

JOSEF MARIA OLBRICH

JUGENDSTIL CANDLE HOLDERS



Details:

Designer: Joseph Maria Olbrich (1867–1908, Troppau/Darmstadt)

Manufacturer: Metallwarenfabrik Eduard Hueck, Lüdenscheid, Germany

Model number: 1819

Period: 1902

Signature: Marked in relief on the underside with the artist's monogram and the factory mark E. HUECK EDELZINN 1819.

Style: Jugendstil

Material and technique: Cast and polished pewter

Condition: In good original condition, with a natural age-related patina and minor signs of wear consistent with age.

Dimensions:

Height: 36cm / 14.17"

Width: 19,2cm / 7.56"

Depth: 17,3cm / 6.69"

Provenance:

Lei and Mientje Linssen, the Netherlands;

Tussen Kunst & Kitsch, AVRO, 2000;

Tussen Kunst & Kitsch op Reis, afl. 3, Met Frans Leidelmeijer naar Wenen, AVRO, uitgezonden 29 juli 2001.

Literature:

Ernst Wasmuth, ed. Architektur von Olbrich. 2 vols. Berlin: Ernst Wasmuth, 1902–1914. Vol. 1, ill. no. 106; vol. 2, ill. no. 88.

Künstlerkolonie-Ausstellung. Exhibition catalogue. Darmstadt: Mathildenhöhe, 1904, 32.

Josef M. Olbrich 1867–1908. Exhibition catalogue. Darmstadt: Mathildenhöhe, 1983, 351, cat. no. 410.

Museum Künstlerkolonie Darmstadt. Darmstadt: Institut Mathildenhöhe, 1990, 204, cat. no. 313.

Peter Bröhan and Dieter Högermann, Metallkunst der Moderne. Berlin: Bröhan-Museum, 1994, 55.

Description:

An Icon of design

From Vienna to Darmstadt, with a Remarkable Dutch Story

We are proud to present a remarkable pair of Jugendstil candlesticks, designed around 1902 by Josef Maria Olbrich (1867–1908) and executed by Metallwarenfabrik Eduard Hueck in Lüdenscheid.

It is not only the design that makes this pair exceptional. The history of these particular candlesticks is equally remarkable, taking us from the Netherlands to Vienna — with a prominent role for one of the Netherlands' best-known experts in Art Nouveau and Art Deco.



Josef Maria Olbrich

Josef Maria Olbrich ranks among the most important architects and designers of European Jugendstil.

After completing his studies in Vienna, he joined the architectural office of Otto Wagner. In 1897, together with artists and designers including Gustav Klimt, Josef Hoffmann and Koloman Moser, Olbrich became one of the founding members of the Vienna Secession, a progressive artistic movement that broke with established academic traditions.

Olbrich designed the celebrated Secession Building in Vienna, completed in 1898. With its radical geometric architecture and distinctive gilded dome, the building became an enduring symbol of the new Viennese art.

His Viennese period, however, was relatively short.

In 1899, Grand Duke Ernst Ludwig of Hesse invited Olbrich to join the newly established artists' colony at the Mathildenhöhe in Darmstadt. There, Olbrich was given the opportunity to realise his artistic ideas on a much broader scale.

Architecture, interiors, furniture and decorative objects were no longer to be regarded as separate disciplines, but as integral parts of a single artistic whole: the Gesamtkunstwerk.

It is within this innovative environment that the design of these candlesticks should be understood.



Josef Maria Olbrich



Secession building, Vienna, Austria



The candlestick, an icon of design

Around 1902, Josef Maria Olbrich designed these monumental two-light candlesticks, executed in pewter by Metallwarenfabrik Eduard Hueck in Lüdenscheid.

The broad oval base flows seamlessly into a tall, trumpet-shaped stem, which gradually narrows and flattens towards the top. Two elegantly curving arms complete the composition. Geometric and organic forms are brought together with exceptional harmony. Subtle relief decoration incorporating stylised foliage adds a refined ornamental element without detracting from the distinctly architectural character of the design.

It is precisely this synthesis of architecture, sculpture and decorative art that characterises Olbrich's design language and his pursuit of the Gesamtkunstwerk.

The importance attached to the design from an early date is reflected in its contemporary documentation. During Olbrich's lifetime, the candlesticks were published in *Architektur von Olbrich* and included in the catalogue of the 1904 Künstlerkolonie Exhibition in Darmstadt.

The significance of the design is further reflected by its presence in major international museum collections. Examples can be found in the Bröhan-Museum and Kunstgewerbemuseum in Berlin, the British Museum in London, the Museum Künstlerkolonie in Darmstadt, the Leopold Museum in Vienna and the Museum of Modern Art in New York.

The candlesticks are therefore regarded as one of the characteristic and internationally recognised designs of the Darmstadt Jugendstil.

A remarkable provenance

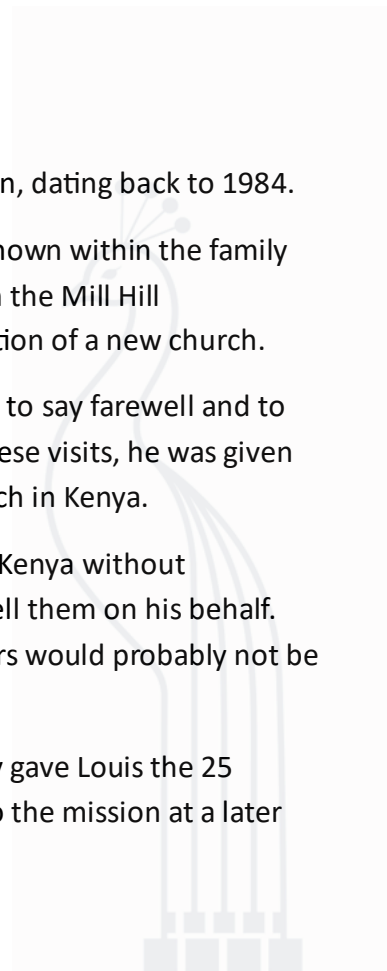
This particular pair of candlesticks, however, has a remarkable Dutch story of its own, dating back to 1984.

That year, Louis Linssen, the half-brother of Lei Linssen's uncle and affectionately known within the family as 'Uncle Lowie', spent two months in the Netherlands. Louis was a missionary with the Mill Hill Missionaries in Kenya, where he was involved, among other things, in the construction of a new church.

Towards the end of his stay, as was customary, he visited friends and acquaintances to say farewell and to gather support for his mission and the construction of the church. During one of these visits, he was given this pair of pewter candlesticks, intended to be placed on the altar of the new church in Kenya.

The candlesticks, however, proved so heavy that Louis could not take them back to Kenya without considerably exceeding his baggage allowance. He therefore asked Lei if he could sell them on his behalf. When Lei asked how much they should fetch, Louis suggested that 25 Dutch guilders would probably not be too much to ask.

Lei suspected that the candlesticks were worth considerably more and immediately gave Louis the 25 guilders, intending to establish their true value and send any additional proceeds to the mission at a later date.



An initial appraisal at an antiques market in Kessel revealed that the candlesticks dated from the Jugendstil period and might be worth around a thousand guilders. This prevented them from ending up at a local flea market, where they had originally been intended to be sold in aid of the parish youth programme.

It was not until sixteen years later that their true significance was discovered. When the Dutch television programme *Tussen Kunst & Kitsch* visited the castle gardens of Arcen in August 2000, Lei and Mientje Linssen decided to have the candlesticks examined once again. By then, Louis had passed away.

There they met Frans Leidelmeijer, who immediately took a particular interest in the candlesticks. He identified them as a design by Josef Maria Olbrich.

What had begun as a gift intended for a church in Kenya thus led, sixteen years later, to the identification of an important design of the Darmstadt Jugendstil. The discovery was followed by another remarkable chapter: Lei and Mientje travelled to Vienna with Frans Leidelmeijer for a special episode of *Tussen Kunst & Kitsch op Reis*, devoted to the work and artistic world of Josef Maria Olbrich.



Tussen Kunst & Kitsch – August 2000

Frans Leidelmeijer

For collectors and enthusiasts of Art Nouveau and Art Deco, Frans Leidelmeijer hardly needs an introduction.

Leidelmeijer is regarded as one of the leading Dutch authorities on decorative arts from the period 1880–1940. From the 1970s onwards, he played an important role as an art dealer in the rediscovery and appreciation of Art Nouveau and Art Deco in the Netherlands.

In 1990, he became an expert on *Tussen Kunst & Kitsch*, a role he would hold for no fewer than 26 years.

His knowledge, enthusiasm and distinctive way of presenting made him one of the programme's most recognisable experts to the Dutch public.

It was Leidelmeijer who would eventually accompany the owners of these candlesticks on their journey to Vienna.

Tussen Kunst & Kitsch op reis, Vienna

For this special episode, Lei and Mientje Linssen travelled with Frans Leidelmeijer to Vienna, the city where Olbrich had been one of the leading figures of the artistic avant-garde at the end of the nineteenth century.

The programme connects the history of the candlesticks with the story of Josef Maria Olbrich and the Vienna Secession.

Naturally, their journey also took them to the celebrated Secession Building — the revolutionary exhibition building designed by Olbrich in 1897–1898, which more than a century later remains one of the icons of Viennese architecture.

The episode, *Tussen Kunst & Kitsch op Reis – Met Frans Leidelmeijer naar Wenen*, was broadcast by AVRO on 29 July 2001.

More than twenty years later, the programme remains a fascinating record of the history of this particular pair of candlesticks.



Tussen Kunst & Kitsch op reis – July 2001

The candlesticks measure approximately 36 cm in height and are executed in pewter. The undersides bear the monogram of Josef Maria Olbrich as well as the manufacturer's mark E. HUECK EDELZINN 1819.

The combination of Olbrich's important design, its execution by Eduard Hueck, the representation of the model in major international museum collections and the extensively documented Dutch provenance makes this pair an exceptional example of the Darmstadt Jugendstil.

