, Alfred Kubin and Anton Fristauer. May I also point out that in the painted version, an extra figure is seated at the foot of the table. This is accepted as being Klimt. For himself and Schiele, this Last Supper was indeed near the end of
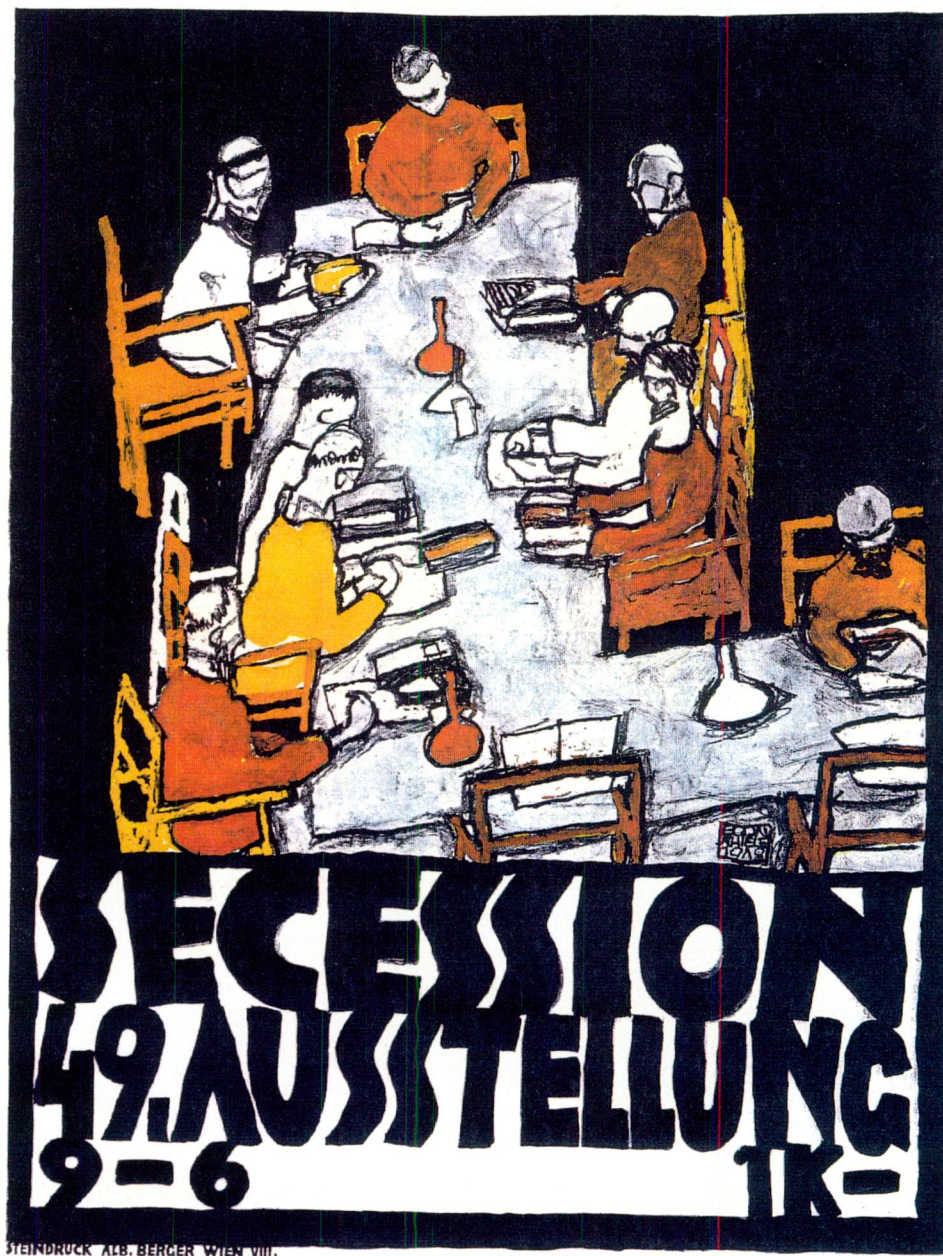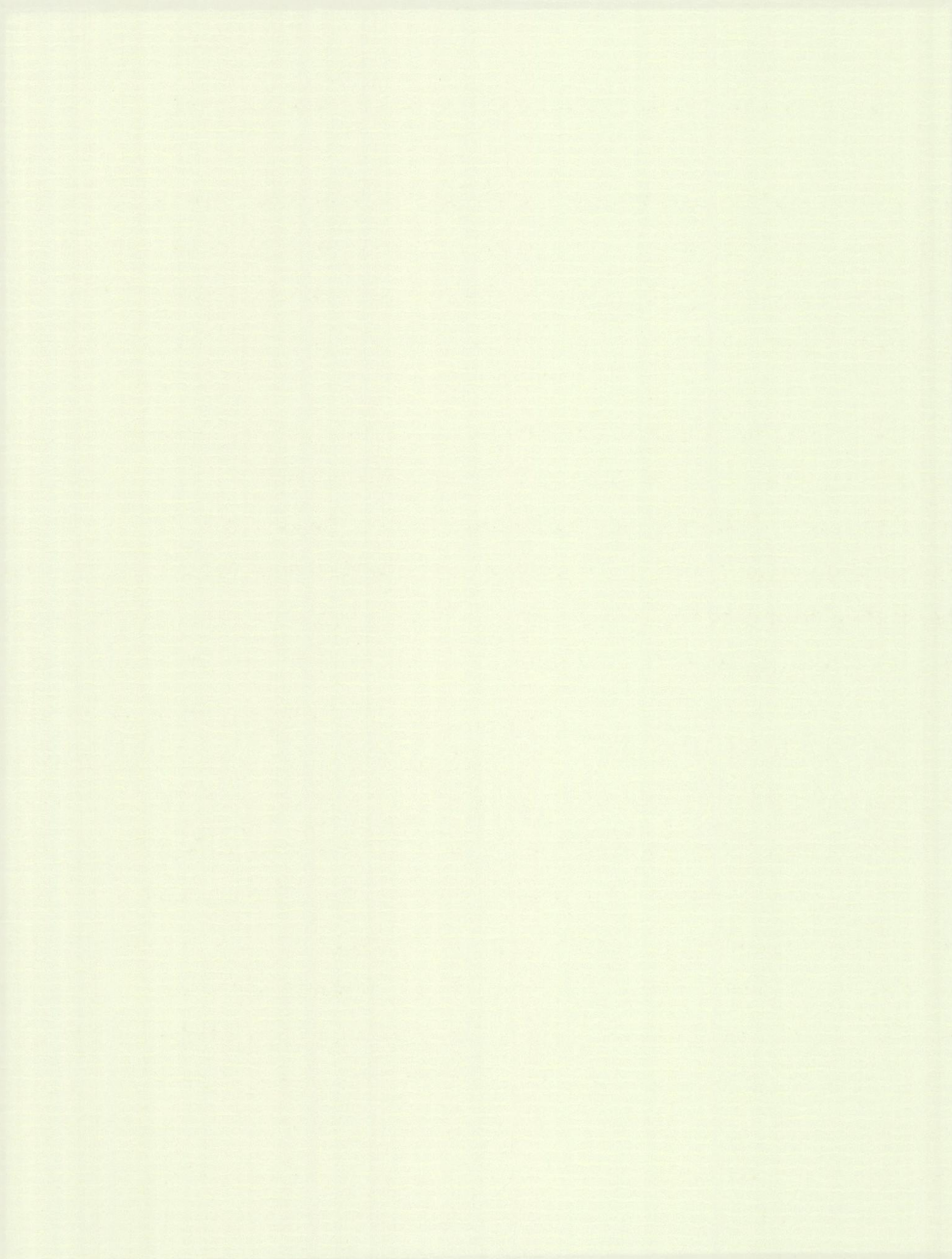
Figure 20 -'49th Secession exhibition poster', Egon Schiele(1918)

both their lives. Klimt died in February 1918, and the seat remains vacant in the poster. In my opinion, Schiele felt that Klimt was irreplaceable. Although dissimilar in many ways, they held a great admiration for one another. Klimt is noted as saying, on a visit to Schiele in his Schonbrurn studio,

"I envy you,
the expression you have put into these two faces on your canvas".

Coming from such a master of bodily moods and emotions, this surely must state Klimts appreciation of his protoge's work. Schiele acknowledges the immense effect this leading Secessionist had on him by drawing Klimt on his deathbed. Unafraid of dying, by this action Schiele may suggest to us with whom he hopes to be reunited.

Returning to Schiele's 49th poster, we see that the format is very similar to many of the previous Secession posters. An area at the bottom of the page has been devoted to text and although it remains cut off from the image, it is in keeping with the illustration style. Schiele's companions are seated in somewhat cluttered conditions, as they pour over books and journals. We see evidence of geometric shapes, but they are stated in a crude and primitive fashion that we have come to accept as part of the Expressionist style. Rigidity reigns throughout the composition, as the unusually sloped table veers off to the right-hand side. It lies most uncomfortably adorned with flatly painted figures who reside in what seem, uneasy chairs. For me, this composition is reminiscent of a pre-Giotto church painting, were depthless forms are stacked in a way that they could almost topple forwards. However, such a style was then used in ignorance of perspective drawing, whereas Schiele's depiction and positioning of the characters was a carefully calculated reaction to the work of his predecessors. It expressed not only a physical point of view, but a psychological one also. It is known that Schiele admired the work of Freud Just a Klimt and his fellow Secessionists had reacted to the classical and monumental art of the Kunstlerhaus Elders, the Expressionists had their own unique message for the Haute Bourgeois of post-war Austria. Along with the likes of Max Oppenheimer and Oskar Kokoshka, Schiele regularly caused a stir with his often gruesome art.

Looking once again to the seated figures, we can see that their roughly etched bodies have little individuality about them. Although recognisable to an art critic, there are few distinguishable features except for the various hairlines and beards. Schiele himself is probably the most readily identifiable. Practically all the artists are bent forward and basic flat colour describes the whole clothed mass. Limbs are stated with uneven black outline. They protrude from their bodies like static extensions and do not suggest the movement that we would usually associate with the reading of

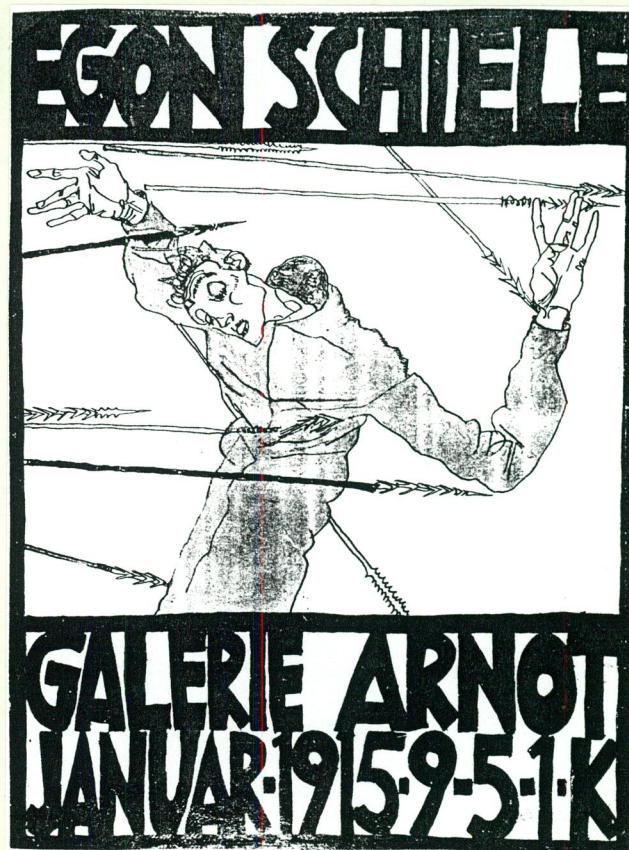Figure 21 -'Wernerwerkstatte' poster,
Egon Schiele, (1915)

Figure 22 -Personal exhibition at the Galerie Arnot,
Egon Schiele(1915)

books. Facial expression is either at a minimum or not at all. The human form has been brought down to a basic shape and this could be seen as an example of Expressionism itself. If we look back upon Klimt's first Secession poster twenty years previous to this, there is a direct contrast in style. Every fold in Athenas' garment has been recorded and yet she still not overly ornamental or decorative. Her facial expression is clear to see as she glances upon the fighting warriors, with stern intensity. While Klimt has illustrated the Goddess in defined line, Schiele takes simplicity to an extreme, with the roughly etched 'Friends'. But while the various elements of Schieles' poster remain free from complication, there is still a great poignancy about the gathering. No one is hidden. Conversation seems absent at this captured moment and the atmosphere hangs heavy with concentration upon their written matter.

Although a static image, the onlookers eye is drawn back an forth across the table, from one artist to another. We search amongst their virtually colourless books and indeed, their faces, in a effort to discover more about these men. The fact that the table leads off to the right, with one artist almost severed at the shoulder, leaves us wondering whether more have gathered and why have books been placed at empty seats. Directly below the image we have the text block, containing a minimal amount of information. This typography exhibits a raw quality that we have not experienced in previous Secession posters, but surprisingly so, we can see some small similarities in Schiele's use of the letter 'S', with the likes of Klimt and Roller. He has depicted this letter minus the curves of a traditional 'S' shape, while it retains a course Expressionistic slant. The type is sans-serif and is executed in black. Heavy slabs of lettering fuse and display some decorative qualities. Two of the S's merge and become one continuous line. Positive areas amongst the text are in the minority. Fellow Expressionists used similar approaches to their typography and Schiele was no doubt influenced by them, and vice versa. Only one small white bar remains void of text and this may be for additional information which would be stated at a later stage. Neither the location of the exhibition dates have been included and Schiele troubles us with only the title '49th Exhibition', the opening times and entrance fee.

We see Schiele use formats that resemble 'The Friends' in other pieces. In both his 1915 poster for the Wernerwerkstatte [fig 21] and an advertisement to announce his own personal show in the Galerie Arnott [fig 22], he implements a similar rough grid around the exterior of the text box and illustration. The treatment of the typography is fairly constant in style and the can be no mistake as to where the type ends and picture begins. This could be said for many of the previous Secession posters. Other artists, however, such as Moser and Roller, attempted to integrate the type and design, and have neither element exist independently of the other. Schiele's Secession text is in keeping with the style of his illustration, but one feels that it is

strong enough in itself, and could carry the Expressionist message as a separate entity.

We can also see many similarities in his pictorial style amongst the three posters. As an artist, Schiele personifies Expressionist art, but in his own individual way. Constantly intrigued by himself, he not only painted many pictures to prove this fact, but also depicted himself in the guise of others. The likeness of Saint Sebastian in the Galerie Arnot poster has been replaced by an image of Schiele and he now becomes the tortured martyr. Previously, Renaissance artists such as Antoneilo Damessina and Antonio Pollaiuolo showed the saint to be a strong young man, brave but quietly accepting the consequences of his faith. Schiele, on the other-hand, seems anguish ridden, and his skeleton frame is adorned with a shapeless garment. Oncoming arrows are met with an awkward stance and his arms are upturned in a defensive , ungamely gesture.

As an artistic personality of this period, Schiele can only be matched by his predecessor, Gustav Klimt. While Klimt was the innovative individual who brought Austrian out from the dark ages of monumental, antiquated art, Schiele carried this influence forward and used its' freedom of thought to depict a post war Europe from Expressionistic eyes. Hermann Bahr said of Expressionism in a 1916 essay

"There had never been a period so shaken with horror, with so much
grimness of death and the silence of the grave. Never had man been so
unimportant, so anxious. Never was pleasure so distant and
freedom so dead."

This comment could be viewed not only as a description of this type of art, but also an accurate perception of a Europe at war. Casualties of the battle field were rounded off to the nearest hundred and the loss of human life was summed up merely with figures. Such degradation obviously effected Schiele, especially when the Austrian Haute Bourgeois still continued with their garden parties, almost in ignorance of those dying in the trenches.

Schiele's early death at the age of twenty-eight on the 28th October 1918 of Spanish influenza, cut short a dramatic and artistically and fruitful life. Edith, his expectant wife, had died of the same cause three days previous. The '49th Secession Exhibition' in March of that year had brought him his greatest success yet. Numerous commissions to paint the high society Viennese were to allow him the purchase of new studio and trip to Hungary. But Schiele's notoriety was short lived and beyond his death, the Austrians took many decades to decide upon his importance. Now, we can but look back and marvel at his extensive portfolio and wonder what else Egon Schiele could have achieved has his earthly existence not been so brief.

Conclusion

Now that we have an overview of several Secessionist styles, it may be possible to decide whether of not they contained a systematic approach to design. Alternatively, we could deem the collection to be so diverse, that to pin point a particular method used throughout would be quite difficult. In my opinion, while some of these Viennese artists offered us a variety of personal styles, it is obvious that they also borrowed a wide selection of ideas from foreign sources, such as international Art Nouveau,Islamic and oriental art, the pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood and classical art..

Certain individuals, such as Klimt and his devoted admirer, Schiele, emerge as the most powerful individuals of this period. Their outstanding contribution to art had, in general, a lasting effect upon their successors. As designers of Secessionist posters, their graphic pieces are the strongest and most unique. Klimt was the initial leader of the Secessionist revolt and it would be difficult to imagine this movement having the same success without him. Schiele helped to revive artistic interest in Austria, when the Secession was at its lowest ebb.

Individuality is not a word that could be easily applied to either Roller or Moser, and yet they are important figures should we wish to define or outline Secessionist design.. An ability to absorb artistic influences from the far corners of the globe, combined with their own personal talent, resulted in an overall eclecticism being present in their graphic work. In the 2nd Chapter, I have also discussed the work of other artists who borrowed styles, but in my opinion, their success was limited in doing so. Perhaps they lacked the creative genius of Klimt or Schiele, or the eclectic talents of Roller or Moser.

So, it could be said that Secessionism was a tool that allowed so many different styles to exist concurrently and yet the end result was a movement with which we associate a definite approach to art. The Austrian Secession was unlike any other movement in Europe at that time, in terms of unusual output and the Austro-Hungarian Empire was a state which allowed scope for such diversity. The various political tensions which percolated through to an artistic endeavour and produced an atmosphere which was not to be experienced again in this country. Graphic design, combined with every other artistic medium imaginable, allowed this Viennese Springtime to be, indeed, Sacred.

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