TABLE LAMP "NAUTILUS" GUSTAV GURSCHNER CA. 1899

Table lamp "Nautilus", Gustav Gurschner, ca. 1899, bronze, signed

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Gustav Gurschner was one of the leading bronze artists of the Austrian Jugendstil (Art Nouveau) movement. Deeply fascinated by the possibilities offered by the new medium of electricity, he was captivated by the challenge of finding artistic solutions for this new source of light that differed from conventional illumination and were aesthetically appealing.

One of the most outstanding examples of this pursuit is the Nautilus Lamp, among Gurschner's most iconic creations. The lamp was featured around 1900 in Das Interieur as well as in the article "Gustav Gurschner and His Work" (The Artist: An Illustrated Monthly Record of Arts, Crafts and Industries, Vol. 28, American Edition), in which the author praised:

"Gurschner excels particularly in using shells for electric lamps. The effect of the Nautilus lamp is exceedingly beautiful. The wide hollow shell is, so to speak, growing out of the simple lines of the woman's figure, and is made graceful by the many delicate, mother-of-pearl lights."

Gurschner used a large natural nautilus shell as the shade of the table lamp, combining it with the sculptural figure of a mermaid. This motif elegantly merges natural form and myth. The sinuous body of the mermaid coils around the lamp's base in flowing, organic Jugendstil lines, while the iridescent mother-of-pearl surface of the shell creates a captivating play of light.

The Nautilus Lamp exemplifies Gurschner's central artistic principle. As the contemporary account notes: "Gurschner's great art consists in the ingenious combination of purpose and beauty. He has come to the right conclusion that the form of every object is given by its destination, that nothing which has been added as mere external 'ornament' can be beautiful, but that the beauty of the object has to be developed out of a serviceable form."

Celebrated internationally at the time of its creation, the Nautilus Lamp remains one of Gurschner's most significant lighting designs and a quintessential work of Jugendstil and early electric lighting art.

The lamp shown here is not electrified and has neither a socket nor wiring. Retrofitting with electrical components is possible on request.

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