

Egon Schiele In Prison

by Tantra Bensko

**He squats in prison, asking for a large mirror,
Charcoal, paper. The judge said he lured
Girls into looking at their bodies, let tender
Children see paintings the opposite of pornography.
Given no mirror, only paper, he
Draws his long and skinny hands. Later, he pulls
His cheek, exposing his eye. He opens the walls
With a sweeping gesture, to see his gesture.
See past the wall's strict form.
With his hand, he sees through walls: from the street,
From Schonbrann park, girls go to rest in his house.
They sleep off parents' beatings. They eat.
Always tying dirty sashes, trying to seem like freedom.
Collectors need images of them
In Hapsburg-clenched Vienna, even if they're open,
Skeletal, eyes red, blue joints swollen,
Struggling to the form of square and canvas,**

Like words to their rhythms.

**He'll make the rich of Ringstrasse—which circles Vienna
For shooting riots, faking the glory of stucco days
With ornate cement—he swears he'll Make them see Moa
As she is, and Fredericke, thoughtful, her
Face turned sideways over her hand clutching her shoulder.
He's drawn their hands dark and long, their bodies small.
Or if they're clothed, their hands have all
Their painful nakedness. He's given them his.**

