SEATING SET WITH DINING TABLE JOSEF HOFFMANN J. & J. KOHN WIEN CA. 1908

Seating set with dining table, design by Josef Hoffmann, execution J. & J. Kohn, Wien, ca. 1908, beech and bent beech, brass

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The Jugendstil seating ensemble, comprising six armchairs and a round table, ranks among the most significant examples of early furniture design by Josef Hoffmann. The chairs belong to the Model 423 series produced by Jacob & Josef Kohn and were manufactured from 1909 onward, having already appeared in the company's 1908 catalogue as the first model in its modern section. The design proved remarkably successful—so much so that Gebrüder Thonet issued a nearly identical series in 1915. Its prominent placement in the Kohn catalogue underscores the design's importance as a pioneering expression of emerging modern aesthetics.

The table forms part of a suite conceived by Hoffmann as early as 1906. That same year, it entered production at Jacob & Josef Kohn under model number 421 and was first presented in the 1907 sales catalogue. The ensemble gained international recognition when Hoffmann exhibited it at the Kunstschau Wien 1908, where it was staged as a living room interior for a "small country house." It also attracted considerable attention at the International Exhibition Buenos Aires 1910.

The table itself is crafted from bent and stained beechwood and is distinguished by a clear, restrained formal language that reflects Hoffmann's characteristic rigor. Its base is accented with a brass collar featuring a hammered finish typical of the period, lending the piece a subtle decorative refinement.

As the art critic Ludwig Hevesi aptly observed on the occasion of the Kunstschau, "The artist must also think in terms of the machine." Hoffmann's collaboration with J. & J. Kohn exemplifies this principle: through the consistent application of industrial production methods—most notably the innovative bentwood technique—he succeeded in reconciling the highest artistic ambitions with serial manufacture, thereby aligning avant-garde design with the possibilities of modern industry.

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