

# LE CLAIRE KUNST SEIT 1982

GUSTAV KLIMT

1862 - Vienna - 1918

## *Standing Female Nude. Head Inclined, Left Shoulder Raised*

Pencil on imitation Japan paper; 1906-7.

On the verso at the lower right bearing an inscription in pencil: *Nachlaß Gustav Klimt,  
Zimpel Gustav.*

561 x 370 mm

PROVENANCE: The artist's estate – Gustav Zimpel (nephew of the artist) – Dr. Ferdinand Eckardt (director of Winnipeg Art Gallery) – C. G. Boerner, Düsseldorf – Private collection, North Rhine-Westphalia

LITERATURE: Alice Strobl, *Gustav Klimt. Die Zeichnungen 1904-1912*, Salzburg 1982, no. 1584, pp.120-1, repr.

EXHIBITION: *Gustav Klimt, Drawings*, Winnipeg Art Gallery 1964, no. 16 – *Gustav Klimt (1862 - Wien - 1918), Zeichnungen aus Privatbesitz*, Düsseldorf, C. G. Boerner 1987, no. 19, repr.

Gustav Klimt produced over four thousand drawings. The majority are devoted to the study of the human figure and to the female figure in particular. This remained a consistent focus of his work at all stages of his spectacular artistic career – from the early historicist period and emergence of the Secession to his triumphant 'golden period' and late maturity. Most of the drawings were executed in connection with projects for paintings – portraits of women, works depicting allegorical themes like the cycle of life and mythological fantasies. Despite the modernity evident in the marked eroticism of his naked or semi-naked figures he followed academic principles, making whole series of studies from life.

The present study is loosely related to a large group of drawings executed in the years 1906-7. The group consisted of what were probably preparatory studies for the figure of *Expectation* in the mosaic frieze decorating the dining room of the Palais Stoclet in Brussels. The frieze was completed in 1911.<sup>1</sup> *Expectation* draws on ancient Egyptian art. In it Klimt combines two themes – striding and dancing. In the 1906-7 group of studies Klimt had addressed the stride as a metaphor for determination and eternal yearning but had not addressed the theme of the dance. To do this, he had a group of young female models pose for him in the dynamic stance of a stride. The taut contours of their muscular bodies take up the entire height of the sheet. Parallel to his studies of striding figures Klimt executed a series of standing figures that show a whole range of positions, gestures and moods.<sup>2</sup> The introspective expression on the features of the standing nude in the present sheet has little in common with the heroic character of the striding figures. But what links the figure of the standing female nude and the striding figures is the accuracy of Klimt's characterization and the rhythmical precision in his handling of the contours. The focus of the present image is the head of the model, slightly inclined to one side. Her features are schematically portrayed while chin and jaw are heavily accentuated. The raised shoulder and slightly oblique position of the body produce a complex spatial

<sup>1</sup> Alice Strobl, *Gustav Klimt, die Zeichnungen*, II, Salzburg 1982, pp.108-11, nos. 1533-70: IV, Salzburg 1989, nos. 3580-87.

<sup>2</sup> Op. cit., II, nos. 1594-1613.

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constellation that contrasts powerfully with the purely linear depiction of the figure. The effect of monumentality achieved by the positioning of the figure in the picture plane is also a characteristic of Klimt's work. The model's legs are truncated by the lower edge of the paper. This is no accident but a stylistic device frequently employed by Klimt – seemingly to deflect any impression that his figures might be earthbound beings. They are not of this world but still firmly anchored in the plane, sensual yet distant. Fluid linear rhythm is set in opposition to strict formal discipline. It is the fine balance between inner polarities like these that defines the specific quality of Klimt's draughtsmanship. The lyrical vibrancy expressed in the present drawing emerged at a time when as a painter he was at the highpoint of his 'golden style' and this stage of his career saw him produce equally masterly achievements in the medium of drawing.

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