

Comparative Analysis of Egon Schiele's Inheritance and Innovation of Gustav Klimt's works

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Abstract: In their artistic career, Gustav Klimt and Egon Schiele kept the friendship as teachers and friends. Both of them are representatives of Vienna secession. This paper, through a comparative analysis of Gustav Klimt's and Egon Schiele's paintings of the same subject, explores Gustav Klimt's specific influence on Egon Schiele's works and Egon Schiele's inheritance and innovation. The study found that although Gustav Klimt had a strong influence on Egon Schiele's early decorative expressionist style of painting, Egon Schiele eventually developed his own painting language.

Keywords: Vienna Secession; Gustav Klimt; Egon Schiele; Inheritance and Innovation

1. Gustav Klimt acted as teacher and friend to Egon Schiele

In 1906, Egon Schiele studied traditional painting at the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna. In 1907, he met Gustav Klimt, the long-admired leader of Vienna's secessionist faction. Gustav Klimt was already a star in art. His works were soft and colorful, and he used two-dimensional perspective in composition to make them flat. His decorative works successfully influenced Schiele. Gustav Klimt was also good at using materials such as metals and gems directly in his paintings to create a psychedelic atmosphere.

Gustav Klimt, 28 years older than Egon Schiele, played many roles in Egon Schiele's life. He not only provided substantial assistance to Egon Schiele's artistic development, but also served as his spiritual mentor. Because of Egon Schiele's financial difficulties, Gustav Klimt not only provided his own models to Egon Schiele, but also introduced him to works, contacted sponsors, and bought his works to subsidize Egon Schiele's daily living expenses. Sometimes they would exchange each other's work. His encouragement increased Egon Schiele's confidence and strengthened his determination to explore art.

2. Inheritance and development of Egon Schiele's works

Egon Schiele left the Vienna Academy of Art in 1907, abandoning the conservatively-academic way of painting to study with Gustav Klimt. The early Egon Schiele was simply imitating Gustav Klimt's painting style, but his imitation did not stop there. After 1910, Egon Schiele began to break away from Gustav Klimt's painting form and develop his own painting language. Next, we will compare the similarities and differences between Gustav Klimt's and Egon Schiele's works through specific works.

2.1 Comparative analysis of Gustav Klimt's *The Tree of Life* and Egon Schiele's *The Little Tree in Late Autumn*

Gustav Klimt exhibited "The Tree of Life" in 1909 and Egon Schiele painted "Little Tree in Late Autumn" in 1911. The two works are similar in composition, but give us completely different feelings.



Little Tree in Late Autumn Egon Schiele 1911



Tree of Life Gustav Klimt 1909

From Egon Schiele's 1911 little Tree in Late Autumn and Gustav Klimt's Tree of Life, we can see that both of them chose a tree

as their painting object and placed it in the center of the painting. The tree stretched to the sky, but its roots were always deep in the earth. The painting is divided into three parts: tree, background and earth. Both Egon Schiele and Gustav Klimt did not pursue the representation of three-dimensional space and the concrete shaping of things, but adopted the planar processing method to pursue the depiction of their inner emotions. But unlike Gustav Klimt, Egon Schiele depicts a tortuous withered tree pale from brown, yellow, red mixing of heaps of the black and the background is white and brown mixed the unification of the background, the whole tree is not a leaf, the painter summarized the shape of tree, "line" like carrier of the artists inner world, crisscross lines monotonous and varied, Withered branches give people a sense of death, as if a struggling and sad person's silent struggle against the world, stubborn and tenacious, twisted and abstract lines seem to inject emotion, building a Egon Schiele's spiritual world for us. And Gustav Klimt focuses on contrast of points, lines, planes, and create a harmonious picture effects. in the tree of life, the work is geometric processing, weaving and orderly triangle, circle appear as elements, Gustav Klimt used decorative swirls to form tree, and the snail's shell, feathers, gold foil and other materials directly used for painting, form a special "Mosaic" effect. Gustav Klimt's works are of great personal characteristics. The splendid accordatura, asymmetric composition and decorative painting language make the picture look splendid. The continuous tree of life is surrounded by mysterious and abstract atmosphere, and the embracing couple and the black bird symbolizing death are the artist's reflection on the cycle of life. The anthropomorphic treatment of plants in Egon Schiele's works seems to be the same as Gustav Klimt's, but in his works it is a different atmosphere.

On his own artistic path, Egon Schiele no longer imitated nature, but borrowed The decorative art of Gustav Klimt to perfect himself and form his own painting style. In contrast to Gustav Klimt's opulence, Egon Schiele's work speaks to the heart.

2.2 A comparative analysis of Gustav Klimt's Kiss and Egon Schiele's Cardinal and Nun

Next, we compare and analyze the similarities and differences between Klimt's Kiss and Egon Schiele's Cardinal and Nun in figure painting.



Cardinal and Nun Egon Schiele 1912



Kiss Gustav Klimt 1907

In these two works, we can clearly see the influence of Gustav Klimt on Egon Schiele. The composition is very similar, but Gustav Klimt's work pay more attention to the decoration of the pictures and the gorgeous color than Egon Schiele's. As the title of Kiss, Gustav Klimt depicts a couple kneeling and kissing in a garden, hidden under a golden cloak, the man's face obscured, the woman held up by the man, her eyes closed, intoxicated, shy and passive, the floor stippled with red and yellow on the green grass. Embracing lovers are a metaphor for the union of the sexes, square, circular pattern reflects the differences between men and women, women are the gentle circular, man is the square of angular, let a person feel mysterious and full of contradiction, with a strong oppressive feeling, love is bitter and sweet, warm, passionate people as if from the real life, youth is short, love is unreal. Gustav Klimt was born in a family of craftsmen. As a representative work of Gustav Klimt's "Golden Period", The Kiss uses a large amount of gold and silver foil as decoration in addition to the face, hands, flower parts and some details. However, in Egon Schiele's Cardinal and Nun, the background and figures are mainly painted flat. The texture of the picture also comes from painting materials, and the treatment of figures tends to be flat, which is slightly less decorative. Egon Schiele contrasted red, orange, green with lots of black, nuns look to the audience, while the Cardinal looked at the nun, and nuns are summarized into triangle, the nuns facing the audience looked terrified, both were kneeling, exaggerated lines, distorted face and dreary melancholy color make pictures appear restless, depression and fear as the heart, The desire to live seems threatened by death. Gustav Klimt's work emphasize the creative and imaginative, and shows a bright future of the decadent beauty, and Egon Schiele's life in a turbulent environment, the characters in his work, thin body, some distortion even morbid, some unkempt, he depicted the characters are mostly the underprivileged people, show is the most real desire and pursuit, But it was also full of struggle and resistance.

3. Conclusion

In his early works, Egon Schiele imitated and learned Gustav Klimt's painting works in linear language, color composition segmentation, subject shaping and other aspects. Through inheritance and innovation, Egon Schiele eventually formed his own unique painting language. They have different emotional concerns and expressions. Egon Schiele's paintings do not simply pursue the picture effect brought by the surface schema, but more talk with his own heart and reverently seek for his own painting language. His advanced artistic thinking and personalized painting language provide us with reference for future study, thinking and creation.

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