

MASTERPIECES IN FOCUS
MAX KURZWEIL – LIGHT AND SHADOW

Upper Belvedere
11 May to 4 September 2016



Max Kurzweil, *Therese Bloch-Bauer*, around 1907

Oil on canvas

115 x 97 cm

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The Belvedere is devoting the fourteenth exhibition in the series Masterpieces in Focus to the fascinating and versatile fin-de-siècle artist Max Kurzweil. His biography reads rather like inspiration for a novella from Vienna around 1900 and his work, which ranged from Impressionism to Symbolism and even Expressionism, is a testament to a particularly passionate temperament. One hundred years after his death and fifty years after the last solo exhibition at the Belvedere, *Max Kurzweil – Light and Shadow* showing from 11 May to 4 September 2016, features both well-known masterpieces and a wide variety of previously unknown or rarely exhibited paintings and graphic works by the artist. The portrait of Therese Bloch-Bauer, sister of Adele whom Klimt portrayed, is a sensational rediscovery as this is the first public showing of the painting since 1908.

“The exhibition about Max Kurzweil continues the successful series Masterpieces in Focus by showcasing an outstanding but largely forgotten Austrian artist. He was, in fact, an unusual personality in almost every way. The portrait of Therese Bloch-Bauer, one of the highlights of the exhibition, is an excellent example of the talent and refinement underpinning Kurzweil’s work. It is high time that he is recognized as one of the great and influential artists in Austrian art history, especially in the Vienna Secession,” said the Director of the Belvedere and 21er Haus, Agnes Husslein-Arco.

Light and Shadow – A Biography Resembling a Novella

“Few personalities so embody the spirit of Viennese modernism around 1900 as Max Kurzweil,” said the curator of the exhibition Markus Fellinger. Although, or precisely because, he was never at the hub of Vienna’s art scene, was regarded as taciturn and reserved, and was not known for any revolutionary spark, the story of his life could have been penned by Arthur Schnitzler. It has all the ingredients of an exciting novella: a young man from an affluent *haute-bourgeois* background, a dragoon officer, but also a *bon vivant* and successful painter, married to a young French woman of head-turning beauty who was unhappy in Vienna and suffered from homesickness and depression. They never had children, and Kurzweil was himself often low-spirited and listless. The painter was constantly fluctuating between a carefree artist’s life and the conventions of his *haute-bourgeois* background. Late in life, now essentially separated from his wife, he embarked on an affair with one of his students. Her father discovered the liaison and tried to put a stop to it. After the outbreak of the First World War, Kurzweil was enlisted as a war painter. While on leave, he met his lover one last time at his Vienna studio, where they both committed suicide using Kurzweil’s service pistol.

From Impressionism to Symbolism and Expressionism

Kurzweil studied painting at the Vienna Academy of Fine Arts and the Academie Julian in Paris. In 1893 he started spending the summers at the Breton port of Concarneau, where in 1895 he married the deputy mayor’s daughter, Marthe Guyot. Light and colour now increasingly take on their own intrinsic value and become vehicles of symbolism in his work. Although initially

interested in genre painting in the tradition of French Naturalism, he increasingly shifted his focus towards Impressionism. His talent brought him early successes at the Künstlerhaus exhibitions. As a founder member of the Secession, he also explored Symbolist and esoteric subjects, learned the art of the Japanese woodcut, probably from Emil Orlik, and made a name for himself as a portraitist. Some pictures even reveal his early engagement with emerging Expressionism.

Kurzweil is particularly well known as a portraitist of Viennese society. This exhibition features his portrayal of Therese Bloch-Bauer, sister of Adele whom Klimt painted, which is being shown in public for the first time since 1908. Intimate portraits of his French wife Martha are further highlights, as are the Impressionist landscapes from Brittany, Italy, and Dalmatia. His passionate temperament comes to the fore in his expressive late work, especially his nudes, a side of his character that this gentleman from an affluent background lived out in secret.

Masterpieces in Focus

In line with the main tasks and strengths of a museum – conserving, presenting, and expanding the collection, as well as communicating and educating – the exhibition series Masterpieces in Focus has been part of the Belvedere’s programme since 2009. Twice a year it places a focus on important aspects in Austrian art history, concentrating on a key theme, a particular artist or outstanding masterpieces from the collection. These presentations are integrated in the Upper Belvedere’s permanent displays, but stand out within the exhibition design. They focus on the significance of selected works in the context of the collection, relating them to the art and culture of their time. The exhibitions are accompanied by a book series that publish the latest research and, adopting a multidisciplinary approach, present the artworks from an unusual perspective.

Press texts and images can be downloaded at the following link:
www.belvedere.at/presse

ARTIST BIOGRAPHY

Max Kurzweil

- 1867 Maximilian Viktor Zdenko Franz Marie Kurzweil is born on 13 October, the second son of the sugar manufacturer Carl Kurzweil in Bisenz/Bzenec, Moravia.
- 1879 The family sells the unprofitable factory and moves to Vienna, where his father acquires the building at Währinger Straße 1 (today Hotel Regina) and lives as a man of independent means.
- 1886 Matura (school-leaving exam) at the grammar school Schottengymnasium. In autumn, Kurzweil enrolls at the Vienna Academy of Fine Arts where he studies in Christian Griepenkerl's General School of Painting until 1888.
- 1891 Beginning in October, one-year volunteer with the Third Dragoon Regiment in Stockerau.
- 1892 In the autumn, he moves to Paris with Ludwig Ferdinand Graf where they both enrol as students at the Academie Julian. Kurzweil spends two years studying in Paris.
- 1893 On 1 January, he is appointed reserve lieutenant. In summer, first trip to Concarneau with Graf. Paints *Breton Girl*.
- 1894 In summer, second trip to Concarneau with Wilhelm List. Engagement to Marie Josephine Marthe Guyot, daughter of the businessman and deputy mayor Octave Guyot. Works on the painting *Blind Flautist*. In autumn he returns to Vienna. Studies one more year at the Academy of Fine Arts with Kasimir Pochwalski. Exhibits *Blind Flautist (In Autumn)* at the Salon in Paris and at the Vienna Künstlerhaus Christmas exhibition.
- 1895 Exhibits *A Dear Visitor* at the Künstlerhaus annual exhibition. In May, he participates in a military manoeuvre. Afterwards he travels to Concarneau, where he marries Marthe Guyot on 6 July.
- 1896 In February, he is accepted into the artists' association Genossenschaft bildender Künstler Wiens (Künstlerhaus). Kurzweil exhibits *The Convalescent*, which he painted in Concarneau, at the Künstlerhaus annual exhibition and is awarded the small gold medal.
- 1897 On 25 May, the Secession is established. Kurzweil, currently in Concarneau, sends his written resignation to the Künstlerhaus on 11 June.

- 1898 Exhibits the monumental painting *The Dryad's Death* at the Secession's first exhibition. Creates a wall painting for a beer hall at the Imperial Jubilee exhibition at Vienna's Prater.
- 1899 Kurzweil exhibits *Lady in Yellow* at the fourth Secession exhibition.
- 1900 Exhibits his painting *The Convalescent* at the Paris World's Fair and is awarded a silver medal.
- 1902 Kurzweil learns the technique of Japanese woodcuts. Contributes two wall paintings to the *Beethoven Exhibition* at the Secession.
- 1903 Kurzweil contributes twenty-three works and the poster to the seventeenth Secession exhibition. He has six of his woodcuts published in the tenth issue of *Ver Sacrum*. Creates the coloured woodcut *The Cushion* for the annual portfolio of the Gesellschaft für vervielfältigende Kunst (Society for Reproductive Art).
- 1904 In summer, he travels to Concarneau. Paints *The Pond*, which the following year is acquired by the Moderne Galerie at the Belvedere.
- 1905 Exhibits *The Pond* at the second exhibition of the Deutscher Künstlerbund in Berlin. On 11 June, he leaves the Secession with the Klimt Group.
- 1907 Travels in summer to Grado, where he paints portraits of the Bauer sisters and possibly the portrait of Therese Bloch-Bauer.
- 1909 Exhibits at the Internationale Kunstschau in Vienna and Internationale Kunstausstellung at the Munich Glaspalast. Kurzweil is appointed professor at Vienna's Kunstschule für Frauen und Mädchen (Art School for Women and Girls), where, starting in autumn, he teaches life drawing and painting.
- 1912 Kurzweil participates in the Hagenbund's spring exhibition. In summer, he paints at Camaret in Brittany.
- 1914 In summer, travels to Paris and Brittany. He returns to Vienna after the outbreak of the First World War.
- 1915 Kurzweil paints *The Bewitched Prince*. He is enlisted for military service and on 6 October reactivated as a lieutenant of the Landsturm. He applies to become a war painter at the war press office.
- 1916 Exhibits *The Bewitched Prince* and two further works at the Vienna Kunstschau group's exhibition at the Berlin Secession. On 21 January, Kurzweil is appointed as a war painter in the army. He is sent to the war zone in Montenegro and paints in

Castelnuovo and Cattaro. On 28 April, he is given leave of absence. After returning to Vienna, on 9 May he commits suicide with Helene Heger in his studio.

1918 On 16 October, his artistic estate is sold at the auction house C. J. Wawra in Vienna.

1964 On 29 June, Martha Kurzweil dies in Tangier/Morocco.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Exhibition Title	Masterpieces in Focus Max Kurzweil – Light and Shadow
Exhibition Dates	11 May to 4 September 2016
Venue	Upper Belvedere
Exhibits	45
Curator	Markus Fellingner
Catalogue	Max Kurzweil – Licht und Schatten (German version) Hg.: Agnes Husslein-Arco, Markus Fellingner Belvedere, 136 Pages, 19,5 x 25, Hardcover ISBN: 978-3-903114-05-0, € 21,-
Contact	Belvedere, Prinz Eugen-Straße 27, 1030 Vienna T +43 (01) 795 57-0 www.belvedere.at
Opening Hours	Daily 10 am to 6 pm
Regular Tickets	€ 14 (Upper Belvedere)
Guided Tours	T +43 (01) 795 57-134, M public@belvedere.at
Public Relations	Belvedere & Winter Palace Public Relations Prinz Eugen-Straße 27, 1030 Vienna T +43 (01) 795 57-177 M press@belvedere.at
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