
Hans Böhler

At the Bar

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Hans Böhler

At the Bar

Summer 2023

Exhibition organized by
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS: With thanks for their assistance on this project: Dr. Gerd Pickler, Prof. Doc. Annie Paule Quinsac, and Dr. Felicitas Thurn-Valsassina

BACK COVER ILLUSTRATION: *Portrait of the Artist*, Collotype from photo, Photographer Unknown, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, <https://onb.digital/result/110C8FD3>.

GRAPHIC DESIGN: Kaitlin Anne Vervoort

A Rediscovery of an Early Painting by Hans Böhler

“I see you have an early painting by Hans Böhler...”

It was early 2020 when we acquired the present painting. Along with the rest of the world, we were on the verge of shutting down indefinitely for the Covid-19 pandemic.

The work immediately struck us as Viennese—everything pointed in that direction—the subject matter, the square format, the treatment of the hands, the Josef Hoffmann style frame, and the canvas supplier’s mark (see APPENDIX 1 AND 2).

With limited physical access to reference libraries during this time, we searched the web and what we had at hand in our gallery archives. After reviewing countless artists of the period, we kept coming back to the work of Hans Böhler, an integral member of the artistic circle around Egon Schiele, Gustav Klimt, Mopp (Max Oppenheimer), and Hoffmann in Vienna in the early 1900s. The juxtaposition of contrasting colors, particularly of the flesh tones and the abstract space in the background, seemed familiar to his work.

As the pandemic regulations eased, we were able to show the painting to various colleagues for opinions and insights. What we received were many variations on the same “oh, it’s not Viennese, perhaps a Hungarian or Czech artist working in Paris.” Frustrated, we put the research on hold as our other gallery projects took precedent.

After some time, we decided to reinvestigate our initial hunch of Hans Böhler as the painter of this elusive painting. The foundation of the material presented in this dossier was gathered with the intention of publishing the work as “Austrian School, possibly Hans Böhler.” As the painting hung in our back room, unattributed, a friend, the art historian Annie Paule Quinsac, casually remarked: “I see you have an early painting by Hans Böhler” (see APPENDIX 3). This shocked and delighted us. Here was an unsolicited opinion from a colleague who had intimate knowledge of Böhler’s work. With this affirmation we redoubled our efforts and finally felt that we were indeed on the right track to determining the authorship of this work; in recent months, other experts in the Viennese art world have since come on board.

We decided to prepare this dossier and in need of hi-res images of the work, we removed the painting from its curiously constructed frame (see APPENDIX 1). There in the raking light on the verso of the canvas, under the upper right stretcher bar key, was the inscription “H B---” (see APPENDIX 4).

“I see you have an early Hans Böhler...”

Indeed.

We do.

RK / DW

BÖHLER, Hans (Vienna 1884 – 1961 Vienna)
Austrian School

AT THE BAR, circa 1908 – 1910

Oil on canvas. 31 ½" x 31 ½" (80 x 80 cm). Framed: 34 ¼" x 34 ¼" (87 x 87 cm). On verso, inscribed in pencil at top right corner, diagonally situated between the stretcher bar keys: *H B...* (illegible). Canvas supplier's mark stamped in ink on verso: *Malleinwandfabrik | WIEN XIV, Arnsteingasse 31 | Arnold Landsberger | Niederlage | I. Tegetthoffstrasse 4* (enclosed in an oval). Dorotheum inventory number inscribed on upper left verso of frame in black marker: 142-53489. To the right of inventory number, an earlier inscription in crayon: — 4.

PROVENANCE:

Private Collection, Berlin, by October 3, 1991;

Considered for the Dorotheum auction *Kunst des 20. Jahrhunderts* on October 3, 1991 listed as Viennese School, *Drei Personen in Erwartung [Three People in Anticipation]*, circa 1915, inv. no. 142-53489, withdrawn before the publication of the catalog; Private Collection, Paris, until 2020.



Some artists prefer the past, and indeed any period of the past with its specific art forms, to the present, and assiduously draw from traditional models. Others, inspired with the fervent belief that their own age is ‘the age of destiny’, look neither forwards nor back but live and create entirely in the present. Thirdly, there have always been artists who prefer the future above all, forerunners who race headlong towards it and who, thanks to their happy intuition of what it is to come, create works that are misjudged at first because scarcely comprehensible to their contemporaries. *Hans Böhler is an artist who values tradition without burying himself in it; he has passed through all three phases and is now a creative artist who transmutes what exists—things seen, felt and experiences—into aesthetic images.*¹

Arthur Roessler (1877 – 1955)

On September 11, 1884 Hans Böhler was born into one of the most prominent families supporting the arts in Vienna at the turn of the century. The father, Otto Böhler, was a chemist and partner in the family firm Gebrüder BÖHLER & CO that supplied steel to the region. With offices in Asia, Europe, and the United States the reach and influence of the Böhler Brothers was expansive and the opportunity for travel ripe. As a young man, Hans began to display an aptitude for the arts, mainly music and drawing; his father, an artist in his own right, made a concerted effort to keep Hans free of the burdens of the family business.²

Some sources reference the first of Hans Böhler’s exhibitions to have occurred in 1901 with

the *Aquarellistenclub* where he received a positive reaction to his entries.³ It was this foray into the visual arts that encouraged Böhler to commit himself to it professionally. Shortly after this first exposure to the art scene, Böhler took a trip to Paris. Little is known about this trip other than a brief mention in the publication *Erdegeist*.⁴ It is likely that whilst in Paris, Böhler was exposed to various Post-Impressionist movements such as Divisionism, Les Nabis, and later the Fauves. The effect that Van Gogh had on all these artistic movements cannot be emphasized enough. Böhler too appears to have been inspired by the Dutch painter, either directly through Van Gogh’s work or indirectly by the artists for whom Van Gogh was the source of much guidance and influence. The prevalence of bar scenes in French art of the time was unparalleled. Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec (1864 – 1901), Louis Legrand (1863 – 1951), Edgar Degas (1834 – 1917), and Pablo Picasso (1881 – 1973) were among the most prolific social commentators at the turn-of-the-century and their art transcended nation-state borders and culture. It may have been in these budding years of artistic development that Böhler found a model for his work.

Upon Böhler’s return to the Austrian capital, he found a guiding hand in the tutelage of Franz Jaschke (1862 – 1910) of the Jaschke School of Painting. In 1904 he also enrolled at the Academy of Fine Arts, Vienna to work under Professor Rudolf Bacher (1862 – 1945) but quit after two or three days feeling underchallenged by the curriculum.⁵ Instead, he remained at the Jaschke School of Painting from 1902 until circa 1904/06.⁶ One critic, Dr. Wladimir Zaloziecki, saw the influence of Paris and Impressionism in Böhler’s choice of tutors: “Hans Böhler found what he was looking for: a hand that was to introduce him to those mysteries of art that Paris and the French had shown him.”⁷

At some point circa 1904/06 Böhler left Jaschke's instruction. He continued his education on his own, learning much about the arts from experimentation. In 1905 Böhler joined the artist's association, Jungbund, established by the artist Carl Leopold Hollitzer (1874 – 1942). Founded in 1902, the Jungbund worked closely with another artist collective founded in 1900, the Hagenbund (Künstlerbund Hagen), by Josef Urban (1872 – 1933) and Heinrich Lefler (1863 – 1919).⁸ As a member of the Jungbund, Böhler contributed three drawings to a 1905/06 exhibition featuring the Hagenbund and Jungbund. The drawings, from a trip to Belgium, no. 204 *Am Kanal*, no. 206 *Kursaal*, *Ostende*, and no. 207 *Fischmarkt in Middelberg* were



FIGURE 1. Hans Böhler, “Bar Philosophie”, *Die Muskete* VII, no. 167 (10 Dezember 1908), 85



FIGURE 2. “Ad for *Humoristen-Ausstellung: Die Mitarbeiter der ‘Muskete’* at Galerie Arnot,” in *Die Muskete* IX, no. 221 (23 Dezember 1909): VII

shown next to works by fellow Jungbund members Oskar Laske (1874 – 1951), Otto Barth (1876 – 1916), and Tomislav Krizman (1882 – 1955).⁹ Critics were beginning to take notice of the young artist. In the art magazine *The International Studio*, one critic specifically noted Böhler's aptitude for color: “Hans Böhler in his drawings shows a fine sense of colour.”¹⁰

Böhler's next known exhibition wasn't until 1908 when he participated in the first Kunstschau exhibition. In the intervening years, he contributed to satirical illustrated journals such as *Jugend*, *Erdegeist*, and *Die Muskete* with illustrations parodying societal norms, nightlife, bar scene culture, and national identities. By working in this vein Böhler operated in the shadow of the previous generation of caricaturists and humorists such as Th. Th. Heine (1867 – 1948), Rudolf Wilke (1873 – 1908), and Karl Arnold (1883 – 1953). The captions that accompanied Böhler's illustrations were likely produced by the editor of the publication to match the depicted scene. Nevertheless, ranging from geopolitical to moral, romantic to familial, each legend offers an extra layer to the possible interpretations of each image. In the publication *Die Muskete* most of

Böhler's illustrations take place in bars, restaurants, and other social settings. One such image from 1908 demonstrates Böhler's growing interest in depicting bar scenes much like the present painting *At the Bar*. Titled *Bar-Philosophie*, the focal point of the scene is a woman attired in a fur stole, wide brimmed hat, and heels embellished with a bow (FIGURE 1). Hatted men and women mingle around an 'American' styled bar covered in an array of glasses containing mysterious concoctions.¹¹ As the woman in question ruminates on her failed relationships, she



FIGURE 3. Hans Böhler, *Stehender weiblicher Akt* [Standing Female Nude], 1908, oil on canvas, 76 ¾" x 35 7/16" (195 x 90 cm). Private Collection.

stirs her cocktail surrounded by a bustling nightlife. The caption reads: "Once in my life I found a noble guy. And he was a rogue."¹² The women in these vignettes are always portrayed in the latest fashions, though not of Wiener Werkstätte design, which was too voguish for widespread viewership, yet the men are often depicted with a touch of contempt. They are shown to be uncoordinated, disreputable, and ineffectual. In December of 1909 Böhler was represented in the exhibition *Humoristen-Ausstellung: Die Mitarbeiter der "Muskete"* featuring work by illustrators from Die Muskete at Galerie Arnot (FIGURE 2). In total, Böhler contributed to *Die Muskete* for just under two years from 1908 until 1910, a time which marked his entrance into the world of Egon Schiele (1890 – 1918),



FIGURE 4. Friedericke Maria Beer at the age of 16 in 1907, Photographer Unknown. Reproduced in Martin Suppan, *Hans Böhler: Leben und Werke* (Wien: Edition Martin Suppan, 1990), 12.

Gustav Klimt (1862 – 1918), and Josef Hoffmann (1870 – 1956), artists with whom he became both close personal friends and colleagues.

In 1897 a group of artists broke away from the conservative artist collective Künstlerhaus based in Vienna and established the Secession after the model of the Berlin and Munich Secession founded by Franz von Stuck (1863 – 1928) some five years earlier. Among those artists were Klimt, Koloman Moser (1868 – 1918), Joseph Maria Olbrich (1867 – 1908), and many others. The Secession sought to incorporate all forms of art in its program including textiles, graphic

design, and architecture. Over the years, there were divisions within the group over exactly how to integrate these nontraditional forms of art and to what extent they should be prioritized. An enclave of artists within the Secession, led by Klimt, supported the idea of *Gesamtkunstwerk*, or a total work of art, in all parts of life. Those opposing the leveling of all forms of art and inclusion of the applied arts were led by Josef Engelhart (1864 – 1941), a co-founder of the Secession who suggested a return to the "traditional" fine arts. After a dispute in 1905 involving a Klimtgruppe backed alliance with the commercial gallery, Galerie Miethke, the Secession took a vote on the proposed amendments to the association's objectives. Klimt and his acolytes lost by one vote precipitating the en

masse resignation of Klimt along with several of his colleagues including Adolf Böhm (1861 – 1927), Hoffmann, Adolf Hölzel (1853 – 1934), Max Kurzweil (1867 – 1916), Richard Luksch (1872 – 1936), Franz Metzner (1870 – 1919), Carl Moll (1861 – 1945), Moser, Felician von Myrbach (1853–1940), Emil Orlik (1870 – 1932), Alfred Roller (1864 – 1935), and Otto Wagner (1841 – 1918). Within three years, these artists mounted a new artist collective and subsequent exhibition, the *Kunstschau Wien*.¹³

On the 60th anniversary of Emperor Franz Joseph's reign, the *Kunstschau* mounted their first exhibition in a building designed by Josef Hoffmann specifically for the show. Hans Böhler was given a space in a salon on the second floor, room 45, exhibiting alongside Otto Zweig-Trubel (1885) and Cæsar Kunwald (1870 – 1946). His contribution was an oil on canvas entitled, *Damenbildnis*.¹⁴ Most scholars identify it to be the same as the painting *Stehender weiblicher Akt*, a nude of his childhood friend and lover Friederike Maria Beer (later Beer-Monti) (1891 – 1980) who was later painted by both Schiele and Klimt (FIGURE 3 AND 4).¹⁵ During the Klimt commission, Beer-Monti and Klimt became lovers; Böhler and Beer-Monti remained close friends for the remainder of their lives.

By 1909 Hans Böhler was poised to participate again with Klimt and Hoffmann in the *International Kunstschau*. The exhibition hall that housed the show the previous year was due for demolition as per the original terms of construction but the plans for the concert hall that was to replace it were delayed and the *Kunstschau* was permitted to launch its second show in the original building. Böhler's oil on canvas *Kritik*

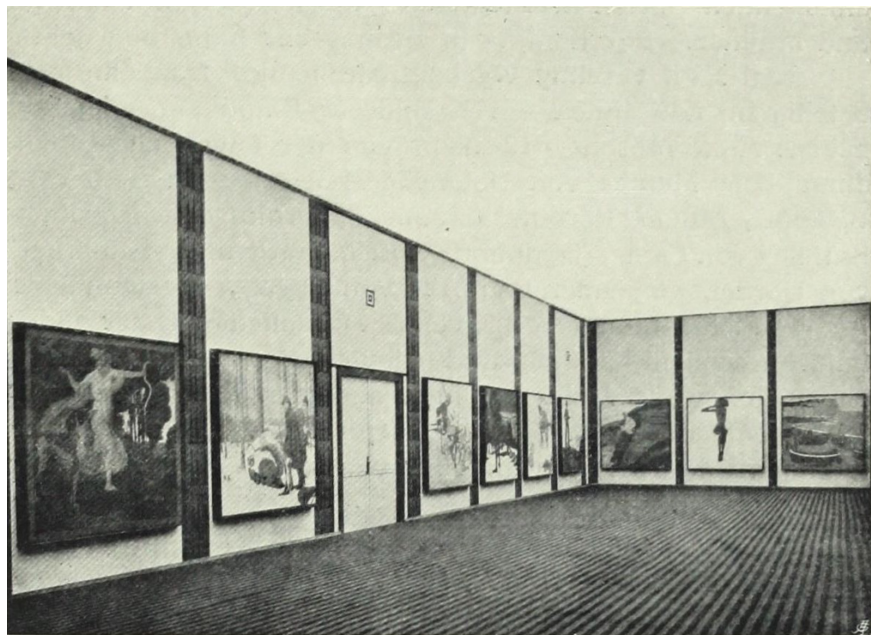


FIGURE 5. Installation view of the Klimtgruppe Room VI of *Die Erste Internationale Jagd-Ausstellung, Wien 1910*, designed by Josef Hoffmann. Reproduced in *Die Erste Internationale Jagd-Ausstellung Wien 1920: Ein Monumentales Gedenkbuch* (Wien; Leipzig: Wilhelm Frick, Kais. und Kön. Hofbuchhändler, 1912), 31.

was placed in room 21 alongside Karl Caspar (1879 – 1956), Orlik, and Hans Brühlmann (1878 – 1911). Room 21 directly preceded room 22, where a selection of Gustav Klimt's works was featured.¹⁶ The placement of Böhler's work in the second show indicates either a closer relationship with or greater recognition by the *Kunstschau*.

At the end of 1909, Böhler was represented in two more exhibitions, the previously mentioned exhibition of *Die Muskete* illustrators and one held at the Gustave Pisko Galerie with members of Egon Schiele's newly founded *Neukunstgruppe* (New Art Group). The show, simply titled *Neukunstgruppe*, featured two works by Böhler: *Wasserschloß* and *Porträt*.¹⁷ Arthur Roessler, an art critic at the time who later became a key biographer of Egon Schiele and Hans Böhler, wrote a laudatory review of the exhibition in the newspaper *Arbeiter=Zeitung*. Among the artists he praised in the article apart from Schiele were Hans Böhler, Gusti von Becker (1879), Hilde Exner (1880 –

1922) Friedrich Pollak (1887) Richard von Rziha Asir (1883 – after 1928), and others.¹⁸ It was also during this year that Josef Hoffmann designed Böhler's atelier at no. 16 Gußhausstraße in Vienna's fourth district, Wieden.¹⁹ By this time, Böhler was an avid collector and patron of Klimt, Schiele, Hoffmann, and others.

Böhler participated in two separate exhibitions in 1910, the first of which was the 36th *Ausstellung der Vereinigung bildender Künstler Österreichs Secession* where he exhibited *Das starke Geschlecht* alongside fellow Viennese artists Ludwig Wieden (1869 – 1947), Josef Stoitzner (1884 – 1951), and Maximilian Lenz (1860 – 1948).²⁰ Later that year Böhler was included in another exhibition which may be the most pertinent in reference to the present painting *At the Bar*. On the 80th anniversary of Emperor Franz Josef's birth, an international hunting exhibition was staged in the Rotunda, a building first constructed for the 1873 Vienna World Exhibition. *Die Erste Internationale Jagd-Ausstellung* was a celebration of the sport of hunting. Within the rotunda art was placed next to antlers, horns, and trophies. One room was dedicated each to the so-called Klimtgruppe and the Secession. Professor Josef Hoffmann curated and designed the Klimtgruppe room with a very particular stipulation: only square-format paintings were allowed (FIGURE 5).²¹ Often nicknamed *quadratl-Hoffmann* (*Square Hoffmann*) for his obsession with all things square, Josef Hoffmann and the Wiener Werkstätte, over which he presided, made waves through the modern art world.²² Böhler's entry is listed as *Dekoratives Panneau*, a title given to other works in the exhibition by Carl Krenek (1880 – 1948), Edouard Stella (1884 – 1955), Alfred Basel (1876 – 1920), and others. Regardless of its format, it seems unlikely that Böhler's *At the Bar* was on view at this exhibition, but the influence of Hoffmann is apparent (APPENDIX NO. 1). Just as Klimt

and Schiele revisited the square-format promoted by Hoffmann throughout their career, so did Böhler.

Tied to the Wiener Werkstätte through his association with its participating artists, Klimt, Hoffmann, and others, as well as his intimate long-term relationship with Friederike Maria Beer-Monti, who was in her own right, a supporter of the Wiener Werkstätte and a model for various fashion and jewelry designers, Böhler was in frequent contact with this emerging school of design. After a trip to the far east in 1910-11, Böhler began to contribute to the workshop's long-running editions of postcards. He contributed six postcards in total, all featuring people seen on his trips to China and Japan. Böhler's works from his trip abroad were the subject of another article by Roessler in the 1911 – 1912 publication of *Die Kunst und Dekoration*. According to Roessler this marked a great development in the technique and gaze of the artist: "He looked with his own eyes, and what he saw with his eyes, the real eyes of the artist, which want to drink in the golden abundance of the world up to the edge of the eyelashes, that, in a subtle technique gained from the object itself, he was anxious to represent. With success."²³ Böhler continued to travel around the world, drawing inspiration from the people he met, and the landscapes he saw as he came into his own style that defined his career until his death in 1961.

To Roessler, the scenes depicted almost come second to the brilliance of Böhler's color theory. "Without any arbitrariness born of academic or other prejudice, he simply follows his own nature, and is entirely a painter, a pictorial creator of events in color." He goes on to say that Böhler "produces his effects by means of form and color, and mainly color."²⁴ Roessler does miss something crucial in the works of Hans Böhler: the relationships of the individuals depicted. As seen in *At the Bar*, something intangible is presented

alongside the characters, something just as important to the work as the paint he used. The individuals are not stoic or so isolated that they could exist in the painting by themselves. Each character interacts ever so slightly with their counterparts, even if it is just in the glance of an eye or their tense and unresolved bearing.

In 1929 Roessler wrote the first biography on Böhler.²⁵ Few other scholars have taken up the task to devote so many words and pages to the Austrian artist. In recent years Böhler has been increasingly recognized by those with an interest in the turn-of-the-century Viennese art. Hopefully in coming years this will continue and the scope of Böhler's oeuvre will expand as more works are considered.

At the Bar, circa 1908 – 1910

Hans Böhler is thought by Roessler to be first and foremost a formalist in his works after 1914 focusing mainly on painterly style rather than the narrative content, yet he repeatedly portrayed social and bar scenes throughout his career. Before 1914

Böhler engaged in various forms of social commentary, mainly in his contributions to illustrated periodicals such as *Die Musekete*, *Jugend*, and *Erdegeist* of the first decade of the 20th century. Even into the 1940s when Böhler was in the United States he continued a certain social awareness in his depictions of Harlem bar scenes (FIGURE 6). The present painting *At the Bar*, dated circa 1908 – 1910, reveals a scene full of social commentary. The sidelong glances, raised eyebrows, and telling smirks create a tense and charged exchange between three people. Based on the visual cues within the painting one can make certain assumptions about the role of the characters and the “conversation” they are having. A man dressed in a suit, bow tie, and top hat stands at a bar with an empty glass and a pile of coins in front of him. An empty drawer is left open on the opposite side of the bar, possibly indicating an exchange of money for goods or services rendered. Two women stand before him, both facing the viewer. One might simply assume that this is a customary bar scene in which a man is demonstrating that he is

ready to purchase another drink, but this reading would ignore the palpable tension between the characters that reads more as being sexual in nature rather than a simple exchange of commerce. What seems likely is that the services he is in search of go beyond the customary exchange between customer and bar staff.

The scene is set. Three people (a man and two women) are shown in the middle of a discussion that appears transactional. This moment is a pregnant pause full of intrigue, expectation, and



FIGURE 6. Hans Böhler, *Jack Carter's Bar in Harlem*, 1942, oil on canvas, 32 ¹¹/₁₆" x 51 ³/₈" (83 x 130.5 cm). Courtesy Belvedere Museum, Vienna.



FIGURE 7. Emilie Flöge wearing a reform dress and jewelry from the Wiener Werkstätte, February 1909. Photograph by d'Ora-Benda Studio. Bildarchiv der Österreichischen Nationalbibliothek, Vienna.

sexual innuendo. The terms have been discussed, the money presented, and all that remains is the decision. Who holds the power here? Is it the man with the stacked gold coins who intends on paying for his pleasures; the young bar maid who is clearly skeptical of the sexual and predatory advances of the man across the bar and the coercive glances of her employer; or the proprietress who is eager to placate the customer whose advances are being spurred by the headstrong young employee?

It is clear that the young bar maid at the center

does not see herself as a prostitute or purveyor of sex for hire, yet it is almost “expected” of her by the two individuals flanking her. Covert prostitutes often operated out of bars, cafés, and Heurigen (wineries) with and without the sanction of the establishment’s owner. These women were known as *Diskreten* (discreet) or *Geheimen* (secret), a type of prostitute, who, according to a 1924-26 League of Nations Report on prostitution in Vienna, “practised [sic] the sex trade largely invisible to the public eye.”²⁶ The woman here is in no such position; she stands erect in a defensive posture with her arms crossed in front of her. While she may be alluring to the customer, she holds leverage in her decision. Her power is also apparent in her manner of dress. Even with a cursory look, one can tell that she is not wearing a corset. Her breasts are free, and her waist unbridled. She is an early model of the *Neue Frau*, a woman who breaks social norms and is liberated from gendered expectations. Her hair is fashioned similarly to the way the designer and companion of Klimt, Emilie Flöge (1874 – 1952), often styled her hair at the time, parted in the middle with hair either braided or fitted over wire cages or pompadour “rats” to create volume and set over the ears (FIGURE 7). Her cheeks are flushed, eyebrows raised, and a sideways smirk is set across her face. She looks not at the man behind her who is leering at her in expectation but to the woman to her left, the proprietress who is acting like a *Madam* in a brothel. Her eyes show both contempt and stubborn refusal.

A man in a top hat, suit, and blue bow tie leans against the bar. He has a stack of coins and a tall glass (only faintly visible) in front of him. His eyes are fixed on the bar maid on the other side of the bar, boring into her back with determination and desire. The gentleman’s arms are crossed revealing his left hand extending beyond the borders of the canvas. His hand

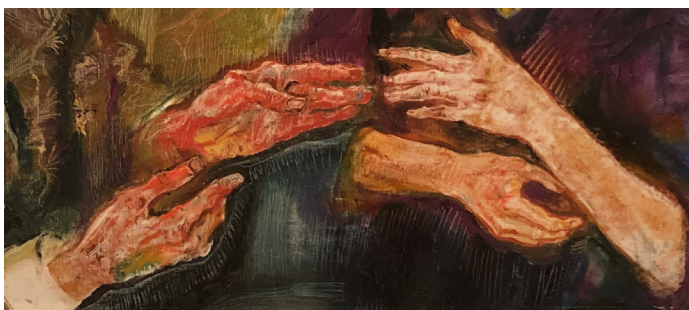


FIGURE 8. Oskar Kokoschka, detail of *Hans Tietze and Erica Tietze-Conrat*, 1909, oil on canvas, 30 $\frac{1}{8}$ " x 53 $\frac{5}{8}$ " (76.5 x 136.2 cm). Courtesy Museum of Modern Art, inv. no. 651.39.



FIGURE 9. Egon Schiele, detail of *Erwin Dominik Osen with Fingertips Touching* ("Mime Van Osen"), 1910, black chalk, watercolor, gouache on paper, 15 $\frac{1}{16}$ " x 11 $\frac{15}{16}$ " (38.3 x 30.3 cm), Courtesy Leopold Museum, Vienna.

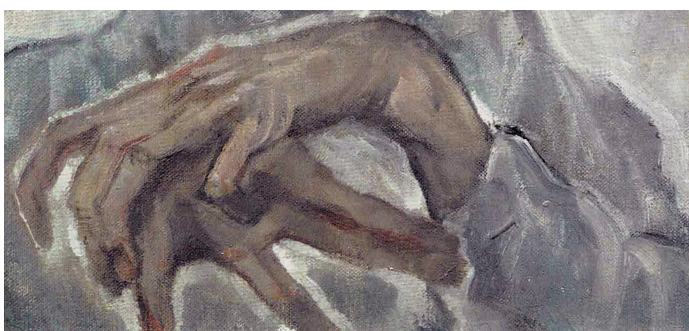


FIGURE 10. Mopp (Max Oppenheimer), detail of *Portrait of Egon Schiele*, 1910, oil on canvas, 17 $\frac{3}{4}$ " x 16 $\frac{15}{16}$ " (45 x 43 cm). Reproduced in Agnes Husslein-Arco and Alexander Klee, eds., *Oppenheimer: Mahler and the Music* (Vienna: Belvedere, 2010), 108, pl. XIII.

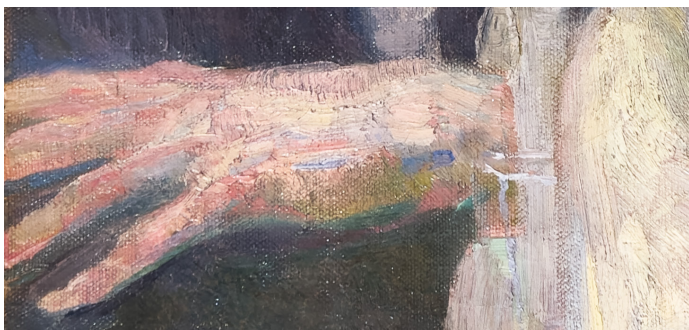


FIGURE 11. Hans Böhler, detail of *At the Bar*, circa 1908-1910.

is elongated and tortured, reminiscent of the hands depicted by Böhler's contemporaries Oskar Kokoschka (1886 – 1980), Schiele, and Mopp (Max Oppenheimer, 1885 – 1954) (FIGURES 8 - 11). Even Klimt dabbled in this unique method of representation. For Kokoschka, the use of such expressive hands represented an extension of the psyche, a further means to identify the personality and mood of the sitter. The hands acted as signifiers of emotion and identity. Schiele also embraced this idea as early as 1909, the year he withdrew from the academy and founded the Neukunstgruppe. It was in this year that the depictions of hands among this select group of artists began to change. Kokoschka, Schiele, Mopp, and Klimt began to experiment with the portrayal of hands, moving away from the traditional academic style towards a more modern and corporeal style. Just as facial expressions of a sitter reveal the secrets of the mind, so too these artists thought, did the gestures of the sitter's hands. The hands in *At the Bar* are very much of this emerging style. Due to the proximity of Hans Böhler and the artists in question, it is beyond doubt that this is where Böhler found his influence.

The third individual in the scene is a woman of means. Adorned in Wiener Werkstätte jewelry, she stands behind the young bar maid with a meaningful expression. She is clearly identifiable in her role as a proprietress with the doppler (two-liter bottle, also known as an *Austromagnum*) in her hands. A bar towel hangs from her left forearm in the traditional style of a server. Her hair is pulled back into the popular pompadour hairstyle that raged at the turn of the century. She is, however, without the customary hat. When in public, men and women would be seen wearing hats: for women they would often be wide-brimmed and adorned with flowers, feathers, and pearls. Most of those in the service industry, such as



FIGURE 12. Glasperlen [Glass Beads]. Necklace designed by the Dagobert Peche at the Wiener Werkstätte. Private Collection.

barmaids, waiters, and other working staff, however, would forego hats while serving their clientele. Despite this divide between customer and proprietress, she is clearly marked as both trendy and affluent by her choice of jewelry. High-necked lace blouses and dresses were still fashionable in the first decade of the 20th century, but with the rise in popularity of the Wiener Werkstätte, more women were experimenting with wearing jewelry as an extension of one's clothing. The proprietress is wearing a *collier de chien*, a popular necklace designed by Hoffmann and Moser at the Wiener Werkstätte and worn by Emilie Flöge, Friederike Maria Beer-Monti, and Sonja Knips (FIGURE 7). Flöge in particular had been seen wearing the jewelry designs of the Wiener Werkstätte dating back to 1904 when a selection of jewelry was sent to the atelier of *Schwestern Flöge* on consignment in December of that year.²⁷ She also frequently paired necklaces of different length, wearing intricate beaded necklaces (*Glasperlen Kette*) with longer pendant necklaces similar to the proprietress in *At the Bar* (FIGURE 12).

The background of *At the Bar* is particularly interesting as Böhler reduces it to a mirage of colors,

blurring any recognizable external features of the movements and details around the three figures in focus. The trio are shown as fully engaged in the unfolding scene. The blurring of the background reinforces the intimacy of this exchange, a private scene in a public space. This disintegration of any background detail is typical of most of his paintings throughout his career dating as early as *At the Bar*. This technique described in a feature on the upcoming artist in *Erdgeist* states how color supersedes form: “Böhler has a peculiar color technique, he dabs brush against brush, where it is necessary to give life to the surface...he never brings out the form through laborious labor value modeling, always only through the freest local color.”²⁸ This technique continued to dominate Böhler's work after 1914.

A student of art even outside the classroom, Hans Böhler consumed art and synthesized styles, techniques, and themes into a practice uniquely his own. Within the span of just a few years he experimented with different styles, discarding those which did not resonate. *At the Bar* was created under these very conditions. What is expressed in this painting, as a single work within the larger oeuvre of Hans Böhler, is not an artist grounded in a unique style known as his own, rather a work of art produced during the artist's formative years in a search for a personal aesthetic. Such a discovery is an insightful foray into the artistic career of Hans Böhler.

Kaitlin Anne Vervoort

ENDNOTES

- 1 Arthur Roesler, *Hans Böhler: 1884 - 1961* (London: Marlborough Fine Art Ltd., 1968), np. Emphasis mine.
- 2 Otto Böhler was an internationally acclaimed silhouettist of various composers including Johannes Brahms (1833 – 1897), Anton Bruckner (1824 – 1896), Hans Richter (1843 – 1916), Richard Wagner and others. See *Dr. Otto Böhler's Schattenbilder* (Wien: Rudolf Lechner (Wilhelm Müller), 1914).
- 3 *Boehler: Zeichnungen und Gemälde* (Wien: Giese und Schweiger, Kunsthandler, 2014), 100. See also Martin Suppan, *Hans Böhler: Leben Und Werke* (Wien: Edition Martin Suppan, 1990), 34. At the time of this publication, no concrete evidence had been found in support of this claim even after consulting the catalog for said exhibition. It ran from January 20 until February 24, 1901. See *Katalog der XV. Ausstellung der Aquarellisten-Clubs der Genossenschaft der Bildenden Künstler Wiens* (Wien: Genossenschaft der Bildenden Künstler Wiens, 1901).
- 4 Dr. Wladimir Zaloziecki, "Kunst: Hans Böhler," *Erdgeist* 3, no. 11 (1907/1908): 416.
- 5 Suppan, *Hans Böhler: Leben Und Werke*, 34.
- 6 Roesler, *Hans Böhler: 1884 - 1961*, np.
- 7 "...fande Hans Böhler, was er suchte: eine Hand, die ihn einführen sollte in jene Mysterien der Kunst, die Paris und die Franzosen ihm..." Zaloziecki, "Kunst: Hans Böhler," 416.
- 8 Stephan Pumberger, "The History of the Hagenbund 1900-1938," in *Expressionism, New Objectivity and Prohibition: Hagenbund and Its Artists: Vienna 1900-1938*, by Peter Chrastek (Wien: Wien Museum, 2016), 9.
- 9 *Katalog der Siebzehnten Ausstellung, November 1905 - Jänner 1906* (Wien: Künstlerbund Hagen, 1905), 38.
- 10 A. S. L., "Studio Talk - Vienna," *The International Studio: An Illustrated Monthly Magazine of Fine & Applied Art* XXVIII, no. 109 (March 1906): 77, <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/gri.ark:/13960/t24b9hz25>.
- 11 'American' bars started to appear in England and Europe in the 1890s. Bringing an array of American-styled cocktails and other alcoholic libations to the continent, the bars became popular destinations promoting cocktail culture. In 1908 the architect Alfred Loos established the Loos American bar on Kärntner Straße in Vienna. See "Geschichte," Loos American Bar, 1908, accessed April 27, 2023, <https://www.loosbar.at/geschichte>.
- 12 "Ein einziges Mal in meinem Leben hab' ich einen noblen Kerl gefunden. Und das war ein Gauner." Hans Böhler, "Bar Philosophie," *Die Muskete: Humoristische Wochenschrift* VII, no. 167 (Dezember 1908): 85, <https://anno.onb.ac.at/cgi-content/anno?aid=mus&datum=19081210&seite=5>.
- 13 Cynthia Prossinger, "Secession - Vienna," *Grove Art Online*, 2003, <https://doi.org/10.1093/gao/9781884446054.article.T077304>.
- 14 *Katalog der Kunstschau Wien, 1908* (Wien: Kunstschau, 1908).
- 15 See Suppan, *Hans Böhler: Leben Und Werke*, 34.
- 16 A selection of Gustave Klimt's works was featured in Room 22 for both the 1908 and 1909 Kunstschau exhibitions. Böhler's *Kritik* was republished in *Jugend: Müncher illustrierte Wochenschrift für Kunst und Leben* 2, no. 49 (26 november 1912): 1477, <https://doi.org/10.11588/diglit.4281#0721>.
- 17 *Neukunstgruppe*, Gustav Pisko Galerie, Wien, December 1909, Raum 2, no. 2, "Wasserschloß" and no. 3 "Porträt"
- 18 Arthur Roessler, "Neukunstgruppe: Ausstellung im Kunstsalon Pisko," *Arbeiter-Zeitung* 11, no. 336 (7 Dezember 1909): 7-8, <https://anno.onb.ac.at/cgi-content/anno?aid=aze&datum=19091207>.
- 19 Hoffmann designed Dr. Otto Böhler's villa in Kapfenberg, Styria at Mariazellerstraße 32. He also outfitted the apartment of Hans Böhler's cousin, Heinrich Böhler, on Belvederegasse, Wieden, Vienna as well as his villa at Pelzgasse 17, 2500 Baden.
- 20 XXXVI. *Ausstellung der Vereinigung bildender Künstler Österreichs Secession*, Gebäude der Secession, Wien, April – July 1910, Linker rückwärtiger raum, no. 64, "Das starke Geschlecht," <https://ia600909.us.archive.org/19/items/frick-31072002492496/31072002492496.pdf>. This work was republished in *Jugend: Müncher illustrierte Wochenschrift für Kunst und Leben* 1, no. 11 (5 märz 1912): 297, <https://doi.org/10.11588/diglit.4280#0312>.
- 21 *Die Erste Internationale Jagd-Ausstellung Wien 1920: Ein Monumentales Gedenkbuch* (Wien; Leipzig: Wilhelm Frick, Kais. und Kön. Hofbuchhändler, 1912), 30.
- 22 Jane Kallir, *Viennese Design and the Wiener Werkstätte* (New York: Galerie St. Etienne/George Brazillier, 1986), 73-74.
- 23 "Er schaute mit eigenen Augen, und was er mit seinen Augen, den echten Augen des Künstlers, die bis an der Wimpern Rand den goldenen Überfluß der Welt in sich trinken wollen, sah, das, in einer subtilen, aus dem Gegenstand selbst gewonnenen Technik darzustellen, war er bemüht. Mit Erfolg." Arthur Roesler, "Zu einigen Blättern aus Hans

Böhlers ostasiatischer Studienmappe,” *Deutsche Kunst und Dekoration* band 29 (1912-1911): 441, <https://doi.org/10.11588/diglit.7012#0445>.

24 Roesller, *Hans Böhlen: 1884 – 1961*, np.

25 Arthur Roesler, *Der Maler Hans Boehler* (Wien; Leipzig; Zurich: Amalthea Verlag, 1929).

26 Markian Prokopovych, “Prostitution in Vienna in the Nineteenth Century,” in *Trafficking in Women (1924-1926): The Paul Kinsie Reports for the League of Nations*, by United Nations, vol. 2, 2 vols., United Nations Historical Series (New York: United Nations, 2017), 233, <https://doi.org/10.18356/ec5cc5ab-en>.

27 Janis Staggs, ed., *Wiener Werkstätte Jewelry* (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2008), 49.

28 “Böhler hat eine eigenartige Farbentechnik, Pinsel tupft er an Pinsel, wo es gilt, der Fläche Leben zu geben...nie bringt er durch mühsames Valeurmodellieren die Form heraus, immer nur durch freieste Lokalfarbe.” Zaloziecki, “Kunst: Hans Böhlen,” 416.

APPENDIX

1. THE FRAME, ATTRIBUTED TO JOSEF HOFFMANN

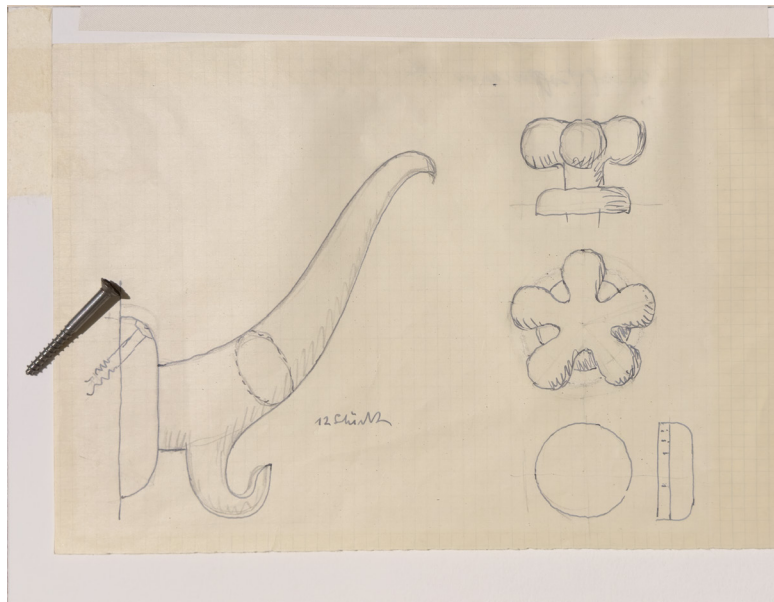
The Hoffmann square frame is constructed as somewhat of an architectural puzzle. The frame consists of eight beech wood sections. Four flat panels create the back support sub-structure, and four half round moldings with deep sides create the frame profile. These eight elements are fastened together only with screws, without the use of glue (APPENDIX 1A). The deep, top half-round molding has angled mitered corners and the back support structure consists of mortise and tenon joint construction (APPENDIX 1B). The thin wood back slats support the painting, serving as an atypical rabbet. The screw and frame profile match similar designs by Josef Hoffmann (APPENDIX 1C).



APPENDIX 1A. Profile of the frame's half-round molding.



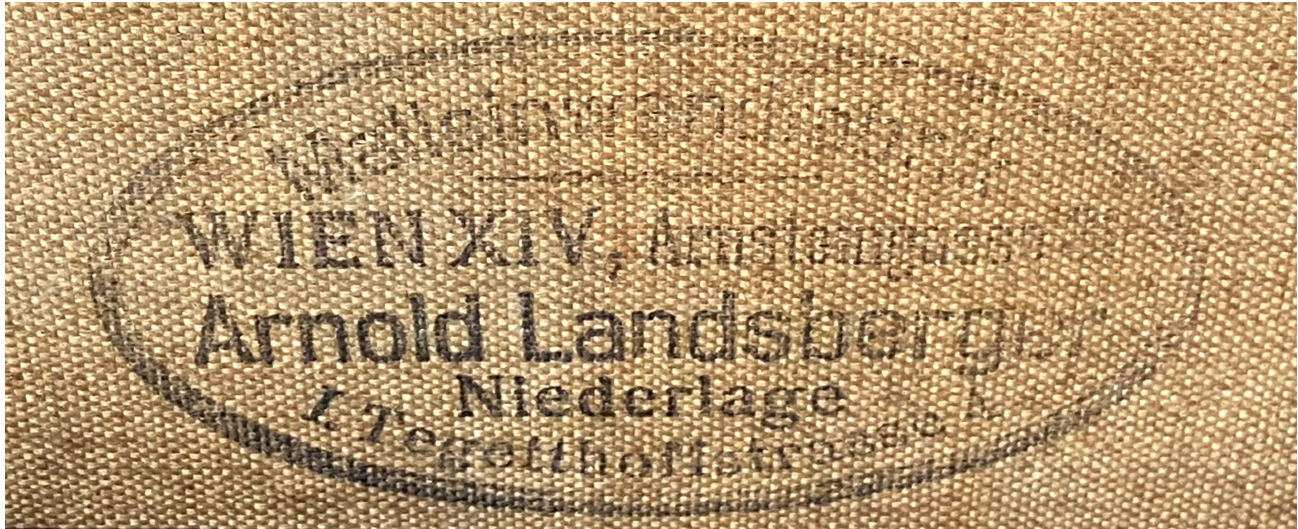
APPENDIX 1B. Support Slats.



APPENDIX 1C. A screw from Böhler's *At the Bar* frame next to a drawing of an identical screw from Josef Hoffman's *Coat Hooks*, circa 1920.

2. THE CANVAS SUPPLIER'S MARK

Arnold Landsberger canvases were used by Egon Schiele and others. The firm had a location in Vienna on the Tegetthoffstrasse until its move in 1910 to Operngasse 4. The canvas supplier's stamp on *At the Bar* dates the canvas prior to 1910.



APPENDIX 2. Canvas supplier's mark stamped in ink on verso of *At the Bar*: Malleinwandfabrik | WIEN XIV, Arnsteingasse 31 | Arnold Landsberger | Niederlage | I. Tegetthoffstrasse 4

3. VIA E-MAIL CORRESPONDENCE

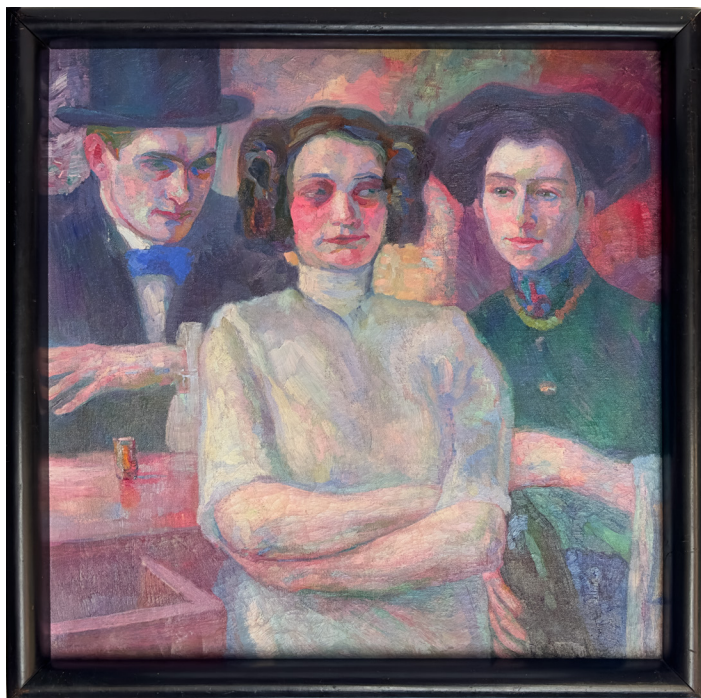
Annie Paule Quinsac
To: shepherdny@aol.com
Tue, Jan 24 at 10:44 AM

Hi! I was very surprised yesterday walking through the gallery to be confronted with an early Hans Bohler painting—unsigned and unattributed—which I immediately identified as one of his Viennese period works. I happen to be very familiar with Bohler's oeuvre. I owned two of his drawings. One I donated to the Columbia Museum of Arts (Columbia, South Carolina), the other to my son. I dedicated 30 years of my life to the art history program there (1970 – 2000), teaching and contributing to the creation of the graduate program. In the late 70s/early 80s (???), a relative of the Boehlers - and **owner of the [Hans Bohler] estate** moved to Columbia countryside with the collection. In the 90's, after the death of her husband, she moved again, this time to California and I lost track of her. I did organize a small show of the most striking pieces of that collection to which I added some later works belonging to his last partner, Harriett Kresch, a friend of mine, a violinist and very knowledgeable of the Viennese art connoisseurs and dealers of the second half of the last century. Even though this is my first encounter with the Shepherd Gallery painting I am totally convinced that it is one of his early Viennese pieces. Let me know what happens with it. Best, Annie-Paule

Prof. Dott. Annie-Paule Quinsac, PhD

4. RECTO AND VERSO OF PAINTING AND FRAME: THE INSCRIPTION

Inscribed in pencil on verso, diagonally between the upper right stretcher bar keys: *H B...* (illegible) (APPENDIX 4C).



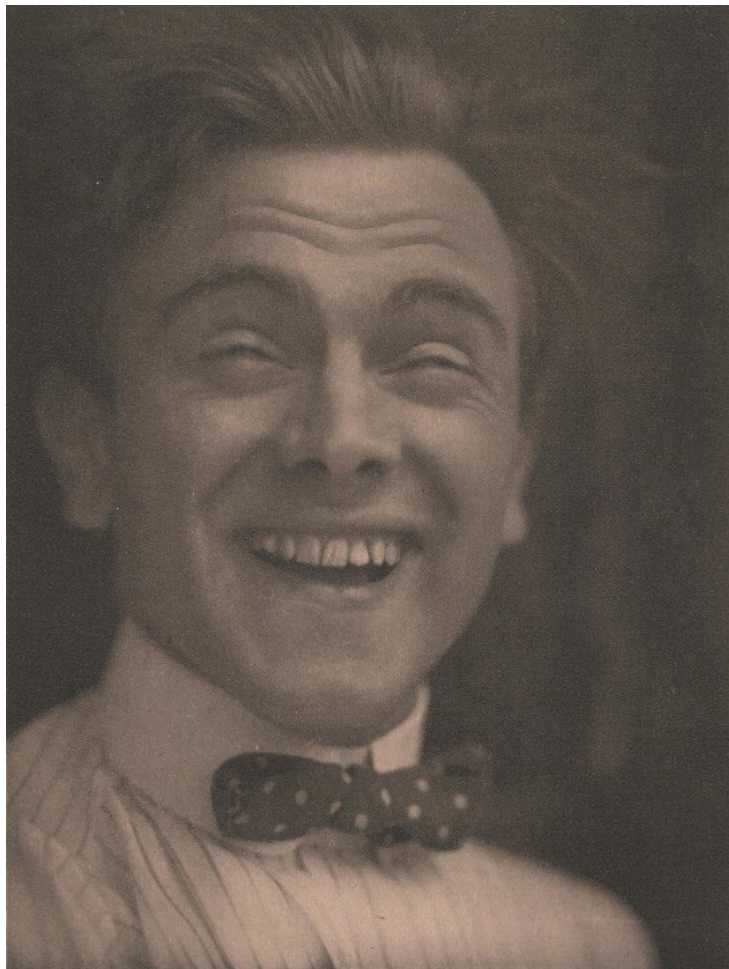
APPENDIX 4A. Hans Böhler's *At the Bar* in its original Josef Hoffmann frame.



APPENDIX 4B. Verso of *At the Bar* and frame.



APPENDIX 4C. Inscription on verso of *At the Bar*, in pencil at top right corner, diagonally situated between the stretcher bar keys: *H B...* (illegible).



Hans Böhler
1884 - 1961

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