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The Wittgenstein Vitrine: Modern Opulence in Vienna

Kevin W. Tucker

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The Wittgenstein Vitrine, a monumental silver and gemstone-encrusted cabinet, is one of the most important and complex works produced by Austria's Wiener Werkstätte. Kevin W. Tucker weaves together a fascinating portrait of the vitrine, examining its stylistic origins and context, the powerful Wittgenstein family, and Vienna during its apogee of artistic ferment. His essay explores how the vitrine and its presentation at the 1908 Kunstschau embodied the debate over progressive ornamentation and suggested the evolving definition of modernity in the early 20th century. A companion essay by Fran Baas details the fascinating eight-month process of conserving the cabinet, revealing construction details unseen since its original assembly. Lavish photography throughout the book includes details of the vitrine's floral and faunal ornamentation as well as contextual images of related works by the Wiener Werkstätte. This book also serves as the only English-language publication detailing the work and biography of the vitrine's designer, Carl Otto Czeschka (1878–1960).

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