

KLIMT & THE KISS

DIRECTED BY ALI RAY | PRODUCED BY PHIL GRABSKY | MUSIC BY ASA BENNETT

INTRODUCTION FROM THE DIRECTOR, ALI RAY

You may not know who painted it, when or why but I guarantee you will have seen Gustav Klimt's painting *The Kiss*. This glittering, golden image of a couple locked in embrace remains one of the most popular posters displayed on student bedroom walls. It is referenced in films, emblazoned on t-shirts, calendars and tote bags. However, when an image like *The Kiss* becomes so familiar, we stop actually 'seeing' it. I wanted this film to rectify that.

As one of my interviewees says, "*The Kiss could only have been painted when it was, where it was and by who it was*". Thus, the film explores all of these elements that fed into the creation of this one iconic image. Turn of the century Vienna was a glorious and glamorous city with an intriguingly dark underbelly and, over the course of the film, we learn that this golden picture echoes those contradictions.

To understand the meaning or the making of a particular work of art, it seems obvious to turn to the words of the artist that created it. For myself as a film-maker telling Klimt's story this was not an option. He was famously and frustratingly tight-lipped when it came to discussing his work or indeed his infamous private life. I was wholly reliant on my excellent set of interviewees; the curators and historians who bring this and many of his other art works to life.

What is going on in the picture? What kind of kiss is this? It reminded me how much of ourselves we bring to a piece of art when we look at it. One of the very few quotes from Klimt is: "*whoever wants to know something about me should look attentively at my pictures and there seek to recognise what I am and what I want*" fascinating, soul-searching, ground-breaking and controversial works by Gustav Klimt.

