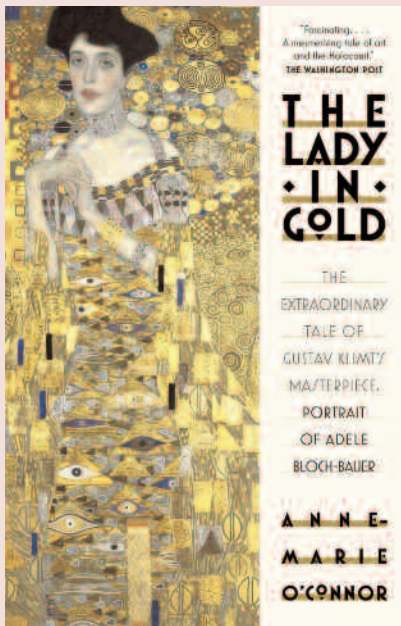


The Lady in Gold by Anne-Marie O'Connor National Best Seller



Contributor to the *Washington Post* Anne-Marie O'Connor brilliantly regales readers with the galvanizing story of Gustav Klimt's 1907 masterpiece—the breathtaking portrait of a Viennese Jewish socialite, Adele Bloch-Bauer. The celebrated painting, stolen by Nazis during World War II, subsequently became the subject of a decade-long dispute between her heirs and the Austrian government.

When the U.S. Supreme Court became involved in the case, its decision had profound ramifications in the art world. Expertly researched, masterfully told, *The Lady in Gold* is at once a stunning depiction of fin-de-siècle Vienna, a riveting tale of Nazi war crimes, and a fascinating glimpse into the high-stakes workings of the contemporary art world. [Courtesy of amazon.com]

How to Use this Discussion Guide

All art—whether literary or visual—arises from the context of its time. Creating bridges between the literary and visual arts is what makes the MFAH Book Club unique.

This discussion guide features questions about broad themes—political, historical, censorship, and artistic freedom—all addressed in Anne-Marie O'Connor's *The Lady in Gold*, as well as questions about works of art in the Museum's collections and exhibitions.

Read the book, discuss some or all of the questions with your group, and then reserve a MFAH Book Club tour.

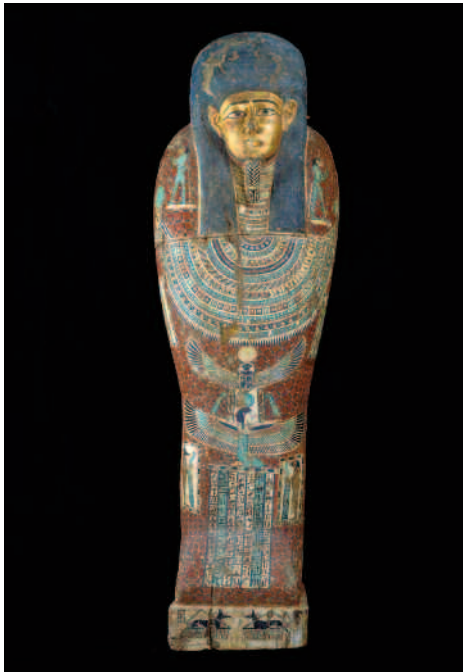
How to Book an MFAH Book Club Tour

For book clubs and other groups of six or more confirmed participants, tours related to O'Connor's *The Lady in Gold* are available on select days and times May 1–August 31, 2016. Tours are led by Museum docents and feature excerpts from the book and discussion about works on view at the Museum. During this time, you will also be able to view exquisite works of art in the exhibition *High Society: The Portraits of Franz X. Winterhalter*.

For more information, visit mfah.org/bookclub. Please e-mail bookclub@mfah.org with any questions.

Gustav Klimt and Adele Bauer

Klimt studied the “exotic motifs from North Africa” and “Egyptian antiquities” (p. 10). How are these styles of art represented in Klimt’s pieces?



Egyptian, *Coffin of Pedit-Osiris*, 332–30 BC, carved and painted wood; gold leaf, the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, museum purchase funded by the Alice Pratt Brown Museum Fund, 2000.560.A..B.



Wolof peoples, *Pendant*, 1900–15, gold, the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, gift of Alfred C. Glassell, Jr., 9710271.

“The Greeks thought inspiration was a gift of the gods. Freud believed art arose from attempts to resolve psychological conflict, and that for creators, the pain of a childhood trauma was a wellspring of inspiration” (p. 13). How do you think progressions in psychology affected the way people viewed and interpreted art?

“A wealthy girl was like a jewel, to be locked away until her family found a worthy setting” (p. 20). Although women were becoming increasingly educated, what were some of the restraints placed upon them and how do you think some of them were able to overcome adversity?



From *High Society: The Portraits of Franz X. Winterhalter*: Charles Frederick Worth, *Evening Bodice and Skirt*, c. 1866–68, yellow silk satin with lace and tulle, Philadelphia Museum of Art, 125th anniversary acquisition, gift of the heirs of Charlotte Hope Binney Tyler Montgomery, 1996-19-1a-c.



From *High Society: The Portraits of Franz X. Winterhalter*: Charles Frederick Worth; Franz X. Winterhalter, *Empress Eugénie (Eugénie de Montijo, Condesa de Teba) in 18th-Century Costume*, 1854, oil on canvas, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, purchase, Mr. and Mrs. Claus von Bulow gift, 1978, 1978.403.

Which of the dresses shown to the left would you imagine Adele wearing? Which one would you imagine Therese wearing?

“I want to liberate myself. I want to break free from all these unpleasant, ridiculous aspects that restrict my work. I want to get out. I want my freedom. I refuse all official support. I will do without everything” (p. 39). Now, art is often thought of as a release—a way to express oneself freely through various media. However, when money is involved, it can become a cage restricting creativity. How do you think Klimt’s legacy would have differed had he never made the decision to escape all aspects that restricted his work?

Gustav Klimt and Adele Bauer



“Art forced people to see differently, listen differently, and feel differently” (p. 50). Art has the potential to promote great change. Have you ever felt impacted by a piece of art, or has some art form changed the way you perceive your surroundings?

“Adele was frozen as a symbol of the enlightened turn-of-the-century Viennese women, imbued with the opulence Klimt disdained and thrived on” (p. 60). Bearing children was one of the primary duties of women in this era and they were often depicted caring for their children or in a maternal setting. What would Adele’s infertility have meant for a woman during this time? How has Adele been immortalized through her portrait? What message does she project?

Baron François Gérard, *Portrait of Louise-Antoinette-Scholastique Guéhéneuc, Madame la Maréchale Lannes, Duchesse de Montebello, with Her Children*, 1814, oil on canvas, the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, museum purchase funded by the Brown Foundation Accessions Endowment Fund and the Alice Pratt Brown Museum Fund, 2007.1202.

The Bauer Lineage and the Nazi Plague

Therese’s daughters “greatly admired [their] aunt Adele, with her gold cigarette holder, her opinions, and her many interesting male friends” (p. 82). How was Adele different from most of the women in her time, specifically in her social circles?

“Maria would wait. Maria would marry for love” (p. 84). How did others perceive Maria’s ambition? Do you think her stubbornness paid off? How does Maria and Fitz’s relationship evolve through the novel; what outside forces have an effect on their life together?

Gustav and Therese “had lived through World War I... they would weather this too” (p. 77). How does this compare to the mindset of many Jews living in Europe during this time? Do you believe many citizens were under the impression that the circumstances could not have gotten worse or that regardless of the horrors they would persevere?

“Everyone they knew regretted not trying to escape immediately” (p. 117). What were some motives people found to stay where they were—do you think they were driven by hope, industry, family, or something else?

What effect did Hitler’s reign have on the world of art? Do you think things might have been different had he been accepted into the Vienna School of Art?

The Bauer Lineage and the Nazi Plague

"As the alluring golden Adele was admired by strangers in Vienna, the niece of this glamorous daughter of Vienna was at the mercy of passing soldiers. This was war, and women were the spoils" (p. 182). How do female portraits reflect the changing views of women in western art?



Left: From *High Society: The Portraits of Franz X. Winterhalter*: Franz X. Winterhalter, *Madame Rimsky-Korsakov*, 1864, oil on canvas, Musée d'Orsay, Paris, on permanent loan from the Louvre, R.F. 235.

Right: Henri Matisse, *Woman in a Purple Coat*, 1937, oil on canvas, the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, gift of Audrey Jones Beck, 74.141. © 2015 Succession H. Matisse / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York



Angelica Kauffmann, *Ariadne Abandoned by Theseus*, 1774, oil on canvas, the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, gift of Mr. and Mrs. Harris Masterson III in memory of Neill Turner Masterson, Jr., 69.23.

Art Acquisitions and Family Feuds

"Adele had loved Austria and Nelly believed in her heart that the Klimt paintings belonged there" (p. 234). Do you believe the painting should have stayed in Austria or that it should have gone back to the Bauer family?

Do you think Maria's strong stance against the Austrians was purely out of the desire to get the painting or do you believe it may have been a more complex issue?

"Who could have guessed that the history of Vienna would be told by its paintings?" (p. 279) How does art affect the way we view history, and how has it unveiled truths about our social and cultural values?

Sometimes the acquisition of art in museums has been called into question, frequently because of the means by which it was acquired, most notably in this novel by means of war. What are some newsworthy pieces you know of that have been in question by original owners?

Author Biography



Anne-Marie O'Connor

Anne-Marie O'Connor is a veteran foreign correspondent, war reporter, and culture writer who has covered everything from post-Soviet Cuba to American artists and intellectuals. O'Connor attended Vassar and the San Francisco Art Institute and graduated from the University of California at Berkeley, where she and fellow students cocreated an award-winning documentary on the repression of mural artists after the 1973 military coup in Chile. She covered the wars in El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Guatemala as a Reuters bureau chief in Central America; the Shining Path guerrillas in Peru, coups in Haiti, and U.S. interventions in Haiti and Panama; and covered Cuba and Haiti for a newspaper chain. At the *Los Angeles Times* she chronicled the violence of Mexico's Arellano-Felix drug cartel, U.S. political convention; and profiled such figures as Nelson Mandela, George Soros, Joan Didion, John McCain, and Maya Lin. Her story on Maria Altmann's effort to recover the family Klimt collection appeared in the *Los Angeles Times Magazine* in 2001. She has written for *Esquire*, *The Nation*, and *The Christian Science Monitor*. She currently writes for *The Washington Post* from Jerusalem. [Courtesy of goodreads.com].

Acknowledgements

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