

**THE BELVEDERE
AND VIENNESE MODERNISM**
Masterpieces by Gustav Klimt and Egon Schiele



Gustav Klimt, *The Kiss (Lovers)*, 1908 (finished 1909) © Foto: Johannes Stoll / Belvedere, Wien

THE BELVEDERE AND VIENNESE MODERNISM

The Belvedere holds a pivotal position in the history of Viennese Modernism. In 1897 a group of artists, including Gustav Klimt, Koloman Moser, Josef Hoffmann, Max Kurzweil, and Wilhelm List, founded the artist association known as the Vienna Secession. This is seen to mark the beginning of Viennese Modernism. One outcome of this time of new beginnings was the foundation of the Moderne Galerie at the Lower Belvedere. Many Austrian artists had been pushing for a state museum of contemporary art for years, and in 1903 the Moderne Galerie was finally founded by the Ministry of Culture. Its philosophy was based on the principles of the Secession, one of the main ideas being to present Austrian art in an international context—to this day part of the Belvedere's mission. It was also the Secessionists' gifts to the museum that laid the foundations for the Belvedere's collection. The world-famous painting *The Kiss (Lovers)* by Gustav Klimt was acquired as early as 1908.

Vienna around 1900—the Modernity of an Era

The culture of Modernism that emerged in Vienna around 1900 is still astonishingly current. Highly original achievements in art, design, architecture, music, and literature blazed a trail into the future. Gustav Klimt was one of the preeminent artists of Art Nouveau, the style known as Jugendstil in the German-speaking world. His bold juxtapositions of ornament and realism anticipated elements of early abstract art. Egon Schiele and Oskar Kokoschka are considered the major protagonists of early Viennese Expressionism. Schiele's radical self-scrutiny and Kokoschka's provocative distortions of the human body have lost none of their power to this day. In around 1905, Koloman Moser and the Wiener Werkstätte achieved a purity in design that still appears overwhelmingly radical. Meanwhile, Otto Wagner, one of the greatest European architects around 1900, was awarded major commissions, such as the planning of the Vienna urban railway and the Austrian Postal Savings Bank. Josef Hoffmann was the architect of the Viennese haute bourgeoisie; his Palais Stoclet in Brussels is a *fin-de-siècle* icon. By contrast, Adolf Loos's unadorned, austere houses were the complete opposite of the Jugendstil aesthetic.

The great significance of the achievements of Viennese Modernism were little appreciated at the time. This also applies to music: the compositions of Arnold Schönberg and his circle were generally not understood. But Schönberg, Anton Webern, and Alban

Berg revolutionized music by breaking down tonality and developing the twelve-tone technique, setting new standards that influence certain music genres to this day.

GUSTAV KLIMT AT THE BELVEDERE

One of the main exponents of Viennese Modernism around 1900, the Austrian painter Gustav Klimt (1862–1918) ranks among the world's iconic twentieth-century artists. The Belvedere holds the world's largest collection of Klimt's paintings: twenty-four works supplemented by several permanent loans. This is further enhanced by the *Beethoven Frieze*, which is on permanent loan at the Secession, as well as the eleven-part copy of this frieze and various precious personal items belonging to the artist.

Gustav Klimt as a European Jugendstil painter

Klimt belongs to the generation of painters on the cusp of early-twentieth-century modern art. His training and stylistic influences were rooted in the spirit of late Historicism. It was not long, however, before he encountered the innovations of Post-Impressionism and Jugendstil followed by the early avant-garde movements like Expressionism and Fauvism, styles that conquered the international art world in rapid succession. In this time of fertile change, it is a testimony to Klimt's genius that he conjured up his own imaginary world and created works unique both in terms of their painting technique and aesthetic boldness. Klimt's portraits combine ornament—in a way that anticipates abstraction—with a hyperrealism; his landscapes represent the culmination of an idealized, aestheticized approach to nature. This is his artistic legacy and, in this respect, he was unsurpassed in painting during his day.

During his lifetime, Gustav Klimt was both a controversial and a much-admired artist. As a young painter, he had already made a name for himself as an exceptional talent. In the 1880s and 1890s he collaborated with his brother Ernst and their fellow student Franz Matsch to create numerous wall and ceiling paintings, including prestigious commissions for the Burgtheater and the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna. In their pronounced realism and harmony with their architectural setting, these paintings essentially adhered to the style of late Historicism. A fundamental change first emerged in the Faculty Paintings for the ceiling of the Great Hall at the University of Vienna, which Klimt began working on in the late 1890s when he was over thirty. In these works he moved away from the traditional, appealing paintings for interior decoration and emerged as a major

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protagonist of Jugendstil in Vienna and in Europe as a whole. Indeed, these works unleashed a vehement public debate on the degree of eroticism and ugliness permissible in art.

By this time, Klimt was a preeminent figure in the Vienna art world. He was the first president of the Secession when it was founded in 1897 ("Vereinigung bildender Künstler Österreichs—Secession"). The Secession's exhibition hall, designed by Joseph Maria Olbrich, was opened in 1898 and provided Klimt with a public forum where he could present his latest artworks. Highlights of this period were the *Beethoven Frieze*, created for the 14th Secession exhibition in 1902, and the extensive solo show the Secession devoted to the artist in 1903.

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE BELVEDERE'S KLIMT COLLECTION

Portrait of a Woman, c. 1893



Klimt adopted the photographic realism demonstrated by this painting only for a brief period around the mid-1890s, mainly in his decorative schemes for buildings and in his early portraits. This large female portrait is an impressive example from this stylistic phase. Every detail has been rendered with a meticulous perfection akin to a miniature. Klimt probably used a photograph as a resource for this work.

Sonja Knips, 1897/98



In this work, Klimt first adopted Jugendstil's style of portraiture, characterized by a soft, ethereal aura. Sonja Knips was a close friend of Klimt's and was actively engaged in commemorating the artist after his death, funding, for example, the Österreichische Galerie's acquisition of one of Klimt's Faculty Paintings in 1919. Whether there was a more intimate relationship between painter and model, as some have claimed, has never been established.

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Judith, 1901



Klimt's *Judith* combines sexuality and death into an inextricably linked whole. To save her people, the Biblical heroine decapitated the general Holofernes during a night of passion. Her head tilted back slightly, her lips parted lasciviously, Judith gazes seductively at the viewer. This female type of the femme fatale embodies an ideal of beauty cultivated by many artists around 1900. It is only on closer scrutiny that the viewer discovers the head of Holofernes.

Fritza Riedler, 1906



Friederike Riedler's husband commissioned this work at a time when Klimt had already established an excellent reputation as a portraitist. The sitter's dress, face, and hands have been rendered in a virtuoso meticulous and sensual manner. These passages are starkly juxtaposed with the abstract, geometric forms. The contrast between hyperrealism and ornamental abstraction is one of Klimt's great innovations, taking his art far beyond the realms of Jugendstil.

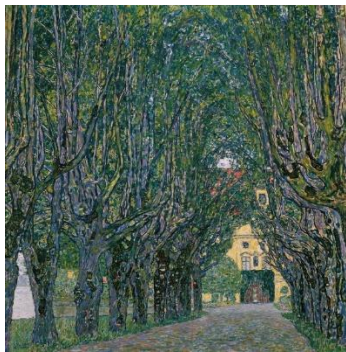
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Sunflower, 1907/08



From about 1900, Klimt turned his attention to landscape painting, partly as a result of his annual summer sojourns in the Salzkammergut together with his life companion Emilie Flöge and her family. The summer scenes around the lake provided Klimt with a wealth of motifs for his landscape paintings; he transformed nature into a captivating cosmos of colors and forms. The sunflower placed at the center of the painting bears a remarkable resemblance to Emilie Flöge in one of her long summer dresses.

Avenue Leading to Schloss Kammer, 1912



This painting was also created at the Attersee. Schloss Kammer is located close to the villa where Klimt summered until 1912 and he painted it a total of five times. The image shows the long avenue of trees leading up to the entrance. Its airy canopy of foliage allows glimpses in all directions. One gains a feel of both space and flatness with colors and forms evoking a hovering, floating effect. This certainly encapsulates one of the great enigmas of Klimt's landscapes.

This Kiss (Lovers), 1908/09



The Kiss (Lovers) by Gustav Klimt is the most famous Austrian painting in the world and the highlight of the permanent displays at the Upper Belvedere. A couple, swathed in richly adorned robes, tenderly embrace on a luxuriant flowery meadow. It was painted in 1908/09 at the height of Klimt's "Golden Period." At this time, the artist developed his new technique of combining gold leaf with oils and bronze paint. Klimt's *Kiss* presents a universally valid allegorical message from the early twentieth century about love being central to human existence. The fact that the picture still has an immediacy and emotional impact demonstrates the brilliance of his achievement. The garments of the lovers are embellished with gold leaf and the background, too, is suffused with delicate gold, silver, and platinum flakes. It was acquired by the Austrian state for the recently founded Moderne Galerie at the Lower Belvedere at its first presentation in 1908. The painting has been in the museum's collection ever since.

GUSTAV KLIMT: A BRIEF BIOGRAPHY

1862: Gustav Klimt is born on July 14 to Ernst and Anna Klimt, the second of seven children. His father is a self-employed engraver.

1876–83: School of Applied Arts of the Austrian Museum for Art and Industry and School of Painting. Starts collaborating on projects with his brother Ernst and their fellow student Franz Matsch, later calling themselves the "Künstler-Compagnie" (Artists' Company).

1885–90: Ceiling paintings for the Hermesvilla on the outskirts of Vienna, decoration of the Burgtheater staircase, pendentives around the staircase at the Kunsthistorisches Museum.

1891: Member of the artist association Genossenschaft der bildenden Künstler Wiens—Künstlerhaus. His brother Ernst Klimt marries Helene Flöge in October; Gustav Klimt meets Helene's sister Emilie.

1894: The Ministry of Education awards Klimt and Matsch the commission to paint the ceiling paintings for the Great Hall at the University of Vienna. Klimt's three large Faculty Paintings are destroyed in 1945 during World War II.

1897: Foundation of the Vereinigung bildender Künstler Österreichs—Secession, with Klimt as president for the first two years.

1899: Travels to northern Italy with Carl Moll and his family.

1900: First showing of the Faculty Painting *Philosophy* at the 6th Secession exhibition, soon followed by its display at the Exposition Universelle in Paris. First summer at Litzlberg am Attersee with the Flöge family; he returns to the lake Attersee every year until 1916.

1901: The Faculty Painting *Medicine* is shown at the 10th Secession exhibition for the first time, the scandal precipitated by the Faculty Paintings comes to a head.

1902: Highlight of the 14th Secession exhibition: the *Beethoven Frieze*.

1903: Trips to Ravenna and Venice; major *Klimt Collective* exhibition at the Secession from November 1903 to January 1904.

1905: The "Klimt Group" leaves the Secession following various quarrels and disputes.

1908: The Klimt Group's exhibition known as the Vienna Kunstschau runs from June to November and includes the first public display of *The Kiss (Lovers)*.

1910: Participates in the 9th Venice Biennale. Exhibition of Klimt's drawings at the Galerie Miethke, Vienna.

1911: Klimt's painting *Death and Life* is awarded first prize at the International Art Exhibition in Rome.

1912: Klimt becomes president of the artist association Bund österreichischer Künstler.

1918: On January 11, Gustav Klimt has a stroke in his apartment at Westbahnstraße 36 leaving him paralyzed on one side. The artist dies on February 6 at the General Hospital and is buried three days later at Hietzing Cemetery.

PAINTINGS BY GUSTAV KLIMT AT THE BELVEDERE

Josef Lewinsky as Carlos in Clavigo, 1895

Oil on canvas, 60 × 44 cm

Male Nude, 1883

Oil on canvas, 68 × 54.8 cm

Study for the Allegory of Music (Woman Playing the Organ), 1885

Oil on canvas, 38.5 × 50 cm

Lady by the Fireplace, 1897/98

Oil on canvas, 41 × 66 cm

Sonja Knips, 1897/98

Oil on canvas, 145 × 146 cm

After the Rain, 1898

Oil on canvas, 80 × 40 cm

Old Man on his Deathbed, c. 1899

Oil on board, 30.4 × 44.8 cm

Judith, 1901

Oil on canvas, 84 × 42 cm

Girlfriends (Water Serpents I), 1904 (minor additions 1907)

Mixed media, gold on parchment, 50 × 20 cm

Fritza Riedler, 1906

Oil on canvas, 153 × 133 cm

Farm Garden with Sunflowers, 1907

Oil on canvas, 110 × 110 cm

Flowering Poppies, 1907

Oil on canvas, 110 × 110 cm

Sunflower, 1907/08

Oil on canvas, 110 × 110 cm

The Kiss (Lovers), 1908 (finished 1909)

Figural part: gold leaf, gold paint (gold powder dispersed in a binder), silver, platinum, lead, oil paint on canvas with a lead white ground; background: metal leaf (brass), painted over with glazes, 180 × 180 cm

Mother with Two Children (Family), 1909/10

Oil on canvas, 90 × 90 cm

Schloss Kammer on the Attersee III, 1909/10

Oil on canvas, 110 × 110 cm

Farmhouse in Buchberg (Farmhouse in Upper Austria), 1911

Oil on canvas, 110 × 110 cm

Avenue Leading to Schloss Kammer, 1912

Oil on canvas, 110 × 110 cm

Woman in White, 1917/18

Oil on canvas (unfinished), 70 × 70 cm

Adam and Eve, 1917/18

Oil on canvas (unfinished), 173 × 60 cm

Johanna Staude, 1917/18

Oil on canvas (unfinished), 70 × 50 cm

Amalie Zuckerkandl, 1917/18

Oil on canvas (unfinished), 128 × 128 cm

LOANS OF PAINTINGS BY GUSTAV KLIMT

The Bride, 1917/18

Oil on canvas, 172 × 197 cm

Design for the curtain at Karlsbad Municipal Theater, 1884/85

Oil on canvas, 52.7 × 42.5 cm

Portrait of a Woman, c. 1893

Oil on canvas (glazed), 168 × 84 × 2 cm

Marie Kerner von Marilaun as a Bride in 1862, 1891/92

Oil on canvas, 68.8 × 54.5 cm

Forester's House in Weißenbach on the Attersee I, 1914

Oil on canvas, 110 × 110 cm

EGON SCHIELE AT THE BELVEDERE

The Austrian painter Egon Schiele (1890–1918) was a major exponent of Viennese Modernism around 1900 and is one of the world's great twentieth-century artists. Today the Belvedere's collection holds a total of fifteen works by Schiele with additional loans from private collections. The museum's outstanding collection includes major works from every phase in the artist's career.

Egon Schiele as an Exponent of Expressionism

In the early twentieth century, Expressionism emerged in various European centers as a movement countering the established styles of Jugendstil and Post-Impressionism. Together with Oskar Kokoschka, Egon Schiele is the artist most associated with early Viennese Expressionism. This new generation of artists wanted to rebel against conventional academic training while at the same time aspiring to reform society. Vincent van Gogh, whose work was discovered across Europe after his death in 1890, had a profound influence on the Expressionists. Norwegian artist Edvard Munch also inspired these artists.

Schiele's Expressionism was to a certain extent still aligned with Viennese Jugendstil. His work is characterized by an emphasis on line. The artist's painting style reflected practices cultivated at the time and many of his subjects demonstrate an obvious connection to the art of Symbolism. At the same time, however, the twenty-year-old artist provoked Viennese society by introducing some completely original themes, rooted in radical Expressionist thought. Above all, Schiele's depictions of nudes with their vehement, expressive gestures and explicit nakedness were considered provocative and offensive. With angular, elongated contours and torso-like, seemingly mutilated body shapes, his nudes are still disturbing to this day. His erotic depictions capture existential human states. Schiele's many self-portraits appear similarly striking and are characterized by exaggerated poses and gestures. He seems able to slip into different roles and thus probe the possibilities of extreme psychological states.

A further characteristic of Schiele's Expressionism is his preference for enigmatic and mystical subjects. Many of his images, especially his allegorical themes, appear to have a profound, psychological character. They suggest a deep and spiritual artist. Schiele's paintings often reveal a sense of loneliness and grief, a preoccupation with dying and

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death. His landscapes and cityscapes, frequently depicting motifs from the Bohemian town of Krumau (now Český Krumlov) and its surroundings, are tinged with a lyrical melancholy. Their anthropomorphic appearance makes them seem like metaphors of human life.

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE SCHIELE COLLECTION AT THE BELVEDERE

Sunflowers I, 1911



For Schiele, sunflowers were a recurring theme, especially in his early work. Probably they were inspired by Vincent van Gogh's famous sunflowers that could be seen at Secession exhibitions and at commercial art galleries in Vienna. As in van Gogh's paintings, the flowers also have a psychological aura in Schiele's work, for it seems that he was essentially aiming to depict people. This effect can be found in many other depictions of flowers and trees by the young Expressionist.

Eduard Kosmack, 1910



In 1910, Schiele painted six life-size portraits of personalities who were important to him, including the publisher and art dealer Eduard Kosmack. This masterpiece of Expressionist portraiture captivates the viewer on account of the sitter's hypnotic stare. The composition is characterized by an unusual square format and a replacement of the surrounding space by blank areas. Sitters are thus deprived of any relationship with their surroundings and seem to be thrown back to the very basics of existence.

Death and Maiden, 1915



Schiele painted this picture in 1915 when he was breaking up with Wally Neuzil after a long relationship. Wally had worked for Schiele as a model and they had soon started a love affair. But he left Wally in the spring of 1915 in order to marry Edith Harms in June of that year. He certainly did not find the separation easy, however, as he documented in this painting. Beyond its biographical background, this work can be seen as a universally valid allegory about parting, love, and death.

Embrace, 1917



This work—one of the few large-scale nudes by Egon Schiele—is unusually risqué for its time. As so often in his nudes, the artist goes beyond the merely sensual to include psychological aspects. *Embrace* presumably shows Schiele closely intertwined with his wife Edith. The artist has achieved the image's strong emotional impact through the detailed representation of the bodies and the dynamic lines of the crumpled sheet combined with the dark cascade of the woman's hair.

Portrait of the Artist's Wife, Edith Schiele, 1918



In June 1915, Egon Schiele married Edith Harms who was from a bourgeois family and three years his junior. Their different backgrounds and values made it difficult for her to adapt to her husband's artistic world. As time went on, however, she grew accustomed to this bohemian scene. Edith and Egon loved each other deeply and their affection is expressed in their letters. Schiele captured his wife's features in many drawings and two paintings. She always looks soulful, soft and sensitive, qualities Schiele obviously cherished.

EGON SCHIELE: A BRIEF BIOGRAPHY

1890: Egon Schiele is born on June 12 in Tulln, Lower Austria, the third child of Marie (née Soukop) and Adolf Schiele.

1896–1900: Primary school in Tulln.

1900/01: Secondary school in Krems.

1902–06: Attends the abbey grammar school in Klosterneuburg.

1905: Schiele's father dies after suffering for many years from syphilis. Uncle Leopold Czihaczek becomes Schiele's guardian.

1906: Schiele is the youngest student to be accepted by the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna.

1908: Schiele exhibits his pictures for the first time at a group exhibition in Klosterneuburg Abbey.

1909: Participates in the International Kunstschau and leaves the Academy of Fine Arts; foundation of the "Neukunstgruppe" (New Art Group) and their first exhibition at Salon Pisko in Vienna.

1910: Stays in Krumau (Český Krumlov). Close contact with the dancer Moa Nahuimir and his fellow painters Erwin "Dom" Osen and Anton Peschka.

1911: First solo exhibition at Galerie Miethke in Vienna. Wally Neuzil becomes Schiele's model and they soon start a relationship; they move to Krumau together but have to leave again in August following conflicts with the townspeople. In September, Schiele moves to Neulengbach, Lower Austria.

1912: Schiele's works are presented at Museum Folkwang in Hagen. In April he is remanded in custody. The accusations of kidnapping and violation of minors are shown to be groundless but he is charged with "public immorality." Schiele is in Neulengbach jail for a total of twenty-four days. Returns to Vienna.

1913: Hans Goltz stages a solo Egon Schiele exhibition at his gallery in Munich.

1914: Schiele becomes a member of the Munich-based artist group "Sema."

1915: On June 17, Schiele marries Edith Harms. Shortly afterward he is drafted into the army and posted to Prague. After basic training, he is sent back to Vienna to dig trenches and guard Russian prisoners of war.

1916: Guards Russian prisoners of war in Mühlhng, Lower Austria.

1918: Transfer to the Heeresgeschichtliches Museum at the Vienna Arsenal and tasked with office duties. Successful exhibition at the Vienna Secession in March. In October Edith Schiele, who is six-months pregnant, contracts Spanish Influenza. Edith dies on October 28. Egon Schiele succumbs to the same disease on October 31.

WORKS BY EGON SCHIELE AT THE BELVEDERE

Sunflowers, 1911

Oil on canvas, 90 × 80.3 cm

Russian Prisoner of War, 1915

Gouache and pencil on paper, 44.5 × 31 cm

Death and Maiden (Man and Girl), 1915

Oil on canvas, 150 × 180 cm

Four Trees, 1917

Oil on canvas, 110 × 140 cm

The Artist's Wife, Edith Schiele, 1917

Gouache and crayon on paper, 45.5 × 29.7 cm

Portrait of the Artist's Wife, Edith Schiele, 1917/18

Oil on canvas, 139.8 × 109.8 cm

Portrait of Dr. Victor Ritter von Bauer, 1918

Oil on canvas, 139.8 × 109.8 cm

Squatting Couple (The Family), 1918

Oil on canvas, 150 × 160.8 cm

Façade of a House (Windows), 1914

Oil on canvas, 111 × 142 cm

Portrait of Dr. Hugo Koller, 1918

Oil on canvas, 140.3 × 110 cm

Embrace, 1917

Oil on canvas, 100 × 170 cm

Mother with Two Children III, 1915–17

Oil on canvas, 150 × 159.8 cm

Portrait of Eduard Kosmack, 1910

Oil on canvas, 99.8 × 99.5 cm

Portrait of Herbert Reiner (Reiner Boy), 1910

Oil on canvas, 101 × 101.5 cm

Houses in Winter, 1907/08

Oil on cardboard, 24 × 17.8 cm

View into the Apartment of Leopold and Marie Czihaczek (Interior)

Oil on cardboard, 39.1 × 31.2 cm

Portrait of Dr. Franz Martin Haberditzl, 1917

Oil on canvas, 140 × 110 cm

Self-Portrait, 1917 (later cast 1980)

Bronze, H: 28 cm

WORKS BY EGON SCHIELE ON PERMANENT LOAN AT THE BELVEDERE

City on the Blue River II, 1911

Watercolor, gouache (?), pencil and oil on wood, 37.2 × 29.8 cm

Reclining Couple (presumably Egon Schiele and Wally Neuzil), 1912

Watercolor, gouache, and pencil on paper, 30.4 × 44.5 cm

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