

JOHANN LOETZ WITWE

KARL KELLERMANN – KOLOMAN MOSER

PHÄNOMEN GENRE 85/3833

Details:

Glass Manufacturer: Johann (Lötz) Loetz Witwe, Klostermühle, Austria

Design of form: Karl Kellermann (*biographical data unknown*)

Production commission no.: Comm. 85/3710

Design of décor: Koloman Moser (1868-1918, Vienna)

Décor: Phänomen Genre 85/3833

Date: c. 1901

Signature: Unsigned

Mount maker: Unknown

Style: Vienna Secession / Jugendstil

Material en technique: Free-formed and decorated glass with applied and fused glass threads and stylized heart-shaped motifs, reduced and iridescent.

Condition: The vase is in excellent original condition, entirely free from damage and showing only minimal age-related signs of wear.

Dimensions:

Height: 31cm / 12.20"

Diameter top: 14,5cm / 5.71"

Diameter base: 13cm / 5.12"

Bibliography:

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Johann Loetz Witwe for E. Bakalowits Söhne

Exceptionally rare vase with Phänomen Genre 85/3833 decoration by Koloman Moser

Form designed by Karl Kellermann | Vienna / 1899

At the turn of the twentieth century, the glassworks of Johann Loetz Witwe at Klostermühle occupied a central position within the artistic renewal taking place in Vienna and the wider Austro-Hungarian Empire. Under the direction of Max Ritter von Spaun, Loetz transformed the possibilities of blown and iridescent glass, developing increasingly sophisticated surface effects that brought the manufactory international recognition. Its presentation at the Exposition Universelle in Paris in 1900, where Loetz was awarded a Grand Prix, marked the factory's emergence as one of Europe's leading producers of modern artistic glass.

Of particular importance was Loetz's relationship with the prestigious Viennese firm E. Bakalowits Söhne. Although the two companies maintained commercial relations for more than three decades, the most innovative phase of their collaboration was concentrated around 1900. Between approximately 1899 and 1903, Bakalowits commissioned a remarkable series of glass objects in which the exceptional technical abilities of the Loetz glassmakers were combined with designs originating in the progressive artistic circles of Vienna.

This collaboration coincided with one of the most important moments in the development of Viennese modernism: the emergence of the Vienna Secession. Founded in 1897 by artists including Gustav Klimt, Josef Hoffmann and Koloman Moser, the Secession sought to break with historicism and to create a new artistic language appropriate to modern life. Architecture, furniture, textiles, graphic design, metalwork and glass were no longer regarded as isolated disciplines, but as elements of a unified artistic environment.

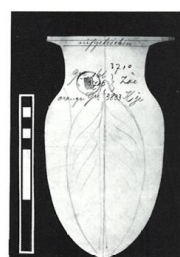
Among the protagonists of this movement, Koloman Moser (1868–1918) was of exceptional importance. A founding member of both the Vienna Secession and, in 1903, the Wiener Werkstätte, Moser was extraordinarily versatile. His work moved from the floral and organic vocabulary of the early Secession towards an increasingly abstract language based upon repetition, geometry and the ordering of the surface. From 1899 he taught at the Vienna School of Arts and Crafts, where this approach was transmitted to a new generation of designers.

It is within this highly creative environment that the present vase must be understood.

Karl Kellermann, Koloman Moser and Loetz

The vase represents a particularly fascinating synthesis involving three different creative forces.

Its underlying glass form is documented under production commission no. 85/3710 and was designed by Karl Kellermann for E. Bakalowits Söhne in 1899. Kellermann studied at the Wiener Kunstgewerbeschule and worked in Vienna as an architect and designer of decorative arts. His documented glass designs are known exclusively for Bakalowits, making his surviving body of work particularly limited.



85/3710 (K. Kellermann)

85/3710

aufgetrieben
Dekorzeichnung 8 theilig.
Gre 166 zöe
Gre 3716 zöe
orange Gre 3833 K je

The extraordinary decoration applied to this form belongs to Phänomen Genre 85/3833, designed by Koloman Moser in 1901 for Bakalowits and executed by Johann Loetz Witwe.

This distinction is important: Kellermann provided the architectural form of the vessel; Moser transformed its surface through one of his most sophisticated experimental glass decorations; and Loetz translated the design into glass.

The result is therefore much more than a decorative Loetz vase. It is a documented product of the interaction between the Viennese avant-garde, the commissioning activities of Bakalowits and the technical virtuosity of the Loetz glassworks.

Phänomen Genre 85/3833

Across the surface, elongated vertical bands descend through the glass, establishing a strong linear rhythm. Between and within these bands appear repeated heart-shaped motifs, created not as superficial painted ornament but as integral elements of the hot-worked glass decoration.

The combination is particularly characteristic of Moser's artistic development around 1900–1901. The heart remains recognisable as an organic motif, yet through repetition it loses much of its literal meaning and becomes an abstract unit within a carefully organised surface pattern. The vertical stripes impose structure and rhythm, while the hearts introduce movement and a softer, almost botanical quality.

This tension between nature and geometry is fundamental to Moser's work during this period. It represents the transition from the more floral vocabulary of the early Vienna Secession towards the increasingly geometric and abstract language for which Moser and the later Wiener Werkstätte became celebrated.

The execution demanded considerable technical control from the Loetz glassmakers. The stripes and heart-shaped elements had to be incorporated into the vessel while the glass remained hot, manipulated and fused into the body before the final form was completed. Their controlled repetition nevertheless retains subtle variations created by the hand of the glassmaker. It is precisely this combination of design discipline and the fluidity of molten glass that gives the vase its extraordinary vitality.

Viewed in changing light, the decoration alternately emerges and recedes into the body of the vessel. The hearts appear almost suspended within the glass, while the elongated threads emphasise its verticality. The decoration therefore does not simply cover the form; it interacts with it.

The mount and a possible early execution

Of particular interest is the mount of the present vase.

Other documented examples of this glass form and decoration are known with mounts of a distinctly more architectural and geometrically ordered character. These correspond closely to the increasingly rigorous vocabulary associated with Viennese modernism and the later development of the Wiener Werkstätte.

The mount of the present example is markedly different. It has a more floral, organic and curvilinear character, visually closer to the earlier language of the Vienna Secession and Jugendstil.

This difference is potentially significant.

As Phänomen Genre 85/3833 was introduced in 1901, the stylistic character of the mount raises the intriguing possibility that the present vase represents an early execution of the design, produced at a moment when the

organic vocabulary of the 1890s was still giving way to the more geometric Viennese modernism of the following years.

This should not be presented as documentary proof of an exact production date: without archival evidence directly connecting the mount to a particular order, such precision would go beyond what can presently be established. Nevertheless, stylistically the mount is entirely compatible with an early date and provides an important indication that this example may belong to the earliest phase of production around 1901.

Indeed, the juxtaposition is particularly compelling. Moser's decoration itself stands at a stylistic crossroads: the heart motif still refers to the organic world, while its repetition and combination with vertical bands already anticipate abstraction. The floral mount reinforces the earlier side of this transition.

The historic photographic documentation

The importance of the model is further strengthened by surviving historical photographic documentation.

A period photograph published in connection with Viennese interior and decorative design shows a vase of the same Kellermann form combined with Moser's 85/3833 decoration, albeit mounted differently. The photograph is particularly important because it demonstrates that this combination of form and decoration existed within the historical context of Viennese design rather than being a later association based solely upon factory records.



Exhibition of interior and furniture in Vienna, 1905



Phänomen Genre 85/3833 – PGM

The appearance of the model in period visual documentation provides an unusually strong art-historical anchor for the vase.

Equally significant is the survival of another example in the Passau Glass Museum, again combining the Kellermann form with Moser's distinctive heart-and-stripe decoration. Its presence in a major specialist collection devoted to Bohemian and Austrian glass underlines the recognised importance of the design.

The different mounts are themselves revealing. Rather than diminishing the relationship between the examples, they demonstrate how the same highly sophisticated Loetz glass body could be incorporated into different Gesamtkunstwerk-like settings. The glass was not necessarily conceived as an isolated vessel; through its mount it became part of the broader Viennese dialogue between glass, metalwork, furniture and interior design.

An exceptionally rare survival

Examples of Phänomen Genre 85/3833 are exceptionally uncommon.

This was not one of the standard Loetz Phänomen Genres manufactured in substantial quantities for the international decorative-arts market. It belongs instead to the highly specialised group of experimental designs produced in connection with Bakalowits and the circle surrounding the Vienna School of Arts and Crafts.

The surviving documentation shows that Moser's involvement with Bakalowits was concentrated within a remarkably short but fertile period. His documented designs include production commissions from 1900 through 1903, placing 85/3833 precisely within the years in which the collaboration between Bakalowits, progressive Viennese designers and Loetz reached its artistic peak.

The rarity of the present vase is therefore not simply a matter of how few examples survive. Its significance lies in the unusual convergence of documented authorship, experimental glass technology, historical photographic evidence, institutional comparison and the artistic context in which it was conceived.

Art-historical significance

The vase can ultimately be understood on several levels at once.

It is an exceptional example of Loetz's technical mastery, in which demanding hot-worked decoration was integrated into an elegant blown-glass form. It is a documented Karl Kellermann design, representing the work of a comparatively little-known designer whose glass production for Bakalowits was extremely limited. Above all, its Phänomen Genre 85/3833 decoration places it directly within the creative world of Koloman Moser, one of the central figures of Viennese modernism.

The object also captures a pivotal moment in European decorative art: the brief period in which the floral vocabulary of Jugendstil and the early Vienna Secession was being transformed into the structured, geometric abstraction that would define the Wiener Werkstätte and exert a lasting influence upon twentieth-century design.

The floral character of the present mount makes this particular example especially evocative of that transition. Against its organic framework, Moser's rhythmic hearts and elongated stripes appear simultaneously naturalistic and abstract—an unusually clear visual expression of the artistic transformation taking place in Vienna around 1901.

Combined with its documented Kellermann form, Moser-designed Phänomen Genre 85/3833 decoration, execution by Johann Loetz Witwe for E. Bakalowits Söhne, extreme rarity, surviving period photographic evidence and comparison with the example preserved in the Passau Glass Museum, the present vase represents considerably more than a rare piece of Loetz glass.

It is a tangible document of one of the most innovative moments in the history of Viennese decorative art: a work in which Kellermann's form, Moser's revolutionary approach to ornament, Bakalowits's role as artistic intermediary and Loetz's extraordinary command of glassmaking converge in a single object.

