



Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco

'Encounter' is a sensual blend

Works by Klimt and Rodin at Legion of Honor

By Charles Desmarais

The exhibition "Klimt and Rodin: An Artistic Encounter" opens Saturday, Oct. 14, at the Legion of Honor. Although it is not a definitive survey of the work of either artist, it is nevertheless an experience not to be missed.

There are still-startlingly original Gustav Klimt paintings (he hardly made any other kind), but many of the most famous pictures are also so famously fragile they could not travel. The Auguste Rodin sculptures are among the Bay Area's most significant art treasures, but their display here is appropriately limited to a number (25) that does not overshadow the 30 works by Klimt.

Nor is the show the occasion for new biographical scholarship on a relationship between the two. Klimt and Rodin met only once, we are told in the very first sentence of the catalog. Rodin did send works to

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"The Virgin," above, by Gustav Klimt, and "Age of Bronze (L'Age d'Airain)" by Auguste Rodin, right, are among the works in a new exhibition.



ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Sexual energy in work of 2 masters

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be shown at exhibitions of the Viennese Secession, which Klimt helped to found, but the catalog essays work over-hard to draw meaning from slim evidence that the Austrian and the Frenchman, 22 years apart in age, had much more than professional respect for one another.

Any shakiness of concept, though, will be immediately forgiven by viewers because the show is such a sensual treat. The exhibition itself is the encounter — not of artists, but of art.

Those who have been tracking the Legion's series of Rodin Centenary exhibitions, of which this is the last, can now discern the program's full arc. The year started

"Klimt and Rodin: An Artistic Encounter": 9:30 a.m.-5:15 p.m. Tuesdays-Sundays. Through Jan. 25. \$20-\$35. Legion of Honor, Lincoln Park, 100 34th Ave., S.F. (415) 750-3600. <http://legionofhonor.famsf.org>

with a solid new installation and book on the museum's Rodin collection, considered among the best in the world.

That was followed in April by a witty and, to many, irreverent juxtaposition of the Legion Rodins with works by the Swiss artist Urs Fischer. In July, "Sarah Lucas: Good Muse" scandalized a large part of the museum membership, if my email inbox is any indication, with a sculptur-

al intervention in the Rodin galleries laden with sexual and scatological references.

"Artistic Encounter" now closes the cycle with a pairing that underlines in bold strokes, for anyone who will really look at the objects, Rodin's obsessive interest, not only in the anatomical and the formal, but the sexual aspects of art. In the context of Klimt and Rodin's prints and drawings of languid naked women with splayed legs or absorbed in self-pleasure, a Lucas plaster of a woman's bottom sporting a cigarette is downright anodyne.

The exhibition teases out of works by Rodin some of the frisson that may have been lost as they became numbingly familiar to museum regulars. At the same time, as with the previous juxtapositions, the current show highlights objects that we don't see all the time.

Even more important than Klimt's extraordinary drawings, shown side-by-side with rarely seen Rodin drawings from Legion holdings, the 15 paintings amount to the West Coast's most extensive presentation of such works.

Among them are strong portraits with white-on-white techniques borrowed from the American James McNeill Whistler. The brooding, sloe-eyed woman in "The Black-Feathered Hat" (1910), all in whites but weighed down by a massive dark form, commands our attention from across the room. Only in the original painting can we discern the brushwork that seems to separate hat from encroaching inky form, that seizes the woman by her spectacular red bouffant.

Landscapes built up like mosaics of solid color barely hold together, seemingly at the brink of dissolution into abstract jeweled panels. Depending on the path one takes through the show, they anticipate or recapitulate the two great paintings around which



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"Johanna Staude" by Gustave Klimt is one of his 30 works in the exhibition.

the whole affair revolves.

Klimt's "The Baby" was painted in 1917, a short time before his death. The child is swaddled — nearly smothered — in a mountain of rich color and frantic pattern.

It is the 1913 canvas "The Virgin," however, that best represents the artist's notorious late-career conflation of salacious decoration, pent-up pictorial energy and delicious sexuality. A globe of desire and abandon, it has been hurtling through dreams for more than 100 years, and has yet to be arrested.



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Klimt's "Portrait of a Lady" is in the Legion show.

PUZZLE ANSWERS

Crossword Puzzle

A	S	T	O	N	I	S	H	E	S	I	S	M	S	
P	O	U	R	N	E	O	U	T	F	L	O	E		
E	N	D	O	F	A	N	E	R	A	C	O	R	P	
D	Y	E	A	L	T	D	O	R	F	W	T	A		
S	I	L	Z	I	P	C	A	R						
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D	O	A	N	O	L	O	V	E	L	O	S	T		
G	I	R	L	S	C	O	U	T	C	O	O	K	I	E
L	A	N	D	H	O	L	D	E	R	T	E	N		
I	N	F	E	R	S	E	M	F	E	R				
M	E	L	D	E	D	B	E	D						
P	L	A	W	I	D	E	N	E	D	C	O	B		
S	A	K	I	C	O	M	E	T	O	P	A	P	A	
E	N	E	R	T	I	M	E	T	R	A	V	E	L	
D	E	S	K	A	T	A	D	E	A	D	E	N	D	

New York Times Crossword

T	S	A		I	M	P	E	L		A	S	S	E	T		G	P	S			
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S	T	E	F	A	N		P	R	E	G	G	E	R	S		T	O	N	E	D	
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R	O	D		S	E	I		C	A	S	S		C	O	L	D	P	L	A	Y	
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F	R	A	N	K	Z	A	P	P	A		S	U	P	E	R	G	R	O	U	P	
R	O	T		A	I	R	O	U	T		A	S	I	D	E		O	G	R	E	
O	D	E		T	O	P	S	Y		R	E	E	S	E		Y	O	W			

Sudoku Puzzle

5	6	8	2	7	1	3	4	9
1	3	7	5	9	4	8	2	6
9	2	4	8	3	6	1	5	7
3	9	5	7	8	2	6	1	4
8	4	1	3	6	5	9	7	2
2	7	6	4	1	9	5	3	8
7	8	2	6	5	3	4	9	1
6	5	9	1	4	7	2	8	3
4	1	3	9	2	8	7	6	5

Challenger

					25
9	5	5	5	5	24
9	5	5	5	5	24
4	6	4	5	19	
9	5	4	6	24	
31	21	18	21	24	

Chess

1... Qb6! (with threats of
2. Rxd8 mate or
2. Qc7 mate)

THEATER & ENTERTAINMENT GUIDE

MUSIC THEATER

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Charles Desmarais is The San Francisco Chronicle's art critic. Email: cdesmarais@sfgchronicle.com Twitter: @Artguy1