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The soft, delicate touch of paintings caught my eye, especially her expression. She kept her eyes closed even when many tourists pointed their cameras at her. I wondered what she was thinking about. I had been diligently collecting data on the plague and sanitary conditions to write a report on Austria's medical history. However, I could not forget Klimt's works, including "The kiss". I have seen his works in various museums, and while some landscapes and male figures were on display, his paintings of female figures impressed me the most. The following is a discussion of Klimt's paintings and Austria at that time.

Why is it that Klimt's work fascinates me? Klimt lived in the chaotic period in the end of World War I. However, his models were wealthy aristocratic women. Because many of his works were about women and sexual themes, he sometimes received a lot of criticism from the public. (His contemporary Sigmund Freud was similarly often criticized by the public for his scholarship.) His paintings depicted richly decorated and wealthy women, but they also conveyed a sense of the fragility of happiness and a heavy atmosphere. His paintings can be seen as representing the state of mind of the people living in the exhausted Vienna of that time. I believe that he looked at the models as human beings, so this way the woman's expression would come across to me as her emotion.

Interestingly, Klimt's painting style was greatly influenced by Japanese painting. Japanese painting is characterized by its flatness, as seen in ukiyo-e, while Western painting is more realistic, as it faithfully depicts the actuality and three-dimensionality of the subject matter. Klimt's paintings are characterized by both flatness and realism, indicating that he was influenced by Japanese painting methods. For example, in "The kiss", the human face and skin are realistic, but the background and clothing are flat, with shimmering gold. When I saw this painting, I was so immersed in it that I forgot the frame of the painting. The viewer's perspective was naturally drawn to the expressions on the faces of the two people standing in the center of the painting. I believe that Klimt's paintings were sublimed into something unique by the fusion of various painting techniques and his unique sense of color.

In addition, during the lecture, the professor explained that Klimt and other painters depicted the changing social position of women in Austria. "Pallas Athene" is a good example. I saw this work in Vienna Museum, and it, too, evoked a sense of wonder. In the myth Athena has gender ambiguity, and Klimt would be more interested in Athena's sanctity than her gender. Athena holds an iron spear, wears a helmet, and turns her piercing gaze upon us. Her masculine features are everywhere in detail, while her long hair and her soft skin symbolize feminineness. Klimt often depicted sensual female figures, but did he sense in these paintings the strength and dignity that he felt in actual women, who rebelled against society? Or was Klimt himself hoping for a change in society? In any case, the social position of women changed completely after this period.

Paintings and art strongly reflect the trends and social conditions of the times. Before my visit to Austria, I was not interested in history academically. However, after visiting Vienna and seeing various works of art, I think I now understand the fragility and instability of history. History itself has no words. It is only the traces of the people who lived in those times, in other words, the paintings, music, and architecture, that ask questions to those of us living in the present. I wonder if I will ever be able to forget this strange feeling of being in dialogue with something that transcends time.