



**EDST**

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*First of the EDST Public Culture Series*

**Klimt Beyond the Kiss:  
Art, the University and Politics in Fin de Siècle Vienna**

Hans Pechar & Lesley Andres

**Wednesday September 19, 2012**

**Ponderosa Annex G Lounge**

**12:30 – 2 p.m.**

Gustav Klimt's "The Kiss," an icon of modern mass culture, is as popular as the portraits of Che Guevara or Marilyn Monroe. Much less known is that around 1900 Klimt was at the centre of a fierce university controversy. He was commissioned to design three ceiling paintings for the Ceremonial Hall of the new University of Vienna. His visual depiction of the three university faculties – philosophy, medicine, and law – triggered a major scandal. One might expect that an avant-garde artist would clash with those with conservative values supported by a reactionary government. The surprise in the story rests with those who opposed and supported of Klimt's portrayal of academic life.

To unfold this story, we begin with the political, social, and cultural developments in the aftermath of the revolution of 1848. The revolution was followed by two major developments: (1) university reform that introduced the Humboldtian model to Austria and (2) urban reconstruction that replaced the medieval city walls with a representative Boulevard. Among the buildings that should adorn this Boulevard was the new University of Vienna. Klimt's university paintings and the related controversy were at the crossroad of these two developments.

**Hans Pechar** is a Professor in the Faculty for Interdisciplinary Studies, Alpen Adria University, Austria. The focus of his research is comparative higher education and economics of higher education. Currently, he represents Austria in the governing board of OECD CERI. His recent publications address topics of policies of access to higher education, governance of Austrian universities, and equity in education.

**Lesley Andres** is a Professor in the Department of Educational Studies at the University of British Columbia. She is the principal investigator of the *Paths on Life's Way* Project, a unique Canadian longitudinal study combines extensive qualitative and quantitative data over a 22 year time frame to examine the lives, actions, experiences, and perspectives of individuals within a life course framework. Also, she is the Editor-in-Chief of the *Canadian Journal of Higher Education*.