

VIENNA 1900, GUSTAV KLIMT PORTRAITS

Patterns upon Patterns

A Kiss felt around the World

By Sibylle Maria Pfaffenbichler

HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL BACKGROUND:

VIENNA was the capital of the vast Austrian-Hungarian Empire of Europe whose lands extended all the way to Russia and at one point through a complex network of marriages even to Mexico. It was ruled by the Hapsburg Dynasty for 800 years. The empire fell apart after WWI in 1918.

VIENNESE MODERNISM developed over 60 years of Emperor Franz Josef's rule by his revamping the city layout, filling it with new imperial constructions, installing art schools and museums and constructing networks of roads and bridges for public transportation. 54 million people lived throughout the Austrian provinces and many immigrants from these areas streamed into the booming capital – German, Czech, Slovak, Slovene, Polish, Italian, Romanian, a high percentage of Jewish origin. A cultural melting pot developed – as later on New York City in America. Japanese and Chinese art became popular, ancient Egyptian tombs were sought after and uncovered. This was the natural incubator for the distinct Viennese Modernism, also called JUGENDSTIL (Art Deco elsewhere), in Fine Arts as well as Architecture, Home Furnishings, Textiles, Music and many other disciplines. A most exciting era.

GERMAN VOCABULARIES to go with “The Kiss” – 2nd slide of the show.

Major Happenings influencing the culture at the turn into the 20th century: :

In 1900 the famous **DREAM THEORY** by Sigmund Freud was published, followed by the Sexual Theory, Totem and Taboo. **PSYCHOTHERAPY** was born.

In **MUSIC** Arnold Schoenberg rearranges the traditional **HARMONY**, so does Igor Stravinsky.

The Technical College introduces **AERONAUTICS** and the **AUTOMOBILE** to its **SCIENCE** curriculum.

In **LITERATURE** Arthur Schnitzler, Author and Dramatist, takes to the stage creating controversy with his liberated characters, influenced by Sigmund Freud's teachings, and his strong stand against rising anti-semitism.

ARCHEOLOGY: great interest in Egyptian discoveries

In 1907 a young man named Adolf Hitler tries in vain to get into the Akademie der Bildenden Kuenstler in Vienna. (Academy of Fine Art)

And the Fine Artists of Vienna break away from the conservative, traditional Academy of Fine Art and form the **SECESSION, giving a podium to paint and draw with a new perspective on the fine arts as well as many other arms of the culture.** Its first elected executive President was the painter GUSTAV KLIMT.

GUSTAV KLIMT, 1862-1918, embodies the **Viennese Jugendstil**. Attached please see 20 dazzling portraits by Gustav Klimt, starting with his most famous one – **“THE KISS”**, picturing him and his love Emilie Floege in warm embrace. (The Kiss became a beloved Austrian postal stamp)

Gustav Klimt was trained as a textile designer which is evident in his use of many **PATTERNS** in the textiles and backgrounds of his portraits paintings.

PATTERNS are repetitive or all over designs. They can be of organic shapes or geometrical, a repetition of color or limited use of color, patterns can be static or full of motion.

The highly decorative portraits, filled with patterns and symbolism are stimulating and fun to look at in depth. Many questions and observations rise from them.

OBSERVATION

- What in the picture is Realistic, what is Stylized?
- How would you describe the Clothing and Hairstyle?
- Find the Geometric Shapes
- Find various Patterns
- Do you see any Symbolic Images? (circle – woman, bird – male sexuality, cross – death...)
- What mood, feeling do you detect from the picture?
- What do YOU feel?
- Describe the Background, what do you see? And what could it mean?
- Study the Colors – which is the Dominating one in a given picture
- Study the Color – which colors are Warm, Cold? (yellow/orange/red – warm, blues and greens – cold)

ANALYSIS:

- Who made the paintings?
- What was the significance of the artist?

- What do the portraits have in common? How are they different?
- Who are the people in the picture?
- Is there any clue to who they are?
- What makes this painting “modern” as opposed to academic/conservative
- Do you see any clue that would reflect the new teachings of Sigmund Freud (psychoanalysis)

COMPARISON:

Compare the Portraits with a Portrait that you would imagine of Yourself

- your expression
- your hair style and clothing
- Style
- Background
- Colors

ASSESSMENT

Make a SELFPORTRAIT wearing clothes of today or imagined, background or accessories with clues WHO YOU ARE:

- showing FAVORITE Music, Fashion, Hobbies, Interests, Family and Friends, Mood, Pets, Goals, Aspirations, Politics, School, Sport, Color, Holiday, Images, and more

you can draw or paint or make a collage cut from magazines, buttons, mirrors.....etc.

GUSTAV KLIMT, a great artist and kind, generous man, unfortunately died in 1918 of the influenza that was ravaging the world killing millions. World War I was raging from 1914 – 1918. Everything had changed - The Austrian-Hungarian Monarchy had come crushing down, war torn Austria was now a Democratic Republic, of the same size of territory as in the year 900. But not for too long, World War II was looming on the horizon. Just think how differently the world history would have turned out if Adolf Hitler would have been lucky to get into the Academy of Fine Arts in 1907. During the Nazi era many of Gustav Klimt’s portraits of his Jewish patrons were confiscated. To this day battles are being fought in international courts to return some of these paintings to the rightful heirs, (see documentary “The Rape of Europa”, ASIN: B0011ZJ5C2, www.menemshafilms.com)

KEYWORDS

GUSTAV KLIMT, AUSTRIAN MODERNISM, AUSTRIAN JUGENDSTIL, VIENNA 1900, AUSTRIAN ART, PORTRAIT, THE KISS, DECORATIVE ART, PATTERN, COLOR, SYMBOLISM, WWI, WWII, SIGMUND FREUD, ADOLF HITLER, ARNOLD SCHOENBERG, HARMONY, Austrian-Hungarian Empire. GERMAN VOCABULARIES

Charles Wilbert White (April 2, 1918–October 3, 1979) was an American artist born in Chicago. He was known for his WPA era murals. White was married to famed sculptor and printmaker Elizabeth Catlett briefly.

White's best known work is *The Contribution of the Negro to American Democracy*, a mural at Hampton University depicting a number of notable blacks including Denmark Vesey, Nat Turner, Peter Salem, George Washington Carver, Harriet Tubman, Frederick Douglass, and Marian Anderson.