

LONDON | Mitzi Mina | [Mitzi.Mina@Sothebys.com](mailto:Mitzi.Mina@Sothebys.com) | Sarah Rustin | [Sarah.Rustin@Sothebys.com](mailto:Sarah.Rustin@Sothebys.com) | +44 (0) 207 293 6000  
NEW YORK | Lauren Gioia | [Lauren.Gioia@Sothebys.com](mailto:Lauren.Gioia@Sothebys.com) | Darrell Rocha | [Darrell.Rocha@sothebys.com](mailto:Darrell.Rocha@sothebys.com)

## One of the Greatest Portraits by Gustav Klimt To Come to Auction

An Exquisite Portrait of Gertrud Loew, Later Known as Gertha Felsövényi,  
To Be Offered Following a Settlement Between the Felsövényi Heirs and  
The Klimt Foundation, Vienna



Thursday 4th June 2015, Sotheby's London today announces that Gustav Klimt's extraordinarily beautiful and captivating portrait *Bildnis Gertrud Loew* of 1902 will be offered for sale in its 24<sup>th</sup> June Impressionist & Modern Art Evening Sale following a settlement between the Felsövényi family and The Gustav Klimt | Wien 1900-Privatstiftung (Klimt Foundation). The painting (est. £12-18 million / \$18.5-27.7 million / €16.8-25.3 million) depicts the ethereal figure of Gertrud Loew, later known by her married name Gertha Felsövényi, a member of fin-de-siècle Viennese society, wreathed in diaphanous folds of gossamer fabric.

**Helena Newman, Sotheby's Co-Head of Impressionist & Modern Art Worldwide said:** *"Gustav Klimt's exquisite and ingenious representations of women have led to him become the most celebrated painter of the female portrait of the early 20th Century. Bildnis Gertrud Loew, from a crucial period in the artist's career, is one his finest portraits to appear at auction in over twenty years."*

**Gertrud Felsövényi's granddaughter, commenting on behalf of the family heirs, said:** *"This portrait portrays the brave and determined nature of my grandmother. Her strength of character and beauty lives on in this visual embodiment. My father, Anthony Felsövényi, last saw this painting in June 1938 when he left the family home for the last time to depart for America. At that time my grandmother had been advised to leave her family home to live in a less grand home to try to avoid the attention of the Nazis, given her Jewish ancestry. Eventually, under duress, in 1939 she left Vienna altogether to join my father in America, having left all of her belongings behind - including this painting. Her home had been taken over as a Nazi headquarters and she had left her valuable belongings with friends and acquaintances. After the war, she never returned to Vienna. Only my father's sister did, with the hope of retrieving some of their belongings, but to no avail. My father said that my grandmother never again mentioned the painting or the valuable belongings she had left behind."*

*"My father recalled that throughout his childhood the painting was displayed in the entrance hall of their family home. It was displayed prominently on a stand rather than hung on the wall, and faced out to the gardens. After he had left Vienna, my father hung a reproduction of the Klimt portrait of his mother in his*

*home in America. While sadly my father is no longer alive, having died two years ago aged ninety-eight, this settlement would have meant a great deal to him, as it does to me and the other family heirs with whom this settlement has been agreed. Before his death my father had wanted to thank Mrs Ucicky for her longstanding desire to work towards this settlement, and our family wishes to thank her as well as the researchers and others involved in bringing about this resolution.”*

*Bildnis Gertrud Loew* was commissioned by Gertrud’s father Dr Anton Loew, at the time one of the most celebrated physicians in Vienna. The Loew family lived in a palatial residence adjoining the Sanatorium Loew – the largest and grandest private sanatorium in Vienna where a number of important *fin-de-siècle* figures were treated, including Gustav Mahler and Gustav Klimt, as well as Ludwig Wittgenstein. The success of the Sanatorium enabled Anton Loew to acquire some of the greatest masterpieces of the time, including Ferdinand Hodler’s *Der Auserwählte* (now in the Kunstmuseum, Bern) and a further important work by Gustav Klimt, *Judith I* (now housed in the Belvedere, Vienna). He had also commissioned the artist Koloman Moser to design Gertrud and her first husband’s apartment in the Wiener Werkstätte style, but following Anton’s death Gertrud moved back to the family’s residence where she continued to run the Sanatorium. When the Nazis arrived in Vienna she came under increasing pressure due to her Jewish ancestry, and in early 1939 reluctantly agreed to leave Vienna for exile in the United States, leaving the entire Felsövänyi art collection behind. When Gertrud’s daughter, Maria, returned to Vienna after the war to reclaim her family’s property she discovered that it had all been sold by her mother’s friend – herself under duress by persecution - and the Felsövänyi family was not able to retrieve a single work of art.

Untraceable by the Felsövänyi family, by then *Bildnis Gertrud Loew* had been acquired by Gustav Ucicky, one of Gustav Klimt’s sons by Maria Ucicka who had modelled for the artist. Gustav Ucicky was a film director who rose to prominence during the Weimar Republic. He acquired a considerable number of works by his father, which he left to his wife Ursula after his death in 1961. In 2013 Ursula Ucicky established Gustav Klimt | Wien 1900-Privatstiftung which houses this collection of works and is also a non-profit cultural, art historical, scientific and educational centre. In addition to aiming to preserve and research the life and oeuvre of Gustav Klimt, Ursula Ucicky wished to research the history of the acquisition of the artworks in the collection, enlisting notable provenance experts to carry out the research. Following extensive research, a settlement between the Felsövänyi family and the Klimt Foundation was reached under the Washington Conference Principles on Nazi-Confiscated Art and an agreement that *Bildnis Gertrud Loew* will be offered for sale.

**Commenting on the sale, Peter Weinhäupl, Chair of the Board of Directors of The Gustav Klimt | Wien 1900-Privatstiftung (Klimt Foundation), said:** “Mrs Ucicky and the Klimt Foundation are happy and grateful that a just and fair settlement was reached with the heirs of the Felsövänyi family on the basis of the Washington Conference Principles and in accordance with our Foundation’s charter.”

### **Gertha Felsövänyi**

Gertrud Loew, known as Gertha, was nineteen years old when she was painted by Gustav Klimt in 1902. Dr Anton Loew had become one of the first benefactors of the Secession movement, co-sponsoring the building of the Secession, and in addition to works by Klimt, Hodler and Segantini, he collected antiques, baroque and renaissance art.

In 1903 Gertha married Hans Eisler von Terramare in the Minoritenkirche in Vienna. After the early death of the couple’s only daughter Gertrude, the marriage fell apart. Gertha moved back into the family residence next to the Sanatorium and took over the running of the Sanatorium after Dr Anton Loew’s death in 1907. In 1912 she married the Hungarian industrialist Elemér Baruch von Felsövänyi with whom she had three children. In November 1923 her husband caught pneumonia returning from a nightclub without an overcoat and died a few days later.

When the Nazis arrived in Vienna, Gertha was encouraged by her lawyer to leave her home and move into more modest accommodation, and then under increasing duress she reluctantly left in 1939, entrusting her artworks to a friend for safekeeping. Although her son Anthony was already living in America, Gertha was denied an entry visa and was not allowed to disembark when she docked in New York harbour; it was only through the intercession of Eleanor Roosevelt that she was allowed a day pass to spend Christmas 1939 with her son. She continued her journey to Colombia and spent time as a French teacher in Barranquilla while she waited for the grant of a US visa. In June 1940 she arrived in the USA where she started a new life, working nightshifts. When Gertha's daughter Maria returned to Vienna after the war to reclaim her family's property she discovered the fate of her family's collection. Having learned about the losses of her father's legacy, Gertha Felsövényi never returned to Austria. She died in Menlo Park, California in March 1964 at the age of 80.

### **A Portrait Painter of International Acclaim**

*Bildnis Gertrud Loew* was exhibited on numerous occasions during the artist's lifetime, both in Austria and Germany. The portrait was first exhibited in the Wiener Secession's Klimt exhibition in 1903 where it was reviewed by the great Viennese art critic, Ludwig von Hevesi, and described as '... *the most sweet-scented poetry the palette is able to create.*' Klimt's foundation of the Secession and its association with private supporters allowed him to cultivate prospective commissions as well as exhibitions on a large scale, in a manner rarely afforded to artists before him. The growth of private patronage from the haute-bourgeoisie was needed to replace the large-scale commissions from the State and city of Vienna which previously supported many of Austria's artists.

Klimt's portraits were much in demand and he rapidly became the highest-paid artist in Vienna. His popularity and status led to a number of prominent exhibitions – not least the *Kollektiv Ausstellung Gustav Klimt* at the 1903-04 Secession – but also to a market for reproductions of his best works. In 1908 the art dealer H. O. Miethke, of the eponymous gallery, initiated the creation of a series of 50 lithographs of Klimt's finest work, simply entitled *Das Werk Gustav Klimts*. The present work was chosen alongside several of the great Golden period works, as well as a selection of landscapes, portraits and allegorical works. It was this collection of prints that helped the artist to gain an international reputation, and Emperor Franz Joseph I of Austria was the first person to purchase a folio set.

### **The Gustav Klimt Foundation**

The Gustav Klimt | Wien 1900-Privatstiftung (Klimt Foundation) was founded in September 2013 by Ursula Ucicky, the widow of the film director and illegitimate son of Gustav Klimt, Gustav Ucicky (1899–1961). Established as a not-for-profit cultural, art historical, scientific and educational institution, its main objective is to research and publicise the life and oeuvre of the artist Gustav Klimt and the movement of Jugendstil/Classical Modernism, which emerged in Vienna around 1900 and was shaped by Klimt, as well as to highlight the important role that Klimt and this era played and continued to play in Austria's cultural development. As a private foundation registered under Austrian law, it serves as an independent and interdisciplinary platform for the documentation of the "Vienna 1900" era, and partners with select organisations for research projects exhibitions. The Klimt Foundation also has a focus on the objective reappraisal of the life and work of Gustave Ucicky and its benefactress Ursula Ucicky, née Kohn. For further information please visit <http://www.klimt-foundation.com/en/>.

#### **FOR MORE NEWS FROM SOTHEBY'S**

Visit: [www.sothebys.com/en/inside/services/press/news/news.html](http://www.sothebys.com/en/inside/services/press/news/news.html)

Follow: [www.twitter.com/sothebys](https://twitter.com/sothebys) & [www.weibo.com/sothebyshongkong](http://www.weibo.com/sothebyshongkong) & WeChat (ID: sothebyshongkong)

Join: [www.facebook.com/sothebys](https://www.facebook.com/sothebys)

Watch: [www.youtube.com/sothebys](https://www.youtube.com/sothebys)

Sotheby's has been uniting collectors with world-class works of art since 1744. Sotheby's became the first international auction house when it expanded from London to New York (1955), the first to conduct sales in Hong Kong (1973), India (1992) and France (2001), and the first international fine art auction house in China (2012). Today, Sotheby's presents auctions in 10 different salesrooms, including [New York](#), [London](#), [Hong Kong](#) and [Paris](#), and Sotheby's [BidNow](#) program allows visitors to view all auctions live online and place bids from anywhere in the world. Sotheby's offers collectors the resources of [Sotheby's Financial Services](#), the world's only full-service art financing company, as well as [private sale](#) opportunities in more than 70 categories, including [S|2](#), the gallery arm of Sotheby's Contemporary Art department, and two retail businesses, [Sotheby's Diamonds](#) and [Sotheby's Wine](#). Sotheby's has a [global network](#) of 90 offices in 40 countries and is the oldest company listed on the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE).

**Images are available upon request**