

■ *Later Interpretations.* During the 1920s, Art Deco designer Robert Mallet-Stevens, among others, designs furnishings and interiors in character and form that reflect the influence of the Vienna Secessionists. Few interpretations occur after this time until the late 20th century when various manufacturers, such as Knoll International, produce variations of Hoffmann's furniture (Fig. 45-15). Jack Lenor Larson and his designers reinvent the textiles of the period with great success.



▲ 45-15. Later Interpretation: Armchair model 810, 1982; United States; Richard Meier, manufactured by Knoll International. Modern Historicism.



▲ 45-12. Armchair, 1901–1904; Austria; Otto Wagner and R. Tropesch.



▲ 45-14. Bedroom furnishings; 1901–1904; Austria.



▲ 45-13. Writing desk, c. 1902–1903; Austria; Koloman Moser.

quadrangular. A few examples have metal feet. Designs may recall traditional types, such as ladder-backs or rectangular arm chairs, in a simplified vocabulary with a greater emphasis upon outlines and shape. Squares, rectangles, or circles are the only ornament. Upholstered pieces may be boxy or have simple curves but no carving, inlay, or other ornament. Nails secure fabric to the frame.

■ *Tables.* Tables usually are slender and rectilinear with some curves (Fig. 45-7). Tops may be round or square, and legs are usually straight and quadrangular in form. The *Wiener Werkstätte* vocabulary often redefines traditional types to support new interior design concepts.

■ *Storage.* Storage pieces, such as cabinets and desks, have a rectangular outline (Fig. 45-6, 45-8, 45-13). Inlay or marquetry in repeating patterns of squares, rectangles, ovals, and/or circles may cover fronts. Door and drawer handles are simple, rectangular, and flat to avoid disrupting the composition.

■ *Beds.* Like other furniture, beds have simple rectilinear headboards and footboards (Fig. 45-8, 45-14). Sometimes head- and footboards are embellished with open or veneered squares, rectangles, or other motifs.

■ *Decorative Arts.* Like furniture, decorative arts reflect the *Wiener Werkstätte* design vocabulary. Conceived as part of total works of art, the glass, metalwork, tablewares, and even cutlery feature geometric forms, shapes, and details.

DESIGN SPOTLIGHT



▲ 45-11. Chairs and recliner, 1900-1909; Austria; Josef Hoffmann, with much of the furniture manufactured by Thonet Brothers.

language in form and design. Later exhibitions take the form of complete room settings to showcase the talents of the group's members. The eighth exhibition in 1900 is particularly significant because it includes work by C. R. Ashbee's Guild of Handicraft from England and a room by the Glasgow Four (Charles Rennie Mackintosh, Herbert McNair, and the MacDonald sisters, Margaret and Frances) from Scotland. Although the new Viennese style receives critical acclaim, the Secession group begins to lose cohesion as an art movement in 1905 when members move in new directions. It becomes an artists' union and continues exhibitions into the late 20th century.

In 1903, inspired by the success of the Secession group, Hoffmann and Moser form the *Wiener Werkstätte* (Vienna Workshops), a craft studio inspired by Ashbee's Guild of Handicraft and opposed to methods of mass production. Many members of this group are females. Projects, mostly for wealthy patrons, include the decoration of individual rooms, entire houses, or small apartments. Products range from furniture and textile designs, cabinetwork, and lighting to ceramics and silver objects, all bearing a similar unified appearance. The group's passion for unifying all arts extends even to the clothing worn by the lady of the *Wiener Werkstätte* house. The studio initiates artist workshops to promote artistic experimentation in ceramics, woodcarving, enameling, wallpapers, and fashion design. Commercially successful largely because of wealthy patrons and good advertising, the *Werkstätte* continues operations until 1932. Viennese architect Josef Urban opens a New York branch in 1922.

Both the Vienna Secession and *Wiener Werkstätte* make significant contributions to subsequent modern developments. In their quest for a new design language, they explore forms, details, and colors generally not popular before. Additionally, they favor simplicity; rational construction; honest use of materials; and, ultimately, a rejection of ornament.



## CONCEPTS

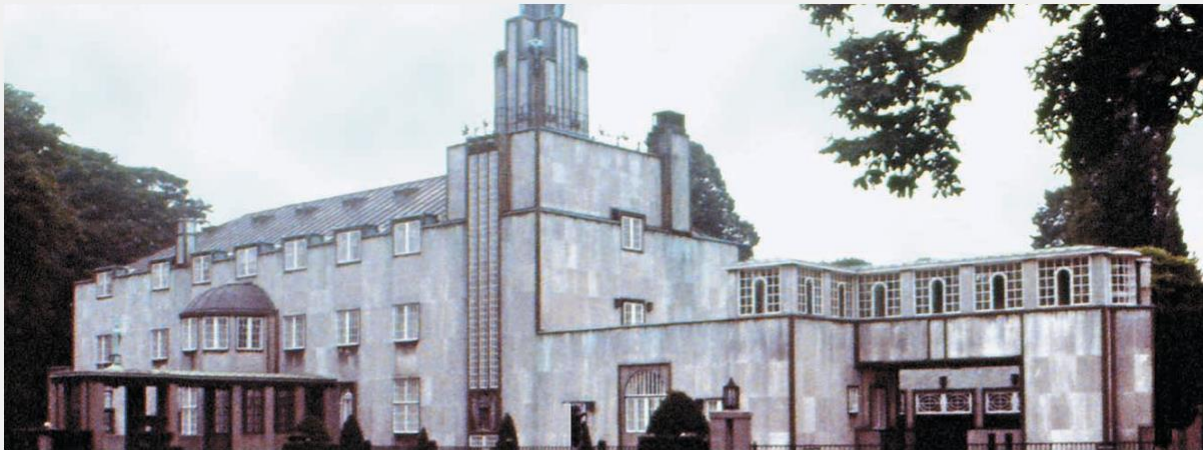
Secession members call for architecture, interiors, and furnishings that develop from contemporary life. Additionally, they strive to dissolve divisions between the fine and decorative arts and design through their exhibitions. Following Otto Wagner in *Moderne Architektur* (1895), the group believes in the expressive power of construction and materials instead of historicism, form over ornament, rationalism, and stylistic simplicity. Like Art Nouveau artists and designers, the Secessionists believe in the power of architecture not only to reform taste, but the very lives of their clients. The *Wiener Werkstätte* shares similar ideals but adds an emphasis on honest use of materials and excellent craftsmanship. They realize that their products are too expensive for most consumers, but they insist that the very exclusivity is evidence of their appeal to the highest tastes and their socially reforming role.

## CHARACTERISTICS AND MOTIFS

Designs in architecture, interiors, furniture, textiles, and decorative arts exhibit minimalism, geometric silhouettes, and strong contrasts. All emphasize geometric forms, shapes, repetition, defined outlines, vertical movement, volumes as planes, functionalism, simplicity, and an honest use of materials. Interiors and



▲ 45-1. Motifs: Poster on the *Wiener Werkstätte* and decorative interior by Leopold Bauer, 1898–1903; Austria.



## CHAPTER 45

# Vienna Secession

1897–1920s

Vienna Secession strives to create a modern style devoid of historicism and free of academic stagnation. Founded in 1897 in Vienna, Austria, by a group of artists, sculptors, architects, and designers, it is more influenced by Britain, Scotland, and Germany than by France or Belgium. Rejecting the more flamboyant Art Nouveau expressions, the Secession advocates simplicity, rational construction, and honest use of materials, which will, in turn, influence subsequent modern developments. Members of the Secession form the *Wiener Werkstätte*, a crafts organization similar to a guild. It shares similar beliefs, but puts more emphasis on unity and excellent craftsmanship.

### HISTORICAL AND SOCIAL

During the late 19th century, rapid industrialization and a significant increase in population provide the framework for urban growth in Vienna. A bustling, multicultural city, it becomes a center for artistic creativity with far-reaching influences on later

*The exhibition was of prime importance in so far as artistic craftsmanship in Vienna was concerned. . . . One saw for the first time modern interiors arranged in accordance with a new Viennese taste. . . . And, moreover, our works were neither Belgian, nor English, nor Japanese, but Viennese, as the majority of critics indeed acknowledged.*

—Koloman Moser, recollecting the Eighth Secession Exhibition in 1900

design. Architecture in the city favors a strong academic tradition, a hierarchy of importance among buildings, historicism, and expressions of imperial grandeur. The *Künstlerhaus* (Academy of Arts) controls art in Vienna, both who creates it and what it looks like. Otto Wagner, Hans Olbrich, and Josef Hoffmann are members, but they break away from it to show their rejection of its academic position and reliance on traditional theories of art. They, along with Josef Maria Olbrich, Koloman Moser, painter Gustav Klimt, and others, found the Vienna Secession (*Wiener Sezession*) in 1897. This society of avant-garde architects, designers, sculptors, and painters strives to unite art and design, mainly by showcasing their work and that of others in prominent exhibitions. Affected by the concurrent rational construction of architecture and furniture in Munich, Germany, the group also follows, to some degree, the principles of craftsmanship and production promoted by the English Arts and Crafts Movement. Work by Charles Rennie Mackintosh in Scotland provides a major source of design inspiration. The society publishes its own journal, *Ver Sacrum* (*Sacred Spring*), from 1897 to 1903. Members also spread their ideas through professorships in various art schools.

The first Secessionist exhibition held in 1898 displays paintings, wallpaper, stained glass designs, and book illustrations. Some of the noteworthy participants include James McNeil Whistler, Walter Crane, and Gustav Klimt, all of whom receive wide acclaim. The exhibition is such a success that later in the year the group builds an exhibition hall, the design of which declares its rejection of academic traditions and illustrates a new architectural