

VIENNA
An Artistic Feast:
Bruegel, Monet, Klimt...& Hitler
October 2018



When we learned that the first ever retrospective of Peter Bruegel the Elder would be mounted in Vienna, we immediately booked flights and hotel.



Bruegel launched a major revolution in art—breaking free of stultifying religious themes to paint Dutch peasants and landscapes.



Being a Dike Plugger, I was automatically invited to *The Wedding Feast*. Mmmm, mush. My fave.



Free beer? You betcha. I particularly love Bruegel because he opens a window onto my ancestors' lives. Dozens of fabulous Dutch artists followed, including Vermeer, Frans Hals, Van Steen, Avercamp, Van Gogh and on and on. All windows.



He launched the Dutch Golden Age of the 16 and 1700s. Hell, he launched *everybody* after him. Period. He opened up the whole art form. He painted during the mid 1500s during the Little Ice Age, that 300-year-period when the climate was so cold in winter canals froze.



A copy of *Hunters in the Snow* has hung over our bathtub since the 1970s. I still see new things in it. Bruegel lived 1525/30-1569 in southern Netherlands, the region my various Dutch strains rise from.



I never but never go to New York without visiting *The Harvesters* at the MET. I just love this painting. Hell, I love all his stuff (well, not his Hieronymus Bosch period so much).



In 1984 I took a side trip while passing through Europe to visit the horde of Bruegels in Brussels. The other largest collection is in Vienna. The Viennese show attracted aficionados from around the world from the babel of languages in the crowded galleries.



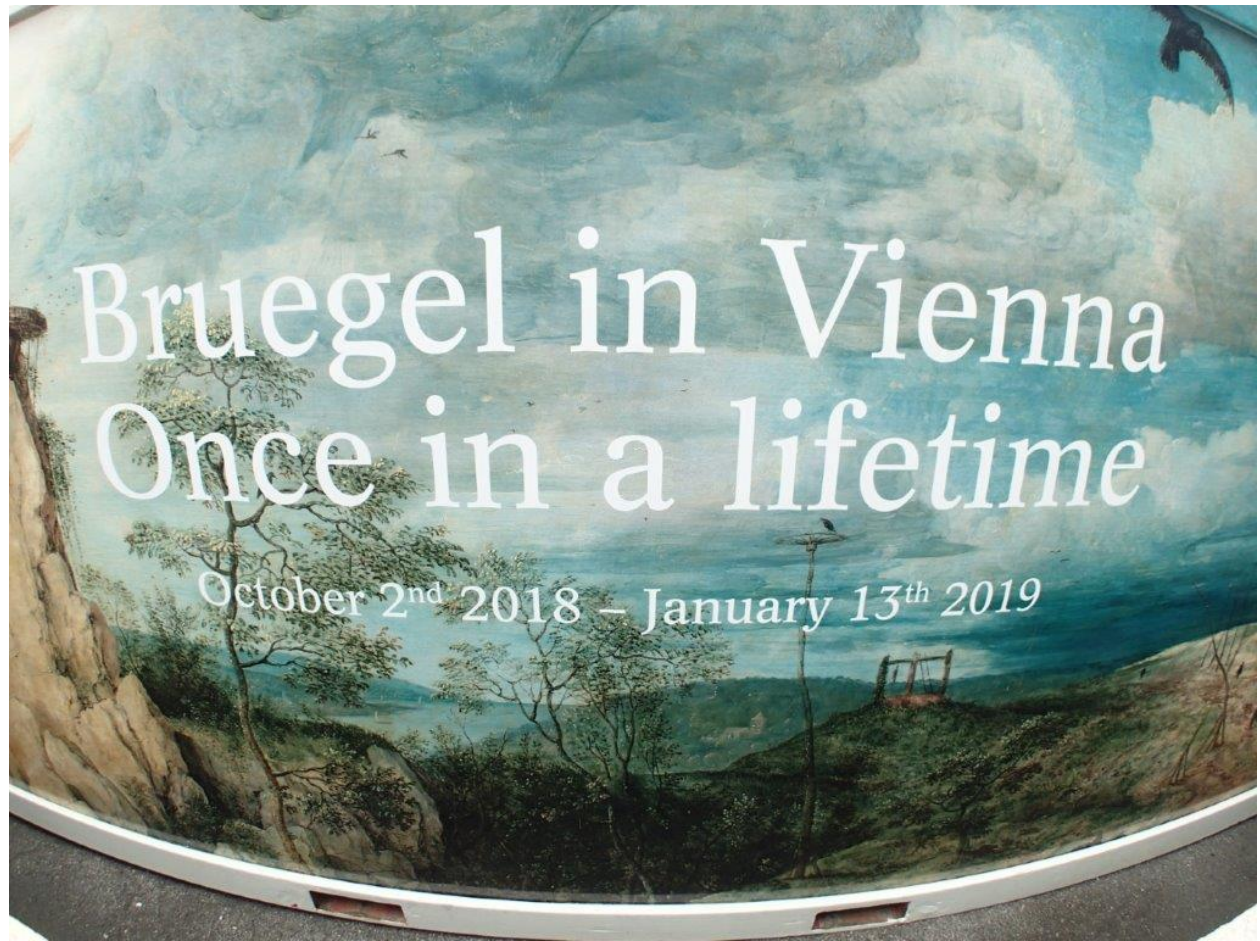
The twin lineups for tickets at the Kunsthistorisches Museum.





My fellow Dike Pluggers loved to party. Look at the drunks on the left, pissed out of their minds, arguing. The bagpiper looking away, trying to ignore the slurring drunk with the pitcher of beer.





That's what I thought when I heard about the show: a once in a lifetime experience. And, yes, it was worth it.



Help! I've fallen in and can't get up!



Serendipitously, we hit a double header! Monet was also having a major exhibition in Vienna, at the Albertina! A hundred of his paintings!



Das Parlament, Mäwen
Houses of Parliament, Seagulls
1900-1904

Deutsches Museum für Schöne Künste
A. S. Pracht, München



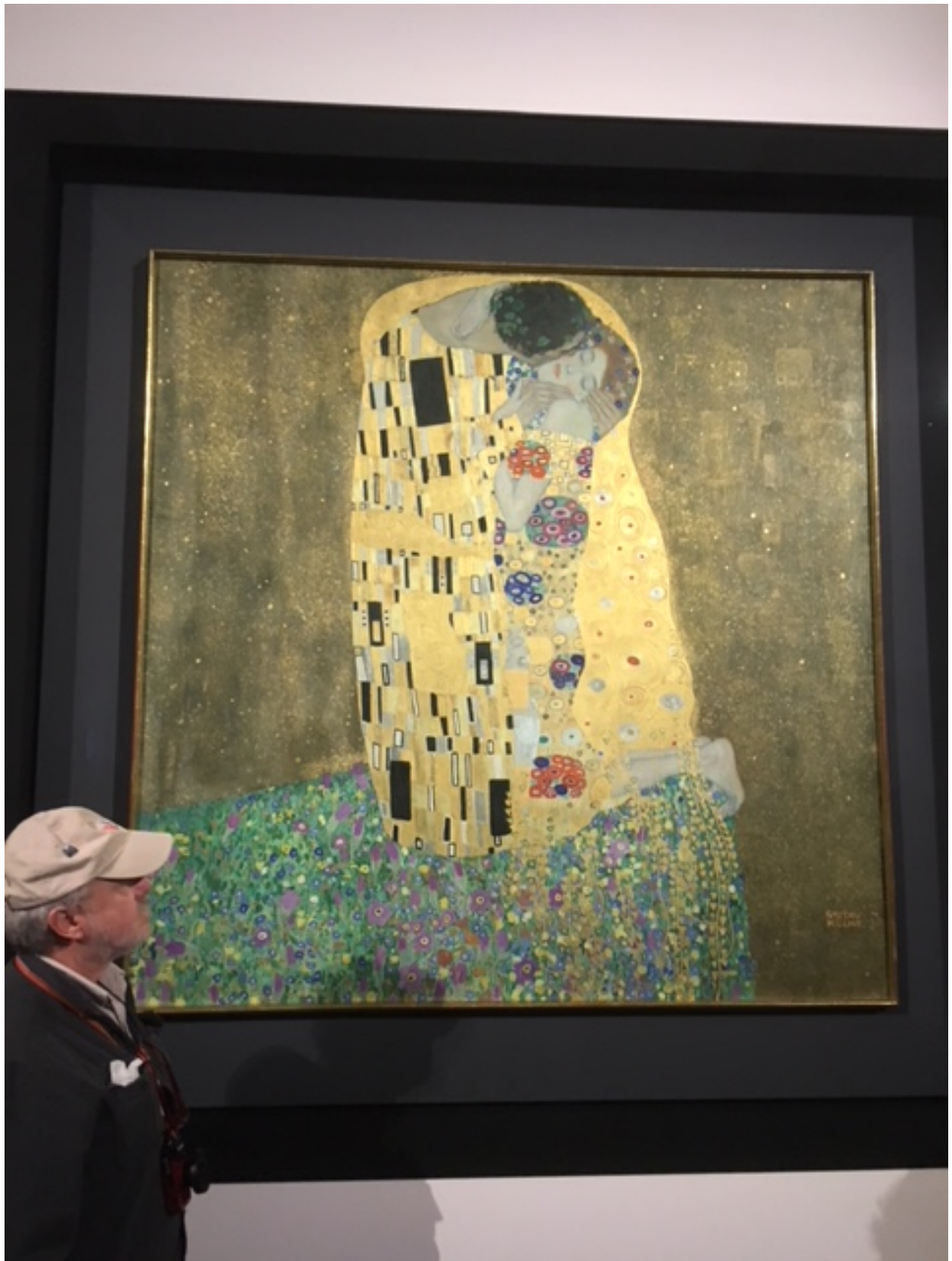




Again, the galleries were full.



As if this wasn't a big enough feast, the Belvedere also holds major works. (Odd of them to name this place after a 1950s Plymouth and a brand of cigarettes though? Belvedere translates in Wop as "beautiful view.")



Klimt's *The Kiss* is the most famous painting in Austria. We've admired its fraternal twin, *The Woman in Gold*, at the Neue Galerie in New York. And there was that excellent movie of the same name with Helen Mirren. She believes Goering's wife once wore the necklace Adele, Klimt's muse, has on at Nazi gatherings.





It's also home to Jacques-Louis David's *Napoleon Crossing the Alps*.



Which wouldn't have become famous, I'm sure, without help from me getting his nag to rear up. But do I get credit? Nooooooooo.... (Sorry, but I couldn't help it...you can take the redneck out of Carrot River, but you can't take....)





We lodged at the 19th century Ambassador Hotel. If it was good enough for Mark Twain from 1897-88, it's good enough for us. We had a spacious corner room. A sound to transport you back instantly in time while enjoying morning coffee in the room? The clip-clop of horse drawn carriages on the cobblestones outside.



It is perfectly located on Karntner, the main walking street. Unlike Munich's, which has hordes of unemployed Muslim refugees wandering around, most of whom seemed to be pushing baby carriages, Vienna's was free of them.



Just down from Stephansplatz and the church marking the center of the city.



It was hit by a bomber in April 1945 but, fortunately, it and most of the city was spared. The central part is a UNESCO World Heritage Site, the Hapsburg imperial architecture magnificent. It's a great city, very civilized, and a stroller's paradise.



“Su, may I buy you this traditional Austrian dress you can wear when you go to the oper-“
“*Nein!*”

I'll never understand wimmen.



“Blue” Danube...? It looks more like the Jolly Green Giant took a leak in it.



The parks are great, statues everywhere, and safe at night.



I said one hears a babel of languages. The Chinese are a major invading force. They're not wearing Mao jackets anymore.



The obligatory Mozart shot. Though I ain't a fan of most classical music. I'm more pop, rock n roll and jazz. And blues of course.



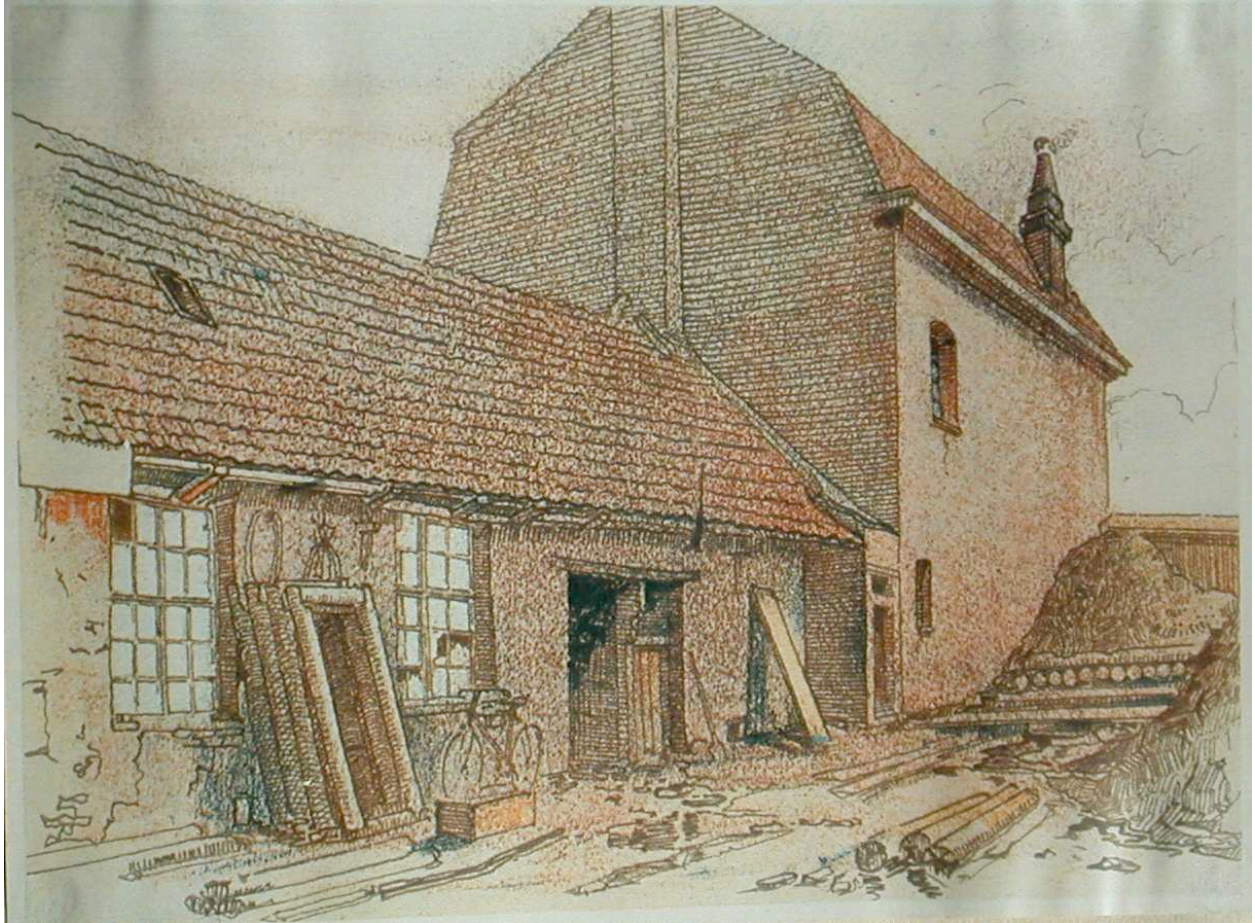
It's also obligatory to test drive the schnitzel, here at Figlmuller's, a century old eatery famous for it. Austrian beer is also excellent, but I figured out why they've invaded France so many times: so they can get their hands on decent red wine. Theirs is God awful.



Also over a century old is the Central Café, hangout of Lenin, Tolstoy, Freud and a young Adolf Hitler who arrived in Vienna at 18 in 1908 and stayed til 1913 when he moved to Munich. We explored his haunts there too in 2015. <http://www.jasonschoonover.com/2016/10/hitlers-munich-to-verduns-killing-fields/> and <http://www.jasonschoonover.com/2016/10/the-last-long-leg-up-the-boot-of-italy/>



Here he enjoyed his carefree youthful days, a romantic, struggling artist, painting hundreds of mostly architectural themes, such as the opera house. He frequently attended the standing room only area to listen to his fave, Wagner. The Dragon Lady, coincidentally, caught Wagner here. It didn't make her want to invade Poland though.



He was talented, but not enough to get into The Academy of Arts, where he was turned down in 1907 and 8. He actually spent his Vienna years eking out a living and looking up the social ladder with increasing jealousy and bitterness at the wealthy Jewish bourgeoisie. A strong undercurrent of anti-Semitism ran through Viennese society and he plugged into it.



It was difficult for the Boche to confirm themselves the Master Race when they looked around to see this minority group populating the upper tier of society, in business, science, academics and the arts. It was especially infuriating to Adolf, reduced to a men's dormitory, and possibly, a park bench at one point. Well, he would have a solution for that....

SONDERHEFT

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Der Führer in Wien!

His moment of grand triumph came March 15, 1938, when he returned to make the ceremonial announcement of the Austrian Anschluss, or “Joining,” leading his procession down the grand boulevard of Ring Road surrounding the inner city. The boulevard was built on the grounds of the old city walls which had been torn down in the mid-1800s and which had repelled the Ottoman hordes twice.



The procession headed for Heldenplatz adjoining sprawling Hofburg Palace, the emperors’ home until 1918. The Hapsburg monarchy, with roots in the Holy Roman Empire, ruled much of Europe for centuries.



Entering Heldenplatz.



He would have run me right over if I had been standing here then.











200,000 fellow Huns greeted him. Enthusiastically. That's the Rathaus in the distance. The Krauts have a great name for City Hall.



© APA (Schlager)



Ein Volk, ein Reich, ein Führer!



That very day the Gestapo rolled in and with it his revenge.



But he still had an interest in art. This Vermeer he purchased as part of a grand museum he planned to open in Linz, his home town, after the war. Recovered in a salt mine in 1945 it's now in the Albertina, with the family disputing its ownership, claiming they were forced to sell it below market.





We also visited the Natural History Museum, the building opposite and a carbon copy of the . Kunsthistorisches. It blew us away. Until perusing its incredible galleries I thought the American Museum of Natural History in New York was the penultimate.



We're keenly interested in pre-history of course—and this long, unusual Neolithic tool from Austria grabbed my attention. It's approximately 5,000 years old.



What is particularly striking to us is the similarity to this rare adz type we acquired in Luang Prabang, Laos.



Verschiedene Fundorte | *different sites*
Niederösterreich, Tschechische Republik | *Lower Austria, Czech Republic*

Frühe Jungsteinzeit

5 600 – 4 900 v. Chr. | *BC*

Indeed, even the smaller adz heads found in Austria are identical to others we've collected in Southeast Asia and as far away as Turkey and Peru, and studied in a collection from coastal British Columbia. The illumination for me is the spread of this new polished ax style around the world. As was the case with earlier, more primitive, developments in stone tool technology. The diffusion rate would have been slower then, of course, but there was still adaptation to and dissemination of new technologies all around the globe.



The star piece at the museum is the 29,500-year-old Willendorf Venus, the oldest of this fat lady genre found across Europe and into Central Asia. No one can definitively address the purpose, but I think it's clearly either the earliest Mother Goddess figurine—a genre found at early stages of all cultures—or it's an idealized female figure. A figure of beauty, and desire, precursor to statues of Venus and Aphrodite.



I lean toward the latter explanation. But come on? A bod that you normally see waddling around Wal-Mart diving into a bag of chips? My theory: back in a cold, damp cave during the Ice Age, which would be more desirable? A lithe young thing to shiver next to—or someone rolling in soft, mountains of flesh that could keep you warm at night? Also, a well padded woman would be a sign of affluence, that her man was a skilled hunter. Having a fat lady could have been a status symbol, as being overweight in India was (and possibly still is) such.



That said, I'd sooner have lived in the warm Mediterranean climate during the Roman Warming Period and have a gorgeous Aphrodite like this, from the Kunsthistorisches, to cuddle up to. This hot ancient Greek babe blows the bulky Venus in the Louvre away. (What could the gossamer material be? The ancient Greeks had silk, but this is utterly diaphanous....)



It was a fabulous week in this most cultured of all cities, though we did get tired of people staring at us. But they do that everywhere for some reason. I think it's because of Su. I keep offering to buy her dresses but she keeps refusing to let me.

-Yavol, ziss iss za end-

