

Armin Horovitz, Portrait of Carl Rössler, 1937, oil on wood, signed above right "AHorovitz / [1]937" and on the backside "AHorovitz", 75 x 89.6 cm, unframed, inscribed recto "...Karl...[R]össler/" and verso "Carl Rössler".

This extraordinary painting is a real discovery and bears witness to the National Socialists' bleeding of Vienna's culture, which was once strongly influenced by Jewish people, in several respects.

The painter Armin Hermann Horovitz (1880 Warsaw - 1965 Norwich), almost unknown today, was once a highly acclaimed artist in Vienna who moved in important cultural circles. Born as the son of the successful Hungarian-born portrait painter Leopold Horovitz (1837-1917), he studied at the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna from 1897 to 1901, primarily under Alois Delug (1859-1930) - the latter is said to have been instrumental in opposing Adolf Hitler's admission to the Vienna Academy in 1907. Horovitz then moved to the Munich Academy of Art under Leo Putz (1869-1940), who was to have a major stylistic influence on him. He continued his education by traveling to France, England, Italy and the Netherlands.

Before the First World War, in which he participated as a soldier and from 1916 as a war painter in the Imperial and Royal War Press Quarters. He had already exhibited successfully at the Vienna Secession from 1910 to 1914. Arpad Weixlgärtner wrote in 1911: "He, who had studied in Paris, used this opportunity to introduce himself to his native city in the most advantageous way with two etchings of very large format. The sheet with the large female nude in the foreground is particularly exquisite, with its painterly and decorative treatment." And the magazine *The International Studio* described him as "an artist of great promise" (1911) on the occasion of an exhibition at the Royal Hungarian Art Society in Budapest.

In the interwar period, Horovitz continued to establish himself as a successful artist and frequented Vienna's important cultural circles. From 1911 to 1938, he lived with his wife Rose at Frankgasse 1 (9th district) in a spacious apartment designed by Adolf Loos (1870-1933) (furnishings lost). He had taken over the apartment from the mother of the famous doctor, writer and playwright Arthur Schnitzler (1862-1931). He remained close friends with Schnitzler, a fixture of Viennese modernism, until Schnitzler's death. They met frequently, even with important guests, and went on vacation together. Schnitzler mentioned him dozens of times in his diary.

Armin Horovitz's artistic career then came to an abrupt end at the hands of the National Socialists. He was able to flee to England with his family just in time in 1938. There, however, he was only moderately successful, calling himself Armin Holt for a time. Only a few works are known to exist, such as a pastel portrait of Major Fletcher from 1942. His sisters Stephanie Horovitz (1887-1942) - an important chemist and psychologist - and Zofia Natanson (1878-1942) were murdered in the Treblinka extermination camp in 1942. His sister Janina Horovitz (1882-1941), a talented but mentally unstable painter - the *Neues Wiener Journal* reported a suicide attempt in 1925, but she was saved by her brother Armin - appears to have died under Nazi terror as early as 1941.

The painting on offer here shows Carl Rössler (1864 Vienna - 1948 London), who was an important Jewish actor, director, writer and librettist in the first third of the 20th century and seems almost forgotten today. Initially working as an actor on stages in German-speaking

countries, he joined the circle of Max Halbe (1865-1944) in Munich in 1897, was a member of the ensemble of the German Dramatic Society in London in 1900 and, after further engagements at the Deutsches Theater Berlin and in Munich, decided to become a freelance writer in 1906. As a playwright and librettist, he worked with such important personalities as Kurt Tucholsky (1890-1935), Max Reinhardt (1873-1943) and Lion Feuchtwanger (1884-1958). His best-known works include *Der reiche Jüngling* (1905) and the comedy *Die fünf Frankfurter* (1911), which - based on the Rothschild family - takes a conciliatory look at the problem of Jewish assimilation and was one of the most frequently performed plays in Germany before the First World War.

After the National Socialists came to power, Rössler's plays were no longer allowed to be performed in Germany. In April 1933, he emigrated to Vienna and lived in a retirement home, which he had to leave after the November pogrom of 1938. In June 1939, with the help of Rudolf Olden (1885-1940) and a guarantee from the Rothschild family, he managed to emigrate to Great Britain, where he lived in Oxford and Cambridge and finally died in a retirement home run by the Alexian lay order in London.

The large-format painting was created in 1937, shortly before the painter and sitter had to flee Vienna to escape the Nazis. While several photographs of Carl Rössler exist, this painting is probably the only known painted portrait of him. Horovitz shows Rössler in the casual pose of the bohemian, of which he was considered a prime example throughout his life. Seated in an armchair with a pipe and newspaper, he appears as an elegant intellectual of advanced age. In style and coloring, especially in the two-dimensional parts of the background, the portrait reveals the influence of Leo Putz, with whom Armin Horovitz had studied in Munich. An exceptional work in every sense.