

Town & Country

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SPECIAL ISSUE

ALL
THE
BEST

LIFE'S
GREAT
LITTLE
THINGS!

AN INTIMATE
NEW SPA

GEM
OF A
MUSEUM

NOVEMBER 2007
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GIADA
DE LAURENTIIS
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PLUS:
PINT-SIZED
DOGS

LITTLE
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HOTELS

THE
SMALL-
HOME
CRAZE

Giada De Laurentiis
in Carolina Herrera

Ronald S. Lauder,
who created the
Neue Galerie with
the late Serge
Sabarsky, recently
welcomed Gustav
Klimt's *Adele
Bloch-Bauer I* into
the fold.

So What's NEUE?

A GREAT SMALL art museum is one whose contents you can savor in a morning's visit yet enjoy again and again. No U.S. museum better qualifies than the **Neue Galerie New York**, on Manhattan's Upper East Side. Even with only 4,300 square feet of exhibition space—less than many of the city's private art galleries—it holds its own with such exalted neighbors as the Frick Collection, the Met and the Guggenheim. One reason for the

By Philip Herrera

Photographs by William Abranowicz





Neue (rhymes with Goya) Galerie's success is that it focuses intently on a single moment in art history: the visual revolution that took place in Austria and Germany between 1890 and 1940. Not only was painting affected, but so was the design of everything from chairs to clothes, coffee cups to jewelry. The epicenter was Vienna, an imperial city replete with young talent—most notably the

Carrière & Hastings designed the Neue's 1914 building as a residence for industrialist William Starr Miller. Museum director Renée Price (opposite, with Egon Schiele drawings) and her staff occupy the top two floors.

artists Gustav Klimt, Egon Schiele and Oskar Kokoschka and the architects and designers Adolf Loos, Josef Hoffmann and Koloman Moser—all in full revolt against the academy. (Adding to the general combustion were Sigmund Freud and Ludwig Wittgenstein.) Meanwhile, in Germany, a group of painters known as the Expressionists were embarking on a new, implacable quest to express their innermost feelings, often using simple, powerful forms to heighten the emotional response of viewers.

A second reason for the Neue Galerie's quality is that it enjoys the sponsorship of Ronald S. Lauder. The son of the late cosmetics queen Estée Lauder, he is a man who has both the passion for art and the deep pockets to create an exemplary museum. Even as a boy, he loved all things Austrian; all four of his grandparents were from Austria-Hungary. By his teens, he had discovered the work of Gustav Klimt and was so smitten that he learned German in order to read the only books available about the artist. Later, he lived in Vienna when President Reagan appointed him U.S. ambassador to Austria.

Last July, Lauder made news when he paid a staggering \$135 million to capture a single masterwork by Klimt for his collection.

Although he is capable of this kind of grand gesture, "no detail is too small for his attention," says the Neue Galerie's director, Renée Price. "There are three period clocks on exhibition here, for example, and all of them are set to the exact New York time. It tells visitors that this museum is a living place, that it is *now*. Mr. Lauder insists on such things."

In 1967 Lauder met Serge Sabarsky, a Viennese art dealer in New York who became his friend, fellow collector and mentor. Lauder soon asked Sabarsky how many clients he had. "Two," said the dealer. "Well, now you can add my brother and myself," said Lauder. Replied Sabarsky, "I've already counted both of you."



In the 1970s and '80s, when Lauder and Sabarsky bought most of the art that would eventually fill the Neue, as it is sometimes called, the works were wildly undervalued. "The art was largely ignored because tastemakers like Alfred Barr, of the Museum of Modern Art, thought it wasn't in the mainstream of modernism," says the Neue's deputy director, Scott Gutterman. "And then there was the bias against Austrian and German art because those countries were our enemies in two world wars. We forget that Hitler wanted to destroy the culture that produced the art we have in this museum."

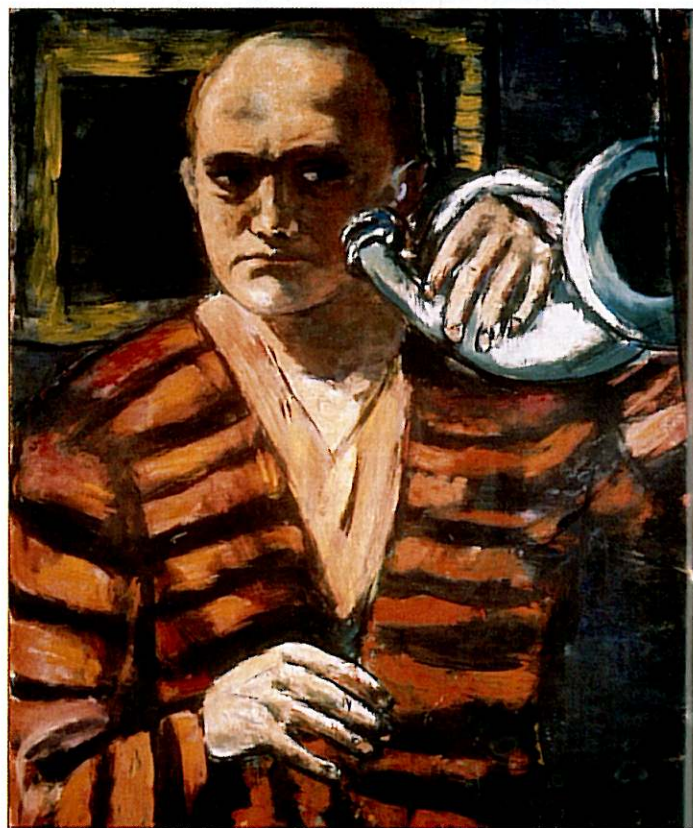
Gradually, the two men assembled the best collections of early-20th-century Austrian and German art outside those countries. Sometimes they competed for pieces, retaining their friendship all the while. Lauder, a ducal figure who served for ten years as chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Museum of Modern Art, says he was motivated by his devotion to art. "It's my life," he told an interviewer recently.

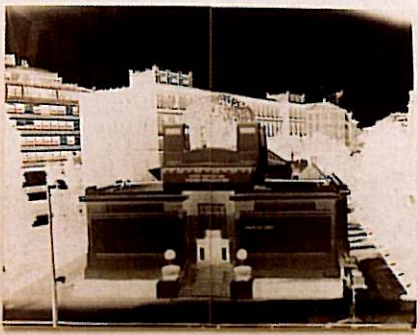
Sabarsky's interests were more narrowly focused. "Serge was charismatic, funny, driven," recalls Price, who ran Sabarsky's gallery. "He worked seven days a week, never took a vacation. He wouldn't embark on a venture without Ronald Lauder. The two of them talked on the phone five times a day." As they collected, they came to share a lofty vision. "Serge went from being an art dealer to putting on museumlike shows," says Lauder. "We then began talking about starting an art museum where he could just put on shows." Sabarsky died in 1996, before the dream could be realized, but he left his stamp on the Neue. Ten percent of its collection came from him (80 percent was supplied by Lauder and the remainder acquired by the museum itself). Ever the Viennese, Sabarsky also insisted that it have a great café, saying, "If the coffee is not good, forget the whole museum."

They searched for a building for years, finally settling, in 1994, on a 1914 brick-and-limestone Fifth Avenue mansion designed by Carrière & Hastings, the creators of the splendid New York Public Library. "When I saw it, my jaw dropped," says Annabelle Selldorf, the architect chosen to transform the house into a museum. "It was marvelous, beautiful, impressive—but in terrible shape." Her firm made few structural changes (adding a large elevator, for example) but did a lot of restoring, rewiring and replastering. The result is a museum that has the intimacy and luxury of a great manor.

The ground floor comprises a well-stocked bookstore, a design shop full of handsome reproductions of objects on view and a café, named after Sabarsky, that looks so much as if it had been transplanted from old Vienna that Austrian diplomats drop in because it feels like home. (The coffee, incidentally, is excellent.) Up one flight, visitors find three gracious rooms given over to fine and

A touch of Vienna in New York, clockwise from near right: the Café Sabarsky; Vera Lutter's *Secession, Vienna I* (1999), a photographic work of Vienna's 1898 Secession building; Gustav Klimt's *Adele Bloch-Bauer I* (1907); Josef Hoffmann's jeweled gold tobacco case (1912); the second-floor painting gallery, showing works by Klimt; Ernst Ludwig Kirchner's *Tightrope Walk* (1908-1910); Max Beckmann's *Self-Portrait With Horn* (1938); the *Knieschwimmer* club chair (circa 1930), by Adolf Loos.









decorative Austrian artists. Lauder had the good sense to collect the jewelry and everyday objects designed by Josef Hoffmann, Koloman Moser and others. With their precise, energized lines, they make much of today's design look anemic. Another room, dimly lit for conservation purposes, shows prized drawings by Klimt and Schiele, some of them quite racy.

The best space is the former living room, where visitors can see one of the world's most expensive paintings, the \$135 million *Adele Bloch-Bauer I*, by Klimt. It is (appropriately) a golden picture, a highly sensual work in which Mrs. Bloch-Bauer, her dark eyes full of seduction and her mouth slightly open, looks at once haughty and enchanting in her swirl of glittering clothes. It is a beautiful, unforgettable portrait that serves as a magnet for the Neue; since it went on view, daily attendance at the museum has doubled. Lauder bought it privately, thus avoiding the possibility of losing what he considers a key painting to another bidder. He explains, "This portrait was finished in 1907, the same year as Picasso's *Demaiselles d'Avignon*, which most people think changed Western art." Lauder concedes Picasso's importance but feels that *Demaiselles* "has no relevance whatever to Paris at that time; the Klimt, on the other hand, could only have been made by him at that moment in Austria." In sum, it may not have started a revolution, but it does epitomize the glamour of a glorious age.

You might expect the rest of the permanent collection to be a letdown after the Klimt. But no, the German Expressionists are a real revelation, with their fraught colors and piercing subjects. Three waves of artists are represented: those who called themselves the Bridge (Emil Nolde, Max Pechstein and Karl Schmidt-Rottluff); the group named Blue Rider (Wassily Kandinsky and Paul Klee); >159

Imposing yet intimate, the Neue Galerie is an ideal venue for presenting decorative arts, including works from Vienna circa 1900 through the close of the Bauhaus school, in 1933. At far left is an Adolf Loos pendulum clock (1904); display cases hold crystal and porcelain by Josef Hoffmann, Koloman Moser and Jutta Sika, among others.

ged eighteen to twenty-one. **Give a little:** \$100 provides a week of one-on-one tutoring for a child; \$200 provides a year's worth of school clothes for one child; \$500 pays for a year of weekly painting, ballet or piano lessons or for ten birthday parties for children who may never have had one before.

UP-AND-COMING OPERATIONS

Baby Buggy Inc., *New York; 212-736-1777; babybuggy.org.* Baby Buggy Inc., founded by Jessica Seinfeld, wife of comedian Jerry Seinfeld, collects gently used and new gear, products and clothing for infants and young children and delivers these items to needy New York City families—including many single teenaged mothers who can't afford the basic necessities and live with their children in foster care. **Give a little:** "\$100 buys a brand-new crib and mattress, which is a really significant gift because cribs help prevent infant deaths due to rollover suffocation," says executive director Claudia Fleming. "This translates as the gift of life." \$250 provides twenty-five families with infant carriers; \$500 provides twenty-five families with baby monitors; \$1,000 provides more than thirty families with playpens or high chairs.

Jeremy's Heroes, *Woodbridge, NJ; 877-554-6773; jeremysheroes.org.* Established in memory of Jeremy Glick, a passenger on United Flight 93 on 9/11 who helped prevent the hijacked plane from reaching its intended target in Washington, D.C., Jeremy's Heroes identifies at-risk elementary- and middle-school children, gives them the equipment they need to participate in sports programs and encourages them, by teaching them to strive for excellence, to realize the hero within. As Jeremy's sister Jennifer Glick, who founded the group, says, "Our logo is an adult holding a child up to reach for the stars." **Give a little:** \$100 buys balls, bats, racquets, gloves and other sports equipment; \$300 funds one semester's coach-

ing and tutoring for one child; \$500 sends a child to sports camp for four weeks; \$25,000 pays for one year's program for an entire school.

Little Kids Rock, *Montclair, NJ; 973-746-8248; littlekidsrock.org.* Even though good music programs have been linked with better behavior and higher grades, music classes have been slashed from public schools nationwide. Little Kids Rock is helping these programs stage a comeback by giving low-income public-school children instruments and high-quality instruction, free of charge. So far, more than 7,000 students in major cities have been reached—*School of Rock*, move over! **Give a little:** \$100 provides two guitars; \$1,000 buys instruments for two classes.

My Stuff Bags Foundation, *Westlake Village, CA; 866-369-7883; mystuffbags.org.* When you're little and upset, a teddy bear or a favorite blankie can be your best friend—but many of the more than 300,000 children who are rescued nationwide each year from abusive homes leave so quickly that they can't take anything along. My Stuff Bags gives these children something to hold on to: duffel bags filled with new toys, toiletries and blankets. Many of the items are handmade, says foundation president Janeen Holmes. "Each bag is a unique collection of things donated by people across the country, so children get the message that they're surrounded by people who care." **Give a little:** \$100 provides bags for ten children.

Tuesday's Children, *Manhasset, NY; 516-562-9000; tuesdayschildren.org.* Founded in 2001 after the World Trade Center attacks, Tuesday's Children offers a wide range of services to families affected by 9/11. For very young children and their families, there's First Steps, with events, outings and support programs; children aged six to sixteen who lost a parent can be paired up with an adult in the Mentoring Program; and for teens seeking to enroll in college, the group offers Career Paths. **Give a little:** \$400 funds the matching of one teen with an adult mentor. ❖

So What's Neue?

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and New Objectivity (which included Max Beckmann, Otto Dix and Georg Grosz, with their acid, indelible view of post-World War I German society).

A small, hardworking staff of fifteen occupies the top two floors of the mansion. Besides running the museum, they plan future shows (usually relying on guest curators to realize them) and produce catalogues. "For our exhibits, most of the art is borrowed," says Price. "European museums can be pretty stiff with us because we are still new to them, but they are changing their minds when they actually see us."

Most people who visit the Neue Galerie for the first time will have a similar epiphany. "German and Austrian art is not given its rightful place yet, though on inspection the artists stand up very well to their contemporaries elsewhere," says the British art historian Jill Lloyd, the guest curator of the Neue Galerie's next big show, "Van Gogh and Expressionism" (March 22 to July 2). "To my eyes, the French Impressionists look very traditional and a little tired by comparison. The Germans had a humanist vision that seems right for our times; most were interested in humanity and issues about humanity."

But in the end, it is the spirit of Vienna that informs the Neue Galerie. "The Viennese are masters of presentation," notes Gutterman. "How you frame a picture, light it and hang it is as important as the object itself. Everything has to be perfect."

And everything *is* perfect: the appetizing little cakes in the café; the beautiful Viennese fabric on the banquettes; the spotless walls and sparkling vitrines; and, most of all, the evocation of an epoch through highly charged paintings and supremely sophisticated objects in a grand setting. It's enough to bring visitors back again and again.

Neue Galerie New York, 1048 Fifth Avenue; 212-628-6200; neuegalerie.org. Open Friday 11 A.M. to 9 P.M.; Saturday, Sunday and Monday 11 A.M. to 6 P.M. ❖