
THE PIPES OF PAN AND THE KNEELING YOUTH

A Painting by Bertold Löffler
A Sculpture by George Minne

April 24th through June 28th, 2008

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LÖFFLER, Bertold
1874 - 1960
Austrian School

YOUTH PLAYING THE PIPES OF PAN
(*Flöte spielender Jüngling mit Flora und Pomona*)
1912

Oil on canvas, 74 1/4" x 70 11/16" (188.6 x 180.2 cm). Signed at lower right in brown oil: *BERTOLD LÖFFLER / 1912*. On verso: inscribed in black ink on center stretcher bar: *PZ 585* and *187607-1*; inscribed in green ink on center stretcher bar: *45150-1*; two Austrian export stamps: one on center stretcher bar at right, and one on center right canvas; white label inscribed: *5098*, and in red ink: *x116*.

Provenance:
The artist; Eduard Ast (until 1945); sold by daughter of Ast after 1945

Formerly:
Shepherd Gallery, 1972

Sale:
Sotheby's New York, 26 October 1983, ill. lot 116, as *Rite of Spring*



INTRODUCTION

This presentation of the colorful decorative painting by Bertold Löffler, together with an ascetic, spiritual sculpture by George Minne, is an attempt to move beyond the prevailing notion that Viennese art between 1900 and 1914 was defined by Gustav Klimt and Egon Schiele. The present works testify to the multitude of talents and enterprise that formed Viennese art and society around 1900. Along with Klimt and Schiele, the painters Oskar Kokoschka and Richard Gerstl explored paths towards Expressionism; the architects Otto Wagner, Josef Hoffmann, and Adolf Loos pointed the way toward modern architecture; and a host of painters, designers, and sculptors working under the roof of the Wiener Werkstätte, contributed to the overall image of Viennese Modernism. In their creative exuberance, these artists ignored the dividing line between decorative art and fine art. Oskar Kokoschka illustrated his own poetry and disseminated his illustrations as postcards; Bertold Löffler designed fabric and ceramics which he incorporated in his paintings and frescoes; Josef Hoffmann created cutlery, ashtrays, and teapots; and Koloman Moser, assisted by a Viennese baker, produced rolls of bread in the Secessionist style.

None of this would have happened, however, without the active participation of a phalanx of enlightened bourgeois patrons in Vienna. Industrialists, state officials, artists, and bankers built villas in Vienna and country houses nearby, designed by modern architects and filled with works by young artists. Bertold Löffler's painting, *Youth Playing the Pipes of Pan*, was acquired by Eduard Ast, owner of a construction company and shareholder of the Wiener Werkstätte. Both Bertold Löffler's *Youth* and Gustav Klimt's *Danaë* contributed to the overall design of the Villa Ast. George Minne's *Kneeling Youth*, one of five identical figures circling the *Fountain of Kneeling Youths*, was exhibited at the Vienna Secession (built by the industrialist Karl Wittgenstein). The figures were cast from a mold that belonged to the art critic Julius Meier-Graefe, who also owned the establishment *La Maison moderne* in Paris. The following entries pursue these threads that tie the two present works into the dense network of Vienna's artists and patrons around 1900.

—E. K.

BERTOLD LÖFFLER

The present painting hung in the dining room of the Villa Ast shortly after its completion in 1911. Eduard Ast (1869-1945) was a building contractor who founded Eduard Ast & Co. in 1898; the firm is still in existence today. Ast's pioneering use of reinforced concrete allowed for the open modern spaces created by Josef Hoffmann. Hoffmann built the house for Eduard Ast on the Hohe Warte in Vienna next to a lot occupied by painter Carl Moll. (Moll, along with Hoffmann, Klimt, and other artists, founded the Vienna Secession in 1897.) Ast was only the first illustrious occupant of the villa. Villa Ast later became the home of Moll's stepdaugh-

ter, Alma Mahler-Werfel (née Schindler), who was married to the composer Gustav Mahler, the architect Walter Gropius, and eventually to the writer Franz Werfel.

Hoffmann, Ast, Löffler, and Klimt often crossed paths in the early twentieth century. Hoffmann and Ast worked together on various commissions before Ast asked Hoffmann to build his home. For example, in 1907 the two men worked on the overall design for the Wiener Werkstätte store at Graben 15. (The Wiener Werkstätte was founded in 1903 by Hoffmann and Moser, backed by banker Friedrich Waerndorfer [Ast and Hoffmann were shareholders], and closed in 1932.) The



fig. 1

following year, Löffler and Klimt co-founded the *Kunstschau Wien 1908* exhibition, and Hoffman and Ast collaborated on the *Kunstschau* exhibition space. Ast bought Klimt's *Danaë* from this exhibition. Hoffmann completed the Villa Ast in the same year that he finished the Palais Stoclet (1905-1911) in Brussels. The design for the Palais Stoclet was carried out under Hoffmann, Löffler provided mosaic panels, and Klimt created the famous frieze for the dining room.

Whether the present painting was commissioned or simply purchased has not yet been documented. However, we do know that Ast paid the artist directly in the year the painting was finished. In a letter from Ast to Löffler dated 3 June 1912, Ast mentioned payment for the painting and invited Löffler to view the picture *in situ* (fig. 1).¹ In the same letter, Ast expressed his extreme satisfaction with the present picture, which he felt perfectly suited the dining room. Indeed, the painting harmonized so well with the room in scale, style, and subject that it seems likely to have been commissioned. The idyllic landscape represented in the present painting served to connect the indoor space of

the dining room, which opened onto a terrace, with the exterior space of the garden and grounds. Fruit and flowers, held by the female figures in the present picture, would have recalled the garden and were common subjects found in dining room decor. The blues and greens of the present picture would have complemented the browns, oranges, and pale champagne stucco used in the dining room.

The present painting also harmonized with Hoffmann's architecture (figs. 1 & 2). Hoffmann's fluted strips (inspired by classical fluted pilasters) on either side of the present painting in the dining room and on the exterior of the villa were echoed in the vertical lines of the garments of the two female figures. Incidentally, the dining room was located across the hall from the ladies' salon where Klimt's golden *Danaë* (1907-8) hung.



fig. 2

Without documentation regarding the possible commission, the title of the present painting is a mystery. No title was mentioned in the letter from Ast to the artist; Ast simply referred to it as the “picture” (*Bild*). We include Pan in the title because Löffler included a youth playing panpipes as well as a Pan playing a double flute on the vase at the Youth’s feet (and Löffler was himself a passionate flute player).² Pan, the Greek god of woods, fields, and herds, invented reed pipes. Ancient Greek artists sometimes represented Pan as a handsome youth, but in the



fig. 3

Renaissance and Baroque periods he was depicted with the horns, pointed ears, legs, and tail of a goat. Löffler included Pan figures in several other works, such as in the Salzburger Volkskeller and in the Wiener Keramik fresco for the Werkbund exhibition (discussed below). His design for the 25 July 1896 cover of *Jugend* featured a garland-crowned youth playing a double flute.³ Another possibility is that the youth represents Daphnis, the young shepherd whom Pan taught to play the pipes. Daphnis is sometimes represented with a crown of flowers as in the present painting. The female figures on either side could represent fertility and

abundance in this idyllic setting. In his forthcoming catalog raisonné on Löffler, Gerd Pichler includes the names of two goddesses in his working title for the present picture, *Flöte spielender Jüngling mit Flora und Pomona*. Flora was the goddess of flowers, fertility, and spring, and Pomona was the goddess of fruit and gardens.

The Ast family owned the present painting until it was sold by Ast’s daughter sometime after her father’s death in 1945.⁴ From then until 1972, when Shepherd Gallery acquired it in Vienna, the present picture’s whereabouts were unknown. It later turned up on the market at Sotheby’s, and then disappeared into private hands once again until it was reacquired by Shepherd Gallery.

LÖFFLER’S BACKGROUND

Löffler’s artistic background was formed by his studies at the School of Applied Art (*Kunstgewerbeschule*) in Vienna, which he attended from 1890 to 1900. Under his teacher Koloman Moser, Löffler made studies after live models, animals, and flowers, which were essential elements of his work in all genres. In 1907, Löffler replaced Carl Otto Czeschka as head of the painting course and printing workshop at the School of Applied Art, and he remained a professor there until 1935. Among his notable students was Oskar Kokoschka. Löffler also taught at the Vienna Embroidery School (*Kunststickereischule*) from 1904 to 1909. (His wife, Melitta Löffler, was well-known for her Wiener Werkstätte embroideries.)

In addition to his teaching, Löffler was heavily involved with the Wiener Werkstätte. Most of Löffler’s work for the Wiener Werkstätte comprised decorative art and graphic design,

including numerous designs for posters, jewelry, postcards, textiles, and more. Löffler's use of bold, stylized lines, geometric forms, and decorative motifs in his posters and paintings are characteristic of the Wiener Werkstätte. This style is evident in his well-known poster advertising the Cabaret Fledermaus (1907), the interior of which was designed by the Wiener Werkstätte. In addition to the poster design, Löffler contributed to the decoration of the bar and coat rooms of the Cabaret. Around this time, Löffler became increasingly involved with ceramics. Löffler and Powolny co-founded the Wiener Keramik in 1906 and soon after sold its ceramics exclusively through the Wiener Werkstätte.

Aside from his involvement in the Wiener Keramik and in the Wiener Werkstätte, Löffler exhibited drawings, graphic designs, decorative works, and occasionally paintings. He was represented at the important exhibit he co-organized with Klimt and others, the *Kunstschau Wien 1908*, mentioned above, for which he designed the poster. In 1912, he participated in the Hagenbund exhibition and in the Werkbund exhibition, and in 1913 he exhibited in the International Black and White Exhibition in Vienna.

LÖFFLER'S CLASSICISM

Around the turn of the century in Vienna, classicism was reinterpreted by Löffler and his contemporaries, notably Klimt and Hoffmann. By 1899, Löffler's use of classicism was already evident. A mock Secessionist exhibition—a charity event sponsored by the anti-Modernist socialite and *salonnière*, Princess Pauline Metternich-Sándor—took place at the

Prater in 1899. For the event, Löffler contributed a parody journal, *Quer Sacrum* (*Skewed Spring*), a spoof on the Secessionist magazine, *Ver Sacrum* (*Sacred Spring*).⁵ For the cover of *Quer Sacrum*, Löffler parodied Klimt's poster, *Pallas Athena* (1898). With his satirical journal, Löffler poked fun at the classical tradition admired by the Secessionists, who were led by Klimt. (Löffler was not a member of the Vienna Secession.) That both artists' paintings hung in the Villa Ast over a decade later is noteworthy.

Classicism was still a point of departure for Löffler in 1912.⁶ The present canvas, along



fig. 4

with the large-scale commissions from 1912—the Salzburger Volkskeller and the Wiener Keramik exhibition room of the Werkbund—were some of Löffler's most important works. He was commissioned to decorate the walls of the Salzburger Volkskeller of the Hotel Pitter with figures from Salzburg's history; Hoffmann and the Wiener Werkstätte handled the rest of the interior. Hoffmann's black and white interior contrasted with Löffler's colorful murals, whose figures were inspired by folk figures as well as by classical figures. Each figure in the



fig. 5

painting, one of which was a Pan, was enclosed in an amorphous shape, and in between these bubble-like forms were stylized flowers similar to those at the bottom of the present painting.

For the Wiener Keramik exhibition room of the Werkbund, Löffler painted frescoes *al secco* in a classical vein with images of Narcissus, Pan, putti, Venus, Pomona, and other mythological figures that entirely covered all four walls of the exhibition room (no longer extant) in the Museum für Kunst und Industrie (fig. 3). (This building is now the Museum für angewandte Kunst.) His use of fresco and tempera for the wall covering furthered his connection to antiquity and to the Italian Renaissance. He departed from classical antiquity and the Renaissance in his treatment of the figures. Löffler's figures are simple and flat with dark outlines, rather than modeled after the antique, and most are set against backdrops of stylized vegetation. He also included Pan figures playing pipes as in the present painting. Löffler enclosed each classical figure (as well as some animals) in amorphous shapes just as he did in the Salzburger Volkskeller. The colorful walls formed a backdrop for Michael Powolny's black and white ceramics, akin to the contrast achieved in the Salzburger Volkskeller.

The present painting represents Löffler's connection to classicism, and at the same

time demonstrates the fluidity with which he merged fine art and decorative art. At the base of the tree in the present painting is the classical "source" of his inspiration: an ancient Greek style black-figure terracotta vase featuring Pan playing a double flute. This vessel was not the type that would have been created by the Wiener Keramik, nor was it after an actual

ancient Greek vase, since the shape was not standard. Represented on the vase is the proper flute-playing Pan, part human and part goat, while the youth in the present painting is fully human and plays panpipes.

References to Löffler's textiles, ceramics, and murals, and to Hoffmann's architecture are all encompassed in the present painting. Modern patterned textiles of the type that Löffler designed replace the typical Greek white *himation*, the cloak worn over the *chiton*, or tunic. One of the textile patterns in Löffler's wall mural at the Werkbund exhibition is identical to the blue-gray cloak worn by the woman holding flowers in the present painting (fig. 4). The black-and-white checkerboard pattern on the edge of her garment echoes the tiles of the dining room and of a terrace outside the Villa Ast (figs. 1 & 2). Hoffmann often used this pattern in his architecture and designs.

Almost as a postscript, the artist translated part of the composition of the present painting into a decorative mirror (fig. 5) the following year. Flanked on either side of the mirror are plaques featuring classically draped female figures. On the left is a woman with flowers and on the right is a woman with fruit, as in the present canvas.

—Leanne M. Zalewski

Figures:

1. Josef Hoffmann, Villa Ast, Dining Room. *Moderne Bauformen* 12, no. 1 (January 1913): 16.
2. Josef Hoffmann, Villa Ast, exterior. *Der Architekt* 18 (1912): 10.
3. Bertold Löffler and Michael Powolny, Wiener Keramik exhibition room of the Werkbund, 1912. *Das Interieur* 13 (1912): 63.
4. Detail of figure 3.
5. Bertold Löffler, *Mirror*, 1913. *Studio Yearbook of Decorative Art* (1913): 218.

Endnotes:

- ¹ We are grateful to Mag. Gerd Pichler for information about the Ast family's possession of the present painting. We also thank him for transcribing the letter for us. The original letter from Ast to Löffler is in the Löffler Collection at the Universität für angewandte Kunst in Vienna, LÖ 10.686/Aut/3. The present painting will be included in the forthcoming catalog raisonné on Bertold Löffler by Gerd Pichler.
- ² We are again grateful to Gerd Pichler for this information.
- ³ We thank Gerd Pichler for bringing this cover to our attention.
- ⁴ Gerd Pichler e-mail to Robert Kashey, 1 January 2008.
- ⁵ The translation of *Quer Sacrum* is problematic. In her article listed below, Julie M. Johnson translated *Quer Sacrum* as "Skewed Spring," which reflects its satirical aspect. *Ver Sacrum* is Latin, but *Quer Sacrum* combines German and Latin words. A literal translation results in an awkward phrase: "crossing the sacred" or "across sanctity."
- ⁶ Modern painters who incorporated classicism in their works from the 1910s and 1920s have gained attention in recent exhibitions, such as Elizabeth Cowling's and Jennifer Mundy's *On Classic Ground: Picasso, Léger, de Chirico and the New Classicism 1910-1930* (London, 1990). Picasso's famous painting, *The Pipes of Pan* (1923, Musée Picasso, Paris) is a pertinent example. Picasso was influenced by the Hellenistic sculpture, *Pan and Olympos* (Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Naples),

which he saw in Italy. Curiously, the youth playing pan-pipes in Picasso's painting bears some resemblance to the youth in the present painting. A greater acknowledgment that canonical modern artists incorporated classical subject matter and styles in their modern paintings or worked in both styles simultaneously is also evident in John Richardson's new biography, *A Life of Picasso: The Triumphant Years 1917-1932* (New York, 2007), p. 98. Picasso began both the Cubist still-life *Table, Guitar and Bottle* and the traditional portrait *Olga in an Armchair* in 1918. Richardson's examples date just a few years after the present painting.

Literature:

Bertold Löffler (Vienna: Galerie Metropol, 1980), ill. cat. cover. (The present painting was not included in the Galerie Metropol exhibit.)
Bertold Löffler (1874-1960): Graphics and Design (New York, 1981).
Bertold Löffler: Vagant zwischen Secessionismus und Neobiedermeier (Vienna, 2000).
Julie M. Johnson, "Athena Goes to the Prater: Parodying Ancients and Moderns at the Vienna Secession," *Oxford Art Journal* 26, no. 2 (2003): 51-57 (discusses Löffler's part in *Quer Sacrum*).
Jane Kallir, *Viennese Design and the Wiener Werkstätte* (New York, 1986).
A[melia] S. Levetus, "Austrian Architecture and Decoration," *Studio Yearbook of Decorative Art* (London) (1913): ill. p. 218.
———"Die Villa Ast in Wien von Professor Josef Hoffmann, Wien," *Moderne Bauformen* 12, no. 1 (January 1913): ill. p. 16.
Christopher Long, "'A Symptom of the Werkbund': The Spring 1912 Exhibition at the Austrian Museum for Art and Industry, Vienna," *Studies in the Decorative Arts* 7, no. 2 (Spring-Summer 2000): ill. p. 96 (Room VII, with murals painted by Löffler).
Werner Schweiger, *Wiener Werkstätte: Design in Vienna, 1903-1932*, trans. Alexander Lieven (London, 1984), ill. p. 132 (Room VII, with murals painted by Löffler).
Eduard F. Sekler, *Josef Hoffmann: The Architectural Work: Monograph and Catalogue of Works*, trans. John Maass (Princeton, 1985), 135-40, 319, 322, 332-36.

MINNE, George 1866 – 1941
Belgian School

KNEELING YOUTH, circa 1900

Plaster on rectangular plaster base. Height, from bottom of base to top of head: 28 1/2" (72.5 cm); width, from curve of hip at left to curve of shoulder at right: 7 1/2" (19 cm); depth, from curve of forehead in front to edge of base in back: 19 1/2" (49.5 cm).

Provenance:
The artist; Alfred Roller (circa 1901); the Roller family
by descent



GEORGE MINNE

In November of 1900, George Minne exhibited his *Fountain of Kneeling Youths* (*Jünglingsbrunnen*) at the eighth exhibition of the Vienna Secession (fig. 1). In the center of the Minne Room, five identical nude figures in white plaster, hugging their shoulders with arms crossed over their torsos, were kneeling on the wide rim of a circular basin. The fountain was placed in a round room with four niches lined in matte gold mosaic, each holding small sculptures by Minne. The basin, consist-



fig. 1

ing of two circular drums, brought the figures to eye level. The impression must have been awe-inspiring as if one were stepping into a sacred space. Upon seeing the fountain, art critic Berta Zuckerandl experienced a “shy feeling of alienation and adoration.”¹ To Richard Muther, Minne’s sculptures became “pale human figures spiritualized like gothic buttresses.”² Altogether, there were thirteen sculptures by Minne in this exhibition. Their stark abstraction and otherworldliness was experienced by the public—even if critically—as a complete-

ly new artistic vision. The most obvious effect was that on Viennese artists. Oskar Kokoschka wrote in his memoirs that the strongest impact in his early career had come from Minne’s sculptures.³ Gustav Klimt echoed elements of Minne’s figures in his *Beethoven Frieze* of 1902, and Schiele’s bodies, pitched into space at an angle, appear like anxious versions of the *Kneeling Youths*. A generation later, Wilhelm Lehmbruck, Käthe Kollwitz, and Ernst Barlach created works that echoed formal ideas first presented by Minne in Vienna in 1900. Minne’s *Fountain of Kneeling Youths* marked the end of the floral, linear *Art Nouveau* style and the beginning of angular, architectonic Modernism.

The Vienna Secession was founded in 1897 when the Habsburg Empire was still intact. One might think that the local art scenes in Prague, Budapest, or Zagreb provided enough diversity to supply a new art venue in Vienna. However, from the beginning, the group of young reformers had their sights set on an international horizon. They wanted to show the Viennese public what was going on in the arts beyond their regionally defined *Vielvölkerstaat* (state of many peoples). Ferdinand Hodler was invited from Switzerland, Max Klinger from Germany, and Puvis de Chavannes from France. Along with the Belgians, George Minne and Henri van de Velde, the Mackintosh-MacDonald clan from Scotland exhibited in 1900 and profoundly changed the aesthetics of decorative arts in Vienna.

The artists at the Vienna Secession felt very passionate about the proper presentation of their exhibitions. The large number of architects and designers among the members might have been decisive for this ambition. For the eighth exhibition, Josef Hoffmann was in charge of the overall concept, and he took no shortcuts. Rooms and windows were enlarged and a wall was removed. In the so-called Minne Room a band of squares



fig. 2

and vertical lines ran along the bottom of the wall and was repeated on the lower half of the drum which supported the five figures of *Youths*. High-stemmed trees in containers flanked the door and niches. Skylights provided soft clarity. Minne himself was keenly interested in all details of the installation, as we know from a letter by Minne to Julius Meier-Graefe.⁴

Julius Meier-Graefe (1867-1935), the art critic known as a pioneer of Impressionism in Germany, played a crucial part in the exhibition. He defended Minne in an often-quoted article in which he ridiculed “slow-minded critics” who called the stylized forms of Minne’s figures “ugly.”⁵ Perhaps a modest degree of controversy—and thus publicity—was not unwelcome to Meier-Graefe, who also had commercial interests in Minne’s works. Hiding behind pseudonyms, he wore two hats: editor and entrepreneur. As the editor of the magazine *Dekorative Kunst* and its French counterpart *L’Art décoratif*, he was the chief champion for bringing decorative arts and fine art together as a single venue of modern art. And as entrepreneur, he sold the art he advocated in his writing. From 1899 to 1903, he was director of *La Maison moderne* in Paris (fig. 2). This establishment, designed by Henri van de Velde, offered objects for everyday life in modern designs as well as contemporary works of art, including Minne’s sculptures. Meier-Graefe, van de Velde, and

Minne were friends, and it comes as no surprise that mutual visits and long talks about art resulted in joint projects. Meier-Graefe owned the mold from which the *Kneeling Youth* had been cast for the 1900 exhibition. Rather than shipping five fragile plaster casts to Vienna, the mold was sent and the figures were cast locally.

Two variants of the early *Kneeling Youth* are known, one with feet stretched out (fig. 3) and one with feet bent. (Minne reworked the figure in the 1930s for two bronze fountains, installed in Ghent and in Brussels. These later versions do not concern us in the context of the present sculpture.) The figures of the *Fountain of Kneeling Youths* shown at the Secession in 1900 depicted the kneeling boys with their feet stretched out flat on the support. Other examples of the *Kneeling Youth* show both feet hooked over the rear end of the support, bent on a right angle (fig. 4). Variants with the feet stretched out are very rare and very early. To our knowledge, they were always executed in plaster, except for a single example in cast stone (formerly David Daniels collection) (fig. 5).⁶

Minne exhibited the *Fountain* for the first time in 1899 in Brussels at *La Libre esthétique* under the title *Projet de la fontaine*. It was listed as *réduction* and possibly illustrated in Puyvelde (cat. 27, pl. 26).⁷ However, Puyvelde does not list a source for his photo. Of the exhibition in Vienna, a photo was published in *Ver Sacrum*. It showed the five figures with feet stretched out, each kneeling on the wide flat surface of the circular support. As far as we know, no ensemble of five figures with feet stretched out is extant today. Sculptures of a single *Kneeling Youth* were made more often and in different media. We don’t know whether the single *Kneeling Youth* exhibited at the 1900 Secession along with the *Fountain* had feet stretched out or bent.

Examples of the sculpture with feet stretched out that we could physically examine show dif-

ferent attempts of dealing with the figure's weight distribution. The head bent forward and the arms crossed in front of the chest must have caused the sculpture to easily topple over. Consequently, some casts, including the present one, are mounted on a wedge-like support that is higher in the front than in the rear. The version in cast stone has an extended base at the rear (fig. 5). In a companion piece to the present cast (Smart Museum of Art, The University of Chicago), the lower part of the body is filled with plaster to weigh it down.

Soon after the Secession exhibition, it seems that Minne solved the problem of balance by changing the position of the feet. The versions with stretched feet disappear after 1900. From our research, it seems that all casts with feet stretched out can be traced to the Vienna exhibition and to Meier-Graefe's mold. In addition to the five figures of the *Fountain* at the Vienna exhibition, we know of the example in cast stone (formerly David Daniels collection) and a plaster in the collection of Mrs. Tanghe-Minne.⁸ The latter, obviously owned by the family, might be the original plaster model from the artist's studio. The cast stone version might have been cast by Meier-Graefe for his shop in Paris. (Minne seems to have experimented with cast stone. In an entry in Leo van Puyvelde's monograph, the medium for the *Large Kneeling Youth* of 1898 is listed as *pierre blanche*, which could have been cast stone.)⁹

A bronze cast of the *Kneeling Youth* with bent feet in the Ghent Museum is dated 1898, suggesting that Minne had solved the weight problem much earlier.¹⁰ However, the dating of examples of the *Kneeling Youth* as well as related sketches calls for caution. Von Puyvelde listed the *Kneeling Youth*, the *Fountain of Kneeling Youth*, and the *Large Kneeling Youth* under the year 1898. Ever since, 1898 is affixed as an approximate or definite date in publications and by museums rather indiscriminately on examples of these three sculptures, regardless of the year in which they were executed.

The provenance of the present sculpture can be traced directly to the *Fountain of Kneeling Youths* at the Secession exhibition in 1900. The German scholar Ilse Dolinschek wrote that Meier-Graefe retained the mold of the figures and donated the five sculptures of the *Fountain* to the "then president Carl Moll and other collaborators of the exhibition."¹¹ In a recent exhibition catalog, *Josef Hoffmann Interiors 1902-1913*, Michael Huey published newly discovered photographs of Hoffmann's own apartments, which made it possible to trace the original owners of all five *Youths*.¹² All five original plasters from the *Fountain of Kneeling Youths* seem to be now documented. According to Michael Huey, Carl Moll, Fritz Waerndorfer, and Josef Hoffmann each received one *Kneeling Youth*. Alfred Roller must have received two, since



fig. 3



fig. 4



fig. 5

two identical copies were recently sold in Vienna by the descendants of the Roller family. One of them is now in the Smart Museum, and the other one is presented in this exhibition. Both plasters from the Roller family show lines from a piece mold. It might seem surprising Minne did not bother to smooth out the lines from the piece mold for the exhibition at the Secession. However, it had become almost fashionable to show mold lines after Auguste Rodin had begun exhibiting bronze casts with visible lines. In 1902, Minne exhibited a plaster of his *Bathing Girl* with equally untreated mold lines.

The other three recipients displayed their plaster *Kneeling Youths* in their homes. The painter Carl Moll pointedly depicted his *Kneeling Youth* in the foreground of his *Self-Portrait in the Studio* (fig. 6). Fritz Waerndorfer, a textile manufacturer who went bankrupt by heavily investing in the Wiener Werkstätte, was an enthusiastic collector of works by George Minne. Two of Minne's sculptures were placed in the dining room of Waerndorfer's villa, built by Josef Hoffmann in Vienna. Hoffman mounted the two sculptures on high plinths, backed by square mirrors. In the villa's study, the *Kneeling Youth* was placed in a corner on a mantle piece in front of a three-way mirror.¹³ Josef Hoffmann displayed his own plaster on a piece of furniture based on a rather monstrous design of his own: a magazine shelf, attached to a sofa. It stood in his "bachelor's quarters" in Vienna, Margaretenstrasse 5.¹⁴

Hoffmann seems to have been a particular champion of Minne's small sculptures. In his installation for the *Kunstschau* of 1908, he displayed Klimt's *Portrait of Adele Bloch-Bauer* flanked by a marble version of the *Kneeling Youth* and a marble of the *Large Kneeling Youth* (Puyvelde no. 28).¹⁵ The whole ensemble entered the collection of Ferdinand and Adele Bloch-Bauer and is now re-assembled in the Neue Galerie New York.

Alfred Roller (1864-1935), the original owner of the present plaster, succeeded Carl Moll in 1901 as director of the Secession. In the same year he became professor at the School of Applied Arts (*Kunstgewerbeschule*). Born and raised in Brno, then Moravia, Roller first studied law at the Vienna University, then followed his true interest and enrolled at the Vienna Academy. In 1897 he was



fig. 6

one of the founding members of the Secession. Roller exhibited paintings early on, but became eventually famous for his set designs. Gustav Mahler hired him in 1903 as director of decorations and costumes at the Vienna *Hofoper*, and his designs for the operas of Richard Wagner and Richard Strauss became legendary.

At the same time, Roller continued to exhibit at the Secession. The ambition of the Secession's members to create a *Gesamtkunstwerk* culminated in 1905 in the Beethoven exhibition. Max Klinger's monumental, multi-media sculpture of *Beethoven* dominated the center. Through openings in the walls, one could see Klimt's *Beethoven Frieze* along the upper part of the adjacent room. Alfred Roller contributed the poster and a large fresco to this exhibition. At the opening reception

Gustav Mahler led a group of trombone players in a segment from the last movement of Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony*. The text, which the select audience surely knew by heart, evokes the creator of the world above the starry sky. Roller's fresco of rhythmically repeated angels, *Night Descending*, could not have been a more suitable horizon for the event.

—*Elisabeth Kashey*

We are grateful to Gilles Marquenie for sharing his research with us.

Figures:

1. *Fountain of Kneeling Youths. Ver Sacrum* (1901).
2. *La Maison moderne* in Paris. *Deutsche Kunst und Dekoration* 7-8, (1900-1901): 102.
3. *Kneeling Youth*, detail of the present plaster.
4. *Kneeling Youth*, detail, marble, Neue Galerie New York, gift from the heirs of the Bloch-Bauer family.
5. *Kneeling Youth*, detail, cast stone, formerly collection David Daniels.
6. Carl Moll (1861-1945), *Self-Portrait in the Studio*, circa 1906, Academy of Fine Arts, Vienna, Gemäldegalerie.

Endnotes:

- 1 Quoted in Ilse Dolinschek, *Die Bildhauerschule in den Ausstellungen der Wiener Secession von 1898-1910* (Munich, 1989), 54.
- 2 Quoted in Dolinschek, 55.

- 3 O. Kokoschka, *Aus meinem Leben* (Munich, 1971), 38.
- 4 Dolinschek, 53.
- 5 Quoted in Dolinschek, 53.
- 6 The Minneapolis Institute of Arts, *Sculpture from the David Daniels Collection* (Minneapolis, 1979-80), ill. cat. no. 65, p. 151.
- 7 Leo von Puyvelde, *George Minne* (Brussels, 1930 [?]).
- 8 Museum of Fine Arts, Ghent, *George Minne* (Ghent, 1982), ill. cat. no. 70, p. 149.
- 9 Puyvelde, 77.
- 10 Museum of Fine Arts, Ghent, ill. cat. no. 71, p. 149.
- 11 Dolinschek, 84.
- 12 *Josef Hoffmann Interiors 1902-1913*, ed. Christian Witt-Doerring (New York, 2006), 84 *passim*.
- 13 Sabine Plakholt-Forsthuber, "Spiegel der Seele" in *Der Kuss der Sphinx. Symbolismus in Belgien*, ed. BA-CA Kunstforum (Vienna, 2007), ill. p. 62, fig. 20.
- 14 *Josef Hoffmann Interiors 1902-1913*, ill. p. 84.
- 15 Jane Kallir, *Viennese Design and the Wiener Werkstätte* (New York, 1986), ill. p. 64.

Final Note:

In light of so much evidence regarding the fate of the five original plasters, two questions remain: How were the figures mounted flush to the surface of the drum at the exhibition, and how could they afterwards show up with a base which is integral to the figure? A tentative explanation is, that the individual sculptures were sunk with their bases into the surface of the drum. The figures in the exhibition had to be somehow anchored to the drum. We suggest that the base fulfilled this function. It remains a speculation.

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