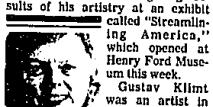


'Streamlining America'

Henry Ford Museum exhibit goes back to the future

I first met Gustav Klimt in Paris last spring on a very brief visit to the Pompidou museum. I had no way of knowing that I would meet him again and again during the summer. In New York City and in Vienna, or that I would see the long-range results of his artistry at an exhibit called "Streamlining America," which opened at Henry Ford Museum this week.



Iris Jones

helped change the direction of art, architecture and product design forever.

I didn't know that on that sunny April day in Paris. It was 5 p.m. and I was thinking about how to get a quick look at the Pompidou before returning to my hotel for a dinner date.

I recognized the bright red and blue cubes, and the scaffolding supporting the glass box of the museum, a design that made the Pompidou famous all over the world when it opened; critic said they turned the building inside out so that the plumbing showed.

travel

I wasn't prepared for the life pulsing around the Centre Pompidou, or as some people call it, the Beaubourg Center. People of all ages were gathered around the pool outside the museum door, drinking wine and tea, watching the late sun shine through the wonderful wacky sculpture that was the centerpiece of the fountain.

ON AN adjacent plaza, the Parisians watched jugglers, speechmakers, sidewalk musicians and painters. It was such a great spectacle that I went quite reluctantly through the museum door.

Inside, I saw an escalator leading down to a mezzanine, where a line of people leaned against a railing and gazed down at the activities visible on a lower floor. There, white-aproned waiters served coffee and whipped cream cakes to tiny tables, and people crowded around the posters and books in a museum book store.

It took me a moment to realize that those railing-leaders were really people looking forward to the Uckerl booth, where they were standing in line for a 2 a.m. showing of an exhibit called "Vienna 1900."

Since I didn't know much about

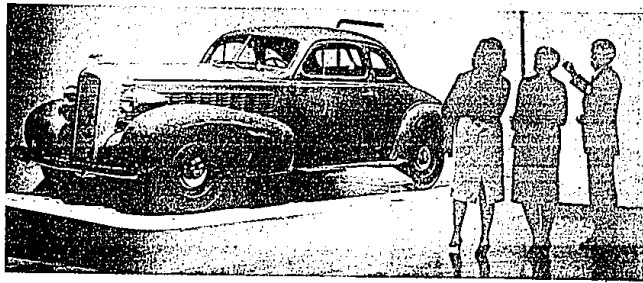
Gustav Klimt or Egon Schiele I could not understand why turn-of-the-century Vienna was worth such a middle-of-the-night visit. Apparently the exhibit was so popular that the Pompidou opened it twice a week at night to get the crowds through.

Klimt's work dominated the bookstore; women and lovers, draped in gaudy, elegant golden clothes, rose against every wall. The English version of the catalog was sold out so I bought it in French. I could not skim the words but the pictures were a knockout.

When I stopped in New York City on my way home, I learned that many well-informed people had already met Gustav Klimt. "Vienna 1900" was scheduled at the Museum of Modern Art July 3 through Oct. 21, where it has taken America by storm.

NEW YORK artist Eric Jones, formerly of the Detroit area, had a shelf of books about Klimt, Schiele and their friends, and was happy to explain this boom in Viennese painters. (See adjoining story.)

I am always fascinated by the way that life leads you from one piece of a jigsaw puzzle to another, so I should not have been surprised that I would meet Klimt again on an unexpected trip to Vienna. There he was in a newly rendered series of wall murals in the Secession Museum,



A 1938 LaSalle coupe is part of the "Streamlining America" exhibit at Henry Ford Museum in Dearborn.

built by Klimt and his gang as a rebuttal of traditional Viennese art. The murals had been redone with a grant from the American ambassador to Vienna, Ronald S. Lauder, whose family also supported the exhibit in New York.

A leads to B leads to C, so why shouldn't this artistic adventure lead eventually to my own doorstep? Henry Ford Museum in Dearborn opened two new exhibits this week:

"Streamlining America" and "Yesterday's Tomorrows."

As I stepped through the archway into "Streamlining America," the first words I read were "After World War I swept away the last remnants of the Victorian era, there was growing awareness in both Europe and America that we were entering a new age — the modern age."

There they were, sleek ships, planes and cars leading through a

doorway to the stark modern designs of washing machines, toasters and chairs, all of them 20th century designs that could not have appeared on our landscape until artists like Klimt and Schiele had swept away the designs of the old world.

Gustav Klimt has never been to my dinner table. He died in 1918. But I have met his handiwork so often in the past six months that I feel like I know him well.



Displayed in the Vienna 1900 show is a reconstruction of a 1902 original by Otto Wagner, Dispatch Bureau, "Die Zeit."

1900 Viennese art had lasting effect

Eric Jones is an artist who grew up in Dearborn and Farmington Hills and has his studio now in New York City.

By Eric Jones
special writer

The Old World ended in 1918. The steel and glass towers of the New Age would be built on the rubble left by World War I. Four Viennese artists died in 1918: Gustav Klimt, Egon Schiele, Otto Wagner and Kolo Moser. So ended one of the most unique and volatile periods in art history.

These four artists created important changes in modern thought and social history, but it was their formal stylizations that had a lasting impact on our world. The way things look today, and the vitality we have come to expect from our art, owe much to the artists and intellectuals of turn-of-the-century Vienna.

Artists like Klimt and Schiele used their medium as an emotional outlet, a tangible reflection of their mental state. This expression of inner meaning through outer form is called expressionism and is one of the dominant characteristics of 20th century art. It moved like a wave across Europe at the beginning of this century, leaving in its wake the remains of 19th century romanticism.

VIENNA 1900: Art, Architecture and Design is the subject of a major exhibition, which will continue at the Museum of Modern Art in New York City through Oct. 21. Similar shows have been mounted recently in Vienna and Paris, like the New York show, they have drawn huge crowds. This sudden interest is partly due to the sophisticated marketing techniques that museums use today to attract customers; they have learned how to make difficult and esoteric art accessible to the general public.

In the first part of the exhibit, paintings are presented together with jewelry, posters and furniture. The walls of the galleries are decorated with patterns of the time, and a newspaper-style brochure features articles on Viennese intellectuals. This cultural clutter helps to establish the ambience of the period.

The plethora of styles presented is the result of the expressionists' energetic quest to develop a style befitting the coming New Age. Here are the seeds of many of the larger movements that would take place in

later years. These artists were shedding their repressed 19th-century attitudes, as were the writers and philosophers of the day. The superficial elegance of the Hapsburg empire was seen as little more than a facade, which concealed the darker side of life. Ideas that challenged the status quo were flowing from the new science of psychology, and from existential philosophers. These pressures were directed most pointedly at the institutions, such as the Vienna Academy of Fine Arts.

In 1897 a middle-aged muralist named Gustav Klimt positioned himself as the antagonist of the Academy. He saw their lack of response to contemporary trends in art to be at odds with the new social consciousness. Together with a group of younger painters, and supported by architects and designers, he formed the Association of Austrian Painters, Secession.

The Secessionists opened an exhibit hall half a block from the Academy and mounted shows that were free of exotic, stylish and hostile toward prevailing values. The effect would

be profound on Academy students who would rather imitate Klimt than copy plaster busts all day.

Klimt's paintings were highly symbolic and erotic. His "Golden Style" paintings are among the most elegant and seductive works ever created. This style integrated sensuous nudes with richly colored abstract patterning and lots of gold. Underneath the luxuriant tapestries, the figures have been painted in obsessive detail. The son of a goldsmith, Klimt was familiar with the glittering excesses of Viennese society, as we look at this stylish work now it is hard to imagine that it was a reaction against that society.

One of the students influenced by Klimt was Egon Schiele. His work was more brittle, impatient and frightening than the master's though. He came to see Klimt's art as just

another facade, and Schiele wanted to expose the reality underneath. Schiele, Oskar Kodosha and Richard Gerstl developed a way of painting called "pathological portraiture," a kind of psychologically charged caricature. This attempt at social consciousness eventually led to self-consciousness and narcissism for Schiele, whose favorite subject was himself.

A kind of schizoid sexuality began to inhabit his work, and his drawings, simultaneously erotic and repulsive, are the highlight of the MOMA show. Their receding themes of self-pity, death and masturbation led a local judge to burn one of Schiele's drawings and throw him in jail for immorality.

While the painters were busy exploring their psyches, the designers and architects were exploring new

materials and attitudes. The Wiener Werkstatte (Vienna Workshops) was formed by Josef Hoffman, Otto Wagner and Koloman Moser to create the utilitarian objects that would fill the modern world. They developed a strictly geometric style of design, which was later carried on by a spin-off group called the Bauhaus. This geometry and functionalism has since become the dominant style in our time.

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