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PROPERTY FROM THE LEOPOLD MUSEUM, VIENNA

**Egon Schiele**

*HÄUSER MIT BUNTER WÄSCHE (VORSTADT II) HOUSES WITH LAUNDRY (SUBURB II)*

Estimate   22,000,000 — 30,000,000 GBP ▼

**LOT SOLD. 24,681,250 GBP (Hammer Price with Buyer's Premium)**

## DETAILS & CATALOGUING

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Egon Schiele

1890 - 1918

*HÄUSER MIT BUNTER WÄSCHE (VORSTADT II) HOUSES WITH LAUNDRY  
(SUBURB II)*

signed *Egon Schiele* and dated 1914 (lower centre)

oil on canvas  
99 by 119cm.  
39 by 46 7/8 in.  
Painted in 1914.

# IMPRESSIONISM & MODERN ART EVENING SALE

22 JUNE 2011 | 7:00 PM BST  
LONDON

## PROVENANCE

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Heinrich Böhler, Vienna & St. Moritz (acquired from the artist in June 1914)  
Mabel Böhler, Lugano (wife of the above; by descent from the above in 1940)  
Rudolf Leopold, Vienna (acquired from the above in 1952)  
Leopold Museum, Vienna (acquired in 1994)

## EXHIBITED

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Vienna, Galerie Arnot, *Kollektiv-Ausstellung Egon Schiele*, 1914-15, no. 11  
Amsterdam, Stedelijk Museum & Eindhoven, Stedelijk van Abbe Museum, *Kunst uit Oostenrijk*, 1956-57, no. 229  
St. Gallen, Kunstmuseum, *Kunst aus Österreich*, 1957, no. 91  
Bern, Kunsthalle, *Kunst aus Österreich*, 1957, no. 109  
Rome, Pinacoteca Capitolina & Venice, Museo d'Arte Moderna Ca' Pesaro, *Egon Schiele*, 1984, no. 28, illustrated in colour in the catalogue  
Vienna, Künstlerhaus, *Traum und Wirklichkeit: Wien 1870-1930*, 1985, no. 15/8/18, illustrated in colour in the catalogue  
Tokyo, Isetan Museum; Aichi, Prefectural Museum of Art; Nara, Prefectural Museum of Art; Yamanashi, Prefectural Museum of Art & Kamakura, Museum of Modern Art, *Egon Schiele und Wien zur Jahrhundertwende*, 1986, no. 25, illustrated in colour in the catalogue  
Zurich, Kunsthaus; Vienna, Kunstforum Länderbank; Munich, Kunsthalle der Hypo-Kulturstiftung & Wuppertal, Von-der-Heydt-Museum, *Egon Schiele und seine Zeit: Österreichische Malerei und Zeichnung von 1900 bis 1930 aus der Sammlung Leopold*, 1988-89, no. 41, illustrated in colour in the catalogue  
Lugano, Museo d'Arte Moderna della Città di Lugano, *Egon Schiele*, 2003, no. 37, illustrated in colour in the catalogue  
Vienna, Leopold Museum, *Egon Schiele, Landschaften*, 2004-05, illustrated in colour in the catalogue  
Paris, Galeries Nationales du Grand Palais, *Klimt, Schiele, Moser, Kokoschka, Vienna 1900*, 2005-06, illustrated in colour in the catalogue  
Basel, Fondation Beyeler, *Vienna 1900: Klimt, Schiele, and Their Times. A Total Work of Art*, 2010-11, illustrated in colour in the catalogue

## LITERATURE

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Otto Nirenstein, *Egon Schiele: Persönlichkeit und Werk*, Vienna, 1930, nos. XXXII; XXXVIII & XXXIX, listed on pp. 91, 92 & 118  
Otto Kallir, *Egon Schiele, Œuvre-Katalog der Gemälde*, Vienna, 1966, no. 204, catalogued p. 404

Rudolf Leopold, *Egon Schiele. Paintings, Watercolours, Drawings*, London, 1973, no. 251, illustrated p. 584; illustrated in colour pl. 156

Christian M. Nebehay, *Egon Schiele: Leben, Briefe, Gedichte*, Salzburg & Vienna, 1979, nos. 686 & 689

Gianfranco Malafarina, *L'Opera di Egon Schiele*, Milan, 1982, no. 274, illustrated p. 110

Wolfgang Georg Fischer, *Egon Schiele. Pantomimen der Lust. Visionen der Sterblichkeit*, Cologne, 1994, illustrated in colour p. 66

Jane Kallir, *Egon Schiele, The Complete Works*, London, 1998, no. 283, illustrated p. 327 (titled *Häuser mit Wäsche (Vorstadt II)*)

Tobias G. Natter, *Die Welt von Klimt, Schiele und Kokoschka. Sammler und Mäzene*, Cologne, 2003, mentioned pp. 179 & 232

## CATALOGUE NOTE

**P**ainted in 1914, *Häuser mit bunter Wäsche (Vorstadt II)* is one of Schiele's most impressive and important townscapes. Combining the river in the foreground and fields in the background with the colourful houses and drying laundry stretching along the middle of the composition, it unites the natural and the man-made in a harmonious and vivid composition. The geometry and linearity of brightly coloured houses and laundry lines create a shimmering, highly decorative effect that represented a legacy of Schiele's mentor Gustav Klimt. Set against a strongly delineated, neutrally coloured landscape, they create an atmospheric composition which is, as is the case with Schiele's most accomplished landscapes, reflective of the artist's state of mind. It is this combination of the decorative and the symbolic that makes *Häuser mit bunter Wäsche (Vorstadt II)* one of the finest paintings of Schiele's *œuvre*.

According to Jane Kallir, this and another landscape painted that year 'may be loosely based on Krumau motifs, though they depict no specific location' (J. Kallir, *op. cit.*, p. 327). Schiele had a close link with the town of Krumau (fig. 2), which was the birthplace of his mother Marie, and was often a refuge for the artist when he was experiencing difficult times in his life. It also inspired some of the most significant compositions of his career. In March 1911 he was making plans to move to Krumau for an extended stay, and asked Willi Lidl of the Krumau Gymnasium, a great admirer of his, to find him a suitable garden house. In the summer of that year he rented a cottage in Krumau, where he set up a studio and lived with the model Wally Neuzil. Schiele's first paintings of this region date from 1908, while he was still a student at the Academy. In 1910 he executed several works on paper on the subject of Krumau, and in 1911 several small-scale oils. It was not until 1913 that he started painting views of the town on a large scale. In 1914, Schiele painted seven large-scale townscapes: two of them remain in the Leopold Museum in Vienna (fig. 1), while the others are in Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza in Madrid (fig. 3), Staatsgalerie in Stuttgart and Österreichische Galerie Belvedere in Vienna, with only one remaining in a private collection.

In *Häuser mit bunter Wäsche (Vorstadt II)*, the compositional format displays the elevated perspective typical of Schiele's townscapes, captured as if the artist – and, in turn, the viewer – has the vantage point of a soaring bird, a visionary, or a divine being, hovering above the landscape and looking down on the town from the heights. Jane Kallir wrote: 'Schiele's favourite landscape subject [...] was the town of Krumau (today Cesky Krumlov), to which he referred most frequently as the 'dead city' (but also as the 'old city' and the 'city on the blue river'). Krumau, his mother's birthplace, was indisputably an old city, a medieval time capsule whose winding streets and crumbling buildings embodied for Schiele an eternity of human decay and persistence. Situated around and within a tortuous bend in the Moldau river (now called the Vltava), Krumau has a compact, islandlike configuration that Schiele found compositionally intriguing. He liked especially to perch on the high left bank of the river and draw the old town from above. He told one friend that this bird's-eye perspective influenced all his work and indeed even his nudes were often viewed



**FIG. 1**  
Egon Schiele, *Die kleine Stadt IV (Krumau an der Moldau)*, 1914, oil on canvas, Leopold Museum, Vienna



**FIG. 2**  
A view of Krumau



**FIG. 3**  
Egon Schiele, *H'er am Fluss II (Die alte Stadt II)*, 1914, oil on canvas, Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza, Madrid



**FIG. 4**

this bird's-eye perspective influenced all his work, and, indeed, even his heads were often viewed from the vantage point of a tall stool or ladder' (J. Kallir, *Egon Schiele*, New York, 1994, p. 96).

Discussing the present composition in a recent exhibition catalogue, Franz Smola wrote: 'The left-hand and right-hand halves of the picture are each dominated, almost symmetrically, by blocks of houses made up of individual buildings of different sizes. This is undoubtedly a reminiscence of the Old Town of Krumau; in this picture, Schiele has ripped the picturesque town quarter out of its context and set it down in an almost empty landscape. As is virtually always the case in Schiele's city *vedute*, there are no inhabitants in this painting who would dispel the sense of desolation. But traces of human dwellings are recognisable: the many rows of clotheslines on which laundry has been hung out to dry. [...] Schiele's pictorial composition proves to be a carefully calculated interplay of the horizontal and the vertical. Despite their tendency to geometric structuring, Schiele's compositions never follow a strict formal theory such as the ones we know from Cubism or Constructivism. Instead, Schiele always structures his pictures on the basis of an intensely personal, selective process of imagination and perception' (F. Smola in *Klimt, Schiele, Moser, Kokoschka, Vienna 1900* (exhibition catalogue), *op. cit.*, p. 200).

Like other landscapes that Schiele painted in 1914, the present composition is dominated by horizontal lines, which define the rows of houses, the washing lines and the background, unifying these various elements into a harmonious pictorial whole. By 1915, the straight lines are replaced with curved ones, such as in *Krumau Häuserbogen I (Die kleine Stadt V)* (fig. 4), in which Schiele depicts a different view of the town's houses and laundry lines. In the present work, the horizontal organisation is balanced by brightly coloured vertical laundry poles and chimneys, as well as by the triangular rooftops. This overall linear composition is punctuated by the small boats by the river bank, imbuing the painting with a light, almost child-like touch. Jane Kallir commented on the structure of the present work: 'Pursuing the horizon line as organizational motif, Schiele also evolves compositions in which isolated houses are set against striated backgrounds. Possibly inspired by the terraced vineyards of the 1913 Stein paintings [fig. 5], these striations now appear not only in narrow bands of turf, but also in sky and water. Such obsessive attention to the minutiae of formal patterning verges on mannerism, especially when (as in some of the 1914 landscapes, e.g. [the present work]) the patterns are highlighted by bursts of bright, folkish accent of coloring' (J. Kallir, *op. cit.*, p. 323).

Many art historians have observed that Schiele's townscapes are not literal depictions of a given view, but rather the artist's own, highly personalised interpretations of them. Like many of his best landscapes, the present work is reflective of the artist's emotional and psychological state, rather than an accurate topographical representation. As Klaus Albrecht Schröder wrote: 'The town, for Schiele, is a field of association for his own emotions; predictably, none of his townscapes gives anything like an exact rendering of the place concerned. [...] Nor does he select his views of Krumau with the eye of a tourist, strolling round to surrender himself to whatever charms the town may have to offer. On the contrary; he examines each and every building for its symbolic content.' Schröder further observed: 'The houses of Schiele's Krumau are empty of people. Seen from above, they are an embodiment of the human presence, but even the traces of that presence, such as clothes lines [in the present work] or open shutters, do not connote the inhabitants, who are absent. These views embody a human presence only in the highly significant sense that Schiele projects his own states of mind onto them as he does onto nature' (K. A. Schröder in *Egon Schiele und seine Zeit: Österreichische Malerei und Zeichnung von 1900 bis 1930 aus der Sammlung Leopold* (exhibition catalogue), *op. cit.*, p. 26).

The first owner of *Häuser mit bunter Wäsche (Vorstadt II)* was Heinrich Böhler (1881-1940), an heir to the Böhler-Werke steel-producing factories. While the Böhler family were known to be patrons of

FIG. 4  
Egon Schiele, *Krumau Häuserbogen I (Die kleine Stadt V)*, 1915, oil on canvas, Israel Museum, Jerusalem



FIG. 5  
Egon Schiele, *Stein an der Donau, vom S%rn gesehn*, 1913, oil on canvas, Neue Galerie, New York

the arts, it was Josef Hoffmann – the celebrated Viennese architect and co-founder of the Vienna Secession – who introduced Heinrich Böhler to Schiele in 1914. They were to become close associates. Soon after the initial introduction from Hoffmann, Schiele took on Böhler as a pupil but, as Jane Kallir relates: 'Böhler soon turned out to be far more than just a student. Not only did Böhler supply Schiele with paint, canvas and models when they worked side by side, he also became a dedicated collector of the artist's work' (J. Kallir, *op. cit.*, p. 173). Böhler bought a significant number of paintings in 1915, and paid Schiele a monthly stipend of 200 kronen during the war years. Heinrich Böhler, along with his cousin Hans, an artist in his own right, was a painting companion of the artist and they often went on painting excursions to Krumau.

Böhler's collection contained seven oils by Schiele, as well as numerous works on paper, several of which are now in Austrian museums. Böhler was also the subject of several portraits on paper by Schiele. In 1917 the artist sketched a drawing as a study for an oil portrait of Böhler; however the painting was never executed due to Schiele's premature death the following year.

Fig. 1, Egon Schiele, *Die kleine Stadt IV (Krumau an der Moldau)*, 1914, oil on canvas, Leopold Museum, Vienna

Fig. 2, A view of Krumau

Fig. 3, Egon Schiele, *Häuser am Fluss II (Die alte Stadt II)*, 1914, oil on canvas, Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza, Madrid

Fig. 4, Egon Schiele, *Krumau Häuserbogen I (Die kleine Stadt V)*, 1915, oil on canvas, Israel Museum, Jerusalem

Fig. 5, Egon Schiele, *Stein an der Donau, vom Süden gesehn*, 1913, oil on canvas, Neue Galerie, New York

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