



MARCH 2006
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
PRESS PREVIEW APRIL 4 - DETAILS TBA
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**FIVE MAJOR PAINTINGS BY GUSTAV KLIMT,
NEVER BEFORE SHOWN TOGETHER IN THE U.S.,
ON VIEW AT LACMA BEGINNING APRIL 4**

**OWNERSHIP OF ICONIC WORKS RESTORED
TO ALTMANN FAMILY BY AUSTRIAN GOVERNMENT**

LOS ANGELES, CA (March 15, 2006) -- The Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) is honored to announce a special exhibition of five important paintings by Austrian artist Gustav Klimt (1862–1918). The paintings were recently returned by the Austrian government to the family of Maria Altmann, of Los Angeles, following a lengthy legal dispute over the rightful ownership of these works stolen by the Nazi regime. The exhibition will go on view at LACMA on April 4, 2006 and remain on view through June 30, 2006.

The five masterpieces by Klimt epitomize the height of Viennese Jugendstil. They include two portraits of Maria Altmann's aunt, Adele Bloch-Bauer (1881–1925) and three landscapes, *Beechwood* (1903), *Apple Tree I* (ca. 1911), and *Houses in Unterach on Lake Atter* (1916). The five paintings, which until recently hung in the Austrian Gallery Belvedere in Vienna, have never before been shown together in the United States.

“We are extremely grateful to Maria Altmann and her family for sharing these iconic works with the people of Los Angeles,” said Michael Govan, who has recently been appointed LACMA's Director. “These paintings are extraordinary examples from this rich period of art history and we are especially pleased to tell the story surrounding the family, its relationship to the artist, and their ownership of the paintings to our visitors from around the world.”

“In gratitude to the City and County of Los Angeles,” stated Maria Altmann, “which provided me a home when I fled the Nazis, and whose courts enabled me to recover my family’s paintings at long last, I am very pleased that these wonderful paintings will be seen at LACMA. It was always the wish of my uncle and aunt to make their collection available to the public.”

The earlier portrait, *Adele Bloch-Bauer I* (1907), one of the few extant paintings in Klimt’s groundbreaking gold style, portrays its elegant and intelligent subject as the ideal of feminine beauty. The figure, now among the world’s most recognizable works of art, seems to dissolve into sumptuous gold patterning reminiscent of Byzantine art. The second version, *Adele Bloch-Bauer II* (1912), abandons gold in favor of vivid colors. *Beechwood* (1903), one of Klimt’s few woodland paintings, shares in the ideas of French Impressionism and is dominated by the brown and gray tones of the dried leaves of the forest floor. His *Apple Tree I* is suffused with nuanced color and is among his most meditative paintings. One of Klimt’s last landscapes, *Houses in Unterach on Lake Atter*, renders houses along Lake Attersee in an architectonic style.

“This is a once in a lifetime opportunity for West Coast audiences to view these five Klimts, and a unique opportunity to see one of the rare gold portraits, one of only three he created; the only other Klimt paintings in U.S. collections are on the East Coast,” said LACMA senior curator of modern art, Stephanie Barron.

Not only central to Viennese cultural identity and perhaps the greatest expression of its turn-of-the-century artistic splendor, Klimt’s work also symbolizes the history of much of the city’s Jewish population. This society, from which Sigmund Freud, Gustav Mahler, Arnold Schoenberg, and Ludwig Wittgenstein emerged, was profoundly affected in the 1930s and 1940s by the reign of the Nazis and its aftermath.

The Loss and Recovery of the Klimt Paintings

Maria Altmann was part of the remarkable world of Vienna of the early 20th century. Born in 1916 into the illustrious and patrician Jewish Bloch-Bauer family, she enjoyed extraordinary cultural and material riches during her youth. This included weekly visits to her aunt and uncle, Adele and Ferdinand Bloch-Bauer, who lived in an urban palace filled with art treasures, which included the five paintings they

commissioned or bought from Klimt, with whom they had a long and close relationship. The works by Klimt had been Adele's favorite pieces and were especially meaningful to family members.

Like many others during that period of history, Maria Altmann was forced to flee after the German Anschluss in 1938. The paintings, as well as the remainder of his property, were left by her uncle Ferdinand to Maria and two of her siblings in his last will. However all the treasures had been stolen by the Nazis and were scattered across Europe. While Maria Altmann and the other heirs were fortunate to have survived and started new lives in North America, they did not fare as well in recovering family property. Historian and restitution expert Jonathan Petropoulos, Professor at Claremont-McKenna College notes, "Many victims and heirs struggled to recover property in the immediate postwar period—especially in Austria, where officials often required claimants to relinquish valuable objects if they wanted to export others."

After years of believing that little could be done to recover the lost family patrimony, Maria Altmann's hopes were revived in the late 1990s when international interest in restitution was renewed and a new Austrian law opened up archives and facilitated claims by heirs. Her attorney, E. Randol Schoenberg, grandson of the composer, steered the case through the U.S. Supreme Court and subsequent legally binding arbitration with the Austrian authorities.

The final decision to return the five paintings to Maria Altmann and her family was announced in January 2006.

NOTE TO PRESS: PRESS CONFERENCE AND ACCESS TO PAINTINGS ON APRIL 4, DETAILS TBA.

About LACMA

In April 2006, Michael Govan became CEO and Wallis Annenberg Director of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA). He is the 7th person to hold the position of Director in the museum's 41 year history. Established in 1965, LACMA has assembled a permanent collection that includes approximately 100,000 works of art spanning the history of art from ancient times to the present, making it the premier encyclopedic visual arts museum in the western United States. Located in the heart of one of the most culturally diverse cities in the world, the museum uses its collection and resources to provide a variety of educational and cultural experiences for the people who live in, work in, and visit Los Angeles. LACMA offers an outstanding schedule of special exhibitions, as well as lectures, classes, family activities, film programs and world-class musical events.

General Information

LACMA is located at 5905 Wilshire Boulevard, Los Angeles CA, 90036. For more information about LACMA and its programming, log on to www.lacma.org.

Museum Hours:

Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday, noon–8 pm; Friday, noon–9 pm; Saturday and Sunday, 11 am–8 pm; closed Wednesday, Thanksgiving, and Christmas. Call 323 857-6000, or www.lacma.org for more information.

General LACMA Admission: Adults \$9; students 18+ with ID and senior citizens 62+ \$5. Admission (except to specially ticketed exhibitions) is *free* every evening after 5 pm, the second Tuesday of every month, and for children 17 and under.

Please note: LACMA is free every evening after 5 pm and the “Free after Five” program is sponsored by Target..