

Introduction

In the following study, I will examine the **evolution of gold color symbolism** in works from ancient to modern times. I will investigate this symbolism specifically in these three artworks: *The Kiss* by Gustav Klimt, *Michael Jackson and Bubbles* by Jeff Koons, and the *Mask of King Tutankhamun*. While examining these artworks I will compare and contrast the meaning behind the gold symbolism as well as examine in what capacity it was used in. Being that these works have been created throughout the 13th century BC to the 20th century, I will be able to study how the use of gold changed throughout time. This topic has sparked my personal interests due to my fascination with different works of art throughout time. Gold being such a symbolic color and valued material throughout all cultures and time periods will allow me to investigate these works through time.

I was interested in these artworks because of the decorated and graphic elements included in the artworks. I admire how these artworks include a variety of patterns and, in the case of Gustav Klimt's artwork, a variety of materials. I choose these three artworks due to their indisputable use of gold color. The glaring gold color found in each work is a prominent aspect of each piece which reflects in each piece its own symbolism. Another aspect I kept in mind when choosing a selection of different artworks was time period. The fact that these artworks range from the start of ancient times to modern times was purposeful as I want to evaluate this discrepancy. Furthermore, I plan to look into both societal and cultural differences and their impact and influence on gold color symbolism, especially through each different artists' choice of color, material, technique and portrayal, which all contain many similarities with in the as well.



Jeff Koons
Michael Jackson and Bubbles
Porcelain
42" x 70.5" x 32.5"
C. 1988
[Website](#)



Mask of King Tutankhamun
Massive gold
21" x 15.5" x 19"
C. 1323 BC
[Website](#)



Gustav Klimt
The Kiss
Gold Leaf, Oil Paint
5"11" x 5"11"
C. 1907-1908
[Website](#)

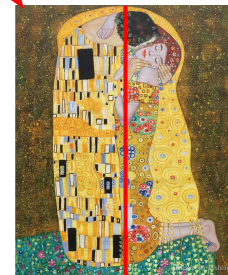
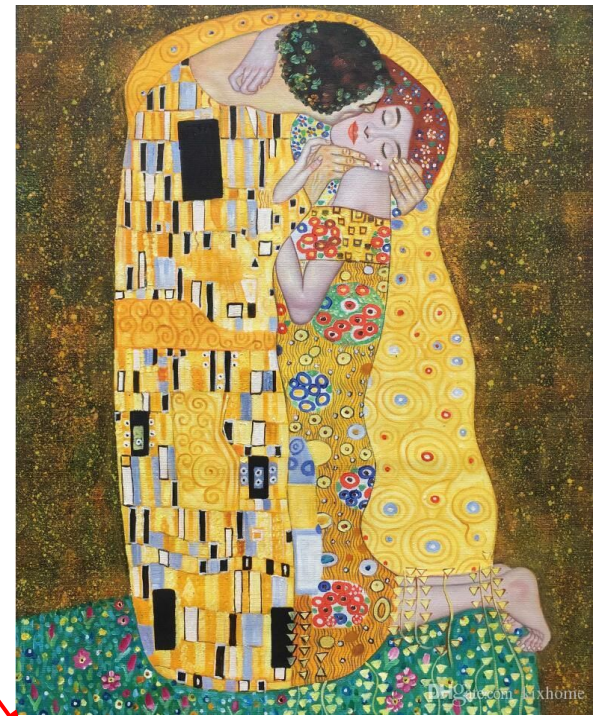
Why Gold?

My fascination with gold spurred from the idea that gold is a very valuable object. I have always been in awe about how one type of material could be deemed as important or beautiful. The color gold has also always stood out to me in comparison to the other hues of color. Gold has a metallic glow to it that reflects its light source more prominently than the rest of the colors. This reflection along with the yellow tones found in gold has always given off a sense of warmth to me as the viewer. Through this study I hope to highlight the importance of gold throughout other artists' works.

The Kiss

Formal Analysis: In Gustav Klimt's piece, *The Kiss*, the subject matter of this painting depicts a couple embracing each other. The way their bodies are entwined reflects a overall feeling of comfort. As the face of the figure to the right is relaxed this echos the overall sense of calmness in the piece. However, their bodies being entwined with the more detailed robes which involve vivid color and pattern break this initial rhythm of calmness in a subtle way. The use of pattern on the left hand side on the robe is not identically being repeated, this creates almost a unsettling effect as it appears to almost a random layout of geometric shapes. However, to complement the use of geometric shapes, Klimt on the other side of the robe, to the right of the figure on the right uses a series of organic shapes. This use of organic shapes also seem to be incorporated in the figure facing the viewer's dress. The overall divide between geometric and organic shapes mimic the divide between the figures. While they are intertwined, the series of different shapes create a clear separation between the two figures, geometric shapes laying across the figure on the left and organic shapes surrounding the figure on the right. While Klimt does distinguish a clear divide using pattern, the use of similar hues creates a unified effect to the figures. The repetition of a series of yellow values as well as cool blues surrounding the figures create this idea of unity that mimic the body language of the figures-being unified. The style of the robes follow contemporary Art Nouveau movement as it's ornamental characteristic is evident.

Klimt's work includes undulating asymmetrical line seen throughout the robe and figures takes the form of flower stalks and buds. This asymmetry is also created with the placement of the figures. If you were to split the work in half creating a line of symmetry, it would be noticed that the majority of the figures are depicted on the left hand side of the piece reflecting this unbalance. The use of gold leaf in Klimt's work, added a unique element to the work that helped to create a focal point. The overarching use of gold in the robes surround the figures while the use of dark hues found in the hair create contrast which leads the viewer to focus on the face of the figure to the right. This sense of contrast is also found between the ground relationship. In the foreground a series of bright hues of yellows and golds are depicted while in the background of the piece the hues are dark and almost appear to be flat color in comparison to the intricate pattern and detail found in the foreground. The dark hues are however, somewhat balanced between the background and foreground as Klimt does add various dark hues throughout the hair and left side of the robe. The color scheme in *The kiss* is a series of analogous colors. The hues of yellow, green and blue make up this relationship.



Gustav Klimt
The Kiss
Gold Leaf, Oil Paint
5"11" x 5"11"
C. 1907-1908
[Website](#)

Michael Jackson and Bubbles

Formal Analysis: *Michael Jackson and Bubbles* by Jeff Koons is a porcelain sculpture created in 1988. The subject matter of this piece reflects the title as it is Michael Jackson and his pet monkey Bubbles. This sculpture could be classified as realism due to the fact it clearly conveys Jackson and Bubbles and is recognizable to all. The layout of this piece has been arranged in a triangular and multi-perspective composition. Jackson and Bubbles form an optical unit creating unity throughout the piece. This unity is similarly expressed through the body language of Jackson. Jackson is holding Bubbles while he sits on his lap with create an interconnected feeling amongst piece. The similar clothing, colored homogeneously, as well as the hues found throughout the entirety of the figures add to this unity.

In this 3D piece, parts of their bodies are paralleled which one another, such as Jackson's right hand and Bubbles paw this creates an effect of balance. The placement of the pupils being in the center of the eyes in both figures create an effect that mirrors direct eye contact with the audience. While looking at the piece from any angle it is noticeable that the eyes in a sense follow the viewer which creates direct interaction between the piece and audience. This direct interaction is further expressed through the different directions Jackson and Bubbles are both looking. If the viewer were to move to the side of of the piece, the eye contact would be echoed by Jackson. Koons is able to create texture throughout this piece by sculpting in indents to the porcelain. This is scene in places such as the clothes that appear to be wrinkled, the hair, and the 3D flowers shown at the bottom of the sculpture. This texture adds dimension to the piece which is further enhanced by the use of color. This is seen in Jacksons hair as Koons uses both white and gold to reflect light areas and shadows. The color scheme displayed in the face which uses different colors than seen in the body of the figures such as black for the eyes and red for the lips creates a focal point to the faces of the figures. The focal point being especially on the eyes of the faces due to the heavy contrast between the white skin and black eyes.



Jeff Koons
Michael Jackson and Bubbles
Porcelain
42" x 70.5" x 32.5"
C. 1988
[Website](#)

Jeff Koons statue of Michael Jackson and Bubbles on display at the MOMA in San Francisco
Stock Photo
20.05 " x 13.39"
[Website](#)

The Mask of King Tutankhamun

Formal Analysis: The *Mask of King Tutankhamun* displays the subject matter of a 3D portrait of King Tutankhamun. This mask uses a variety of pattern and detail to mimic the appearance of King Tutankhamun when he was living. The pattern seen throughout his hemhem crown consists of parallel lines that all lead to the center of the face enhancing the face as the main focal point. The face is allowed attention to due to the flatness of gold color. Due to the fact all the objects around the face have patterns and detail the flatness of the face is appealing to the viewer. The eyes specifically are enhanced due to the use of bold outline in black color also found on the eyebrows.

The pattern of the necklace found at the bottom of King Tutankhamun's mask displaces a crescent like shape that mirrors the jawline of the face shown in the red lines. This creates unity throughout the piece as the same organic shapes are being repeated. This curved line pattern also creates invisible lines up to the face to create that same focus point. The amount of detail in this piece reflects realism as it is obvious to all that this is a face, however includes unrealistic elements such as the gold as skin.

The unknown artist of this work has manipulated these gold elements to create a God-like face. The certain mood and feeling created by this work seems of importance as the face is looking straight forward and the eyes seem to follow the viewer. The way the neck seems to be elongated gives the impression of confidence along with a overall sense of pride. The bold stripes and patterns also mimic this idea of a strong figure as they are harsh and defined.



Mask of King Tutankhamun

Massive gold

21" x 15.5" x 19"

C. 1323 BC

[Website](#)

Function and Purpose: Gustav Klimt

Purpose:

The Kiss is an Austrian painter, Gustav Klimt, most famous work of art. It is quite large as it measures to be 70 x 70 inches and captivates many due to its abundance of detail. In 1908 the piece was exhibited by the Austrian Gallery even though Klimt had not yet finished the work. The Belvedere museum later added the unfinished piece to their collection and remains on exhibit at the Belvedere today. Some historians believe the portrayed are Klimt himself and his long time partner and fashion designer Emilie Flöge. Whom Klimt had previously portrayed in another artwork. However, many have mentioned Adele Bloch-Bauer as the possible woman portrayed. The subject's proportional facial highlights uncover a likeness to a large number of the ladies that Klimt depicted, but ultimately they can't be unequivocally ascribed to a specific individual.

The Kiss is Klimt's artistic reaction to the Byzantine mosaics at Ravenna, Italy, which so significantly influenced him. The flowers beneath the couple further nourish the symbolism of love. The kiss shows the male figure with his hair decorated with bay leaves is a representation of the mythical character Apollo taking the lead and actively kissing the woman. Her on the other hand is passive and submissive to the point nature even begins to take a hold of her and she seems trapped by the vegetation. Klimt thus was interpreting the Myth of the Nymph who was typically the pursuer now having a more passive attitude and letting herself be taken. These lovers represent the connection of contrary energies.

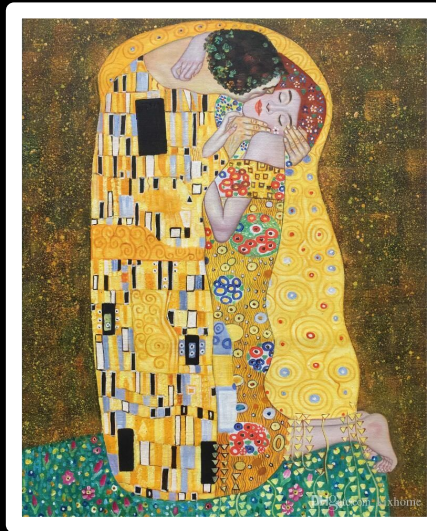
Artworks, for example, *The Kiss* were visual manifestations of fin-de-siècle spirit since they catch a wantonness passed on by rich and arousing images. The utilization of gold leaf mimics medieval "gold-ground" paintings, and prior mosaics. The spiral patterns in garments recall Bronze Age workmanship and the decorative tendrils found in Western craftsmanship since before classical times.

Historical Context:

In 1903, Klimt made a trip twice to Ravenna, where he saw the mosaics of San Vitale, whose Byzantine impact was obvious in the works of art of what would become known as his "Golden Period." This piece was made at the height of his so-called "Golden Period" of his professional career, which lasted from 1898 to 1908. In which he painted a series of works in a similar guided style in which he incorporated gold leaf into his works. Klimt belonged to the current of symbolism and was contemporary to the Art Nouveau movement. He painted *The Kiss* using oil paint and gold leaf on canvas. This piece incorporated fresco and mosaic techniques as well.

Klimt's utilization of gold went back to Klimt's own past, Klimt's father was a gold and silver engraver. Several of Klimt's siblings followed in the footsteps of Klimt's father, including Ernst. His father and younger brother Ernst both died a decade prior to Klimt's "Golden Period."

The design has clear connections to Art Nouveau and the organic forms of the Arts and Crafts movement. Simultaneously, the background brings out the conflict between two- and three-dimensionality intrinsic to the work of Degas and other modernists.



Gustav Klimt
The Kiss
Gold Leaf, Oil Paint
5"11" x 5"11"
C. 1907-1908
[Website](#)

The Kiss is an oil painting that incorporates the utilization of gold leaf and added silver materials. This work is still today viewed as a show-stopper of the early present day time frame. It is a symbol of the Jugendstil—Viennese Art Nouveau—and is viewed as Klimt's most popular work.

Function and Purpose: Jeff Koons

Purpose and Function:

Jeff Koons has expressed that his masterpieces should contact the biggest conceivable audience. For this reason he looked for motivation in entertainment media, pop culture, mainstream society and Christian art. The portrayal of a media powerful individual like Michael Jackson may have assisted him with accomplishing this point. Koons once said about the sculpture "I wanted to create him in a very god-like icon manner. But I always liked the radicality of Michael Jackson; that he would do absolutely anything that was necessary to be able to communicate with people."

Although this model can be deciphered from numerous points of view, Koons is consistent with his explanation that there is no secret significance behind this work. Michael Jackson and Bubbles is an overwhelmingly larger-than-life-sized porcelain imitation of Michael Jackson and his chimpanzee pet, Bubbles. The piece is inspired by a photo of the two, and it is almost indistinguishable from the image. Jeff Koons portrays the pop star as a heavenly figure, looking like a divine resemblance of a God-like structure. Koons depicts the popular culture of celebrity worship of the time through a pop art lens. Koons claims that he needed to depict Jackson as another redemptive figure who engages people to find their own social mythology.

Audience Reaction to the Sculpture:

In the 1980s, African Americans frequently faced racially based constraints, despite reductions in survey-reported racial discrimination and the abolition of legalized discipline. Communities were overwhelmingly segregated and there was little to no hope that the discrimination faced by African Americans relative to whites could be further changed. For this reason, how Koons portrayed Jackson in his sculpture irritated many of Jackson's fans. By how the porcelain made Jackson appear to be white, many were offended. Due to the fact African American's were so discriminated towards, African American's took great pride in Jackson representing a minority group and by the white porcelain making Jackson appear to be white, this reflected taking that sense of pride away from many. There were also complaints about how feminine Jackson looked in the sculpture. The dispute his work generated among the audience left Koons unfazed. Instead, he thinks art transcends gender.

Historical Context:

Jeff Koons, who draws influence from mainstream culture, media outlets, and pop stars, is certainly perhaps one of the most known Neo-Pop artists.

During the 1980s Jackson became a pop icon while being recognized for a massive achievement across the charts. This success caused Koons to overemphasize the King of Pop as looking God-like, enhancing the importance of Jackson.

In 2018, Koons's independent presentation of his work called 'Jeff Koons: A Retrospective,' consisted of the subject matter Michael Jackson and Bubbles. The presentation was also displayed at the Center Pompidou in Paris in October before its excursion to the Bilbao Guggenheim in Spain. Since then, three Michael Jackson and Bubbles models have been made.



Jeff Koons
Michael Jackson and Bubbles
Porcelain
42" x 70.5" x 32.5"
C. 1988
[Website](#)



Function and Purpose: *Mask of King Tutankhamun*

Purpose:

Masks were developed in Egypt for the purpose of covering the face of the passed in a ceremonial way. The masks were believed to make the human body recognizable and help guide the spirit of the passed to their body. This recognition was believed to later help aid the spirit in its journey towards the afterlife.

The mask was also representative of protection. It was common for heads to be broken or lost during the process of presenting the body, hence the mask could also serve as a replacement for the mummified head.

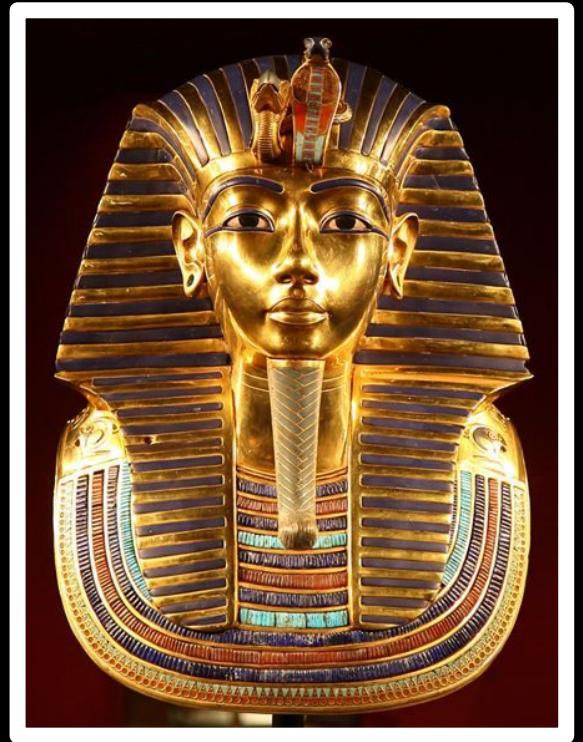
The mask made of radiant, gold skin, was said to be purposeful as the color gold was reminiscent of the gods. Ancient Egyptians associated this gold with the sun god known as Ra. As gold was believed to be so powerful that the material was able to aid this journey of pharaohs to the afterlife.

Historical Context:

Ruling from 1332-1323 BC, King Tutankhamun was the ancient Egyptian Pharaoh of the 18th dynasty. King Tutankhamun was of great importance to Egypt as it was believed that he redesigned Egypt. Tutankhamun is thought to have unchanged unpopular religious changes, such as restoring god Amun to magnificence and moving all capital business back to Thebes. After this King Tut deserted his first name, Tutankhaten for Tutankhamun ("living picture of Amun"), which sealed this religious change.

King Tut had passed on to the afterworld when he was just about 19. Hence, many considered King Tut to be "The Boy King." Ruling from 1332-1323 BC

The current estimated age of King Tut's ceremonial mask is 3,000 years old. In 1925, the mask was discovered by Howard Carter in the tomb historians call KV62. In this tomb is the Valley of the Kings where past pharaoh's had laid. The mask is currently located in Cairo's Egyptian Museum and still to this day is known as one of the world's best-known works of art.



Mask of King Tutankhamun

Massive gold
21" x 15.5" x 19"
C. 1323 BC

[Website](#)

Cultural Context and Significance: Gustav Klimt

Gustav Klimt was renowned for portraits enriched with patterns. He was a part of the Secessionist Movement and a so-called Symbolist pioneer. In his painting *The Kiss*, a piece he created in his luminous "Golden Age," Klimt's avant-garde painting approach was specifically seen. This time was based on Byzantine mosaics, which gave rise to glimmering aspects of Klimt's parts. This stressed the ethereal nature present in the



Vanderweide, Zoë. "21 Facts Gustav Klimt." *Sothebys.com*, Sotheby's, 12 Apr. 2019, www.sothebys.com/en/articles/21-facts-gustav-klimt.

Prior to making *The Kiss*, Klimt had gotten scathing criticism in the principal decade of the twentieth century for his painting on the ceiling of the University of Vienna. Because of the naked composition of those works, his translations of reasoning, medication and jurisprudence were considered as obscene and pornographic which injured the reputation of his commonly used subject matter - the female body. The post-Victorian culture of the early 1900s saw "The Kiss" as obscene and pornographic, despite the fact that the two figures are completely robed.

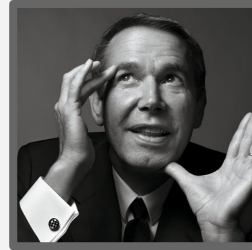


Gustav Klimt
The Kiss
Gold Leaf, Oil Paint
5"11" x 5"11"
C. 1907-1908
[Website](#)

Cultural Context and Significance: Jeff Koons

The inspiration derived from Jeff Koons came from everyday things. This included toys for children, cartoon characters, porcelain figurines, and decorations for parties. His work can be connected to many different movements, but as he takes ordinary objects and re-interprets them, he is most generally linked to Pop Art.

For both its flawless finish, Koon's was drawn to using mirrors and highly polished surfaces in his pieces as well as enabling the viewer to see themselves in the artwork. Koons was, thus, swayed by the use of gold.



"Jeff Koons." *Mnuchin Gallery*, www.mnuchingallery.com/artists/jeff-koons.

"If I could be anyone, it would be Michael Jackson. For me, Michael Jackson served as a kind of spiritual authority who could help people feel secure in embracing their culture, whatever it was."

- Jeff Koons

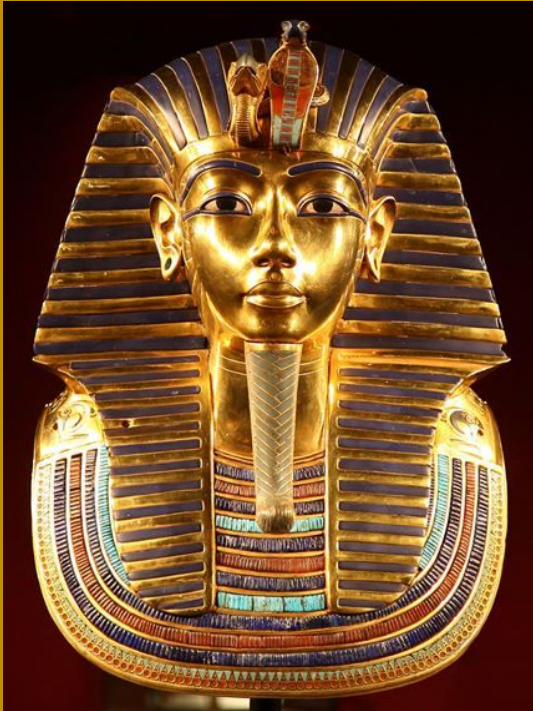


Jeff Koons
*Michael Jackson
and Bubbles*
Porcelain
42" x 70.5" x 32.5"
C. 1988
[Website](#)

Sculptures from Jeff Koons' Banality series includes Michael Jackson and Bubbles. In his Banality series he created giant porcelain sculptures that alluded to cheap, collectible figurines. During this time period, Michael Jackson was a very famous singer and dancer.

In 1988, Jackson had released his seventh studio album in which won him the Billboard Spotlight Award. This album, known as *Bad*, earned Jackson recognition of the record-breaking chart success on the Billboard Hot 100.

Cultural Context and Significance: *Mask of King Tutankhamun*



Mask of King Tutankhamun

Massive gold
21" x 15.5" x 19"
C. 1323 BC

[Website](#)

The mask is said to resemble Osiris, the Egyptian God of the afterlife. As this mask's main purpose was to assist King Tut to the afterlife, it does make sense for his mask to bear the likeness of the God of the afterlife.

The mask was found along with a vast hoard of artifacts and treasures. These items were representative of the materials that would accompany King Tut to the afterlife. One of these items was from the Book of the Dead as it was a spell transcribed in hieroglyphics. This spell was found on the shoulder of the mask showing that it was of great importance as it was actually located on the mask itself.

Many of the items surrounded by King Tut in his tomb have been able to reveal to many historians information regarding the royal life of ancient Egypt.

The use of gold throughout Egypt was greatly valued. Many pieces of jewelry that lined the necks and bodies of Egyptians were made of gold, as were sacred objects. One reason behind this was the belief that gold was made from the flesh of the sun god, Ra. A secondary reason was that gold was believed to be indestructible as it was a heavy metal, this idea also mimicked the belief that there was a connection to Ra, hence the gold could not be broken. In the region of Egypt, gold was also plentiful.

The Kiss by Gustav Klimt + Michael Jackson and Bubbles by Jeff Koons

At first glance these two works bear many similarities: they both depict human figures, there are two figures each, and in both works that figures are embracing each other. However the most prominent similarity being the use of gold color.

Color and Contrast

The hues throughout these two works are also similar. Both use a series of tans and golds, though Klimt uses a more extensive color palette throughout his work. The contest between the lights and darks of Klimt's work is far more emphasised as he uses dark areas to differentiate between the background and the figures as well as define the face of the women. While Koons sticks to a similar undertone palate while only using contrast to define the features in the face.

Subject Matter and Setting

As stated both Klimt's and Koons' work depict two figure which appear to be embracing one another. In both works of art, in the embracing between the two figure there seems to be an overall sense of control. In Klimt's work, the male figure seems to be grasping the womans face, asserting his dominance. While the woman can be seen as submissive due to her kneeling body language. In Koon's work this power dynamic can also be observed. Jackson has his hands grasping Bubbles as if preventing him to leave Jackson's lap. Bubbles also being sitting on Jackson's lap can imitate the idea of ownership. As Bubbles was Jackson's pet the power dynamic between the two is inevitable however it still correlates to the power dynamic in Klimt's work. The platforms of the works are almost identical. In both pieces the figures rest upon a seres of flowers found at the base of their bodies. In *The Kiss* this is a purposeful use of symbolism to reflect love. While the use of flowers in Koons' work is unknown, the symbolism of love and friendship between Bubbles and Jackson could be a valid explanation.

Differences

When first looking at both of these works side by side it is obvious they are different in the types of media they are made of. Klimt uses oil paint and gold leaf in 2D form, while Koons uses porcelain to portray a 3D, life-sized imitation of Jackson and Bubbles. The styles these works can be categorized under are also completely different. Klimt takes an Art Nouveau, Byzantine mosaics artistic approach involving many different patterns, while Koons draws from Pop Art style and popular media to portray popular figures using flat color. The meaning behind the use of gold is also different, Klimt's use sparks from early childhood family relations to gold as his father was a gold and silver engraver, and also his personal art journey through his "Golden Period." Koon's use for gold was more symbolic to Jackson in that he believed gold made the pop icon devine and god-like.



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Artwork 1 and Artwork 3: Comparisons and Connections

Formal Qualities Summary (Art Elements and Design Principles, Subject Matter, and Composition)

Mask of King Tutankhamun
Massive gold
21" x 15.5" x 19"
C. 1323 BC
[Website](#)



Similarities

An obvious visual fact that both works depict some sort of human figure. In both pieces the author uses decorative elements to enhance the figure and their significance. The color pallet in both of these paintings consist of many yellow, back, blues, and red hues. The main color being used is gold. There is clear contrast between the works as the background in *This Kiss* created a clear divide with the bright use of gold on the figures in the foreground. The contrast is seen in the *Mask of King Tutankhamun* in between the patterning on both the head-cloth and necklace, as well as the face to define key features.

Differences

In Klimt's work he uses a geometric pattern using black rectangular shapes to reflect the masculinity of the male figure, while the women figure has flower like patterns using bright colors and organic shapes to reflect her purity and feminism. The use of gold in Klimt's work reflects both his childhood relations while also is based of his own artistic journey though his "Golden Period."

Differences

The *Mask of King Tut* uses patterns of stripes seen in his head piece. The striped head-cloth is representative of pharaohs in ancient Egypt, thus the pattern is reflecting his social status. The pattern found in this mask seem to me more crisp and purposeful opposed to Klimt's patterning appearing to be randomized. The prominent use of solid gold in King Tut's mask was used to reflect his high status and significance as a leader, while also mimicking religious beliefs as gold was said to aid pharaohs in their journey to the afterlife.



Jeff Koons
*Michael Jackson
and Bubbles*
Porcelain
42" x 70.5" x 32.5"
C. 1988
[Website](#)

Artwork 2 and Artwork 3: Comparisons and Connections

Formal Qualities Summary (Art Elements and Design Principles, Subject Matter, and Composition)

Mask of King Tutankhamun
Massive gold
21" x 15.5" x 19"
C. 1323 BC
[Website](#)



Similarities

The use of gold color and its symbolism in the pieces of Koons and the *Mask of King Tutankhamun* are similar in how they are represented. Both subject matters depicted in these pieces both involve human figures. The figures are representing a popular and important figure for their own time period, in Koons work, Michael Jackson and Bubbles, and in the mask, King Tutankhamun. These people were both widely known and had large influence over their people, King Tut being a ruler, and Jackson being a pop music pioneer. Their works both take form in 3D and use contrast to separate details in the work. The use of gold in both pieces has similar symbolism as they both connect to the idea of the Gods. The gold in Koons' work was used to make Jackson appear God-like, and in the mask the gold skin was reminiscent of the gods.

Differences

The contrast used in Koons' piece is more on the subtle side. The contrast between the gold color and white is similar in tone, therefore not creating a substantial pop between the two. However, this contrast is seen directly in the face features of both Jackson and Bubbles. The color palette is very neutral as it includes a majority of gold color and white.

Differences

The contrast in the mask is more distinct as the black stripes and outlines on the face are harsh against the gold color. There is a wide range of colors used in the color palette; golds, blues, red, and black are used. The gold symbolism in this piece is used to help King Tut in his life in the afterworld as gold was said to be a powerful element for aiding pharaohs in their afterlife.

The evolution of gold color symbolism in works from ancient to modern times

Conclusion:

In conclusion, there is not one overall meaning behind gold symbolism. Over the course of ancient to modern times the use of gold has been portrayed in multiple different medias and has developed a numerous of different reasoning behind gold color, which can be seen through the three paintings I have chosen, *Mask of King Tutankhamun*, *The Kiss*, and *Michael Jackson and Bubbles*. By focusing on the formal qualities and the historical and cultural context and significance, I was able to analyse the use of gold in different medias and time periods and discover the symbolism behind each piece. For example after researching Gustav Klimt and his piece *The Kiss* it was evident that his interest in gold color evolved from his childhood family connections. The initial exposure of his father being a silver and gold engraver and his brothers along with Gustav himself helping work with their father drove an underlying connection to gold that was later expressed in his own artistic way during his “Golden Period.” However, Jeff Koons’ piece and the use of gold was not personally influenced. Instead he turned to the symbolism of gold as reflecting divinity. His symbolism for gold was able to drive his Pop Art notions and further glorify the popular subject matter he depicted-Michael Jackson and Bubbles. Lastly, for the *Mask of King Tutankhamun* the symbolism was also based on religious influences such as the common belief that gold would aid pharaohs in their journey to the afterlife and that they associated gold with the sun god, Ra, and considered gold to be a powerful material reflecting social status.

Overall, symbolism is always constantly changing no matter what time period or country you are in. With such a widely known and used material as gold, each culture and society will take gold with their own understandings and personal beliefs.



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The Significance of Researched Gold Artwork in My Own Work



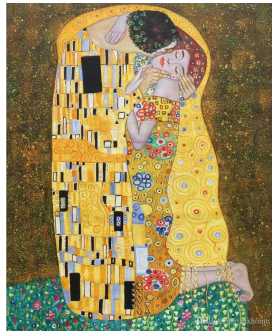
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C. 1988
[Website](#)

In my piece *The constriction of Branding*, I was mostly inspired by aspects of both Jeff Koons' work, *Michael Jackson and Bubbles*, and Gustav Klimt's piece, *The Kiss*. The general theme for my idea was inspired by Jeff Koons' work. I followed in his footsteps and drew upon the popular culture I am surrounded with today. The popularity of brand names in this society is what I drew upon for the inspiration of this piece, like Koons used popular media of pop star, Michael Jackson to inspire his art. I also did mimic other characteristic from the Pop Art style that influenced Koons' work as well. In my piece, characteristics such as bold outlines, bright colors, repeated patterns, and areas of flat color can be seen. These are all main aspects of Pop Art that were inspired by how Koons used that style to portray his art.



The constriction of Branding
Oil Pastel and acrylic paint on paper
60cm x 50cm
2020

Gustav Klimt's piece inspired my work as well due to the use of various patterns and they way he used gold in his piece. In my piece the variety of patterns can be found throughout the whole face, hands, and hair. I believe that the effect of these patterns made it easier for the viewer to differentiate between different popular brands patterns and logos. This differentiation is the same technique Klimt used to create a difference between the male and female figure. Klimt used more geometric and dark colors on the left side of the robe to represent the male figure while using more organic shapes and bright colors to represent the female figure. I mimicked this differencio by dividing parts of the face up to designate different brands too such as the red and green stripes to represent the brand Gucci, and using the hand on the left for the brand Dior, and the hair to represent Louis Vuitton. I also mimicked the way Klimt used gold in his piece to surround the two figures. I used this same oval like shape to outline the face in my piece. I believe that in both Klimt's and my own work this technique helped to draw attention to the humans depicted in the work. This was good for my piece because the brands are located in the face, hence drawing attention to the face will better get my message about brands across. The technique was good for Klimt due to the fact the subject matter of the painting is the kiss, hence the name *The Kiss*.



Gustav Klimt
The Kiss
Gold Leaf, Oil Paint
5"11" x 5"11"
C. 1907-1908
[Website](#)

The Significance of Researched Gold Artwork in My Own Work

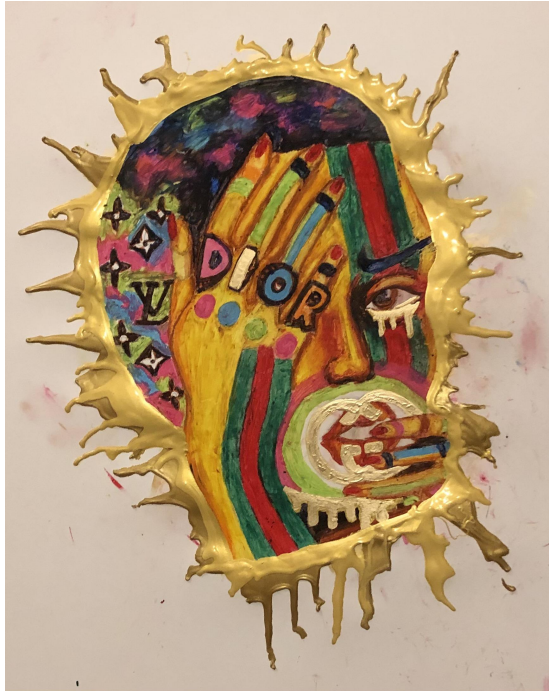
Jeff Koons
*Michael Jackson
and Bubbles*
Porcelain
42" x 70.5" x 32.5"
C. 1988
[Website](#)



Gustav Klimt
The Kiss
Gold Leaf, Oil Paint
5"11" x 5"11"
C. 1907-1908
[Website](#)



Mask of King Tutankhamun
Massive gold
21" x 15.5" x 19"
C. 1323 BC
[Website](#)



The constriction of Branding
Oil Pastel and acrylic paint on paper
60cm x 50cm
2020

Gold Symbolism:

The gold color in my piece was symbolic for the fact that brand names limit our creativity because of the gold surrounding the face. I choose to add the gold because it is symbolizing the creativity the person has, however, the brands represented through the hands are suppressing this creativity. This is also shown due to how I decided to layout the gold. The gold is very prominent near the outskirts of the figure, however, further away the gold gradually disappears. The symbolism of this gold in my piece is to reflect one's pure form of creativity. Gold is a pure element that most often in West culture reflects riches and wealth. In this piece I used it ironically due to the fact it is not representing expensive name brands that many define their wealth by, but instead it is representing one's creative self expression. The symbolism of gold presented in my artwork compares to both Koon's art and the mask due to the intention behind the gold symbolism. In my work it is representative of specifically creativity, while in the mask and Koons's piece the intent behind the gold color is to mimic the idea of the Gods. The gold in Koons work was used to make Jackson appear God-like, and in the mask the The gold skin was reminiscent of the gods. The intent in Klimt's work however, differs from that of the rest three as there is no specific meaning to the gold color. Simply the use of gold reflects both his childhood relations while also is based of his own artistic journey though his "Golden Period."

The Significance of Researched Gold Artwork in my own work

I found the Mask of King Tutankhamun to be successful as it drew upon imaginary lines leading to the focal point of the piece- the eyes. I wanted to mimic this success as I wanted to create the eye as my focal point as well. I did this through creating imaginary lines with the way I used the acrylic gold paint. By spreading the paint away in every direction from the face, I was able to create the illusion of lines leading towards my identified focal point. The lettering on the hand of my figure was also important to this technique as it created a diagonal line towards the eye. Being that the mask incorporated crescent shapes surrounding the face to make the distinction of the focal point, I attempted this as well. However, I made the crescent shape more defines as I used gold color to exemplify this. The use of gold under the eye in a crescent shapes aliens with the crescent shape the gold creates under the chin of the face. The chin also matches up with the crescent shape portrayed at the bottom of my piece surrounded by gold as well.

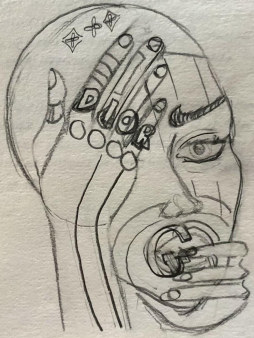


The constriction of Branding
Oil Pastel and acrylic paint on paper
60cm x 50cm
2020



Mask of King Tutankhamun
Massive gold
21" x 15.5" x 19"
C. 1323 BC
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Mask of King Tutankhamun
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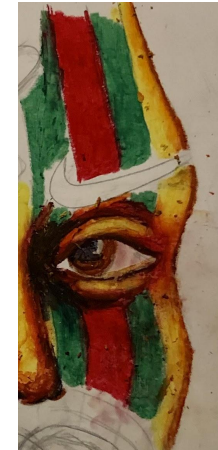


The sketch on the left is my final sketch before beginning my project. In my sketch I drew upon aspects of King Tut's mask in hopes to make my face appear strong. To do this I mimicked the prominent stripes, seen throughout the head covering of the mask, into the face and hands of my piece. I also used the idea of bold outlines seen in the face of the mask. As seen in my piece the eye and eyebrow consist of the darkest hues seen in the face. In the mask this is also true, the eyes are outlined in black, drawing focus to the eyes of the face. When using this technique in my piece, the face was able to appear stronger as a focal point was created- the eyes looking harshly at the viewer. I was also inspired to mimic the way gold was surrounding the harsh outlines in the face of the mask as I added gold to surround the eye from below. I made this artistic decision to further reflect the gold symbolism in my piece- being representative of creativity. The gold in the face of the mask also furthers the symbolism of gold through the belief that gold was made from the flesh of the sun god, Ra. Hence, depicting the skin as gold better emphasizes the meaning behind gold color.



The idea of embracing was also taken as inspiration for my work from *The Kiss*. I used the interpretation (of some critics) of Klimt's work of the idea that the man in the piece is constricting the female figure movement to better fit the idea of my piece. As I used hands to constrict the face as depicted in Klimt's work- the males hands holding the face up. I make the idea of constriction more clear to the audience by placing the hands to cover key features the face, such as the other eye and mouth. I also created the eyebrow at a tilted downwards angle to represent this struggle against the constriction, where in Klimt's work he depicted the female figure to be calm, with no distinguishable facial expression.

I used pattern in my work just like Klimt used pattern to create the bodies and the background in his painting. I did this by mimicking Klimt's use of rectangular shape to create pattern in the rectangular stripes. These stripes are also repeated again in the hand of my piece.



Gustav Klimt
The Kiss
Gold Leaf,
Oil Paint
5"11" x
5"11"
C.
1907-1908
[Website](#)



The constriction of Branding
Oil Pastel and
acrylic paint
on paper
60cm x 50cm
2020

