



INKWELL WITH CROUCHING MERMAID GUSTAV GURSCHNER CA. 1899

Inkwell with crouching mermaid, Gustav
Gurschner, ca. 1899, patinated bronze, cast,
signed

Gustav Gurschner designed several objects for study rooms, including inkwells and writing sets. At the turn of the century, the Art Nouveau (in German: Jugendstil) artist often combined such everyday objects with figurative representations, especially female ones. This inkwell offers an outstanding example. A mermaid crouches on a rock in a pensive pose. The mermaid's tail winds its way down the rocky landscape in one sweeping curve. Next to her there is an amphora with a removable lid, which serves as the inkwell. Here, Gustav Gurschner demonstrates his masterful capability to embed a functional object in a mythological, strikingly contemplative scene. This is well aligned with the aesthetic ideals of Art Nouveau. Artists at the turn of the century were particularly fascinated by the figure of the mermaid, and indeed it played an important role in the pictorial creations of Gustav Klimt and Alphonse Mucha, for example. As a mythological water creature, the mermaid unites sensuality, nature, and fantasy. With its finely worked surface texture and the innate calm of its figurative representation, this inkwell, made of dark patinated bronze, makes for an especially captivating object. It combines functionality and aesthetics with the utmost virtuosity.

