

# *Nineteenth-Century Art Worldwide*

a journal of nineteenth-century visual culture

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## Writing, Erasing, Silencing: Tina Blau and the (Woman) Artist's Biography

*Nineteenth-Century Art Worldwide* 4, no. 3 (Autumn 2005)

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Citation: Julie M. Johnson, "Writing, Erasing, Silencing: Tina Blau and the (Woman) Artist's Biography," *Nineteenth-Century Art Worldwide* 4, no. 3 (Autumn 2005), <http://www.19thc-artworldwide.org/autumn05/writing-erasing-silencing-tina-blau-and-the-woman-artists-biography>.

Published by: [Association of Historians of Nineteenth-Century Art](#)

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Abstract:

Women artists often undergo a cycle of repeated rediscoveries and are only rarely firmly established in art historical memory. In a case study of Austrian Impressionist Tina Blau, this essay traces the moments of silencing and erasure that occur in the writing of her life, suggesting how biography can play a significant role in maintaining historical memory for women artists.

## Writing, Erasing, Silencing: Tina Blau and the (Woman) Artist's Biography

by Julie M. Johnson

A canon, in art history, is a virtual museum of works deemed worth remembering. But the canon's very existence depends upon silencing the things on its periphery. Any center, as historian Joan Scott remarks, "rests on—contains—repressed or negated material and so is unstable, not unified."<sup>[1]</sup> Recent art historical studies have shown that the aesthetic values of the canon were expressed as well by women artists as by some of the established male heroes of the history of art. Women artists therefore make visible the instability and disunity of the dominant canonical system. But this is no reason to reject the canon; the problem with rejecting canons altogether is that they represent the successful repetitions of history.

The most memorable histories of Vienna 1900 have centered on the Secession and its role as a heroic avant-garde in battle with moribund art institutions. The early reception of Vienna 1900 (its first scholarly revival occurred in the 1960s) stressed a dichotomy between sexual repression and the freedom of modernist artists and thinkers like Freud. In the images that have become most canonical, the sexual freedoms of artist heroes Gustav Klimt and Egon Schiele are apparent. The emphasis on Freud and Klimt as revealers of sexual truths is one image of Vienna 1900 that persists today, but it is incomplete. Michel Foucault suggests that readings of the sexual repression of the Victorians reflect our own preoccupation with seeing sexuality itself as a source of truth. He proposes that sexuality is produced in and through power relations, and all the talk about sex is really about power.<sup>[2]</sup> No wonder Klimt and Schiele, through the more widely known histories of the period, have become the heroes of Vienna 1900. This view of Vienna is based on a kind of identification with the past—one associated with uncovering the "truths" of modernity—as located in sexuality.<sup>[3]</sup> It is a long-accepted fact that women did not have access to the sexual freedoms that men artists did, and this is one of the reasons that their imagery appears less frequently in canonical studies and major exhibitions.

The rediscoveries of many women artists have been initiated by artists who were searching for art historical "mothers" with whom to identify.<sup>[4]</sup> Indeed, Joan Scott believes that all history writing depends upon identification—a selective delving into the past—in a process that uses fantasy to create coherence out of chaos.<sup>[5]</sup> The repetitions or "echoes" of history are part of this process: there are inevitable distortions that occur over time and over the generations, but identification is required for these repetitions to take place. This is as true for the established canon as it is for the new research on women artists.

Austrian Impressionist Tina Blau (1845-1916), painted aesthetically innovative works, like the 1883 *In the Tuileries Gardens (Sunny Day)*, in which she allows the paint to hover over the canvas; the brushstrokes and color taking precedence over the figures and landscape that they represent (fig. 1). But the connection of her work to her person meant that she would not be included in the universal histories of modern art, because she was a woman (fig. 2). Had Blau's paintings been valued according to a system based on aesthetic criteria alone, it is clear that she would have been included in histories of modernism during her lifetime.

Cultural critics Karl Kraus (1874-1936), Rosa Mayreder (1858-1938), and A.F. Seligmann (1862-1945) all recognized the very aesthetically advanced, modernist qualities of her painting. Personal factors affected the reception of her art during and after her lifetime, but now a renewed interest in both women and Jewish artists has reenergized interest in her work. After 1938, Blau would be temporarily erased from Austrian art history because she was a Jew. Although Blau has been celebrated in a recent exhibition at the Jewish Museum in Vienna (another significant instance of identification and recovery of lost artists based on their Jewish identity), she remains little known outside Austria.[6]



Fig. 1, Tina Blau, *In the Tuileries Gardens (Sunny Day)*, 1883. Oil on canvas. Vienna, Österreichische Galerie  
[\[larger image\]](#)



Fig. 2, Madame d'Ora, Photograph of Tina Blau, 1915. Bildarchiv, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek.  
[\[larger image\]](#)

Her story offers ample documentation through which to examine the silencing of a modern woman artist's life—one who was omitted from the Secession's selective ancestor cult and from modern histories of Austrian art, and literally erased from public spaces through institutionalized anti-Semitism in the late 1930s. Instead of being celebrated as a precursor to the modern values of the fin-de-siècle, Blau was mistakenly called a student of her male peer, Emil Jakob Schindler, which placed her in the role of follower rather than independent discoverer. Blau had a significant public exhibition record and was critically successful and financially independent early on, drawing considerable envy from her male peers and even her teacher August Schaeffer when she had a series of one-person shows and

a large auction. Such stories remain buried in Vienna 1900 studies, not only because of gender prejudice, but also because few have written about the role that art dealers played in the art historical field, which has focused primarily on the Secession, Künstlerhaus and Hagenbund—all publicly funded artists' organizations that excluded women from officially joining.

The Secession had the most elaborate exhibition program on modernist art, complete with visiting lectures from art historians Julius Meier-Graefe and Richard Muther, creating its own ancestor cult. Blau possessed all of the characteristics of an artist who would have been celebrated by a younger generation of artists (the Secessionists) in her hometown of Vienna. She was stylistically innovative, had a confrontation with the local Künstlerhaus for being too progressive, and achieved early success on foreign soil. But the Secessionists did not celebrate her in their ancestor cult because she was a woman, and the "mother-son plot", uncomfortable in Freud's Vienna, indeed remains so today in art historical narratives.<sup>[7]</sup> She herself managed her career by withholding aspects of her identity—she refused to exhibit with women's art unions, for example, and did not actively intervene into the formation of a public record of her life until she was fifty. She nevertheless negotiated a very successful career, exhibiting in numerous one-person shows in Vienna and Munich, winning financial independence early on, and cultivating a circle of sympathetic critics. After her death in 1916, there were numerous celebrations of her life, and by 1933 there was a retrospective of her art in the Volksgarten, but by 1938, the street that had been named after her was renamed, and she was literally erased from the histories of Austrian art, her paintings removed from the galleries, all for being a Jew. This essay considers the role that biographical facts play in securing the memory and reputations of women artists, with special attention given to moments of silencing and erasures.

One of the biggest problems with biography for women has been its continuing susceptibility to misuse. As Kristen Frederickson has pointed out in *Singular Women: Writing the Woman Artist*, the survey writers Janson and Janson (in their very brief and recent inclusions) included anecdotes about Elizabeth Vigée-Lebrun's personal beauty, and Artemisia Gentileschi's feelings about men, while doing no such thing for Caravaggio or other male artists.<sup>[8]</sup> Frederickson's concern was prefigured in debates among art historians at the turn of the previous century, albeit for reasons of method rather than concerns for gender equity. Heinrich Wölfflin and art historians at the Vienna School rejected the sort of history that Richard Muther (1860-1909) had written with *The History of Modern Painting*, a popular art history survey text that was widely translated. The scholars at the Vienna School found Muther's writing irredeemably sentimental because of its dependence on anecdotal biography in the narrative. Muther equated works of art with the physiognomies and personalities of their makers, sometimes in quite inventive ways: "Andreas Achenbach's forehead, like Menzel's, is rather that of an architect than of a poet; and his pictures correspond to his outward appearance."<sup>[9]</sup> Alternately, he would embellish preexisting characterizations of artists like Courbet, who was "himself the 'stone-breaker' of his art, and, like the men he painted, he has done a serviceable day's work."<sup>[10]</sup> Muther turned artists into signposts in a diverting narrative, but rarely included women.

Instead of temperament and character, Wölfflin made aesthetic, formal concerns the basis for a "scientific" study of art history. In a review essay published in 1933 ("Rigorous Study of Art"), Walter Benjamin agreed with Wölfflin's dismissal of Muther's version of history:

In the foreword to his 1898 *Classic Art: An Introduction to the Italian Renaissance*, Heinrich Wölfflin made a gesture that cast aside the history of art as it was then understood by Richard Muther. "...One no longer expects an art-historical book to give mere biographical anecdotes or a description of the circumstances of the time; rather one wants to learn something about those things which constitute the value and the essence of a work of art...The natural thing would be for every art-historical monograph to contain some aesthetics as well."<sup>[11]</sup>

Fredrickson, Wölfflin and Benjamin share a concern for the misuse of biographical facts to explicate pictures or conflate aesthetics with personal fortune. But biography is nevertheless essential as a parallel, intertwining text to the works, for securing the memory of an artist. For an artist to receive wider attention, the repetitions, or the "echoes" of history, as Joan Scott wrote, are necessary for securing that reputation. To expect aesthetics alone to inspire the continued attention that I am speaking of has rarely worked, if ever.

In 1982 Linda Nochlin posed the correlative question to her "why have there been no great women artists?", which was "why have there been great male artists?" She investigated the biography of Courbet to demonstrate how his politics were circumvented (or celebrated, in one case) through various narrative strategies in Third Republic France. Nochlin meant to demonstrate that the biography of the artist presents not a set of explanatory facts, but rather an infinite range of materials from which to tell a story—it is as much an art form as is the work of art itself, and a component in securing the memory of the great artist.<sup>[12]</sup> Ernst Kris and Otto Kurz had already suggested in 1934 that rather than merely providing an entree into the mind of the artist and therefore the work, the artist's biography was a sociological phenomenon, that certain stereotypes prefigured the narratives which were sought out, recorded, and even invented about the artist.<sup>[13]</sup> These are the repetitions and identifications that secure reputations over time. While Nochlin made her point by examining different readings of Courbet, the authors of which rescued him from his disastrous episode during the French Commune, women artists rarely present such case studies. Rather, historical silencings, careful self-presentation, and negotiations of fraught institutional fields more often form the raw materials of women artist's biographies.

The artist's public self-presentation, or lack thereof, is important material for prospective biographers. Blau tried (sometimes in vain) to place her work first, and to remove her biographical identity from its reception, for she was keenly aware of the ways in which women's art was misread in fin-de-siècle Vienna, where art historical narratives of influence and generational metaphors were employed not only within the new school of art history, but by artists of the Secession. In the history of art, artists not only play a significant role in canon formation when they choose their own ancestors, but also when they document their own lives. Art historians produce the more official histories, but the role that non-historians play is equally important to recognize. Blau waited until she was in her fifties to make corrections about her life story. Michel-Rolph Trouillot has proposed that silencing the past is an active process, and argues there are "many ways in which the production of historical



narratives involves the uneven contribution of competing groups and individuals who have unequal access to the means for such production."<sup>[14]</sup> A. F. Seligmann, Blau's colleague at the Art School for Women and Girls, and her greatest champion, summarized the situation in an exhibition catalogue shortly after Blau's death:

Among artists and connoisseurs Tina Blau has been known from the beginning as one of the strongest and most unique individuals of contemporary Vienna landscape art...When the Prince Regent Luitpold came to Vienna, he never missed visiting the cozy Prater atelier of the artist. In the exhibitions of the *Künstlergenossenschaft* her pictures always held good places. And if Tina Blau played no great role in Viennese social life, the reason was in herself to find. A still, rather closed nature, only solicitous of a circle of close friends, and homebound for many years with a hearing impairment, which more recently made her sensitive and communication difficult, she dedicated herself completely to her art, creating and teaching. Neither can one say that Tina Blau is unknown, that her significance among her contemporaries hasn't been praised. Nevertheless it is only now being made clear as her artistic estate is being made public, how much the art world has lost.<sup>[15]</sup>

Silences in history are difficult to recover, but Seligmann bridged some of the early gaps with his consistent championing of Blau.<sup>[16]</sup>

Artists' participation in the construction of their own biographies dates at least from Dürer's thorough self-recording. Some were more creative in their self-mythology than others. Paul Gauguin, for example, fabricated his journals to make it seem as though his was an unmediated, authentic encounter with Tahiti. In one instance he claimed to know the Maori religion from his thirteen-year old wife Teha'amana, when in fact he had copied the information from Jacques Antoine Meorenhout's 1837 *Voyages aux îles du grand océan*.<sup>[17]</sup> At a time when Gauguin was piecing his own mythology together in *Noa Noa*, Blau opted to remain silent with respect to such self-stylization. If Gauguin could go away to Tahiti to mythologize an encounter with an Other, Blau found herself in a position of Other in fin-de-siècle Vienna and chose not to connect her own person to her work. As Renate Berger has shown, the woman artist was defined in relation to the male producer, always in the dependent position of copyist or follower.<sup>[18]</sup> Blau wanted her work to speak for itself, and to provide biographical anecdotes or to affiliate herself with other women would be a distraction. As a woman and a Jew, she was doubly Other in the city where Otto Weininger's *Geschlecht und Character* had been a bestseller, popularizing theories of the inferior creative potential of women and Jews.<sup>[19]</sup> Particularly as a woman she had experienced firsthand the problem that poet and critic Paul Valéry described: that the observable graspable facts of biography and an artist's personhood could deflect the meaning of a work of art, and even prevent a spectator from seeing the work proper.<sup>[20]</sup> So Blau tried to retract herself from her work, at least until so much misinformation had been disseminated about her that it became too much for her to bear. In 1907 she wrote an autobiographical essay that was published in a popular magazine, and quietly left a record of her personal history to accompany her remarkable body of work.<sup>[21]</sup>

As a young girl Blau was encouraged to pursue her talents by her parents—her father, who was a military physician, had wanted to be an artist himself.<sup>[22]</sup> At age fifteen she took art lessons from August Schaeffer, a well-established member of the Künstlerhaus. He is a

character who will reappear later in her story as a figure who envies her. Her early life is filled with steady and independent artistic discoveries and contacts that she sought out. When Blau began her career, the critic-dealer system remained undeveloped and art union purchases were a significant source of income for young artists. She was only 22 when in the summer of 1867 the Österreichischer Kunstverein bought her *Kalkofen bei Abendbeleuchtung* for 100 Gulden, and she used the money to visit the first international exhibition at the Glaspalast in Munich where she studied the Barbizon school in particular. Her money lasted until the end of the year and her parents helped her out financially until the Kunstverein in Munich purchased her first Munich painting, *Jakobsee bei Polling* in 1869. The purchase price had now doubled to 200 Gulden, and it was a unanimous vote.[23] This steady stream of first purchases turned into other firsts: international exhibitions and a series of one-person shows and good reviews in Munich and Vienna.

She was able to acquire studio space from her teachers; in Vienna Blau began working in Schaeffer's studio when he was away, two times per week, and after she settled into a comfortable artist's life in Munich, her teacher Lindenschmidt allowed her studio space in his home.[24] In Munich she met many artists, including Gustave Courbet.[25] She traveled to artist colonies (Szolnok, for example, she considered important for her stylistic development).[26] She cultivated critics and friends in a very likeable, modest way, and somehow through perseverance and her temperate personality, managed to achieve a room of her own in the form of studio space in the Prater, one of Vienna's most expansive public parks. After the 1873 Worlds' Exhibition in Vienna, the government allowed painters to take over the exhibition buildings as studios. Because Blau had been sharing a space with Emil Jakob Schindler, they were offered studio space (two rooms) in the Prater pavilion building, but Schindler refused to give her one of the rooms. They had a falling out, but by the time he married and moved out of the studio space Blau had reconciled with him and was able to take over the entire space in 1879. The Prater atelier became an important part of her life in her own estimation and in the eyes of friends and critics. Having the space to herself was of inestimable importance; she noted she could finally "breathe" artistically without anyone looking over her shoulder.[27] She also began to paint a series of Prater pictures, which would become her most important motif. By 1882 she had painted her most famous painting, the *Spring at the Prater* (fig. 3), which was aesthetically advanced and led to her succès de scandale in Vienna, and later Paris. The Prater canvas story, the most important episode of her career, will be discussed at length below. After her Paris success in 1883 she returned to Munich, and married the battle and animal painter, Heinrich Lang, at the very end of the year. The two traveled to Vienna often, she painting from her Prater studio and he visiting the Lippizaners at the Spanish Riding School.[28] In 1890, when Blau was 45, she had a one-person show at the Munich *Kunstverein*. This exhibition of sixty works that traveled to Berlin, Dresden, Düsseldorf, Hamburg and Leipzig was, because of its success, repeated in 1893. In 1891 Lang died unexpectedly, and Blau successfully petitioned the Vienna Künstlerhaus to stage a retrospective of his art. The two had been married less than eight years, and it was said by Friedrich Stern that this was a blow from which Blau never truly recovered.[29] She remained productive, however, and by 1894 had moved back to Vienna. Her first solo exhibition in Vienna took place at the Salon Pisko in 1899, during which Rosa Mayreder wrote a deliciously subversive review of her work, comparing it to the output of the Secession (her assigned topic), and the emperor purchased her *Spring at the Prater* from a Bavarian collector.[30] By 1900, the art auction house Kende put on a sale of 100 of Blau's works, and this drew a most envious essay by August Schaeffer, whom Blau,

beginning to stand up for herself in her early fifties, privately reprimanded. In 1907 her autobiographical notes were published in a local newspaper.[31] In 1909 she had another one-person show at the Galerie Arnot, which was visited by the emperor, who again visited her 1914 show at Arnot's.[32] Around 1910 she began to take care of recording her work, having it photographed and documented, and generally granting interviews and setting the record straight. In 1913 her seventieth birthday was celebrated in the newspapers. Blau died three years later.



Fig. 3, Tina Blau, *Spring at the Prater* [*Frühling im Prater*], 1882. Oil on canvas. Vienna, Österreichische Galerie [\[larger image\]](#)

### **The Shoulders of Giants, or the Impossibility of the Mother-Son Plot**

Although Blau was correctly perceived by critics to be original in her confrontations with nature, anticipating the developments of her time, she was not included in the main histories of art. Because she was a woman, she was not selected as an influential figure by the original producers of histories of art in Vienna: the Secessionists, Richard Muther and Julius Meier-Graefe. After Blau's death, A. F. Seligmann noted that although she had been recognized and admired during her lifetime, no one really understood the greatness of her painting. He connected her art to a free individualism which was never in fashion and therefore could never go out of fashion; she selected her motifs for their painterly qualities, but was so "powerful and honest in her encounters with them that people were convinced, rather than shocked" by her very advanced art. By daring to use light and paint in new ways, she had made some of the same discoveries as the Impressionists had: "Later, after open air painting became fashionable, she was already somewhere else: ...while most painters became routine mannerists, her painting become ever more simple, honest, and naïve, and had in its art something completely elementary." [33] More often women's art was rhetorically connected to modishness, easy fashionability and the impermanence that these implied. Seligmann was careful to place Blau in a modernist tradition that was rhetorically distanced from the connections that antimodernists were making between femininity, modishness, temporality, and the modern. In a 1905 essay on Blau he contrasted the painters who followed the latest fashion to Blau, for she alone painted out of inner necessity. [34] He could not, however, force her into the more influential historical narrative penned by Julius Meier-Graefe. [35] Overall, Blau received good notices in the press and was financially successful, but that did not translate into inclusion as a founding figure in the history of Austrian art. In Richard Muther's history, for instance, an artistic master founded



something that other artists could build upon, becoming part of a great chain of developers in the world of art discovery and invention.[36] The prejudices and myths inherent in the art historical narratives of Meier-Graefe and Muther kept Blau from consideration as a peak or founding figure in their teleologies. As Meier-Graefe noted, "A woman with genius? The thought gives one the shivers. Unhealable sickness, a kind of elephantiasis." [37]

The Secessionists programmed their own teleological narratives through a didactic exhibition program, in which they presented themselves as the sons of modern masters Van Gogh and Manet. The Secession also played a role in the remembrance of Austrian artists, looking for local prototypes in older Viennese painters—artists who were antagonized by the Künstlerhaus, who were pioneers in their depictions of nature, and whose works were now selling briskly. Their champion, Ludwig Hevesi, selected Theodor von Hörmann and Rudolf von Alt, while Secession member Josef Engelhart selected himself as the precursor of the Secession. According to Engelhart, the founding of the Vienna Secession was initiated by an incident having to do with *The Cherry Picker*, his painting of a nude girl picking cherries from a tree. It was rejected by the Künstlerhaus jury for the watercolor exhibition in 1893 (four years before the Secession was formed) so as not to offend the "Frauenpublikum" (female public). The *Cherry Picker* anecdote suited the qualities that the Secessionists chose to celebrate in their homemade stories: antagonism with the Künstlerhaus and an emphasis on nature and censorship. Engelhart appended another incident to the story, which involved the rejection of another work in Vienna and its acceptance in Paris.[38] But Engelhart's *Cherry Picker* incident pales in comparison to Blau's discovery story.

Tina Blau was never selected as an artistic predecessor by the Secessionists, though were she a man, it is clear, from the sheer exuberance of her story, that she would have been. Her 1882 *Spring at the Prater* (fig. 3) was nearly rejected by the jury of the Künstlerhaus because its light impressionistic effects were described as causing a "hole in the wall" in the otherwise dark installation. The painter Hans Makart (1840-1884) intervened and insisted that the picture be hung, and the hanging committee obliged, but placed it in a modest corner. The events were later recounted in articles about Tina Blau in local newspapers:

In 1882 the first international art exhibition took place at the Künstlerhaus. There hung in a corner of the Austrian exhibition space a large, light Prater scene, all air and scattered light, which although it was placed high, in considerable distance from the onlooker, nevertheless weighed so heavily upon some hearts. It was a hole, a hole in the wall, through which one believed one could see into open nature![39]

Antonin Proust, the French Minister of Fine Arts, was drawn to the work, declaring it the best in the show:

One day the Minister of Fine Arts in France (Proust) came to the exhibition and was led through the house with great respect, with all the more respect as Paris was then the Mecca of painting. [He asked] "By whom is this then?" —Apologetically he was informed that the painter, Miss Tina Blau, was otherwise quite talented, one couldn't just ...! But that is the best picture in the whole room!' escaped from the lips of the guest. And with that began the fame of Tina Blau.[40]

Upon visiting her studio, Proust was surprised to learn that Blau had never been to Paris, and urged her to submit *Spring at the Prater* to the Salon. She did, and it received an honorable mention.<sup>[41]</sup> This anecdote has all of the Secession's required ingredients: the forward-looking technique based on interaction with nature, the conflict with the old school at the Künstlerhaus, and the additional bonus of success and appreciation found in Paris. It is a typical discovery story: just as Giotto was discovered by Cimabue, so Tina Blau was discovered by Proust. Such a story makes Engelhart's tale seem both quibbling and self-aggrandizing at the same time. Blau fulfilled all of the qualities that Rudolf von Alt, Theodor von Hörmann, and Josef Engelhart had, but was never turned into an artist-hero in the eyes of her contemporaries, nor among a younger generation of male artists. To the contrary, while E. J. Schindler, the artist with whom she shared an atelier for a time, was touted as the leader of a school of impressionism in Vienna, Blau was mistakenly described as his student.<sup>[42]</sup>

Women were not selected as forebears, because the familial metaphors that governed such story-telling would not allow a foremother as predecessor, no matter how appropriate her art and anecdote.<sup>[43]</sup> Linda Nochlin underscored such a dichotomy when she imaginatively reversed the genders of all of the characters in Courbet's 1855 *Painter's Studio: A Real Allegory of Seven Years of My Life*.<sup>[44]</sup> She imagined that Rosa Bonheur replaced Courbet at his easel, and that the young boy looking up at Courbet was replaced by a young girl, who, representing future generations of artists, would gaze admiringly as Bonheur showed the world the way through her confrontation with nature. All the male characters (Baudelaire and Napoleon III, among others) would slowly lose their clothes and names before fading into the background. The female characters would dress, take on names and identities, and laugh while moving to the foreground. The alienating effect of Nochlin's reversal makes her point: it demonstrates how embedded the paternalistic narrative is in constructions of the great male artist. Placing a woman in the progenitor role, here Bonheur, undoes the narrative, for the woman-mother is associated too closely with hearth, home, and the space of the body, rather than with the discovery and leadership in the patriarchal world beyond.

The aesthetic quality of Tina Blau's art merited its inclusion in this Viennese pantheon, but the power of the father-son plot and its attendant metaphors worked against such inclusion. The Secessionists, for example, never figured themselves as wrestling with or being heirs to mothers. The idea of women forming part of the great chain of master artists was mocked in a 1909 cartoon appearing in *Jugend* magazine.<sup>[45]</sup> A group of bespectacled and dowdily clad women painters stand at a Hans Mar\_ es retrospective, one instructing the others: "And now my dear colleagues, it is our most sacred duty to build upon this foundation! What men have failed to achieve, we must strive to achieve through hard work and perseverance!"

In 1910, when the first union of women artists with public rights in Austria was founded, the group decided to stage a retrospective of "old mistresses,"—a kind of art historical argument that women, too, participated in the aesthetic march of styles and movements from the Renaissance to the present. Through this exhibition, a visual and public form of history production, the women sought out great women artists from the past with whom they might publicly identify themselves. On November 5, 1910, the retrospective of women's art, *The Art of the Woman*, opened at the Secession. Archduke Rainer (1827-1913) presided over the opening festivities and the musical concert that took place that evening. Men in top hats and

women in reform dress and other fashions stepped from horse-drawn carriages to walk up the stately steps through the imposing doors of the Secession. As the festivities began, Tina Blau's large canvas, *Spring in the Prater* (fig. 3), hung in a still silent room surrounded by the works of other women artists. The Secession itself was filled with over three hundred paintings, sculptures, and works on paper by women, and if many of them were portraits of women and children, Tina Blau's large canvas hung in a room with works as diverse as a large portrait of a general by Therese Schwartz, an impressionist scene of the Villa Rotunda by Emma Ciardi and a reclining female nude by Charlotte Besnard. A. F. Seligmann remarked that this modern section gave him the impression that the jury anxiously omitted anything that one might have accused of being feminine.[46]

Blau had finished the canvas nearly two decades before the show opened, just two years before Georges Seurat began work on the *Sunday Afternoon on the Grande Jatte*, his bid for leadership of the Parisian avant-garde. Blau's canvas was around half the size of the *Grande Jatte*, but still large enough to publicly declare the ambitions of the young artist: it was the size of a grand history painting. In the central foreground, a mother sews in the dewy springtime, her child happily playing, pausing to look over her shoulder. In the right foreground, members of the wealthier classes parade in the latest fashions, a little girl too well-dressed to join the children playing in the water in the middle ground. Two more well-dressed couples promenade in the middle ground, but unlike Seurat's rhythmic repetitions which serve to crowd the French together, Blau's solitary figures and repeating couples serve to emphasize the immensity of the space around them. This was the well-loved Prater of the Viennese, a special park within the city limits that Emperor Joseph II had given to the people, where one could go riding or visit an amusement park of lowbrow entertainments, where the wealthy would mingle with the lower classes. Like the *Grande Jatte*, the Prater was a site where the classes were on display. Wealthy children would watch the lower classes have fun, who in turn could watch the wealthy promenade in private horse-driven carriages along the fancy corso.[47] For Arthur Schnitzler, the park offered a scene for a tryst between a *süßes Mädel* and a soldier, but Blau gives no inkling of sexual cruising or lowbrow amusements. She shows only the expansive space, mothers and children of the middle class and upper bourgeoisie, promenading couples and children wading. Where Seurat showed the stiff unease of Paris' *nouvelles couches sociales* comically ignoring one other on a crowded suburban island,[48] Blau portrayed the naturalness of the separation of the Viennese classes: her space is so expansive that the children playing in a stream and well-dressed couples see one another only from afar. The spectator experiences similar space and distance from the figures situated in the landscape.

Where Seurat used tiny individual pats of complementary colors to construct shimmering, still forms, Blau's brushwork describes the leaves of trees, suggests the patterns of a dirndl, smooth creamy white shows the texture of the canvas beneath her solid figures: one senses a sure hand, a sure composition of a landscape which carves out a large expanse of sunlit space. The painting recreates the impressions of a day in springtime, where the light of a blue and white sky rakes over the first buds of green sprouting from brown mud. With a firm brush and flecks of heavy white paint, she populated her landscape with solid figures who exist comfortably in nature, unlike the crowded, awkward figures of Seurat, those cartoon-like signs and tin-soldiers gliding across the grass. There it hung: the painting that had caused controversy at the Künstlerhaus in 1882 was now on display as an achievement

of a great woman artist. This would be the only time during Blau's life when her painting would be exhibited in a women's art exhibition.

The artist herself did not attend the opening, nor did she lend her work for the show. Blau's lifelong refusal to take part in women's exhibitions, despite being solicited by the elite group of Eight Women Artists and the 1913 retrospective of women's art in Turin, did not matter, for the *Spring at the Prater* had been bought by Emperor Franz Josef in 1899 for the Imperial collections.[49] The curators of *The Art of the Woman*, artists Ilse Conrat (1880-1942) and Olga Brand-Krieghammer (1871-?), did not need to ask Tina Blau's permission, as they had been given permission to borrow from royal collections at home and abroad.[50] While the festivities and celebrations of the new union were underway, Blau, celebrating her 63rd birthday that November, would have been at home in her large Prater atelier, the one-time Pavilion of Amateurs built for the 1873 World's Exhibition. Blau was not a recluse, but simply a private individual who preferred to work in solitude than to attend social functions.[51] She was a known figure who was often seen painting in the public Prater, often staying until dark.[52] But she rarely shared information about herself, for the same reason that she refused to take part in women's exhibitions.

Blau always maintained the professional position, particularly in her actions, that her work should stand on its own. For this reason Blau provided no autobiographical utterances until late in her career; only then did she help to mold a biography that would focus on her relationship to nature and her home base in the Prater atelier. The Prater had become her Mont Ste. Victoire, and by 1910 she had begun her fifth decade of reworking the motif in different seasons and in various formats. From her home-studio in the Prater she made daily excursions into the large park. Perhaps because of recent heart problems, she began to put her affairs in order.[53] She noted things for posterity in the quiet of the Prater atelier, where she had written her first autobiographical essay three years earlier. The stories she recorded and retold to critics she trusted were repeated in Vienna's newspapers on the occasion of her seventieth birthday, when she died in 1916, and then later by art historians. The painting that had found a home in the Imperial collections and which now hung at the exhibition of women's art had played a large role in her life. The story she wrote down in her brief memoir, the story of her *Praterbild* at the first international art exhibition at the Künstlerhaus, was retold in its entirety by the *Neues Wiener Tagblatt* on the occasion of her seventieth birthday.[54] (The work created "a hole in the wall, through which one believed one could see into open nature!") [55]

If the *Praterbild* was at the women's exhibition contrary to her wishes, her friend and critic A. F. Seligmann clearly relished the opportunity to explain yet again to his reading public in the *Neue Freie Presse* that it was a revolutionary contribution to the history of Austrian art. Indeed, nearly a third of his feuilleton was devoted to this one painting (when 300 works of art were on display). He compared the display conditions of its current home at the Hofmuseum to those of the new exhibition, where it was advantageously placed and well lit, in the same way that Elisabetta Sirani's (1638-1665) painting could now be truly appreciated. [56] The Imperial collections were hung in uniform frames, three and four rows high and with practically no space between them, which made experiencing Blau's *Praterbild* like "listening to music through locked doors." [57] He suggested that the court museum should rotate works and display them with breathing room, so that these works could be

appreciated. For Seligmann, Blau's *Praterbild* invalidated the oft-heard accusation that the woman does not create anything new or original, that she always adapts, follows, and copies the art of men. When Blau had painted it thirty years ago, he pointed out, it was a time when one knew nothing of "plein air" and "impressionism" in Germany and Austria, a time when Uhde and Liebermann were still working in "blackest Munkacsy black"

and Leibl had just begun to sense light and air of nature in his work, in a time when the big Piloty students ruled and Bastien Lepage was regarded as a sort of anarchist ... the picture would have begun a complete revolution in Austrian painting, if one had only understood it. When the Secession began, one was of course already at dotting and hatching, imitating mosaics and marquetry and saw such painting as backwards.  
[58]

He tried in particular to educate the public that she had made revolutionary contributions in the art of painting, and that she was the pioneer Impressionist of Vienna.[59] It was at this time that Blau began to call him "my good translator," for his reviews were consistently sympathetic toward her work, explaining its aesthetic merits to his readership in the *Neue Freie Presse*. [60] If Blau was treated fairly in the press of the 1910 show, it was due to the efforts of Seligmann. Individual contributions like Blau's were only rarely discussed. More commonly, the press reception of the exhibition lumped the contributors together, as if the art of the woman were an intellectual curiosity, a specimen of something other than the men's art that usually hung on the modular walls of the Secession. Mentions of individual women artists in the reviews of *The Art of the Woman*, no matter how honorable, were accompanied by wildly impressionistic columns that compared the woman artist to passive, narcissistic models, battling amazons, and seductive sirens. The show generated a dialogue about the role of women in the arts, and the overall result of the seventy-odd reviews placed the woman artist in a different category of art making, one dependent on the male producer.[61]

### Writing, Silencing, Critical Encounters

Blau was very much unlike Teresa Ries (1874-c.1956), who had inspired Karl Kraus to complain about the publicity offensive for her 1906 one-person show at the Palais Liechtenstein.[62] Ries crafted an art persona and related stories about herself that comically turned on her own gendered status as an artist (sculpting John the Baptist's head while men painted Salome holding his head).[63] Ries drew publicity through unusual large-scale sculptures, such as a witch sharpening its toenails in preparation for the witches' sabbath. When Mark Twain made his famous visit to Vienna, it was Ries who sculpted his bust. Blau, on the other hand, shunned fanfare and the publicity associated with her person (though not the positive reviews she received in the press). Instead, she worked steadily and quietly behind the scenes. If one day even Karl Kraus mentioned Tina Blau, it was because of his delight in displaying the incongruities and absurdities that appeared in Viennese art criticism. Kraus criticized a critic at the *Neue Freie Presse* (not Seligmann) who misjudged Tina Blau's work by suggesting she make use of the "modern means" of painting. Kraus of course pointed out that Blau had also been criticized for precisely that; indeed it was she who had been "using the principles of the Glasgow and Worpswede schools for twenty years, in her own way." [64] In 1907 Seligmann suggested that her painting was overlooked because it had qualities that could only be discovered over time, in the same way a person's qualities can only come to be understood as a friendship develops.[65] It was this quietness that her



friend felt existed both in her person and in her work, and that amounted to a strategy of self-effacement.

Blau's work drew the attention of a few critics who became her loyal champions, and Blau cultivated their friendship. Just as Gustav Klimt had Hermann Bahr, Ludwig Hevesi, and Bertha Zuckerkandl to champion his art, Tina Blau had A. F. Seligmann and Rosa Mayreder who not only explained the aesthetic advances of Blau's art, but also emphasized her problems with art institutions. In Klimt's case, bureaucratic meddling and the ceiling painting scandal prompted Zuckerkandl's outrage. Likewise, Seligmann criticized the art institutions of Vienna for excluding women,[66] also finding fault with histories of Austrian art, like Muther's and Hevesi's, which omitted Blau. He pointed out that Blau was often praised in a few lines, but that no one had properly shown how revolutionary her work was for its time, and he noted that while Hevesi had written a superb collection of feuilletons and essays, these were often occasional pieces written from a modernist point of view that did not include Blau. Seligmann argued that if even Muther handled the Austrians in "a stepmotherly fashion," with "no idea of the true meanings of the works" then there was little hope, and concluded, "... If a history of the development of Austrian painting, especially landscape, should be written, then Tina Blau must be named as among the first to practice Impressionism." [67] A history of modernism in Austria would seem to require her inclusion on aesthetic grounds alone. Seligmann carried out a virtual one-man campaign in various newspapers to demonstrate the significance of Blau. If one were to create a circle of influence for Blau, as Edward Timms did for many of Vienna's cultural luminaries, it would be drawn around Blau, Seligmann and Mayreder.[68]

Sustained critical attention in Vienna was a rare thing, and because of the polemical nature of criticism in Vienna, and its "dueling critics" who were known to write for the same newspapers but to hold opposing viewpoints, artists needed personal champions to explain their art to the public. This polemical tradition translated in art critical terms into either pro-public (making fun of the artist) or pro-artist reviews. To explain the artist's work from the artist's point of view, visiting the atelier (as did Zuckerkandl for Klimt, and Mayreder for Blau) was characteristic of the international tendency to associate the artist's biography with his or her work. Mayreder's criticism drew on this in both its polemic nature and sympathetic treatment of a single artist: in her first review of Blau's work (actually a review of the Secession) she contrasted the Secession's third exhibition's foreign, international flavor with the fact that one has to go to an art dealer's salon to see the "home-grown" art of Blau. Mayreder compared Blau's sincere, original encounter with nature to Klimt's foreign-inspired *Pallas Athena* (1898, Historisches Museum der Stadt Wien), which for Mayreder looked too much like Franz Stuck's *Athena*. Given that Hermann Bahr had waxed poetic over the Secession's home-grown art, celebrating the native sons who were showing Austrian art in an international context, Mayreder's argument provides a witty turn, beginning her review with the pronouncement that "modern painting" is for Vienna the same as foreign painting. She pointed specifically to Klimt who "places his gift too much under the suggestion of foreign individuals like Stuck and Khnopff ... All of these artists remind one of a statement which Courbet made at a German exhibition, 'Weren't these people born anywhere?'" [69]

In her second review of Blau's work, she compared the intimate setting of the art dealer's salon (Gustav Pisko), which allowed one to appreciate the artist's work, to the mass exhibitions which did not, while noting with irony that although Vienna had two exhibition houses, these had allowed an art dealer to demonstrate to the Viennese public that great artists still lived among them.[70] Mayreder's suggestion that the big exhibition houses of Vienna had forfeited their duties to the Viennese public might appear risky, since Blau still needed to exhibit her work. But Mayreder's polemics would not have been the reason that Blau was not included in the Secession's heroicization of older artists; rather, it was because she was a woman she was not considered a figure of (maternal) influence by the younger male artists of the Secession.

After Blau read this favorable notice of her exhibition at the Salon Pisko in the *Magazin für Literatur*, she wrote its author, a "Mr. Arnold," a gracious letter, inviting him to view her new show at the Salon Pisko.[71] She did not appear to realize that Herr Arnold was in fact her student Rosa Mayreder, who had sent her the article, a review of the Secession's third exhibition. In February, Mayreder received two invitations to Blau's new Pisko exhibit—one for Herr Arnold, and one for Frau Rosa and her husband.[72] If Tina Blau was not already in on the joke, she would soon learn the identity of Herr Arnold, whose "deep knowledge" of art Blau had praised.[73] Mayreder wrote another review for the *Magazin für Literatur* in the following month using the same pseudonym. This second review demonstrated intimate knowledge of the artist, noting for example that Blau had not been a student of Schindler.[74] Mayreder had become her student in 1899 and from Blau's correspondence it is easy to see that the two developed a close friendship, working together with A. F. Seligmann at the Art School for Women and Girls (or Women's Academy [*Frauenakademie*]), which the three founded in 1897.[75] Blau and Seligmann were the primary art professors there and Rosa Mayreder and her husband concentrated on fundraising and handling the school's business matters. Through her professional relationship with Gustav Pisko, Blau was able to arrange exhibition space for the student shows, with which Mayreder also helped.[76] Seligmann reviewed her exhibitions quite positively and "Frau Tina" always responded with friendly, gracious letters of thanks for making her work understandable to the public:

I don't know what I should rue more—that you must write about me, or that I am now sixty and must believe it all—I was so pleased when notice was made in my small family circle and then came the latest number of the modern (sic) *Frauenleben*, a magazine that I esteem, with your completely glowing, fascinating article about me... now I am really proud... no one has written like you have, and I will read your article again when I am sad and depressed about the lack of success that I was supposed to get used to and that I did get used to: and then I would again agree with you, that my way of being carries some of the blame.[77]

Blau then compared Seligmann's warm encouragement to the encouragement of her Munich teacher, Lindenschmidt, who had seen the good in her work, introduced her to other artists, and helped her sell her paintings at the Kunstverein.[78] Quietly, then, Tina Blau cultivated a circle of devoted art critics and colleagues who would help to explain her art to the public; (she called Seligmann her "good translator"). Considering the few pro-artist critics working in Vienna—Ludwig Hevesi, Hermann Bahr, Bertha Zuckerandl, A. F. Seligmann, and Arthur Roessler stand out—Blau needed Seligmann and Mayreder.

Bahr was a polemicist, more interested in aesthetic movements and wild pronouncements than in paying attention to individual works of art. He was described by Karl Kraus as a man who changed his opinions as often as others might change shirts; more interested in Idealism and "the day after tomorrow" than in Tina Blau.[79] Zuckerkandl wrote reviews for art journals, but in her column in the *Wiener Allgemeine Zeitung* was most passionately interested in the Secessionists, Gustav Klimt, and criticizing the arts bureaucracy. She also hosted an important salon where Bahr and other Viennese luminaries circulated. In her columns she often took Seligmann to task, and therefore was not likely to take up Blau's cause.[80] Roessler was a partisan critic who championed Schiele, even manufacturing some memoirs for him, and who dropped the Jewish Max Oppenheimer when it became an inconvenient project (he had planned a monograph on the artist). His criticism of *The Art of the Woman*, the 1910 retrospective, proved him a misogynist, as did his description of Tina Blau in his collected essays of 1922.[81] Of all of these critics, Ludwig Hevesi had the most delightful way with words, and was a critic who covered all of Vienna's artistic events.[82] He would have been an ideal "translator" of Blau's work, but remained silent for reasons known only to him. Given Blau's formidable exhibition record (she appeared in nearly forty major shows before 1910, the year of Hevesi's death), Hevesi's silence is all the more remarkable. The enthusiastic critic who chronicled all of Vienna's art happenings, large and small, never mentioned Blau in a show. He did include her in his history, but only in the long version, and then only as Schindler's student and the painter of flowers on the Palais Zierer ceiling.[83] Blau resented being called Schindler's student because she was not; moreover, the appellation placed her in the role of "daughter" rather than independent discoverer. The Zierer commission was only a reminder to her that she had been left out of all that was significant in the Ringstrasse commissions.[84] It was not that Hevesi attended only large art exhibitions. He attended the exhibitions at the Salon Pisko of the Eight Women Artists, an ad hoc exhibition group that began exhibiting together in 1901, and reviewed them for *Kunst und Kunsthandwerk*. It remained for Seligmann and Mayreder to critique her work. But Mayreder was a feminist engaged with the Woman Question, and she soon left the penning of art reviews behind to counter the theories of Weininger, Lombroso, and other misogynists, arguably a more pressing vocation.[85]

Blau's critics had in common a preference for Impressionism and naturalism over Idealism and Expressionism.[86] In 1890, for example, on the occasion of her first one-person show at the Munich Kunstverein, the critic Otto Bierbaum hailed the beginning of a new era for the Kunstverein, one that would emphasize quality over quantity. This new era was "born under the sign of Tina Blau," whose "star pictures," fifty-three in all, were now to be seen "in the heavens of the Kunstverein." In her art were truth and nature, which he contrasted with the unhealthy, weak poetry of idealism and its misuse of nature. Bierbaum described Blau as strong, true, honest, and pure, without any "artistic sickness." He connected her art to the raw reality of nature (true beauty is in the "larva," not in its "superficial cosmetic overlay").[87] In 1913, Friedrich Stern connected Blau to groundbreaking aesthetic achievements, which she accomplished not through theorizing but always through honest and intimate encounters with nature.[88] If Blau was consistently figured as seeing the truth of nature, this was the opposite of what many critics at *The Art of the Woman* and what many women's art histories and theories said about the woman artist in general; they connected women's artistic process to superficial copying, to narcissistic applications of makeup and powders.[89] Arthur Roessler accused Blau of precisely this in 1922: "The paintings of Tina Blau convey the unmistakable finding that just as the woman needs to be inseminated by the

man to create, to give birth, so too must the woman as artist. What she bears as a woman is the man's child, and what she creates as an artist, is the man's art."<sup>[90]</sup> He went on to note, in logic similar to that of Paul Möbius and Weininger, "gender perversion may well result in some minor artistic achievements by women, but such exceptions only prove the rule."<sup>[91]</sup> When Blau's work was treated fairly in the press, perhaps it was because of her careful management, her cultivation of friendly critics, and her insistence on independence from women's art exhibitions. Stern noted, for example, that Blau's work had nothing to do with the "Woman Question," except that she had founded the Art Academy for Women and Girls.<sup>[92]</sup>

### **The Reluctant "Old Mistress"**

Faced with exclusion from official membership in the big exhibition houses in Vienna, some women artists in Vienna formed their own exhibition societies. Tina Blau, though, preferred to join (as a guest) the art exhibitions of established, all male unions, such as the Künstlerhaus in Vienna, or to exhibit her works in one person shows at art dealers in Munich and Vienna. It was not that she was against a progressive women's movement, which she participated in, but rather she separated her career as an artist from any involvement with "women's" projects. Blau was a member of the honorary exhibition committee of the Women's Trade Union and devoted her teaching career to the Art School for Women and Girls. She regarded the feminist journal *Neues Frauenleben* very highly, and was quite pleased when the journal published an article about her in 1906.<sup>[93]</sup> Its editor, Auguste Fickert, later invited Blau to take part in a project to create a home for single working women, a project to which Blau lent her name.<sup>[94]</sup> When she refused the invitation to send her works to the 1913 Women's Art Exhibition in Turin, the Union of Women Artists in Austria (1910-present) noted that they had been trying to get her to join their union, but already knew Blau to be a "bitter enemy of women's art groups of any kind."<sup>[95]</sup> She was retracting her gendered self from her work, to the degree that this was possible. By refusing to exhibit with women's unions, she meant to avoid associating her work with the Woman Question that inevitably became part of the critical discussion of such exhibitions. The women exhibitors tended to look up to Blau as a successful "old mistress" who might help make their public case for women's art, but Blau preferred to forego both the homage of other women, and any "mother-daughter plots."

This reluctance to exhibit with other women did not give Blau immunity from gender bias in critical commentary, but critics were more likely to pay attention to her art than to the Woman Question when confronted with a solo exhibition. Her friend and critic-champion Adalbert Seligmann once noted that women's exhibitions had become substitute fora for political discussions on the Woman Question because the women's movement was lagging so far behind politically.<sup>[96]</sup> To participate in women's exhibitions might call her work into question in a way in which it was not done at the Künstlerhaus, or at the art salon of Gustav Pisko. As a reviewer of the seventh exhibition of the Union of Women Artists in Austria noted, "the danger that the artistic level sinks, that an exhibition [of women's art] becomes more of a social happening than an artistic one, is very near [and] the better the works are, the more the spectator is pressed by the question: how would this or that work look next to men's work?" She concluded, "the best success such a union might achieve is that it is no longer necessary."<sup>[97]</sup> Blau refused to exhibit with other women because she wanted to

avoid labeling: she wanted her art to be regarded as art, not as a specimen or example of women's art.

Blau had agreed to exhibit in such a forum once in the past, when she was given a special invitation by the Austrian Women's Committee to send works to the Woman's Building at the Chicago 1893 Columbian Exhibition.[98] The Union of Women Writers and Artists, charged with sending representative works for the exhibition to the Austrian Women's Committee, invited Blau so late that she had little time to select a painting for the show.[99] Blau assented to send a work with the reservation that she was in general against women's exhibitions of any kind, but that this would be the exception, because it would show "all" of women's art making.[100] She likely believed that a multitude of artists, media, and nationalities would make it impossible for critics to name, categorize, or dismiss the production of women. Blau scolded the union for inviting her so late, for she knew that the invitations to artists had gone out weeks before. In the end, she hastily sent one of her more important canvases (probably *Spring at the Prater*) to the exhibition committee in order to meet the deadline.[101] After returning from a short trip to Italy, however, Blau found a bill from the shippers, requesting money and directions for returning her picture, which had been rejected by the committee because it was too large. Blau was justly incensed, and requested reimbursement for the charges that she had incurred reminding them that she had given them the dimensions of her picture, and the committee knew of the space they had, so there was no excuse at all. Blau was an internationally known artist who had even modestly wondered whether it was proper for her to exhibit in three places at once in Chicago, for she had already submitted two works to the Munich section and one to the Vienna section of the international fine arts building, for which all her costs were covered. [102] She reprimanded Mina Hoegel, the president of the Union of Women Writers and Artists, saying that no president of an art union personally invites someone to submit a work and THEN makes it undergo a jury review. It seems now ironic that it was Blau, the most sought-after woman painter by the Eight Women Artists,[103] who, relenting just once, would find her work rejected. The episode only hardened Tina Blau's resolve to never participate in women's exhibitions; she wrote Hoegel that she "regretted only that I had gone against my principle to never exhibit with women's groups." [104]

The emperor visited Tina Blau at her one-person show at Pisko's in 1909. This was a tremendous honor in old Vienna, for attending art dealers' exhibitions was not part of his usual routine.[105] He also visited her atelier in 1913. By contrast, he did not even open *The Art of the Woman*. Mayreder later remarked that it was not until the emperor's 1909 visit that Blau had achieved complete recognition.[106] But Blau's financial success and fame with the emperor stand in direct contrast to her general lack of official recognition as an artist by the Viennese art institutions.

Blau was the student (at age fourteen) and friend of an ultimate insider, August Schaeffer, but instead of winning his support she won his envy. Schaeffer, an average painter, was in charge of the royal collections (which then housed her *Spring at the Prater*), and had provided Blau a letter of introduction for the curators of *The Art of the Woman*. In a mean-spirited essay on his students, Blau and Olga Wisinger-Florian (1884-1926), he noted: "I was thrown head over heels into the Woman Question, from which I had wanted to shield myself." [107] Schaeffer provided a narration of his part in Blau's education, describing the



day he sent Blau out to seek other artists, cataloguing her artistic influences, and calling her a "student" of Schindler, which apparently upset Blau even more than the following insults:

Our painting ladies imagine that in their efforts they are more rousing and dashing than the men, they venture and take this position for all they're worth. So Frau Wisinger-Florian has just installed a one-person exhibition at the Salon Pisko of her recent works and studies and eagerly sells one object after the other. Frau T. Blau, who also recently had a very lucrative one-person show at the Salon Pisko, now at or through Kende, will sell off her paintings and studies. Now the women are quite hard workers ... they braid and weave away as if it were a matter of winning the world, as if they didn't already have this in their laps. But that's not enough anymore."[\[108\]](#)

Schaeffer might have had reason to envy Blau's financial success. In a city which Bahr claimed was no market, Blau sold her works readily, averaging 200 to 740 florins per painting, depending on the size, or \$4,000 to \$14,000 1996 U.S. dollars. In 1883 *Spring at the Prater* sold for the equivalent of roughly \$40,000 1996 U.S. dollars.[\[109\]](#) She also exhibited and sold works in Germany in numerous one-person exhibitions.[\[110\]](#) In Vienna, the art dealers Pisko and Arnot gave her one-person exhibitions in 1899, 1903, and 1909. In 1900 the art auction house Kende held a retrospective of her works, which sold for very high prices, probably irking Schaeffer all the more. Between 1910 and her death in 1916, Blau appeared in eight more exhibitions, including her unwitting participation in the 1910 retrospective of women's art at the Secession. Between the years 1890 and 1914 she had eight retrospectives in the cities of Hamburg, Vienna and Munich. This is quite considerable for the time, because Vienna's critic-dealer system was not very developed, and most artists depended upon the big art unions for exhibition space.[\[111\]](#)

I have not found evidence that Schaeffer's essay was published, but Tina Blau saw it and responded to it in a personal letter to Schaeffer, noting

if I were not a woman, my works would be viewed not only as independent, but also ahead of their time in Vienna, just as they were in Paris and Munich. I am valued by my colleagues, but nonetheless, when it really counts for me to be treated as an equal, to be honored and included because of the value of my work, I am always left out. There have been a huge amount of commissions given to Viennese artists through the building of the museums and the Burgtheater, but no one thought of me.[\[112\]](#)

Blau received only one commission to paint a ceiling, for Zierer's private palace, not anything as public or important as Klimt's commission for the University ceiling, the last big commission of the Ringstrasse projects. Schaeffer was an official chronicler of art life in Vienna, and it is to him that we owe a description of the union of the old artists' societies into the Künstlerhaus.[\[113\]](#) That Schaeffer was Blau's teacher made the essay all the more humiliating, because he his role as her teacher lent him some authority. Schaeffer is also speaking as the gallery director for the imperial collections, and near the end of the essay he declares that her *Spring in the Prater* was selected not for its aesthetic qualities but for its subject matter, (it was the emperor's favorite park, and he had selected the work himself). Of all of the insults directed toward Blau and her contemporaries, this is the one for which she reproached him in the strongest terms. Her lengthy written response to Schaeffer was prefaced by the comment that she had been mistakenly stamped as Schindler's student ever

since his death, which weighed upon her. She had neglected to publicly correct facts and dates, but now that Schaeffer would call her Schindler's student too, at the expense of his own personality as teacher, she felt he "owed" it to her to read her comments.[114] In describing her pain at being left out of every single public works project of importance, she noted her personal joy in her success with the *Praterbild*, which she believed was purchased for its "outstanding painterly qualities," not for being a Prater motif.[115] It was during the year prior to this painful exchange that Rosa Mayreder had clearly stated in the *Magazin für Literatur* that Blau was not Schindler's student.[116] Blau's correction to Schaeffer remained in the form of a private letter to him. It would not be until 1907 that Blau would make a public autobiographical statement in a popular magazine; her focus however, was on her early student days in Munich, rather than correcting public misconceptions.

### Erasures

Because she was a woman, Tina Blau was excluded from the famous Ringstrasse commissions and from membership in the Künstlerhaus. In spite of this, she had a tremendously successful career. She had a "room of her own" in the Prater atelier where she painted until her last years, and had been financially independent since selling her first painting in 1869. She was a critical success in Munich and Vienna, valued by collectors, and esteemed by the emperor. As did the Eight Women Artists, Blau exhibited her works primarily at art dealers' salons. The art dealer essentially presented the only option for a woman artist, who would otherwise have to count on invitations from the Künstlerhaus, and where a collective, or larger grouping of works by a single (woman) artist was not the norm. [117] The critic-dealer system in Vienna was so limited that many Vienna-based artists like Oskar Kokoschka sought their fortunes in Germany. Art dealers like Arnot and Pisko in Vienna supported Tina Blau because her successful sales made doing so quite lucrative. One might compare Blau's regular exhibitions in Vienna and Germany to Kokoschka's heated competition with Max Oppenheimer over dealer exhibitions in Germany.[118] A network of relationships and personal friendships that is hard to quantify also figured into the critic-artist relationship. The history of art dealers in Vienna has never been fully documented or written, and because it constitutes a significant part of the history of women artists, this absence has also become a factor in their invisibility to historians in general. The historiographical emphasis has always been on the Secession, Wiener Werkstaette, and exemplary men artists—Klimt, Schiele and Kokoschka.

Blau was doubly Other in Weininger's Vienna—as a woman and as a Jew. The former plagued her professional life while the latter retroactively erased her from the history of art in Austria. In 1934, Blau's important canvas *Spring at the Prater* was sent to represent Austria in the London exhibition.[119] In the same year her work was also shown with Emil Orlik's as "two great artists from old Austria" in an exhibition in the Glaspalast in the Burggarten in Vienna.[120] Four years later, however, their works would be removed from the national galleries of Austria because they were both Jews. Bruno Grimschitz, director of the Austrian galleries, was ordered to remove paintings by Jewish artists from the Belvedere collections on April 1, 1938. Tina Blau's three works on display, including *Spring in the Prater*, were removed.[121] Blau was literally erased from the history of art for a time; Grimschitz, who became the National Socialist director of the Belvedere, published no works by Blau in his richly illustrated *Maler der Ostmark im 19. Jahrhundert* in 1943, although her works had appeared in earlier editions, but then, twenty years later, added three of her works to the 1963 enlarged edition.[122] The Art School for Women and Girls, which Blau had co-

founded, was also in trouble. In July 1938 it lost its public rights because many of the teachers had, "from the beginning, been Jews, and none of the minority Aryan teachers was a National Socialist."<sup>[123]</sup> Furthermore, said official reports, so many pupils were Jews that this "could be considered a Jewish educational institution."<sup>[124]</sup> Ferdinand Andri, who had taken part in the famous 1902 Beethoven exhibition at the Secession, was now Rector of the Academy of Fine Arts. It was he who, upon reading this report, declared that one could not justify allowing the Women's Academy to continue to exist. Tobias Natter suggests that this was an opportunity for the Academy to rid itself of the long bothersome competition from the Art School for Women and Girls.<sup>[125]</sup> Part of the erasure of Blau included the renaming of the Tina Blau Way to Edmund Hellmer Way, under Nazi policy. When Blau died childless, her estate was divided between her brother Dr. Theodor Blau and her sister Flora Roth. When Theodor's daughter fled to the Phillipines in 1938, many of Blau's works were lost in transport. Flora's daughter Paula fled in 1939—to New York, where her children now live.<sup>[126]</sup> Flora's daughter Helene Taussig Roth, Blau's beloved niece who had also taught at the Women's Academy, was killed in the Holocaust.<sup>[127]</sup>

After she died, anti-Semitism endangered Blau's art, family and memory. But during her lifetime it was the experience of exhibiting her work as a woman artist that was fraught with difficulty. As Griselda Pollock and Roszika Parker summarized *Old Mistresses* in 1981, "women's practice in art has never been absolutely forbidden, discouraged or refused, but rather contained and limited to its function as the means by which masculinity gains and sustains its supremacy in the important sphere of cultural production."<sup>[128]</sup> I would alter this statement to be more precise in the case of Tina Blau: her practice was not contained and limited, but her story was. Her work could not be suppressed from success in the marketplace, from the admiration of the emperor, from stylistic innovation, or from the admiration of a few critics. She was an ambitious artist, setting herself apart from the crowd. But the actual recording and writing of her history as such has been plagued by rediscovery and erasure rather than the repetitions and re-readings that secure reputations of better-known artists. Blau did not want to attach her person to her work because she wanted to preempt easy connection to stereotypes of the feminine. Blau's independent, quiet life of art, her dignified refusal to participate in separate women's exhibitions, and her slowness to provide autobiographical utterances about herself was a quietly defiant response to the conditions of working as a woman in fin-de-siècle Vienna. On the one hand, Blau's strategy of self-effacement merely avoided the problem because constructed biographies were the building blocks of histories of modern art (as artists like Gauguin knew); on the other hand, insisting that her work speak for itself was perhaps the best way to proceed. Blau did not want to be part of the formation of an alternative tradition, becoming in effect an "old mistress" to other women artists because the Woman Question; the social position of woman and scientific discourse on women's brains and physiological limitations, made it impossible for some critics to actually see women's art in fin-de-siècle Vienna.

Tina Blau applied paint differently on the canvas because of who she was, but I would argue that the fact that she was a woman and a Jew is not discernible in the final product. The connection between the self and the work of art is much more complicated than that. According to Valéry:

What is essential to the work is all the indefinable circumstances, the occult encounters, the facts that are apparent to one person alone, or so familiar to that one

person that he is not even aware of them. One knows from one's own experience that these incessant and impalpable events are the solid matter of one's personality.[129]

Valéry is referring to the accumulation of past experiences that aid in each of the multitude of decisions which come into play in the construction of a work of art; each word/brushstroke, each erasure, observation, and choice made on color, horizon, and size. To Valéry, the process of art-making is itself demystified, yet remains ultimately ineffable even to the artist.

Everything happens in the artist's inner sanctuary, as though the visible events of his life had only a superficial influence on his work. The thing that is most important—the very act of the Muses—is independent of adventures, the poet's way of life, incidents, and everything that might figure in a biography. Everything that history is able to observe is insignificant.[130]

I have argued that Blau's biographical material, particularly the label of woman, precluded her work from being included in histories by Richard Muther and Julius Meier-Graefe, and that the label of Jew ensured erasure from the 1943 survey by Bruno Grimschitz. Courbet could exceed the label, the equation with his work, because serious biographies and studies of his work were undertaken, once and again. Blau could not: as a woman she was too easily reduced to a category. The difference is one of labeling and identity (stereotypes) as opposed to a willingness to investigate how the complexities of personal experience might be implicated in a painting.[131]

Why was Tina Blau important? Is she just another forgotten woman whose life must be reconstructed, her body of work reexamined? Blau was famous and lived in a city with art historians, cultural critics, and sophisticated thinkers about identity at a time when many things seemed possible for women and Jews. Her artistic achievements have never been in doubt; her life and work are well documented, having undergone rediscovery and repeated attention, particularly in her 1996 retrospective at the Jewish Museum in Vienna. But Blau's life is most telling for the ways in which one can trace its silencings—moments of self-effacement, moments of envy from her teacher, of omission by Vienna's most comprehensive chronicler, the moment of not being chosen as an artistic parent by the Secessionists (the mother-son plot is never followed through), and even the moments of literal erasure (the street named for her) because of institutionalized anti-Semitism. As James Young has pointed out (regarding the Holocaust), repetition is necessary for securing memory, which always must be considered an unfinished project.[132] Women artists, many of whom have undergone multiple rediscoveries, are particularly vulnerable to this forgetting because there are moments, as occurred in Blau's life, of silencing and erasure that work against sustaining their reputations. It is these moments of silencing and erasure that can tell us much about the writing of women artists' lives and why they are so vulnerable to being forgotten.

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## Notes

- [1] Joan W. Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 7, as cited in Marnie Hughes-Warrington, *Fifty Key Thinkers on History* (London: Routledge, 2000), 277. I first wrote on Tina Blau in my thesis, *"The Art of the Woman": Women's Art Exhibitions in Fin-de-Siècle Vienna* (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1998); I would like to thank Reinhold Heller for the initial suggestion that I include a chapter on Blau, and the anonymous reader of this article for his or her comments.
- [2] Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, v. 1, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Random House, 1978).
- [3] The title of a recent exhibition points to a continuing interest in connecting truth, sexuality, and the art of Vienna's canonical artists: Tobias Natter and Max Hollein, eds., *The Naked Truth: Klimt, Schiele, Kokoschka and other Scandals*, Exh. cat., (Schirn Kunsthalle Frankfurt; Leopold Museum Vienna; Munich: Prestel, 2005).
- [4] The 1910 retrospective exhibition, *The Art of the Woman*, is an early example of an exhibition curated by activist women artists. *Die Kunst der Frau*, Exh. cat. (Vienna: Secession, 1910). The impetus for the famous 1977 exhibition curated by Linda Nochlin and Anne Sutherland Harris, *Women Artists 1550-1950*, also began with activist women artists, who insisted in 1970 that more women's art be shown at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. Initially, there was to be an "all-Artemesia" exhibition; Anne Sutherland Harris suggested a historical survey instead and recruited Nochlin to co-curate. The two spent five years researching and organizing the exhibition. Grace Glueck, "The Woman as Artist," *New York Times*, 25 September 1977.
- [5] Joan W. Scott, "Fantasy Echo: History and the Construction of Identity," *Critical Inquiry* (Winter 2001): 284-304.
- [6] For a complete bibliography, see G. Tobias Natter, ed., *Plein Air: Die Landschaftsmalerin Tina Blau, 1845-1916*, Exh. cat., (Vienna: Jüdisches Museum, 1996). Blau was remembered periodically in Austria by her birthdate; in 1935 for example, E[dith?] Hofmann wrote "Tina Blau, Österreichs größte Malerin," *Österreichische Kunst* 6, no. 3 (15 March 1935): 3-8. For more recent entries on Blau see Andrea Winklbauer, "Als Frau und Künstlerin: Durchsetzungsstrategien weiblicher Kunstschaffender im 19. Jahrhundert," in Ingrid Brugger, ed., *Jahrhundert der Frauen*, Exh. cat., (Vienna: Kunstforum; Salzburg: Residenzverlag, 1999), 45-60; and G. Tobias Natter and Claus Jesina, *Tina Blau: (1945-1916)* (Salzburg: Verlag Galerie Welz, 1999). For an online bibliography and images, see [www.onb.ac.at/ariadne/vfb/bio\\_blautina.htm](http://www.onb.ac.at/ariadne/vfb/bio_blautina.htm).
- [7] For feminist critiques of the father-son plot, see especially Lisa Tickner, "Mediating Generation: The Mother-Daughter plot," *Art History*, 25, no. 1 (February 2002): 23-46, esp. note 31, and Nanette Salomon, "The Art Historical Canon: Sins of Omission," in Donald Preziosi, ed., *The Art of Art History: A Critical Anthology* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 344-553.
- [8] Kristin Frederickson, "Introduction: Histories, Silences, and Stories," *Singular Women: Writing the Artist*, ed. Kristen Frederickson and Sarah E. Webb (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 10-11.
- [9] Richard Muther, *The History of Modern Painting* (London: J. M. Dent, 1907), 246.
- [10] *Ibid.*, 393. Udo Kultermann has more recently referred to these gaps in Muther's judgment as "howlers" in *The History of Art History* (New York: Abaris, 1993), 33.
- [11] Walter Benjamin, "Rigorous Study of Art" (first published as "Strenge Kunstwissenschaft. Zum ersten Bande des *Kunstwissenschaftlichen Forschungen*," *Frankfurter Zeitung* 76 (1933), 56, trans. Thomas Y. Levin, *October*, 47 (Winter 1988): 84.
- [12] "The De-Politicization of Gustave Courbet: Transformation and Rehabilitation under the Third Republic," *October*, (Fall 1982): 65-75. It is difficult to imagine such efforts being expended on behalf of Tina Blau, for prejudice against women (and Jews) pervaded the discourse of art history. The posthumous resurrection of Courbet's reputation after it had



been sullied by his involvement in the Commune might be compared with the posthumous eradication of Blau after the annexation of Austria to Nazi Germany

[13] Ernst Kris and Otto Kurz, *Legend, Myth, and Magic in the Image of the Artist* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979).

[14] Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past* (Boston: Beacon, 1995), xix.

[15] A. F. Seligmann, "Tina Blau," *Versteigerung des künstlerischen Nachlasses der Landschaftsmalerin Tina Blau*, Exh. cat., C.J. Wawra (Vienna: Wawra Selbstverlag, 1917), n.p. All translations are my own unless noted otherwise.

[16] The greatest silence is on Blau's identity as a Jew: nowhere does she mention it in her written records, nor is it mentioned in the art criticism. In the only related utterance I have found, she is quoted as saying to the Emperor when he visited her one-person exhibition in the Salon Pisko, "I am an Aryan, Majesty, I was born in the Haymarket barracks." Her father was a military physician and had living quarters in the barracks. Arthur Modry, "Tante Tina," *Österreichische Kunst* 6, no. 3 (15 March 1935): 8. Alexandra Ankwicz, "Tina Blau," *Frauenbilder aus Österreich* (Vienna: Obelisk Verlag, 1955), 248-49. A growing body of literature on Jewish identity and the cosmopolitan nature of Vienna 1900 might allow for more inference in a longer essay, but here my focus remains primarily on her identity as a woman, until the attempted erasures of her work and name under Nazi rule.

[17] Abigail Solomon-Godeau, "Going Native," *Art in America* (July 1989): 126.

[18] Renate Berger, *Malerinnen auf dem Weg ins 20. Jahrhundert. Kunstgeschichte als Sozialgeschichte* (Cologne: Dumont, 1982).

[19] Otto Weininger, *Geschlecht und Character* (Vienna: Wilhelm Braumüller, 1903); Chandak Sengoopta, *Otto Weininger: Sex, Science, and Self in Imperial Vienna* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000).

[20] Paul Valéry, *Selected Writings* (New York: New Directions, 1950), 141.

[21] Tina Blau, "Erinnerungen," *Österreichs Illustrierte Zeitung Kunst-Revue*, June 1907, 874-76. Photocopies of her handwritten memoirs along with a typescript are in the Ankwicz-Kleehoven papers at the Österreichische Galerie, Vienna. See also the interview with Bela Gonda Jr., "Besuch bei Tina Blau," typescript, Ankwicz-Kleehoven papers.

[22] Karoline Murau, *Wiener Malerinnen* (Dresden: E. Pierson's Verlag, 1895), 5-8. The chronology that follows is based on G. Tobias Natter, "Notizen zu ihrem Leben," in Natter, *Plein Air*, 165-70 and Annelie Roser-De Palma, *Die Landschaftsmalerin Tina Blau* (Ph.D. diss., University of Vienna, 1971), 4-14.

[23] Blau, "Erinnerungen," 876; Max Eisler, "Tina Blau," *Westermanns Monatshefte* 120, no. 718 (June 1916), 472.

[24] Blau, Typescript of handwritten memoirs, Ankwicz-Kleehoven papers.

[25] Blau, "Erinnerungen," 876.

[26] Bela Gonda Jr., "Besuch bei Tina Blau," typescript interview, Ankwicz-Kleehoven papers.

[27] Sabine Plakolm-Forsthuber, "Tina Blau und die Frauenbewegung," Natter, *Plein Air*, 41.

[28] Natter, "Notizen zu ihrem Leben," 168.

[29] Friedrich Stern, "Frau Tinas 70. Geburtstag," *Neues Wiener Tagblatt*, 13 November 1913.

[30] Blau herself remembers bringing the painting back from Paris, exhibiting it, and the emperor purchasing it. Bela Gonda Jr., "Besuch bei Tina Blau," typescript interview, Ankwicz-Kleehoven papers. There is no date on the interview transcript, but Blau is by then 68 years old, as she indicates in the interview. Her recollection is correct, if incomplete: *Spring at the Prater* sold for roughly \$40,000 U.S. to a private collector in Bavaria when it was first shown at the Künstlerhaus, and in 1899 (the year of her first one-person show in Vienna at the Salon Pisko) was sold by the private collector to the imperial collections for 1700 florins (\$34,000). Martina Haja, "Alltägliche Natur. Tina Blau und die Freilichtmalerei in Österreich," in Natter, *Plein Air*, 9.

[31] The newspaper published them in the form of a letter to Arthur Hecht, whom Blau thanks at the end for requesting that she write down her memoirs. The focus is on her youth and early years in Munich, which she recalls as "beautiful memories from youth." Blau, "Erinnerungen," 876. Seligmann's 1905 essay "Tina Blau," *Neues Frauenleben* 17, no. 12 (December 1905), 19-21 is reprinted in full in the pages preceding Blau's essay, and several of her paintings are pictured.

[32] "Kleine Chronik," *Wiener Zeitung*, 21 November 1909, 2; Natter, "Notizen zu ihrem Leben," 169.

- [33] Seligmann, "Tina Blau," *Tina Blau Künstlerischer Nachlaß*, n.p.
- [34] Seligmann, "Tina Blau," *Neues Frauenleben*, 20.
- [35] Julius Meier-Graefe, *Entwicklungsgeschichte der Modernen Kunst* (Munich: Piper, 1920).
- [36] "Carstens' influence on German art has been then entirely a negative one. It was not on such a foundation that a German art could arise. He prepared no ground for his successors on which they could build further; but through his abandonment of the whole capital which ... had been handed down at compound interest from one generation of painters to another, he rather cut away the ground from under their feet." Muther, *The History of Modern Painting*, 96-97.
- [37] Meier-Graefe, in *Veröffentlichungen des Kunstarchivs* 27-28 : 8, ed. Gustav E. Diehl (Berlin, 1926), as quoted in Berger, *Malerinnen auf dem Weg ins 20. Jahrhundert*, 312.
- [38] The story is reported primarily in his 1947 biography, and the fact that Engelhart's story involved nudity shocking the public fit into the image of a Vienna that dichotomized modern truths of sexuality and a repressed bourgeoisie. The story is still repeated as an important episode in histories of art and architecture in Vienna. Josef Engelhart, *Ein Wiener Maler erzählt: Mein Leben und meine Modelle* (Vienna: Wilhelm Andermann, 1943), 64-65.
- [39] Stern, "Frau Tinas 70. Geburtstag," 314. Cf. the jury protocol of 16 March 1882 (Box 1. Internationale Kunstausstellung 1882, Künstlerhaus Archives). *Spring at the Prater* was among four pictures "that partly due to their large format, partly for their equal number of black and white balls (meaning there was no majority vote) were set aside for another vote." Quoted in Plakolm-Forsthuber, "Tina Blau und die Frauenbewegung," 42. For more on Makart's intervention, see Wolfgang Born, "Makart rettet ein Bild. Erinnerungen an eine Große Malerin," *Neues Wiener Journal*, 3 November 1935, 6.
- [40] Plakolm-Forsthuber, "Tina Blau und die Frauenbewegung," 42.
- [41] Blau described these events in her handwritten memoirs and in her interview with Bela Gondo, Jr., Ankwicz-Kleehoven papers.
- [42] Mayreder [pseud. Franz Arnold], "Tina Blau," *Magazin für Literatur*, 68, no. 13 (April 1899), 306, and Max Eisler, "Tina Blau," *Westermanns Monatshefte* 120, no. 718 (June 1916), 470-71 both correct (at some length) the misconception that Blau was Schindler's student, or even influenced by him. In the 1910 edition of Thieme-Becker she is described as coming "under the powerful influence of the great Austrian landscape artist Jacob Emil Schindler," 106. In 1957 he is again mentioned as her "teacher" in the *Österreichisches Biographisches Lexikon, 1850-1950*, ed. Leo Santifaller (Böhlau: Graz and Cologne, 1957). Only recently, Andrea Winklbauer placed Blau as a significant participant in a modernist narrative, as the heir to Ferdinand Georg Waldmüller (1793-1865). Winklbauer argues that only Blau and von Hörmann painted with such light palettes, "Tina Blau (1845-1916)," *Jahrhundert der Frauen*, Exh. cat. (Kunstforum Vienna, 1999), 61-62.
- [43] This does not mean that men artists were not influenced by women artists—those stories remain to be told. Relatively recently, for example, Griselda Pollock has suggested that Manet looked at Cassatt's loge scenes, which inspired his mirror conundrum in the *Bar at the Folies Bergère*. *Mary Cassatt* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1998), 144-47.
- [44] Linda Nochlin, "Courbet's Real Allegory: Rereading *The Painter's Studio*," in Sarah Faunce and Linda Nochlin, eds. *Courbet Reconsidered*, Ex. cat. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), 37-38.
- [45] August Geigenberger, "Die Malweiber in der Marées-Ausstellung," *Jugend* 12, (1909): 268.
- [46] A. F. Seligmann, "Die 'Ausstellung der Frau'. (Sezession)," *Neue Freie Presse*, 11 November 1910, 2.
- [47] Ulla Weich, "Praterskizzen: Zum Wiener Prater als Thema in Literatur und Malerei," in Natter, *Plein Air*, 53-62.
- [48] The reader familiar with *The Painting of Modern Life* will know that I am loosely quoting from T. J. Clark's witty reading of the *Grande Jatte*, in which he describes the overwrought stiffness of the forms (where even a lily pad floats into a "discreet parallelogram") as they mimic the stiffness of class relations (New York: Knopf, 1984), 259-68.
- [49] Haja, "Alltägliche Natur," 9.
- [50] The twenty-nine year old Ilse Conrat reported that the exhibition was successful, socially as well as financially. The young sculptor and Olga Brandt-Krieghammer had divided Europe between them, Conrat selecting England, Holland and Belgium. Conrat had combined her curatorial travels for the show with a honeymoon trip. Her career as a sculptor was rich with prestigious public and private commissions lasting until the Anschluß. She received her orders from the secret state police to report to the Jewish Community July 20, 1942. Instead

she committed suicide in August, according to Edmund Jonas in an official statement made on November 9, 1945. The documents, including her orders from the state police and personal memoirs are in the Twardowski-Conrat papers, City Archives, Munich.

[51] Stern, "Frau Tinas 70. Geburtstag," 314; Seligmann, "Ein letzter Besuch," *Neue Freie Presse*, 10 November 1916, 1-3.

[52] Rosa Mayreder, "Wiens große Malerin...," *Volkszeitung*, 2 November, 1935, 3.

[53] Beginning in 1910, Blau handwrote a list of her works and commissioned Pauline Wolf, a friend, to take black and white photographs. Natter notes that there are some errors of memory in titles and dates. Natter, "Notizen zu ihrem Leben," 169.

[54] Ankwicz-Kleehoven papers.

[55] Stern, "Frau Tinas 70. Geburtstag," 314.

[56] The painting in question is most likely *Martha Scolds her Vain Sister*, which was shown as the work of Sirani at the 1910 women's retrospective and pictured in its catalogue with a date of 1665; the painting has now been reattributed to Simon Vouet by the curators of the Kunsthistorisches Museum.

[57] Seligmann, "Die 'Ausstellung der Frau' (Sezession)," 1-2.

[58] Ibid.

[59] A. F. Seligmann, "Sezession," *Neue Freie Presse*, 5 November 1910.

[60] Blau to Seligmann, Vienna, 13 August 1911 (Manuscript Collection of the City of Vienna), I.N. 35620).

[61] Julie Johnson, "From Brocades to Silks and Powders: Women's Art Exhibitions and the Formation of a Gendered Aesthetic in Fin-de-Siècle Vienna" *Austrian History Yearbook*, 28 (Winter 1997): 269-92.

[62] Karl Kraus, "Bildhauer," *Die Fackel*, 12 March 1906, 22-23.

[63] Teresa Ries, *Die Sprache des Steines* (Vienna: Krystall, 1928), 8-10. This is a good example that writing a memoir and being famous during one's life is not enough to secure the memory of an artist. Ries is not as well known as Blau. Two of her major sculptures are in the collection of the Historisches Museum der Stadt Wien, and have recently been put on permanent display at the Hermesvilla Museum, arguably due to the research efforts of feminist art historians like Plakolm-Forsthuber.

[64] Karl Kraus, "Die Kenner.—Tina Blau.—Herr Klimt und das revolutionierte Kunstempfinden des Herrn von Dumba," *Die Fackel*, April 1899, 27-28.

[65] A. F. Seligmann, "Tina Blau," *Österreichs Illustrierte Zeitung, Kunst-Revue*, June 1907, 873-74.

[66] Blau died in 1916, just as the *Künstlerhaus* was considering giving her membership status. *Künstlerhaus* President Hugo Darnaut mentioned this when he gave a speech at her grave. Ankwicz, "Tina Blau," *Frauenbilder aus Österreich*, 246. Blau's Brother, Dr. Theodor Blau, thanked the *Künstlerhaus* for this, noting how significant the organization had been for her, despite the fact that she could not become an official member. 8 November 1916, Folder Tina Blau, *Künstlerhaus Archive* quoted in Plakolm-Forsthuber, "Tina Blau und die Frauenbewegung," 38. See also Modry, "Tante Tina," 9.

[67] Seligmann, "Tina Blau," *Österreichs Illustrierte Zeitung*, 874.

[68] Edward F. Timms, *Karl Kraus, Apocalyptic Satirist: Culture and Catastrophe in Habsburg Vienna* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1986), 4-9.

[69] Rosa Mayreder [pseud. Franz Arnold], "Die Ausstellung der Wiener Sezession," *Magazin für Literatur*, 68, no. 2 (January 1899): 30-35. Mayreder published poems under her own name in the *Magazin für Literatur*, but art criticism under the name of Franz Arnold.

[70] Rosa Mayreder [pseud. Franz Arnold], "Tina Blau," *Magazin für Literatur*, 68, no. 13 (April 1899), 306. The Salon Pisko provided an alternative exhibition space not only for Blau, but for the Eight Women Artists exhibition group; Egon Schiele would exhibit with his Neukunstgruppe there in 1909.

[71] Letter from Blau to Franz Arnold (Mayreder), Vienna, 16 February 1899 (I.N. 118.926).

[72] Letter from Blau to Mayreder, Vienna, 15 February 1899 (I.N. 118.913).

[73] Letter from Blau to Mayreder, Vienna, 20 January 1899 (I.N. 118.921).

[74] Mayreder, "Tina Blau," 303-6.



[75] See also "Zehn Jahre Kunstschule," *Der Bund*, 3, no. 4 (April 1908), 6-7; Barbara Doser, *Das Frauenkunststudium in Österreich, 1870-1935* (Ph.D. diss., University of Innsbruck, 1988); Plakolm-Forsthuber, "Tina Blau und die Frauenbewegung," 46-47.

[76] Letters from Blau to Mayreder, n.d. 1900 (I.N. 118.920); 6 July 1902 (I.N. 118.923); and 8 May 1909 (I.N. 118.924).

[77] Letter from Blau to Seligmann, Vienna, 29 December 1905 (I.N. 95646), thanking him warmly for his article in the *Neues Frauenleben*, 17, no. 12 (December 1905): 19-21. See also the letters from Blau to Seligmann, Vienna, 4 April 1908 (I.N. 95644); and 28 February 1914 (I.N. 95645).

[78] Letter from Blau to Seligmann, Vienna, 29 December 1905 (I.N. 95646).

[79] Bahr (1863-1934) was also nicknamed the "Proteus of modernity" and the "midwife of new art." He was a prolific writer, dramatist, journalist, and general critic of all trades, a practitioner of the feuilletonism, or impressionistic journalism, that Karl Kraus so despised. Bahr came to represent, for Kraus, the corruption of literature through the press. He wrote essays for the *Neues Wiener Tagblatt*, the *Österr. Volkszeitung*, the *Berliner Börsen Courier* and *Der Morgen*, Berlin.

[80] Her only essay on Blau was on the occasion of her death: "Tina Blau-Lang†," *Wiener Allgemeine Zeitung* (Vienna, 2 November 1916). Zuckermandl (1863-1945) was the daughter of Moritz Szepe, the influential newspaper owner of whom it was said that he was more important than the emperor. Not only did she attack Seligmann, but also Friedrich Stern of the *Neues Wiener Tagblatt*. (These opponents of hers were the champions of Blau.) For more on Zuckermandl, see Renate Redi, *Bertha Zuckermandl und die Wiener Gesellschaft. Ein Beitrag zur österreichischen Kunst- und Gesellschaftskritik* (Ph.D. diss., University of Vienna, 1979); and her collected essays: *Bertha Zuckermandl, Zeitkunst Wien 1901-07* (Vienna: Hugo Heller, 1908).

[81] Arthur Roessler, "Tina Blau," *Schwarze Fahnen* (Vienna: C. Konegen, 1922), 63-65. For his review of "The Art of the Woman," see "Kunstaussstellungen: Wien," *Kunst und Künstler*, no. 4 (1910), 204-205. Much later he wrote a sympathetic typescript entry on Blau referring primarily to the "seven apocalyptic years" of Nazi rule, noting that she had been mocked for seven years "because she was not an Aryan." "Die Wiener Malerin Tina Blau," Typescript, I.N. 163.756 (copy in Ankwiczy-Kleehoven papers, Österreichische Galerie).

[82] Hevesi (1842-1910) wrote for the *Wiener Fremdenblatt*, where he had been editor since 1875. Before moving to Vienna in 1875 he had been editor (from 1866) at the *Pester Lloyd*, Hungary's equivalent of the *Neue Freie Presse*. He studied medicine and classical philology in Vienna, wrote humor, travelogues, and children's books in addition to his art criticism. Christian Nebehay, *Ver Sacrum 1898-1903* (Vienna: Edition Tusch, 1975), 22.

[83] Hevesi's short history is "Modern Painting in Austria," *The Art Revival in Austria*, ed. Charles Holmes (London: Studio Magazine Series, 1906). The long history is: Hevesi, *Österreichische Kunst im 19. Jahrhundert* (Leipzig: E. A. Seemann, 1903). On the present state of the paintings, see Plakolm-Forsthuber, "Tina Blau und die Frauenbewegung," 38.

[84] Plakolm-Forsthuber, "Tina Blau und die Frauenbewegung," 38. During the nineteenth century and into the twentieth, artists wanted prestigious Ringstrasse commissions, but with hindsight, we may say that many of the names of those artists who painted the ceilings of the Arsenal and the new Museums of Art and Natural History (Carl Blaes, e.g.) languish forgotten, their works remaining as testaments to historical decoration of the nineteenth century. Only Gustav Klimt's works are widely noted, at the Museum of Fine Arts and the Burgtheater; his university ceiling paintings, lost in 1945, have become canonical (in Vienna), celebrated both for their ability to generate scandal in the wider cultural field and for their artistic innovation.

[85] Rosa Mayreder, *Zur Kritik der Weiblichkeit* (Jena and Leipzig: Diederichs, 1905); *A Survey of the Woman Problem*, trans. Herman Scheffauer, (New York: George H. Doran, 1913).

[86] While A. F. Seligmann, Blau's greatest champion, made a sustained argument for Blau based on her forward-looking, modernist painting, he was simultaneously reluctant to accept the latest expressionist tendencies, associating them with fashion, easy changeability, and lack of sustained technique; he therefore was not a champion of all modern women artists. For example, see his review of the second exhibition of the Union of Women Artists: "Hagenbund," *Neue Freie Presse*, 17 September 1911, 1-3.

[87] O.J. Bierbaum, "Aus dem Kunstverein — Tina Blau —," *Münchener Kunst*, 11, no. 10 (8 March 1890).

[88] Stern, "Frau Tinas 70. Geburtstag," 314.

[89] Johnson, "From Brocades to Silks and Powders," esp. 286-291.

[90] Roessler, "Tina Blau," 64.

- [91] Ibid. Möbius (1853-1907) wrote a book titled *Über den physiologischen Schwachsinn des Weibes* [On the Feeble-mindedness of the Woman] (Halle a.d.S.: C. Marhold, 1902).
- [92] Stern, "Frau Tinas 70. Geburtstag, 314"
- [93] Letter from Blau to the President of the Frauen Gewerbe-Vereins, Vienna, 17 February 1900 (I.N. 205.282).
- [94] Letter from Blau to Auguste Fickert, Vienna, 19 February 1909 (I.N. 69843).
- [95] *Österreichische Frauenrundschaue* 111 (1913), 8.
- [96] A. F. Seligmann, "Kunstaussstellung," *Neue Freie Presse*, 12 December 1912, 1-3.
- [97] E. P., "VII. Ausstellung der Vereinigung bildender Künstlerinnen Österreichs," *Der Bund*, 12, no. 2 (1917), 14-15.
- [98] A sense of competition with the men and the other exhibits of the fair directed much of the fair women's activities. Some women felt one could not expect the woman artist able to successfully compete with the men to forego displaying her work in the Fine Arts Building. Other women saw drawbacks to being associated with women's work, and the more lowly applied arts, to say nothing of the biscuit baking and cooking demonstrations which would be sponsored by the Woman's Building. Yet others felt it was too early for women to compete in the fine arts arena, and that women's strengths should be stressed—in the applied or "primitive" arts like pottery whose originators were thought to be women. In the end, organizer Bertha Palmer's initial optimism for a womanly triumph in the fine arts remained unfulfilled. She herself declared, "all the best works of art at the fair can be found at the Fine Arts Palace." Jeanne Weimann, *The Fair Women* (Chicago: Chicago Academy, 1981), 322. See also Maud Howe Elliott, ed., *Art and Handicraft in the Women's Building of the World's Columbian Exposition* (Paris and New York: Boussod, Valadon, 1893); "In the Woman's Building. Some of the Many Beautiful Things to be Seen There," *The New York Times*, 25 June 1893, 17; M. A. Lane, "The Woman's Building. World's Fair," *Harper's Weekly*, 9 January 1892, 40.
- [99] *Achter Jahresbericht des Vereines der Schriftstellerinnen und Künstlerinnen in Wien für das Vereinsjahr 1892-93* (Vienna: Selbstverlag, 1893), 5.
- [100] Letter from Blau to [unidentified] Munich, 1 March 1893 (I.N. 65890).
- [101] Plakolm-Forsthuber concludes "with some certainty" that *Spring at the Prater* was the painting that Blau sent to the Woman's Building in Chicago in 1893. It is hard to document because the painting was not exhibited and Blau herself referred to the painting variously in her correspondence. "Tina Blau und die Frauenbewegung," 43.
- [102] Letter from Blau to [unidentified] Munich, 1 March 1893 (I.N. 65890).
- [103] In a letter from 12 April 1908, addressee unknown, Blau politely but firmly reiterates her stance to refuse to participate in women's exhibitions. The letter may be to one of the organizers for the Eight Women Artists that was active during the first decade of the twentieth century, and tried very hard to get Blau to participate, at least as a guest. For example, in a much earlier letter from 3 November 1900, Eight Women Artists member Olga Wisinger wrote to Marianne Eschenburg regarding an upcoming exhibition, "Couldn't you try to work on Tina Blau, so that she takes part?" (I.N. 65898). Blau's 1908 response to their newest invitation was characteristically polite but unwavering in her rejection. (I.N. 65891).
- [104] Letter from Blau to Minna Hoegl, President of the Union of Women Writers and Artists in Vienna, Munich, 13 April 1893 (I.N. 65889).
- [105] "Kleine Chronik," *Wiener Zeitung*, 21 November 1909, 2; "Der Kaiser in der Ausstellung der Malerin Tina Blau," *Neues Wiener Tagblatt*, 21 November 1909; Ankwicz, "Tina Blau," *Frauenbilder aus Österreich*, 248-9.
- [106] Mayreder, "Wiens große malerin ...," *Volkszeitung*, 3.
- [107] August Schäffer, 19 January 1900 manuscript essay, "Tina Blau," transcribed in Roser-De Palma, *Die Landschaftsmalerin Tina Blau*, 152. The essay was published, according to Natter, "Dokumentation," 171, but I have not found any further references to its publication.
- [108] Roser-De Palma, *Die Landschaftsmalerin Tina Blau*, 152.
- [109] Haja, "Alltägliche Natur," 9.
- [110] Seven months before *The Art of the Woman* opened, Blau had had her seventh one-person exhibition, at the *Kunstverein Neuer Wahl* in Hamburg. Her first one-person exhibition had taken place two decades earlier at the Munich *Kunstverein* in 1890. Her important exhibition catalogues are listed in Natter, *Plein Air*, 186.
- [111] For more on Vienna's art unions and women artists, see Julie Johnson, *The Art of the Woman: Women's Art Exhibitions in Fin-de-Siècle Vienna*, 68-172.



- [112] Blau, quoted in Roser-De Palma, *Die Landschaftsmalerin Tina Blau*, 150.
- [113] August Schaeffer, 50 Jahre Wiener Kunst, typescript., n.d., Künstlerhausarchiv, Vienna.
- [114] Plakolm-Forsthuber has pointed out that early in this relationship some pictures were signed with the initials of both Schindler and Blau in "Tina Blau und die Frauenbewegung," 40.
- [115] Letter from Blau to August Schäffer in response to his 19 January 1900 manuscript essay, "Tina Blau," Vienna, 14 February 1900, as transcribed by Roser-De Palma, *Die Landschaftsmalerin Tina Blau*, 146. The letter from Blau has also been reprinted in full in Natter, "Dokumentation," 171-73.
- [116] Mayreder, "Tina Blau," 306.
- [117] A notable exception is the collective exhibition of Emilie Mediz-Pelikan and Karl Mediz at the Hagenbund in 1903. See Erich Tromayer, *Emilie Mediz-Pelikan: Bilder, Briefe, Gedanken* (Vienna: Selbstverlag, 1986).
- [118] Werner Schweiger, *Der junge Kokoschka* (Vienna: Christian Brandstaetter, 1983), 202-8.
- [119] *Austria in London. Austrian National Exhibition of Industry, Art, Travel, Sport*, Exh. cat., (London: Dorland Hall, 1934), 30. Alexandra Ankwicz describes this as a significant honor, because these were works from the museum collections, and Blau's painting was sent as representative of the "Austrian masters." "In Memoriam Tina Blau: Zum 90. Geburtstag der berühmten österreichische Malerin," Typescript, Ankwicz-Kleehoven papers.
- [120] Wilhelm Dessauer, "Zwei Künstlernaturen," *Neue Freie Presse*, 29 May 1934, 1-2.
- [121] The museum owned nine of her works altogether. Folder Z1.184 1938, Österreichische Galerie Archives, as cited by G. Tobias Natter, "'Wenn Sie noch unverändert an meine Tante denken' Tina Blau und der Nationalsozialismus," in Natter, *Plein Air*, 64.
- [122] Bruno Grimschitz, *Österreichische Maler vom Biedermeier zur Moderne* (Vienna: Wolfrum, 1963), as cited in Natter, "'Wenn Sie noch...,'" 67. It was simultaneously issued as *Austrian Painting from Biedermeier to Modern Times* (Vienna: Wolfrum, 1963). She had been honored locally until this erasure. After her death, there were commemorative exhibitions in 1917 and 1926, the tenth-year anniversary of her death, but the next exhibition devoted to her would be in 1971. *Gedächtnis- und Nachlaß-Ausstellungen Zygmunt Ajdukiewicz. Tina Blau-Lang. August von Schaeffer. Hans Wilt*, Exh. cat. Künstlerhaus (Vienna: Künstlerhaus, 1917), nos. 64-140; *Tina Blau*, Exh. cat. Galerie Würthle (Vienna: Galerie Würthle, 1926); *Tina Blau, 1845-1916: Eine Wiener Malerin*, Exh. cat. Österreichische Galerie (Vienna: Österreichische Galerie im Oberen Belvedere, 1971).
- [123] Natter, "'Wenn Sie noch...,'" 64-65.
- [124] Ibid.
- [125] Ibid.
- [126] A few works remain with Blau's descendents in New York. Ibid., 67.
- [127] In 1941 she was deported to Poland, from where she was sent to either Birkenau or Auschwitz. Official communication of the Register of the Vienna Municipal Archive, 3 May 1996, as cited in Ibid., 68.
- [128] Griselda Pollock and Roszika Parker, *Old Mistresses: Women, Art and Ideology* (New York: Pantheon, 1981), 170.
- [129] Valéry, *Selected Writings*, 141.
- [130] Ibid.
- [131] For more on stereotypes, see Sander Gilman, *Difference and Pathology: Stereotypes of Sexuality, Race and Madness* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985).
- [132] James E. Young, *At Memory's Edge* (New Haven: Yale, 2000).

## Illustrations



Fig. 1, Tina Blau, *In the Tuileries Gardens (Sunny Day)*, 1883. Oil on canvas. Vienna, Österreichische Galerie [\[return to text\]](#)



Fig. 2, Madame d'Ora, Photograph of Tina Blau, 1915. Bildarchiv, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek. [\[return to text\]](#)



Fig. 3, Tina Blau, *Spring at the Prater* [*Frühling im Prater*], 1882. Oil on canvas. Vienna, Österreichische Galerie [\[return to text\]](#)