

Love comes and goes. A brief journey in ten collages through the labyrinth of sensuality as depicted by artists of every era.

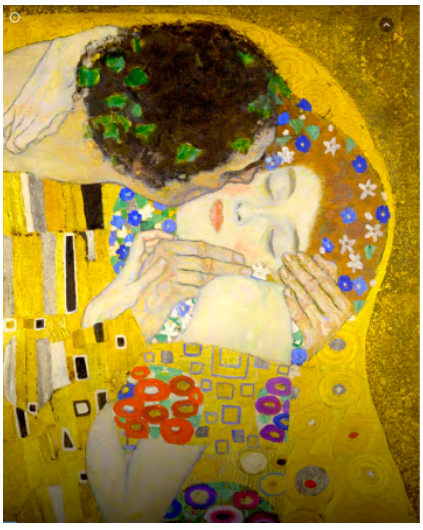
While love "comes and goes," artists have captured this precariousness by focusing on the sensual detail rather than the completion of the act.

When "public virtue" imposed a strict composure, the "private vice" of painting explored a morbid attraction to decadence.

1. Amori Disconosciuti



Artists cited:



Gustav Klimt
1909



Maître de Naumburg
1250

Gustav Klimt was not only the painter of gold and symbolism, but also a man whose existence was an inextricable intertwining of art, eros, and profound bonds.

His relationship with women was complex: on one hand, fleeting and carnal desire; on the other, a spiritual and enduring affection.

Klimt never married, but lived surrounded by women; it is said that semi-nude models constantly moved about his studio, ready to be captured in a gesture or a pose at the moment of sudden inspiration.

He had countless lovers, often belonging to the poorest social classes (models, seamstresses, flower girls). Upon his death, as many as 14 people claimed he was the father of their children, though he officially recognized only a few.

He was also the favorite portraitist of the ladies of Vienna's high society. His relationship with them was a blend of intellectual seduction and aesthetic admiration, crystallized in masterpieces where the gold seems to protect and, at the same time, imprison the female figure.

Many critics see the two lovers locked in the embrace of The Kiss (1909) as Gustav himself and Emilie Flöge, his favorite companion: a union that transcends eroticism to become a spiritual fusion.

2. Dolci Baci, Languide Carezze



Artists cited:



Pietro Della Vecchia
1645



Gustave Courbet
1858



Daniel Hernández
1906

Although they belong to different eras and geographical contexts (from Venetian Baroque to French Realism, to Peruvian Academicism), Pietro della Vecchia, Gustave Courbet, and Daniel Hernández share some striking stylistic and conceptual traits.

All three painters are celebrated for an extraordinary technical mastery.

There is also a common thread linking their use of light: a fascination with Shadow and Chiaroscuro. None of these three artists sought an idealized beauty:

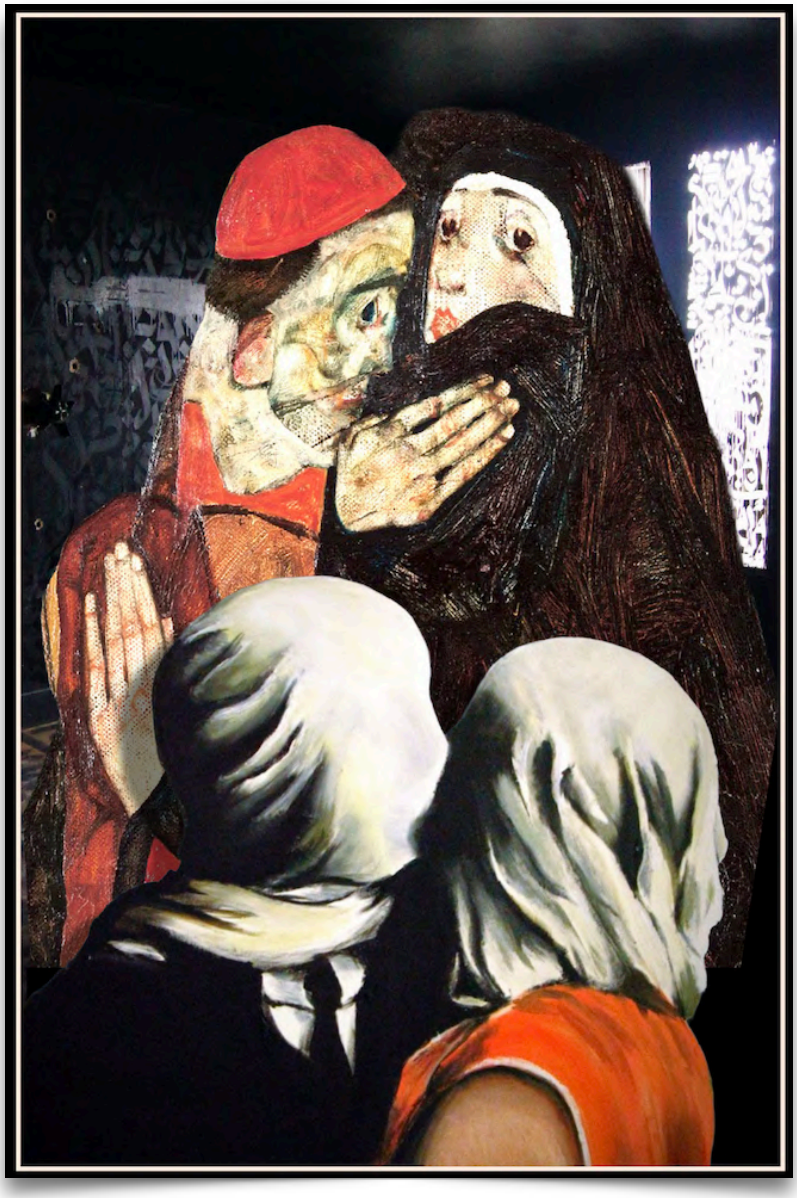
Della Vecchia painted wrinkled warriors, disheveled-looking philosophers, and grotesque figures.

Courbet made Realism his banner, shocking the public with non-idealized nude bodies and scenes of brutal daily life.

Hernández excelled in the female nude, treating the human body with a sensual and vibrant realism that avoided the mythological abstractions of the past.

In short, all three artists preferred the substance of painting and the physical presence of their subjects over the rigid rules of pure classicism.

3. In Incognito





Egon Schiele
1912



René Magritte
1928

At first glance, René Magritte and Egon Schiele seem to inhabit opposite universes: one is the master of Belgian detachment, bureaucratic precision, and cerebral enigma; the other is the tormented soul of Viennese Expressionism, defined by jagged lines, carnality, and existential angst.

However, they are united by a crisis of identity and the negation of objective reality.Both artists deprive the subject of its traditional psychological integrity, but they do so through different means:

***Magritte**: Hides the face (with apples, doves, or cloths) or multiplies it. The body becomes a mannequin, an object among objects.*

***Schiele**: Distorts the face and body until they are almost unrecognizable or caricatured. The skin is a gnarled prison. Identity is fragmented and suffering.*

External reality becomes an unreliable stage, evoking a sense of the individual's estrangement from the surrounding world.

Both reject the idea that art should be a mere copy of nature. Instead, art is a tool to dismantle the viewer's certainties.

Ultimately, their bond is one of profound disquiet. Magritte expresses it through silence and order; Schiele, through the scream and chaos.

4. Inquisizione Spagnola

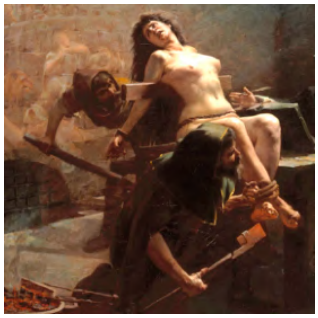




Francisco Goya
1795



Francisco Goya
1797



José de Brito
1895

The relationship between Francisco Goya and the Spanish Inquisition was a long and dangerous game of cat and mouse.

Despite being the First Court Painter, Goya lived a profound contradiction: he was a man of the Enlightenment (influenced by French ideas) working for an absolutist and Catholic monarchy, where the powerful "Holy Office" frowned upon his social criticism and brutal realism.

The most famous case, however, concerns the Maja desnuda (The Nude Maja). Goya was summoned to answer before the inquisitorial tribunal. The charge was having painted an obscene and morally offensive work.

The artist managed to get off the hook thanks to the intervention of powerful friends and his prestigious position, arguing that it was an artistic exploration in the vein of the great masters of the past.

In 1824, under the pretext of needing thermal baths in France, Goya asked the King for permission and fled to Bordeaux, where he spent his final years in voluntary exile, far from the eyes of the Spanish inquisitors.

The artist's famous quote reads: "The sleep of reason produces monsters", a direct attack on religious and institutional fanaticism.

By a twist of fate, the Inquisition was definitively abolished in Spain in 1834, just six years after the death of the great painter.

5. L'Amore Prende Corpo



Artists cited:



Ary Scheffer
1850



Francesco Hayez
1823

Romanticism transformed the way we perceive desire: no longer a quest for plastic perfection, but an immersion into emotion, often tinged with melancholy or heroism.

In this scenario, Ary Scheffer and Francesco Hayez embody the canons of nineteenth-century sensuality: ethereal and spiritual, romantic and carnal, yet always deeply human.

The Dutch-born French painter Ary Scheffer interprets sensuality through the filter of pure emotion. In his portraits, beauty is never aggressive; it is a light that seems to emanate from within.

His women, often inspired by the writings of Goethe or Dante, possess an almost supernatural grace.

While Scheffer elevates the flesh to the spirit, the Italian Francesco Hayez does the exact opposite: he brings myth and history into the realm of the vibrant and the tangible.

His true sensual power emerges in his female portraits, where beauty is proud, solid, and unequivocally earthly.

In conclusion, while Scheffer makes us fall in love with an idea of ideal beauty, Hayez confronts us with the magnetic force of physical presence; either way, both portraits in the collage seem to come alive, stepping right out of the canvas.

6. La Tana degli Amanti



Artists cited:



Francesco Hayez
1859



Angelo Dall'Oca Bianca
1931

The Kiss by Francesco Hayez is an allegory of the Risorgimento, blending passionate, romantic love with a fierce patriotism, and symbolizing the struggle for Italian unification against Austrian occupation.

To support his widowed mother, Angelo Dall'Oca Bianca began drawing, aided by a remarkable natural talent; his genius eventually took him all the way to the Paris Universal Exposition of 1900.

The story of the painter Angelo Dall'Oca Bianca would already make for an excellent Christmas tale on its own—a journey of redemption from the poverty of mid-nineteenth-century Verona's poorest alleys to social redemption, crowned by his consecration as an artist.

But his story does not end there. It was with the Christmas holidays that the painter inextricably bound his name. In fact, the artist is the one who designed the star-shaped mold for the Pandoro in 1894, contributing to the success of one of Italy's most famous holiday cakes.

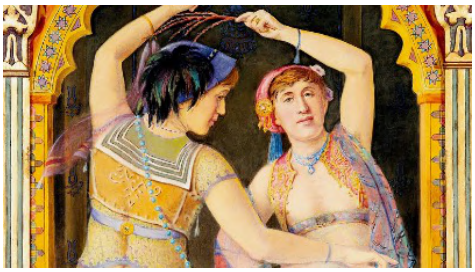
Meanwhile, due to his family's difficult financial situation, the young Francesco Hayez was entrusted to a maternal uncle. Noticing the boy's precocious talent, his uncle sent him to an artist's workshop and later enrolled him in the Venice Academy, where he attended courses in history painting.

Even a founding father like Giuseppe Mazzini defined Francesco Hayez as "the head of the school of History Painting, which is so important for a united Italy."

7. Privacy Violata



Artists cited:



Elisar von Kupffer
1896



Hans Baldung
1525



Luis Montero Cáceres
1900

Finding a common thread between Hans Baldung, Elisar von Kupffer, and Luis Montero Cáceres requires digging into the darkest and most provocative folds of art history.

Although they belong to distant eras and geographical contexts, these three artists share a common obsession: the representation of the human body as a site of tension between the sublime, the macabre, and forbidden desire.

***Hans Baldung**: The master of the German Renaissance is famous for his "Venuses" depicted alongside the figure of the skeleton. In his work, sensuality is a memento mori: the flesh is beautiful precisely because it is destined to decay.*

***Elisar von Kupffer**: In his frescoes, the male body is idealized within a mythical, often statuesque dimension, appearing suspended in an eternal time, almost beyond life itself.*

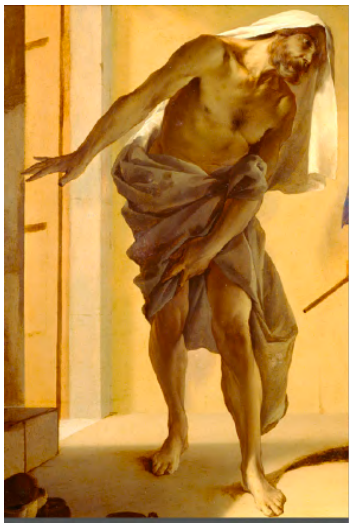
***Luis Montero Cáceres**: In his masterpiece The Death of Atala, the Peruvian painter exalts the sculptural beauty of a lifeless body. There is a morbid sensuality in the marble coldness of the skin, blending Neoclassical taste with a tragic Romanticism.*

Therefore, the great affinity we can highlight among them is the indissoluble link between plastic beauty and the tragic end of existence.

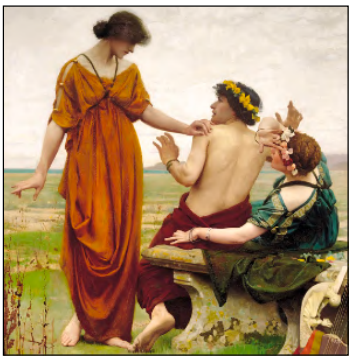
8. Rivalità Femminile



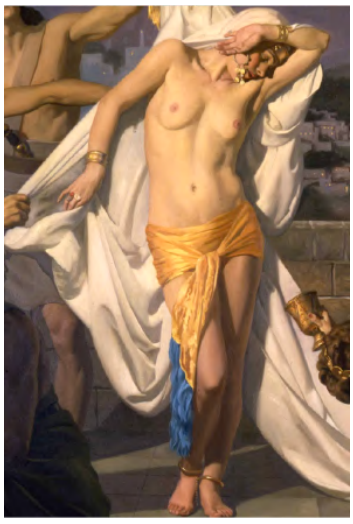
Artists cited:



Bernardo Cavallino
1650



Thomas Cooper Gotch
1885



Ives Gammell
1934

These three artists seem to inhabit completely different worlds: Bernardo Cavallino, a master of the Neapolitan Baroque; Ives Gammell, a 20th-century American academic theorist; and Thomas Cooper Gotch, a late-Victorian English Pre-Raphaelite.

However, digging past their dates of birth, a fascinating common thread emerges that binds their aesthetics together:

The Pursuit of "Ideal Beauty" and Grace

All three artists rejected raw realism or a certain kind of modernity in favor of a lyrical and refined beauty.

The Theater of Composition

There is a strong theatrical and scenographic component to their works. The figures seem like actors on a stage, illuminated by a light carefully studied to emphasize the sacredness of the moment. This is particularly evident in their use of rich drapery and elegant poses.

An Element of Poetic Unrealism

Cavallino's scenes often have a suspended air; Gotch's portraits resemble modern Byzantine icons; Gammell's allegorical works draw the viewer into a symbolic and dreamlike world.

All three represent different points along the exact same line: that of erudite painting.

9. Sigillo d'Amore



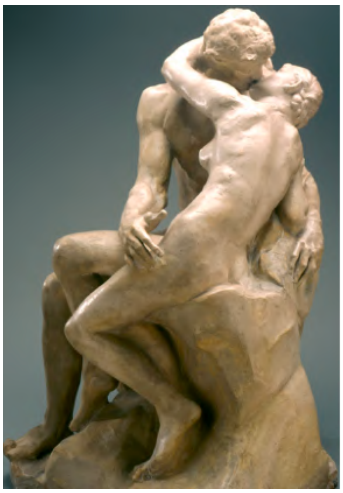
Artists cited:



Nikiforos Lytras
1878



Scultura Maya
700 dC



Auguste Rodin
1888

The kiss in art is never a mere contact of lips, but a powerful narrative device that transforms a private gesture into a universal symbol; from a seal of love to supreme betrayal, its iconography has spanned the centuries, evolving alongside social sensitivity and globalized cultural models.

Nuances of the gesture - Romantic Ecstasy

In the nineteenth century, the kiss became the emblem of overwhelming desire and Italian national identity. We need only think of Francesco Hayez, whom we admired in the collage ***La Tana degli Amanti****, where the kiss is a furtive and patriotic farewell, fraught with dramatic tension and secrecy.*

Nuances of the gesture - Cosmic Union

With Symbolism and Art Nouveau, as seen in Gustav Klimt's famous The Kiss, which appears in our first collage ***Amori Disconosciuti****, the gesture is transformed into an embrace that dissolves individuality, where bodies merge into a single decorative and spiritual entity.*

Nuances of the gesture - Modern Fragility

In the twentieth century, artists like Magritte or Schiele, in the collage ***In Incognito****, explore the dark or uncommunicable side: veiled kisses that prevent actual contact, or violent fusions that consume vital energy.*

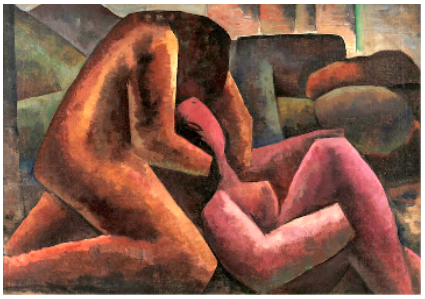
10. Vizi Privati, Pubbliche Virtù



Artists cited:



Peter Paul Rubens
1633



Man Ray
1914



Edvard Munch
1897

*The title **Vizi privati, pubbliche virtù** roots itself in Bernard Mandeville's provocative The Fable of the Bees (1714). However, when applied to the sphere of sexual and romantic relationships, it becomes the key to reading centuries of hypocrisy, rebellion, and social change: the split between the image presented (the façade of morality, decorum, and fidelity) and the passionate reality (the desire for transgression, the hidden eroticism).*

*It is impossible not to also mention the 1976 film **Vizi privati, pubbliche virtù** (Private Vices, Public Pleasures) by Hungarian director Miklós Jancsó. The work reimagines the Mayerling incident (the suicide of Crown Prince Rudolf of Austria and his mistress), transforming it into a political critique.*

Sex becomes a tool of rebellion against authoritarian power. "Private vice" is no longer a fault, but an act of freedom against a "public virtue" that is, in reality, oppression and control.

Is this the end of the secret nowadays? In the era of social media, the boundary seems to have flipped: Vices become Public, as people flaunt a "token" transgression to gain visibility. Virtues, on the other hand, become Private; true intimacy, tenderness, and fidelity are private matters that no longer make the news.

This dichotomy lies at the heart of almost all erotic and Symbolist art, playing on the eternal boundary between what was acceptable to display and what was only visually or allusively suggested.


Love comes and goes