

Art Nouveau Splendor: A Klimt Walk through Vienna

For many people, Gustav Klimt (1862 – 1918) is the epitome of art nouveau. His works "The Kiss," "Judith" and the "Beethoven Frieze" are known throughout the world – even by those who don't know much about painting. If you want to get to know the work of Gustav Klimt and the environment in which he created his works, join us on our walk ...

by Paul Daniel

Klimt at the "Burgtheater": An Artist Enters the Limelight

Gustav Klimt was born on July 14, 1862, in a house which does not exist today. It is therefore not worth one's while to go all the way to 247 Linzer Strasse in Vienna's 14th district to see the site where his birthplace once stood. Let us begin our Klimt Walk with a guided tour through the **Burgtheater**. Here, between 1886 and 1888, the master created impressive ceiling paintings in both stairwells. Nearby are works by his brother Ernst Klimt and the artist Franz Matsch.

In the gala stairwell on the "Landtmann" side of the Burgtheater – the side nearest the renowned Café Landtmann – Gustav Klimt recreated the theater of antiquity in Taormina, Sicily. The stairwell on the "Volksgarten" side is adorned with a depiction of the London Globe Theatre and the final scene from Shakespeare's "Romeo and Juliet." In the background, the painter immortalized himself and his two colleagues.

Emperor Franz Joseph was so delighted with the paintings in the gala stairwells that he bestowed the Golden Cross of Merit on the members of the artists' group.

Burgtheater, 1st district, Dr.-Karl-Lueger-Ring 2, guided tour "Gustav Klimt – Grand Staircase and Angelika Prokopp Foyer" in German with English summary, Fr – Su at 2.00 pm, information: tel. 51 444-4140, www.burgtheater.at

Along the Ring Boulevard to the Museum of Fine Arts: A View of the "Show Window" of the Habsburg Monarchy

The Museum of Fine which boasts, among other artworks, the largest collection of Bruegel paintings worldwide, is considered one of the most important museums in the world. Here, Gustav Klimt created 40 spandrel and intercolumnia paintings (*Zwickel- und Intercolumnbilder*) in 1891 with his artist colleagues; they worked on those areas that remained free between arches and columns in the splendid stairwell of the museum.

Here, the three painters depicted the main epochs of art history with symbolic figures. An information tablet set into a small table on the balustrade of the stairwell explains the meaning of these figures. This was the last important work by the artists' group. After the death of his brother Ernst in 1892, Klimt ended his cooperation with Matsch.

Museum of Fine Arts, 1st district, Maria-Theresien-Platz,
Tel. 525 24-0, www.khm.at, Tue – Sun 10:00 am – 6:00 pm,
Thu 10:00 am – 9:00 pm [discount with the Vienna Card]

Café Gerstner at the Museum of Fine Arts, Tue -- Sun 10:00 am - 5:00 pm,
www.gerstner.at

The Leopold Museum: Gustav Klimt and His Contemporaries

The MuseumsQuartier Vienna, opened in 2001 counts among the ten largest cultural complexes in the world. At the Leopold Museum, in addition to the important Schiele Collection, one also finds main works by Gustav Klimt – among others, his famous painting "Death and Life" as well as the landscapes "A Morning at the Pond" and "Attersee." The museum also shows fascinating works by Oskar Kokoschka, Richard Gerstl, Albin Egger-Lienz, Anton Kolig, Herbert Boeckl and Alfred Kubin. Before continuing to the next fascinating Klimt sight, you can take coffee or refreshments at the "Café Leopold" in the museum.

Leopold Museum: 7th district, Museumsplatz 1, Tel. 525 70-0,
www.leopoldmuseum.org, Wed – Mon 10 am – 6 pm, Thu 10 am – 9 pm
[discount with the Vienna Card]
Café Leopold: Tel. 523 67 32, Sun -- Wed 10:00 am – 2:00 am,
Thu -- Sat until 4:00 am www.cafe-leopold.at

Klimt meets Ludwig: The Monumental Beethoven Frieze

In 1902, Klimt created one of his most famous works, the Beethoven Frieze, for an exhibition of the Secession movement. The entire show was an homage to Ludwig van Beethoven. Klimt's monumental frieze greeted visitors in the entrance hall. Thirty-four meters wide and two meters high is this opulent, ornamental "symphony," in which Klimt sought to immortalize Beethoven's "Ninth" and its interpretation by Richard Wagner.

Not only contemporaries were deeply impressed by this work – the world at large is still showing its appreciation. Originally, the cycle was intended to be dismantled once the exhibition had ended. A collector bought the frieze in 1903 and removed it from the wall, separating it into seven pieces. In 1973, the Republic of Austria bought the valuable work and made it accessible to the public in 1986 in a room specially created for it in the Secession.

As was the case during Klimt's time, the Secession building is still devoted to contemporary art in changing exhibitions, which can be viewed during guided tours (also in conjunction with the Beethoven Frieze). At the Museum Shop, you can acquire attractive reproductions of details from the frieze as well as books about Gustav Klimt.

Secession, 1st district, Friedrichstrasse 12, Tel. 587 53 07, www.secession.at, Tue – Sun 10:00 am – 6:00 pm, Thu 10:00 am – 8:00 pm, guided tours Sat 3:00 pm, Sun 11:00 am and by arrangement

Art in Passing: Karlsplatz

Some of the sights around **Karlsplatz** are directly or indirectly connected to Gustav Klimt.

One splendid example is the **Stadtbahn Pavilion**, that architect Otto Wagner built around 1900 for the **Vienna City Rail**, and where all elements can be found again which you have already encountered elsewhere in the footsteps of Gustav Klimt: floral ornaments, gold decoration, and attention to the smallest details. Or **Künstlerhaus**, that institution that Gustav Klimt and his friends turned their backs on. And the **Vienna Museum Karlsplatz** (the former Historic Museum of the City of Vienna), which houses some important works by Gustav Klimt, among them the paintings "Emilie Flöge," "Pallas Athene" and the early work "Interior of the Burgtheater" (1887).

Otto-Wagner Stadtbahn Pavilion, 1, Karlsplatz, Tel. 505 87 47-85177, April to Oct.: Tue -- Sun and pub hols., 10:00 am-6:00 pm, www.wienmuseum.at

Künstlerhaus, 1, Karlsplatz 5., Tel. 587 96 63, www.k-haus.at,

Tue – Sun 10:00 am – 6:00 pm and Thu 10:00 – 9:00 pm [discount with the Vienna Card]

Vienna Museum Karlsplatz, 4, Karlsplatz, Tel. 505 87 47-0, www.wienmuseum.at,

Tue – Sun and pub hols 10:00 am - 6:00 pm [discount with the Vienna Card]

Apprenticeship of a Genius: The MAK and Gustav Klimt

At the Austrian Museum for Applied Arts (MAK), Gustav Klimt learned his trade from 1876 to 1883 with the decoration painter Ferdinand Laufberger. Hans Makart, the most important painter of the Vienna Ringstrassen Era, invited the student Klimt in 1879 to participate in the legendary gala parade on the occasion of the silver anniversary of Emperor Franz Joseph and his wife Elisabeth ("Sissi").

Today, one can see nine wonderful design sketches, created by Gustav Klimt from 1905 to 1909 for the mosaic frieze at the Brussels Palais Stoclet. The Palais Stoclet is considered the most important work by the art nouveau architect Josef Hoffmann. Together with a number of Viennese art nouveau artists and craftsmen of the *Wiener Werkstätte*, Hoffmann created this unique work of art from 1905 to 1911 as a commission by Adolphe Stoclet.

The MAK provides fascinating insights into the wealth of ideas and forms as well as the esthetic power of Viennese art nouveau and Art Deco. Since 1955, the museum has owned the archives of the *Wiener Werkstätte* and continuously exhibits furniture, metal and leather works, fashion and tapestries, books, ceramics, glass as well as objects of daily life by such artists as Adolf Loos, Josef Hoffmann, Koloman Moser and Dagobert Peche. At the MAK Shop, you can buy decorative reproductions of Klimt's sketches for the Stoclet Frieze.

MAK – Austrian Museum for Applied Arts, Contemporary Art, 1st district, Stubenring 5, Tel. 711 36-0, www.mak.at, Tue 10:00 am – midnight, Wed – Sun 10:00 am – 6:00 pm [discount with the Vienna Card]

A Kiss makes History: Klimt at the Austrian Gallery Belvedere

Here, the most famous painting of the master is on view: "The Kiss," this icon measuring 180 by 180 centimeters, whose ornamental character was enhanced by Klimt with gold and silver.

According to a contemporary rumor, the couple depicted in "The Kiss" are the artist himself and his lifelong partner Emilie Flöge, whose fashion salon was designed by Gustav Klimt and Kolo Moser.

Klimt's patronage and some paintings in which he depicted his lover not only secured Madame Flöge a place in Viennese society, but also a permanent place in art history. His relationship to Emilie did not prevent the master, however, from starting affairs with some of his models.

With "The Kiss," which was bought in 1908 by the *Moderne Galerie*, Klimt reached the pinnacle of his "golden" phase. An additional famous work of this period, "Judith I," is also exhibited at the Austrian Gallery, as is the "Lady with Hat and Boa," the painting "Johanna Staude" and a multitude of fascinating landscape paintings. These are mainly of the Attersee and its environs, the Upper Austrian Salzkammergut, where Klimt spent nearly every summer after 1900.

Gustav Klimt died on February 6, 1918 after a stroke. The master of ornaments and painter of alluring women was interred in an honorary tomb at the Hietzing Cemetery (13th district, Maxingstrasse 15, underground line: U4, Bus: 56 B; the tomb is in Group V/194/195).

A Palace for Art: The Belvedere

The Belvedere was built in 1721-22 by Johann Lukas von Hildebrandt as the summer residence for Prince Eugene of Savoy and is considered one of the most beautiful Baroque buildings in the world. In its beginnings, the Paintings Gallery which is housed in the palace, the former "Austrian Gallery," was supported in great measure by the Vienna Secession and thus by Gustav Klimt. Here, you will not only find the largest collection of works by Gustav Klimt, but also masterworks by Egon Schiele and Oskar Kokoschka. Also, important works of the French Impressionism, the most important Biedermeier collection as well as highlights of the Baroque and Medieval Collection are accommodated here.

Today, there are special exhibitions in the Lower Belvedere and its Orangerie; one can also view the gala rooms. The museum itself has long been moved to the Upper Belvedere on the other end of the splendid garden and has become an important center for admirers of Klimt from all over the world.

Austrian Gallery Belvedere, 4th district, Prinz-Eugen-Strasse 27, Tel. 79 557-0, www.belvedere.at, daily 10:00 am – 6:00 pm [discount with the Vienna Card]

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