

<https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/becoming-modern/symbolism/v/gustav-klimt-the-kiss-1907-8>

## Video transcript

1- DR: BETH HARRIS: Schiele gives us an image of a couple that's electrified by kind of agitate outlines..

2- DR: BETH HARRIS: And catch the light, much the way that the gold was tooled in medieval paintings.

3- DR. STEVEN ZUCKER: Well there's no question that the gold here makes you think of the Byzantine tradition, maybe some of the tile work at Ravenna. There is a way that the patterning, especially around the faces, becomes a kind of halo, as well. You have Klimt building up the gold. He's got those gold circles, they actually rise off the surface of the canvas.

4-DR: BETH HARRIS: It's a very large painting and there's so much gold that it's hard not to think of a religious icon. And I think in some ways Klimt was trying to create a modern icon-- something that suggested a sense of transcendence.

5- DR. STEVEN ZUCKER: There is this sense of the male figure of patterns that are direct of linear in contrast to the curvilinear to the circles and the ovals that we seen in the female form. But the point that you made about the sense of the spiritual is so powerful in this painting. I think we forget that that darker gold ground seems so much as if the figures are somehow being dissipated into the cosmos, that there are so lost in the intensity, the eternity of that kiss.

6- DR. STEVEN ZUCKER: Schiele is showing us a kind of truth through the energy of the moment. Whereas Klimt seems to be reaching out to a truth that is for all time, that is so aestheticized it feels as if it has a degree of absolutepermanence

7- DR. STEVEN ZUCKER: And that's absolutely right, with the exception of the faces. And here, this is where the entire painting changes. The female figure is completely full frontal but horizontal. So that there's this beautiful sense of here passivity receiving that kiss, but also a kind of deep interior feeling with her eyes closed. Her fingers just delicately touching his as he holds her head and his neck reaches out and round, and you get a sense of his physical power through the strength of that neck, but also the intensity of his desire. And of course, they're both crowned. As on his head you can see a wreath of leaves, on hers almost as if they were the stars of the heavens.

8-DR. STEVEN ZUCKER: We're in the Belvedere in Vienna, and we're looking at Gustav Klimt's The Kiss from 1908. Probably the most famous Klimt, and actually, I

have to admit that I had forgotten that the painting was almost a perfect square, because I've seen in so many posters where it's been cut down and made into a rectangle

9- DR: BETH HARRIS: And all removed from the everyday world. I mean, we have to remember that this is a time of incredible modernization in Vienna. The city of Vienna has been transformed in the previous 30 years into a modern city. Here Klimt is abstracting a universal experience from the trauma, the difficulties, the anxieties of everyday life. I think it's also important to see this in relationship to Klimt's Beethoven Frieze, where the figures confront evil forces-- these mythic figures-- and in the end, there's this embrace, this kiss, this emergence from evil into fulfillment and perfection. A minute ago, we were looking at the painting by Egon Schiele called The Embrace, but there there was so much more of a sense of the physicality, of the body's. The way that the bodies really aren't present here and are cloaked in these decorative forms, reminds us how much Klimt, although he was exploring this kind of sensuality, was also disguising it, or covering it with a kind of decorative patterning.

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