Research Article

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FROM MASKS TO MODERNISM: THE THEATER AS A NUCLEUS OF EARLY VIENNESE EXPRESSIONISM

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ABSTRACT

Egon Schiele produced his first Expressionist work in 1910. Portraits and self-portraits turn their dramatic countenances toward the viewer. The origins of these vivid facial expressions and gestures have been a focus of Schiele scholars for half a century. The key question is whether the artist's objective in creating these works was to depict an inner truth that goes beyond the facade of his subjects. This research article suggests that theatrical phenomena provided a stimulus for Schiele's early Expressionism. I focus on the ubiquitous presence of the theatrical in the lives of a young generation of artists at the beginning of the 20th century in Vienna. In this context, the central source of inspiration for Schiele's art was his friend, the artist Erwin Osen. Osen was brought up on the theater; his appearance, his range as a universal artist, and his (fictional) journeys made a lasting impression on Schiele. At the same time, Schiele was deceived and disappointed by Osen. For Schiele, the mask becomes the symbol for deception but also the medium for a new reality that is borrowed from the performing arts, and it dominates his portraits and self-portraits from 1910.

KEYWORDS

Schiele Egon; Osen Erwin; Heller Hermann Vinzenz; Messerschmidt Franz Xaver; Kokoschka Oskar; Roessler Arthur; Mach Ernst; Rilke Rainer Maria; Mask; Theater; Japonisme; Expressionism; Portrait; Self-portrait; 1910s; Modernism Viennese; 20th century; Austria; Painting; Theory portrait; Vienna; Austria-Hungary

With a mouth opened wide in such a way that the face takes on an extremely dramatic expression, and with all the head muscles tightened as if a cry is escaping from the almost toothless mouth—this is how Egon Schiele appears to us in a self-portrait from 1910, titled *Self-Portrait, Grimacing* (Fig. 1). This unprecedented level of ruthlessness in an artist's depiction of themselves opens a new chapter in the story of early Austrian Expressionism. The question of the origins of such pictorialized expression is a key focus of Schiele scholars. During the past century, they have developed two principal, and contrasting, explanations of this phenomenon: One reads it as a view deep into the individual; the other, as based on the idea of theatricalization. This article seeks to show that the central artistic idea of Schiele's facial expressions is one of performativity and is rooted—at least to a large extent—in the theatrical milieu that surrounded him. In the following, I show that many examples of Schiele's work suggest that some of the important anatomical ideas that influenced early Viennese Expressionism are also inextricably linked with the theater and that all these influences come together in the motif of the mask.

Earlier research consistently points to the glimpse behind the facade of the individual that is laid bare in Schiele's portraits and self-portraits, as can be seen in the artist's first biography, written by his manager and networker, Arthur Roessler. In his book, which was published in 1948, Roessler paints a picture of an artist who had "almost overloaded (life) with suffering" and who knew how to capture the emotional existence of an individual:

> His [Schiele's] eye had the ability to sense all the various and often hardly perceptible signs of suffering in the face and on the body of a person, and his hand had the ability to produce a shocking depiction of the subject. [...] Faces, which [...] vividly offer a distant echo of the innermost feelings of an individual with touching emotional sensitivity.[1]

This interpretative approach has so far dominated the research literature. For instance, Patrick Werkner, seminal scholar of early Austrian Expressionism, writes of Schiele, "In his portraits, in his self-portraits, and in his ecstatic nudes, Schiele is also constantly searching for the hidden, daemonic, unwhole aspects."[2] At the same time, references to the performative aspects of Schiele's works have intensified since the 1980s, as exemplified by Klaus Albrecht Schröder, who poses the question: "What and whom does Schiele see in the mirror? Certainly not just his own body. Clearly, he is looking for poses, and for habitual distortions: he is alienating himself from himself."[3] Wolfgang Georg Fischer, writing in the 1990s, sees this as the trait that makes Schiele unique: "In the huge hall

Fig. 1: Egon Schiele, *Self-Portrait, Grimacing,* 1910, crayon and gouache on paper, 45.3 × 30.7 cm. Leopold Museum, Vienna, inv. no. 2312 (Photo: Leopold Museum, Vienna).

of mirrors of his introspection and showmanship, he performs that pantomime of the self that distinguishes him from all other artists."[4] Katharina Sykora, writing around the same time as Fischer, investigates the performative inspiration that Schiele found in traditional forms of theater and modern dance as well as his passion for Javanese shadow puppets.[5] By contrast, Alexander Klee interprets Schiele's portraits via a theory of temperament: "In Schiele's portraits facial expressions serve to express feelings or emotions, such as rage [...], shame, and astonishment, whereby the most aggressive of the sheets are almost all self-portraits, some of which take on a diabolical character."[6] More recently, Helena Pereña widens the debate and raises the question of the reason for Schiele's self-depictions. She investigates the history of the ideas behind the expressive works and places the intensely discussed issue of the subject at the heart of her studies. Here, the crisis of identity in the years around 1900 becomes a driving force that is also reflected in Schiele's literary pronouncements, as Pereña explains: "The self is no longer an immutable constant or a position from which we are able to recognize reality, but an eternal coming and becoming."[7] Finally, in her most recent investigation, Laura Feurle suggests that it is impossible to interpret Schiele's grimaces, due to the fact that the momentary emotion or the grimace distorts the face. In her view, the surface of the portrait shuts itself off and becomes opaque and indecipherable.[8]

A LETTER REVEALS SCHIELE'S UNDERSTANDING OF WEARING MASKS

Several years ago, a letter came to light that was written by Egon Schiele on September 20, 1910, around the time that he produced the self-portrait described above (Fig. 1).[9] We know of no other letter written by Schiele in this year of frenzied production that so clearly describes the position of the then 20-year-old artist. It is addressed to the architect and designer Josef Hoffmann, whom Schiele repeatedly tried to recruit to join his network. While a comprehensive array of such written documents exists—30 (all from Schiele to Hoffmann) are recorded in the Egon Schiele Autograph Database—the expressive power of this letter is unique because it establishes the link between Schiele's work from that time and his deepest insights.[10] "The time will come when you get to know me!"—this opening line is followed by reflections on Schiele's view of the world as well as of nature and humanity.[11] Here, Schiele takes up the subject of the mask and admits that there are many people with whom he only speaks when "wearing a mask": "This also allows me to speak with everyone else, after all, when wearing a mask; it's possible."[12] Schiele makes it unmistakably clear that these masks enable him to distance

himself from the veracity of an authentic facial expression: "And just like there are many people with a fake facial expression, I can have a fake one, too."[13] The more the artist denies the truthfulness of the facial expression, the more he trusts the expression of the gesture: "But the hands with which I talk are truth itself; they are permanently unmasked."[14] Ultimately, Schiele writes that he presents his understanding of facial expression and gestures in his self-portraits, closing with the following statement: "How often I portray myself!"[15]

The theatrical background of the facial expressions, particularly the mask motif, is key to Schiele's work, broadening and deepening the range of inspirations in the artist's expressive 1910 depictions. But what does the term *theatrical* mean in this context? Michael Fried's definition, in which he describes the "theatricality" involved in arranging the object within an exhibition space, seems to be of limited use.[16] The theatrical presentation of the image for the observer, which Fried principally expounds with the help of eighteenth-century paintings, can only provide a very loose framework for addressing the topic.[17] The "hysterical-theatrical gestures" and pathological origins of the studies by Nathan J. Timpano are similarly hard to apply here.[18] These primarily involve an analysis of the impact of the writings and paintings of Jean-Martin Charcot on Schiele's work. There is no significant overlap between the pathological, hysteria-centered aspect of Viennese Modernism identified by Timpano and the issues investigated in this article. And while Timpano's reference to the figures of Elektra, Isolde, and Salome may involve the visual arts, he does not address the aspect of wearing masks.[19] A more suitable introduction to the subject is provided by an article that also dates from 1910, the production year of Schiele's early Expressionist self-portraits, in which the author Hans Wantoch defines the term *theatricality* by focusing on sudden affect:

> Ideally [...] this stream of emotions begins with the first line. We sense theatricality when it gives rise to a sudden, unexpected wave that emerges from nothing that was here before. [...] The layperson uses the term "untrue to life" as a means of expressing a violation against psychology, which is to say, against the depiction of an individual as necessarily defined by their intrinsic principles. Theatricality means nothing more than an effective breach of the characteristic and inherent compositional rules to which the work is subject.[20]

Even before Wantoch, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's plays provided a basis for this approach by being rooted in the "creation of their own reality, independent of the given reality of nature and society."[21] The most important reform during the years of early

Expressionism included ideas about the "retheatricalization" of the theater inspired by the cabaret at Münchner Künstlertheater [Munich Art Theater],[22] as recorded by Georg Fuchs in 1909:

> The simplest form of drama is the rhythmical movement of the body in space. Varieté is the place, where drama is still performed in its simplest form as dance, acrobatics, juggling, tightrope walking, conjuring tricks, wrestling and boxing, performing animals, musical comedy, masked dancing, and who knows what else.[23]

Thus, already by the nineteenth century, theater achieved a status that left traces on "cultural-sociological developments," to the extent that one can even talk of a "theatricalization of society."[24] In the nineteenth century, the mask covered a broad spectrum. It was a theatrical prop, a (medical) print or merely the assumption of an emotional or pathological expression, a portrait of oneself or of another, and much more. It was a symbol of the performative and, as such, came to embody a dimension of the self that was imbued with ambivalence; it also offered an escape from the new approach to self-depiction.

What is the connection between such observations and Schiele's self-portrait (Fig. 1)? As Klaus Albrecht Schröder observes, the artist is hiding in the picture behind a facial facade.[25] We are confronted not by a fleeting moment but by a rigid countenance with a hardened expression. The face cannot be full of life because it has been robbed of its constant changeability. In the introduction to his comprehensive study of masks in Western modern art, Édouard Papet notes, "The mask isolates the facial characteristics, transforms them into hieroglyphs; it reduces the individual, the portrait, to the expression that emerges most clearly."[26] In the case of Schiele's self-portrait, this expression draws its sense of drama from the ruthlessness with which the subject looks out at us with his one remaining tooth.

As a child, Schiele enjoyed an intense relationship with the theater. He grew up watching Vienna's shows and was a frequent visitor to the Burgtheater [Imperial Court Theater], where his uncle Leopold Czihaczek had rented a box.[27] The superstar of Viennese theater at the time was Josef Kainz, and the young Schiele liked to reenact his performances—in plays such as Ernst Hardt's *Tristram the Jester*.[28] Schiele's interest in theatrical performances was broad, including opera and ballet. He admired dancers such as Ruth St. Denis, whom he longed to meet personally.

Vienna, the center of Schiele's life, had been one of Europe's major capitals of courtly entertainment since the Baroque era. Carl E. Schorske traces this tradition back to the

Counter-Reformation era, identifying the performative character that could be found in the rituals of the Catholic Church. According to Schorske, the secular culture that was promoted by both church and court was theatrical and laden with metaphor.[29] And the Ringstraße, with its new Burgtheater and the State Opera, became a symbol of this. William Edgar Yates reports that the importance attributed to Viennese theater is also reflected in Stefan Zweig's observation that Vienna's middle class turned the pages of their newspapers searching not for political news but for articles about the theater.[30] This presence of the theater accompanied Schiele's artistic development at the heart of the Habsburg monarchy.

SCHIELE'S CREATION OF IMAGES: NAKED AND MASKED

In 1910—just when he was producing his expressive self-portraits—Schiele was also painting an extensive series of nudes. This pivotal phase of his oeuvre began with paintings of his artist friend Erwin Osen. As I demonstrate, Schiele's close relationship with Osen and Osen's character form the basis for these works. Schiele's portraits can be divided into three groups: artworks dedicated to his model, Osen, in motion and to the variety of his artistic expression (from miming to singing to dancing);[31] the *Red Nudes*, for which, according to Jane Kallir, Schiele's artist friend was also likely to have been the model;[32] and two reclining nudes.[33] The latter were produced in black chalk with dark watercolors and gouache and portray the subject in notably slender and angular wide-shouldered poses. The artistic technique as well as the build and certain significant physical characteristics of the model portrayed in another previously little noticed and rarely published drawing, *Standing Male Nude* (Fig. 2), all point to this model being Osen.[34] The notable feature of this portrait (Fig. 2) is that Osen is depicted wearing a mask. This is indicated in two ways: First, the color of the neck differs markedly from that of the mask, the top of which covers much of the figure's hair. Second, on the upper right part of the face, a sharp edge rises from the cheek and clearly contrasts with the organic roundness of the head, pointing to the materiality of this face covering.

It is thus quite clear that this can only be a covering—a mask. The eyes gaze at us from behind the mask; eyelashes, which are an important element of the other two portraits in the reclining nudes series, are missing completely. One fascinating aspect of this drawing is the link between nudity and the mask, two phenomena that, given the sociohistorical context of the drawing, provide the maximum possible contrast. Since at least Gustav Klimt's *Nuda Veritas* of 1899, the representation of the nude has often been linked to ideas of truth in the Austrian context. The call for truth became a constant subject,

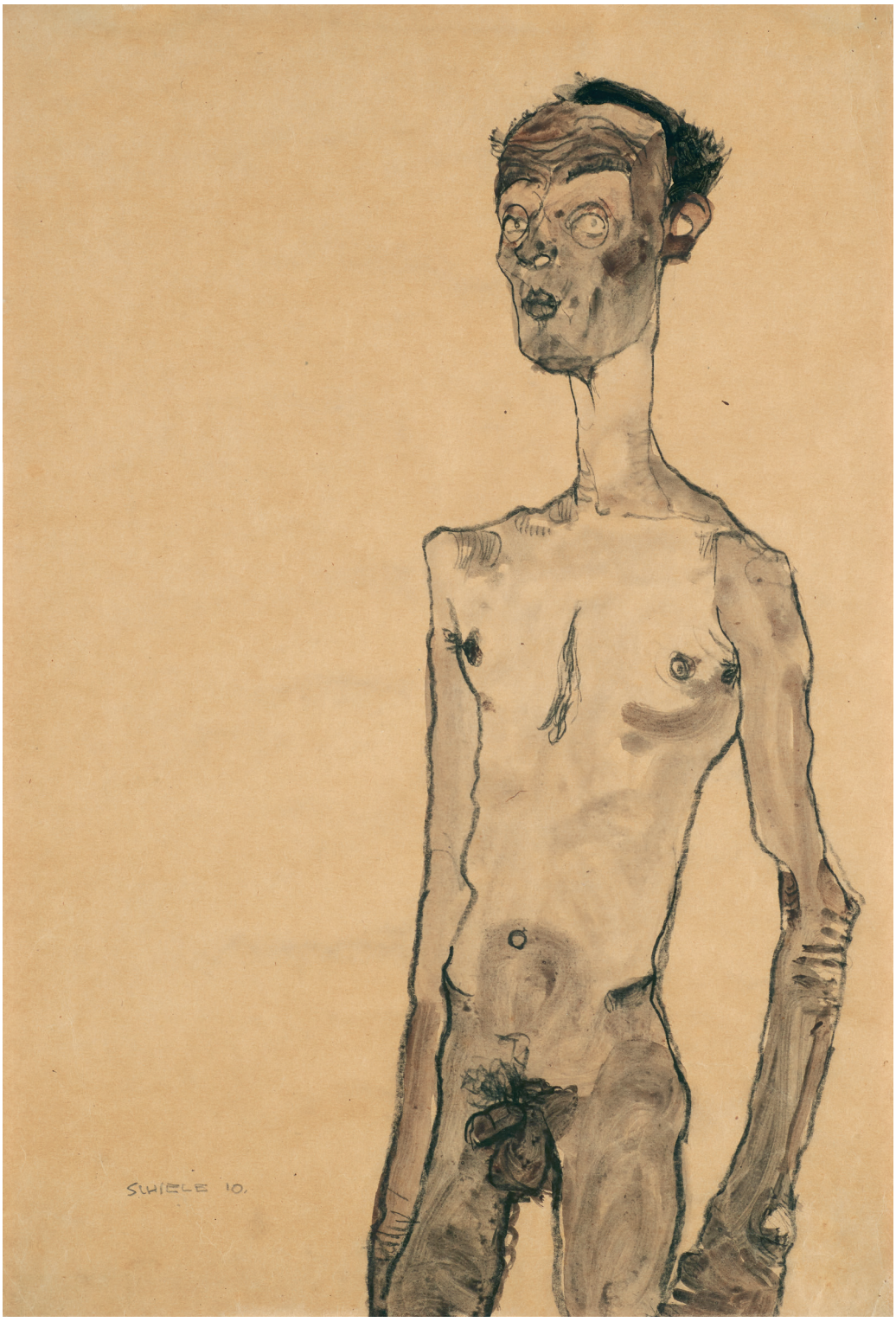

Fig. 2: Egon Schiele, *Standing Male Nude*, 1910, gouache, watercolor, and black crayon on paper, 44.5 × 30.2 cm. Private Collection, Courtesy Richard Nagy Ltd., London (Photo: Private Collection, Courtesy Richard Nagy Ltd., London).

for instance, in the writings of Hermann Bahr, one of Klimt's foremost collectors.[35] For Schiele, there is a connection between the extreme form of truthfulness embodied by the nude and the wearing of a mask.

In this portrait, *Standing Male Nude* (Fig. 2), Osen's mask appropriates neither another culture nor even another identity, but only another mood. Put more precisely, the mask fixes an expression, whose relationship with the hidden face necessarily remains unexplained. It defines not another face but, rather, a specific facial expression: Even when wearing a mask, Osen is recognizable on account of his physiognomy. The fact that the mask in this portrait long remained unrecognized intensifies the iconography of the depiction, the aim of which is to create a delusion that has almost become part of the face. This means that the work has virtually nothing in common with the doll-like portraits Schiele produced between 1913 and 1915, which Nathan J. Timpano labels as containing an "iconography of highly expressive but lifeless marionettes."[36]

Schiele's combination of nudity and the mask in a way that is so far removed from the allegorical pictorial tradition is a characteristic visual innovation that owes much to the sociohistorical changes of the early twentieth century, his training at the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna, and the idiosyncrasies of his subject.[37] The drawing of Osen is a sign of a radical shift in the spirit of Modernism that released huge amounts of energy. The urban world was in a state of flux, and Schiele and his circle were questioning patriarchal social orders while ambiguity, uncertainty, and the search for new value systems were setting the tone. This fundamentally changed the individual's view of themselves, reflecting a "skepticism toward the idea of the self as a constant," as has been defined by Helena Pereña and as illustrated in the writings of Ernst Mach and Hermann Bahr.[38]

This constellation of historical and cultural forces provided a breeding ground for a theatrical approach to thinking and acting that, having emerged in Paris, would then transform social conventions in Vienna. The mask, which had been an artistic medium since antiquity, became an outlet for the crisis of the subject and found its way into many areas of life. The training institutions of Vienna's artists contributed to this zeitgeist. A young teacher at both Vienna's Academy of Fine Arts and the local k. k. Kunstgewerbeschule [School of Arts and Crafts], Hermann Vinzenz Heller, ensured that these ideas were passed on to the new generation, which included Schiele. As set out below, his teaching provided a significant boost to the development of early Viennese Expressionism.

HERMANN VINZENZ HELLER: TEACHING ABOUT EXPRESSION AS A STIMULUS FOR EARLY VIENNESE EXPRESSIONISM

The anatomy and art professor Hermann Vinzenz Heller began teaching at the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna just as Egon Schiele commenced his studies.[39] Heller, who extensively researched human emotions as an academic painter, sculptor, and doctor, had transposed the self-portrait into every possible emotional state and, in 1902, published it as a series of masks in his work *Grundformen der Mimik des Antlitzes* [Basic Forms of Facial Expressions].[40] In this work, Heller closely connects his ideas on the subject of the mask with his love of the theater and his relationships with actors.[41] The author expresses this on the cover of the book, which, rather than featuring one of the masks that he made himself, contains the frightening face of Medusa.

In *Grundformen der Mimik des Antlitzes*, Heller includes photographs of his own face with a range of facial expressions as the starting point of the process of producing 50 masks (Figs. 3–5, 13). A few years before completing his book, he had made a research trip to art schools in Munich, Brussels, London, and Paris. This led to an exchange of letters between Heller and the German writer Theodor Piderit, who wrote *Grundsätze der Mimik und Physiognomik* [Principles of Facial Expressions and Physiognomy] (1858) and whose systems were adopted by Heller as the foundations of his own work.[42] Heller was forced to agree with Piderit that depictions of expressions produced in front of a mirror could not be authentic because, in the absence of the corresponding emotion, their facial characteristics "emerged in an unnatural and exaggerated manner."[43] In other words, Heller's notion of the facial expression pursued a performative idea, and this expression became an artistic, representational statement.[44]

Heller's contribution aimed to educate a new generation of artists in Vienna about the theatrical orchestration of the expression and its underlying medical principles. This is clearly corroborated by his preference for "pantomime expressions" as the basis of the dramatic arts. Heller explains that facial features serve the needs of pantomime and, thereby, imitate emotions.[45] Needless to say, Schiele translated Heller's repertoire of sensitivities into an artistic context, and the significance of this inspiration becomes clear when one compares the self-portrait (Fig. 1) with the preliminary photographic study *Entsetzen/Überraschung* [Horror/Surprise] (Fig. 3) and plate 33, *Heftig erregte Aufmerksamkeit, Verstimmung und bitterer Zug (Entsetzen)* [Violently Aroused Attention, Displeasure, and Bitter Expression (Horror)] (Fig. 4) in Heller's study. The connection between the Osen portrait (Fig. 2) and plate 15, *Das aufmerksame Prüfen* [Careful Examination] (Fig. 5), is equally apparent. Schiele himself

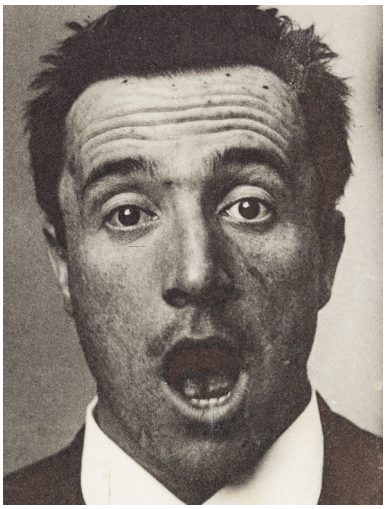

Fig. 3: Hermann Vinzenz Heller, *Fotografisches Selbstporträt – Profil und en face Vorstudie zur platischen Mimikserie* [Photographic Self-Portrait—Profile and En Face Preliminary Study for a Series of Facial Expressions]. State Collections of Lower Austria, St. Pölten, inv. no. KS-19046/2//3 (Photo: State Collections of Lower Austria, St. Pölten).

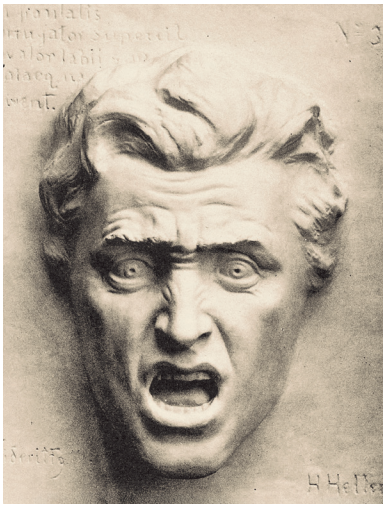

Fig. 4: Hermann Vinzenz Heller, *Heftig erregte Aufmerksamkeit. Verstimmung und bitterer Zug (Entsetzen)* [Violently Aroused Attention, Displeasure, and Bitter Expression (Horror)], plate 33 of *Grundformen der Mimik des Antlitzes*, Vienna, 1902. State Collections of Lower Austria, St. Pölten, inv. no. KS-19064 (Photo: State Collections of Lower Austria, St. Pölten).

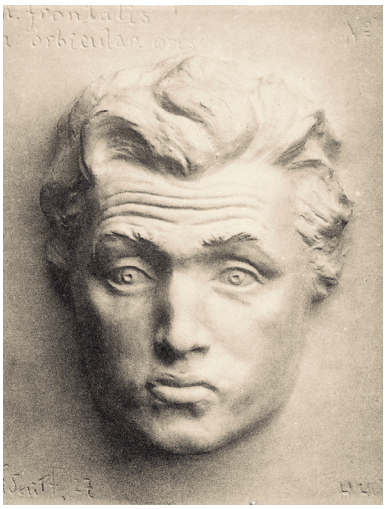

Fig. 5: Hermann Vinzenz Heller, *Das aufmerksame Prüfen* [Careful Examination], plate 15 of *Grundformen der Mimik des Antlitzes*, Vienna, 1902. State Collections of Lower Austria, St. Pölten, inv. no. KS-19064 (Photo: State Collections of Lower Austria, St. Pölten).

Fig. 6: Oskar Kokoschka, *Self-Portrait as a Warrior*, 1909, unfired clay painted with tempera, 36.5 × 31.5 × 19.5 cm. Museum of Fine Arts Boston, John H. and Ernestine A. Payne Fund, accession no. 60.958; © Fondation Oskar Kokoschka/Bildrecht, Vienna 2025 (Photo: Museum of Fine Arts Boston).

describes the function of the mask in terms of its ability to provide him with a fictitious facial expression that enables him to address others, as in his self-portraits dating from 1910.[46]

The masks created by Heller for use in art schools were tested in the anatomy lessons that he taught in Vienna's School of Arts and Crafts, before putting them into service at the Academy. The doctor made a huge impression on the young Oskar Kokoschka at the School of Arts and Crafts in the winter semester 1904/1905, as we can clearly see from both historical sources and formal affinities.[47] A central example of this is Kokoschka's "earliest manifestation of Expressionism," the painted clay bust entitled *Self-Portrait as a Warrior* (Fig. 6).[48] This self-portrait was presented at the international Kunstschau in 1909, attracted widespread attention, and was eventually acquired by the influential Viennese architect Adolf Loos, who went on to become one of Kokoschka's most important patrons.

The figure of the warrior in Kokoschka's work comes across as aged and exhausted. The bust appears to be undergoing the process of dissolving, the impression of physical tension is inverted, and the work communicates a sense of powerlessness. Described by Kokoschka as the "expression of a powerful scream," the mouth appears unable to emit any sort of

convincing cry.[49] It is almost impossible to imagine a greater contrast between Kokoschka's figure, who seems to be in danger of becoming subsumed by the materiality of the clay, and the physical tension in Schiele's works. Kokoschka refers to the inspiration provided by a "Polynesian mask with engraved tattoos [...] because I felt my facial nerves react to cold and hunger in the same places."[50] Known examples of Polynesian masks remain unable to offer a useful comparison, and research has also drawn a blank.[51] A more convincing non-European model is a reference that was made during a wide-ranging discussion that accompanied the first presentation of the work at the international Kunstschau in 1909; this relates to the mokomokai, which Paul Frank described as "the grimace of a New Zealand fetish."[52]

Kokoschka was interested in the exposure of muscles, veins, nerves, and sinews, which follows the model of the self-portrait, and subsequent research articles have identified it as a decisive innovation in his warrior.[53] Claude Cernuschi notes the translucency of the top layer of skin—which is underlined by its reddish tint—and the uncovering of the veins, arteries, and nerves. According to him, the artist interpreted his role as "removing the outer layer of skin and presenting himself not naked but without a skin."[54]

The fact that Kokoschka also combined medical and theatrical ideas is demonstrated by his body painting of the actors at the premiere of the play *Mörder, Hoffnung der Frauen* [*Murderer, Hope of Women*]: "[I] decorated [...] the arms and legs with nerve lines, muscles, and tendons, as one can also see in my drawings."[55] It is unclear where Kokoschka's idea of artistically removing his own skin in a self-portrait came from, in part because the artist actively blurred the origins of his ideas in his own self-narrative.[56]

Heller likely influenced Kokoschka's interest in this anatomical approach to portraiture. Like his masks, Heller's publication on facial expressions was also available at the Kunstgewerbeschule. In plate 5 (Fig. 7), he presents a completely skinned head. Significantly,

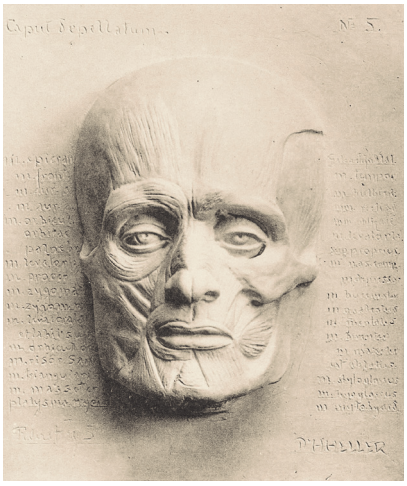

Fig. 7: Hermann Vinzenz Heller, *Das Muskel-Schema* [The Muscle Sketch], plate 5 of *Grundformen der Mimik des Antlitzes*, Vienna, 1902. State Collections of Lower Austria, St. Pölten, inv. no. KS-19064 (Photo: State Collections of Lower Austria, St. Pölten).

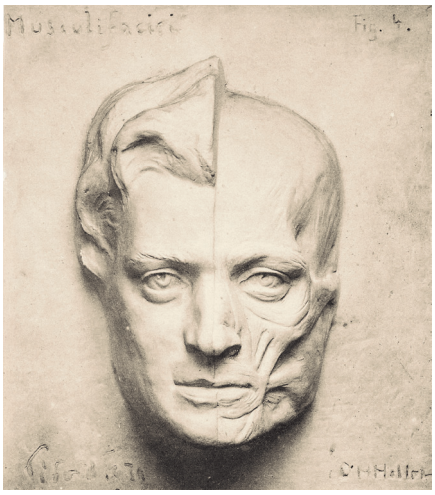

Fig. 8: Hermann Vinzenz Heller, *Der zur Hälfte abgehäutete Kopf* [The Half-Skinned Head], plate 4 of *Grundformen der Mimik des Antlitzes*, Vienna, 1902. State Collections of Lower Austria, St. Pölten, inv. no. KS-19064 (Photo: State Collections of Lower Austria, St. Pölten).

this removal of the skin is, as in the case of the warrior, also presented sculpturally and as a form of self-portrait, as vividly demonstrated in plate 4, *Der zur Hälfte abgehäutete Kopf* [The Half-Skinned Head] (Fig. 8). Early versions of the masks were certainly partly painted, as shown in a historical photograph.[57] The depiction of the skinned head highlights many of the muscles described in Heller's accompanying text, such as the "ring of muscles around the eye," which is also emphasized in the warrior.[58] The fact that such artistic processes were inspired by Heller also becomes clear in an interview given by Kokoschka (even though he does not mention his teacher by name):

> What irritated people particularly was that the nerves were drawn outside the figures, on the skin, as though they could in fact be seen. [...]. All I was after was this enhancement of expression. I treated the members of the cast quite differently. Some of them I gave cross stripes, like a tiger or a cat, but I painted the nerves on all of them. Where they are located I knew from my study of anatomy, for we even studied anatomy at the Kunstgewerbeschule. There was a mad doctor who taught the subject; he was a very good teacher. Organs, joints, muscles, nerves—how they are constructed, how they function—it all interested me very much.[59]

In the same context, Kokoschka points to the inspiration provided by the masks used by actors, which includes his experience of the anatomy lectures delivered by Heller: "The Greeks put masks on their actors, to fix character—sad, passionate, angry, etc. I did the same thing in my own way, by painting on faces, not as decoration but to underline the character."[60] Heller's alphabetic schema for the face appears to have inspired not just the view below the skin of Kokoschka's warrior but also his expression itself, albeit with far

Fig. 9: Oskar Kokoschka, *Self-Portrait*, 1910, plaster tondo, painted with oil paint, diameter 48 cm. Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe Hamburg, inv. no. 1969.103; © Fondation Oskar Kokoschka/Bildrecht, Vienna 2025 (Photo: Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe Hamburg).

more dramatic results.[61] A formally calmer realization of these ideas is represented by the plaster tondo with accentuated anatomical details, in which Kokoschka originally depicted the musical virtuoso Franz Liszt, before he unceremoniously painted it and labeled it as a self-portrait (Fig. 9).[62] As we can see, theatrical masks and their connection with human expressions were just as important to Kokoschka as they were to Schiele.

The timeliness of the issues addressed by Heller was also underlined by the way in which Franz Xaver Messerschmidt's alabaster busts (Fig. 10) emerged into the public view after more than a century in storage at the Staatsgewerbeschule. They were celebrated as a

Fig. 10: Franz Xaver Messerschmidt, *"Character Head"* no. 17, c. 1777–1783, brown-spotted alabaster, 43.5 × 21 × 33 cm. Belvedere, Vienna, inv. no. 5509 (Photo: Belvedere, Vienna).

great discovery at the Spring Exhibition of the Hagenbund association in 1907—just a few months after Schiele's anatomy lessons.[63] The busts caused a sensation at the time, and researchers are still working on their interpretation today. After numerous different readings as, for example, pathologized expressions of a paranoid personality, some now interpret them as being the realization of a theatrical principle.[64] Ernst Kris describes a spectrum of roles that the busts play as a means of demonstrating the versatility of the actor,

whose theatrical status is emphasized by the changes in hairstyles and head coverings.[65] Messerschmidt clearly illustrates a relationship between expression and emotion, even though this relationship is physiological rather than psychological. Richard Weihe suggests that the artist is investigating how facial muscles react to physical sensitivities: "It is not the character but the physiology that counts."[66] This analysis of the Messerschmidt busts aligns with the above-described roots of both Schiele's and Kokoschka's early self-portraits. In both, the expression is recognized as the result of theatrical and medical-physiological influences.

THEATRICAL ACTIVITY ON THE STAGE OF EVERYDAY LIFE

The new generation of artists in the first decade of the twentieth century thus had access to a catalog of expressions, and the order of the day was to develop this wealth of ideas and models further. The timing was fortunate because a succession of artists in their late teens and 20s had stepped up to the challenge of helping to shape the imperial capital of Vienna. Hence, the period in which Schiele was producing his major expressive works coincided with a shift that brought to light a new group of artists alongside the older generation that was centered on the superstar Gustav Klimt. Their lifestyle and approach to presentation were shaped by a bohemian radiance that transposed theatrical principles to the stage of everyday life. Indeed, it is precisely this combination of the stage and real life that was the recipe for the success of the bohemian.[67]

Against the background of the shifts in the notion of the self that occurred in the early twentieth century, the masquerade became an unexpected success story in the world of art—in the form of either the motif of the mask appearing alone or the real figure being presented as a mask.[68] The theater, too, provided the perfect platform for escaping the tight corset of social constraints. The method for achieving such escape was not new. The notion of human behavior being a form of roleplay on the stage of everyday life had already been addressed in the nineteenth century in, for example, the writings of Arthur Schopenhauer. And if Schopenhauer identifies the individual as a masked actor, then everyday life becomes a stage and society the audience. Richard Weihe puts this precisely: "This means that one cannot speak of individuality—it's not about the core of the personality; it's only about its outer shell."[69]

After the turn of the century, established formats were disrupted by those derived from the theater and the masquerade. The liberation from designated social and economic roles shifted from the theater to many areas of life. A new dimension of freedom was achieved. Elisabeth von Samsonow describes the expansion of this counterworld:

"Something that started as a brief transgression and as a foolish, trivial game came to symbolize a time that was dedicated to the cult of youth. Or, put another way: The cult of youth is itself a consequence of the disintegration of guiding principles."[70] The economic situation also pushed artists toward self-promotion, given that, in a period in which the gallery system had not yet become established, they were often forced to approach (usually male) buyers themselves, as explained by Bodo von Dewitz:

> In reality, artists were now exposed to the anonymous market. This liberation left them facing an extremely insecure situation, the obligation to discover themselves, a certain sense of being uprooted, and the reality of destitution. It is the group of artists who accepted this fate and adopted it, at least for a certain period, as *their own* that we label as bohemians.[71]

ERWIN OSEN: EGON SCHIELE'S THEATRICAL INSPIRATION

The artist Erwin Osen appeared among the dropouts from the Viennese Academy who gathered around Egon Schiele in 1909. Osen went on to make exemplary use of the performative possibilities of his time as a mime artist, set designer, and dancer. Despite dropping out of the academy, he was educated, eloquent, and extremely talented.[72] His second home was the theater, and his signature on the document that established the Neukunstgruppe [New Art Group], which can be interpreted as admitting him to Schiele's circle, carries the label "Painter of Theatrical Art."[73]

The most defining description of Osen comes from Arthur Roessler, who, despite calling him a liar, a fake, and a thief, cannot do so without expressing a certain appreciation:

> He encountered the adventurer: tall, slender, as gaunt as an Arab, and with the pale and beardless face of a "fallen angel," elegantly clad and restrained, unostentatious, but strikingly adorned, with a number of exotic rings on his fingers and similarly exotic pins in his bulkily dazzling necktie. [...] On top of this, the young man's obviously virtuoso capacity for facial expression was coupled with the no less skillful verbal dexterity and effortlessly playful fantasy of the born improviser as he dreamed up curious travel experiences.[74]

Roessler exposes all of the stories in which Osen recounted his travels (as far as to Siam, Tibet, and China) as fabrications, but he records Schiele's fascination with them and their narrator:

> He [Schiele] was intoxicated by the wealth of singularities that Neso [a codename for Osen] lavishly spread before him, unfolded in poetic images, as only an artist could do, and he was extraordinarily impressed by the "urbane and gentlemanly" self-assured and unfailingly cool demeanor [...] I know this because Schiele never told me as much about another person as he told me about this man.[75]

Osen thrilled Schiele with his repertoire of artistic forms of expression, his "diabolical intellect," and the courage with which he broke with convention.[76] The two artists developed an intensely close relationship, which is demonstrated by the many nudes that they painted of each other, some of which were likely created in the studio that they shared at Alserbachstraße 39 in Vienna.[77] The fact that the building also contained a cinema adds another important element to the theatrical spectrum; both artists were enthralled by film, with Osen later going on to dedicate himself to the new medium.[78] Osen's multifaceted nature was hard to match, and he was constantly redefining the boundaries of the possible and the presentable. Black humor, richly imaginative mime, and the deeply serious merged together—truth and fantasy melded into one. The impact of his performances became prodigious, and the appearance of the artist was precisely orchestrated. The perfection with which Osen must have mastered his roleplaying—as he permanently oscillated between the bohemian and the dandy—attracted a lot of attention, and not just from Schiele.

While the dandy and the bohemian embodied contrasting ways of life, one could frequently find a playful combination of the two characters, as in Osen's self-expression. The dandy's change of roles was often situational and resulted in an assured performance of the alternative character. Although the bohemian embodied the antitype of the dandy, he was able to adopt his asocial outsider position and transform social exclusion into a focus of its own.[79] The cultural sociologist Arnold Hauser most succinctly differentiates between the two social typologies: The dandy "is the bourgeois intellectual who has been downgraded upwards, while the bohemian is the artist who has fallen to the level of the proletariat. The prodigious elegance and extravagance of the dandy perform the same function as the self-neglect and decadence of the bohemian."[80] The constant change of Osen's social masks must have played a part in his effect on Schiele.

Against the background of the closeness between Osen and Schiele, and also in view of the tales and the dramatic qualities of Osen—who, as Roessler reports, triggered, in turns, delight and disappointment in Schiele—we are able to see the gouache drawing of the naked friend of the artist wearing a mask in a new light (Fig. 2).[81] The identification of the subject and the recognition of the mask help us to better decipher the work, with all its closeness to life and immense quality.

ERWIN OSEN AND THE DEPICTION OF THE MASK

While he was working as a set and costume designer for the production of *Parsifal* at the New German Theater in Prague in 1913, Osen produced an ex libris drawing for Friedrich Bondy, the stepson of the director of the theater, Heinrich Teweles (Fig. 11).[82] This work depicts a woman with a rigid and motionless facial expression, who is holding a mask in each hand. The drawing illustrates the ability of the actress to alter her age, mood, and gender with the help of the masks and a simple movement of the hand. This change is presented in quite general terms, but Osen could also depict his own face as a sequence of masks. A self-made postcard, titled *Masken* [Masks], from Osen to Schiele, addresses acting with the help of the example of the self-portrait (Fig. 12), and it taps into ideas from the anatomy lectures at Vienna's art schools. The postcard includes five self-portraits, alongside

Fig. 11: Erwin Osen, *Ex Libris für Friedrich Bondy*, 1913, collotype, 5 × 3 cm. Private collection (Scan from Christian Bauer, *Erwin Osen: Egon Schieles Künstlerfreund* [Cologne: Hirmer, 2023]).

Fig. 12: Postcard with drawing from Erwin Osen, ink (black) and watercolor on paper, 14.2 × 9 cm. Albertina, Vienna, inv. no. ESA65r (Photo: Albertina, Vienna).

depictions of an old man and an old woman that refer to his Osen's own lineage, but the focus is on a frontal watercolor self-portrait. The rigid reserve of the colored image contrasts with the rich, almost caricature-like expressions of the other portraits, which are positioned slightly behind it. This sequence recalls Heller's catalog of facial expressions. The connection is reinforced by the correlation between the watercolor self-portrait and the first plate in Heller's work, titled *Das ruhige Antlitz* [The Calm Face] (Fig. 13). This way of capturing a face in a few strokes in an ink drawing also recalls depictions of Japanese masks, such as those by Katsushika Hokusai.[83] Both the reduction of the face to a neckless contour and the formulation of a theatrical expression using just a few strokes provide a link between Osen's masks and Japanese models.

The association of Osen's drawings with Japanese art is not coincidental. The mask has a special importance in the art of Japan—another country where it is widely used in the theater. The growing importance of Japonisme in Vienna and Paris from the 1870s onward was also reflected by the increasing popularity of Far Eastern theater.[84] It is reasonable to assume that the hype surrounding masks also focused on Japan because "during the course of its development, the Nō created the most differentiated system of sculptural theatrical masks ever," the oldest form of institutionalized masked theater.[85] Unlike the Greco-Roman mask, the Nō mask covers not the whole face but (in a way that makes it seem insignificantly tiny for Western visitors when it is worn onstage) just the central part, because, as Günter Zobel states, "the basic idea is to avoid a complete illusion and the actor does not want to look like a puppet but, rather, to wear the mask."[86]

Osen spoke of tracing his origins to Japan and referred to his Japanese father, whom he described as being a direct descendant of the eighteenth-century poet O-Sen.[87] This narrative, which clearly contradicts the known facts, was incorporated into Osen's theatrical

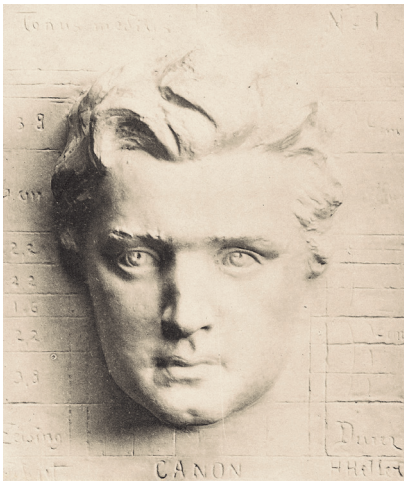

Fig. 13: Hermann Vinzenz Heller, *Das ruhige Antlitz* [The Calm Face], plate 1 of *Grundformen der Mimik des Antlitzes*, Vienna, 1902. State Collections of Lower Austria, St. Pölten, inv. no. KS-19064 (Photo: State Collections of Lower Austria, St. Pölten).

Fig. 14: Erwin Osen and Iby Chong during a performance, photograph, 10 × 8 cm. Private collection (Photo: Christoph Fuchs).

persona at an early date and is also reflected in the artist's signature.[88] The importance of the Japanese mask for Osen is also evoked by an undated photograph of the artist with his later wife, Käthe Frieda Brzezinski (alias Iby Chong) (Fig. 14). In the image, Osen's Western costume and appearance contrast strongly with that of his partner, who is holding an oversized (male) Japanese mask. The connection between the female figure and the symbol of the mask already had a long tradition in Vienna, where the perfectly adapted linear forms (that are particularly prevalent in the repertoire and the masks of Greek antiquity) provide excellent projection surfaces for Jugendstil art. This phenomenon is so significant that Klimt's depiction of the face of Pallas Athene can "be seen as a sort of logo of the Secessionist movement."[89] Osen picks up on this tradition of the woman with two faces as a way of referring to a debate that is particularly intense in the field of photography. As Quentin Bajac puts it, "between the traditional depiction of the muse and the time-specific questioning of identity, the mask becomes a decisive tool in the quest to create modern forms of femininity."[90] In the photograph, the focus on Japan and the tradition of Nō theater play a special role. A similar "inequality between the model and the mask on the one hand and the female and the male element on the other" is embodied in 1916 by the actor Michio Itō in a performance of Alvin Langdon Coburn's *At the Hawk's Well* that is based on the model of Nō theater.[91]

Schiele was also partial to Japanese art, likely owing to his friendship with Osen, although Klimt's collection of Asian art objects and the enthusiasm for Japan that was widespread in Vienna at the time must also have played a role. In 1905, for example, the

Fig. 15: Head of a puppet, late nineteenth century, 48.2 × 42 × 24 cm. MAK—Museum of Applied Arts, Vienna (Photo: MAK/Georg Mayer).

entire k. k. Museum für Kunst und Industrie [Imperial Royal Museum for Art and Industry] was transformed into a huge Japanese theme park and hosted a Japan exhibition that remains the largest that Vienna has ever seen.[92] Visitors were inspired to see almost European characteristics in the Japanese mask. Besides the masks, which were dominated by gods and demons, there were also Japanese puppets with powerfully realistic levels of expression. Performances featuring deceptively lifelike puppets with real hair, glass eyes, and softly radiant skin had been hugely popular among European audiences since the mid-nineteenth century.[93] The life-size puppets (Fig. 15) probably entered the collection of the Imperial Royal Museum for Art and Industry during the nineteenth century and must have left an impression on the new generation of artists—it includes a mask with a frozen scream that has been linked to early Viennese Expressionism, for example.[94]

Hence, a large arsenal of theatrical methods of transforming human expression was available to Vienna's new generation of artists. "I am everything at once," declared Schiele in 1910, probably also meaning that he was able to play widely differing roles.[95] And he formulated the theatrical moment of his early Expressionist work even more

clearly in the letter that is discussed at the beginning of this article.[96] By speaking with many people only when "wearing a mask" and noting that the facial expressions of many people are fake, just as his own could be, the artist suggests the connection between this preoccupation with the mask and the question of truth—as reflected in the supposed authenticity of the face.

The tension between truth and artifice occupied Schiele and his generation just as much as it has occupied researchers from the early modern era to the present day. The glimpse behind the mask is repeatedly, as in the case of the work of the painter and friend of Egon Schiele, Max Oppenheimer, labeled as a search for the truth: "That which lies on the surface, easily accessible to all, offers no exhaustive characterization. One has to dig deeper, penetrate the hidden regions of the soul, and see through the mask that is worn most of the time."[97] The paintings of Kokoschka similarly search for a truth beyond the surface:

> When I paint portraits, my aim is not to capture the external appearance of a person [...] The aspect of my portraits that used to shock society was the fact that I was attempting to find things in a face, in the facial expression, in gestures that I could then express in my pictorial language as the resume of a living being in a form of mental image. A person is not a still life, not even if they are dead.[98]

Schiele's portraits and self-portraits demonstrate such an immanent interest in the performative that any clear interpretation is lost in the ambivalence of his depictions. In *Standing Male Nude* (Fig. 2), is Schiele admiring his artist friend Osen for his ability to transform himself, or is he pointing to his lack of authenticity by placing a mask over his face? The quality and density of the portraits and self-portraits that Schiele created with a performative character suggest that the depictions contain a dimension of truth. Jean-Luc Nancy sees this is a characteristic of the mask:

> Is the truth in which we want to believe not precisely that of the mask? Is it not customary for the wearer to simply accept this mask? And does this not lead us to conclude that there is no "hidden" truth, no "natural" appearance, which can be revealed to us, when the mask is removed?[99]

The young Malte Laurids Brigge, in Rainer Maria Rilke's novel, arrives at a similar conclusion when he tries on pieces of clothing from an old wardrobe. Published in 1910, *The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge* was one of Schiele's favorite books, and it is dedicated to the subject of self-awareness.[100]

As he tries on the garments and plays different roles in front of the mirror, Malte Laurids Brigge "had imagination on his side, as long as [he] pleased."[101] The decisive factor here is that there is no separation between the real self and the performative self and that, as Rilke makes clear, quite the opposite is true: "These displacements, however, never went so far that I felt estranged from myself; on the contrary, the more variously I transformed myself the more convinced of myself I became."[102] Schiele also practiced such roleplaying; almost all his self-portraits were produced in front of the huge mirror from his parents' house in the Austrian city Tulln that accompanied him to all his later homes. He begins the poem entitled *Ein Selbstbild* [A Self-Image] that he wrote in 1910 with the words "I am everything at once."[103] Laurids Brigge would probably have agreed.

NOTES

1 Arthur Roessler, *Erinnerungen an Egon Schiele* (Vienna: Wiener Volksbuchverlag, 1948), 7. Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are by Rupert Hebblethwaite.

2 Werkner's research has been well received internationally. See Patrick Werkner, *Austrian Expressionism: The Formative Years* (Palo Alto, CA: Society for the Promotion of Science and Scholarship, 1993). The quote is from Patrick Werkner, "Body Language, Form and Idea in Austrian Expressionist Painting," in *Egon Schiele and His Contemporaries: Austrian Painting and Drawing from 1900 to 1930 from the Leopold Collection*, ed. Klaus Albrecht Schröder and Harald Szeemann, trans. David Britt (Munich: Prestel, 1988): 37.

3 Klaus Albrecht Schröder, "Not Blind to the World: Notes on Gustav Klimt and Egon Schiele," in Schröder and Szeemann 1988 (see note 2): 19.

4 Wolfgang Georg Fischer, *Egon Schiele 1890–1918: Pantomimen der Lust und Visionen der Sterblichkeit* (Cologne: Taschen, 1994), 147.

5 Katharina Sykora, "Performative Selbstinszenierung und Geschlechterirritation bei Egon Schiele," in *Egon Schiele: Inszenierung und Identität*, ed. Pia Müller-Tamm (Cologne: DuMont, 1995): 48.

6 Alexander Klee, "Attitudes and Gestures as Reflections of the Conception of Gender," in *Egon Schiele: Selbstportraits and Portraits*, ed. Agnes Husslein-Arco and Jane Kallir, exh. cat., Belvedere, Vienna, February 17–June 13, 2011 (Munich: Prestel, 2011): 36.

7 Helena Pereña, "'Wie man wird was man ist'—Schieles Selbstdarstellungen," in *Egon Schiele: "Das unrettbare Ich." Werke aus der Albertina. Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus und Kunstbau*, ed. Helmut Friedel and Helena Pereña (Munich: Wienand, 2011): 37.

8 Laura Feurle, "At the Margins of Portraiture: Revisions of a Genre in Viennese Modernism in the Work of Georg Simmel, Julius von Schlosser, and Egon Schiele," *Belvedere Research Journal* 2 (2024): https://doi.org/10.48636/brj.2024.1.94243.

9 First published in Christian Bauer, ed., *Ich bin alles zugleich: Selbstdarstellung von Schiele bis heute* (Vienna: Verlag für moderne Kunst, 2019), 10–17.

10 See Leopold Museum, Egon Schiele Datenbank der Autografen, https://www.egonschiele.at; in chronological order: ESDA ID 2128, 2315, 2516, 2317, 260, 2316, 30, 2458, 279, 2283, 2537, 607, 1946, 693, 692, 691, 760, 791, 809, 811, 877, 907, 941, 1123, 1231, 1235, 1397, 1261, 1314, 1406.

11 Bauer 2019, 10–17 (see note 9).

12 Bauer 2019, 10–17 (see note 9).

13 Bauer 2019, 10–17 (see note 9).

14 Bauer 2019, 10–17 (see note 9).

15 Bauer 2019, 10–17 (see note 9).

16 For more on Michael Fried's theory and critical reflection, see Ralph Ubl, "'Good Objecthood'—Form und Objekt bei Michael Fried," in *Michael Frieds "Shape as Form" und die Kritik der Form von 1800 bis zur Gegenwart*, ed. Ralph Ubl and Rahel Villinger (Paderborn: Wilhelm Fink, 2018): 51–67.

17 Michael Fried, *Absorption and Theatricality: Painting and Beholder in the Age of Diderot* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980).

18 See Nathan J. Timpano, *Constructing the Viennese Modern Body: Art, Hysteria, and the Puppet* (New York: Routledge, 2017), 66–86.

19 See Timpano 2017, 72–80 (see note 18).

20 Hans Wantoch, "Theatralik," *Die Schaubühne*, October 13, 1910: 1032.

21 Erika Fischer-Lichte, *Kurze Geschichte des deutschen Theaters* (Tübingen: Francke, 1993), 147.

22 Herta Schmid, *Beiträge zur Geschichte und Theorie des Dramas und Theaters im 20. Jahrhundert* (Tübingen: Narr, 1992), 257.

23 Georg Fuchs, *Die Revolution des Theaters: Ergebnisse aus dem Münchner Künster-Theater* (Munich: Georg Müller 1909), 179.

24 Heidrun Katharina Künzel, *Jairi Tochter im 19. Jahrhundert: Studien zur Bildgeschichte eines religiösen Motivs* (Münster: LIT, 2021), 92.

25 Klaus Albrecht Schröder, *Egon Schiele: Eros and Passion* (Munich: Prestel, 1995), 64.

26 Édouard Papet, "Die Maske im Blick," in *Masken: Metamorphosen des Gesichts von Rodin bis Picasso*, ed. Ralf Beil (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2009): 10–13, 10.

27 Gertrude Peschka-Schiele, "Erinnerungen an Egon Schiele, 1976, von ihrem Sohn aufgezeichnet," in *Egon Schiele: Leben, Briefe, Gedichte*, ed. Christian M. Nebehay (Salzburg: Residenz, 1979): 165n15.

28 Peschka-Schiele 1979 (see note 27).

29 Carl E. Schorske, *Thinking with History: Explorations in the Passage to Modernism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998), 129.

30 W. E. Yates, *Theatre in Vienna: A Critical History, 1776–1995* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 178.

31 There is a total of seven portraits, including four nudes; see Christian Bauer, *Erwin Osen: Egon Schieles Künstlerfreund* (Cologne: Hirmer, 2023), 23.

32 Jane Kallir, "Reconfiguring Gender—Egon Schiele and the Gay Subculture," in *Egon Schiele: Milieus und Perspektiven. Tagesbund zum 4. Egon Schiele-Symposium im Leopold Museum*, ed. Verena Gamper and Hans-Peter Wipplinger (Vienna: Leopold Museum, 2022): 110.

33 Bauer 2023, 23, 35, 36 (see note 31).

34 In addition to the gaunt, wide-shouldered stature and scraped back hair, particular attention should be drawn to the overlong neck, the bony protruding elbows, and the hairy inner thighs. The fact that the drawing (KD 677) belongs to the same series as KD 679 and KD 680 is made clear by several observations: All three drawings are produced using the same technique and have virtually the same form. As Jane Kallir has recently interpreted the largest block of male nudes by Schiele, the *Red Nudes*, as depictions of Osen (Kallir 2022, 110 [see note 32]), this argument is particularly convincing for the above-mentioned group. Further evidence that this is Osen is offered by the fact that drawing D 679 comes from the collection of Schiele's brother-in-law Anton Peschka and was shown with the involvement of Anton Peschka Jr. in 1990 in the exhibition *Egon Schiele: Frühe Reife—Ewige Kindheit* [Egon Schiele: Early Maturity—Eternal Childhood], where it was interpreted as a portrait

of Erwin Osen. See *Egon Schiele: Frühe Reife, Ewige Kindheit* (Vienna: Historisches Museum, 1990), 60. The same attribution was offered much earlier by Alessandra Comini. See Alessandra Comini, *Egon Schiele's Portraits* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), 34.

35 Tobias G. Natter and Max Hollein, eds., *The Naked Truth: Klimt, Schiele, Kokoschka and Other Scandals* (Munich: Prestel, 2005), 108. See Christian Huemer, "Nuda Veritas im neuen Kleid: Das Expressionismuskonzept von Hermann Bahr," *Belvedere: Zeitschrift für bildende Kunst* 1 (2003): 16.

36 See Timpano 2017, 179 (see note 18).

37 In Gustav Klimt's *Allegory of Sculpture*, a naked female figure appears before a collection of busts from various cultures. See Natter and Hollein 2005, 97 (see note 35).

38 Helena Pereña, "Ich bin Maske: Überlegungen zu einem archetypischen Motiv der Kunst des 20. Jahrhunderts," in *Hinter der Maske*, exh. cat., Museum of Tyrolean Regional Heritage, Innsbruck, April 25–November 9, 2014 (Innsbruck: Tiroler Landesmuseen-Betriebsgesellschaft, 2014): 35. Both Ernst Mach and Hermann Bahr make important contributions on the phenomenon of the crisis of the subject around 1900. For the physicist Ernst Mach, the subject is a mere convention that serves "as a stopgap to help initial orientation." Ernst Mach, *Beiträge zur Analyse der Empfindungen* (Jena: Fischer, 1885), 10. The writer Hermann Bahr, however, goes a step further: "The self cannot be saved. It is just a name. It is just an illusion. It is a substitute that serves the practical purpose of helping us to organize our ideas." Hermann Bahr, "Das unrettbare Ich," in Hermann Bahr, *Dialog vom Tragischen* (Berlin: Fischer, 1904): 97. Helena Pereña offers the soundest analysis of the crisis of the subject around 1900 and its connection with Schiele's work. Helena Pereña, "'Wie man wird was man ist'—Schieles Selbstdarstellungen," in Friedel and Pereña 2011 (see note 7): 36–51.

39 Egon Schiele attended Heller's anatomy lectures right at the beginning of his studies. See Schlussbericht aus der Anatomie im Studienjahre 1906/07, AZ 359-1907, Archive of the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna. Regarding Hermann Vinzenz Heller's importance for Schiele, see Christian Bauer, "Vom Bahnhofskind zum Giganten der Moderne: Egon Schiele zwischen Tulln, Krems, Klosterneuburg und Wien—Kindheit, Netzwerke, Symbolismus und Ausdruckskunst," in *Egon Schiele: Almost a Lifetime*, ed. Christian Bauer (Munich: Hirmer, 2015): 49–53.

40 Hermann Vincenz Heller, *Grundformen der Mimik des Antlitzes in freiem Anschlusse an Piderits "Mimik und Physiognomik" mit besonderer Berücksichtigung der bildenden Künste* (Vienna: Schroll, 1902).

41 Heller produced portrait busts of the actresses Eleonora Duse and Hansi Niese, with the latter serving as the model for plate 48 of *Grundformen der Mimik des Antlitzes* (*Das unterdrückte Lachen*). See Christina Natlacen, "Bewegte Gesichter, erstarrte Masken: Zu den Mimikstudien von Hermann Heller," *Fotogeschichte: Beiträge zur Geschichte und Ästhetik der Fotografie* 91 (2004): 15–32, 32n53.

42 Theodor Piderit, *Grundsätze der Mimik und Physiognomik* (Braunschweig: Vieweg, 1858).

43 Letter from Theodor Piderit to Hermann Vinzenz Heller dated July 26, 1892, quoted in Natlacen 2004, 21n22 (see note 41).

44 Natlacen 2004, 22 (see note 41). The depth of Heller's knowledge of European developments in the field of physiognomy is demonstrated by his collection of photographs by Duchenne de Boulogne, who artificially provoked facial expressions by electrically stimulating individual face muscles. Heller was also familiar with

images of the expressions of patients with hysteria at the Salpêtrière in Paris, and beginning in 1899, he exchanged letters over many years with Paul Richer, Charcot's assistant in Paris. In 1907, Heller met the artist's son Jean Richer in Vienna. The letters show that Paul Richer sent books to Heller in Vienna. See letter from Jean Richer to Hermann Vinzenz Heller dated November 18, 1907, private collection.

45 Heller 1902, 15–16 (see note 40).

46 Bauer 2019, 10–17 (see note 9).

47 See Archive of the University of Applied Arts Vienna, academic year 1904/05, subject "Anatomy"; Kokoschka passed the examination with distinction on July 1, 1905.

48 Claude Cernuschi, *Re/Casting Kokoschka: Ethics and Aesthetics, Epistemology and Politics in Fin-de-Siècle Vienna* (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2002), 25.

49 Oskar Kokoschka, *Mein Leben: Vorwort und dokumentarische Mitarbeit von Remigius Netzer* (Munich: Bruckmann 1971), 55.

50 Kokoschka 1971, 51 (see note 49).

51 Even an example from the Metropolitan Museum proposed by Claude Cernuschi may fail to convince. See Cernuschi 2002, 59n33, 59n31 (see note 48), Costume with Masks and Ornaments, Papua New Guinea, East Sepik Province, Metropolitan Museum, New York, figs. 15, 34. Gabriele Weiss, the specialist curator at the Weltmuseum Wien, was unable to find a mask with similarities to Kokoschka's description. See Cernuschi 2002, 198n33 (see note 48).

52 A mokomokai is the preserved tattooed head of a dead Maori. One found its way into the collection of today's Weltmuseum Wien as early as the nineteenth century thanks to the collector Johann Georg Schwarz. This mokomokai was returned to New Zealand in 2015. See https://leichenimkeller.at/u1-mokomokai. See Paul Frank, "Kokoschka," in *Wiener Allgemeine Zeitung*, July 7, 1909, quoted in Werner J. Schweiger, *Der junge Kokoschka: Leben und Werk 1904–1914* (Vienna: Brandstätter, 1983), 113.

53 Claude Cernuschi, "Anatomisches Sezieren und religiöse Identifikation: Eine Wittgensteinsche Antwort auf Kokoschkas Alternativparadigmen zur Wahrheit in seinen vor dem Ersten Weltkrieg entstandenen Selbstporträts," in *Oskar Kokoschka: Das moderne Bildnis 1909 bis 1914*, ed. Tobias Natter, exh. cat., Neue Galerie New York, March 15–June 10, 2002; Hamburger Kunsthalle, July 5–September 29, 2002 (Cologne: DuMont, 2002): 43–45.

54 Cernuschi 2002, 43–45 (see note 48).

55 Kokoschka 1971, 65 (see note 49).

56 This phenomenon is the subject of many contributions of recent years; see, in particular, Birgit Kirchmayr, "Zur 'Legende vom Künstler': Einige Anmerkungen zu Oskar Kokoschkas 'autobiographischem Leben,'" in *Oskar Kokoschka: Neue Einblicke und Perspektiven/New Insights and Perspectives*, ed. Régine Bonnefoit and Bernadette Reinhold (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2021): 146–167.

57 A series of masks that was exhibited in 1894 seems to have been partly painted. See Natlacen 2004, 18 (see note 41).

58 Heller 1902, n.p., plate 52 (see note 40).

59 An interview involving Oskar Kokoschka and Ludwig Goldscheider in Villeneuve in 1962, published in *Kokoschka: Von Ludwig Goldscheider. In Zusammenarbeit mit dem Künstler* (Herrsching: Pawlak, 1975), 15.

60 Kokoschka 1975, 15 (see note 59).

61 The expression, described by Kokoschka as "character," appears to refer to plate 40 of the work *Träges Erstaunen*. See: Heller 1902, 132 (see note 40).

62 Natter and Hollein 2005, 122 (see note 35).

63 See Ludwig Hevesi, "Vom alten Messerschmidt, Artikel vom 13. März 1907," in Ludwig Hevesi, *Altkunst—Neukunst: Wien 1894–1908* (Vienna: Konegen, 1909), re-created by Otto Breicha (Klagenfurt: Ritter, 1986): 90.

64 See Ernst Kris, "Ein geisteskranker Bildhauer: Die Charakterköpfe des Franz Xaver Messerschmidt," *Imago* 19 (1933): 384–411.

65 Richard Weihe, *Die Paradoxie der Maske: Geschichte einer Form* (Munich: Fink, 2004), 308.

66 Weihe 2004, 307 (see note 65).

67 See Bodo von Dewitz, "'... nur noch zu lieben, was angenehm ist!' oder, 'Fliederbüsche stehen nicht am Lebensweg.' La Bohème—Eine Einführung," in *La Bohème: Die Inszenierung des Künstlers in Fotografien des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts*, ed. Bodo von Dewitz (Göttingen: Steidl, 2010): 9.

68 Elisabeth von Samsonow, "Ichzerfall und Maskerade," in *Wir sind Maske*, ed. Sylvia Ferino-Pagden, exh. cat., Kunsthistorisches Museum, Museum für Völkerkunde, Vienna, June 24–September 28, 2009 (Cinisello Balsamo: Silvana Editoriale, 2009): 356.

69 Weihe 2004, 329 (see note 65).

70 Von Samsonow 2009, 354 (see note 68).

71 Von Dewitz 2010, 10 (see note 67).

72 For Osen's biography, see Bauer 2023, 191–213 (see note 31).

73 Agreement (written guarantee) by the artists of the Neukunstgruppe for the exhibition in Salon Pisko, June 17, 1909, Albertina, Vienna, https://www.egonschiele.at/223.

74 Arthur Roessler, "Begegnung mit dem Abenteurer," in *Das Egon Schiele Buch*, ed. Fritz Karpfen (Vienna: Wiener Werkstätte, 1921): 73.

75 Roessler 1921, 79 (see note 74).

76 Letter from Anton Peschka Jr. to Iris Lamowski, dated November 22, 1996, private collection, Frankfurt.

77 See Bauer 2023, 22, 25–29, 34–37 (see note 31).

78 Bauer 2023, 108 (see note 31).

79 Kathrin Luz, "'Und möge uns das Leichentuch mit Eleganz bedecken': Die Karrieren des Dandys," in von Dewitz 2010 (see note 67): 113–121, 117.

80 Arnold Hauser, *Sozialgeschichte der Kunst und Literatur*, vol. 2 (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1953), 454.

81 Roessler 1921, 79 (see note 74).

82 Bauer 2023, 21 (see note 31).

83 Beil 2009, 73, 78–79 (see note 26).

84 Papet 2009, 32 (see note 26).

85 Weihe 2004, 250 (see note 65). Nō is the traditional Japanese theater that was originally played by men. Nō actresses first became significant at the beginning of the twentieth century. The main actor generally wears a mask. See Ulrike Dembski and Alexandra Steiner, *Nō-Theater: Kostüme und Masken* (Vienna: Brandstätter, 2003).

86 Günter Zobel, "Von Segen spendenden alten, ruhelosen Geistern und zu bannenden Dämonen," in Dembski and Steiner 2003 (see note 85): 47.

87 Osen was the illegitimate son of Dominik Ladislaus Kuhn; his father came not from Japan but from Busk in Galicia, then Poland and now Ukraine. See Christian Bauer, "Erwin Dominik Osen—Eine Annäherung," in Gamper and Wipplinger 2022 (see note 32): 91n4.

88 See Bauer 2023, 99 (see note 31). Many of Osen's signatures follow Japanese models.

89 Philippe Thiébaut, "Moderne Kunst und Antike zu Beginn des 20. Jahrhunderts," in Beil 2009 (see note 26): 190–197, 194.

90 Quentin Bajac, "Die Frau mit den zwei Gesichtern: Muse und Masken in der Fotografie zwischen den Kriegen," in Beil 2009 (see note 26): 216–226, 217.

91 See Bajac 2009, 219, fig. 66 (see note 90).

92 Johannes Wieninger, "Die MAK-Sammlung Asien 1864–2014," in *MAK/GUIDE ASIEN. China—Japan—Korea/ MAK/GUIDE ASIA: China—Japan—Korea*, ed. Christoph Thun-Hohenstein (Munich: Prestel, 2014): 34.

93 Christoph Thun-Hohenstein, Mio Wakita-Elis, and Johannes Wieninger, eds., *Kuniyoshi + Design und Entertainment im japanischen Farbholzschnitt*, exh. cat., MAK—Museum of Applied Arts, Vienna, October 26, 2019–February 16, 2020, MAK Studies 27 (Vienna: Verlag für moderne Kunst, 2019), 134.

94 Thun-Hohenstein et al. 2019, 134 (see note 93). There is a possibility that the puppets were exhibited in Vienna in the early twentieth century, but it has not yet been possible to provide proof of this.

95 Poem by Egon Schiele dated May 1910; see Leopold Museum, Egon Schiele Datenbank der Autografen, ESDA ID 292, https://www.egonschiele.at/292.

96 Letter dated September 20, 1910; see Leopold Museum, Egon Schiele Datenbank der Autografen, ESDA ID 2762, https://www.egonschiele.at/2762. The letter was first published in Christian Bauer, "Selbstfindung, Selbsterkenntnis und Selbstdarstellung: Egon Schiele und die Gegenwart," in Bauer 2019 (see note 9): 10–11.

97 Max Oppenheimer, *Menschen finden ihren Maler* (Zurich: Oprecht, 1938), 9.

98 Kokoschka 1971, 72 (see note 49).

99 Jean-Luc Nancy, "Maskiert und demaskiert," in Beil 2009 (see note 26): 13–17, 14.

100 Rainer Maria Rilke, *Die Aufzeichnungen des Malte Laurids Brigge* (Leipzig: Insel, 1910). That this was one of Schiele's favorite books emerges from Alessandra Comini's interview of Adele Harms that was conducted on January 24, 1967. See Comini 1974, 80n2, 214 (see note 34). Helena Pereña's work continues to provide an excellent record of Schiele's library and literary education. See Helena Pereña Sáez, *Egon Schiele: Wahrnehmung, Identität und Weltbild* (Marburg: Tectum Verlag, 2010).

101 Rainer Maria Rilke, *The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge*, trans. Burton Pike (Funks Grove: Dalkey, 2008), 76.

102 Rilke 2008, 76 (see note 101). Pereña has pointed out the connection between the book and works by Egon Schiele. See Pereña 2014, 38–39, 59 (see note 38).

103 See Egon Schiele, "Ein Selbstbild," Leopold Museum, Egon Schiele Datenbank der Autografen, ESDA ID 292, https://www.egonschiele.at/292.

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