

Gustav Klimt

Letztes Atelier 1912-1918



VEREIN
GEDENKSTÄTTE
GUSTAV KLIMT

Anmerkungen zu Klimts künstlerischer Entwicklung

Observations on Klimt's Development as an Artist

Gustav Klimt über sich selbst als Maler: „... Von mir gibt es kein Selbstporträt.² Ich interessiere mich nicht für die eigene Person als Gegenstand eines Bildes, eher für andere Menschen, vor allem weibliche, noch mehr jedoch für andere Erscheinungen. Ich bin überzeugt davon, dass ich als Person nicht extra interessant bin. (...) Ich bin ein Maler, der Tag um Tag vom Morgen bis in den Abend malt. Figurenbilder und Landschaften, seltener Porträts. (...) Wer über mich – als Künstler, der allein beachtenswert ist – etwas wissen will, der soll meine Bilder aufmerksam betrachten und daraus zu erkennen suchen, was ich bin und was ich will.“

ERNEUERUNGSBESTREBUNGEN UND GESAMTKUNSTWERK

Gustav Klimt malt 1883–1888 mit der „Künstlercompagnie“ Wand- und Deckengemälde in der traditionellen akademischen Schule. Erneuerungsbestrebungen der Kunst führen 1897 zur Gründung der Wiener Secession. Klimt schließt sich mit gleichgesinnten Künstlern zusammen und entwickelt den Jugendstil österreichischer Prägung. Die Stilisierung als Ausdrucksform des Jugendstils zielt auf eine Durchdringung des ganzen Lebens mit künstlerischen Absichten, die im Begriff „Gesamtkunstwerk“ zum Ausdruck kommt. Nach Klimts Postulat schaffen die Künstler, in den Wiener Werkstätten vereinigt, Gestaltung und Architektur des Innenraums sowie das künstlerische Reformkleid. Emilie Flöge und Klimt entwerfen Kleider, welche im Modesalon der „Schwestern Flöge“ gefertigt werden. Frühe Modefotografien werden von ihm mit seinem Signet „GK“ versehen.



[1] Gustav Klimt, Fakultätsbild: Philosophia 1899-1907, Öl auf Leinwand, 430 x 300 cm, 1945 verbracht in das Museum für angewandte Kunst, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Wien

[1] Gustav Klimt, Faculty Painting: Philosophy 1899-1907, Oil on canvas, 430 x 300 cm, lost in a fire at Schloss Immendorf, Lower Austria, in 1945



[2] Gustav Klimt, Adele Bloch Bauer I, 1907, Öl auf Leinwand, 130 x 138 cm, Österreichische Galerie Belvedere, Wien

[2] Gustav Klimt, Adele Bloch-Bauer I, 1907, Oil on canvas, 130 x 138 cm, Österreichische Galerie Belvedere, Vienna



[3] Gustav Klimt, Tod und Leben, 2. Zustand, umgearbeitet 1916, Öl auf Leinwand, 178x198 cm, Leopold Museum, Wien

[3] Gustav Klimt, Death and Life, 2nd version, altered 1916, Oil on Canvas, 178x198 cm, Leopold Museum, Vienna

Gustav Klimt made the following observations about himself as a painter:¹ „...There is no self-portrait of me.² I am not interested in my own person as a subject of a picture – more in other people, especially women, but even more so in other appearances. I am convinced that as a person I'm not particularly interesting. (...) I'm a painter who paints day in and day out, from morning till evening – figure pictures and landscapes, more rarely portraits. Whoever wants to know something about me – as an artist which alone is significant – they should look attentively at my pictures and there seek to recognize what I am and what I want.“

INNOVATION AND GESAMTKUNSTWERK

From 1883 to 1888, Gustav Klimt was part of the “Künstlercompagnie” (Artist Company) and painted decorative schemes for architecture in a traditional academic style. The winds of change in art eventually led to the foundation of the Vienna Secession in 1897. Klimt joined with like-minded artists and developed an Austrian style of Art Nouveau (known as Jugendstil in German-speaking countries). The stylized art of Jugendstil aspired to imbue every facet of life with art and to create an artistic synthesis or “Gesamtkunstwerk” (a total work of art). As Klimt had urged, artists, who were collaborating in the Wiener Werkstätte, designed every aspect of the interior down to the clothes that people wore. Klimt and Emilie Flöge designed reform dresses which were made by the “Flöge Sisters” fashion salon. Early fashion photos are embellished with Klimt's signet “GK”.

ALLEGORY AND PORTRAIT

Klimt created monumental murals including the “Beethoven Frieze” at the Vienna Secession and a mosaic frieze for Palais Stoclet in Brussels. A number of his paintings are closely related to these murals and ceiling paintings in terms of their impact, design and symbolic and allegorical subject-matter. “The Kiss” is a variation of the final image in the “Beethoven Frieze”³ and the composition of the figures in paintings like “The Bride” [6], “The Virgin” and “Death and Life” [3] resembles the Faculty Paintings [1].⁴

“Adele Bloch-Bauer I” [2], 1907, is a masterpiece of the “Golden Style”. This was inspired by the Byzantine golden mosaics in Ravenna and Japanese screens with their golden grounds, which were exhibited in Vienna around 1900.⁵ In this period Klimt worked intensively with Japanese motifs and design principles.⁶

“The Kiss”, 1907/08, was the principal work at the exhibition “Vienna Kunsthau” (Art Show) of 1908 and is today the quintessential icon of Viennese Jugendstil. The exhibition was the first public presentation by the Klimt Group (“stylists”). The Klimt Group left the Vienna Secession in 1905 after conflicts of interest emerged.

A TIME OF TRANSITION IN KLIMT'S WORK

In 1909 Klimt travelled to Paris, Madrid and Toledo during a phase of transition. He now replaced gold with “vibrant colours, which can already be detected in ‘Death and Life’ of 1908-1911 (1st version), and 1916 (2nd version [3]), in the oil painting “The Virgin” of 1912/13, but also in the portraits of the same period.”⁷ “Adele Bloch Bauer II” [4] of 1912 is the first female portrait to reflect a new approach to colour inspired by Matisse. The Japanese painter Kijiro OHTA (1883-1951) visited Klimt in 1913 in his studio and noted: “He was using very little gold and silver (...) and not painting the way you would expect. (...) I now saw that he uses his brush in a lively and free manner.”⁸

LANDSCAPES

The idyllic studio in the Feldmühlgasse was the right environment for Klimt's exceptional late work. It was here that Klimt finished a large majority of his landscapes, which he had started during his summer sojourns [5]. To help him seek out his motifs he not only made use of photography but also cut a square hole into a piece of card, which he then used as a viewfinder.

LATE WORK

At the end of his last creative period another change in style can be identified, which resulted in Klimt abandoning baroque tendencies and once again moving towards mannerism. He reverted to a rigorous two-dimensionality and to representing very elongated bodies. In some of these drawings, female nudes are transformed into spiritual beings in a way that makes them appear transparent and consumed by their passions. Light no longer emphasizes their corporeality but dematerializes them (...). It was certainly no coincidence that it was at this time that El Greco's dramatic use of light and shade and the ecstatic expressions and postures of his figures were important for Klimt.⁹



[4] Gustav Klimt, Adele Bloch Bauer II, 1912, Öl auf Leinwand, 190 x 120 cm, Österreichische Galerie Belvedere, Wien

[4] Gustav Klimt, Adele Bloch-Bauer II, 1912, Oil on canvas, 190 x 120 cm, Österreichische Galerie Belvedere, Vienna



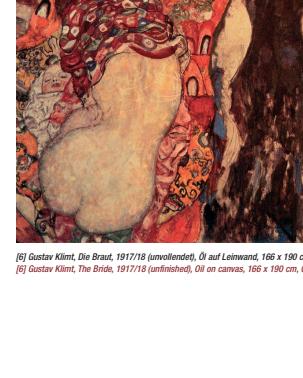
[5] Gustav Klimt, Allee im Park von Schloss Kammer, 1912, Öl auf Leinwand, 110 x 110 cm, Österreichische Galerie Belvedere, Wien

[5] Gustav Klimt, Avenue in Schloss Kammer Park, 1912, Oil on Canvas, 110 x 110 cm, Österreichische Galerie Belvedere, Vienna



[5] Gustav Klimt, Avenue in Schloss Kammer Park, 1912, Öl auf Leinwand, 110 x 110 cm, Österreichische Galerie Belvedere, Wien

[5] Gustav Klimt, Avenue in Schloss Kammer Park, 1912, Oil on Canvas, 110 x 110 cm, Österreichische Galerie Belvedere, Vienna



[6] Gustav Klimt, Die Braut, 1917/18 (unfinished), Öl auf Leinwand, 166 x 190 cm, Österreichische Galerie Belvedere, Wien

[6] Gustav Klimt, The Bride, 1917/18 (unfinished), Oil on canvas, 166 x 190 cm, Österreichische Galerie Belvedere, Vienna

¹ Diese Quote ist aus einem undatierten handschriftlichen Gespräch mit Klimt entnommen.

² Alice Strobl, Gustav Klimt. Die Zeichnungen, Bd. II – IV, Salzburg 1982-89.

³ Fritz Novotny, Johannes Dobai, Gustav Klimt, Wien 1967; S. 11-94.

⁴ Christian M. Nebelhay, Gustav Klimt Dokumentation, Wien 1969.

⁵ Christian M. Nebelhay, Gustav Klimt. Von der Zeichnung zum Bild (Vienna, 1992).

⁶ Heide und Helmut Buschhausen, „Das Ensemble Klimt-Atelier als Denkmal des Jugendstils“, Steine Sprechen (Zeitschrift der Öster. Gesellschaft für Denkmal- und Ortsbildpflege), No. 112 (1999) und No. 118a (2000).

⁷ Alice Strobl, Gustav Klimt Die Zeichnungen, vols. II-IV (Salzburg, 1982-89).

⁸ Fritz Novotny und Johannes Dobai, Gustav Klimt (Vienna, 1967), 11-94.

⁹ Christian M. Nebelhay, Gustav Klimt Dokumentation (Vienna, 1969).

¹⁰ Alice Strobl, Gustav Klimt. Von der Zeichnung zum Bild (Vienna, 1992).

¹¹ Alice Strobl, Gustav Klimt (Vienna, 1967), 35.

¹² Kojirō Ohta, Gustav Klimt (Tokyo, 1996), 8.

¹³ Alice Strobl, Künstler der Jahrhundertwende. Gustav Klimt, Zürich, 1983.

¹⁴ Verein Gedenkstätte Gustav Klimt (ed.), A visit to Gustav Klimt (Großwolfsberg, 2005).

¹⁵ Alice Strobl, Gustav Klimt. Die Zeichnungen, Band III, Salzburg 1984, S.12.