

## THE BELVEDERE



4. A conversation room at the Lower Belvedere was remodelled into the Gold Cabinet for the Empress Maria Theresa in around 1765

the Second World War, with the addition of a Museum of Medieval Austrian Art. Of the 300-odd medieval works in the collection today – split between the Upper Belvedere and the former Palace Stables of the Lower Belvedere – only four were present when the palace was opened to the public in 1781.

The curators of '300 Years' have risen to the challenge of unravelling the knotty history of the museum in the 20th century. Ziaja points to the fact that the Upper Belvedere was the venue for the signing of the State Treaty in 1955, which marked the end of the Allied occupation and the re-establishment of Austrian sovereignty; the palace was, she says, 'an important anchor for national identity'. But the Nazi era and its aftermath is given appropriate attention here, with exhibits of acquisitions during that period revealing the close ties between the museum's directorship of the time and National Socialist policies. 'So we also have these holdings in the collection that are quite problematic,' Ziaja says, 'and one needs to deal with it, but it's complicated.'

The issue of restitution looms large over all of this, even if the wall labels that refer to it are small. The most high-profile restitution case to date – from the Nazi era at least – involved the Belvedere, which, along with the Austrian government, took on a villainous aspect when

it fought between 1999 and 2006 to keep five Klimt paintings that had been seized from the home of the wealthy Jewish couple Ferdinand and Adele Bloch-Bauer. One of the works, the extraordinary gold-ground portrait of Adele, famously became the most expensive painting ever sold (up to that point) after the group was returned to the couple's heirs. A subtle acknowledgement of that episode in the Belvedere's history is represented here by the shimmering, almost pointillist *Schloss Kammer on the Attersee III* (1908/10), which was proved to have been donated to the gallery by Ferdinand Bloch-Bauer in 1936.

The last restitution the Belvedere made was Egon Schiele's *Four Trees* (1917) in 2020; so careful has the museum's provenance research been in recent years, says Ziaja, that, 'No, there shouldn't be any surprises.' *An Avenue in Monet's Garden* (1902) by the Impressionist master is being considered for restitution. *The Coachmen's Quarrel* (1828), a painting by the Biedermeier shoemaker-cum-painter Michael Neder, has passed restitution prerequisites under the Austrian Art Restitution Act, but heirs of the original owners (one of whom was killed in the Izbica Ghetto in Poland) have yet to be found. How much work museums are required to do to find heirs is one of many grey areas in this complex field. In their capacity as centres of art-historical research, however, they are well placed to spot

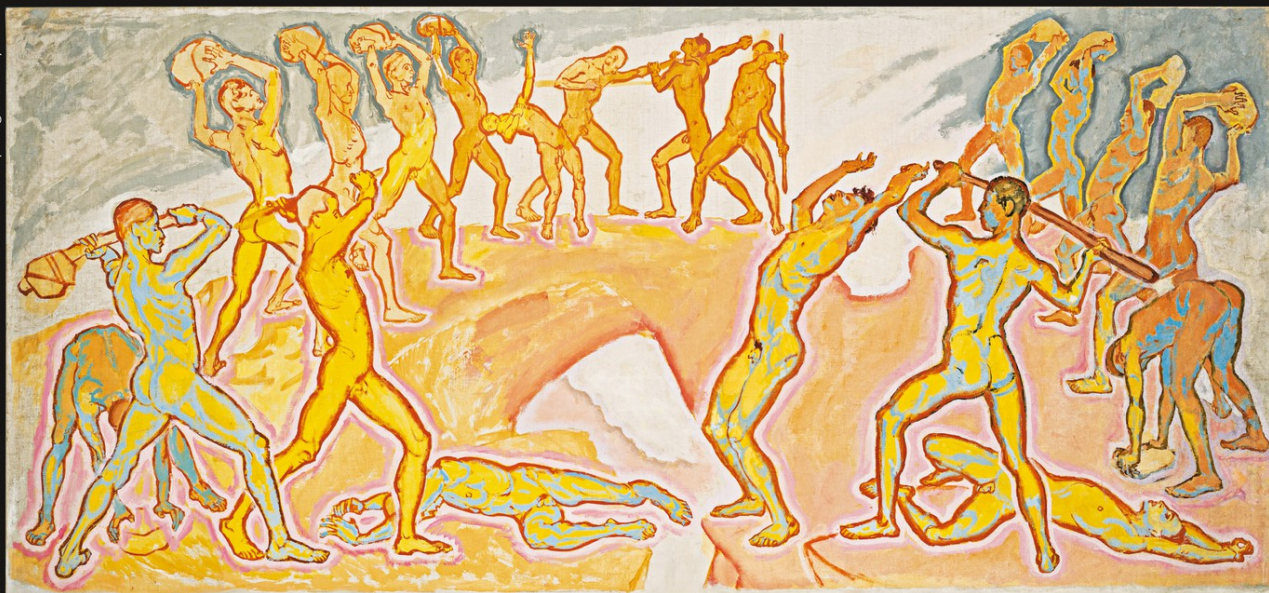
Photo: © Lucas Schaller



# bel etage

THE BEL ETAGE GALLERY EXHIBITING AT THE EUROPEAN FINE ART FAIR  
TEFAF MAASTRICHT, MARCH 11<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup>, 2023, BOOTH 718

Cat. no. 25. K. MOSER, around 1914. H 157 cm, W 240 cm (Image detail)



Cat. no. 5. K. MOSER/P&F, 1900. H 180 cm



Cat. no. 35. J. HOFFMANN/WW, 1908. H 15.5 cm



Cat. no. 12. K. MOSER/WW, before 1906. H 12.5 cm

We have produced a 128-page expert catalogue. You are welcome to pick up the new catalogue from us for free.  
We will also be pleased to send you a copy of our catalogue at a cost of € 20/Austria € 10 to cover post and packaging.

A-1010 Vienna, Mahlerstraße 15  
Mo-Fr 1 to 6 PM  
+43 1 512 23 79

**WOLFGANG BAUER**  
office@belestage.com  
www.belestage.com

A-1010 Vienna, Dorotheergasse 12  
Tue-Fr 1 to 6 PM  
Sat 11 to 5 PM