

Dear Mitra:

I think one way to exam Klimt's "Danaë" is to compare his work with other famous renderings of the same subject- "Danaë". Below are some I found over the internet.

Notice, Danaë is a Greek goddess, therefore, she was rendered nude. By comparing with other artworks of "Danaë" previously, Klimt's illustration of this figure is very different! Notice, both male gods and female goddess in Greek myth were rendered nude but not for human male and female. Zenowich explained: "Nudity in Greek art was used symbolically to display heroes from myths, gods, warriors, or war heroes. "The ancient Greeks were selling a social agenda or normative culture by using nudity," said Kenneth Lapatin, curator of antiquities at the Getty Villa Museum. "By presenting an idealized nude they were telling the rest of the world they were powerful" (Zenowich).

The concept of rule breaking is very obvious when you consider how all the artists rendered about the story "Danaë" before him. That is the rule this work broken. Klimt's rendering show a peaceful Danaë sleeping with a curved body, naturely hide most of the erotic portion away from the viewers. Her nude left thigh represent more than half of her body but they are render without any sexual implication. Her right hand curved and hide her right breast, avoiding unnecessar exposure of nudity. Klimt smartly render fine quality of fiber to cover her left leg and her back, and illustrate her beautiful red hair to cover her shoulder. The "shower of gold" on the upper left is executed nicely because Klimt learn all the trick from his goldsmith father since his youth. That usage of gold is simply a necessary iconography to represent the story of "Danaë". Klimt shown off his creativity by using a very unique compostion to render a revolutionary pose that no other artist attempted. That is why many considered this piece "break the rule"! Not that he encouraging any females to break any rule in their society, but rather Klimt himself, broke the rule of how to render the subject "Danaë" in the rule of art making. If this still not convince you, consider how he render her hair, comparing to anyone else render the hair of female figures before his time! Also, you need to evaulate his work by the standard of 1907, when he worked on this painting, not by the standard of 2024, 117 years after the completion of this work! Remember, this work is completed 13 years before the United States Constitution guaranteed that right for women to vote nationally in 1920 by the ratification of the 19th Amendment. When Klimt depicted Danaë, female lived in many states in the US cannot even vote for another 13 years! The question should not be how Klimt's work breaks the rule in the art world of 2024, but instead- did his work break the rule in the art world back in 1907!

As about "helping women feel stronger", I think that was never what Klimt intend to do when he worked on this piece. He is a male artist, and therefore there are no need for any female to get help from any male artist to help them feel stronger. Such idea is simply logically contradict against itself. I do think Klimt rendered female figures very differently than other male artists before his time and that is obvious in this particular work as well as many of his other works. (see my response below)

Works Cited

Zenowich, Desiree. "Why Are so Many Ancient Greek Statues Naked?" *Why Are There So Many Naked Statues?*,

Danaë in art



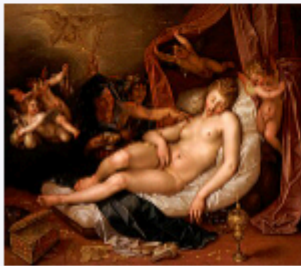
Jan Gossaert, 1527



Correggio's *Danaë*, 1531–1532.



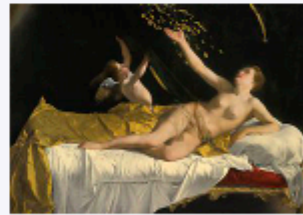
One of several variants by Titian, 1544. Cupid is alongside Danaë. 120 cm x 172 cm. National Museum of Capodimonte, Naples



Hendrick Goltzius, 1603



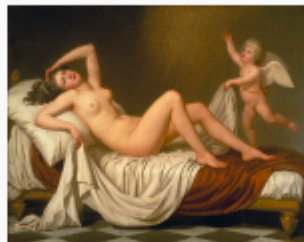
Artemisia Gentileschi, c. 1612



Danaë by Orazio Gentileschi, 1621–23.



Rembrandt's *Danaë*, c. 1636.



Danaë receiving Jupiter in a Shower of Gold, by Adolf Ulrik Wertmüller (1787)



Jacob van Loo, 1650s