

Klimt show is pure gold

Gustav Klimt

Tate Liverpool

MENTION Gustav Klimt's Beethoven Frieze to anyone in the art world and they'll wax lyrical about it in overtures of admiration.

Yet, the mural should have been destroyed following its exhibition in Vienna's Secession building in 1902. Instead, it was saved and sold, surviving war and dispossession (like many Klimt paintings, it was looted by the Nazis from a wealthy Jewish collector) to finally be permanently housed back in Vienna.

Today, a full-scale reconstruction of the 100-ft long frieze is unveiled as part of the first comprehensive British exhibition of the Austrian painter's work.

Gustav Klimt: Painting, Design & Modern Life In Vienna 1900, outlines Klimt's career in the contextual surroundings of the Wiener Werkstätte, a nouveau art collective that worked to turn fine art into applied architecture and design.

One of the most important events on Liverpool's European Capital Of Culture calendar, the Klimt show is also expected to



GENIUS

Austrian artist Gustav Klimt was a leading light of the Viennese Secessionist movement

be one of 2008's stand-out British exhibitions. Renowned for his ornate gold portraits of femme fatales, Klimt is the most reproduced and pricey artist of the 20th century.

"This is the first time his paintings and drawings have been brought together in the context of the patrons and collectors who supported his work," said Klimt expert Tobias Natter, director of the Vorarlberg State Museum, in Bregenz. "Klimt made no distinction between high and low-brow art. He worked in an ideal community with those who created and those who enjoyed art – this is what this exhibition celebrates."

Consequently, the show also features exquisite silverware, jewellery and furniture by Josef Hoffman, Charles Rennie and Margaret Macdonald Mackintosh, Carl Moll and

Koloman Moser, as well as pieces from Klimt's personal collection – even one of his trademark smocks – and dozens of sketches.

The galleries are arranged to reflect the work that the Werkstätte's patrons commissioned. The Villa Henneberg room, for example, features Klimt's celebrated Portrait Of Marie Henneberg alongside a Moser cabinet arrangement.

Colourful portraits of the Primavesi family – Portrait of Eugenia Primavesi and The Baby – are beautiful examples of Klimt's late paintings and the inclusion of some of his landscapes highlight a period of work that is often overlooked.

But it is his allegorical depictions of the female form that are expected to cause the most excitement. The Three Ages Of Life (1905) remains a striking example of Klimt's recurring obsession with the life cycle, while Adam And Eve and Judith II explore sensuality and fertility.

Showing at Tate Liverpool, until August 31. Tickets are £8 (£6 conc) and can be booked online at tate.org.uk or by calling 0845 600 1354.

Sarah Walters



LUMINOUS TALENT Gustav Klimt's striking oil on canvas portrait of Eugenia Primavesi, created in 1913/14