

For Immediate Release

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CHRISTIE'S NEW YORK TO OFFER FOUR SUPERB BLOCH-BAUER MASTERPIECES BY GUSTAV KLIMT

All Works Recently Restituted to the Heirs of Ferdinand and Adele Bloch-Bauer

New York – Christie's President Marc Porter today announced that Christie's has been selected to advise the heirs of Ferdinand and Adele Bloch-Bauer on the sale of four of the five legendary Klimts recently restituted to the family. The fifth painting, Klimt's golden masterwork *Portrait of Adele Bloch-Bauer I*, was recently purchased by The Neue Galerie New York through the efforts of its co-founder, philanthropist Ronald Lauder, in a transaction in which Christie's assisted Mr. Lauder and the Neue Galerie. All five works were exhibited at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art in January this year before moving to the Neue Galerie in July, where they will remain exhibited together until September 18.

Praise in the media for these paintings has included "All That Glitters: Five Klimt Dazzlers" (Wall Street Journal), "They are just the rarest of the rare" (Washington Post) and the observation by The New York Times that while, "Five paintings do not normally make for a blockbuster ... [the] group of five early 20th century masterpieces by Gustav Klimt has been causing a sensation."

"Since recovering the paintings," says Maria Altmann, niece of the Bloch-Bauers, "my family and I have focused our efforts on arranging exhibitions in Los Angeles and New York in order to share these beautiful works and their powerful story. Our family has now made the decision to part with them and has entrusted them to Christie's, whose chairman, Stephen Lash, has long been our friend and supporter in our recovery efforts." According to Steven Thomas of Irell & Manella in Los Angeles, the art lawyer for Maria Altmann and the other Bloch-Bauer heirs that negotiated the current agreement with Christie's, "Maria Altmann and the other Bloch-Bauer heirs, having coordinated the two exhibitions and having concluded a record setting sale of *Portrait of Adele Bloch-*

Bauer I to the Neue Galerie, are now turning their attention to the disposition of these four paintings, and have engaged Christie's to advise them as they move forward in this process and for the first time bring these paintings to the market."

The Family and Restitution

As noted by William Booth of The Washington Post, the restitution effort of the Bloch-Bauer heirs, "reads like a sweeping, romantic epic of loss and redemption, a tale that spans the hothouse salons of fin de siècle Vienna, the darkness of the Holocaust and the U.S. Supreme Court."

As a wealthy Austrian industrialist who had made his fortune in the sugar industry, Ferdinand Bloch-Bauer sponsored the arts in turn-of-the-century Vienna. Among the artists he supported was Gustav Klimt, a founding member of the Vienna Secession, a group of artists that broke away from more traditional styles of 19th century painting. Bloch-Bauer's wife, Adele, modeled for Klimt and became the only model who was painted twice by the artist. His second picture of her, *Adele Bloch-Bauer II*, was completed in 1912 and is now being offered for sale by Christie's.

Adele Bloch-Bauer had indicated in her will that Klimt's paintings should be donated to the Austrian State Gallery. After she died in 1925, her widowed and childless husband was forced to flee Austria when the Nazis took over. His property, including the Klimt paintings, was confiscated in 1938. The five paintings were eventually placed in Vienna's Austrian Gallery Belvedere.

In 2000, the Bloch-Bauer heirs began a protracted court battle in the United States, following efforts originally initiated in 1998 in Austria. With the legal counsel of Randol Schoenberg of Burris & Schoenberg, LLP of Los Angeles, the family ultimately brought its case before the U.S. Supreme Court, which ruled in 2004 that United States courts had jurisdiction to decide their case and therefore the heirs could sue Austria in the United States. The parties ultimately submitted the case to binding arbitration in Austria, and in January 2006, an Austrian arbitration panel unanimously determined that the paintings should be returned to the heirs under Austria's 1998 art restitution law. Further information can be obtained from <http://www.adele.at>.

The Four Works

Ranging in time from 1903 to 1916, the four paintings represent an exquisite overview of the different phases of Klimt's career and the diverse subject matters he chose to explore. Since most of Klimt's greatest works are in museums throughout the world, these four coming to market make for a rare acquisition opportunity. *Adele Bloch-Bauer II* was painted in 1912, five years after Klimt executed the fabulous, golden portrait of the same sitter. After his golden period during which the

artist also produced *The Kiss*, Klimt consciously turned away from the use of gold and opened his work to a wave of colors.

Adele Bloch-Bauer II is a celebration of colors, depicting Adele in a less formal way than her golden portrait. A pattern of red, green, blue and pink color patches, filled with Asian-inspired figures and flowers, supports the still splendid-looking figure of Adele dressed in whites and greys. Besides the outburst of colors, Klimt's second version of Adele differs from the first one in the way it clearly searches for the depths of her soul and mind, a feature which Klimt, duly impressed by the works of Kokoschka and Schiele, might have adopted from his younger colleagues. As noted by Michael Kimmelman of *The New York Times*, "... No longer gold and Byzantine with Egyptian flourishes, instead flowery, sketchier and brightly colored, like a Japanese print, she wears a halo made out of the brim of a huge black hat. Her dress is high-collared, not off the shoulder, her body face-forward and erect, a slender, sinuous Coke-bottle shape, more chaste than carnal."

Houses in Unterach on Lake Atter (Häuser in Unterach am Attersee), 1916, was painted when Klimt spent the summer months with the Flöge family in Weissenbach, at Lake Atter but the first seeds for these views might have been planted when the artist sketched two villages at the Garda Lake in 1913. The fabulous view of the village Unterach on the water shows Klimt's fascination with colors, using them as building stones for his composition and creating at the same time a more liberated, more fluent image. In an inimitable way, Klimt masterfully ignores all rules of perspective: the smooth facades of the houses simultaneously seem to merge with and burst from the surrounding trees. It is a beautiful landscape that, according to Francine Prose of *The Wall Street Journal*, "... is a view of a terraced hillside rising above the water that evokes Cezanne."

Throughout his career, Klimt visited and revisited trees as a subject matter, often even devoting his full attention to the texture and lushness of one single specimen. *Apple Tree I (Apfelbaum I)*, one of the "richly textured landscapes" described in *The New York Times*, was painted in 1911 or 1912 and is one of the illuminating examples of Klimt's unique method to render the tree through gradations and shades of colors rather than to structure it formally. The result is a tree that is alive and breathing, its foliage touched by a floating breeze while rays of light play games with the leaves. Through these exquisite tree paintings, Klimt created a symbol for the symbiosis of nature and light, with at its center the magnificent Tree of Life.

Birch Forest (Buchenwald), the earliest work by Klimt to be offered, dates from 1903 and is one of the few wood scenes executed by the artist. It is in the wood paintings - in 1901, he painted *Pinewood* and 1903 saw another version of the *Birch Forest* - that Klimt connected most with the Impressionist movement. The spectator is presented with a view reminiscent of the dark density of the heart of a wood, devoid from any light or an opening to the sky, while a fall atmosphere is suggested through

the red and brown fallen leaves that cover the ground and the slightly withered and grey tree trunks. As noted by Ms. Prose of The Wall Street Journal, “. . . the remarkably moody, mysterious and suggestive 1903 *Birch Forest* is, I would argue, the real jewel of the exhibition....”

Gustav Klimt (1862-1918) was an Austrian symbolist painter and one of the founding members and the first President of the Vienna Secession movement. He began his career as a painter of interior murals in large public buildings and later moved on to portraits and landscapes which he executed in his very distinct, elegant style. Influences on his work come from different sources including Egyptian and Byzantine inspirations as well as medieval European paintings, Henri Matisse and Japanese Ukiyo-e.

About Christie's

Christie's is the world's leading auction house, a name and place that speaks of extraordinary art, unparalleled service, and international glamour. Founded in 1766 by James Christie, Christie's conducted the greatest auctions of the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries, and today remains a popular showcase for the unique and the beautiful. Christie's offers nearly 1,000 sales annually in over 80 categories, including all areas of fine and decorative arts, jewelry, photographs, collectibles, wine, cars and more. Prices range from \$200 to over \$80 million. Christie's has 90 offices in 30 countries and 16 salerooms around the world including in London, New York, Los Angeles, Paris, Geneva, Milan, Amsterdam, Tel Aviv and Hong Kong. Most recently, Christie's has led the market with expanded initiatives in emerging markets such as Russia, China, India and the United Arab Emirates, with successful sales and exhibitions in Mumbai, Dubai and the branded sale in Beijing. In 2005 Christie's annual global sales increased 38% to \$3.2 billion, the highest total in company history and propelling the auction house into global market leadership.

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Images available on request
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More information about Christie's sale of *Impressionist and Modern Art* can be found on www.christies.com. All lots from the sale can be viewed online along with full catalogue descriptions on Lotfinder®, which also allows clients to leave absentee bids. www.christies.com provides information on more than 80 sale categories, buying and selling at auction, complete auction results, and Christie's international auction calendar.

Notes to Editors

In 1993, Christie's was the first auction house to hold a theme sale dedicated to German and Austrian Art. Since then, Christie's has established many of the current auction record prices for the leading German and Austrian artists including, George Grosz, Heinrich Campendonk, Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, Emil Nolde, Karl Schmidt-Rottluff and Oskar Schlemmer among others. In February 2006, the German and Austrian Art portion of the London Evening Sale realized £24.5 million and established new auction records for: Ernst Ludwig Kirchner's double-sided canvas *Frauenbildnis in weissem Kleid*, 1908, which sold for £4.9 million, and Heinrich Campendonk's *Kuh Mit Kalb*, 1914, which realized £1.68 million, as well as a setting a new auction record for a drawing by Egon Schiele, *Kniender weiblicher Halbakkt (Kneeling female half-nude)*, 1917, which sold for £4.15 million. The German and Austrian Art section of the June 2006 Evening sale totaled £24.3 million bringing sales in this category to £48.8 million in London this year. That auction included the sale of *Herbstonne*, 1914, by Egon Schiele which sold for a record £11.7 million.