

EGON SCHIELE  
LANDSCAPES



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## LANDSCAPES

Rudolf Leopold



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*Crescent II*; detail), 1915

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Page 6/7: Egon Schiele, *Houses and Laundry* (also known as *Two Blocks*

*of Houses with Washing Lines*) 1914

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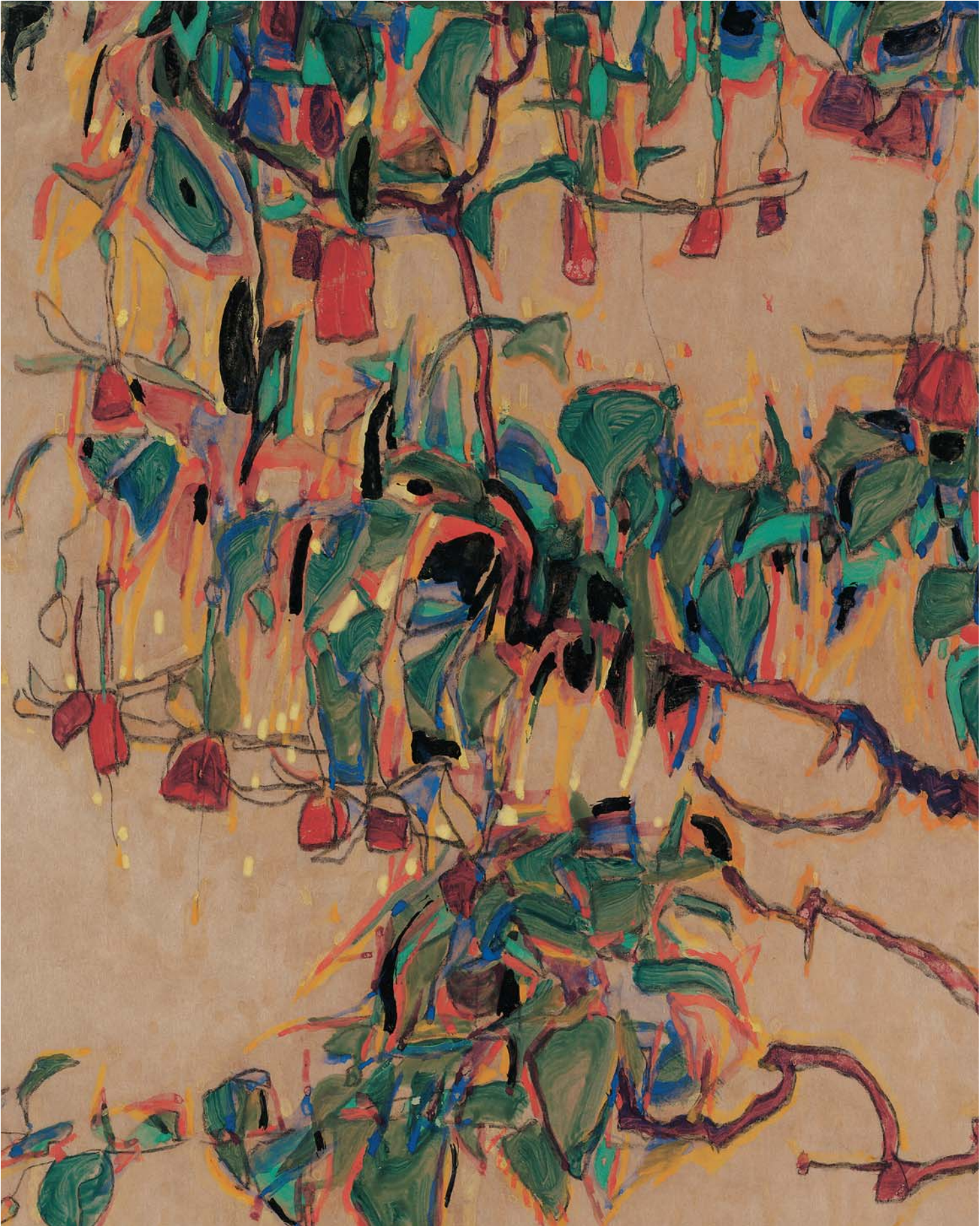
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EGON  
SCHIELE  
1890







## *Introduction*

Depictions of houses, in an urban and occasionally rural setting, play an important role in Schiele's painting oeuvre both in terms of number and significance. From the time he attained to his original, independent style, Schiele began to alter given motifs to an ever greater degree. This process generally consisted in changing existing forms and colors, and in omitting certain parts of a motif. Rearrangements or displacements of motifs into imaginary landscapes also occurred.

These changes can be traced by comparing Schiele's pictorial solutions with the existing original motifs, in so far as these are still localizable. As such comparisons have revealed, his alterations took different forms in each phase of his development. In his naturalistic-impressionistic beginnings Schiele depicted the natural scene basically just as it struck his eye. If any alteration was made, it was mainly in terms of color, in which the influence of the Viennese Secession rapidly made itself felt. From the middle of 1908 onwards, both choice of palette and mode of composition relied largely on currently fashionable approaches. Yet by as early as 1910, Schiele had arrived at his own style, achieved artistic autonomy. Although this was first reflected in his figurative works, it was soon confirmed in his landscape depictions. Like the portraits and compositions with figures, the landscapes were conceived in terms of a height-

ened expressiveness and enhanced by typifications. A group of houses in Krumau, for example, could become a "Dead City", or a hill with fields a "Thunderstorm Mountain".

At this point not some prevalent fashion in art but personal involvement became the determinant factor. Schiele's increasingly painterly approach went hand in hand with a decidedly visionary quality, as reflected in the numbers of ghostly paraphrases of Krumau motifs that now emerged. House groupings were spirited out of their original context, modified, and blended into unfamiliar surroundings that lent them a symbolic meaning.

As another consequence, the format of the paintings grew considerably larger in the years 1913–15. At the same time, as in the figurative depictions, landscape motifs were increasingly reduced to geometric terms. Cubic and pyramidal shapes were emphasized, as were overlappings in space. Yet despite the formal tendency of these compositions, the actual experience on which they were based still remained evident. During the three last years of his life, Schiele's architectural landscapes grew much more schematic in character. Their coloration was more poster-like, blatant, and the previously strong suggestion of spatial depth, especially in the works of 1913–15, gave way to an increasing decorativeness. In part these late works were reprises of earlier compositions, but occasionally sheer inventions not preceded by any involvement with objective situations or based on transformations of these.



*Bare Trees, Houses and Shrine (Klosterneuburg) 1907*  
(see p. 39)



*Krumau Town Hall II 1911*  
(see p. 79)

In principle, the works in the present volume are arranged chronologically. In so far as a painting of a certain motif existed, it, rather than a drawing or compositional study, determined the place of the motif in the sequence. In cases where Schiele later employed the same motif for further paintings, these have all been reproduced together with the earliest version.

The majority of Schiele's usually small-format oil studies of motifs in Klosterneuburg emerged in 1906–08. These were followed before the latter year by three studies from Krumau, Bohemia, his mother's home town. This lovely old place exerted a magical attraction on Schiele, and he moved there in 1911. Trouble with the inhabitants, however, compelled him to leave Krumau after only a few months, although he later continued to make regular short trips there. This explains why Krumau motifs held a predominant place in his mature depictions of houses and townscapes from 1910 onwards.

Böhmisch-Krumau (Český Krumlov) lies in southern Bohemia, on a triple bend of the Moldau. It was from this "krummer Au", or "crooked lea", that its earlier name "Krummau" derived. By the First World War, the second "m" had been dropped, as seen in contemporaneous post-marks citing the German Krumau and the Czech Krumlov.

*"Island Town" 1915*  
(see p. 160)



Essentially Krumau consists of two sections: the inner district, located in the middle Moldau loop, established as a town in 1309 by Heinrich von Rosenberg; and Latron (Latrán) in the northern loop, a settlement inside the castle walls that goes back to the thirteenth century. The houses built in the course of time outside the town to the south-east soon developed into a separate district, the “New Town”. These buildings were later enclosed by the second fortified wall built around the Latron district.

The name Latron has various possible etymologies. One is from the Latin *latro*, or thief, which might go back to the legendary smoking out of a robbers’ nest on Krumau rock by the Witigons. Other derivations are from “*ad latera castelli*”, or beside the castle; from “*in latera arcis*”, or in the bend; or from the Greek-derived word “*latris*”, or servant. This last interpretation, advanced by Karl Tannich, according to which Latron took its name from the dwellings of the castle lord’s servants and laborers, is generally considered the most likely. In 1555 the inner town was amalgamated with Latron. Schiele was fascinated by its old houses and lanes. In 1911 he described in his sketchbook how they “fit together closely like letters” in a word. This idea was wonderfully conveyed in the townscapes he painted at the time, which had already begun to display his own personal style.

Expressive art is essentially characterized by the way in which emotional reaction takes precedence to visual im-

pression. Schiele’s mature townscapes provide abundant examples of this, precisely because it is so often possible to compare them with the original motifs. Unlike the Expressionism that emerged in the orbit of *Die Brücke* and the artists’ group *Der Blaue Reiter*, in which architectural motifs tended to be extremely generalized or abstracted, the Expressionist Schiele adhered to the specific traits of the motifs that inspired him. Although they were altered and heightened in an Expressionist manner, the idiosyncracies of the motifs remained recognizable.

This link with objective perception was one of the most striking features of early Viennese Expressionism. Even though Schiele attempted a portrait of a building in each depiction of an individual house, he represented many of their real details quite literally. (This was not the case in full-fledged German Expressionism, which intentionally strove for an indeterminate “somewhere, nowhere” particularly in depictions of houses. To a greater or lesser extent, of course, a departure from the natural impression underlay all Expressionism.) The differences pointed out here should therefore be understood as qualifications within the overarching whole of a common artistic striving – in the context of which Schiele’s rank and extraordinary place stand assured.

*"Sketch from Krumau"* 1906

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Pencil and watercolor on paper, 10.4 x 21.1 cm  
Dated and titled 'Krumau' upper right;  
inscribed on the reverse 'Skizze aus Krumau'  
Private collection

*This was the title* Schiele inscribed on the reverse of this small, only approx. 10 x 21 cm sheet. On the obverse, he dated it precisely to the day: "30. VIII. 06" (30 August 1906).

The houses on the left are only cursorily sketched, and the group of trees at the bottom merely suggested by a uniform green. In contrast, the houses above it (that is, in reality behind it) are accurately rendered in pencil and watercolor. We can also see how skillfully the sixteen-year-old artist was already capable of depicting windows with reflections and chimneys with cast shadows.



Кривля  
30. VIII. 06.



*Albrechtstrasse in Klosterneuburg* 1906

L 3 K 5

Mixed media on cardboard, 29.8 x 19.6 cm

Signed upper right

Stiftsmuseum Klosterneuburg, inv. no.: GM 552

*The street is depicted* from a high vantage point. In view of Schiele's development at that period, the brilliant blue sky, the highly contrasting colors of the remaining passages, and the skilfully employed lighting effects speak for a date of execution in late summer 1906. Although the painting still has a bit of the student work about it, the handling of the overall perspective is entirely convincing. Yet even more importantly, Schiele has altered a given motif for compositional reasons, rendering the shadowed house wall at the left front in a gradation much lighter than it would have been in reality, in order to establish a formal counterpoint to the sunlit façade on the right.

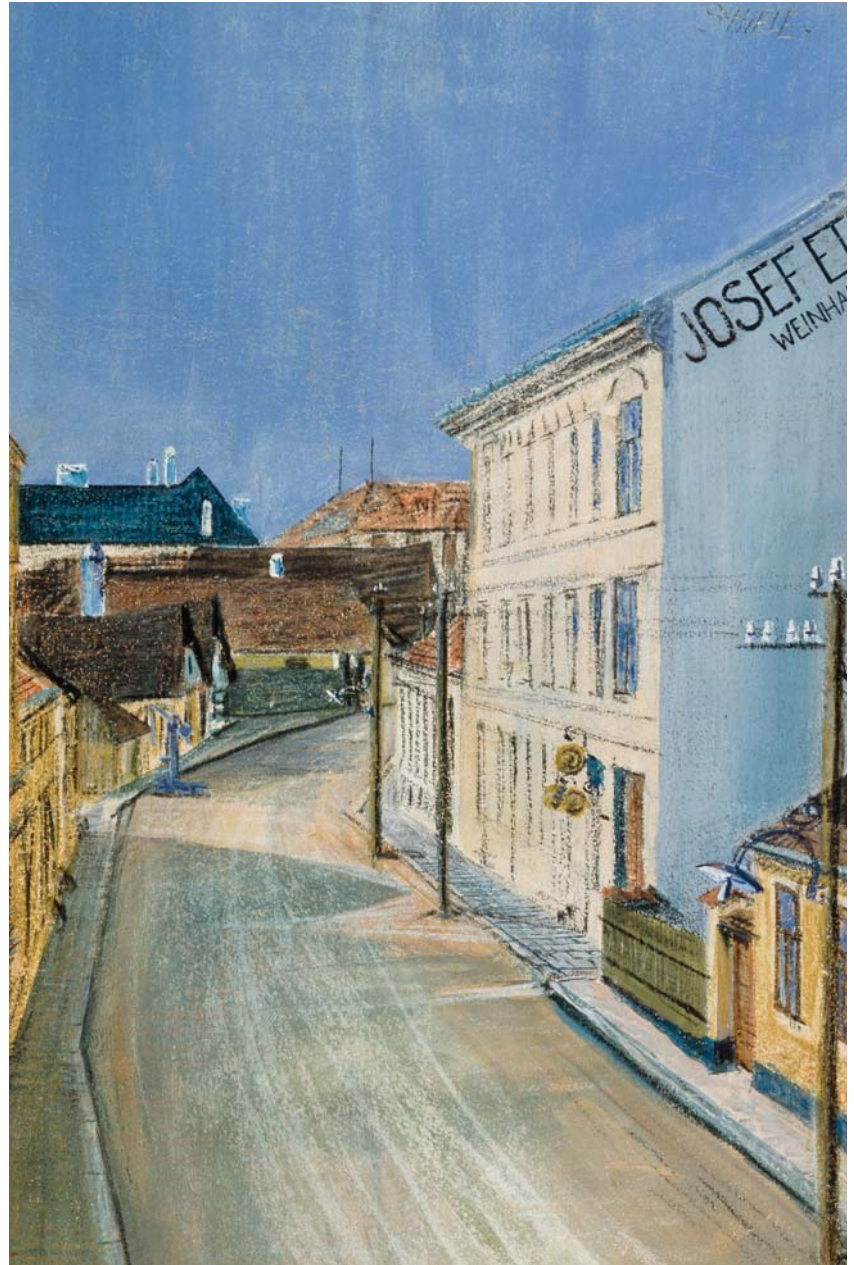
Despite the pedantically precise rendering of the wine dealer's sign at the upper right, the charming, luminous colors of the composition evoke a compelling atmosphere.

Schiele has depicted a section of Albrechtstrasse that runs uphill. Judging by the angles of the perspective lines

and the vanishing point, and the fact that a small part of the façade of the building at 2 Ziegelofengasse is visible at the upper left, the artist likely painted this view from a window on the first floor of 65 Albrechtstrasse, where he lived at the time.

The two-story house cut off by the left edge is 69 Albrechtstrasse, and the adjacent single-story building is 69B. Farther up, sunlight emerges from a lane, Karl-Rudolf-Werner-Gasse. As this indicates, it was afternoon when Schiele painted this view.

The houses in the foreground are all still in existence. Perhaps the most striking is the three-story building at 62 Albrechtstrasse (whose southeastern firewall then bore the advertisement mentioned above). Its façade and that of the low house beyond (64 Albrechtstrasse) receive the most intense sunlight.



*Farmhouses* 1907

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Pencil, opaque colors and opaque white  
on natural paper, 24 x 30.6 cm  
Private collection

*Schiele* dated this painting of farmhouses “4. VII. 07” (4 July 1907). He executed it on greenish paper. Its color, however, is almost nowhere in evidence, since the work was done in opaque gouache rather than transparent watercolor washes.

Here Schiele was probably inspired less by the uniform gray of houses and wall than by the window openings with their light-colored crossbars interrupting the darkness inside, not to mention the contrast between the sunlit gable wall under the mansard roof and the walls lying in shadow. The perspective view of this gable wall is likewise skillfully handled.





*Quarry in the Vienna Woods* 1907

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L 23 K 41  
Oil on canvas, 16.5 x 23.5 cm  
Signed and dated lower right  
Egon Schiele Museum, Tulln on the Danube

*In the present* study Schiele has attempted to play off various relatively bright, light colors against one another, as in the contrast between the pink hue of the quarry and the bluish-green of the shrubbery. To emphasize texture, he employed a coarse canvas, some of whose tufts he left unpainted to let the white of the ground show through. In the area of the green meadow, on the other hand, he used a dry brush – as it is known in painter’s lingo – to wipe carmine red over such tufts in the canvas to produce a contrast. Schiele presumably executed this delightful study shortly before the beginning of summer 1907.



*Trees Mirrored in a Pond* 1907

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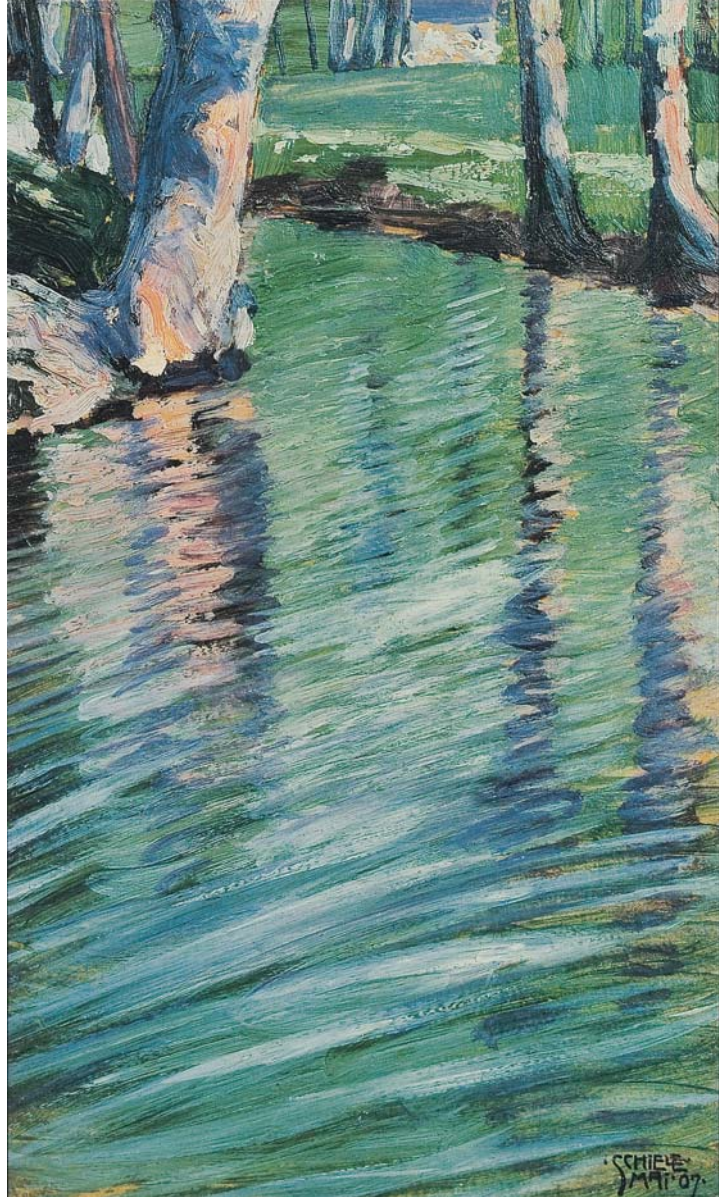
L 47 K 48

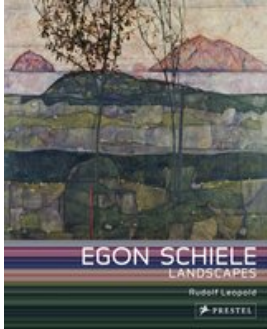
Oil on cardboard, 30.5 x 19.7 cm

Signed and dated lower right

Private collection

*The skillful rendering* of the principal section of the picture, the water surface with trees reflected in it, is an astonishing achievement for an artist who was not yet seventeen.





## Egon Schiele Landscapes

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### Kurztext Deutsch

Nun im attraktiven Flexi-Cover erhältlich, beleuchtet diese Sammlung an Landschaftsbildern und -zeichnungen von Egon Schiele einen bislang nur wenig beachteten Aspekt aus dem Gesamtwerk des berühmten Malers. Bekannt ist Egon Schiele der in erster Linie für seine Porträt- und Aktdarstellungen, jedoch widmete er sich ebenso der Landschafts- und Naturmalerei sowie szenischen Darstellungen des alltäglichen Lebens. Zahlreiche Landschaftsbilder und Stadtansichten seines langjährigen Wohnortes Wien nehmen einen beachtlichen Teil seines Gesamtwerkes ein.

In diesem Buch werden rund hundert hochwertig reproduzierte Landschaftsdarstellungen und Stadtscenen des Künstlers abgebildet, ergänzt durch zahlreiche Fotos der Originalschauplätze. Dieses Buch belegt eindrucksvoll, dass sich Schieles Können nicht nur auf die radikale, zum Teil provozierende Wiedergabe des menschlichen Körpers beschränkte. Es eröffnet dem Leser zugleich einen Zugang zu Themen, die sein gesamtes Werk durchziehen. Schieles Landschaftsbilder zählen zweifellos zu seinen bedeutsamsten Werken und liefern zudem einen wertvollen Beitrag zur europäischen Landschaftsmalerei.