



## Rainer Stamm "Frühling" as an allegory of timeless yearning and anticipation

The painting "Träume II (auch ‚Frühling‘ oder ‚Erwartung‘)" represents the culmination of Heinrich Vogeler's painting in the *Jugendstil* style (also known as *Art Nouveau*) and ranks among the artist's most outstanding works in oil.

This geometrically stylized composition consisting of an intersecting circle and triangles shows us a side view of the seated Martha Vogeler, who directs her gaze longingly into the distance. The horizon divides the almost square picture across the middle into two halves. Although a meandering river can be discerned in the background, the image has a completely flat layout, one entirely in keeping with the geometric configuration of the canvas: As Gustav Klimt or Giovanni Segantini were wont to do, the flowers have been turned into two-dimensional decorative elements that surround the sitter. This effect is further reinforced by the snowball-like agglomeration of white blooms that encircles Martha's blond head and pale neck like a halo. Even the diaphanous blue dress is not intended to provide erotic titillation, but rather to distribute prismatically the various blue tones across the plane formed by the circle and pyramid shapes.

This iconic work of the *Jugendstil* period is a transfiguration, a climax of desire and a swansong all in one. The painter, graphic artist, and craftsman Heinrich Vogeler had first met Martha Schröder (born 1879 in Worpswede) in 1894 when he was only 14 years old. He was to place her on a pedestal of adoration as the very cynosure of his creative striving and worship of beauty.

He lived with her on *Barkenhoff*, a farmhouse that had been turned into an "island of beauty," and which became the epicenter of the famous Worpswede artists' colony. It was here, in the farmhouse's "White Hall," that Martha and Heinrich Vogeler welcomed artists such as Fritz Mackensen, Hans am Ende, Fritz Overbeck, Otto Modersohn, and Paula Modersohn-Becker. In 1900, the circle was joined by the poet Rainer Maria Rilke, who eventually created a literary portrait of the colony and its protagonists.

Vogeler made Martha, whom he married in 1901, into the subject of innumerable drawings, etchings, and paintings. His wife seated in silhouette is an image he had already conceived in 1908 in a drawing for an ex libris label (for Richard und Traute Müller-Riedel). He had used the composition in strictly illustrative fashion, however, by showing Martha listening as a poet recites from a book. Four years later, Vogeler would stylize the same motif into an allegory of timeless yearning and anticipation. Ironically enough, his marriage had already broken down by this time, and the ideal *Jugendstil* vision of an idyll of love, beauty, and eternal youth no longer matched reality. Thus, the woman pictured is no longer an actual person but an emblem of longing for the unity of art and life, beauty and fulfillment. She has become merged and transubstantiated into a symbol and part of an ornament.

In the paintings like "Frühling" (1898) or "Träumerei" (circa 1906), Vogeler had shown Martha in a real landscape. Here, by contrast, the muse "to whom his entire creative expression was directed" (Heinrich Vogeler: *Werden. Erinnerungen*, Berlin 1989, p. 152), already is being depicted as an untouchable part of his decorative world. It is as if Heinrich Vogeler intended this painted allegory of his yearning as a final goodbye to the era of *Jugendstil*.

### 3 Heinrich Vogeler

Bremen 1872 – 1942 Karaganda/Kazakhstan

“Träume II (auch ‘Frühling’ oder ‘Erwartung’)”. 1912

Oil on canvas. Relined. 100 × 110,5 cm (39 3/8 × 43 1/2 in.). Monogrammed, inscribed and dated lower right in the coat of arms: HV W 1912. Signed and titled on the stretcher on the right: H Vogeler. Frühling. Catalogue raisonné Noltenius 129. Retouchings. [3490] Framed.

#### Provenance

Hans Samuel and Lilli Blumenthal, Hamburg / Germanisches Nationalmuseum, Nuremberg (since 1987, inv. no. Gm 1898; restituted to the heirs of Hans Samuel and Lilli Blumenthal)

EUR 200,000–300,000

USD 238,000–357,000

#### Exhibition

Bremen, Kunsthalle, 1912 / Hanover 1912 (?) / Leipzig 1913 / Heinrich Vogeler. Malerei, Zeichnungen, Druckgraphik, Buchgestaltung. Weimar, Kunsthalle am Theaterplatz, 1976, cat. no. 2 / Heinrich Vogeler. Kunstwerke, Gebrauchsgegenstände, Dokumente. Berlin, Staatliche Kunsthalle and Hamburg, Kunstverein, 1983, cat. no. 23, ill. p. 86, p. 113 / Worpswede, Barkenhoff und Kunsthalle, 1989, 2nd edition, cat. no. 52, ill. p. 80, p. 258 / Heinrich Vogeler. Von Worpswede nach Moskau. Bietigheim-Bissingen, Städtische Galerie, 1997, cat. no. 23, ill. p. 79 / Heinrich Vogeler und der Jugendstil. Worpswede, Barkenhoff, Große Kunstschau and Haus im Schluh; Darmstadt, Museum Künstlerkolonie and Stadt Hamm, Gustav-Lübcke-Museum, Stadt Hamm, 1997–1999, cat. no. 21, ill. p. 46 / Heinrich Vogeler. Künstler, Träumer, Visionär. Worpswede, Worpsweder Kunsthalle, 2012

#### Literature and illustration

Herbert Wefels: Heinrich Vogeler und der Jugendstil. Göttingen, Univ., Diss., 1960, ill. 38 / Heinrich Wiegand Petzet: Von Worpswede nach Moskau: Heinrich Vogeler. Ein Künstler zwischen den Zeiten. Cologne, Verlag DuMont Schauberg, 4th edition 1977, ill. 34 / Auction 222: Moderne Kunst. Hamburg, Dr. Ernst Hauswedell & Ernst Nolte, 2.–4.6.1977, cat. no. 702 / Heinrich Wiegand Petzet: Heinrich Vogeler. Zeichnungen. Cologne, Verlag DuMont Schauberg, 3rd edition 1981, ill. 25 / Hermann Glaser: Die Kultur der Wilhelminischen Zeit. Topographie einer Epoche. Frankfurt a.M., S. Fischer, 1984, ill. p. 269

The painting will be offered with the express consent of the heirs of Hans Samuel and Lilli Blumenthal.

- A museum-quality, epochal work by Vogeler.
- An iconic Jugendstil painting of timeless beauty.
- A tribute to Martha Vogeler, the artist's spouse and muse.

