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THREE HIGHLY IMPORTANT WORKS ON PAPER BY EGON SCHIELE TO BE OFFERED AT SOTHEBY'S LONDON

Among the greatest works on paper by Schiele ever to come to the market, the group comes to sale from the renowned Leopold Museum in Vienna



On 5 February 2013, Sotheby's London will offer for sale one of the most important groups of works on paper by Egon Schiele ever to come to the market. Carrying a combined estimate of £9-12 million, the three works span a critical period of the artist's output (1914-1918), each of them demonstrating the impeccable draughtsmanship for which Schiele is renowned. Together they provide an exceptional overview of the breadth of style, technique and composition that characterises Schiele's best work. The drawings come to sale from the Leopold Museum in Vienna which boasts the world's most comprehensive collections of paintings and works on paper by Egon Schiele.

Egon Schiele, *Liebespaar (Selbstdarstellung mit Wally)*,
1914/15, est: £6.5-8.5 million

Helena Newman, Chairman of Sotheby's Impressionist & Modern Art Department Europe, said: *“Following the auction in 2011 of Schiele's Häuser mit bunter Wäsche, Vorstadt II, which sold at Sotheby's London for a record £24.7 million, we are delighted to continue our relationship with the Leopold Museum with this further offering of three works of extraordinary quality and provenance. There are few draughtsmen who can rival Schiele's dynamic and expressive technique.”*

Peter Weinhäupl, Managing Director of the Leopold Museum, said: *“The Leopold Museum is fortunate to hold the world's greatest collection of works by Schiele. The sale of these three works will fund a settlement which will be of benefit to the museum.”*

Tobias G. Natter, Director of the Leopold Museum and a leading scholar in the field of Art from 'Vienna 1900', said: *“The Leopold Museum owns the most important Schiele collection in the world. Carefully selected and proposed for sale in conjunction with Dr Elisabeth Leopold, the three exceptional works to be sold are definitive examples of Schiele's powerful compositions, technique and draughtsmanship from an important juncture both personally and professionally in his life.”*

Leading the group of works to be sold is ***Liebespaar (Selbstdarstellung mit Wally) / Lovers (Self-portrait with Wally)*** of 1914/15. The record price for a work on paper by Schiele currently stands at \$11.35 million/ £5.42 million (established at Sotheby's in New York in 2007); the estimate on this exceptional work (illustrated right) is £6.5 - £8.5 million, reflecting its rarity and extraordinary quality. Executed in gouache and pencil, this transfixing double portrait of the artist with Wally - his model and lover - ranks among the finest works on paper by Schiele ever to have come to the market. With its lavish colours and bold confrontational manner, it takes the viewer to the heart of the emotional turmoil involved in the ending of a long and intense relationship.



It was Gustav Klimt, Schiele's great friend and mentor, who first introduced Schiele to Wally (Walburga Neuzil), the free-spirited, striking and steadfastly loyal woman who was to become the artist's muse and

lover. Her auburn hair and piercing blue-green eyes are identifiable in many of the key works produced during this crucial period. When, in 1912 Schiele was accused of various offences including public immorality, and was held in prison for 21 days, many of his friends abandoned him, but Wally stood firm. Her loyalty bound them yet closer together so that, when in 1914 Schiele made the decision that he needed to find himself a wife and that for social reasons that could not be Wally, the parting was painful for both.

It is likely that, at the time Schiele created this drawing around 1914/1915, he was already courting Edith Harms, his wife-to-be. This artistic immersion in Wally is therefore probably a retrospective expression of his feelings for her, done at a time when she had already irrevocably departed from his life. On this lavishly coloured sheet, Schiele commits his most confidential thoughts to paper with all his expressive powers, transfiguring them into emphatic discourses on the human condition.



Also to be offered is *Selbstdarstellung in grünem Hemd mit geschlossenen Augen* / *Self-Portrait in Green Shirt with Eyes Closed* (illustrated left) an electrifying self-portrait, dating from the same period as the *Liebespaar*. Estimated at £1.8-2.5 million, this work magnificently manifests the ingenuity of Schiele's gouache technique. It also encapsulates his approach to self-portraiture prior to 1915, with its characteristic introspection and highly significant, symbolic depiction of himself with closed eyes and tightly wrung hands. Schiele may also have had another, less introverted motivation in creating this remarkable 1914 work: it seems that in this year he drew a number of particularly strongly coloured, daringly posed self-portraits as part of his early courtship of the Harms sisters - Adele and Edith – whom he was

at this time seeking both to tease and to shock. In this remarkable and intimate self-portrait, Schiele captures both his own vulnerability and his playfulness.

The third of the great Schiele works from the Leopold Museum that is to be offered for sale is the very assured and elegant *Am Rücken liegendes Mädchen mit überkreuzten Armen und Beinen / Girl Lying on her Back with Crossed Arms and Legs*, estimated at £700,000-1,000,000. One of the artist's last works, executed in 1918, this belongs to a series of line drawings of semi-nude female figures which combine a strong sexuality with a novel sense of perspective that is particular to the artist's final works. As the Schiele scholar Jane Kallir noted: '*Schiele's hand had never been surer, more capable of grasping, in a single breathtaking sweep, the complete contour of a figure.*'



The Leopold Museum

The Leopold Museum in Vienna houses one of the most important collections of modern Austrian art in the world, and is particularly renowned as the home of the most substantial and important collections of Schiele's works. The museum's holdings of more than 5,000 exhibits – which also provide an encyclopaedic view of Austrian art from the *fin de siècle* – were collected by Professor Rudolf Leopold and his wife Elisabeth over a period of five decades. In 1994, the Collection was consolidated by Professor Leopold with the assistance of the Republic of Austria and the Austrian National Bank into the Leopold Museum Private Foundation - a non-profit private foundation.

Sotheby's and Schiele

Sotheby's holds auction records for Schiele - both for an oil painting (£24.7 million for *Häuser mit bunter Wäsche, Vorstadt II* of 1914, sold by Sotheby's London on behalf of the Leopold Museum in June 2011) and for a work on paper (\$11.35 million for *Selbstbildnis mit kariertem Hemd*, 1917, sold at Sotheby's New York in 2007). In June 2004, Sotheby's London sold a group of 15 works on paper by Schiele - the most important and wide-ranging collection of drawings by the artist ever to come to auction - for £9,928,800. The top lot of the group was a magnificent gouache, *Liebepaar* from 1913, which sold for £1.9 million – then a record for a work on paper by the artist. Together, these successful sales confirm Sotheby's position as the primary force in defining the market for works by Schiele.

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