TWO CHAIRS AND SECRETARY JOSEF HOFFMANN J. & J. KOHN CA. 1908

Two chairs and secretary for a bedroom, design Josef Hoffmann for Kunstschau Vienna 1908, executed by J. & J. Kohn Vienna, Mahagony, circa 1908

In 1908, for the 60 years jubilee of the Austrian Emperor Franz Joseph, artists of the “Klimt Group” organized the Kunstschau, a major exhibition, which was considered a groundbreaking event for Viennese Modernism. Among other contributions, Josef Hoffmann designed the architecture and interior of a "Country House". This rare secretary with two matching chairs was part of the "Bedroom for a Country House" located on the second floor. A photograph from the Kunstschau shows insights into this room. The country house’s entire furnishing was produced by J. & J. Kohn, a company specializing in furniture made of bent beechwood. This elaborately designed, secessionist furniture was an exception in Kohn's production: precious woods like mahogany and ebonized fruitwoods were combined with bent beechwood. Due to the high quality of craftsmanship, it can be assumed that this piece of furniture was not mass-produced. Highly sophisticated design is evident in the mechanism in the commode’s top drawer. At the touch of two buttons, it transforms the commode into a secretary. The pull-out drawers are fitted with ball knobs, a common feature in Josef Hoffmann’s earlier designs. Large brass fittings used as drawer handles combined with French marble enhance the elegant, upper-class character of this secessionist furniture.

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