

Franz Giessel, *Young Woman in the Garden with a Sunflower, a House in the Background*, c. 1970, oil on canvas, 85 x 100 cm, signed lower right "GIESSEL," unframed. Condition: very good.

Franz Giessel (Vienna 1902 – 1982 Vienna), son of the academic painter Wilhelm Friedrich Giessel (1869–1938), brother of graphic artist Ludwig Giessel (dates of birth and death unknown) and grandfather of the well-known Viennese lawyer Isabella Jorthan (born 1981), was initially trained by his father before studying at the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna.

He then continued his education on study trips to the Netherlands, Belgium, and France. From 1933 onwards, he exhibited regularly at the Vienna Secession and was represented at the so-called "State Exhibition" at the Vienna Künstlerhaus in 1934. When he refused to disclose information about his ancestry at the 58th annual exhibition of the Secessionists in 1938, he was excluded from the exhibition by the National Socialists and, in 1939, was not forcibly admitted to the Künstlerhaus along with the remaining dozens of Secession members. During World War II, he served on the Eastern Front from 1940 to 1945.

After the war, he became a member of the Künstlerhaus in 1946, left between 1950 and 1955, participated in more than 40 presentations at the Künstlerhaus in the following decades, and was awarded the institution's Golden Medal of Honor. He also exhibited internationally, in Stockholm, Venice, Buenos Aires, Rome, and Johannesburg, among other places. While he spent a long time primarily creating views and landscapes from the Döbling and Vienna areas, he became more progressive in his later years and also ventured into form-dissolving approaches.

The large-format painting offered here dates from this last creative phase and could be connected to the group exhibition *Das grosse Format 1971* (The Large Format 1971) at the Künstlerhaus. It amalgamates elements of nude, still life, and landscape depictions in an interesting way. In the foreground of the painting, a young woman is shown almost semi-nude, with her voluptuous breasts presented quite revealingly. She turns her head lasciviously to the side, drawing attention to her long black hair with a red headband. Next to her is a large sunflower, although it is not clear whether the two elements are meant to have a metaphorical connection or not. A house in the background suggests that the scene may be set in a suburban garden.

The almost garish colors of the painting, with blue, white, green, and yellow as the main colors, strongly inspire the senses. Applied in part using a palette knife technique, which deliberately gives the image a certain blurriness, the young woman's skin in particular is emphasized in the almost glaring light of this summer day, with the lighting working with a clear chiaroscuro effect. The painting is certainly one of Giessel's most powerful works.