

Press release

Imperial Furniture Collection •
Vienna Furniture Museum

The Imperial Furniture Collection as an internationally unique furniture museum

Originally established by Empress Maria Theresa to store the Habsburg's furniture, the Imperial Furniture Collection has developed into the largest collection of furniture in the world. Today, the Collection not only constitutes a unique insight into the imperial style of living, but also presents an overview of the development of 20th-century Austrian furniture design.

The Collection still retains its original function as the Imperial-Royal Furniture Storehouse and is responsible for restoring and maintaining furniture from the imperial age while at the same time providing the furnishings for state receptions and the offices of leading politicians. The restoration workshops still make use of old craft techniques. The first permanent display was opened in 1924, thereby creating a unique combination of storeroom, workshop, administrative body and museum.

As part of the general restoration work begun in 1993, two of the old Depository's neighbouring buildings were acquired, increasing the total exhibition area to 6,000 m². The architect Alessandro Alverà redesigned the buildings, linking them with each other so as to create not only display rooms but also rooms for events. The lecture hall on the ground floor also houses a particularly important item of the Collection: the Egyptian Cabinet, the last surviving item from the magnificent Empire apartment redesigned for Empress Ludovica in the Hofburg at the beginning of the 19th century.

When the Collection was reopened in 1998, responsibility for management was transferred to Schloß Schönbrunn Kultur- und Betriebsges.m.b.H. (SKB), which also operates the imperial attractions at Schönbrunn Palace, the Children's Museum, the "Schönbrunn Palace Experience" as well as the Imperial Apartments, the Sisi Museum and the Imperial Silver Collection in the Hofburg.

Following the expansion and redesign that took place in the 1990s, the former "lumber room of the monarchy" has become one of the most attractive furniture collections in the world. The Collection focuses on what was the original furniture of the Habsburgs from Schönbrunn Palace, the Hofburg, Belvedere Palace, Laxenburg and Hof Palace. The furniture, decoration and apartments can be seen in the context of the individual members of the imperial family for whom they were made. Of the total of around 160,000 items in the collection, roughly 6,000 exhibits are on display in the museum, including personal memorabilia such as Crown Prince Rudolf's cradle or a group of chairs embroidered by Maria Theresa and her daughters. Other highlights include a valuable imperial throne ensemble, Prince Eugene's Indian Room from Hof Palace, the Turkish Room created for Crown Prince Rudolf and the furnishings of Archduchess Gisela's Bergl Room.

The largest Biedermeier collection in the world

The first Austrian emperor, Franz II/I, provided the museum with the basis for the largest Biedermeier collection in the world. The Biedermeier period was characterised by a large variety of forms, discrete elegance and sumptuous materials. Using objects previously shown in the display collection, 15 alcoves have been created and integrated into the new concept, acting as a "museum within the museum" dedicated to the Biedermeier style of living. In addition, a "walk-in depot" with historical furniture "Pawlatschen" dating from around 1930 provides a view behind the scenes.

The Imperial Furniture Collection • Vienna Furniture Museum sees its function, however, as not merely presenting the Imperial furniture. The presentation of the history of Austrian furniture from the Biedermeier and Historicism to Viennese Modernism and contemporary design, and the

collecting of corresponding items of furniture, play a major role in the curators' work. The Museum displays furnishings by major early 20th century designers such as Adolf Loos, Josef Hoffmann, Otto Wagner and Josef Olbrich. In addition, the Museum also presents an ever-growing collection of contemporary Austrian furniture designs such as by Roland Rainer, Franz West, Margarete Schütte-Lihotzky and Johannes Spalt. The change in the style of living is visualised not only by means of individual items but above all by numerous fully-furnished room ensembles.

Imperial furniture for a world hit

In order to meet the interest on the part of international visitors in Empress Elisabeth and the world-famous Sisi films made by Ernst Marischka in the 1950s, the "*Sissi in the movies – an Empress's furniture*" display was integrated in the Museum in 2006. The display includes not only extracts from the films in a number of languages but also the original furniture that was borrowed from the Imperial Furniture Collection for the production of the films. In addition, a Sis(s)i Path – Sisi in real life and Sissi in the films – leads the visitor through the museum, presenting a wealth of fascinating information about the actors, the director, the film locations and of course the historical model for the film, Empress Elisabeth.

Alongside regular museum operations, numerous special exhibitions have been held on architects and designers such as Mies van der Rohe, Alvar Aalto, Verner Panton, Jean Prouvé and the Thonet brothers. Exhibitions have also been held on topics such as Bauhaus, the history of children's furniture, Vienna furniture design in the interwar period and the 1950s, Crown Prince Rudolf and Romy Schneider.

The range of material presented and the activities available make the Imperial Furniture • Vienna Furniture Museum a comprehensive collection of furniture of international significance.

Contact:

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An overview of the history of the origins of the Imperial Furniture Collection

- 1747 Maria Theresa appoints the first **Court Furniture Inspector** with the duties of inventarising, caring for and transporting the imperial furniture.
- 1809 This court office is given the title of **Court Furniture Directorate** and, during the reign of Emperor Franz II/I, is also made responsible for the purchase of new items for the furnishing of the imperial palaces.
- 1901 Emperor Franz Joseph I commissions the construction of the **Imperial-Royal Court Furniture Depository** at 88 Mariahilfer Strasse as the central storage facility for all items of furniture not in current use, together with workshops and coach houses.
- 1919 After the end of the monarchy, all the furniture that is not the personal property of the Habsburg family becomes the property of the Republic of Austria. Some of the stock was, and still is, used for official state receptions such as those given by the Federal President of Austria.
- 1924 A display collection is opened in what is now the **Federal Furniture Depository**, divided into the various stylistic eras and serving as a model for craftsmen to copy. It includes two rooms with Baroque and Empire furniture together with 15 Biedermeier alcoves as illustrations of past styles of furniture and interior decoration in Vienna.
- 1994 Start of the renovation project. A disused factory building adjacent to the furniture depository and a Biedermeier house on Andreasgasse are also acquired.
- 1998 Opening of the present museum designed by the architect Alessandro Alverà.

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Facts & Figures

Location

Imperial Furniture Collection · Vienna Furniture Museum
Andreasgasse 7
1070 Vienna
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U3 Zieglergasse station, Andreasgasse exit

Management

Schloß Schönbrunn Kultur- und Betriebsges.m.b.H.
Dr. Franz Sattlecker
DI Dr. Wolfgang Kippes

Scientific Management

Federal Ministry for the Economy, Family and Youth
Dr. Ilsebill Barta

Opening hours

Tuesday to Sunday, 10.00 am – 6.00 pm

Technical details

Vital statistics

Display area	Permanent exhibition	4,700 m2
	Special exhibition	550 m2
Auxiliary areas	Café / Restaurant	120 m2
	Entrance hall, hall, cloakroom, lecture hall, WC, video room, archive	550 m2
Reconstruction	1993-1998	
Total costs	EUR 12.281.708	
Principal	Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs	
Planning	Mag. Arch. Alessandro Alverà Arch. DI Karl Stransky architectural office	
Execution	Federal Buildings Management, Federal Property Administration	
Room planning and exhibition concept	Dr. Peter Parenzan, Dr. Ilsebill Barta	
Exhibition design	Mag. Arch. Alessandro Alverà Mag. Art. Heidemarie Leitner	