

# STEPHEN ONGPIN FINE ART



**Gustav KLIMT (Vienna 1862 - Vienna 1918)**

**Study of a Female Nude, Seen from Behind**

Pencil on cream wove paper.

Inscribed with a signature GUSTAV/ KLIMT near the lower left.

543 x 366 mm. (21 3/8 x 14 3/8 in.)

This drawing may be a preliminary study for one of the six female nudes in Klimt's large painting *The Virgin* (*Die Jungfrau*) of c.1913, today in the National Gallery in Prague. The painting, which measures around two metres square, was probably finished by the end of 1912 or the beginning of 1913, but was preceded by a large number of preparatory figure drawings dating from 1911-1912. The present sheet would appear to be an early study for the seated female nude seen from behind at the lower left of the painted composition.

As the Klimt scholar Marian Bisanz-Prakken has noted of the painting and its related drawings, 'With the painting *The Virgin*, which he completed at the end of 1912 or at the latest by early 1913, Klimt took a crucial step in the area of his figural allegories. In this major work of his final creative phase, he grappled comprehensively for the first time with the various stages of erotic consciousness – from young girl to mature woman – which he saw as characterizing female existence...the numerous figure studies produced in 1911-12...feature a richly nuanced spectrum of emotional moods and erotic states of mind. In terms of appearance, the models vary from plain and stocky to highly sensitive, and their

expression range from introverted shyness to effusive ecstasy. With regard to their typological diversity and the open eroticism of their poses, the figure drawings go far beyond the resulting painting. Each study is an autonomous step in the process of carefully analyzing this theme, one that would intensely occupy Klimt as a draftsman subsequently as well.'

The pose of the figure in this drawing is particularly close that of a pencil study of a seated nude, of similar dimensions and technique, in an Austrian private collection, in which, however, the arms of the figure are raised<sup>5</sup>.

As Bisanz-Prakken has noted of the artist's drawn oeuvre, however, 'numerous drawings are linked in a broader sense to the painted works rather than directly related to them', and echoes of the nude in this drawing are also found in the left-hand figure in the large, unfinished painting *The Bride (Die Braut)* of 1917-1918, today in a private collection in Vienna, and in a few of the more than one hundred drawings which have been related to it.

This drawing was acquired by the celebrated Italian opera, theatre and cinema director Luchino Visconti (1906-1976) in 1966, when he was in Vienna to direct Giuseppe Verdi's *Falstaff* for the Vienna Staatsoper, conducted by Leonard Bernstein.

#### **Literature:**

To be included in Marian Bisanz-Prakken's forthcoming supplement to Alice Strobl's catalogue raisonné of Klimt's drawings.