

How did the design of
josef maria olbrich's
secession house and
the 1902 beethove...



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Introduction

Secession is all about withdrawing one or more entities from membership of a political union because of opinion differences. By the time the 19th century was coming to a closure, Vienna was one of the two capitals of Austria-Hungary, which was home to mixed groups of people from various parts of central and eastern Europe. The dispute arose among the Association of Austrian Artists as some of the members felt the association was against the changes that were being proposed. This led to the division among the artists that saw the association move into two separate entities. The separation had a lot of impacts, and such effects are still visible in various artworks such as Josef Maria Olbrich's Secession House and the 1902 Beethoven Exhibition, among others that are evident to date. This paper discusses how the ideals of Viennese secession was reflected in the two significant artworks of Josef Maria Olbrich's Secession House and the 1902 Beethoven Exhibition.

History and Ideals of Viennese Secession

The dispute began around the 19th century when one group of the Association of Austrian Artists pushed the association to be pro-change and adopt the incoming changes in the artwork.[1] There was a group of the members who were against embracing change as they believed that the Austrian Artwork had a bit of the cultural aspects of the Austrian people that needed to be preserved. The majority of the members were conservative and always discouraged the efforts of the other members towards decorative and applied arts, which was gaining popularity compared to traditional fine arts of painting and sculpture.

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The minority groups began their meetings in Cafes at around 1890s to champion for the opinions of the progressive artists that the association refused to implement. The group consisted of painters such as Carl Moll and Koloman Moser. The group also included two young architects, " Joseph Maria Olbrich and Josef Hoffmann," who were students of a renowned Architect at the " Conservative Vienna school for Fine Arts." [2]

In 1897, the progressive group of artists announced that there were going to form their union to champion their opinions. The fear that the previously existing organization would not listen to their grievances informed the decision. They argued that they had already contacted the Association, but they were not willing to embrace change. Change is inevitable, and, therefore, the progressist group was not ready to waste time any further. A significant boost to this group was the membership and support from a well-renowned artist by the name Gustav Klimt who was elected the president at this time. The group was also receiving support from such artists as Olbrich, Hoffmann, Moser, Moll, Max Kurzweil, Wilhelm Bernatzik, Josef Maria Auchentaller, and Ernst Stöhr. [3]

Their main goal of seceding was to secure a venue for their artwork and at the same time, create and improve their contact with the foreign artists. They also wanted to increase the exposure between them and the general public and also with the Collectors. At one point, they even stated that their primary aim. Vienna had commissions that collected some revenues from all the works sold by the artist. The progressist group was against the commercialization of the art world and wanted to free themselves from such

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peddlers who prevented them from flourishing. They maintained that the fight was not an aesthetic debate but a confrontation between two states of spirits. The battle was, therefore, both an economic and a conceptual issue. So many other artists belonging to the conservative group ridiculed the progressist counterparts about this kind of revolution, but this did not deter them from their primary objectives. They continued holding meetings in various Cafes in Vienna to push for recognition of the newly formed organizations. They wanted the whole foreign artists to look at their proposals and join them in the promotion of their new art proposals.

Despite the intimidations they received from their conservative counterparts, they maintained the focus and were proceeding with their meetings and exhibitions to bring together the creative minds of the Viennese artists. They felt that the Viennese artists had focused too much on the traditional forms of art and craft, and the time had come to bring new ideas into the art industry. Their main aim was to reach them and explain to them the reasons why the current generation artists needed to adopt the modern forms and techniques of art.[4]

The Viennese secession was majorly influenced by Art, Nouveau, a German decorative style of art and architecture that mainly used the curved and flowing line of plants. This style of painting was very trendy in most parts of Europe at the time the ideas of secession started coming up. The Curvy lines that dominated the design were very appealing to the eye, and most of the progressive Viennese artists thought it wise to change the contemporary design into something more attractive.[5]

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The main objective was, therefore, to create a total art that differed from the traditional Viennese artists. The secession impacted the design of several architectural monuments and buildings, such as Josef Maria Olbrich's Secession House and the 1902 Beethoven Exhibition, among others. The designs of these artworks were majorly influenced by the main ideas of the secession, as still evident in some of them to date.

How Viennese Secession influenced the Design of Josef Maria Olbrich's Secession House

Josef Maria Olbrich's Secession House was built in the period between 1897 to 1898, a time when Vienna was undergoing the secession.[6]The idea came at a time when one group of the Austria Association of Artists experienced a sharp division. One group was pro-adoption of the trendy emerging designs of the 18th century as the other group refused. They argued that the idea would make them lose essential Viennese customs related to their artwork. Initially, the whole group would do artwork and do an exhibition at one central point where interested people would come to see and buy their and craftwork. Now here came a situation where there was a split. The anti-change group could no allow their pro-change counterparts to present their modern artwork at their exhibition centers.

The new rebelling group was, therefore, in dire need of an exhibition hall, and this is what led to the building of Josef Maria Olbrich's Secession House. A very young architect did the design. Joseph Maria Olbrich, who by that time was a student of one of the renowned former architect Otto Wagner.[7]The building needed to be located at a place where it would stand out against <https://assignbuster.com/how-did-the-design-of-josef-maria-olbrichs-secession-house-and-the-1902-beethoven-exhibition-reflect-the-ideals-of-the-viennese-secession/>

any other larger institutional structures. Establishing the building in a prominent area would communicate to the other Viennese the importance of revolutionizing the art industry.[8]

The building's design consisted of a non-uniform line moving up and down, often having the appearance of flowers. This kind of design was one of the highly trending emerging designs in most parts of Europe at the time the building was being designed.[9]The plan was called Art Nouveau, a German decorative style of art and architecture that mainly used the curved and flowing line of plants.

Art Nouveau was the main reason that led to the Viennese Secession. It consisted of modern curvy designs that looked very appealing to the eyes of some of the Viennese designers. Their decision to revolutionize artwork was influenced by the German artwork that was trending at that particular time. Joseph Maria Olbrich, being one of the groups that were pro-change in the artwork in Vienna, took advantage of the privilege of designing this historic building to include the concept of Art Nouveau. The most probable reason for including this artwork was to communicate to the future generations the reason that led to the Viennese Secession.

Art Nouveau (New Art) and Jugendstil (Youth style) ideas of the Germans had one clear message, which was that the technique was youth-oriented. The youth were fed up with the traditional ways of art, and there was a need to move to the popular modern methods that were invading the market. Art Nouveau was championing for exchange of design ideas across borders so that the best art designs could be achieved.[10]This boosted the abilities of <https://assignbuster.com/how-did-the-design-of-josef-maria-olbrichs-secession-house-and-the-1902-beethoven-exhibition-reflect-the-ideals-of-the-viennese-secession/>

the designers to compete globally instead of just concentrating on Austrian issues of design. Jugendstil was championing for democracy of artwork by eliminating the agencies that collected some percentage of the earnings received from artwork

Initially, the building was to be located along the Ringstrasse, but Josef Maria's design met a lot of resistance from the municipal council. They, therefore, had to relocate the building to other places where there were more significant buildings like the hall. Its location near a vegetable market made the building get the nickname, "The Golden Cabbage." This nickname was also influenced by the design's main features of lattice leaves that were appearing in the dome. Josef Maria used the lattice leaf designed to look like a crown of foliage at the top on a treetop that seems to be entering through a building via the roof.[11]The design was used to symbolize how the secessionists were breaking from the traditional Viennese artwork that was full of cultural customs of the Austrian people. The architect was very passionate about this design so much that he had to include every aspect of secession to this design to act as a reminder to the future generations on how the cessation happened.

On the left entrance of the hall was the title of Ver Sacrum (Sacred Spring), a journal that was used by the progressist group to publish the changes in design from the traditional old-fashioned methods.[12]This journal was used to disseminate the movement's thoughts and ideas during the secession push. The nature in which this journal worked for the campaign was very encouraging, and thus, the journal could not miss being part of the historic

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hall. The designer adopted the design of engraving the title of the journal on the left entrance to act as a reminder to the members of the movement how the journal contributed their secession success.[13]

As one approaches the main entrance to the hall, the German words " Der Zeit ihr Kunst - der Kunst ihr Freiheit"[14](To the Age its Art; to Art its Freedom) appears engraved on the wall. The designer was influenced to use these kinds of design because of the nature in which German art inspired the revolutionization of Viennese art and craft. It is the curves and spiralling features of the German Art Nouveau that resulted in a lot of restlessness among the Viennese artists. This was the main idea that fueled the revolution that saw the Association of Viennese Artist disintegrate into two. The designer being part of the seceding team, could not afford to leave behind the German aspects of design in his work.

The design was such that the natural lighting lighted the interior parts. The interior spaces had movable partitions that maximized the spatial flexibility to allow for changes in the types of exhibitions that were going on during the cessation. The displays could attract people from all over Austria and the rest of Europe, so there was a need to have a flexible space because of the numbers that kept fluctuating.[15]

The designer also employed the use of gold foliage with thin tree trunks that acted as a protecting layer to the gold foliage. The foliage provided a façade that viewers would use to admire the work inside the hall.[16]Using gold in the foliage to give way to seeing artwork inside the building was an

indication of how the designer portrayed the artistic work of the building as <https://assignbuster.com/how-did-the-design-of-josef-maria-olbrichs-secession-house-and-the-1902-beethoven-exhibition-reflect-the-ideals-of-the-viennese-secession/>

pure. The designer was trying to give the impression of how good their artworks were during the recession period. This acted a justification to the push for secession as a result of the difference in opinion among the artists and designers in Vienna

How Viennese Secession influenced the Design of the 1902 Beethoven Exhibition

The 1902 Beethoven Exhibition hall was just situated beside the Josef Maria Olbrich's Secession Hall. The Hall was designed as a result of the teamwork of 21 artists who suggested and implemented their design ideas under the control of Josef Hoffman.[17]In 1902, Gustav Klimt created the famous Beethoven Frieze in preparation for the fourteenth exhibition conference that was soon approaching. The 27th June 1902 exhibition was done in honour of the composer Ludwig van Beethoven hence the name of the hall. The main aim if the exhibition was to bring together all the members of the Visual artist of Vienna secession to solidify their secession goals.[18]

The building was designed with numerous wall paintings and decorations with Beethoven statues standing directly at the center of the main hall. [19]The different colors appearing in every wall were a result of the efforts applied by the various artists who joined hands under the supervision of Hoffmann to come up with the excellent design. The mixing of designers was a strategy used to communicate to the others who were not embracing change that there is much more when artists interact in design.[20]The unique color variations on the wall were used to show how re-uniting

separate arts could lead to successful eye-appealing models. The strategy <https://assignbuster.com/how-did-the-design-of-josef-maria-olbrichs-secession-house-and-the-1902-beethoven-exhibition-reflect-the-ideals-of-the-viennese-secession/>

was used to prove to the anti-change members that were interacting, sharing ideas, and embracing change was an essential step to improving art and design.

On the walls also were statues of gliding female figures that symbolized the longing for happiness. The female characters were followed by a statue of a naked kneeling couple and a standing girl. The naked couple was used to symbolize the suffering humanity who are making please to the night shining armor.[21]The naked couple was used to represent the Association of seceding Artists who plead very much to be heard by the original association. The glowing shield was used to describe the initial association of artists who had the control and resources as far as design in Vienna was concerned. The gliding female statue represented how the seceding artists were longing for the change to be adopted in the art and design in Vienna. The building was designed this way to keep memories of what transpired in the struggle to embrace the modern arts in the Vienna Association of Artists in 1900.[22]

The farthest wall of the Beethoven Hall consisted of Klinger's statue in the 1902 exhibition, followed by some artwork on the wall. The artwork included a female figure that conveyed different messages. They were indicating joy, peace, happiness, and love.[23]At the farthest end was an image of an angelic choir and a romancing couples. These artworks were incorporated into the design of the hall to show that the process of fighting for a revolution is trying, but the end product is a good and joyous one. Many

people resist change but they get pleased with the positive impacts of change.

The statues and images were a special type of artwork that was influenced by the secession struggles that the rebelling artists underwent. The image and sculptures end with a choir of singing angels and a group of kissing people to encourage those planning to champion for change just like these fellows did in Vienna. It is an encouragement to the artists to trust the process no matter how difficult it may be because the end product is happiness. Almost every aspect of the building was influenced by the struggles that the rebelling group of artists went through to achieve the changes they wanted.

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