



# *Beauty will save the world*

Commentary and multi-vision showing on the frieze “Beethoven” by G.Klimt

*What are we looking for and how?  
Which face and what name does our yearning for happiness have?*

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The Frieze called “Beethoven”, 24 metres long and developing on three walls, was made by Klimt for the 14<sup>th</sup> “Secession” Exhibition in Vienna. It is an interpretation of the Ninth Symphony of Beethoven, whose “Hymn to Joy”, directed by Gustav Mahler, was played during the opening of the Exhibition itself.

Klimt represents with this work the eternal struggle between good and evil. In the frieze the amorous ecstasy, represented by the embrace between a man and a woman, expresses the liberation.

After one century, the same images, accompanied by the music that inspired them, will guide us in a reflection on the man and on his search for happiness.

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1. Klimt was born in 1862 and died in 1918, in Vienna: those are times and places in which the old world breaks down and a new world can not yet be seen, the years of Freud, of the birth of the new sciences, of the First World War that brings with it new weapons, gas, planes; those are Marx’s years and the times of the turbulent masses, of the end of the empires and of the birth of totalitarian ideologies, the years of the Belle Époque and of the Liberty style with new figures and new music.

*We are also looking for new figures and words that show us the direction we have to take.*

2. The “Frieze Beethoven” was born as a search for unity and as a fragility consciousness: it is a painting/music/architecture work that was created for the execution of the Ninth Symphony directed by Mahler and that tries to tell and show the wholeness of existence and of life.

*We are also always looking for definitive explanations, for the keys of universe, but nothing seems to have a real duration any more.*

3. The starting point of the Frieze is the search for happiness. It is a movement that endows everything with life.

*What are we looking for and how? Which face and what name does our yearning for happiness have? Does becoming adults mean forgetting the name of what we are looking for?*

4. There is a warrior in this search. He has two fellows who support him. One is the ambition, that holds the winner-laurel and the other is the compassion, with pitiful clasped hands.

*Who among us does not have and did not have a warrior with a golden armour inside?*

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5. Poor people invoke, pray, rely themselves on others: they ask the warrior to bring on his shoulders the hard struggle for a true happiness.

*We have become indifferent to heroes, our hero is today the complete responsibility on ourselves, the feeling of being enough for ourselves. But, there is a mysterious balance to look for, because there is an invoking poor in everyone of us, a frightened child, the fear and the need to rely on someone. But who can we trust?*

6. The central panel of the frieze is the great fight, the time of the history that can be seen.

*We are better men when the fight becomes harder and we are able to use our best qualities with clear eyes when it is time to be special. But the coils and the wings of time, the feathers that look all the same confuse us. Who will be able to guide us?*

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7. Sometimes, in our lives, evils come from outside to seize us: illness, madness, death. Those events, that do not depend from our will, are the first questions, the first requests to start fighting.

*Being conscious that there is an evil coming from outside, an ungovernable evil, a life that is bigger than us and that it is not completely in our hands, it is a real fact that aims us to start the fight.*

8. The evils coming from inside do not have the sharp shapes of the ones coming from outside. The first have sinuous and round shapes: they are yielding evils.

*They are sweet evils that look beautiful and that belong to us, they are soft and wrapping. The fight looks like melting, but in fact our life slips out of our hands.*

9. So here come the coils of depression, the worries that torture us, the pain that gnaws, a fine veil that wraps and presses together, that binds and dries, sucking life itself. It brings to loneliness and makes empty spaces around us. Here is the melancholy that seems to take away any taste and strength. All the evil figures in this frieze are women. Klimt thinks that the woman is an image of life in its wholeness, in its origin, in its care, in its passing through and ageing, in its end.

*Which is the real struggle? Do not let our lives dry up, do not permit them to retire and to close into themselves.*

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10. Once passed through this hard road, we can turn our eyes and meet poetry, the way to beauty, and then meet the arts, the guardians to the entrance doors at the end of the trip.

*Could melancholy and dryness be ways to beauty? We do not easily know if this is possible, but it is necessary.*

11. The conclusion of the frieze is called "This kiss to the whole world" by Klimt: a man and a woman embraced, with sun, moon and primordial waters on their heads, as in the plan of creation, with their feet tied by a fine veil that do not close, but that gives birth and keeps together. Behind them the choir of the angels, an embrace that it is not private, that it is not only itself.

*Words risk to darken the pureness of the image instead of explaining it. It is a creative bound between ourselves and the others, without armour, without boundaries. A kind of Utopia?*

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12. Can a God save us? This question is left to everyone of us: the holy trip do not lead us to an answer, but to an opened question, like it happened to the three Magi, who after following the star, found themselves looking at the sky and asking "Where is the Child?"; like men and women that have made a question of their lives, and who have left a space in their souls in which God could reveal himself.