MIRROR GUSTAV GURSCHNER CA. 1906-08

Mirror with "Etruscan" ornament, Gustav Gurschner, K.K. Kunst-Erzgießerei, ca. 1906-08, bronze, patinated

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The search for a new ornamental language defined Art Nouveau as a conscious departure from the exhausted repetitions of historical styles. In the work of the Viennese artist Gustav Gurschner, this pursuit finds particularly lucid expression. Initially shaped by the French Art Nouveau, with its flowing, organic lines, Gurschner gradually developed an independent formal vocabulary that deliberately draws on archaic ornamental traditions.

Characteristic are those archaic motifs Gurschner himself often described as “Etruscan.” They appear across his works in bronze—from vases and writing implements to a wide range of utilitarian objects—imbuing them with a distinctive, almost timeless aura.

The present mirror, titled by the artist “Toilet Mirror, Etruscan,” follows this same principle. Spirals, beaded bands, and circular forms alternate with smooth surfaces to structure the composition. In bronze, Gurschner skillfully evokes other materials and techniques: certain elements appear as if riveted. The surface is finished with a dark patina, while individual beaded ornaments reveal the lighter bronze beneath. The result is an object that feels organically formed, evoking an almost archaic presence.

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