

GUSTAV KLIMT AND ADELE BLOCH-BAUER:

THE WOMAN IN GOLD

HISTORICAL TIMELINE



1898

Adele Bauer and Ferdinand Bloch meet at the wedding of Therese Bauer (Adele's sister) and Gustav Bloch (Ferdinand's brother).

1899

Adele Bauer and Ferdinand Bloch become engaged.

On December 19, Adele Bauer and Ferdinand Bloch marry in Vienna's Stadt Temple, in a wedding that reinforces ties between two of Vienna's most prominent Jewish families.

1901

Klimt's *Judith I* is publicly displayed. Some scholars believe that Adele Bloch-Bauer was the model for this work.

1903

Adele sends a letter to her brother Julius Bauer in August mentioning that Klimt has agreed to paint her portrait.

Klimt begins work on the portrait of Adele Bloch-Bauer in the winter. In December, he visits the Church of San Vitale in Ravenna, where he sees the sixth-century Byzantine mosaics of Justinian and Theodora.

1906

Adele and Ferdinand Bloch-Bauer purchase sixteen Klimt drawings from the Galerie Miethke, some of which are preparatory sketches for Klimt's first portrait of Adele.

1907

Portrait of Adele Bloch-Bauer I is exhibited at the "Mannheim International Art Show."

1908

Portrait of Adele Bloch-Bauer I is exhibited at Vienna's "Kunstschau." Critical reaction is both favorable—"an idol in a golden shrine"—and less so, with one critic deriding it as "more brass than Bloch."

1912

Klimt begins work on a second commissioned portrait of Adele Bloch-Bauer.

1913

Klimt publicly displays the second portrait of Adele Bloch-Bauer at the "Eleventh International Exhibition of Art in Munich."

1916

Maria Viktoria Bloch-Bauer (later Maria Altmann), niece of Adele, born to Therese and Gustav Bloch-Bauer.

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1917

Klimt makes reference to the Bloch-Bauers in his last diary. Ferdinand and Adele Bloch-Bauer legally join their names to ensure preservation of both family names.

1918

Klimt suffers a stroke and dies at age fifty-five in early February.

1919

Six Bloch-Bauer Klimt paintings are loaned to Vienna's Moderne Galerie (later known as the Austrian National Gallery and today as the Belvedere).

1920

Adele and Ferdinand Bloch-Bauer move to a townhouse at Elisabethstrasse 18 in Vienna's first district.

1923

In her final will, Adele asks Ferdinand to make donations on her behalf to various charities. She also writes: "I ask my husband, after his death, to leave my two portraits and the four landscapes by Gustav Klimt to the Austrian Gallery in Vienna."

Ferdinand, who is the owner of these paintings, expresses a desire to fulfill her request.

1925

Adele Bloch-Bauer slips into a coma and dies of meningitis at age forty-three. Her bedroom at their home in Vienna, with the six Klimt paintings, is preserved as a shrine to her memory.

1928

Portrait of Adele Bloch-Bauer I is exhibited at the Vienna Secession on the tenth anniversary of Klimt's death.

1934

Ferdinand Bloch-Bauer lends the *Portrait of Adele Bloch-Bauer I* to the "Austria in London" exhibition

1936

Ferdinand Bloch-Bauer donates Klimt's *Kammer Castle on the Attersee III* to the Belvedere.

1937

Portrait of Adele Bloch-Bauer I is exhibited at the Paris World Exposition.

On December 9, Maria Bloch-Bauer marries Fritz Altmann. Ferdinand gives Adele's diamond necklace with matching earrings to his niece Maria as a wedding present. It is confiscated by the Gestapo in June.

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1938

Following the annexation of Austria by the Nazis, Ferdinand Bloch-Bauer flees the country and eventually settles in Switzerland. Nazis seize his estate, including his Bohemian sugar factory, the Jungfer Castle in Brezan, and his personal property, including the Klimt paintings, under the charge of tax evasion.

Maria Altmann settles in California in 1942 with her husband. She receives U.S. citizenship in 1945.

1939

Staff from various Austrian museums and government officials visit the Bloch-Bauer townhouse to inspect the art collection.

Eric Führer, a Nazi lawyer, is appointed administrator of the Bloch-Bauer estate.

1941

Führer makes a deal with Gustav Ucicky, son of Gustav Klimt. Ucicky purchases *Kammer Castle on the Attersee III* from the Belvedere. In exchange, two Klimt paintings from the Bloch-Bauer collection are given to the Belvedere (*Portrait of Adele Bloch-Bauer I* and *Apple Tree I*).

First mention of acquisition of the *Portrait of Adele Bloch-Bauer I* in a book published by the Belvedere, where it is described as an “awe-inspiring portrait of a woman covered with a shimmering crust of gold. Perhaps the most significant of [Klimt’s] works....” The painting is retitled *Woman in Gold*.

1943

Nazis mount retrospective of Klimt’s work at the Secession. The *Portrait of Adele Bloch-Bauer I* is renamed *Portrait of a Lady with Gold Background*. One month after this show, Bruno Grimschitz, director of the Belvedere, purchases the second portrait of Adele Bloch-Bauer and it is retitled *Portrait of a Lady*.

1945

Ferdinand Bloch-Bauer re-writes his will in the autumn, dividing his estate between his nieces, Luise and Maria, and his nephew Robert.

In November, Ferdinand Bloch-Bauer dies in Switzerland. He is buried alongside his wife in Vienna.

1946

The Austrian government passes the Annulment Act, intended to void any discriminatory transactions that occurred under the Nazis between 1938 and 1945.

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1948

In March, Karl Garzarolli, the newly appointed director of the Belvedere, writes his predecessor Grimschitz that he is in an “awkward situation” since the details of the arrangement with Ucicky are not documented and appear to have violated the Bloch-Bauer bequest. He also mentions the issue of restitution concerning the Bloch-Bauer works, indicating he will need Grimschitz’s support.

In April, Garzarolli asks the Federal Monument Office to delay the request to return the Bloch-Bauer works. The Bloch-Bauer heirs are informed that Adele’s will granted the Belvedere title to these paintings. The government agrees to return some artwork from the Bloch-Bauer collection, but the heirs are forced to renounce claims to Klimt paintings in return.

1960

Fritz Novotny named director of Belvedere. Provenance records for the Bloch-Bauer Klimt paintings are falsified to indicate that the portraits of Adele Bloch-Bauer were acquired before the Nazi invasion of Austria.

1998

Journalist Hubertus Czernin locates documents in the archives of the Austrian government proving that Ferdinand Bloch-Bauer did not donate the Klimt paintings and files indicating that the Belvedere was aware it possessed looted art. He publishes a series of articles about art stolen by the Nazis in Vienna’s *Der Standard*.

The Austrian government passes the Art Restitution Law, which allows for art to be returned to owners who had been forced to donate it in exchange for export permits pursuant to the Annulment Act of 1946.

A committee is established to oversee restitution requests.

Maria Altmann requests the return of the Bloch-Bauer Klimt paintings under the Art Restitution Law. She is represented by lawyer Randol Schoenberg.

1999

The Restitution Committee rejects Maria Altmann’s claim for the Klimt paintings, citing Adele Bloch-Bauer’s will as proof that these works were legally transferred to the Belvedere. The Restitution Committee recommends the return of 16 Klimt drawings and 19 pieces of porcelain.

Altmann’s request for arbitration is denied by the Republic of Austria. She challenges the decision but is forced to withdraw her claim because of the punitive legal fees assessed under Austrian law (1.2%

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of litigated value, totaling over \$1.5 million).

Altmann brings suit in the Central District of California against the Republic of Austria and the Belvedere on the grounds of expropriation of property in violation of international law.

Hubertus Czernin publishes a book about the Bloch-Bauer Klimt paintings entitled *The Forgery: The Bloch-Bauer Case and the Work of Gustav Klimt*.

2000

The Republic of Austria moves for dismissal of case.

The Federal District Court denies Austria's motion for dismissal pursuant to the Foreign Sovereign Immunities Act (FSIA).

2002

Court of Appeals affirms decision.

2004

U.S. Supreme Court rules against the Republic of Austria and the Belvedere, finding that FSIA applied to events before the passage of the Art Restitution Law. It overrules the alleged jurisdictional immunity claimed by the Republic of Austria, allowing Altmann to sue Austria in the United States for restitution of the Bloch-Bauer Klimt paintings.

2005

The Republic of Austria and Altmann reach an agreement to end litigation and submit the dispute to binding arbitration in Austria. Both sides agree to accept the findings of the panel as final and waive right to appeal. Costs are borne by the Republic of Austria.

Randol Schoenberg successfully argues that Adele's will was not

legally binding, as Ferdinand Bloch-Bauer was the owner of these works.

2006

On January 15, the arbitration panel rules that Austria must return five Klimt paintings to the Bloch-Bauer heirs.

The Bloch-Bauer Klimt paintings are displayed at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art and at Neue Galerie.

Portrait of Adele Bloch-Bauer I is acquired by Neue Galerie.

Four of the Bloch-Bauer paintings by Klimt are sold at Christie's in New York, with proceeds benefitting the Bloch-Bauer heirs and various charitable organizations.

2011

Maria Altmann dies at her home in Los Angeles on February 7 at age 94.