

ERIKA GIOVANNA KLIEN
ALL IS MOVEMENT

Lower Belvedere
18 September 2026 to 31 January 2027



Erika Giovanna Klein, *Kinetische Figur*, 1927
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The Belvedere is dedicating an extensive solo exhibition to the work of Austrian-American artist and educator Erika Giovanna Klien (1900–1957). A leading exponent of Viennese Kineticism, Klien achieved international acclaim early on in her career. Her passion for theater and dance found expression in innovative set designs and complex depictions of bodies in motion. Klien moved to New York in 1929, and this new environment manifested itself in her increasing engagement with urban spaces and social issues.

An exhibition organized by the Belvedere, Vienna, in collaboration with the collection and archive of the University of Applied Arts Vienna, and the dem Istituto Italiano di Studi Germanici, Rom.

Curated by Verena Gamper

Cocurator: Veronica Liotti

Assistant Curator: Johanna Hofer

The exhibition

In autumn 2026 the Belvedere is paying tribute to the work of artist Erika Giovanna Klien (1900–1957) in an extensive solo exhibition. The foremost exponent of Viennese Kineticism, she drew and painted fascinating depictions of quivering birds in flight, dancing bodies, and rotating machines. Her compositions were based on the observation, analysis, and arrangement of complex movements, whether these were natural or technical in origin. It was especially after moving to New York in 1929 that Klien emerged as an astute observer of technical progress and modern city life with its ever-faster pace.

While she was studying in the class of avant-garde educational reformer Franz Čížek at the School of Applied Arts in Vienna, Klien also trained as an actor. Her interest in the stage and dance finds frequent expression in her work, for example in the Kinetic Puppet Theater around 1925, or in the play *The Masses* from the late 1940s. A further thread in Klien's creative output, encouraged by

her education with Čížek and her many years teaching art, was her interest in children's art. Finally, social criticism and reflections on modernity converge in her depictions of the social realities of workers' lives, which she produced both in the 1930s and in the last years of her career.

The exhibition at the Lower Belvedere sheds light on all aspects of the oeuvre of this painter, graphic artist, and art teacher, who had a passion for theater and dance, and presents the latest research on her life and work.

Biography

Erika Giovanna Klien was born on April 12, 1900, in Borgo Valsugana in Trentino, the daughter of kindergarten teacher Anna Klien and stationmaster Franz Klien. After her father's job was transferred several times, the family moved to Vienna in 1918/19. Klien began her studies at the School of Applied Arts in Vienna under Franz Čížek. It was in his course on ornament that Viennese Kineticism developed. Klien emerged as one of the most famous exponents of this movement with her works appearing in international exhibitions and being acquired by Katherine Dreier for the Société Anonyme. Having also trained as an educator in Čížek's class, Klien started teaching art at the Elizabeth Duncan School in Salzburg Klessheim in 1926. After the birth of her son, who was born out of wedlock and was raised by foster parents, Klien moved to New York in 1929. Her hopes of continuing the promising successes of her early career were only partially fulfilled: The economic climate forced Klien to concentrate on teaching. She taught art at Stuyvesant Neighborhood House, the New School for Social Research, the Dalton School, and the Spence School, sometimes juggling multiple jobs. The last of these engagements came to an end before World War II, and Klien did not resume her teaching career until 1946 at Walt Whitman School. She mainly produced commercial graphic designs at this time. Weakened by illness, she gave up teaching in 1951, creating a final body of work revisiting themes from the 1930s. Erika Giovanna Klien died in New York in summer 1957.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Exhibition	Erika Giovanna Klien. All Is Movement
Curator	Verena Gamper
Co-Curator	Veronica Liotti
Assistant Curator	Johanna Hofer
Duration	18 September 2026 to 31 January 2027
Location	Lower Belvedere, Rennweg 6, 1030 Vienna
Opening Hours	Monday to Sunday, 10 am to 6 pm
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For more information on the exhibition and high-resolution press photos please visit www.belvedere.at/en/press