

Vienna 1900: Surface and Depth

Date/Time	Wednesday 11 th and 18 th November 2026, 11am to 4pm	Price	£98
Venue	The Art Workers' Guild, 6 Queen Square, WC1N 3AT	Lecturer	Dr Niccola Shearman

If, by the turn of the twentieth century, cracks were beginning to show in the decorative façades of most European centres of power, the pain and the pleasure were nowhere more public than in Vienna. From the launch of the Secession to the angst-ridden art of the Expressionists; from the theatrical splendour of institutional architecture to the clean lines of the sanatorium, there is plenty to analyse in this modernist arena. In the work of famous artists and architects including Gustav Klimt, Josef Hoffmann, Oskar Kokoschka, Otto Wagner and Adolf Loos; across the applied arts, literature and music too, this course examines the radical overthrow of tradition by an avant-garde equipped with an uncanny x-ray vision.

Alongside the key individuals active between 1890 and 1938, we shall take in major collectives including the Viennese Workshops and the social housing of 'Red Vienna'. Attending to wider cultural currents among intellectuals, patrons and critics, many of Jewish heritage, we shall also explore the significant influence of women creatives - beyond the 'muse' paradigm. Could one really live in a *Gesamtkunstwerk*? Where is the line between the avant-garde embrace of modernity and a retreat from the real world? How far could anyone foresee the collapse of their small but vibrant artistic universe? All up for discussion with regard to this febrile period of cultural experiment.

Day One

1. What Beauty! Cracks appear in the decorative façade of imperial splendour.
2. What Truth? The parallel campaigns of Gustav Klimt and Sigmund Freud.
3. Enter the 'Scared Spring': on the Vienna Secession.
4. Architecture: art or engineering (ornament or crime?).

Day Two

5. Living in a *Gesamtkunstwerk*: Josef Hoffmann and the Wiener Werkstätte.
6. Patrons and Protagonists: the women of Vienna's avant-garde.
7. Viennese Expressionism: enter the *enfants terribles*.
8. Rising hopes, fading fortunes: Vienna in the First Republic, 1918-38.

Lecturer

Dr Niccola Shearman is an independent art historian and freelance lecturer in the field of twentieth-century German and Austrian art. Educated at Oxford University and the Courtauld Institute of Art, her doctorate concerned the German modernist print in the aftermath of the First World War. She has been associate lecturer at the Courtauld Institute and the University of Manchester and is a regular contributor to Courtauld Short Courses and to the V&A Academy. In 2025 she was co-curator, with Emily Christensen, of *With Graphic Intent*, German and Austrian modernist works on paper, at the Courtauld Gallery. Publications include academic articles, book reviews and exhibition catalogue essays. Current research concerns Viennese artists and art historians in exile in London and New York.