

Visual Arts Extended Essay:  
Edo Period Japanese Art and its Impact on Gustav Klimt's Secession Pieces.

**Research Question: To what extent did Japanese art influence Gustav Klimt and his pieces?**

Word Count: 3795

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## The Rise of Japonisme in Western Art

Imagine cultures from two opposite sides of the world colliding, creating an entirely new branch of art history. This collision sparked in an exposition, catching the eye of a particular group that will expand the ideology of art. The Vienna Secession emerged as a protest to the moderation of museums and conventions in the Austrian capital. The group contains five main members: Joseph Maria Olbrich, Koloman Moser, Josef Hoffmann, and Gustav Klimt. At the beginning of the 19th century, Vienna Secessionists began introducing Japanese elements into their work. This inspiration is taken from the Japanese displays at world fairs throughout the last half of the nineteenth century such as Vienna's 1873 *Weltausstellung*, an International Exposition. These elements include rich primary colors, composition, intricate patterns and human positions that portray life, death, and class. Patterns among Japanese art heavily influence the Vienna Secessionists by their prescribed meaning in Japanese culture, as well. They are typically associated with wealth, power, and life, usually with rich colors and respected animals among ancient Japanese tales. This specific type of Japanese art that inspired the Vienna Secessionists originates during the Edo period (1615-1868) including Ukiyo-e and Rinpa School. Gustav Klimt, already internationally known and pronounced president, like the other members of the group, was heavily inspired by this style of Japanese art. This proposes the question, "To what extent did Japanese art influence Gustav Klimt and his pieces?" Common subjects in Klimt's pieces include couples in love and portraits of women. Women are often dressed in thick, colorful layers of cloth to mimic kimonos as well as the style surrounding sleeves and length. This connects to Ukiyo-e prints that depicted coronations and marriages during the Edo period and traditional Japanese culture. His murals are influenced by the patterns and symbols that are heavily used and respected in Japanese culture. Symbols including animals, flowers and colors

direct the patterns associated with characteristics that range from strength to elegance. Slim, tall figures represent a long healthy life according to Japanese tales. Klimt incorporates this work in his pieces reflecting the fixation of Christianity in Austrian society. Using the association from Japanese culture of slim, healthy, and beautiful, he often uses this description for young, strong humans associating with Christ. The connection between cultures is relevant because of how much humans connect through illustrations on canvas without physical interaction. This is an example of how artists can change each other culture through art. The term for Japanese art gaining popularity among Western culture is called *Japonisme*, a French word sparking in the late 19th century. Klimt is heavily influenced by Japonisme as he uses it to portray many scenes including erotica, nostalgia, the progression of Europe during the turn of the century, personal grief and the fear of morality. Japonism can be both classified as a movement and branch of a movement as it takes formal elements of one culture and pushes it to another without generally changing aspects of design. Klimt has been inspired by Japonimse since the International Exposition of 1873 and incorporates it into several art pieces both visually and metaphorically. By analyzing these pieces, I will be using primary sources, some of which I have captured images myself at the Ronin Gallery, the Museum of Modern Art, and the Neue Gallery all located in New York City.

### **Traditional Japanese Culture**

Ukiyo-e prints were popular during the Edo period (1615-1868) of Japan. Ukiyo-e is directly translated to “pictures of the floating world”, “floating world” referring to the brothel and theater districts of Japan’s largest cities.<sup>1</sup> Kabuki (a form of traditional Japanese theater)

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<sup>1</sup> V&A Museum Editors. “Japanese Woodblock Prints.” *Victoria and Albert Museum*, 2020, [www.vam.ac.uk/articles/japanese-woodblock-prints-ukiyo-e#:~:text=Produced%20in%20their%20many%20thousands,pictures%20of%20the%20floating%20world](http://www.vam.ac.uk/articles/japanese-woodblock-prints-ukiyo-e#:~:text=Produced%20in%20their%20many%20thousands,pictures%20of%20the%20floating%20world)’.



Henander-Harris, Iris “Photograph of *Kabuki Actor Nakamura Shikan*,  
Sadagusa c. 1835” Ronin Gallery. Captured 2023.

actors and courtesans were most commonly depicted because of the fashion representation which spread to the public through inexpensive woodblock printing, allowing them to be mass produced for commerce and trade. These art styles depicted colorful scenes of Japanese tales and other classics.

The glorification of beauty in Japanese culture is prominent throughout Ukiyo-E and Rinpa School. In both male and females, pale skin and long, slender bodies were the ideal, being the reason empresses and princesses are depicted with flawless, paper white skin. Large warriors were not seen as muscled figures like in Western art. Feelings of strength and power derived from length rather than width, in Japanese culture. Dragons are extremely common when representing power, wisdom, and being “reborn”. They’re usually shaded in with bright, opaque tones of red and blue, contrasting between them and the background to highlight their power.

## **The Function of Traditional Japanese Art**

During this time, courtesans, actors, models, and entertainers were the main subjects in Ukiyo-E prints. Japan has a rich tradition of fairytales and folklore, so naturally these depict myths and heroic scenes. Models dressed in new fabrics and patterns spread trends around the country via print. Prints containing landscapes were also in high demand. Some have scenes of flourishing greenery, oceans, mountains, or species of animals. They were produced on a large scale with little cost, therefore cheap souvenirs and decorations as the period continued. Other prints contain courtesans portraying mannerisms, as consideration of others and honor are two highly valued traits in Japanese culture. Lastly, these prints also depicted erotic scenes of couples as homosexuality among young females were common, normalized, and encouraged.

## **The Purpose of Traditional Japanese Art**

While printmaking was typically inexpensive, they were often commissioned by the wealthier class. Courtesans and emperors commissioned self portraits to honor the current or previous monarchy. Scenes of erotica were flourishing during this time, as well. Either depicting the couple commissioning the piece themselves or randomly selected people. Erotic prints were for personal use among couples and education for teenagers. Landscape prints were decorative, a form of luxury when displayed in a home. Some prints were doused with gold<sup>2</sup> and placed on large wooden screens, this is called Rinpa School. Other times, landscapes were used as cheap, small prints for easy money. Illustrating landscapes was much easier than obtaining models and Kabuki actors.

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<sup>2</sup> Imprey, Oliver. *The Art of the Japanese Folding Screen*. Weatherhill, 1997.

## Japanese Formal Elements



Henander-Harris, Iris “Photograph of  
*Emperor Koko Shurosho*, Shunsho c. 1775”  
Ronin Gallery. Captured 2023.



Henander-Harris, Iris “Photograph of  
*Shiba I Chutatsu*, Kuniyoshi c. 1834”  
Ronin Gallery. Captured 2023.

When printmaking, the most common scenes portray power, respect and love. Power is associated with emperors, either solo or fighting with a strong mythical creature. When analyzing the elements of power, it is usually depicted through color. In Shunsho’s *Emperor Koko Shurosho* and Kuniyoshi’s *Shiba I Chutatsu*, there remains a palette of primary colors connecting to Japanese culture. In *Emperor Koko Shurosho*, red and green are doused throughout the painting. Red depicts strength and might to highlight his powerful position while deep green represents eternity, two colors to represent a long ruling<sup>3</sup>. In *Shiba I Chutatsu*, there is a

<sup>3</sup> Dunkin, E, “Japanese Colors” Busuu. 2022.  
[https://blog.busuu.com/japanese-colors/#:~:text=Red%20in%20Japanese%20\(Aka\)&text=Red%20is%20said%20to%20scare,and%20red%20and%20white%20curtains.](https://blog.busuu.com/japanese-colors/#:~:text=Red%20in%20Japanese%20(Aka)&text=Red%20is%20said%20to%20scare,and%20red%20and%20white%20curtains.)

prominent use of blue. Here, blue represents stability and security, two characteristics warriors are often portrayed with in a fight. Linework is also prominent and indicates the outcome as

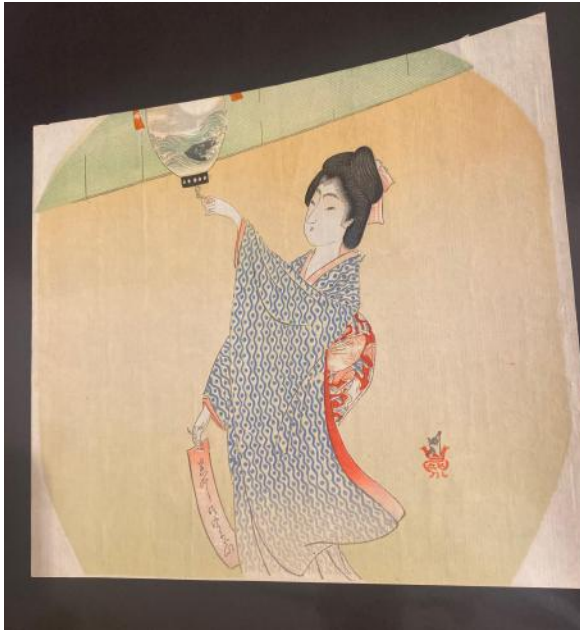


Henander-Harris, Iris “Photograph of *Kabuki Actor Bando Mitsugoro as Hige no Ikyu*, Kunisada c. 1828” Ronin Gallery. Captured 2023.

unpredictable. The strokes are not smooth and parallel portraying steadiness, but rather chaos as it is illustrating a fight scene. The amount of respect is based on how much space they take up in a print. If the subject is higher class, like courts and royals, they wear traditional formalwear called *Junihitoe*. The Junihitoe consists of loose, multilayered fabrics that drape across the body. Because it is thicker than most traditional Japanese wear, it symbolizes royalty, which can be seen in *Kabuki Actor Bando Mitsugoro as Hige no Ikyu*, by Kunisada. As stated previously, Kabuki actors were highly respected<sup>4</sup>. Here, Bando Mitsugoro is wearing a thick, multi-layered kimono nearing the sides of the print. Because these prints were generally around

<sup>4</sup> Kamachi, Noriko. *Culture and Customs of Japan*. Culture and Customs of Asia, 1999.





Henander-Harris, Iris “*Photograph of Summer Lantern*, unknown artist c. 1920” Ronin Gallery.

Captured 2023.



Utamaro, Kitawaga “*True Feelings Compared*” Museum of Fine Arts. 1799.

10” x 15””, it was important to have the subject solo and center to allow dominance of the space around them<sup>5</sup>. The more space they took up, the more honor they obtained. This contrasts to the print *Summer Lantern* by an unknown artist, a piece with no definable purpose. The woman in the middle of the print is not relevant nor has an important role. This is suggested through the lack of material in her kimono as it is thinly layered, allowing emptiness to fill around her. There is no need for her to take up space, the artist depicts her as a common citizen who isn’t relevant in any court, entertainment, or war-honoring purpose. Lastly, couples and scenes of love are extremely common. Besides erotic scenes, love is depicted through color and space.

<sup>5</sup> Ronin Gallery. “Decoding Ukiyo-e: Standard Sizes” 2016. <https://www.ronin-gallery.com/blog/decoding-ukiyo-e-standard-sizes-2#:~:text=STANDARD%20PRINT%20SIZES,-Oban&text=Measuring%20roughly%2015%22%20by%2010,1804>

Representing love is a vibrant orange, portraying a thriving, blooming connection between the two<sup>6</sup>. In Kitawaga Utamaro’s *True Feelings Compared*, a heterosexual relationship where both the man and woman are wearing bright orange to symbolize their beaming love for each other. Orange wraps around the woman’s neck throughout her kimono, as well as orange stripes glide through the man’s hakama. Not only color, but the lack of space in between the two subjects is also a key factor. The man almost directly in front of the woman indicates that the relationship is strong and both are comfortably loving towards each other.

### Japanese Principles of Design



Henander-Harris, Iris “Photograph of Chibi I Chutatsu, Kuniyoshi c. 1834” Ronin Gallery  
Captured 2023.



Henander-Harris, Iris “Photograph of Makibashira, Kuniyoshi c. 1855” Ronin  
Gallery. Captured 2023.

<sup>6</sup> Dunkin, E, “Japanese Colors” Busuu. 2022.  
[https://blog.busuu.com/japanese-colors/#:~:text=Red%20in%20Japanese%20\(Aka\)&text=Red%20is%20said%20to%20scare,and%20red%20and%20white%20curtains.](https://blog.busuu.com/japanese-colors/#:~:text=Red%20in%20Japanese%20(Aka)&text=Red%20is%20said%20to%20scare,and%20red%20and%20white%20curtains.)

Traditional Japanese artists used the principles of design to emphasize the tone specifically through dominance, composition, and balance. Kuniyoshi's *Shiba I Chutatsu* and *Makibashira* both use composition to depict dominance. There is a vertical triangular composition in each piece portraying both warriors dominating the animals by being physically on top of them. In *Makibashira*, the head of the serpent is below the warrior's torso, the warrior



Kuniyoshi "Ogiya uchi Hanaogi" British  
Museum. Date: unknown.



Utamaro, Kitawaga "True Feelings Compared"  
Museum of Fine Arts. 1799

gains control by seizing the serpent's jaw. Due to the contrasting positions, the warrior has dominated the serpent by remaining above it. In addition to composition, repetition is another way artists express respect, for example in *Ogiya uchi Hanaogi*, a young, fresh courtesan is doused in multiple repeating patterns throughout her Junihitoe. This print depicts a formally-dressed female Japanese courtesan, as she is wearing thick layers of blue and white

draped across her body horizontally. Two patterns consisting of flowers and birds are scattered across the fabric. The floral pattern is of two different types of flowers, symbolizing beauty and youth of the young newly courted female<sup>7</sup>. The pattern of the birds represent longevity and prosperity, referring to the hopeful long life this new leader will obtain. The indication of hope comes from either the artist, those who commissioned or both. Lastly, love uses a great deal of principles when portraying a caring, equal relationship such as harmony, balance, and unity. In *True Feelings Compared* by Kitawaga Utamaro, both partners in the relationship cling together touching each other. The horizontal balance between both their bodies and their heads allows a sense of unity in the print, especially since both of them are looking in the same direction. As they both look to the left, it indicates they both share similar goals in their relationship. The two meet together in the middle of the piece, providing a sense of harmony. While the man is taking up more space in the print, the balance remains relatively equal as the woman rests her chin on his shoulder, bringing her face and body closer to the front.

### **How Traditional Japanese Culture Impacted Austrian Culture**

Japanese art gained popularity in Western culture through France in the late 19th century. This is how the term *Japonisme* or *Japonism* came from. In Austria, Japanese art was popularized during Vienna's 1873 Weltausstellung, an international exposition of art. In the Japanese pavilion of this exposition, many objects were obtained from the Tokyo Sasei School (now University of Tokyo) including objects such as ceramics, lacquerware and textiles<sup>8</sup>.

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<sup>7</sup> Sandman, N. "Unlocking the Secrets of Japanese Art." Stone and Gray, 2023. <https://stoneandgray.co.za/blogs/news/unlocking-the-secrets-of-japanese-art-exploring-symbols-and-meanings-in-traditional-masterpieces>.

<sup>8</sup> Rosenman, R. "The Vienna Secession: A History." The Vienna Secession, 2017. <https://www.theviennasecession.com/vienna-secession/>

Secessionists were drawn to the simplicity of Japanese art with its use of hand-made, natural materials and the portrayal of value. The Secessionists appreciate this idea to such an extent, that they make the Secession exhibit of 1903 dedicated specifically to Japanese art.

In Japan's exhibition in Vienna, no specific artist displayed their pieces, rather the Japanese government built shrines and gardens. The exhibits in the industrial pavilion contained the Kinshachi (great dolphins) of Nagoya Castle, a model of great Buddha Kamakura, a temple, and a lantern<sup>9</sup>. Two Secessionists were greatly inspired by this exhibit during this time: Gustav Klimt and Emil Orlik. Orlik's Japanese work experiments with the form, balance, color, pattern and its stylistic influence eventually trickles down to Klimt by interaction through the Secessionists. Graphic design and painting techniques that derive from Ukiyo-e woodblock prints specifically caught Klimt's eye. The bold colors and line work cooperating with negative space were just the beginning of this transition from Japanese art to Japonisme. Long slender women with boldly patterned, flowy dresses and hairstyles in updos became extremely popular portrait styles in the 19th century originating from Ukiyo-e portraits of courtesans and princesses. Not only the subject but the lack of objects around the subject, allowing them to have the focus on them is a sign of respect that emanates from Japanese culture and mannerisms to Klimt's pieces.

### **The Function of Klimt's Inspired Pieces**

The most common subjects in Klimt's Japanese influenced pieces are womens' portraits. These specific portraits were made in the early 20th century as commissioned pieces for wealthy

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<sup>9</sup> Pantzer, Peter. "The World Exposition in Vienna in 1873," 2018.

families. Some of the most famous female portraits Klimt has illustrated are *Adele Bloch-Bauer*, *Portrait of Elizabeth Lederer* and *Portrait of Maria Beer*. In most, Klimt uses shimmering gold



Klimt, Gustav “*Portrait of Elizabeth Lederer*” National Gallery of Canada. 1916



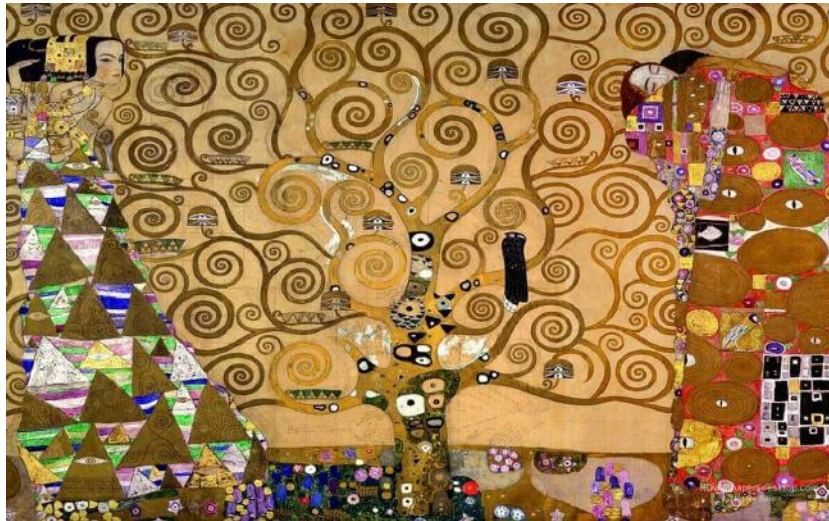
Klimt, Gustav “*the Virgin*” Prague National Gallery. 1913

doused in patterns in the background and on the women’s dress to create a sense of luxury and opulence<sup>10</sup>. Klimt also uses objects from Japanese art and folktales as symbols and tells a story. In portraits such as *Portrait of Elisabeth Lederer*, Klimt adds dragons behind her to symbolize power and prosperity to her and her wealthy family. Similar color schemes such as the complimentary colors blue and orange uplift the symbolism of stability and love. This is not Klimt’s only use of Japanese symbolism, but another Klimt piece, *The Virgin*, symbolizes the relationship between beauty and ephemerality<sup>11</sup>. This piece may not look directly influenced by

<sup>10</sup> Wayne Arthur Gallery. “Why Did Gustav Klimt Use Gold in His Paintings?” 2023. <https://www.waynearthurgallery.com/why-did-gustav-klimt-use-gold-in-his-paintings/#:~:text=Gustav%20Klimt%20is%20a%20renowned,luxury%2C%20opulence%2C%20and%20beauty>

<sup>11</sup> Google Arts and Culture. “The Virgin” 2023. <https://artsandculture.google.com/asset/the-virgin-gustav-klimt/PQHEO7ecgZxl8A?hl=en>

Ukiyo-e prints as his portraits, however the use of young women with pale skin and consistent layering of fabric as clothing is common in Japanese art. Pale skin is considered a higher standard in traditional Japanese beauty. The multi-layered fabric relates to the Junihoto,



Klimt, Gustav “*The Stoclet Frieze*” Museum of Applied Arts. 1911

representing respect and wealth. In each of these pieces, Klimt uses young women as his subjects whether it is a commissioned portrait or not. This connects to *bijin-ga*, Japanese Woman prints, to portray beautiful, erotic female bodies. Lastly, Klimt has been well known for using his pieces to tell a story. Most famously his commissioned Beethoven Frieze and the Stoclet Frieze were pieces meant for wealthy dining room walls. The Stoclet Frieze, also known as the Tree of Life, was commissioned by the Stoclet House and is a three-wall piece that tells a story of connecting three worlds: Heaven, Earth, and the Underworld. This piece was heavily inspired by Rinpa School's use of gold throughout the painting as well as similar nature-related details, like the twisted tree branches. The tree in the middle has long, winding branches that symbolize life's

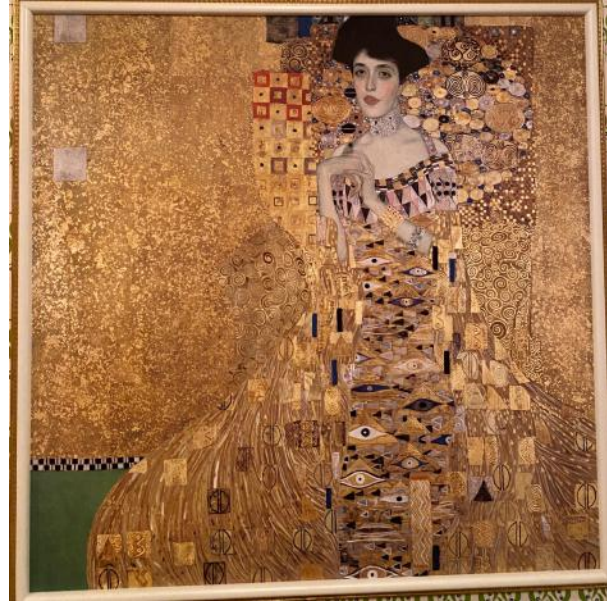
complexity. It also symbolizes a man's yearning to learn more as his roots stay put in the ground beneath him.

### The Purpose of Klimt's Japanese Inspired Art



Klimt, Gustav "Portrait of Maria Beer"

Location: private collection. 1916.



Henander-Harris "Photograph of Portrait of Adele

Bloch-Baur. Klimt, Gustav c. 1907" Ronin

Gallery. Captured 2023.

Klimt's Japanese inspired art was mainly done for commission. Because he uses true gold, commissioned pieces were a status symbol for the wealthy due how expensive gold is. In his *Portrait of Maria Beer*, the purpose is to display her Viennese workshop dress and coat that she is very proud of which she owned during WW1<sup>12</sup>. The amount of wealth the subject has obtained, especially amidst great recessions and global disasters, is the objective. Usually when depicting a subject, Klimt will create a fictional set of formal-wear. A long, layered dress doused

<sup>12</sup> Gustav Klimt. "Portrait of Friederike-Maria Beer, 1916 by Gustav Klimt. 2023. <https://www.gustav-klimt.com/Portrait-of-Friederike-Maria-Beer.jsp>



with patterns and gold tones for his female subjects. This is not the case for the *Portrait of Maria Beer*, as the purpose is to show off her expensive coat and tasteful dress. This is the case, however, for the famous *Portrait of Adele Bloch-Bauer*, a piece commissioned by her husband. She is sitting with an up-do inspired by female Japanese traditional upkept hairdo and a long, flowy dress with scattered patterns and gold tints that connect to a traditional female kimono<sup>13</sup>. While she is dressed in traditional Japanese formal-wear of the higher class to portray respect, the purpose is not to command that respect from the audience by showing off her expensive taste but rather to admire Adele's beauty through the eyes of her husband.

### The Elements of Art In Klimt's Inspired Pieces



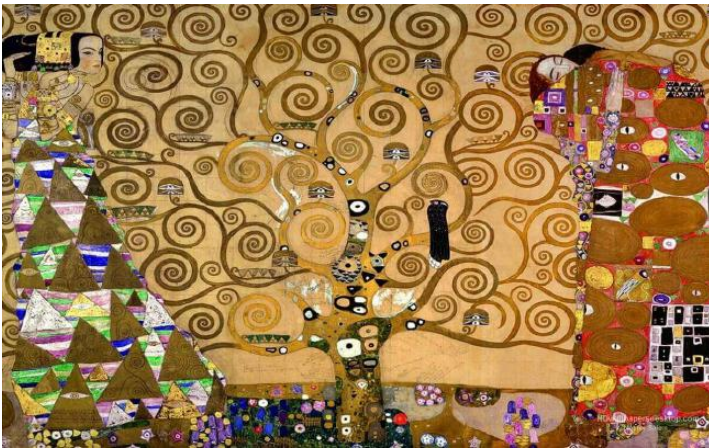
Klimt, Gustav “*Portrait of Elizabeth Lederer*” National Gallery of Canada. 1916



Kunisada, “*Emperor of Han Gaozo of Han Dynasty*” Ronin Gallery. 1830

<sup>13</sup> Kerrigan, Michael. *Gustav Klimt Art Nouveau & The Vienna Secessionists*. London: Flame Tree Publishing, 2018.

In Klimt's pieces, he is clearly inspired by the Japanese elements of art through color, line, and space. Previously, color contained heavy symbolism. In Klimt's piece, *Portrait of Elisabeth Lederer*, both the background and the dragons are blue. Since this portrait is of a daughter commissioned by a wealthy family, they want their class status to be promptly known. By using the color blue, according to Japanese traditions, it symbolizes security and strength which can be related to *Emperor Gaozu of Han Dynasty* by Kunisada. The color purple refers to purity and freshness in traditional Japanese culture, a symbol Klimt is influenced in portraying



Klimt, Gustav “*The Stoclet Frieze*” Museum of Applied Arts. 1911.



Henander-Harris, Iris “*Photograph of Chiba I Chutatsu*, Kuniyoshi c. 1834” Ronin Gallery. Captured 2023.

*The Virgin* as how they are portrayed in the media: *pure*<sup>14</sup>. Linework is another example of Klimt's influences. In one of his commissioned friezes, the Stoclet frieze, Klimt uses several

<sup>14</sup> Hodge, Susie. *Gustav Klimt Masterpieces of Art*. London: Flame Tree Publishing, 2014.

curved lines to represent branches of a tree. As these lines are not blended and quite bold, they do not remain straight. The chaos among the several curved lines represents the human mind and how it yearns to learn everything in its path<sup>15</sup>. This is connected to *Kuniyoshi Chiba I Chutatsu*, where chaos is amongst the background of the painting through perpendicular, multi-colored lines. Lastly, Klimt uses space the same way it is used in traditional Ukiyo-e art. In Klimt's piece, *Hope II*, there is a singular woman (a mother) bowing her head to Jesus as a sign of respect. She and three other women directly below her are in this piece, yet they take up little space. This act is to surrender and pay respect to Jesus, allowing the followers who look up to him to be small by leaving space on the left and right. Because Klimt wants to portray Jesus as the one who holds the power, these women are mere followers surrendering their sins to him: allowing them to take up very little of the painting. This relates to *Woman with a Lantern*, and how she holds little importance taking up very little of the canvas and negative space surrounding her left and right.



Henander-Harris, Iris “Photograph of *Hope II*, Klimt, Gustav c. 1908” MOMA. Captured 2023.



Henander-Harris, Iris “Photograph of *Summer Lantern*, artist: unknown c. 1920” Ronin Gallery. Captured 2023.

<sup>15</sup> Gustav Klimt. “Tree of Life, Stoclet Frieze, 1905, by Gustav Klimt. 2023 <https://www.gustav-klimt.com/The-Tree-Of-Life.jsp>

## The Japanese Principles of Design and Klimt's Art

In Klimt's pieces, he is heavily inspired by the Japanese principles of design such as the use of dominance, composition, balance and unity, and repetition. In his piece *'the Kiss'*, the dominance is seen as the male's face is above the female's with his hands holding her chin and head. The man is looking down at the woman with his body slightly above her, representing the sense of dominance in the piece as he is the one initiating the kiss. This can be related to



Henander-Harris, Iris "Photograph of  
*Makibashira*, Kuniyoshi c. 1855"

Ronin Gallery. Captured 2023



Klimt, Gustav "*The Kiss*" Austrian Gallery Belvedere  
1908.

Kuniyoshi's *Makibashira*, where the warrior's face and body are above the dragon. His hands are on the dragon's face where he is anticipating his triumph. Both of these pieces use a higher body and specific hand placement to assert dominance. The triangular composition is most common in pieces conjuring respect by either a subject or the audience. The *Virgin*, by

Klimt, is an example of a triangular composition. The virgin's face is at the top of the triangle along with the other virgins. Both her feet are the bottom points of the triangle, allowing the audience's eyes to follow her covered body. In the sense of Christianity, the purpose is to allow the audience to pay respect to the virgin, not as a sign of a higher position but rather of greater good and purity. This relates to Tryptic *Paying Respect* by Toyohara Chicanobu, where two subjects are at the bottom of the triangle paying their respects to a person in a higher position at the point of the triangle. Similar to dominance, the higher the position, the more respect gained.



Klimt, Gustav “*The Virgin*” Prague

National Gallery. 1913



Chanobu, Toyohara “*Paying Respect*”

location: private collection. Date: Unknown

Repetition is also common among Klimt's pieces as floral patterns are repeated through many of his portraits and female depictions as well. He uses a similar floral pattern to traditional Japanese pieces, using flowers to represent beauty and youth in *The Virgin* and *the Kiss*. This can be compared to *Ogiya uchi Hanaogi*, a young, fresh courtesan who is covered in patterns



Klimt, Gustav “*The Virgin*”  
Prague National Gallery. 1913.

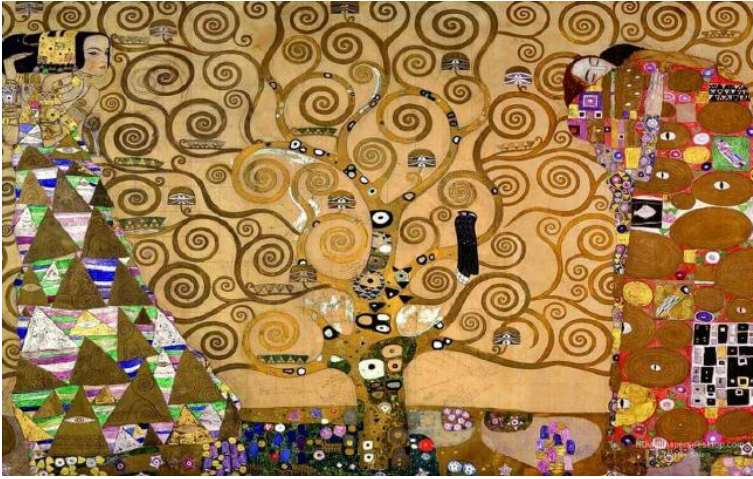


Klimt, Gustav “*The Kiss*”  
Austrian Gallery Belvedere.  
1908.



Kuniyoshi “*Ogiya uchi  
Hanaogi*” British  
Museum. Date: unknown.

throughout her Junihitoe. The meaning of the piece is to celebrate the young princess and highlight her youth and beauty, something not just valued in Japan but internationally. Lastly, balance and unity are very prominent, for example the Stoclet Frieze, Klimt uses both balance and unity to represent the unified worlds of heaven, earth, and the underworld and its existence among humans. This topic is extremely common among Ukiyo-e prints, such as *True Feelings Compared* by Kitawaga Utamaro, both partners in the relationship cling together touching each other. Their bodies represent harmony in the relationship as they are horizontal to each other and balance the piece out, allowing for a sense of unification in their relationship. The horizontal aspect shows how there is not dominance in the piece, but equality.



Klimt, Gustav “*The Stoclet Frieze*” Museum of Applied Arts  
1911.



Utamaro, Kitagawa “*True Feelings Compared*” Museum  
Of Fine Arts. 1799.

### Conclusion

Overall the impact of Japanese art portrayed through Western media was felt by Klimt, as it influenced his most famous pieces and his more obscure pieces alike. It started with an exhibition of global cultures traditional art and ended up being his biggest inspiration. The shrine, garden, and statue, exposed Klimt to a different type of art that expressed ideas and feelings differently than how they were expressed in the West. This inspired many of his pieces including portraits and depictions of females by expressing the erotica and beauty of feminine features, specifically through the use of formal elements and principles of Japanese art, such as the spectrum of color schemes, line work and the amount of space taken up by a subject. Other aspects such as unity, balance, composition of subjects hold a value in his pieces’ meanings similar to Japanese Ukiyo-e art. Even details such as repetition of patterns symbolize similar schemes in Japanese traditional culture. Klimt was heavily influenced by formal wear in

traditional Japanese prints such as the Junihoto and formal headdresses to represent respect and high class. Physically, Klimt embedded gold all along his pieces most famously in his portraits and story-telling frescos. This gold was influenced by traditional Rinpa School and its use of gold throughout scenes of nature. Klimt took these same traditional meanings in Japanese culture and used them in his own portraits of Western women in Western culture, meanings such as gaining strength, prosperity, security, to valuing youth and beauty. He not only uses these elements for meaning but also for story-telling, using traditional Japanese objects and repeating detail to portray the story. Klimt used the traditional Japanese way of belief to describe his subjects and their lives. Vienna Secessionists were heavily inspired by art unfamiliar to Western culture, and Ukiyo-e and Rinpa School art consumed Klimt completely. Without it, for Klimt, the desire to tell the story behind the piece would be a difficult task to complete.



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