

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, Universitätsring 2, guided tours (1 September – 30 June), duration about one hour, daily 3:00 pm; Mon - Thu in German with English summary; Fri - Sun in German and English; other languages upon request Information: Tel. +43-1-51 444-4140 www.burgtheater.at

Along the Ring Boulevard to the Kunsthistorisches Museum Vienna (Art History Museum): A View of the "Show Window" of the Habsburg Monarchy

Take tram line D, 1 or 71 from opposite the Burgtheater and travel along the Ringstrasse as far as Burgring station. Riding the tram gives you a chance to marvel at the magnificent, 57 meter-wide boulevard. You'll pass City Hall, Parliament and the Natural History Museum. In no time at all, you'll be standing in front of the entrance to the *Kunsthistorisches Museum Vienna*

(built in 1872-91 by Gottfried Semper and Karl Hasenauer). Behind you is the huge façade of the Natural History Museum – the architectural sister of the "Kunsthistorisches" – to the right the wide frontage of the MuseumsQuartier.

The Kunsthistorisches Museum Vienna, 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 Intercolumnnbilder*) 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.

Kunsthistorisches Museum Vienna, 1st district, Maria-Theresien-Platz, Tel. +43-1-525 24-0, www.khm.at, Tue – Sun 10:00 am – 6:00 pm, Thu 10:00 am – 9:00 pm [discount with the Vienna City Card]

Café Restaurant at the Museum of Fine Arts, www.genussimmuseum.at

The Leopold Museum: Gustav Klimt and His Contemporaries

The MuseumsQuartier, which opened in 2001, ranks among the ten largest cultural complexes in the world. The former imperial riding stables, designed by Baroque architect Johann Bernhard Fischer von Erlach and completed in 1725, were revitalized by architect Manfred Wehdorn and given a host of new museum buildings according to plans by the architects Manfred and Laurids Ortner. Nowadays, the 60,000 square meter complex houses, among others, the mumok – museum of modern art ludwig foundation vienna, the Kunsthalle Wien, TanzQuartier Wien, festival halls, a children's museum, café-restaurants and bars.

A real crowd-puller is the *Leopold Museum*, named after its benefactor Prof. Dr. Rudolf Leopold. The art connoisseur and enthusiastic collector Rudolf Leopold succeeded in acquiring groundbreaking works by Egon Schiele at a time when hardly anyone else recognized their quality and importance. Over the years, Leopold expanded his collection in all directions. Today it has over 5,000 works – mainly of Austrian painting from the first half of the 20th century, as well as many important works of the 19th century, the second half of the 20th century, and art from sub-Saharan Africa, Oceania and the Far East.

Here, alongside the most important Egon Schiele collection, you can also find major works by Gustav Klimt – including the famous painting "Death and Life" as well as the landscapes "A Morning by the Pond" and "Am Attersee". Exhibited in the same building: fascinating works by Oskar Kokoschka, Richard Gerstl, Albin Egger-Lienz, Anton Kolig, Herbert Boeckl and Alfred Kubin.

Leopold Museum: 7th district, Museumsplatz 1, Tel. +43-1-525 70-0, www.leopoldmuseum.org, daily (except Tue) 10:00 am – 6:00 pm; Thu 10:00 am – 9:00 pm; hols. 10:00 am – 6:00 pm [discount with the Vienna City Card]

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. +43-1-587 53 07, www.secession.at, Tue – Sun 10:00 am – 6:00 pm, guided tours Sat 11:00 am (English), 2:00 pm (German) [discount with the Vienna City Card]

Art in Passing: Karlsplatz

On the way from the Secession to Karlsplatz, you'll see the booths of the Naschmarkt, Vienna's exotic market on the right, and the end of Operngasse with the Café Museum on the left. The traditional coffee house offers an excellent opportunity to pause your Klimt walk for a snack – even in the outside dining area in summer. Some of the sights around *Karlsplatz* are directly or indirectly related to Gustav Klimt.

For example, the magnificent *station building*, built by the architect Otto Wagner around 1900 for the *Wiener Stadtbahn railway*, and which contains all the elements you have already learned about on your Klimt walk: floral ornamentation, gold decoration, design down to the smallest details. Or the *Künstlerhaus*, the institution that Klimt and his friends once turned their backs on. And the *Wien Museum Karlsplatz* (the former History Museum of the city of Vienna), which houses a few major works by Gustav Klimt, including the paintings "Emilie Flöge", "Pallas Athene", and the early work "Interior view of the Burgtheater" (1887).

Otto-Wagner-Pavillon Karlsplatz, 1st district, Karlsplatz, Tel. +43-1-505 87 47-85 177, April to Oct.: Tue – Sun and hols., 10:00 am – 6:00 pm (closed: 1 May and all hols. that fall on a Monday), www.wienmuseum.at

Wien Museum Karlsplatz, 4th district, Karlsplatz, Tel. +43-1-505 87 47, www.wienmuseum.at, Tue – Sun and hols., 10:00 am – 6:00 pm, 24 Dec. and 31 Dec., 10:00 am – 2:00 pm (closed 1 Jan., 1 May, 25 Dec.) [discount with the Vienna City Card]

Apprenticeship of a Genius: The MAK and Gustav Klimt

From the Wien Museum on Karlsplatz, it's just a hop and a skip to Schwarzenbergplatz. Board tram 2 there and travel as far as Stubentor, where you'll find the MAK – *Austrian Museum of Applied Arts/Contemporary Art*.

It was built in 1868-71 by the important Ringstrasse architect Heinrich von Ferstel (Votive Church, University, and others). A training facility for young artists and artisans was added to the museum shortly after its establishment in 1864 – when it was still known as the Austrian Museum for Art and Industry: it was the former School of Arts and Crafts and today's University of Applied Arts.

At the MAK - Austrian Museum for Applied Arts/Contemporary Arts, 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").

Export of Viennese Art Nouveau

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 Arts, 1st district, Stubenring 5, Tel. +43-1-711 36-0, www.mak.at, Tue 10:00 am – 10:00 pm, Wed – Sun 10:00 am – 6:00 pm [discount with the Vienna City Card]

A Palace for Art: The Belvedere

Diagonally opposite the museum is Stubentor tram and subway station. Board tram line 2 here, travel as far as Schwarzenbergplatz and transfer there to tram line D towards Vienna Main Station. As you leave the tram at Schloss Belvedere station, you'll be right opposite the entrance to the Upper 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'll find not only the biggest collection of works by Gustav Klimt but also

masterpieces by Egon Schiele and Oskar Kokoschka. Prominent works of French Impressionism, the most important collection of the Viennese Biedermeier period, and highlights of the Baroque and Medieval Collection are also housed 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.

A Kiss makes History: Klimt at the 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.

Klimt had reached the zenith of his "golden" phase with "The Kiss", presented for the first time at the "Kunstschau" in 1908 and acquired by the "Moderne Galerie". An additional famous work of this period, "Judith I", is also exhibited at the Belvedere, 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).

Belvedere, 4th district, Prinz-Eugen-Strasse 27, Tel. +43-1-79 557-0, www.belvedere.at, daily 9:00 am – 6:00 pm, Fri 9:00 am – 9:00 pm [discount with the Vienna City Card]

Klimt-Villa

If you still have time, a detour will bring you to the "Gustav Klimt-Villa". To get there, take the U4 bound for Hütteldorf. The house at Feldgasse 11 is not even a 10-minute walk from Unter St. Veit station.

Gustav Klimt used a villa in the 13th Viennese district as a studio from 1911 until his death in 1918. This has been revitalized and re-opened to the public again. Klimt used the garden house, which was originally built without a first floor, as a studio room and workshop during his final creative period. On the ground floor, the studio has been authentically reconstructed on the basis of contemporaneous descriptions and illustrations. The aim is to convey the atmosphere of his living and working environment and to make the contents tangible.

This is done through the reconstruction of the furnishing of the "reception room" and the "studio" on the basis of photographs by Moritz Nähr and available original samples of objects (e.g.

carpet). The other rooms of the studio provide information on models and "clients", who were of importance to Klimt's works from this creative period.

Klimt-Villa, 13th district, Feldmühlgasse 11, Tel. +43-1-876 11 25, www.klimtvilla.at, Thu – Sun, hols. 10:00 am – 6:00 pm, public guided tour without registration on Sat at 2:00 pm [discount with the Vienna City Card]

Paul Daniel is a public relations consultant and journalist.