

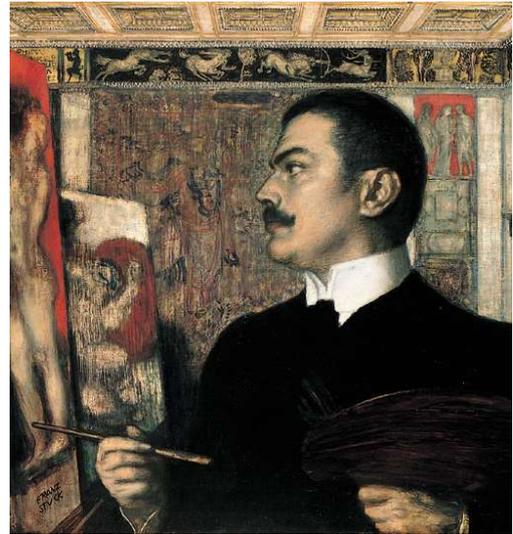
KUNKEL FINE ART

Zeichnungen, Gemälde und Skulpturen
des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts

Franz von Stuck

1863 Tettenweis – 1928 Munich

Franz Stuck's life is a story of rags to riches. A miller's son, he advanced to be one of the most highly respected artists of his day. His princely lifestyle contrasted starkly with his modest beginnings, earning him the title *Malerfürst*. As a child, Stuck showed precocious skill as a draughtsman. Unusually for a boy of his social rank, his talents were nurtured from an early age and he was sent to train at the *Kunstgewerbeschule* in Munich. After completing his training he enrolled at the Munich Academy. As an academy student in the years 1881-5 he produced humorous drawings for illustrated magazines and provided sketches for a portfolio titled *Allegorien und Embleme*. These works demonstrate a growing sensibility for ornamental effect and a penchant for highly imaginative mythological imagery, both of which were to form the bedrock of his artistic practice and bring him widespread recognition.



Franz von Stuck, *Self-portrait*, 1905

Stuck's breakthrough came in 1889 when he was awarded a gold medal for a painting titled *Der Wächter des Paradieses* at the annual exhibition staged at the Munich Glaspalast. The painting, an idealized life-sized self-portrait, is now in the collection of the Museum Villa Stuck in Munich. As a founder member of the *Munich Secession* in 1892 he was able to exercise increasing influence in official artistic circles. His appointment as professor at the Munich Academy in 1895, coupled with the construction of a magnificent villa on Prinzregentenstrasse in 1897-8 elevated his social status. The building was built and decorated according to his own plans – an attempt to create his own ideal of the *Gesamtkunstwerk* through a symbiosis of architecture, painting and sculpture. He was ennobled in 1905.

Stuck's importance lies in his unrivalled ability – as a draughtsman, painter and sculptor – to use his unerring decorative sensibility to break down the boundaries between fine and applied art. Echoing Arnold Böcklin and Max Klinger, his Symbolist imagery is filled with yearning for a world enraptured by beauty, between heroism and hedonism. Paintings like *Die Sünde* (Neue Pinakothek Munich), *Der Krieg* (Neue Pinakothek Munich) and *Der Kuss der Sphinx* (Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest) and sculptures such as *Verwundeter Kentaur* and *Reitende Amazone* are icons of early twentieth-century art – works whose aesthetic appeal and pulling power are still unabated.