

BEECHWOOD (Birchwood). 1903

Oil on canvas, 110 x 110 cm

Signed bottom left: GUSTAV KLIMT

Inventory Nr. 4283

Acquired through a bequest (1948) of the Bloch-Bauer family

Novotny/Dobai, Nr. 136

First exhibition: Secession XVIII, 1903 (Nr. 3 or Nr. 4 – both were entitled "*Beechwood*")

It is hard to decide whether this picture should be called "*Birchwood*" (Novotny/Dobai) or "*Beechwood*" (the latter because manifestly more beeches than birches are depicted); but in any case the decision has little importance beyond epistemological convenience. Klimt painted the interior of a wood several times, on each occasion slightly changing the angle of vision. In the other version of the present picture, painted also in 1903, a patch of bright sky is discernible beyond the tree-trunks. As early as 1901 he had painted a

"*Fir forest*". In all these pictures the predominant colouring is not so much green as the brown and grey tones of the dried leaves on the forest floor and of the bark. Although such works are scarcely comparable to Claude Monet's famous series of nuanced depictions (for example of haystacks), Klimt's few woodland pictures nevertheless exhibit more of the ideas and impact of Impressionism than do his later paintings of gardens and meadows.

