Research Article

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AT THE MARGINS OF PORTRAITURE: REVISIONS OF A GENRE IN VIENNESE MODERNISM IN THE WORK OF GEORG SIMMEL, JULIUS VON SCHLOSSER, AND EGON SCHIELE

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ABSTRACT

This article reevaluates the conventional understanding of Viennese Modernist portraiture, arguing that its frequently debated "crisis" represents a productive revision of traditional genre theory. To support this argument, neglected contemporaneous discourses on portrait theory are examined, which oppose a psychological framework of interpretation. Theoretical writings of Georg Simmel and Julius von Schlosser are brought into a dialogue with selected works on paper by Egon Schiele, which were produced between 1910 and 1913 and are imbued with a distinctive self-reflexivity. By challenging established genre paradigms, the three contemporaries foreground the significance of the individual pictorial appearance and its potential to generate meaning. Their aesthetic approach highlights the dynamic interplay between form, subject, materiality, and meaning and offers methodological implications for future scholarly analysis.

KEYWORDS

Portrait; Theory Portrait; Schiele Egon; Simmel Georg; Schlosser Julius von; Waetzoldt Wilhelm; Monism; Aesthetics; Self-Reflexivity; Modernism Viennese; Methodology; Vienna; Vienna 1900; 20th Century; Dualism; Self-Portrait; Painting; Wittgenstein Ludwig

> "Portrait?" What is in fact a portrait? What actually constitutes a portrait? What does the viewer expect from the artists?
> —Julius von Schlosser, *Gespräch von der Bildniskunst* (1906)

ON THE PRODUCTIVE CRISIS OF TRADITIONAL PORTRAIT THEORY AROUND 1900

In his 1906 publication, *Gespräch von der Bildniskunst* [Dialogue on the Art of Portraiture], the Viennese art historian Julius von Schlosser (1866–1938) critically addresses the fundamental parameters of an aesthetic of portraiture. Considering Mortimer Menpes's (1855–1938) portrait of the British entrepreneur and politician Cecil Rhodes (1853–1902) (Fig. 1), Schlosser initiates a feigned dialogue between a man of letters and an artist in a Socratic manner. Here, the two figures express their dissatisfaction with the traditional tyranny of portraiture's intertwined demands for likeness and beauty.[1] Not only are both

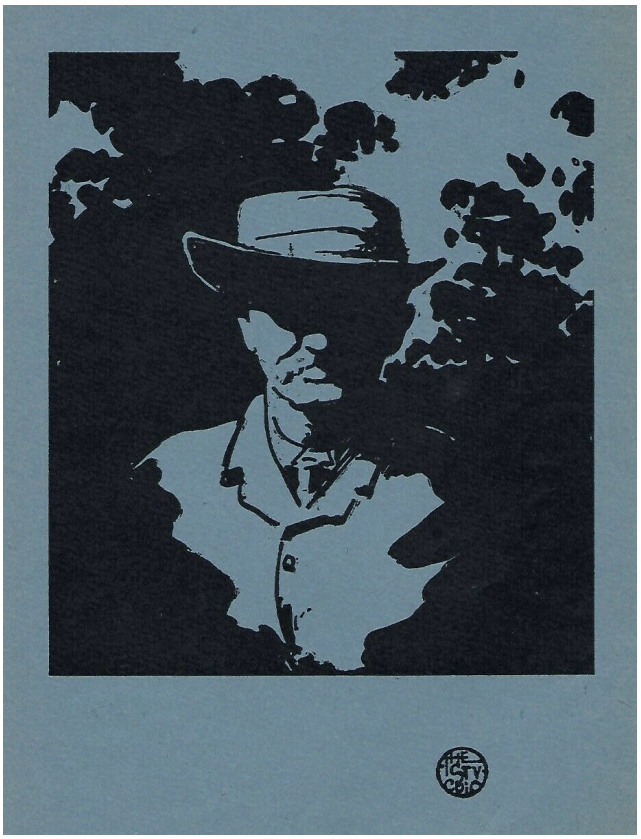

Fig. 1: Mortimer Menpes, *Portrait of Cecil Rhodes*, ca. 1901, lithograph in "Studio-Talk," *International Art* 22, no. 96 (March 1901): 128 (Photo: public domain, via Wikimedia Commons).

historically "quite variable factors, according to the prevailing standards of the time,"[2] but, as the artist humorously and crudely puts it, the expectation that portraits should be both aesthetically pleasing and flattering relegates portrait painters to "the graceful role of cleaning ladies or laundresses."[3]

These statements came at a turbulent time for the art of portraiture. As early as 1885, the Swiss cultural historian Jacob Burckhardt (1818–1897) predicted the end of portraiture, citing photography as a supposedly more objective and mimetic form of portraiture.[4] Schlosser, a generation younger, reached a similar conclusion in 1906 after examining Menpes's Impressionist portrait of Rhodes. Above all, it was the self-referential factures of avant-garde art—especially those of Expressionism—that shook the rather static foundations of traditional portrait theory, which was fundamentally based on the three requirements of referentiality, likeness, and representation.[5] As portraiture began to move away from these traditional paradigms around 1900, the genre experienced a significant surge in popularity, especially during the period of Viennese Modernism.[6] This shift led to a range of interpretations in both popular and academic discourse.[7] Earlier scholarship explained the lack of external mimesis, particularly evident in the portraits of the generation of artists around Egon Schiele (1890–1918), by way of an internal, psychological likeness to the model or even to the artist.[8] This approach was in line with the contemporary concept of portraiture by Leipzig art historian Wilhelm Waetzoldt (1880–1945), who elevated the genre theory to a psychological level in his highly regarded 1908 work, *Die Kunst des Porträts* [The Art of Portraiture].[9] More recent scholarship has shifted from this approach, reframing these representations not as authentic psychological expressions but as performative enactments and theatrical role-playing.[10] Factors such as networks, art markets, and strategic market calculations have also come to play a central role.[11] However, a broader interpretation of these performative portraits in terms of the history of intellectual thought has gained even greater importance. It convincingly links the supposed crisis of the Modernist portrait to the crisis of the modern subject, who at the beginning of the twentieth century had to contend with a high frequency of philosophical, psychological, scientific, and social upheavals.[12]

Although the present article builds on recent research trends, it offers a new perspective. It proposes to reframe the widely discussed crisis of the portrait at the turn of the twentieth century as a crisis of the *traditional* theory of the portrait—one fixated on demands for beauty, likeness, referentiality, and representation. Through in-depth examinations of written as well as painted positions, I delineate an alternative conception of the portrait, challenging both traditional and psychological interpretations of the genre by introducing different conceptual and theoretical parameters.

This analysis begins by exploring the art-literary positions of Georg Simmel (1858–1918) and Schlosser, who both pursued aesthetic approaches to portraiture. Their essays were originally published in the popular weekly *Österreichische Rundschau* [Austrian Review] (Schlosser's in 1906) and the widely circulated daily *Neue Freie Presse* [New Free Press] (Simmel's in 1905), thus reaching a broad Austrian readership.[13] With the disruptions of two world wars, however, their groundbreaking approaches gradually fell into oblivion, becoming familiar only to portrait researchers with a theoretical focus.[14] These approaches have yet to receive broader attention in contemporary art historical studies of Modernist Viennese portraiture.[15] This article, therefore, aims to bring the insights of Schlosser and Simmel into dialogue with selected works on paper by Schiele from 1910 to 1913. Schiele's radical early work is often seen as a vivid "expression of the crisis of portraiture," because it subverts established portrait conventions and contributes to a "redefinition of the genre."[16] Building on these observations, I argue that several works from Schiele's early phase between 1910 and 1913 point to the conditions and paradigms of portraiture in a conceptual and self-reflexive way. Moreover, these works inherit an anthropological dimension of reflection, since they critically examine both dualistic and monistic models of the human subject in relation to corresponding concepts within portraiture. It seems to be no coincidence that this self-reflexive trait is particularly discernable in Schiele's work during this period and within this genre. It is well known that, at this time, the young artist detached himself from his mentor, the renowned Viennese portrait artist Gustav Klimt (1862–1918), and developed his own "Neukunst" [New Art] style.[17]

This article examines how the hitherto marginalized theoretical positions of Schlosser and Simmel, along with selected early works by Schiele, seemingly at the margins of the portrait genre, contributed to redefining the core parameters of portraiture within early twentieth-century Viennese discourse.[18] Moving beyond traditional portrait paradigms does not imply the painted portrait's loss of meaning; rather, the three contemporaries demonstrate that the portrait itself could become a generator of a genuinely pictorial meaning. These shifts in genre theory also carry methodological implications that open up valuable avenues for contemporary art historical analysis. In this regard, there are also structural points of convergence with Carla Carmona Escalera's research, which situates Schiele's work within the early language-critical philosophy of Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889–1951) and thus offers a phenomenological lens for analysis.[19] This article's specific focus on questions of genre theory complements and reinforces Carmona Escalera's prior research.

OPPOSING MODES OF VIEWING

In 1905 and 1906, Simmel and Schlosser published their reflections on portrait painting, just a few years before Waetzoldt published his own. Each of them sought to transcend the traditional "fixation on how portraits are viewed."[20] To this end, they concurrently adopted aesthetic approaches that decreased the portrait's traditional claims of likeness, referentiality, and mimesis and heightened its self-referential quality instead.[21] But the similarities in their perspectives end there. In contrast to Simmel's and Schlosser's approaches, Waetzoldt compensated for his call to relativize likeness by emphasizing psychological aspects, particularly in artistic self-representations.[22] He argued that the "intimate monological manifestation of the [artist's] personality" invited perceptive examination at the "intersection of psychology and art history."[23] In doing so, he leaned on a postromantic leitmotif prominent around 1900, which proposed that the essence of the sitter should be discernible in the portrait.[24] Waetzoldt thus emerged as an essential and influential proponent of this fusion of the demand for likeness and the paradigm of psychological expression. This merging, coupled with the psychological infusion of the artist's style, underpins the common interpretation of Expressionist portraits as vehicles for the artist's self-revelation.[25]

The two essays by Simmel and Schlosser, published in Vienna, offer a multilayered critique of the fusion between portraiture and psychology, which emerged as the dominant paradigm even before Waetzoldt's seminal text. In this spirit, Simmel writes in his essay, *Aesthetik des Porträts* [Aesthetics of Portraiture],

> If all "psychological" interpretation sees the artistic goal as lying solely in the representation of the inner self as such and naively concludes from this that the model's soul, as it really is, must at all costs be revealed in the picture—this psychological realism seems to me wholly inartistic.[26]

In opposition to Waetzoldt, Simmel rejects the notion of interpreting portraiture through psychology, because art would thereby potentially be degraded to a mere "branch" of psychology, in which artworks would serve only as "ciphers [...] that do not have their meaning in themselves but solely in the mental content they convey."[27] Schlosser, in a similar vein, deems it "one of the most dangerous analogies of all, if he [the artist] is permitted to practice 'psychology,'" since it means "a digression from the matter at hand."[28] Naive viewers would similarly look into the portrait to discover the essence of the sitter, just as they would "peer behind the mirror to uncover the reflection."[29] In both cases, Schlosser

considers the mode of viewing to be misguided, in which the artist and viewer alike project themselves into the portrait, much like hanging "personal ideas and feelings on a coat hanger."[30] Schlosser declares the delicate question of whether and how to penetrate the "'inner life' of the 'other'" to be "a rather prickly problem," one he prefers to "set aside, as we would drift toward metaphysical horrors."[31] This unease about metaphysics resonates with Friedrich Nietzsche's quote that opens Schlosser's fictional dialogue between the artist and the man of letters: there, the philosopher condemns what he perceives as a "barbaric" tendency to abstract from the sensual to the symbolic.[32] Nietzsche's critique of metaphysics thus provides Schlosser with a philosophical justification for denouncing the question of the expression of the model's or artist's psyche as being improperly framed. Instead of focusing on an invisible "behind," Schlosser emphasizes the artificial, the "made" character of the portrait—its mediality.[33] The question thus arises, Which of these two opposing modes of viewing is contained in Schiele's works?

THE OPACITY OF THE PORTRAIT

In many of his early works, Schiele ostentatiously broke with prevailing social and artistic ideals of beauty on various levels—through his use of broken colors, depictions of emaciated bodies, and grotesque grimaces.[34] In works such as *Self-Portrait, Grimacing* (Fig. 2), he explores the full spectrum of mimic expressions.[35] In this regard, Schiele's anatomy professor at the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna, Hermann Heller (1866–1949), had a considerable influence on the young artist. Heller rejected the myth of the portrait as an authentic mirror of the soul and instead focused artistically and scientifically on the theatrical enactment of expression.[36] Schiele's portraits also seem to reflect a broader engagement with the cultural currents of his time, including expressive dance, silent film, pantomime, and puppet and shadow theater.[37] Another important inspiration may have been Franz Xaver Messerschmidt's (1736–1783) series of so-called *Character Heads* (Fig. 3), reintroduced into the collective visual memory at the 1907 Hagenbund spring exhibition and discussed in a 1909 publication by the influential Vienna Secession art critic Ludwig Hevesi (1843–1910).[38] Messerschmidt's busts playfully appropriate and recombine contradictory elements of mimicry in a manner that is both ambiguous and irritating.[39] Like Georg Christoph Lichtenberg (1742–1799), Messerschmidt offered a satirical critique of Johann Caspar Lavater's (1741–1801) doctrine of physiognomy, which, building on Cartesian dualism, had strongly influenced the conception of the portrait genre. Lavater's view held that facial features could reliably reveal a person's soul.[40]

In line with Messerschmidt's work, Schiele's *Self-Portrait, Grimacing* (Fig. 2) resists a physiognomic or pathognomonic interpretation.[41] The sitter's facial expression defies

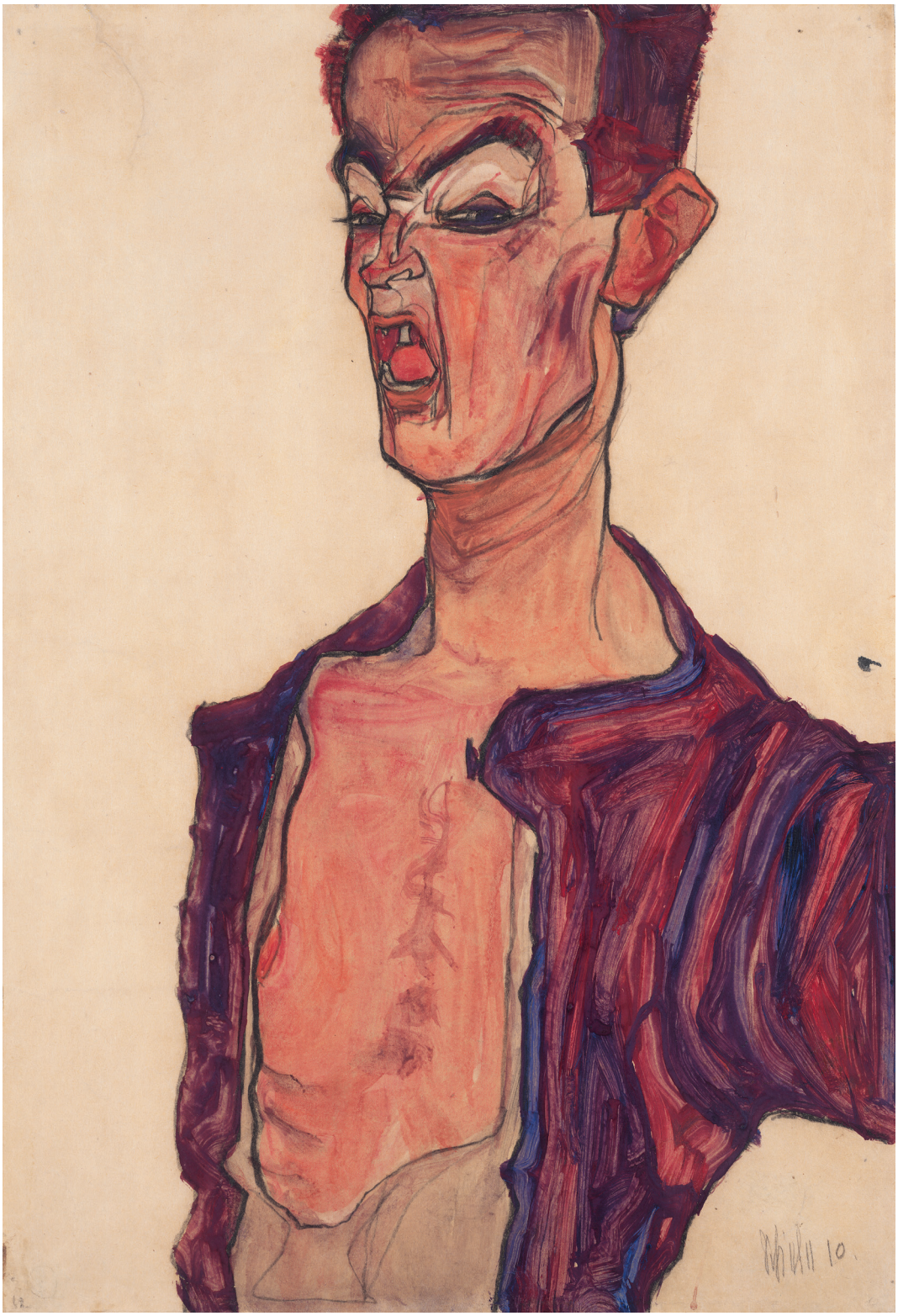

Fig. 2: Egon Schiele, *Self-Portrait, Grimacing*, 1910, crayon, gouache on paper, 45.3 × 30.7 cm. Leopold Museum, Vienna, inv. no. 2312 (Photo: Leopold Museum, Vienna).

Fig. 3: Franz Xaver Messerschmidt, *The Sneeze-Inducing Odor*, 1777/1783, lead cast, 47 × 27 × 33 cm. Belvedere, Vienna, inv. no. Lg 1565, 2013 permanent loan from a private collection (Photo: Belvedere, Vienna).

ready comprehension because the momentary affect, or grimace, distorts the face and obscures any transparent insight into the sitter's essential features.[42] This distorted expression in Schiele's work disrupts an indexical and semiotic connection between body and soul. In his grimacing self-portrait, the surface of the portrait closes in on itself, rendering it opaque and indecipherable, ultimately making only itself visible.[43] This is also true of his depictions of hands, which have recently drawn considerable scholarly interest as expressive media par excellence in his works.[44] However, like the fragmented mimicry of his radical early portraits, their artificial gestures often resist clear meaning and remain inherently illegible. Schiele often fragmented his subject's bodies, either by cropping sections within the frame or by unceremoniously "amputating" limbs.

In this context, Schiele's fascination with the Austrian mime Erwin Osen (1891–1970), to whom he dedicated a series of portraits (Figs. 4, 5), warrants attention.[45] Through

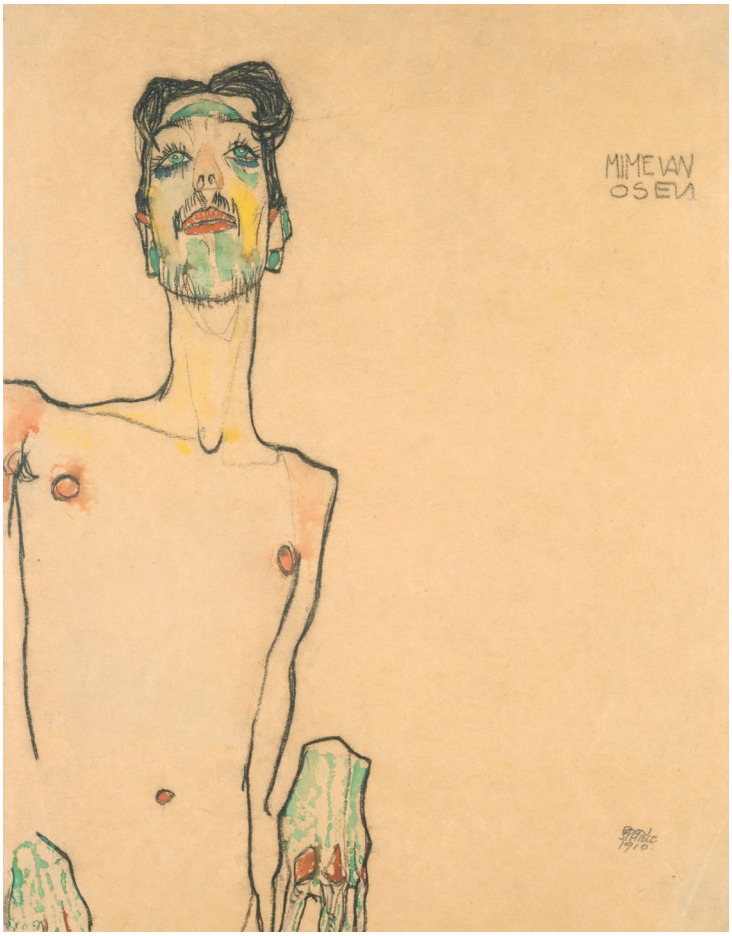

Fig. 4: Egon Schiele, *Mime van Osen*, 1910, chalk and watercolor on paper, 38 × 29.8 cm. Neue Galerie Graz/Universalmuseum Joanneum, inv. no. II/6334 (Photo: Lackner/UMJ).

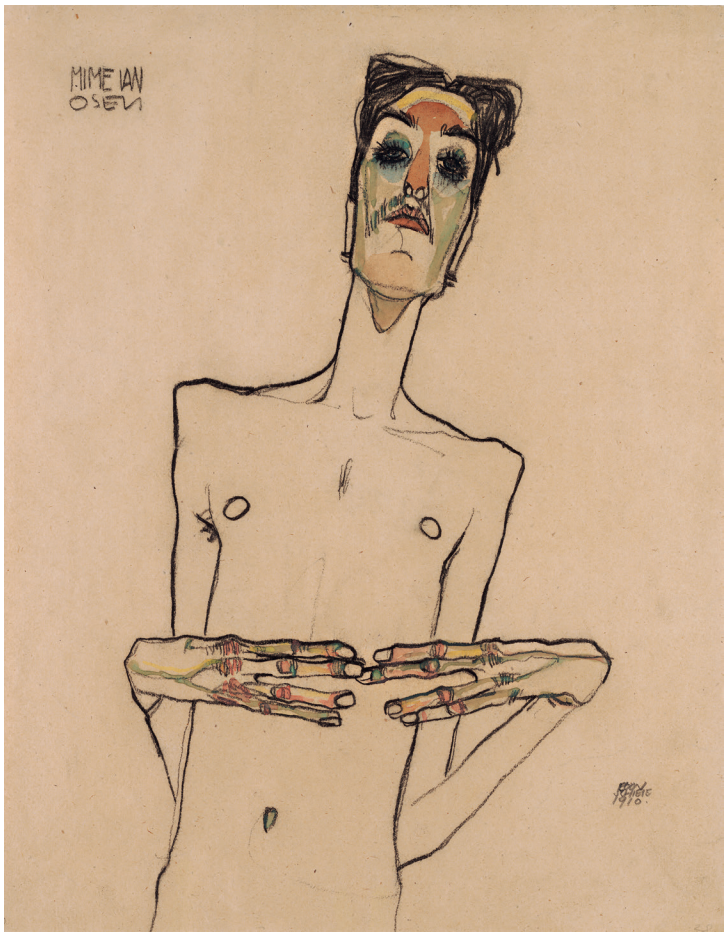

Fig. 5: Egon Schiele, *Erwin Dominik Osen with Fingertips Touching ("Mime van Osen")*, 1910, black chalk, watercolor, gouache on paper, 38.3 × 30 cm. Leopold Museum, Vienna, inv. no. 2348 (Photo: Leopold Museum, Vienna).

a deliberate choice of painterly devices that constantly reference their own artificiality, Schiele underscores the contrived nature of these portraits. Instead of depicting "Erwin" Osen according to physiognomic theory, Schiele creates the fictional figure of the "Mime" (that is, the actor) van Osen, as is even pointed out explicitly with capital letters in the titles of both works.[46] The body, delineated only by a black line, does not make Osen's inner character transparent but leads the viewer's gaze into the void of the ground. Here, the body does not offer psychological depth but rather a glimpse into the materiality of the paper itself. In these works, Schiele turns acting into a metaphor for portraiture, with the mime becoming an alter ego of the portrait artist. This parallel embodies the paradox that Denis Diderot (1713–1784) insightfully described about the actor's craft.[47] Orchestrated gestures and facial expressions found in both acting and portraiture—grounded in

self-discipline and introspection rather than empathic imitation—ultimately create a "natural" effect in their presentation. Schiele's portrayal of Mime van Osen thus illustrates this connection in an almost performative way. Even in these early works from 1910, it is evident how Schiele's oeuvre, while maintaining the recognizability of the subject, reflects on the very determinations of the portrait genre.

THE PSYCHO-PHYSIOLOGICAL MINDSET IN VIENNESE MODERNISM

Through their questioning of the physiognomic concept of the portrait, these early works by Schiele echo many prominent voices at the turn of the century that sought to break away from the mind-body dualism that had prevailed since the early modern era.[48] Helena Pereña Sáez has highlighted the importance of monism, which regards the body and soul as inseparable, for Schiele and his work.[49]

A review of contemporaneous art criticism on Egon Schiele is particularly revealing, because it is imbued with a consistent psycho-physiological metaphorology in keeping with the monistic mindset prevalent in Viennese Modernism.[50] In his 1918 obituary for Schiele, Hans Tietze (1880–1954), a contemporary art historian who taught at the University of Vienna, used forceful vocabulary to describe Schiele's "subcutaneous way of painting."[51] He described the figures in Schiele's works as "just like skinned figures" exhibiting "a twitching rigidity," likening them to "living corpses" burdened by a "perverse glimmer of erotic infirmity."[52] Already in 1914, the influential art critic Arthur Roessler (1877–1955) observed that Schiele had the ability "to turn people's insides outward, and one shudders at the sight of what is carefully concealed, which is sanious and mity and seized by devouring decomposition."[53] According to him, Schiele was able to discern "the soul in these flawed, damaged vessels."[54] In a similar vein, Kurt Rathe (1886–1952) concluded that in Schiele's nudes, "the flesh has a spirit of its own," thus attesting a "consistent psychological interpretation."[55] In 1925, Max Ermers (1881–1950) equated the analytical power of Schiele's "bloody dissecting brush" in his portraits with the methods of a Freudian psychoanalyst.[56] In all of the quoted contemporary commentaries, the perceived visibility of the inner flesh was used to infer the sitter's psyche. These sources reveal that the visibility, opacity, and plasticity of the material was not associated with specific individual pictorial phenomena. Instead, critics, many of whom were also Schiele's benefactors, appeared more focused on constructing a coherent (and quasi-living) corpus of Schiele's oeuvre than on conducting detailed analyses of individual works.[57] This raises the question of whether and how

this suggestive argumentation of art criticism functions in an exemplary self-portrait of Schiele, as well as the broader question of the implications of anthropological monism for the theory of art and portraiture.

In his *Nude Self-Portrait* of 1910 (Fig. 6), Schiele presents a naked, fragmented torso that embodies the aforementioned subcutaneous aesthetic. The ribcage is rendered with reddish brushstrokes in a somewhat restless manner, leaving the bristles of the paintbrush visible. Brown lines accentuate the ribs, creating the effect of a gaping torso where the sternum would normally be. The paint becomes the flesh of the sitter; it appears, as Rathe

Fig. 6: Egon Schiele, *Nude Self-Portrait*, 1910, pencil, black chalk, gouache, opaque white on brown paper, 44.9 × 31.3 cm. Leopold Museum, Vienna, inv. no. 2320 (Photo: Leopold Museum, Vienna).

emphatically yet broadly articulated, "henceforth as the living substance that imparts a rich corporeality to the artistic organism."[58] According to the monistic paradigm, the inner part of this tortured physique manifests itself as the tortured psyche of a modern individual. In this case, it is tied to the myth, borrowed from the Christological iconography of the Man of Sorrows, that portrays the Modernist artist as a martyr—presumably for his art.[59]

While the body in Schiele's *Nude Self-Portrait* may not reveal the immaterial soul in a transparent way or in accordance with dualistic concepts, would it not still be justifiable to seek the soul within the opaque bodies of Schiele's subjects? Does monism offer an alternative anthropological framework for a psychological interpretation of the portrait? After all, even Simmel concedes that "no theory can refute [...] the claim of a portrait to express the soul through the medium of the body."[60] Does this not imply that the ultimate goal of portrait painting, whether viewed through a dualistic or monistic anthropological lens, is still to reveal the human psyche?

THE FACTURE OF SCHIELE'S SUBCUTANEOUS PORTRAIT AESTHETIC

In line with Schlosser's appeal to focus on the mediality of the portrait rather than immediately transcending it interpretatively, I now turn to the form and facture (the pictorial grammar of the image, in Carmona Escalera's terms) of Schiele's *Nude Self-Portrait* (Fig. 6).[61] In contrast to his Osen portraits (Figs. 4, 5), Schiele's self-portrait contains a wide spectrum of traces of its production. The seeming immediacy of the depicted body and the self-referential facture of the image could have led Schiele's contemporaries to form a chain of associations: the open facture alludes to the sectioned body, which in turn suggests, as contemporaneous art critics implied, the exposed psyche of the sitter. In this manner, Schiele depicts his own body as a supposed "direct and immediate form of communication accessible independently of symbolic codes," as Claude Cernuschi has aptly put it, although in reference to Oskar Kokoschka's works, describing it as a rhetorical process of "de-allegorizing."[62]

In Schiele's *Nude Self-Portrait*, the center of the torso evokes the topos of a subcutaneous portrait aesthetic, yet this notion is undermined at the figure's margins. The figure is abruptly cut off at the extremities: the white outline around the upper arms and hips runs dry at this point. This seemingly surgically dissected body turns out to be an artistically fragmented image. Although the painterly facture suggests facial features, it ultimately dissolves into mere brushstrokes. Similarly, in the abdominal area, the facture

initially suggests an epidermis stretched over fleshless pelvic bones, only to reveal itself as a diluted glaze in the open contour toward its lower portion. The subject's eyes are neither windows into nor mirrors of the soul; at best, they reveal the paper on which the image was created. Essentially, this body exposes the mechanisms of its own artistic production. While the gaze initially seems to penetrate the artist's body, it ultimately engages with the material "body" of the image itself. In the visual examination of this pictorial body, the semantic weight of Schiele's facture, when interpreted through the lens of monism, seems coherent at first glance. On closer inspection, however, subtle or significant moments of dissonance draw attention to the picture's artificial nature—to gouache, charcoal, pencil, and paper—encouraging reflection on the process of pictorial meaning-making. In this way, the fragmentation of the body and the seeming dissection of the chest become visible as staged, artificial signs. Ultimately, the flesh and nerve cords of the chest collapse into mere stripes of color. While in *Self-Portrait, Grimacing* (Fig. 2) and the Osen portraits (Figs. 4, 5), Schiele critically exhibits the dualistic notion that the body (and the portrait) is transparent to the soul, in *Nude Self-Portrait* (Fig. 6), he deconstructs the monistic idea that in opaque flesh, the soul becomes visible.

As theorized by Schlosser and Simmel—yet largely overlooked by contemporaneous art criticism that often reverted to established praise topoi—when viewing this early work, the viewer's gaze oscillates between immersive, psychological empathy for a suffering subject and reflection on the conditions of the specific medium through which it is represented. Accordingly, the viewer's projections become observable in a constant tilting movement between materiality and corporeality, abstraction and figuration, necrosis and vivification, or, indeed, vivisection and incarnation. This interplay provides insights into the inherently paradoxical position of the portrait genre, positioned between quasi-living embodiment and dispossession, as already alluded to in Tietze's ambivalent description of Schiele's nudes. Here, the subject's individuality becomes secondary to the modalities of the representation itself.[63] From the perspective of portrait anthropology, the focus thus shifts to the individuality of the portrait itself and its biography in terms of its artistic production.

ON THE AESTHETIC MEANING OF THE PORTRAIT

To a certain degree, Simmel makes concessions to the psychological interpretation of the portrait. Still, he adds a warning against the degradation of art "to the role of mere means," since this would strip art of its capacity "to achieve something unprecedented and extraordinary."[64] While Schlosser simply asserts that "the painted Mr. X" rather than

"the real [Mr.] X" should prevail in the recipient's mode of viewing,[65] Simmel offers a more nuanced explanation of *how* this could actually be achieved in the process of making the portrait:

> From the wholeness of the human being, which ordinary imagination perceives without distinguishing the exterior from all that we know about his soul, the portrait detaches its visibility: the first office of the portrait is to purely depict the meaning of the appearance—not the meaning behind the appearance.[66]

The quotation is notable for two reasons. First, it shows that Simmel's revision of the genre-specific paradigms of portraiture is also grounded in a monistic view of the body-soul union in human beings, which he discusses in greater depth in another passage.[67] Second, he speaks of the "artistic elaboration of visuality," which he argues is essential for creating the meaning of the appearance itself.[68] Simmel regards the act of artistic production as a process of purification and abstraction from the inherent "confused mixture of sensual and mental impressions" that characterizes human appearance.[69] Rather than expecting the pictorial representation of an extra-pictorial body-soul union, he believes that the true achievement of portraiture lies in creating a new reality of this union, which he generally refers to as the "soul."[70] Simmel argues that this fictive or aesthetic (in the strict sense of sensory perception) "soul" [*Seele*] exists only as an autonomous creation inherent in the work of art itself.[71] In it alone lies the meaning of the portrait's visible appearance. It alone elevates the portrait to the autonomous status of a form of visual cognition, regardless "of whether or not it aligns with the soul with which these features are associated in the real person."[72] This concept is at the core of Simmel's portrait theory, which is further demonstrated by the fact that he concludes his essay by repeating the assertion that "the *meaning* of the appearance [...] properly [belongs] to a painted work of art only when it reveals itself as the meaning of *appearance*."[73]

Simmel's conclusion is not only consistent with Schlosser's media-reflexive aesthetics of portraiture but also with my preliminary conclusion concerning Schiele's work. Moreover, Simmel's argument exhibits similarities with the early philosophy of Wittgenstein, developed approximately a decade later: Wittgenstein's insistence on the unity of form and content in the construction of meaning, in both linguistic and artistic expression, illustrates a continuity within the discourse of contemporary Viennese art philosophy.[74]

Furthermore, Simmel's use of the term *Erscheinung* [appearance] carries a dual meaning that resonates with both the specific way of appearance (individuality) and the process of "coming into appearance" (biography) of the portrait in terms of an aesthetics

of production. Each of the aforementioned works by Schiele demonstrates these processes, thereby initiating a second-order observation in which the two different modes of viewing the portrait become the focus of contemplation themselves. The core of Simmel's ideas, divested of his quite complex style of writing, which is closely linked to his *Lebensphilosophie* [life philosophy], can be sharpened by combining them with Schlosser's written and Schiele's pictorial reflections. In particular, the individuality of the portrait—as distinct from that of the individual(s) portrayed—should be seen not as a mere metaphor but as a method. Consequently, an analysis of Modernist portraiture should focus on the unity between subject and form, which generates meaning. Accordingly, an analysis of this kind considers the inherent pictorial qualities of the image and therefore entails a genuinely aesthetic (or, in more recent terms, a phenomenological) approach. Schlosser and Simmel ultimately seek to demonstrate that the painted portrait does not lose its meaning when it qualifies or even abandons its mimetic aim, whether it be external or internal. Instead, the portrait itself becomes a generator of meaning, with its meaning emerging only from within. This shift in artistic paradigms within Modernism—from *mimesis* to *poiesis*—has led to productive consequences for the portrait genre.

AN AESTHETIC STORY OF THE EMANCIPATION OF THE PORTRAIT

Another work on paper by Schiele, from 1913 (Fig. 7), serves as an exemplary case in which the aesthetic mode of viewing becomes the very subject of its representation. No longer attempting to depict a specific individual, Schiele pushes the figural image to the outer limits of the portrait genre. The title, *Before the Mirror* [*Vor dem Spiegel*], appears programmatic: On the one hand, it evokes the influential topos of the mirror as the epitome of mimetic art theory in the history of portraiture and image theory; on the other, it echoes Schlosser's guidance on professional art reception, which advised against attempting to look "behind" the portrait—just as one would (not) gaze behind a mirror in order to find the reflection.

Who or what, then, has Schiele depicted in this image (or portrait)? The work shows a human figure with its lower torso and legs exposed, a generously cut green shirt covering the upper body above the navel. The right arm is raised and placed behind the head, while the left hand is in the act of pulling the shirt over the head to fully undress. As the figure, which initially appears flat, is visually explored, it takes on a dynamic quality and progressively unfolds its volume. The figure seems to pull its corporeal form out

Fig. 7: Egon Schiele, *Before the Mirror*, 1913, pencil, gouache on paper, 48.3 × 31.1 cm. Leopold Museum, Vienna, inv. no. 1435 (Photo: Leopold Museum, Vienna).

of the ground—represented by the amorphous green shirt—thereby enacting the Latin root of the word "portrait," *protrahere* (to pull out), since it quite literally stages the act of bringing itself into being.

The act of removing the garment exposes not only the figure's naked body (leaving green streaks of color across it) but also the materiality of the image; both—as is often the case in Schiele's work—merge into one and reveal the act of artistic production. In this way, the figure's self-exposure is inevitably also an exposure of the ground as the sine qua non of its appearance.[75] It is not the psyche or character of an extra-pictorial person "behind"

the image that is being laid bare. Rather, the image itself becomes an opaque surface for reflection, one that no longer faithfully mirrors reality in the sense of the classic art-theoretical topos but that instead reflects back onto itself the gaze of the viewer who seeks to penetrate it. This misdirected voyeuristic gaze is thus given a lesson ingrained within the image itself, revealing that the act of undressing depicted here, in the sense of the above interpretation, unveils nothing other than its conditions of possibility. This is not simply the portrait of an extra-pictorial person; rather, it demonstrates to the viewer that a portrait must focus on the individual pictorial structures inherent in the image.

There is more, however: in contrast to the conventional practice of visually downplaying the primary sexual organs in depictions of the nude, the bright red accents draw the viewer's gaze directly to the figure's vulva, indiscreetly bringing the ambiguous nature of the figure's sexuality into open view.[76] Furthermore, Schiele's divergence from established norms in nude representation is also manifested in the format of the image.[77] By repositioning the traditional reclining nude into a vertical orientation, Schiele figuratively helps the figure "stand up." This may be attributed to Schiele's established practice of rotating the horizontally oriented sheets by 90 degrees when signing them.[78] The activation of the figure under the viewer's gaze may also be connected to this shift in orientation, allowing the figure to emancipate itself from the viewer, whose gaze the figure does not meet. Given the figure's unsettling absence of a spatial anchor, the observer is forced to position themselves in relation to it. The contradictions in perspective, posture, and picture format make it difficult for the viewer to reconstruct and occupy the artist's viewpoint and thus assume Schiele's visual perspective in the act of drawing.

The distinctive appearance of this portrait provides various prompts to reflect on the meaning of its appearance, as opposed to uncovering the meaning beyond it. The intrinsic meaning of the androgynous figure in *Before the Mirror* lies not only in its departure from conventional and gender-stereotyped traditions of portraiture and the nude but also in its emancipation from the viewer's stereotypical gender attributions and expectations. In several respects, the portrait challenges the visual relationship and, as the title suggests, places the viewers—quite literally—*before* the mirror.

AT THE MARGINS OF PORTRAITURE

My analysis has followed two main lines of inquiry. The first demonstrated that both Simmel and Schlosser were already critical of the dominant concept of the psychological portrait at the outset of the twentieth century. At the same time, they were developing

alternative approaches to portraiture. The close similarities between their two essays, which were published in quick succession in Vienna, suggest that Schlosser was directly engaged with Simmel's earlier work. Indeed, despite notable differences in their respective writing styles, Schlosser appears to have integrated Simmel's ideas into his own formulations.[79]

My reconstruction of this previously marginalized historical debate on portraiture partly meets the current art historical research interest in performative and self-reflexive phenomena while also providing new impulses for art historical analysis. It woul be misguided to interpret the calls for a genuinely aesthetic approach by Simmel and Schlosser as an endorsement of a traditional formalist analysis, which would reduce the pictorial appearance of the portraits to a self-contained interplay of form and color.[80] Instead, with varying degrees of explicitness, they argued for transcending the established divide between form and content as it was conceived within the "phantoms of 'lay aesthetics.'"[81] A more nuanced aesthetic, in the sense of a phenomenological interpretation, should evolve—capable of accessing the individual meaning inherent in each work.[82] My analyses of Schiele's works of art underscore the immense significance of the aesthetics of materiality and production, even if these aspects were less explicitly addressed in Simmel's and Schlosser's writings. Thus, these reconstructed historical perspectives on portrait theory align well with, and in some respects even anticipate, current research in image and materiality theory.[83]

The second line of inquiry examined early works on paper by Schiele that do not correspond to a traditional conception of the portrait. Seemingly on the margins of the genre, these portraits have proved surprisingly consistent in questioning the paradigms at the very center of the portrait genre itself in a self-reflexive—and in some cases, even subversive—manner. In these works, psychological perspectives—whether dualistic or monistic—are deconstructed, challenging both traditional and Modernist genre paradigms alike. The portraits oscillate between construction and deconstruction of the Modernist portrait, deriving their distinct meaning from this tension. Simultaneously, they challenge the conventional reception of "Expressionist" art by unexpectedly revealing themselves as self-aware images. In the final example, *Before the Mirror*, explorations of the artistic conditions and possibilities of portraiture continue to resonate. Here, however, the tendency toward self-reflection is so closely bound to figuration that the portrait produces an idiosyncratic meaning that cannot be confined to a mere depiction of a theory of art.

This article clarifies the contours of a Viennese discourse on portraiture that has largely been marginalized in the history of art. However, the contemporaries' call to explore the inherent meaning of Modernist portraiture—through the unique interplay

of form, subject, and materiality—should not be seen as a peripheral position within the discourse of their era. Instead, further research should investigate how this approach might provide a foundation for gaining new perspectives on avant-garde portraiture as a whole.

NOTES

1 Julius von Schlosser, "Gespräch von der Bildniskunst; der Künstler; der Literat," in *Präludien, Vorträge und Aufsätze* (Berlin: J. Bard, [1906] 1927): 227–247, 228–229. Schlosser's essay was first published in *Österreichischen Rundschau*, February–April 1906: 502–516.

2 "sehr variable Faktoren, je nach den gerade geltenden Begriffen." Schlosser [1906] 1927, 229 (see note 1). Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are by Suzanne Enser-Ryan.

3 "die anmutige Rolle der Putz- und Waschfrau." Schlosser [1906] 1927, 229 (see note 1).

4 Jacob Burckhardt, "Die Anfänge der neuern Porträtmalerei. 10. März 1885," in *Vorträge 1844–1887*, ed. Emil Dürr (Basel: Schwabe, 1918): 266–281, 266.

5 See, for example, Isa Lohmann-Siems, *Begriff und Interpretation des Porträts in der kunstgeschichtlichen Literatur bis zur Mitte des zwanzigsten Jahrhunderts: Ein Beitrag zum methodischen Problem der Bildnis-Interpretation* (Hamburg: Hower, 1972), 237; Rudolf Preimesberger, "Einleitung," in *Porträt*, ed. Rudolf Preimesberger, Hannah Baader, and Nicola Suthor, Geschichte der klassischen Bildgattungen in Quellentexten und Kommentaren 2 (Berlin: Reimer, 1999): 13–64, 15–21, 60; Roland Meyer, *Operative Porträts: Eine Bildgeschichte der Identifizierbarkeit von Lavater bis Facebook* (Constance: Konstanz University Press, 2019), 17–18.

6 Helena Pereña Sáez, *Egon Schiele: Wahrnehmung, Identität und Weltbild* (Marburg: Tectum, 2010), esp. 48–50; Helena Pereña Sáez, "'Wie man wird was man ist'—Schieles Selbstdarstellungen," in *Egon Schiele—"Das unrettbare Ich": Werke aus der Albertina*, ed. Helmut Friedel and Helena Pereña, exh. cat., Lenbachhaus and Kunstbau, Munich, December 3, 2011–March 4, 2012 (Cologne: Wienand, 2011): 36–49, 46–49.

7 For a concise overview of research on Egon Schiele's portraiture, see Pereña Sáez 2010, 12–17 (see note 6). For a broader discussion of portraiture in Viennese Modernism, see Nathan J. Timpano, *Constructing the Viennese Modern Body: Art, Hysteria, and the Puppet*, Studies in Art Historiography (New York/London: Routledge, 2017), 8–12.

8 See primarily Jacob Reisner, "Zum zeichnerischen Werk des Österreichers Egon Schiele," in *Beiträge zur Kunstgeschichte: Eine Festgabe für Heinz Rudolf Rosemann zum 9. Oktober 1960*, ed. Ernst Guldan (Munich: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 1960): 337–348, 342; Carl E. Schorske, *Fin-de-Siècle Vienna: Politics and Culture* (New York: Knopf, 1980); Alessandra Comini, "Egon Schiele: Redefining Portraiture in the Age of Angst," in *Egon Schiele: Portraits*, ed. Alessandra Comini, exh. cat., Neue Galerie, New York, October 9, 2014–January 19, 2015 (Munich: Prestel, 2014): 15–40. This psychological line of interpretation continues to enjoy a somewhat tempered but enduring popularity to this day.

9 Wilhelm Waetzoldt, *Die Kunst des Porträts* (Leipzig: Hirt, 1908).

10 Pia Müller-Tamm, ed., *Egon Schiele: Inszenierung und Identität* (Cologne: DuMont, 1995); Klaus Albrecht Schröder, *Egon Schiele: Eros und Passion*, Pegasus-Bibliothek (Munich/Berlin: Prestel, 2004), 298; see also contributions by Agnes Husslein-Arco, Jane Kallir, and Alfred Weidinger, in *Egon Schiele: Selbstporträts und Porträts*, ed. Agnes Husslein-Arco and Jane Kallir, exh. cat., Belvedere, Vienna, February 17–June 13, 2011 (Munich/London/New York: Prestel, 2011); Gemma Blackshaw, ed., *Facing the Modern: The Portrait in Vienna 1900*, exh. cat., National Gallery, London, October 9, 2013–January 12, 2014 (London: National Gallery, 2013);

Stefan Kutzenberger, "'Mit bangen Schmerzen innen, in der Seele.' Egon Schieles Selbstporträts," in *Die Gesichter des Egon Schiele*, ed. Elisabeth Leopold (Munich: Hirmer, 2023): 15–24, 15–17.

11 See especially the following research conducted by Gemma Blackshaw: "The Pathological Body: Modernist Strategising in Egon Schiele's Self-Portraiture," *Oxford Art Journal* 30, no. 3 (2007): 379–401; "Klimt, Schiele and Schönberg: Self Portraits," in Blackshaw 2013 (see note 10): 111–142, 111–132; and "The Modernist Offence: Schiele and the Naked Female Body," in *Egon Schiele: The Radical Nude*, ed. Peter Vergo and Barbara Wright, exh. cat., Courtauld Gallery, London, October 23, 2014–January 18, 2015 (London: Courtauld Gallery, 2014): 30–49.

12 In light of the vast corpus of existing research, only a few works will be mentioned here: Jacques Lerider, *Das Ende der Illusion: Die Wiener Moderne und die Krisen der Identität* (Vienna: Österreichischer Bundesverlag, 1990); Pereña Sáez 2010, 48–50 (see note 6); Lori A. Felton, "Beyond the Self-Seers: The Creative Strategies within Egon Schiele's Double Self-Portraiture," in *The Doppelgänger*, ed. Deborah Ascher Barnstone, German Visual Culture 3 (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2016): 13–44; Timpano 2017 (see note 7); Elisabeth Dutz, "'Wenn ich mich ganz sehe, werde ich mich selbst sehen müssen …' Egon Schieles Selbstinszenierungen," in *Schiele und die Folgen*, ed. Elisabeth Dutz, exh. cat., Albertina Modern, Vienna, September 10, 2021–January 23, 2022 (Vienna: Albertina Modern, 2021): 14–49, 14–15. In a broader context, the research on Egon Schiele has also built on the seminal contributions of Astrid Kury and Kimberly Smith. In the past years, the crisis of the subject has been a central focus of several exhibitions, most recently Christian Bauer, ed., *"Ich bin alles zugleich": Selbstdarstellung von Schiele bis heute*, exh. cat., Landesgalerie Niederösterreich, Krems an der Donau, May 26, 2019–August 16, 2019 (Vienna: Verlag für moderne Kunst, 2019).

13 Schlosser [1906] 1927 (see note 1). Simmel published a total of three essays on portraiture, with the contribution on the "Aesthetik des Porträts" [Aesthetics of the Portrait] (1905), printed in the *Neue Freie Presse*, Vienna, being the focus here. Key insights from his 1901 article "Die ästhetische Bedeutung des Gesichts" [The Aesthetic Significance of the Face] (printed in *Der Lotse: Hamburgische Wochenschrift für deutsche Kultur*, June 1, 1901: 280–284) were already incorporated in the 1905 publication. Another article on the "Problem des Portraits" [The Problem of the Portrait] followed in 1918 (appearing in *Die neue Rundschau* 29/2, no. 10 [October 1918]: 1336–1344). For more on Simmel's intellectual connections to Vienna, see David Frisby, ed., *Georg Simmel in Wien: Texte und Kontexte aus dem Wien der Jahrhundertwende*, Edition Parabasen (Vienna: WUV, 2000).

14 In addition to Lohmann-Siems (1972, see note 5), special attention was given to the two works by Nicola Suthor—"Georg Simmel: Die wahre Einheit (1905)" and "Julius von Schlosser: Die Phänomenalität des Porträts (1906)"—in the standard publication on the subject: Rudolf Preimesberger, Hannah Baader, and Nicola Suthor, eds., *Porträt*, Geschichte der klassischen Bildgattungen in Quellentexten und Kommentaren 2 (Berlin: Reimer, 1999): 416–424, 425–430; Daniel Spanke, *Porträt—Ikone—Kunst: Methodologische Studien zum Porträt in der Kunstliteratur. Zu einer Bildtheorie der Kunst* (Munich/Paderborn: Fink, 2004); Meyer 2019 (see note 5).

15 The only exception in reference to Viennese Modernism that I am aware of is Rüdiger Görner, *Oskar Kokoschka: Jahrhundertkünstler* (Vienna: Paul Zsolnay Verlag, 2018), 210–213, who briefly addresses the connection between Simmel's ideas and Kokoschka's portrait aesthetics.

16 Pereña Sáez 2010, 48–49 (see note 6); Husslein-Arco and Kallir 2011, 9 (see note 10); see also Pereña Sáez

2011, 46–48 (see note 6); Dutz 2021, 14 (see note 12); Leopold 2023, 7–8 (see note 10); Kutzenberger 2023, 15–17 (see note 10). "It was in his drawings and sketches that Schiele developed the pictorial grammar that [he] would later apply on his canvases"; Carla Carmona Escalera, "The Use of Structures in Egon Schiele's Syntax: Chairs, Tightropes, Clothes, Halos, Prostheses," *Egon Schiele Jahrbuch* 1 (2011): 58–89, 59.

17 Schiele reflected on his "Neukunst" style in a letter to Josef Strzygowski, November 6, 1910, in Egon Schiele Datenbank der Autografen, ID 18: https://www.egonschiele.at/18. See, for example, Husslein-Arco and Weidinger 2011, 12–13 (see note 10); Kallir 2011, 84–87 (see note 10); Dutz 2021, 14–15 (see note 12).

18 Particularly in relation to German Expressionism, the complete exclusion of marginal pictorial phenomena has been the subject of ongoing debate, for example, in Jutta Hülsewig-Johnen, "Selbst-Verwirklichung: Vom traditionellen Bildnis zum Bildnis des Expressionismus," in *O Mensch! Das Bildnis des Expressionismus*, ed. Jutta Hülsewig-Johnen, exh. cat., Kunsthalle Bielefeld, Bielefeld, November 29, 1992–February 14, 1993 (Bielefeld: Kerber, 1992): 8–22.

19 Carla Carmona Escalera has published extensively on the relationship between Egon Schiele's work and Ludwig Wittgenstein's philosophy; see, for example, Carla Carmona Escalera, "Chairs as Structures in Egon Schiele's Aesthetics: Egon Schiele's Place in Wittgenstein's Vienna," *Nómadas: Revista Crítica de Ciencias Sociales y Jurídicas* 29, no. 1 (2011): 155–165; Carmona Escalera 2011 (see note 16); Carla Carmona Escalera, *La idea pictórica de Egon Schiele: Un ensayo sobre lógica representacional*, Colección Ciencias Sociales y Humanidades 7 (Malaga: Genueve Ediciones, 2012); Carla Carmona Escalera, "A Comparison of the Portraits of Friederike Maria Beer Painted by Egon Schiele and Gustav Klimt," *Egon Schiele Jahrbuch* 2/3 (2012/2013): 160–168; Carla Carmona Escalera, "Ethics and Aesthetics Are One: Egon Schiele in the Light of the Philosophy of Ludwig Wittgenstein and the Theory of Musical Composition of Arnold Schönberg," in *Tagungsband zum 1. Egon Schiele-Symposium im Leopold Museum*, ed. Hans-Peter Wipplinger (Vienna: Leopold Museum, 2017): 120–133; Carla Carmona Escalera, "Ethics and Modernity in Fin-de-Siècle Vienna: Equivalence and Qualities in the Arts of Egon Schiele and Robert Musil," *Egon Schiele Jahrbuch* 4–8 (2019): 170–179.

20 Lohmann-Siems 1972, 47 (see note 5).

21 Suthor 1999, 421–422 (see note 14). See also Petra Gördüren, "Das Bildnis sieht sich ähnlich: Abstrakte Porträts im Werk von Imi Knoebel," in *Ähnlichkeit und Entstellung: Entgrenzungstendenzen des Porträts*, ed. Werner Busch, Oliver Jehle, Bernhard Maaz, and Sabine Slanina (Berlin/Munich: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 2010): 181–194, 188.

22 Waetzoldt 1908, 309–314 (see note 9); see also Lohmann-Siems 1972, 12, 38–41 (see note 5).

23 "intime monologische Offenbarung der [Künstler-]Persönlichkeit"; "Grenzgebiet zwischen Psychologie und Kunstgeschichte." Waetzoldt 1908, 312 and preliminary remarks (see note 9).

24 Preimesberger 1999, 19 (see note 5); Meyer 2019, 17–18 (see note 5).

25 Daniela Bohde, "Die künstlerische Handschrift als Ausdruck des Charakters? Die scheinbare Kontinuität eines Topos': Giorgio Vasaris *maniera*—Roger de Piles' *caractères*—Wilhelm Fraengers Formpsychogramme," in *Vasari als Paradigma*, ed. Fabian Jonietz and Alessandro Nova (Venice: Marsilio, 2016): 67–78. In the context of the Expressionist portrait, for example, Alessandra Comini repeatedly posed the question of whose psyche

is being disclosed—that of the subject or that of the artist. See Alessandra Comini, "Die Wiener Bildnismalerei um die Jahrhundertwende," *Mitteilungen der Gesellschaft für Vergleichende Kunstforschung in Wien* 25 (1973): 21–22; Alessandra Comini, *Egon Schiele's Portraits*, California Studies in the History of Art 17 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), 69–70.

26 "Wenn alle 'psychologische' Deutung in der Darstellung des Seelischen als solchen das alleinige künstlerische Ziel sieht und daraus noch den naiven Schluß zieht, daß die Seele des Modells wie sie wirklich ist, um jeden Preis im Bilde zur Offenbarung kommen müßte – so scheint mir dieser psychologische Realismus völlig unkünstlerisch." Georg Simmel, "Aesthetik des Porträts [1905]," in *Georg Simmel in Wien: Texte und Kontexte aus dem Wien der Jahrhundertwende*, ed. David Frisby, Edition Parabasen (Wien: WUV, 2000): 158–166, 165.

27 "Nebenzweig"; "Buchstabenschrift [...], die ihren Sinn nicht in sich selbst hat, sondern in dem geistigen Inhalt hat, den sie vermittelt." Simmel [1905] 2000, 160 (see note 26).

28 "eine der gefährlichsten unter den gefährlichen Analogien, wenn man ihn [den Künstler] 'Psychologie' treiben"; "schon ein Hinüberdenken über die Sache." Schlosser [1906] 1927, 230 (see note 1).

29 "hinter den Spiegel gucken, um das Spiegelbild zu finden." Schlosser [1906] 1927, 228, 231 (see note 1).

30 "persönlichen Vorstellungen und Gefühle wie an eine[m] Kleiderhaken." Schlosser [1906] 1927, 228, 231 (see note 1).

31 "'Innenleben' des 'Andern'"; "ein sehr stachliges Problem"; "da die Schauer der Metaphysik uns anwehen, beiseitestellen." Schlosser [1906] 1927, 228, 231 (see note 1).

32 In his philosophy, Friedrich Nietzsche generally criticizes the Platonic "degradation of sensuality, corporeality, individuality" (quoted in Schlosser [1906] 1927, 244 [see note 1]), which Schlosser also alludes to in his text.

33 Suthor 1999, 428–430 (see note 14).

34 Dutz 2021, 18 (see note 12).

35 Husslein-Arco and Weidinger 2011, 18–20 (see note 10); Rainer Metzger, "Schieles physiognomische Fragmente: Eine Bilderrevue," in *Egon Schiele: Expression und Lyrik. Tagungsband zum 2. Egon Schiele-Symposium im Leopold Museum*, ed. Verena Gamper and Hans-Peter Wipplinger (Vienna: Leopold Museum, 2018): 130–150, 131–132.

36 Bauer 2019, 52–56 (see note 12).

37 Timpano 2017 (see note 7); Gertje R. Utley, "'Die Übermarionette': Egon Schiele's Private Codes," in *A Fine Regard: Essays in Honor of Kirk Varnedoe*, ed. Patricia G. Berman and Gertje R. Utley (Aldershot/Burlington: Ashgate, 2008): 86–103; Alexander Klee, "Attitüde und Geste als Abbild des Geschlechterverständnisses," in Husslein-Arco and Kallir 2011 (see note 10): 31–45; Bauer 2019 (see note 12); Alys X. George, *The Naked Truth: Viennese Modernism and the Body* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2020). Schiele's possible engagement with the photographs of people afflicted with hysteria, produced under the direction of Jean-Martin Charcot, is, however, a matter of controversy; see Blackshaw 2007, 382–392 (see note 11); Husslein-Arco and Weidinger 2011, 21 (see note 10); Timpano 2017, specifically 43–65 (see note 7).

38 Klee 2011, 37 (see note 37); Christian Bauer, "Wunderkind und Rebell: Der frühe Schiele," in *Egon Schiele: Die Gemälde*, ed. Tobias G. Natter (Cologne: Taschen, 2020): 22–83, 30–33.

39 Michael Yonan, *Messerschmidt's Character Heads: Maddening Sculpture and the Writing of Art History*, Studies

in Art Historiography (New York/London: Routledge, 2018), specifically 4–8 and 117–119. Yonan notes that the classification of these works as "character heads," along with the specific titles assigned to them, did not originate with Messerschmidt himself. Rather, it reflects the need to categorize these works by later reception.

40 Metzger 2018, 139–142 (see note 35); Yonan 2018, 117–119 (see note 39). In this context, Yonan points out the conceptual proximity between Messerschmidt and Lichtenberg, elaborating on this connection on pages 98–120.

41 Also, Metzger detects in Schiele's portraits "neither a pathognomonic quality that captures a momentary passion such as anger, grief, or exultation, nor a physiognomic quality that attempts to capture a person's character." Metzger 2018, 131 (see note 35). He also connects these works to the history of physiognomy and Messerschmidt; see Metzger 2018, 135–142 (see note 35). In contrast to this article, Metzger draws the conclusion that the meaning is open-ended; see Metzger 2018, 131, 134 (see note 35).

42 A comparable conclusion is reached, for example, by Pereña Sáez 2010, 44–48 (see note 6); Pereña 2011, 46–48 (see note 6); Metzger 2018, 131 (see note 35).

43 Carmona Escalera has also observed that in Egon Schiele's *Self-Portrait, Grimacing* (Fig. 2), the act of grimacing itself becomes the subject of artistic representation, reducing the figure to a mere medium. See Carmona Escalera 2012, 131 (see note 19).

44 Timpano 2017 (see note 7); Utley 2008 (see note 37); Klee 2011 (see note 37); Husslein-Arco and Weidinger 2011, 23 (see note 10); Bauer 2020, 33–35 (see note 38); Johann Thomas Ambrózy, "Das Geheimnis der 'Eremiten': Die Entschlüsselung einer Privat-Ikonographie und die Klärung des Ursprungs der V-Geste von Egon Schiele," in *Egon Schiele Jahrbuch* 1 (2011): 10–57; Johann Thomas Ambrózy, "Zur neuen Sicht auf Egon Schiele: Wechselnder Stil, bleibendes Ziel," in *Egon Schiele*, exh. cat., Albertina, Vienna, February 22, 2017–June 18, 2017 (Munich: Hirmer, 2017): 17–72, 49–54.

45 As of late, Osen has garnered significant scholarly attention, particularly in the recently published monograph: Christian Bauer, *Erwin Osen: Egon Schieles Künstlerfreund* (Munich: Hirmer, 2023); in the exhibition *The Body Electric: Erwin Osen and Egon Schiele*, from April 16 to September 26, 2021, at the Leopold Museum, Vienna; and the contributions by Verena Gamper, "Den pathologisierten Körper im Blick—Kunst und Klinik bei Erwin Osen und Egon Schiele," and Christian Bauer, "Erwin Dominik Osen—Eine Annäherung," both in *Egon Schiele: Milieus und Perspektiven: Tagungsband zum 4. Egon Schiele Symposium im Leopold Museum*, ed. Verena Gamper and Hans-Peter Wipplinger (Vienna: Leopold Museum, 2022): 70–88; 90–102.

46 In her analysis of Egon Schiele's portrait *Mime van Osen* (Fig. 4), Carmona Escalera also connects the work's artificiality to the profession of the depicted mime; see Carmona Escalera 2012, 137–141 (see note 19).

47 Denis Diderot, "Das Paradox über den Schauspieler (1770–73)," in *Ästhetische Schriften*, ed. Friedrich Bassenge, vol. 2, Eurobuch 8 (Berlin: Europäisches Buch, 1984): 481–538, esp. 484.

48 The groundwork for this line of thought was established by Patrick Werkner in *Physis und Psyche: Der österreichische Frühexpressionismus* (Vienna/Munich: Herold Verlag, 1986); Pereña Sáez 2010 (see note 6); Timpano 2017 (see note 7); George 2020 (see note 37).

49 Pereña Sáez 2010, esp. 131–196 (see note 6).

50 The following publications have specifically highlighted the influence of physiological principles on art criticism in the early twentieth century, particularly within German- and French-speaking contexts: Matthias Krüger, Christine Ott, and Ulrich Pfisterer, eds., *Die Biologie der Kreativität: Ein produktionsästhetisches Denkmodell in der Moderne* (Zurich/Berlin: Diaphanes, 2013); Anja Zimmermann and Cornelia Bartsch, eds., *Biologische Metaphern zwischen Kunst, Kunstgeschichte und Wissenschaft in Neuzeit und Moderne* (Berlin: Reimer, 2014).

51 "Art subkutaner Malerei." Hans Tietze, "Nekrolog," in *In Memoriam Egon Schiele*, ed. Arthur Roessler (Vienna: Lányi, 1921): 57–58, 58.

52 "wie gehäuteten Gestalten"; "zuckende Starre"; "lebende Leichname"; "perversen Schimmer erotischen Siechtums." Tietze 1921, 58 (see note 51).

53 "das Innere der Menschen nach außen zu stülpen ver[möge], und man grau[e] vor dem Anblick des sorgsam Verborgenen, das jauchig und milbig und von fressender Zersetzung ergriffen." Arthur Roessler, "Kritische Fragmente über Egon Schiele: 1909–1918," in Roessler 1921 (see note 51): 7–23, 18.

54 "die Seele in diesen schlechten, verdorbenen Gefäßen." Roessler 1921, 19 (see note 53).

55 "das Fleisch seinen eigenen Geist habe"; "konsequente psychologische Ausdeutung." Kurt Rathe, "Egon Schieles Weg und Ziel: Wien, im Februar 1919," in Roessler 1921 (see note 51): 43–48, 45–46.

56 Max Ermers, "Egon Schiele: Gedächtnis-Ausstellung im Salon Würthle," *Der Tag*, December 13, 1925: 4.

57 Gemma Blackshaw interprets the subcutaneous portrait aesthetic in Schiele's work as an inter-pictorial building of a homosocial network; see Blackshaw 2007, 400–401 (see note 11).

58 "nunmehr als die lebendige Substanz, die dem künstlerischen Organismus saftvolle Körperlichkeit." Rathe 1921, 44 (see note 55).

59 Dutz 2021, 18 (see note 12).

60 "Anspruch an das Porträt, vermittelst des Körpers die Seele darzustellen, [...] keine Theorie hinwegdekretieren." Simmel [1905] 2000, 160 (see note 26).

61 On the formation of the concept of "pictorial grammar," see, for example, Carmona Escalera 2011, 156 (see note 19).

62 Claude Cernuschi, *Re/Casting Kokoschka: Ethics and Aesthetics, Epistemology and Politics in Fin-de-Siècle Vienna* (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2002), 43–44, see also 21–50, 101–122, and 177–194. Bushart and Haug have pointed out in a fundamental way how artistic surfaces can be semantically charged, depending on the discourses to which they are subjected. See Magdalena Bushart and Henrike Haug, "Spurensuche/Spurenlese: Zur Sichtbarkeit von Arbeit im Werk," in *Spur der Arbeit*, ed. Magdalena Bushart and Henrike Haug, Interdependenzen 3 (Cologne/Weimar/Vienna: Böhlau, 2018): 7–24.

63 Suthor also observed this focus on the modalities of representation in Schlosser's portrait theory. See Suthor 1999, 427–428 (see note 14).

64 "in die Rolle eines bloßen Mittels"; "ein Unvergleichliches und Einziges zu leisten." Simmel [1905] 2000, 160 (see note 26).

65 "der gemalte Herr X"; "der wirkliche [Herr] X." Schlosser [1906] 1927, 231–232 (see note 1).

66 "Aus der Ganzheit des Menschen, in die die gewöhnliche Vorstellung sein Äußeres und alles, was wir Seelisches an ihm kennen, ungeschieden einschließt, löst das Porträt seine Sichtbarkeit los: den Sinn seiner Erscheinung—nicht den Sinn hinter seiner Erscheinung—zur reinen Darstellung zu bringen, ist das erste Amt des Porträts." Simmel [1905] 2000, 158 (see note 26).

67 I am referring to this passage: "Ich bin überzeugt, daß der Körper und die Seele nicht zwei 'Teile' des Menschen sind, die ihn erst zusammensetzen und von denen der eine unmittelbar sinnlich gegeben ist, der andere erst erschlossen werden muß. Vielmehr, der Mensch ist eine lebendige Einheit, die erst durch eine nachträgliche Abstraktion in jenes beides zertrennt wird, und als diese Einheit nehmen wir ihn auch wahr. [...] Alle Bemühungen der Denker, den Zusammenhang von Körper und Seele herzustellen, als Wechselwirkung, Parallelismus oder wodurch immer, wollen nur nachträglich die auseinandergeschnittenen Stücke dessen wieder zusammenflicken, was uns tägliches unmittelbares Erlebnis ist: die Lebenseinheit des Menschen [...]." ["I am convinced that body and soul are not two modular components of a person, with the former immediately accessible to our senses and the latter inferred through deduction. Rather, a person is—and is perceived by us solely as—a vital unity, bisected into these two parts only through subsequent abstraction. [...] All efforts of thinkers to define the connectedness of body and soul—whether through interaction, parallelism, or some other idea—are but attempts to piece together the fragmented parts of what is, in fact, our immediate everyday experience: the unity of life."] Georg Simmel, "Das Problem des Porträts (1918)," in Georg Simmel, "Das Problem des Porträts (1918)," in *Aufsätze und Abhandlungen 1909–1918*, ed. Klaus Latzel, part 2 of vol. 13, *Gesamtausgabe* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2000): 370–381, 373.

68 "künstlerische Durcharbeitung der Anschaulichkeiten." Simmel [1905] 2000, 163 (see note 26).

69 "Durcheinander und Ineinander sinnlicher und seelischer Eindrücke." Simmel [1905] 2000, 158 (see note 26).

70 Suthor 1999, 422 (see note 14); Meyer 2019, 230–231 (see note 5).

71 Simmel [1905] 2000, 166 (see note 26).

72 "ob sie mit derjenigen Seele, mit der diese Züge an dem realen Menschen assoziiert sind, übereinstimmt oder nicht." Simmel [1905] 2000, 166 (see note 26).

73 "*Sinn* der Erscheinung [...] erst dann in das malerische Kunstwerk [gehöre], wenn er sich als der Sinn der *Erscheinung* offenbart." Simmel [1905] 2000, 166 (see note 26); emphasis in the original.

74 Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus logico-philosophicus: Logisch-philosophische Abhandlung* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, [1922] 1960), 50. Carmona Escalera has analyzed how, in a Wittgensteinian sense, Schiele's art creates meaning through the specific use and arrangement of individual compositional and motivic structures within the individual image. See, for example, Carmona Escalera 2011 (see note 16).

75 Schiele's precise pictorial language is what enables his paintings to expose—that is, to *show* [*Zeigen*]—their mediality and its limitations in the Wittgensteinian sense (Wittgenstein 1960, 66 [see note 74]), and to generate *meaning* [*Bedeutung*] through the specific *use* [*Gebrauch*] of pictorial language within each individual image; see, for example, Carmona Escalera 2011, 155–156 and 162 (see note 19). Carmona Escalera's analysis of numerous garments in Schiele's paintings and the volatile relations between concealing and revealing, each with its own nuance of meaning, underscores that the interpretation of *Before the Mirror* (Fig. 7), pro-

posed above, is not interchangeable but arises from the phenomenological individuality of the portrait. See, for example, Carmona Escalera 2011, 65–77 and 81–87 (see note 19); Carmona Escalera 2012, 83–94 (see note 19); Carmona Escalera 2012, 216–227 (see note 19); Carmona Escalera 2012/2013 (see note 19). In another context, Carmona Escalera interprets Schiele's eroticized, deindividualized female nudes from 1912 to 1914 as metaphors for representation itself, thus also ascribing metapictorial meaning to them; see Carmona Escalera 2012, 93 (see note 19).

76 Ann-Sophie Lehmann, "Das unsichtbare Geschlecht: Zu einem abwesenden Teil des weiblichen Körpers in der bildenden Kunst," in *Körperteile: Eine kulturelle Anatomie*, ed. Claudia Benthien and Christoph Wulf, Rororo Rowohlts Enzyklopädie 55642 (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt Taschenbuch Verlag, 2001): 316–339.

77 Schiele's break with the tradition of the nude has been frequently noted in scholarly research; see, for example, Jane Kallir, "Egon Schieles Akte," in *Sehnsucht nach Glück: Wiens Aufbruch in die Moderne. Klimt, Kokoschka, Schiele*, ed. Sabine Schulze and Ilsebill Barta, exh. cat., Schirn Kunsthalle Frankfurt, Frankfurt am Main, September 23–December 3, 1995 (Ostfildern-Ruit: Hatje, 1995): 326–331, esp. 328.

78 On Schiele's unusual studio practices, see, for example, Pia Müller-Tamm, "Sehen zeigen—Sehen lassen. Blickinszenierung und Betrachteransprache in Schieles figürlichen Darstellungen," in *Egon Schiele: Inszenierung und Identität*, ed. Pia Müller-Tamm (Cologne: DuMont, 1995): 15–43, 34.

79 Simmel [1905] 2000, 158, 166 (see note 26); and Schlosser [1906] 1927, 231, 246 (see note 1).

80 Carmona Escalera notes that, in light of his emphasis on the self-referentiality of art, Wittgenstein has also been unjustly accused of "formalism." See Carmona Escalera 2019, 173 (see note 19).

81 "Schemen aus der 'Laienästhetik.'" Schlosser [1906] 1927, 236, 234–236 (see note 1).

82 Simmel [1905] 2000, 164 (see note 26).

83 Notable examples here include, on the one hand, convergences with Gottfried Boehm's phenomenological image theory, which focuses on the logic and mechanisms underlying the production of meaning in images. On the other hand, there are parallels with the current turn in art history toward material and praxeological approaches, marked by a growing interest in materiality and aesthetics of production, influenced by Bruno Latour's actor-network theory.

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