

LE CLAIRE

SEIT 1982

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EGON SCHIELE

1890 Tulln nr. Vienna - Vienna 1918

Portrait of August Lederer

Charcoal on paper.

Signed and dated *Egon Schiele 1918*.

464 x 292 mm

PROVENANCE: August Lederer, Vienna, acquired directly from the artist – Erich Lederer, Vienna and Geneva, by descent from the above – Elisabeth Lederer, Geneva, by descent from the above – Ronald S. Lauder, New York – Private collection

LITERATURE: Renée Price (ed.), *Egon Schiele – The Ronald S. Lauder and Serge Sabarsky Collections*, Neue Galerie, New York 2005-6, p. 316, no. D 158, repr. – Agnes Husslein-Arco and Jane Kallir, ed., exhib. cat., *Egon Schiele – Self-portraits and Portraits*, Belvedere, Vienna 2011, p. 201, no. 89, repr. – Marie Nipper and Tamar Hemmes, exh. cat., *Life in Motion: Egon Schiele – Francesca Woodman*, Tate Liverpool, 2018, p. 69

Exhibition: *Life in Motion: Egon Schiele – Francesca Woodman*, Tate Liverpool, 2018, p. 69

Egon Schiele ranks as one of the groundbreaking artists of the twentieth century. Younger by twenty-eight years than his fellow Austrian and mentor Gustav Klimt, he quickly rejected the decorative aesthetic of *fin-de-siècle* Viennese Art Nouveau and Secessionism to create his own original Expressionist style. His artistic career coincided with the birth of psychoanalysis in Vienna. Freud, as Stefan Zweig noted in his autobiography, saw *Viennese culture and civilisation as a thin veneer through which the destructive forces of the underworld could break through at any moment*. Schiele's work contains presentiments of the same destructive forces smouldering in Europe and the *violent volcanic eruptions* (Zweig) that were to come. His career was tragically cut short by his early death at the age of twenty-eight but he left behind an extraordinary body of work. Some of the finest examples are to be found among the many portraits – paintings and drawings – which constitute a major part of his *œuvre*.

This sensitive and striking portrait of August Lederer [fig. 1] was executed towards the end of Schiele's life, in 1918. The drawing demonstrates Schiele's remarkable ability to detach himself from conventions, to analyze the psychology of the sitter and to identify his distinguishing traits. He has depicted the individuality of his subject with flawless economy of line. Following the tradition of Old Masters like Hans Holbein and Albrecht Dürer, the present drawing is precise, realistically accurate, emotionally incisive and yet extremely simple. As Jane Kallir notes, *nothing [...] is false or extraneous*.¹ The drawing testifies to Schiele's unparalleled sureness of touch and his ability to grasp in a single breathtaking sweep, the complete contour of a figure.²

¹ Jane Kallir, *Late Portraits*, in exhib. cat., Husslein-Arco et al., op. cit., p. 168.

² Further portrait drawings of August Lederer by Schiele are held in a number of private collections. See Jane Kallir, *Egon Schiele: The Complete Works*, New York 1990, p. 635, nos. 2452 – 2455, repr.

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By the last two years of his life (1916-18), Schiele had developed a strong following among affluent Viennese families such as the Lederers. The industrialist August Lederer and his wife Serena were his good friends and supportive patrons.³ It was Klimt who had initiated an introduction. He had stepped in to help a young fellow artist who was constantly in financial difficulties.

In the winter of 1912, Schiele was invited to the Lederers' second home in Győr to paint a portrait of their eldest son Erich. During the visit a friendship developed and Erich decided to take drawing lessons from Schiele.⁴ It was at Erich's instigation that the Lederer family began to acquire Schiele's work in quantity, although not every member of the family approved of him.⁵ However the Lederers indulged their young son's enthusiasm for Schiele's work. They ended up, as Erich said, *owning more Schiele drawings than there are days in the year.*⁶

Gustav Klimt died in Vienna in 1918. This placed Schiele briefly at the forefront of modern art in Austria. But he was to die only eight months later - on the cusp of fame and international recognition – in the Spanish influenza epidemic. His wife Edith had predeceased him by three days.

Jane Kallir has kindly confirmed the authenticity of the drawing and has assigned it the archive number D2455a.

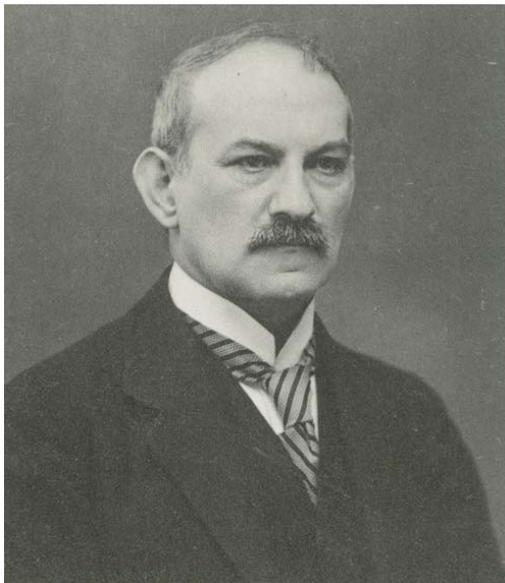


Fig. 1: Unknown photographer, *Portrait of August Lederer*, c.1918.

³ Christian M. Nebehay, *Gustav Klimt – Egon Schiele und die Familie Lederer*, Berne 1987, pp. 11-33.

⁴ Serena Lederer was already studying drawing under Gustav Klimt. Erich Lederer, after taking his first lessons from Schiele and proving a promising student of drawing, rapidly announced his intention to become an artist. C. M. Nebehay, *Egon Schiele: Sketchbooks*, London 1989, p. 63.

⁵ Tobias G. Natter, *Die Welt von Klimt, Schiele und Kokoschka – Sammler und Mäzene*, Cologne 2003, p. 160.

⁶ Heinrich Benesch, *Mein Weg mit Egon Schiele*, New York 1965, pp. 19-20.