

Artist Resources – Gustav Klimt (Austrian, 1862-1918)

[Gustav Klimt Foundation](#)

Klimt at [Neue Galerie, New York](#)

[The Getty Center](#) partnered with Vienna’s [Albertina Museum](#) in 2012 for the first retrospective dedicated to Klimt’s prolific drawing practice. Marking the 150th anniversary of his birth, the prominent collection traced Klimt’s use of the figure from the 1880s until his death. Digital resources from the Getty provide background on Klimt’s relationships to Symbolism and the Secession movement, his public murals, drawings, and late portraits.

In 2015, [the Neue Galerie](#) commemorated the film, [Woman in Gold](#), with an exhibition bringing together Klimt’s infamous [portrait of Adele Bloch Bauer](#) with a suite of historical material. Bauer’s portrait was at the nexus of [a conversation about the return of Nazi looted art](#), now in prestigious museums, to the progeny of families they were stolen from during WWII.

[San Francisco’s de Young museum](#) presented the first major exhibition of Klimt’s work on the west coast in 2017, pairing the Vienna Secessionist with sculptures and works on paper by August Rodin, whom Klimt met in 1902.

[The Leopold museum](#) celebrated the centennial of Klimt’s death and his contribution to Viennese modernism in a comprehensive survey in 2018.



Klimt, ca. 1902

Also in 2018, the [Museum of Fine Arts Boston](#) and the [Royal Academy of Art in London](#) opened surveys exploring the creative influences of Klimt and his young mentee Egon Schiele through the medium of drawing.

In a series of talks in Boston in conjunction with the exhibition, [Professor Judith Bookbinder spoke](#) about the aesthetic differences of Klimt, Schiele, and Schiele’s contemporary Oskar Kokoschka. Bookbinder extrapolated on the legacy of their stylistic innovation and conceptual investigations on European modernism, particularly in the work of such artists as Otto Dix, Max Beckmann, and Karl Zerbe.

[Professor Claude Cernuschi also discussed](#) Klimt’s career as he graduated from the historicist style toward the decorative aesthetic of Art Nouveau and developed a controversial reputation in the prejudicial political climate of fin-de-siècle Vienna. **“The distinction between applied art and fine art is remarkably blurred in his mind,”** Cernuschi commented on Klimt’s familial background of goldsmiths and gold engravers, and Klimt’s articulate use of gold leaf. **“At every point, Klimt is going to push the envelope, not only collapsing flatness and three-dimensionality, fine art and applied art, but severity and gravity...with this blatant emphasis on sexuality.”**

Paris’ [Atelier des Lumières](#) opened its exhibition space in 2019 with an immersive digital display of paintings by Klimt and his milieu.



Klimt, 1917



Gustav Klimt (Austrian, 1862-1918)

Ria Munk I, 1912

Oil on canvas

Private Collection; L2020:103.6

Gustav Klimt was one of the most significant artists of *fin-de-siecle* (end of the century) Europe. As a founder of the Vienna Secession movement in 1897, he led a period of stylistic transformation in Austria, renouncing the dominant confines of Viennese academic historicism for the lush and esoteric visual splendor of Symbolism and decorative Art Nouveau. Prominent public commissions defined the innovative and audacious painter's early career, after which he transitioned into portraiture. Women were a central focus throughout, frequently depicted through sensual and symbolic imagery, sinuous lines, and ornate patterning.

In the paired down **Ria Munk I**, Klimt memorializes Maria Munk, who committed suicide at the age of twenty-four on December 28, 1911 after a broken engagement. Klimt worked on three renditions of a portrait, commissioned by the Munk family, leaving the third—a full length vision in his ornate decorative style—unfinished at his own death. In this intimate initial view, Ria appears in a flower-laden death bed. Klimt focuses on her delicate pale features and the wisps of hair around her face, retaining a touch of realism. Rather than a haunting psychological portrait of death, the likeness radiates a somber peace and soulful grace, as if young Ria is merely sleeping.

On view December 23, 2020 – March 28, 2021