

Koloman Moser

**Allegorical Female Head, Koloman Moser*



Life & Influences

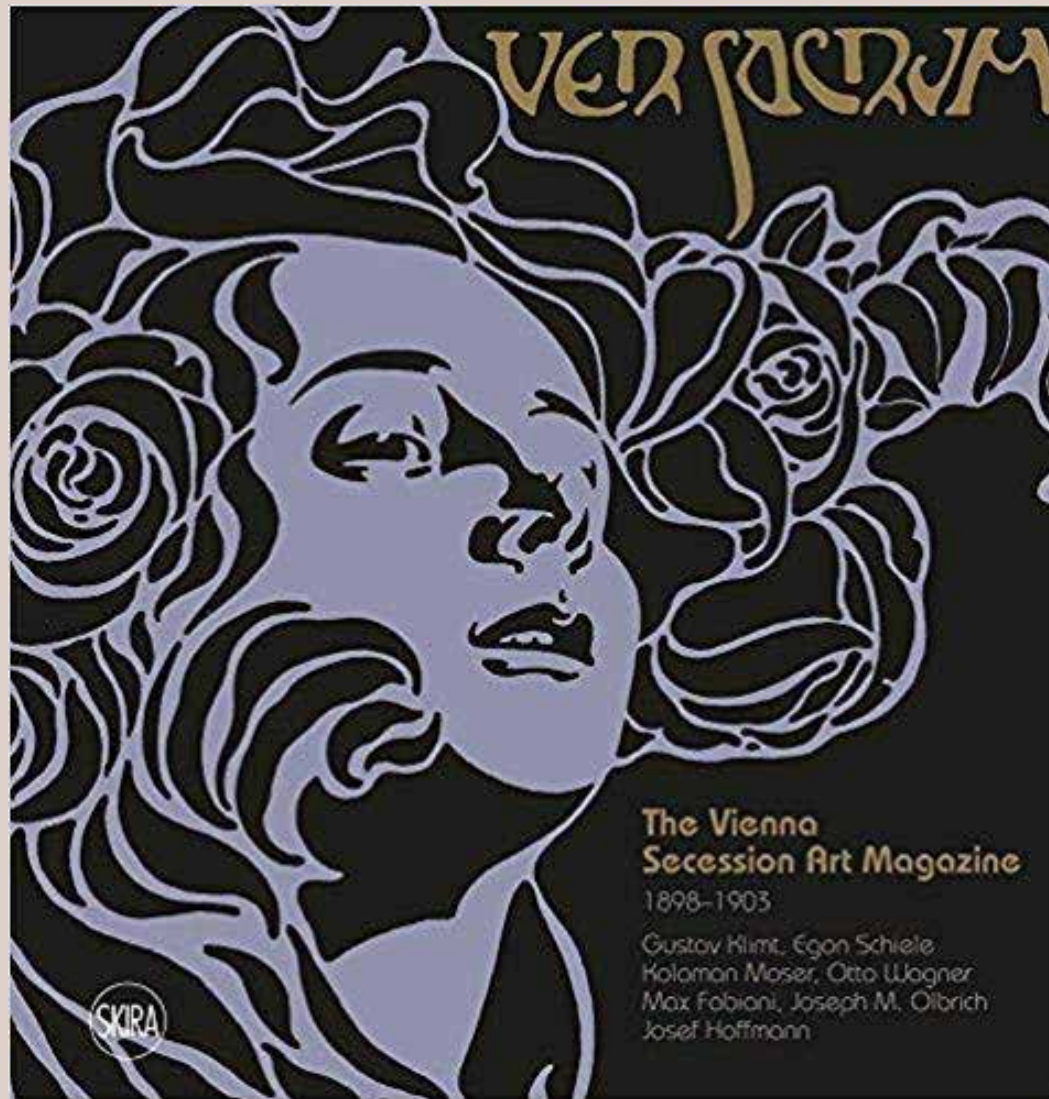
Kolomon Moser has long been considered a “pioneer of modernity” for his work during the period of Art Nouveau. Moser was born in March of 1868 in Vienna, Austria. He grew up very creative and was supported by his parents in his pursuit of an education and career in art. After completing primary school, he went to Wieden, Vienna to study drawing at the trade school there and was later accepted to the Akademie der bildenden Künste (the Academy of Fine Arts) in 1885. After the academy, Moser earned his money by illustrating books and magazines and later continued his studies at the Kunstgewerbeschule (School of Applied Arts). He became a member of the Siebener-Club (Club of Seven) with Josef Hoffmann, Joseph Maria Olbrich, Max Kurzweil, and a few other great influences of the time. This club of innovative designers went on to spearhead the Vienna Secession in 1897 after becoming dissatisfied with the Künstlerhaus, the main exhibiting art society in Vienna at the time. They routinely gathered at coffee shops to discuss their new ideas about art and what it should be.

**Kyrilic poster design, Koloman Moser*



Moser became a founding member of the Vereeniging bildender Kunstler Osterreichs (the Vienna Secession), the formal beginning of modern art in Austria. His group began publishing a journal called the Ver Sacrum (Sacred Spring), which stayed in publication until 1903. The art journal paid particular attention to design and was creatively run by Moser, Klimt, and Hoffmann. The magazine included drawings and designs in the Jugendstil (the Youth Style) along with literary contributions from distinguished writers from all over Europe. It quickly set the tone for both the spirit and the style of the Vienna Secession.

Moser became a full time professor at the Kunstgewerbeschule where he taught decorative drawing and painting until his death in 1918. In 1903, Moser teamed with long-time associates, Hoffmann and Fritz, to found the Wiener Werkstatte (Vienna Workshops). The Wiener Werkstatte was created for much of the same reason as the Viennese Secession: the growing concern that Vienna's culture and prevailing art forms had grown stagnant and tired. The innovative artists in the Wiener Werkstatte created aesthetically pleasing yet functional household objects, including glassware, flatware, silverware, rugs, and textiles.



*Ver Sacrum cover, 1899, Koloman Moser



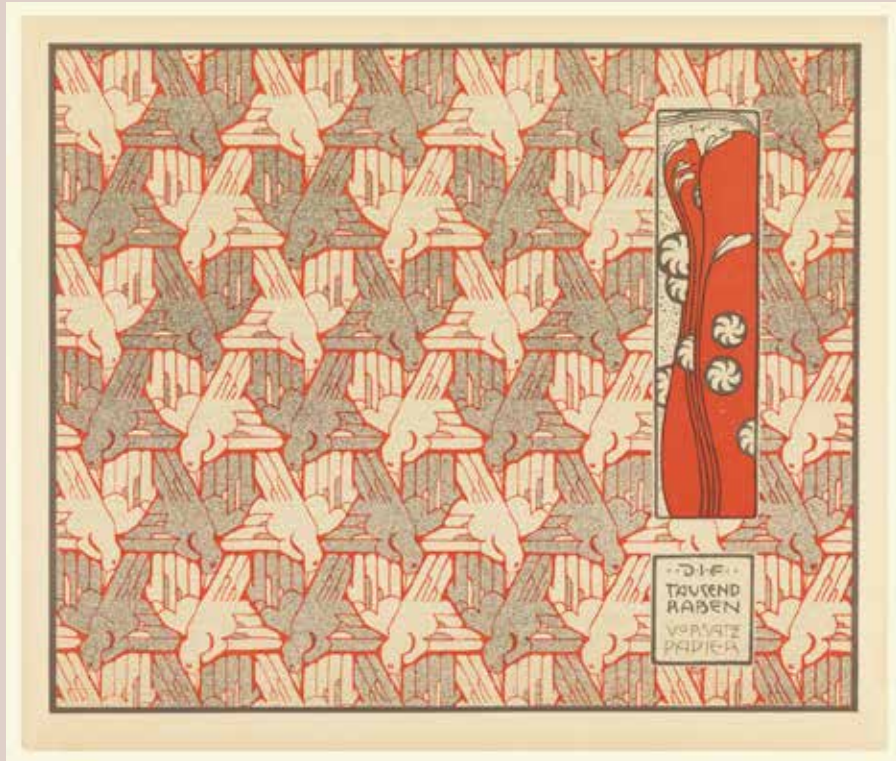
*Angel window, Otto Wagner Church,
Koloman Moser Einbandsentwurf

He also collaborated with Hoffmann on various commercial interior design projects over the years. He designed the Apse mosaic and glass windows in the Kirche am Steinhof in Vienna, Austria. Moser separated from the Vienna Secession with the rest of the Klimt group in 1905. That same year, Moser married the daughter of one of Austria's great industry fortunes, Edith Mautner von Markhof, who's family made their fortune through the brewery business. It was, however, very difficult for the Wiener Werkstatte designers to maintain a healthy economic standing when struggling to correctly estimate the cost of creating and manufacturing one-of-a-kind, luxury items. In 1907, Moser had to withdraw from Wiener Werkstatte to cope with financial problems and his dream for its reorganization not being recognized.



*Einbandsentwurf, Koloman Moser

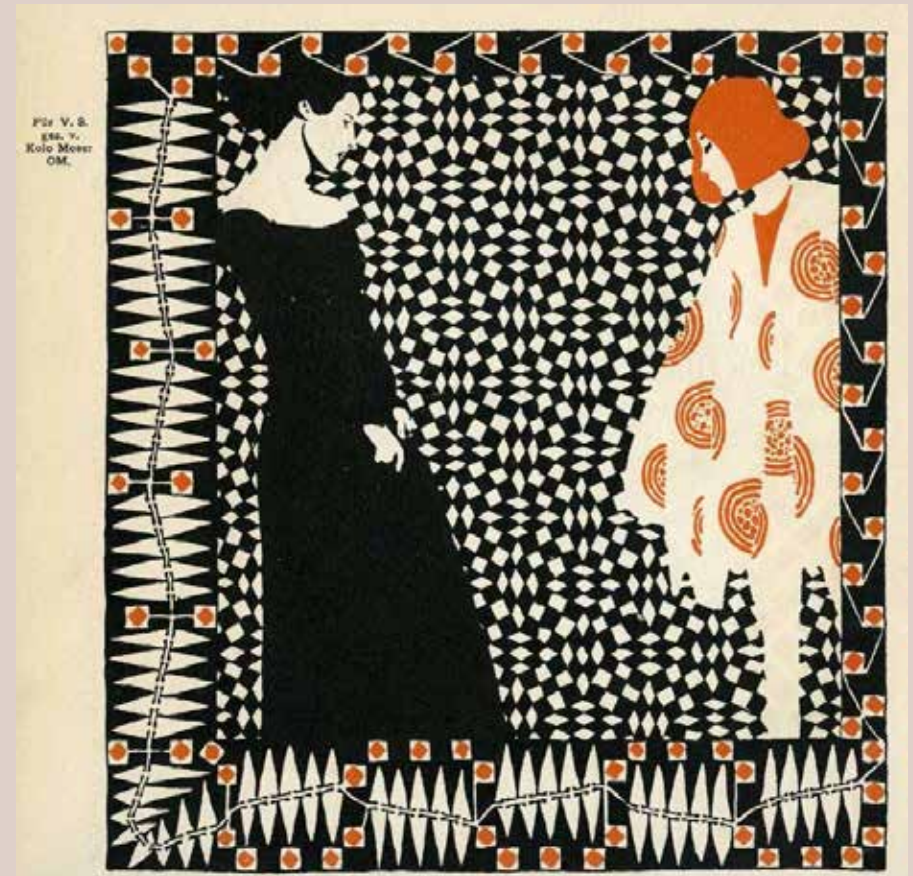
Over the course of his life, Moser created an extremely wide array of art works including books, postage stamps, magazine vignettes, fashion, stained glass windows, porcelains and ceramics, blown glass, silver, jewelry, and furniture. His work in all of the various topics played a large part in characterizing the work of the Art Nouveau time period. He was influenced by the clean lines and repetitive motifs of the ancient Greek and Roman art. What was so influential of his works was his ability to exemplify the themes of the movement by creating beautiful, elegantly designed works that were also functional and available for purchase by the public.



**Die Quelle, Koloman Moser*

While extremely idealistic, the idea behind that type of design was to elevate the quality of lives of consumers through well designed, extremely useful works of art. Before World War I, the style of both Moser and the rest of the artists compiling the Wiener Werkstatte was distinctly Art Nouveau and characterized by the simpler, more geometric shapes that created what is now called Rectilinear Art Nouveau. After the war, the focus of his design became increasingly

rectilinear and carried a more machine precision and feel. This shift, however, furthered the thoughts of changing the way commercial products were thought of by creating elevated yet useful products for an even more elevated consumer base. Moser's influence has stretched throughout the field of graphic design: his ideas have been used in modern furniture in the 1950's and 1960's as well as as an inspiration for psychedelic rock posters that emerged later on.



**spread, Koloman Moser*

Work

Working mainly in lithography, Moser uses patterns in some of his pieces that create geometry out of natural or abstract shapes. This moves those pieces toward the Rectilinear Art Nouveau movement and away from the more fluid techniques seen in the Art Nouveau movement that just preceded it. At first glance the art journal cover, pictured below, looks to be a sort of abstract yet geometric pattern underneath the title area covered in fluid swirls. When looked at closer, female figures appear in the pattern; they are more realistic than the patterned cover that can be seen on the next page. The styles of the two pieces are very similar yet demonstrate stark differences in the shapes repeated to create their respective geometric patterns.



**cover, Koloman Moser*



**cover, Koloman Moser*

Moser also chose similarly styled fonts to headline each of these two pieces. Both are very decorative and resemble a sort of mechanized handwriting. The letter forms are very similarly shaped, namely seen in the "A", "N", and "R" letter forms in these two pieces. The piece with the women, however, includes varying stroke widths that the font used on the other piece does not. This style lends more toward the blend of the original Art Nouveau style and that of the Rectilinear Art Nouveau.

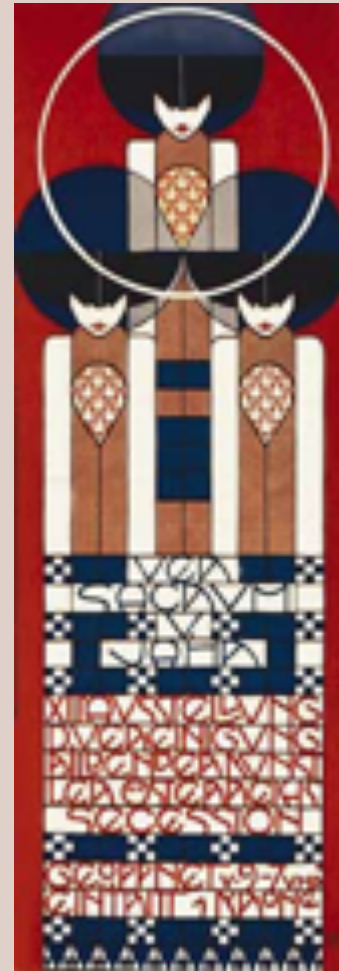


*14th Exhibition for Vienna Secession, Alfred Roller



*Weiner Werkstatte, Josef Hoffman

When examining Moser's magazine and art journal covers it can be very interesting to compare his to those of his colleagues, such as Alfred Roller and Josef Hoffman, whose works are pictured above. The similarities in these two pieces to the style and forms of the previous two Moser ones can be seen immediately. Roller and Hoffman both use geometric and abstract patterns with sort of rectilinear overlays depicting their piece's title; much in nearly the same style as Moser does with his covers and spreads. The piece by Roller differs more in that the patterns are what create the forms whereas in the piece by Moser first talked about, the forms are used to create the abstract pattern. Each of Moser's colleagues also use very similar decorative, likely hand-drawn typographies that mirror the style used in Moser's work.



*Thirteenth Exhibition of the Vienna Secession poster, Koloman Moser

This piece pivots away from the patterns seen in the works previously spoken about and takes on a much cleaner, more mechanized and geometric look. The three women in it are incredibly more abstracted and less realistic than those seen in Moser's earlier pieces. This piece is also not a cover so the dimensions shift away from those required for an art journal or magazine and take to the style of the Rectilinear Art Nouveau. His use of typography, however, remains very similar to his other work in that the type itself is decorative and hand-written but it is contained in its own rectangle on the piece. This piece greatly differs from his work on the Princess and the Frog, where he chose a traditional typeface and more realistic forms, likely to appeal to that audience.



*Bookplate for the Princess and the Frog, Koloman Moser



**chair, Koloman Moser*

It is important to also examine Koloman Moser's accomplishments and influences beyond the world of graphics and into his furniture design. As an accomplished maker in multiple mediums, Moser was very successful in his innovative, angular furniture piece, two of which can be seen below. As part of the vision of the Wiener Werkstatte, Moser desired to create durable, high-end, unique pieces that shifted away from the mass produced junk created in the factories at the time. The furniture he created is bold and creative, yet noticeably sturdy. He uses bright, bold colors such as the deep green or black and white checker box pattern that can be seen below. The chair that Moser created also demonstrates Rectilinear Art Nouveau qualities through its focus on the rectangle throughout the design of the chair and the interesting patterns cast off by it when illuminated.



**couch, Koloman Moser*

Moser's colleagues at the time had much of the same interests in furniture design as he did. Josef Hoffman, particularly, designed a lot of furniture in a very similar fashion to Moser. A chair of his, below, pushes the Rectilinear Art Nouveau styles that Moser uses to the next level by incorporating interesting rounded edges and half-circles into the otherwise angular design. The chair exhibits slots that would likely cast off similarly, if not more so, interesting shadows as the chair done by Moser.

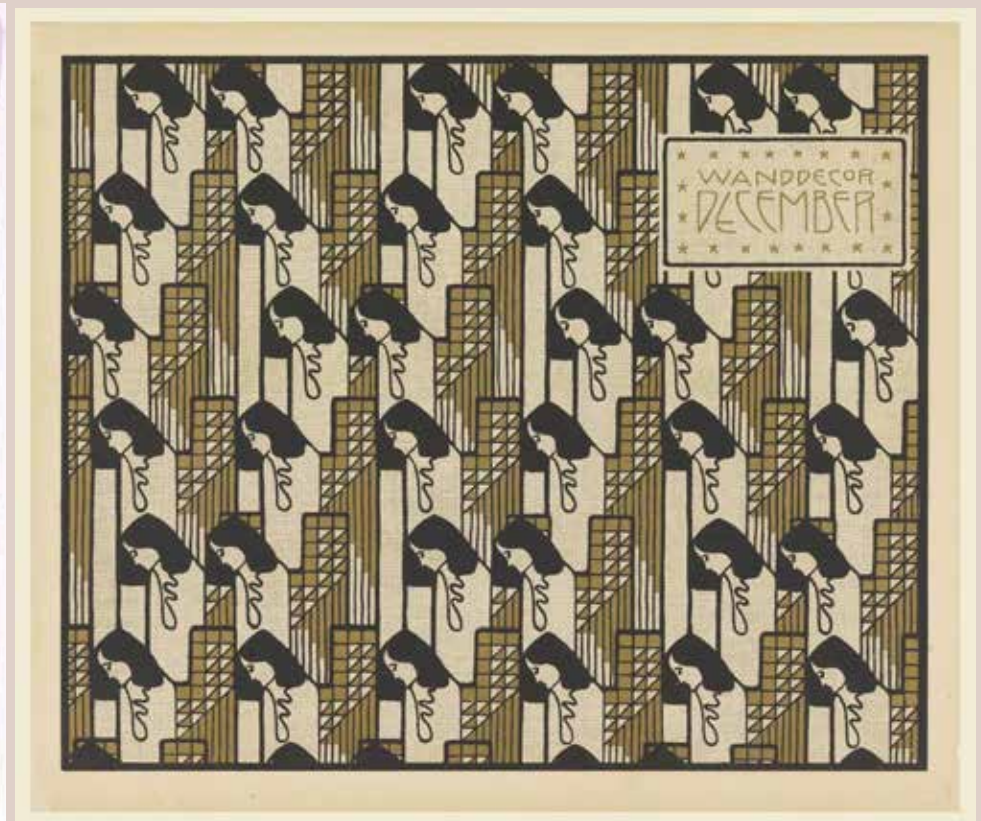
Koloman Moser's design truly displays the overarching qualities of the Art Nouveau and Rectilinear Art Nouveau movements that were prevalent during the Vienna Secession. He and the other designers he spearheaded the movement with, were able to push the boundaries of what art could be and experiment with colors, fonts, and forms in multiple mediums of their work. The influence they had on one another is obvious and striking. Through his time designing, Moser clearly made a lasting impact on the design world.

**chair, Josef Hoffman*





*Die Quelle, Koloman Moser



*Die Quelle, Koloman Moser

Set in Avenir Book (70pt, 40pt, 10pt) and Avenir
Light Oblique (9pt)
Printed in Northeastern University's Snell Library
Created in Adobe InDesign
History of Graphic Design
Shannon Hanlon
NEU 2019

Dedicated to anyone with a love and interest in
the graphic design of the past, present,
and future.

Resources

Koloman Moser, 1868-1918 by Marian Bisanz-Prakken
Turn-of-the-Century Viennese Patterns and Designs by
Koloman Moser
Ver Sacrum: The Vienna Secession Art Magazine 1898-
1903 by Valerio Terraroli
Koloman Moser: Designing Modern Vienna 1897-1907
by Christian Witt-Dorring, Angela Volker

