Rupture and Continuity:
The fate of the Habsburg inheritance after 1918

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The key texts have been translated into English and compiled in this booklet to guide you through the exhibition.

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1. About the exhibition

‘The Republic of Austria is the proprietor of the entire movable and immovable property on its territory of the Court Exchequer as well as properties tied to the previously reigning House or a branch thereof.’

Section 5 of the Habsburg Act of 10 April 1919

With this brief statement the young Republic laid claim to the ownership of the material legacy of the Habsburg Monarchy in the spring of 1919. However, the actual appropriation of the former imperial court offices, art collections, palaces and estates proved to be considerably more complicated. The whole process took three years to complete, and the ‘court without an emperor’ continued to exist until November 1921, albeit under republican administration.

Based on this imperial legacy, the exhibition explores various facets of the historical and social upheaval of the time. First of all the convoluted legal nexus of Habsburg properties and collections is presented in order to explain the various ways in which they were appropriated and exploited by the new Republic. Continuities in these processes can be seen particularly on the administrative level.

The young Republic faced huge challenges as it struggled with the consequences of the world war, widespread poverty and the crisis in supplies. The established political powers feared revolution. The successor states and the victorious powers were demanding their share of the Monarchy's inheritance – the ‘abduction’ of sixty-six valuable paintings from the Kunsthistorisches Museum by the Italian Military Commission being only the most spectacular case to feature here. The grey areas in the legal position concerning former imperial property led to conflicts, some of which were milked for what they were worth in the media, such as the affair of the crown jewels, which Emperor Karl had had taken out of the country during the final days of the Monarchy.

The exhibition shows how the Republic went about taking possession of its new property: by exchanging symbols and names, and re-inventorying and reorganizing the art treasures, but also through active appropriation. Disabled war veterans, for example, regarded themselves as the victims of Habsburg injustice, and as such justified in forcibly occupying parts of the palace at Schönbrunn.

In this ‘democratization' of the imperial holdings, palaces and art collections were opened up to the general public, and a number of public education
initiatives were put in place. The exhibition takes the two examples of Schönbrunn and the Hofburg, the symbolic centres of power, to showcase the many plans for use that sought to profitably exploit this imperial legacy. Many of these schemes were swiftly rejected, while others live on to this day.

A whole section of the exhibition is devoted to the ‘Red Archduchess’, the daughter of Crown Prince Rudolf. A professed Social Democrat, she bequeathed her inheritance – works of art from the private ownership of Empress Elisabeth and her father – to the Republic.

2. The last Habsburg throne

Ever since the advent of the early advanced civilizations, the throne has been a symbol of divine and secular power, and the act of enthronement a defining sign of the claim to power and authority. The throne consists of a canopy of state, a throne seat with a high back and heraldic animals (sphinxes or lions, for example) as decoration and symbols of power and might. Standing on a stepped dais, it is elevated above the monarch’s subject – hence the expression ‘to ascend the throne’. Arms and insignia referring to the ruling dynasty can be affixed to the throne or canopy.

When vacant, the throne symbolically represents the perpetual presence of monarchical authority, even when the ruler is physically absent. In the case of the Habsburgs, each ruler had his or her own throne; that is to say, there was no single throne used by the monarchy down the generations.

The throne displayed here was made for Emperor Franz Joseph and stood in the Privy Council Chamber in the ceremonial apartments of the Leopoldine Wing of the Hofburg. It was only used on important ceremonial occasions, for example, when Franz Joseph gave a speech from the throne, something he did only four times during his long reign. On occasions when a larger audience had to be accommodated, such as the ceremonial opening of the Imperial Assembly in 1879, the throne was set up in the Hall of Ceremonies.

One of the last times that this throne was used by Franz Joseph was in 1900, when the heir presumptive, Archduke Franz Ferdinand, standing before the steps of the throne, solemnly renounced the rights to the throne of his (as yet unborn) children. This was the condition imposed by Franz Joseph in
consenting to the archduke’s morganatic marriage to Countess Sophie von Chotek.
In 1919 the ‘throne without an emperor’ was moved to the Hofmobilien-
depot (Court Furniture Depository), as it had ceased to be needed in the Hofburg.
Without a monarchy or an emperor, a throne is no more than a simple chair.
Nonetheless, the varying positions taken towards the throne, emperor and the Habsburg heritage occupied and divided the political parties of the Republic until far into the twentieth century.

3. The emperor and the dynasty

On ascending the throne in November 1916, Karl (1887–1922) came into an inheritance that was fraught with difficulties. Already weakened by social and ethnic tensions, the Habsburg Monarchy was challenged to breaking-point by the First World War.
Karl inherited the throne from his great-uncle Franz Joseph (1830–1916). The ageing emperor had ruled for sixty-eight years and had latterly come to be regarded as a remote symbol of permanence and stability. However, he also stood for stagnation and exhaustion.
With Karl, who was twenty-nine at the time of his accession, a new generation had come to the fore at the rigid Viennese court. The differences manifested themselves in the way Karl interacted with the people around him: Franz Joseph was invariably very aloof, concerned to preserve majestic dignity, while Karl was far more personal, cultivating a kinder, more affable manner. However, this made him all the more vulnerable.
Despite his ‘modern’ manner, Karl was pervaded by a profound sense of his monarchical mission, with the idea of the dynasty playing a decisive role in his conception of himself as ruler. He put his complete trust in what he saw as the natural authority of his imperial office – without comprehending that this was no longer unquestioned in the light of the looming decline of the Habsburg Monarchy.
His activities as ruler were marked by overzealousness and a lack of foresight. While Karl bubbled over with ideas, he was unable to find opportunities to put them into practice. His well-meaning but often naive efforts to achieve peace foundered on political reality and the omnipotent machinery of war.
Karl was strongly influenced by his wife Zita of Bourbon-Parma (1892–1989), whom he had married in 1911. His bride was from a formerly sovereign princely house, a stalwart member of the Catholic Church and had been brought up on the principles of monarchical legitimism. Generally described as harmonious and happy, their marriage produced eight children.

4. What belongs to the emperor?

Not everything that the emperor possessed and used actually belonged to him personally. The various palaces, art collections and estates that were commonly referred to as ‘imperial’ were in fact classified in different proprietary categories.

By the end of the Monarchy a distinction was made between three main groups, namely between the Court Exchequer of state, the family assets of the Habsburg-Lorraine dynasty, and the private property of individual members of the ruling house.

After 1918 the category to which particular palaces and assets were assigned determined their subsequent fate.

Private property

It is an astonishing fact that Karl and Zita, the last imperial couple, had very little in the way of private assets. Their possessions were limited to the Villa Wartholz in Reichenau (Lower Austria) and the small estate of Feistritz bei St Peter on Kammersberg (Styria). It was not until 1917 that Karl acquired a large estate when he purchased the Bohemian demesne of Brandeis an der Elbe/Brandýs nad Labem.

The direct descendants of Franz Joseph were far wealthier, the elderly emperor having made sure that his daughters Gisela and Marie Valerie, and his granddaughter Elisabeth, the only child of Crown Prince Rudolf, were well provided for.

There were also a number of collateral lines, as the House of Habsburg-Lorraine was widely ramified thanks to the numerous progeny of Maria Theresa. The richest branch line was that of Teschen, deriving from Arch-duchess Marie Christine and Albert of Saxe-Teschen. There were, however, also less well-endowed lines that were financially dependent on appanage from the state and allowances from the Family Fund.
After 1918
The question of the private assets of individual members of the family was resolved in different ways in the successor states of the Habsburg Monarchy. In Austria and Hungary this property was left untouched, whereas in Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia their private property was expropriated in its entirety.

4.1 The ‘tied assets’

The Habsburg fidei commissum and funds are ‘not the individual property of a person, but of the dynasty’.
from Ivan Ritter von Žolger, Der Hofstaat des Hauses Österreich, 1917

A special form of imperial property was the so-called tied assets, which belonged to the Habsburg-Lorraine dynasty as a whole. This kind of property, which may best be compared to modern private foundations, was called fidei commissum or fund.

In concrete terms these were important assets that were intended to remain in the possession of the dynasty and were indivisible and inalienable (i.e., they could not be disposed of) across the generations. The purpose of this arrangement was to secure the family’s finances so that they were able to represent the dynasty in a style appropriate to their standing. There were several of these funds and fidei commissa in the House of Habsburg-Lorraine. Common to most of them was that the proprietor of the fund was always the ruling head of the dynasty, that is, the emperor. However, he only had the right of use over the revenue from these estates and was obliged to pass on the endowment fund undiminished to his successor.

The most important of these foundations was the Familien-Versorgungsfonds (‘family support fund’), founded in 1765 using the inheritance left by Franz Stephan of Lorraine, Maria Theresa’s husband, who thanks to his financial talent left a considerable fortune after his death. Given the large number of Maria Theresa’s children, the aim of this foundation was to provide funds for the bridal trousseaus of the daughters and support for family members in exceptional circumstances.

Named after its founder, the Kaiser Franz Joseph-Kronfideikommiss was set up in 1901. It was established in the wake of the death of Crown Prince Rudolf, in consequence of which the crown would no longer fall to Franz Joseph’s direct descendants. The succession went to the line of his brother,
Archduke Karl Ludwig, whose fortune, however, was not large. In order to ensure that the future ruler was less dependent on appanage from the state, Franz Joseph endowed this fund from his private fortune.

**The art collections**

Together with landholdings and monetary assets, the family assets also included important collections of art. These holdings did not belong to the emperor or any other member of the imperial family as an individual, but were owned by the imperial house as a whole in the form of fidei commissa. Which parts of the art-historical and scientific collections that had been amassed over the centuries belonged to the Court Exchequer – and thus to the state – and which were to be assigned to the ‘Fideikommiss der Allerhöchsten Sammlungen’ (Fidei Commissum of the Imperial Collections), was decided in the context of the general inventory begun in 1875.

According to this, the collections of the Court Natural History Museum and the holdings of items in use belonging to the Court Silver and Table Room, together with the furnishings of the imperial palaces under the administration of the Court Furniture Depository, were assigned to the Court Exchequer of the state.

Among other assets, the Fideikommiss der Allerhöchsten Sammlungen owned the Habsburg dynastic treasure as part of the Secular Treasury, the Fidei Commissum Library and, most notably, the holdings of the Court Art History Museum.

It proved difficult to assign the Court Library to one of these categories owing to the complex nature of the history of its development. The decision of assigning it to a particular category of assets was to be ‘reserved to a later date’. However, this issue had still not been resolved by 1918.

The collection at the Albertina constituted a special case. Although also a fidei commissum, the collection was not owned by the emperor but by the current head of the Teschen line.

**After 1918**

The various funds and fidei commissa that belonged to the ruling dynasty as a whole were taken over into state ownership as so-called ‘tied assets’, both in Austria and in the other successor states.
4.2 The Court Exchequer

The Court Exchequer is ‘an asset that the monarch owns by virtue of his position as ruler, not as a private individual, but as “Supreme Head of State”’.

from Ivan Ritter von Žolger, *Der Hofstaat des Hauses Österreich*, 1917

The Court Exchequer was state property over which the emperor had the right of use as supreme head of state. Also referred to as Crown Estate, these possessions belonged to the crown and not the monarch as an individual. On the death of the emperor the rights of use automatically passed to his successor.
The Court Exchequer included above all properties that were intended for the use of the court. These included the large residences such as the Vienna Hofburg, Schönbrunn Palace and the royal palace in Budapest as well as other castles and stately houses which were mostly allocated as residences to members of the dynasty. The Court Exchequer also owned hunting reserves such as the Prater, the Lobau and the Lainzer Tiergarten.
The upkeep of these properties was funded by the state. The statutory sum disbursed annually to the ruler from state revenues to cover the costs of the court was called the Civil List or ‘Hofstaatsdotation’ (court household allowance). In the final years of the Monarchy the Civil List amounted to 22.6 m crowns annually, a sum that was supplied in equal amounts by the two halves of the Dual Monarchy.
The Civil List also covered the appanage or payments to the non-ruling members of the dynasty that enabled them to maintain a style of living appropriate to their rank. The distribution of these payments was left to the discretion of the emperor as head of the family. Given the growing number of family members, this meant that the emperor had a financial means of exerting pressure on his dependants.

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After the collapse of the Monarchy the individual properties belonging to the Court Exchequer passed into the ownership of the successor state on whose territory they stood.
5. The court household – organisation and duties

With the monarch at its centre, the court household was an organization that had grown and developed over the centuries and had its own special rules and rituals. Regarded as particularly conservative, Viennese court ceremonial preserved the traditions of the Habsburg imperial court right into the twentieth century.

The main task of the court was to ensure the appropriate ‘decorum’ or imperial magnificence.

Behind this magnificent façade was a complicated social system characterized by strict hierarchies. The court was divided into four court staffs forming the main departments of the court.

At the head of the court household was the Oberhofmeister, who was in charge of the entire court with its nexus of court services, different levels of administrative offices and inspectorates.

Immediately beneath the Oberhofmeister was the Oberstkämmerer or head of the imperial chamber, i.e., the private sphere of the monarch. He controlled access to the ruler and issued appointments for audiences. The imperial collections were also within his scope of influence.

The Oberhofmarschall was responsible for legal affairs within the Habsburg-Lorraine family.

Finally, the Oberststallmeister supervised the court stables, the Riding School and the fleet of imperial carriages and other vehicles.

This huge machinery was a logistically well-developed system that had to ensure the provisioning and accommodation not only of Their Imperial Majesties but also the people employed by the court as well as their families. The court’s spectrum of duties included not only the emperor’s household but also the operation of the most important institutions of Viennese cultural life. The Court Opera, the Hofburgtheater and the Court Museums were all run and funded by the court. While this was extremely costly, it secured the emperor powerful influence over cultural life.

5.1 Schloss Hetzendorf as a residence for Karl and Zita

One of the duties of the court administration was to allocate residential quarters to members of the ruling house. The various palaces and stately houses under the administration of the Court Exchequer were expensively renovated and furnished for this purpose, thus enabling their occupants to
lead the style of life appropriate to their high rank. The upkeep and management of the buildings and gardens was also paid for from funds provided by the Court Exchequer. Schloss Hetzendorf, for example, served as the official residence of Karl and Zita from their marriage in 1911 until their ascent of the throne in 1916.

6. From Monarchy to Republic

7. Fear of revolution

After the end of the war, the growth of radical currents and the devastating economic circumstances gave rise to an acute fear of revolution. Political insecurity divided the young Republic, and the policies of isolationism and protectionism instituted by the successor states had destroyed completely the former economic zone of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. Problems lay not only in the ongoing slackening of the economy, steadily rising inflation and the inadequate supply of basic foodstuffs and fuel for Vienna's two million inhabitants. High levels of unemployment among returning soldiers, disabled war veterans and prisoners-of-war led to widespread social tension. There were frequent mass demonstrations, some of which were accompanied by violence.

Consequences for estates owned by the Court Exchequer
The security situation was also problematic for estates owned by the Court Exchequer: in the winter after the end of the war there were frequent break-ins and burglaries at former imperial palaces. After the dissolution of the Imperial and Royal Life Guards the holdings were safeguarded by the Officers’ Guard of the Crown Estates; later the Volkswehr was made responsible for these duties. The Volkswehr was the first provisional army of the Republic, formed from the ranks of the former Imperial and Royal Army.

Occupation by disabled war veterans
Demonstrative claims were made on palaces as symbols of Habsburg rule by disabled war veterans, who saw themselves as ‘victims of Habsburg injustice’. In April 1919, for example, a group of disabled ex-servicemen
spontaneously occupied parts of Schönbrunn Palace. At first they threatened to take over the ceremonial state rooms, but eventually ensconced themselves in the Valerie Wing, a side wing of the main palace.

**Free meals for the poor**
A number of international aid organizations had established themselves in Vienna after the war. By far the most important of these, the American Relief Administration, rented the kitchens of former imperial palaces in order to produce free meals for children in need on a mass scale. For this, the stoves, kitchen utensils, porcelain, glassware and cutlery of the former court kitchens were placed at its disposal. The Belvedere, Palais Augarten and in particular Schönbrunn were the main locations. From May 1919 up to 7,000 meals per day were prepared for the starving children of Vienna.

**Poaching and illegal tree-felling**
Because of the rupture in coal supplies and the general lack of fuel, the forests and hunting reserves belonging to the Court Exchequer in the environs of Vienna became popular locations for obtaining firewood. The trees in the Prater, Lainzer Tiergarten and the Lobau were regarded as ownerless goods after the end of the Monarchy. Poaching frequently accompanied the illegal felling of trees and collecting of firewood.

**8. Poverty and starvation**

**9. Journey into exile**

After Karl had signed a document renouncing all participation in the affairs of government at Schönbrunn Palace on 11 November 1918, he left Vienna together with his family. A convoy of seven automobiles set off, arriving at the imperial hunting lodge of Eckartsau during the night. The location of Eckartsau close to the Hungarian border had a certain strategic advantage: having initially only renounced participation in the affairs of government in the Austrian half of the Empire, Karl was still hoping to re-establish his rule in Hungary. Two days later, however, on 13 November, a Hungarian delegation arrived at Eckartsau and obtained Karl's signature on a document renouncing his participation in the affairs of government in the Hungarian half of the Empire. Karl refused to abdicate formally as king of Hungary, just as he had as emperor of Austria.
In January 1919 State Chancellor Renner appeared at Eckartsau in an attempt to persuade Karl to leave the country as soon as possible. However, Renner was not received by the ex-emperor, ‘for reasons of protocol’. At the end of February 1919 a British Army officer arrived at the snow-bound hunting lodge on the Marchfeld plain: Lieutenant-Colonel Edward Lisle Strutt had brought the Austrian ex-monarch an address of solidarity from the British king George V. When Switzerland declared itself willing to grant exile to Karl and his family, Strutt organized their departure. On 24 March, shortly before leaving Austria at the Austrian-Swiss border Karl declared both renunciations of power null and void in the so-called Feldkirch Manifesto, stating that he had been unlawfully deposed. From his Swiss exile in 1921 Karl launched two attempts to regain his throne in Hungary, both of which were unsuccessful. Following this, Karl and his family were banished to the Portuguese island of Madeira in the Atlantic, where he died on 1 April 1922 at the age of only thirty-five.

‘On 1 November 1918 His Imperial Majesty Archduke Max delivered His Majesty the Emperor’s command to pack up the private jewels of the Imperial House and to convey them abroad to safety without delay. Pursuant to this command, the Director of the Court Office and Head of Department Baron Weckbecker and the Treasurer, Court Councillor Ulreich, proceeded to the Treasury at three o’clock in the afternoon, packed up all the private and family jewels in two leather suitcases and delivered these locked – the two keys separately – at six o’clock in the evening to His Excellency Head of the Imperial Chamber Count Berchtold, who had by then likewise appeared. In one of the cases, partly packed in their own cases, partly wrapped in paper, were twenty items (together with their accessories), in the other case nineteen items ... His Excellency drove off from the Hofburg at six o’clock in the evening, [with] both cases in his automobile. All the other objects in the Treasury (insignia, jewels, etc.) remained untouched. Vienna, on 1 November 1918’

Report by Head of Chancery Wilhelm von Weckbecker dated 1 November 1918 from the classified files of the office of the Head of the Imperial Chamber on the removal of the private and family jewels.
The Austrian writer Stefan Zweig was a chance witness of the departure of Emperor Karl on 23 March 1919. Zweig was travelling by train from Switzerland to Vienna when the court train carrying the imperial couple was waiting to cross the border at Feldkirch. In his memoirs *The World of Yesterday* Zweig describes the moment when the deposed monarch went into exile:

‘To us, the word “Emperor” had been the quintessence of all power and riches, the symbol of an enduring Austria, and from childhood we learnt to speak it with veneration. And now here was the old man’s heir, the last Austrian Emperor, an exile leaving the country. The celebrated Habsburg dynasty that, century after century, had passed on the imperial orb and crown from hand to hand ended with this man. All of us here felt that we were witnessing a tragic moment in history. The police and soldiers seemed to be in some difficulty and looked away in embarrassment, unsure whether or not to give him the old salute of honour ... Finally the engine driver gave his signal. Everyone instinctively jumped, and the moment that would never return had come. The locomotive started with a laboured jolt, as if it too had to summon its strength, and slowly the train moved away.’

(Tr. Anthea Bell)
10. The crown jewels

On 30 October 1918 the provisional National Assembly had voted to constitute the founding of the new state of ‘German-Austria’. Consequently, on November 1, Emperor Karl I gave a verbal order for certain jewels to be removed from the Treasury and taken to Switzerland. The two individuals with responsibility for the Treasuries, Wilhelm von Weckbecker, administrative director of the imperial collections, and the treasurer Adolph Ulreich handed over to Oberstkämmerer Count Leopold Berchtold not only the private jewellery belonging to Zita, but also the Habsburg-Lorraine family jewels from Showcases XII and XIII in the Secular Treasury. That same night Count Berchtold took the jewels – partly in their cases and partly wrapped in paper – in two suitcases by train out of the country.

Listed in the documents are fourteen items of jewellery from the private property of Empress Zita, and thirty-nine objects belonging to the Habsburg-Lorraine House Treasure such as orders, crowns, pearls and diamonds. Among the latter group, also referred to as crown jewels, were the world-famous Florentine, a 133-carat diamond that had once belonged to Franz Stephan of Lorraine, and the celebrated emerald and ruby garnitures associated with Maria Theresa, Marie Antoinette and Empress Elisabeth.

The lawfulness of the jewels’ removal and the issue of their ownership – at least in the case of the crown jewels – were the subject of numerous reports and debates in the ensuing years. Republican argumentation was based on the wartime ban on taking jewels out of the country, the provisions of the Habsburg Act and the appropriation of the private assets of the Habsburgs legalized by the Saint-Germain peace treaty. The Republic abandoned its demand for the return of the jewels in 1921.

The issue of the crown jewels flared up once more in the 1960s during the ‘Habsburg Crisis’, when Karl’s son Otto was attempting to overcome the bar against him entering the country. The ‘affair’ of the crown jewels is still occasionally the subject of reports in various publications. There are several versions of the subsequent fate of the jewels, none confirmed to this day.

The original Showcase XIII has been recently identified among the holdings of the Hofmobiliendepot, as were the abandoned jewel cases in the Treasury, revealing for the first time the gaps left by the legendary dynastic treasure.
10.1 The assets of the former emperor in exile

The removal of the jewels from the Treasury was only one way in which Karl sought to secure parts of the family assets from the grasp of the Republic. Likewise on 1 November 1918 – the same day on which the jewels were removed – Karl gave orders for securities to the value of 28 million crowns from the Family Support Fund to be transferred to Switzerland.

There were also further transactions affecting the Family Support Fund: on 16 January 1919 Karl declared all claims for loans that had been made – by various members of the family, including Karl himself – from the capital of the Family Support Fund, amounting to a total of 10.3 million crowns, as terminated.

On 27 March 1919, after Karl had already left the country, further securities to the value of 1.3 million crowns together with just under 20,000 crowns in cash were transferred to Karl’s private assets from the Crown Fidei Commissum.

However, it should be pointed out that until the enactment of the Habsburg Law on 3 April 1919 these assets were still in the ownership and power of disposition of Karl as head of the dynasty.

It was not until the spring of 1919, when an Allied commission was due to assess the holdings of the Treasury so that they could function as security for the granting of assistance loans, that the administration of the Court Exchequer informed the State of the removal of the jewels on 29 April 1919. The Republic promptly demanded the restitution of the monies and jewels. That its chances of success were assessed as very low is shown by the fact that the claim was never pursued with any urgency. In March 1921 the Council of Ministers voted against pursuing the matter any further.

Nonetheless, the Republic had the private assets of the ex-emperor that still remained in Austria embargoed as a means of exerting pressure. This concerned the Villa Wartholz in Reichenau and Schloss Feistritz (which he owned jointly with Zita, however) together with securities and cash. In addition, art objects and items of furniture from Karl’s private estate that had not been handed over by this point, together with the so-called ‘incognito car’, an Austro-Daimler acquired by Karl in 1913, were also embargoed.

After the death of the former emperor the embargo on his private assets was lifted. In July 1922, 19.9 million crowns in the form of bonds and 16.8 million crowns in cash were paid out to Karl’s widow Zita for income that had accrued in the meantime.
11. The Habsburg Acts

12. The Treaty of Saint-Germain

13. The Republic takes possession – The Habsburg Acts

The term ‘Habsburg Act’ refers to the two Acts passed on 3 April and 30 October 1919 which laid down the legal basis for the banishment of and appropriation of the assets of the House of Habsburg-Lorraine.

The principal contents of the Habsburg Act of April 1919 were the revocation of the right to rule of the House of Habsburg-Lorraine, and the banishment of members of this House insofar as the latter did not expressly renounce their claims to rule.

In addition, the Acts also contained fundamental provisions relating to the future disposition of the ruling house's assets. In just a few sentences the Republic claimed ownership of the material inheritance of the Habsburg Monarchy, appropriating the assets of the Court Exchequer as well as the so-called tied assets of the former ruling family.

In the case of the Court Exchequer, this could not be regarded as expropriation in strictly legal terms, since up to this point in time these assets had also been state assets. It was only their intended allocation – namely, to the monarch – that now ceased to obtain.

The situation was more complicated in the case of the imperial collections and the assets of the various funds and fidei comissa – large holdings that rather like family trusts were owned by the family as a whole. For this kind of property the term ‘tied assets’ was established in the Habsburg Acts. Specifically excluded from this definition was the private property of individual members of the family. This remained untouched by the Habsburg Acts.

In October 1919 an amendment to the Habsburg Law was issued in reaction to the continued demands of the family for the return of the tied assets in order to define more precisely the proprietary rights of the Republic to concrete parts of these assets.

In 1920 the Habsburg Acts were elevated to constitutional status as Federal Constitutional Acts.
How the Habsburg Acts came into being

The Habsburg Acts are among the Republic’s revolutionary acts of foundation. They sent a clear signal, also to the wider world and particularly to the successor states, that the new Austria had emancipated itself from the old. After the elections in February 1919 the government was facing an increasingly revolutionary mood, fuelled by the establishment of council republics on the Soviet model in Bavaria and Hungary. In banishing the deposed emperor, the Social Democrat government wanted to stake out their position and prevent the protest movements from becoming radicalized.

The provisions dealing with the former ruling dynasty, which were far harsher than those imposed in Germany, were predicated on Karl’s refusal to abdicate. The ex-emperor was unwilling to see himself as a supernumerary actor on the historical stage, and rejected offers of compensation from the government. The government for its part was concerned about the ongoing threat to the Republic from the continued presence of the former emperor that they feared might trigger repeated movements to restore the monarchy. And in fact Karl was indeed hatching plans to regain the throne, as attested by his Feldkirch Manifesto: on 24 March, just before leaving Austria, he revoked the declaration he had signed agreeing to renounce all participation in the affairs of government, and protested officially against his deposition.

In accordance with the terms of the Habsburg Acts, the assets of the court and the ruling family that had been seized were to benefit disabled war veterans, war widows and orphans. The moral argumentation underpinning the earmarking of these assets for a worthy cause was intended to gain acceptance for the expropriation in conservative circles.

13.1 Eugen Beck-Mannagetta: the ‘liquidator’ of the Court Exchequer

It is thanks to Eugen Beck-Mannagetta that in the sensitive phase of transition immediately after 1918 the assets of the Court Exchequer were preserved largely undiminished for the young Republic.

Beck came from a family that had been active for generations in the higher echelons of the imperial bureaucracy. After receiving his doctorate in jurisprudence in 1884 he rose rapidly through the ranks of the civil service. Towards the end of the Monarchy he was head of department and under-secretary of state for finance, from which position he retired in March 1919.
However, as a retired civil servant he took on a new remit: on 17 March 1919 he was appointed Senior Administrator of the Court Exchequer by the German-Austrian government. His task was to ‘liquidate’ the Court Exchequer, that is to say, to wind up the administration of the court. In this new function he took over the duties and activities of the Staatsnotar (‘state notary’). Previously, in the first transitional phase, the latter had held as trustee the assets of the Court Exchequer of the fallen Habsburg Monarchy that had been taken over by the young Republic. Beck regarded his task as keeping the assets of the Court Exchequer undivided and intact for the (German) Austrian government for as long as possible, and to defend it against claims by the victorious powers and successor states. Not least, the holdings had to be protected against the desires of the public administration in the light of schemes for their use as collateral for loans, pledges for reparations, or even their sale, which were already at an advanced stage of planning.

Besides the institution of new sources of revenue, the long-term goal was the regulated handover of the assets of the Court Exchequer to the public administration and to the War Veterans and Dependants Fund, an organization that supported disabled ex-soldiers and fallen servicemen’s widows and orphans.

On 20 November 1921 Beck handed in the final report on the status of the liquidation process and resigned from his post. With this, the ‘court without an emperor’ had finally ceased to exist, three years after the fall of the Habsburg Monarchy.

13.2 The process of appropriation by the Republic

On the day the Republic was proclaimed, a legal regulation for the appropriation of the Crown Estates was announced in the Act of 12 November 1918 that set out the form of government of German-Austria. The eventual shape taken by this appropriation of the Court Exchequer and the tied assets of the former ruling dynasty was codified in the Habsburg Law of April 1919.

However, up to the signing of the Saint-Germain peace treaty, which determined the dissolution of the Habsburg Monarchy under international law, on September 1919, the Republic’s exclusive claim to these assets was not uncontested. The demands of the other successor states also had to be taken into consideration.
Thus, the paramount duty of the administration of the Court Exchequer was to preserve these assets in total until a solution was eventually arrived at.
Moreover, an organization as complex as the court administration could not simply be dissolved instantly. The palaces, gardens and collections had to continue to be cared for and maintained, tasks which required both staff and funds. The court administration thus initially remained under the supervision of the ‘Senior Administrator of the Court Exchequer in Liquidation’. The old bureaucratic machinery continued to operate under republican colours. It was not until the end of 1921 that the winding-up of the Court Exchequer was finally concluded.

13.3 The battles for a share of the imperial assets

Right from the beginning, despite its obligation to preserve the former imperial assets, the administration of the Court Exchequer was confronted with a plethora of claims from all sides. It was not only the offices of the German-Austrian government which took the view that the Court Exchequer was at their free disposal – the municipality of Vienna and the provinces as forerunners of federalization also demanded a share of the assets. However, the central Viennese authorities opposed the federalization of the Habsburg heritage on political grounds, fearing the arbitrary fragmentation of collections that had been assembled over centuries. The argument for returning of holdings on historical grounds could also have been used as a precedent for claims by the other successor states.

14. Plans to exploit former imperial property

The collapse of the economic area of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, the dissolution of the monetary union with the successor states and a rapidly expanding budget deficit in the national finances meant that the public revenue of the young Republic covered less than half of state outgoings in 1919/1920.
The situation was aggravated by the reparation payments set down in the treaty of Saint-Germain, and the fledgling state's liability for the sovereign debt of the Monarchy. The victorious powers secured the general right of lien on the entire state property of Austria.
In order to meet all these financial obligations it was proposed to make use of the holdings of art in the Republic's ownership, which had only just been significantly expanded by the appropriation of the imperial collections. The art treasures were inspected and valued by inter-allied commissions. However, no concrete sums had been specified in the peace treaty. Apart from this, the victorious powers quickly realized that in view of the catastrophic economic situation in Austria it was not advisable to insist on the demands in full and thus risk the collapse of the new state.

However, the young Republic itself saw in the holdings of the Court Exchequer and the former imperial collections valuable resources that could be exploited economically. It was proposed that these enormous tangible assets should be drawn on to provide collateral for food shipments and loans in order to combat the catastrophic supply situation. The partial sale of holdings in the collections – for example, the holdings of tapestries and the Albertina Collection – was also mooted.

Ultimately, plans for use as collateral or even sale were not realized in anything like the degree proposed, since they provoked numerous protests and harsh criticism both from specialists in the field and art-loving members of the public.

14.1 Making economies

After the cessation of state allowances in the form of the Civil List, the Court Exchequer needed to support itself. The court administration depended on its reserves, and was now suddenly forced to derive a profit from its revenues and to apply economic thinking to its operations. Salaries and pensions had to continue to be paid out to its employees, but the cash funds for these expenses had already run out by May 1919.

Generally speaking, the main problem was that the cost of the upkeep of the estates belonging to the Court Exchequer was higher than its revenues: palaces and gardens were regarded as 'eroding assets' and could only have been transformed into lucrative operations by means of large-scale capital investment, which was impossible in the face of the prevailing economic situation. New and profit-orientated forms of utilization also had to be found for the enormous holdings of the various administrative court divisions, including among others the stables and the fleet of imperial carriages,
the Court Table and Silver Room and the Court Furniture Depository. Confronted with the hopeless financial situation of the Court Exchequer, in April 1919 the Republic finally agreed to take on the deficits of the court’s particularly cost-intensive cultural institutions such as the Burgtheater and the Opera as well as the former court museums. Their continued operation was considered essential for the identity of the young Republic as a cultural nation.

14.2 Selling off court property

Despite efforts to broadly preserve the assets of the Court Exchequer, particularly cost-intensive or unproductive branches of the court administration had to be sold off. The stocks of the court wine cellars were regarded as lucrative options for sale. While some of the holdings were sold by public auction, wines, spirits and cellar equipment were also sold to commercial companies. The high running costs of the court stables and the continuing lack of fodder meant that the stock of horses had to be reduced. As early as December 1918 auctions were held to sell off horses, carriages and harness. However, there was never any question of the court stables being completely disbanded, as the carting operation – needed for example for transporting sets for the state theatres – had to be kept going. For this reason the holdings of imperial carriages were divided into utility vehicles and carriages worthy of being preserved for historical reasons. The latter were incorporated into the collections of the Kunsthistorisches Museum and from 1922 put on display to the public as the ‘Wagenburg’ (‘carriage palace’) in the former riding school at Schönbrunn.

The fate of the Lipizzaners had to be addressed separately. Part of the stocks of horses was on Austrian soil due to evacuations that had taken place during the war, while the studs at Lipizza and Kladrub now lay outside Austria’s territorial borders. There followed long-drawn-out negotiations on the allocation of the breeding animals in order to ensure the continued existence of the breed. The potential of the Spanish Riding School to attract tourists had already been recognized, and its public performances became a reliable source of income for the state.
14.3 Furniture for food – the planned countertrade with Czechoslovakia

In March 1919 the diplomatic mission of the Republic of Czechoslovakia in Vienna presented an extensive list of items of state furniture, furnishings from offices and tableware from the holdings of the Court Exchequer. These were being claimed as the share of the Court Exchequer holdings by Czechoslovakia as a successor state of the Habsburg Monarchy, and were intended to serve as furnishings for reception rooms and offices in the ministries and embassies of the newly founded state of the Czech and Slovak peoples. Some of the former imperial furniture was to be used in the official residence of President Masaryk in Prague.

Previously the administration of the Court Exchequer had always been hostile to such requests for objects from its holdings by individual successor states, since protests from other nation states likewise demanding their share could be expected. However, the government of German-Austria urged the Court Exchequer to comply with the request, since it was important to preserve the good will of Czechoslovakia in far more important questions, such as cession of territory and relief supplies. However, the administration of the Court Exchequer fell back on tried and tested delaying tactics.

Once the question of ownership of the holdings of the Court Exchequer had been clarified in the peace agreement of Saint-Germain, Czechoslovakia resubmitted its request, but in the form of a countertrade: in return for the furnishings claimed, they offered coal, foodstuffs and industrial goods, all of which were urgently needed in Austria.

In the autumn of 1919 a lengthy series of negotiations commenced. Proposals were followed by counter-proposals. The problem was the continually changing price level: inflation meant that once determined, the value of the objects was overtaken more or less immediately.

In the spring of 1921 the negotiations were finally broken off without any results, and the furniture remained in the ownership of the Hofmobiliendepot. A small number of items from these claimed holdings are on display in the present exhibition.
Providing support for disabled war veterans presented a huge challenge and in the public view was an obligation on the part of the state. Even before November 1918 buildings belonging to the Court Exchequer such as the Hermes Villa had been converted into convalescence homes. Nonetheless, the prevailing radical social-revolutionary mood manifested itself after the end of the war in spontaneous occupations of parts of Schönbrunn by disabled war veterans. In reaction to pressure from the war veterans’ organizations parts of the former imperial palaces at Laxenburg and Hetzendorf were subsequently also adapted as invalid homes.

The young Republic regarded it as a special responsibility to provide support for disabled veterans as well as the widows and orphans of soldiers who had fallen in the war. Eventually, on 18 December 1919, the War Veterans and Dependants Fund was established as an independent endowment fund. The financial means for it were drawn from the tied Habsburg assets that had been appropriated by the Republic. This had already been stipulated in the Habsburg Acts on the grounds that as the former ruling dynasty bore the moral responsibility for the misery caused by the war, proportionate reparation might be claimed. The assets of the foundation were supplemented by the properties owned by the Court Exchequer.

Nonetheless, the government was entitled to exclude from the endowment fund parts of the assets it had taken over from the imperial dynasty and the court as national cultural assets on the grounds of their cultural and historical value, and to transfer these to public administration. This mainly concerned the large residences such as the Hofburg or Schönbrunn, and the art collections. The public administration was also permitted to claim properties and furnishings for its own requirements as needed.

In 1921 following protracted negotiations the War Veterans and Dependants Fund was finally assigned the properties and assets which had the potential to yield a profit in order to fulfil the purpose of the foundation, namely to make relief payments to war veterans and servicemen’s widows and orphans. These were mainly the estates belonging to the former Habsburg Family Support Fund but also included a number of palaces and forestry estates owned by the Court Exchequer such as the Lainzer Tiergarten, a former hunting reserve on the south-west outskirts of Vienna.

The relationship between the federal government and the Fund became increasingly beset by tensions. In the late 1920s the Christian Social Party
started to align itself with the position of the Habsburg-Lorraine family, leading in 1935 to partial restitution and the abolition of the War Veterans and Dependants Fund. After the latter organization had been disbanded in 1937, responsibility for welfare payments to disabled war veterans and fallen servicemen’s dependants was assumed by the federal government.

15.1 Gustav Harpner: attorney to the Republic and president of the War Veterans and Dependants Fund

Gustav Harpner was one of the most outstanding lawyers in Vienna, numbering prominent people such as Viktor Adler, Karl Kraus, Arthur Schnitzler and Kolo Moser among his clients. He is thought to be the most likely author of the Habsburg Act of April 1919, and it is known for certain that he drafted the amendment to the act of 30 October 1919.

Harpner’s qualities as a lawyer and his close relations with the Social Democrat Party led to his being appointed in April 1919 as the ‘representative and administrator’ of the tied assets of the imperial family (collections and the various fidei commissa) that had been appropriated by the Republic on the basis of the Habsburg Acts. Harpner’s outstanding legal expertise was needed since the legal situation pertaining to this issue was far more complicated than in the case of the Court Exchequer. The attempts by lawyers engaged by the Habsburg-Lorraine family to exploit to their clients’ advantage the grey areas in the separation between private property and tied assets were foiled by Harpner’s superior argumentation.

After the establishment of the War Veterans and Dependants Fund in December 1919, Gustav Harpner was appointed its president and represented the Fund in the allocation between the Republic and the War Veterans and Dependants Fund of the assets and properties from the holdings of the Court Exchequer and from the tied Habsburg assets.

During this protracted process Harpner endeavoured to build up the assets of the foundation in order to create a financially viable basis so that distributions from the Fund to its beneficiaries would be guaranteed in the long term.

After the Social Democrats had gone into opposition following losses in the parliamentary elections of 1920 and a government was formed by the conservative Christian Social Party under the leadership of Ignaz Seipel, Harpner lost his political backing. In April 1923 his role as president of the War Veterans and Dependants Fund came to an end.
16. Upheaval as opportunity – reforming the museums

From the perspective of those responsible for the museums, the collapse of the Monarchy also presented an opportunity, since for the first time all the significant holdings of art were in one hand, united in state ownership. Moreover, these holdings had been expanded by numerous objects and properties used in the context of imperial decorum which in the Republic had attained the status of museum pieces: throne ensembles and entire palatial complexes together with their furnishings were now placed in or turned into museums.

Initially the focus was on the material safeguarding and communization of the holdings of art. Austria’s claims in this regard had to be asserted against the claims by the other successor states as well as those of the victorious powers. Demands for restitution made by the former ruling dynasty also had to be warded off.

The securing of former imperial holdings of art for the Republic was paralleled by plans for sweeping structural reform of the Austrian museum scene, that is to say, the transformation of the Habsburg collections, formerly a manifestation of the dynasty’s courtly decorum, into Republican institutions serving the aim of public education. The state collections were united with those administered by the Court Exchequer and the private Habsburg collections, forming the basis of today’s federal museums.

One of the greatest successes of the reform was the conversion of the two Belvedere palaces into galleries. In 1923 the Baroque Museum was opened in the Lower Belvedere, followed by the gallery of nineteenth-century art in the Upper Belvedere in 1924 and the gallery of modern art in the Orangery in 1929. The fusion of the Albertina Collection with the collection of engravings held in the Court Library created in the New Albertina the world’s largest collection of graphic art. The same notion, that is, consolidating related genres of objects, also led to the integration of the Fidei Commissum Library into the Court Library, now called the National Library. In the sphere of the art collections, it led to the incorporation of the Secular Treasury (1920), the Ecclesiastical Treasury (1921) and other court museum holdings (the Tapestry Collection, the Court Armoury, the ‘Rich Saddle Chamber’, Court Carriage Fleet and Depot of Uniforms and Liveries) in the Kunsthistorisches Museum.

However, the initial aim of carrying out a reform of the museums and their mission to educate the general public in parallel to the restructuring of the
collections was swiftly pushed aside. Rivalries and opposing ideological positions came to the fore. The brave new visionary aims rapidly petered out in purely administrative reform, and any reframing of the museums' remit or steps towards democratization ultimately failed to materialize.

16.1 Hans Tietze and the failed reform of the museums

Hans Tietze was an art historian who studied under the influential Viennese theorists of art history Alois Riegl and Franz Wickhoff. An associate professor at the University of Vienna, he worked in the predecessor institution of the present-day Federal Monument Protection Office. He was the editor of the Österreichische *Kunsttopographie*, a scholarly inventory of monuments of art in Austria.

During the First World War he was deployed in Italy as an officer with responsibility for protecting works of art. After the collapse of the Habsburg Monarchy he was appointed coordinator of museums in the Department of Education at the beginning of 1919. Tietze was appointed on the basis of the extensive and revolutionary programme he had devised to secure, reorganize and expand the Viennese museums.

The most urgent task was the legal appropriation of the imperial collections and the securing of the Habsburg heritage in Austria against seizure by the victorious powers and successor states, but also against the plans to sell it by the German-Austrian government in order to obtain funds to alleviate widespread starvation during the first post-war winter. Tietze's great merit lay in his success in securing – almost undiminished – the former imperial holdings of art in Austria for the Republic.

Combative by nature, Hans Tietze was also the most important proponent of a visionary and lasting programme of reorganization which had the aim of expanding and opening up the Viennese art museums and making them into democratic institutions of public education. As a founder member of the state museum commission, he was one of the key players in the reform of Austrian museums.

After an initial period of achievement (the founding of the New Albertina, the Museum of Baroque Art, the Österreichische Galerie among other institutions), however, the reforms ground to a halt. The reasons for this lay in the divergent self-interests of and opposition from individual curators and museum directors together with the increasingly conservative bias of official cultural policy.
By the end of December 1925 the reforms had finally failed, and Hans Tietze resigned from his post. In an article published in the Social Democrat daily *Arbeiter-Zeitung* entitled ‘Die Gefährdung der Wiener Museen’ (‘The threat to the Viennese Museums’) he justified this step as follows: ‘It is public life that suffers; the door to the museum that opened to the people is slammed shut again, the blinds drawn down at the windows. Buried in this musty atmosphere is what should have become the pride and self-confidence of the people as a whole. I will have nothing to do with this destruction of the nation’s intellectual property.’

He continued to work at the University of Vienna, and was an active patron of contemporary art. Together with his wife Erica Tietze-Conrat he undertook fundamental work in the field of art history, establishing important methodological practices. In 1938 the couple were forced to flee from the National Socialists, emigrating via Italy to the United States.

16.2. The tapestry exhibitions in the Upper Belvedere

The 1920 exhibition of tapestries in the Upper Belvedere, the former residence of the heir presumptive Archduke Franz Ferdinand, was the first temporary exhibition to be mounted by the Kunsthistorisches Museum. Showpieces from the imperial collection of tapestries, which comprised around 900 items and had been hitherto largely unknown, were put on public display for the very first time.

The exhibition not only demonstrated the ambitions of a democratic cultural policy for public education but by presenting former imperial holdings of art was pursuing the aim of protecting these treasures as far as possible from being forcibly surrendered in lieu of reparation payments, or even sold. By their very nature, the imperial collections constituted huge assets that were intended to be used as collateral for loans and pledges. To this end a committee of experts was set up in late 1919 to assess the holdings of art in respect of their potential for sale. It was the collection of tapestries that formed the focus of these plans, Finance Secretary Joseph Schumpeter seeing in the sale of these holdings the only way to obtain foreign currency to organize a supply of foodstuffs worth 10 million Dutch guilders. Although plans to sell these assets were already well advanced, ultimately they came to nothing owing to the unfavourable state of the market – the fine art market had been flooded by forced sales from other aristocratic collections.
Having proved a huge success with the public, further tapestries were shown from the extensive holdings in subsequent exhibitions held in 1921 and 1922. These shows helped to establish the Belvedere as a museum and to secure it as the permanent premises of the Österreichische Galerie.

17. Serving emperor and Republic – the staff of the Court Exchequer

The end of the Monarchy hit the court officials and retainers particularly hard, for serving the emperor had been associated with great prestige and a secure living.

After the Republic was unable to continue to employ all the staff who had worked at the court, a wave of dismissals took place. Immediately after the end of the Monarchy the aristocratic court dignitaries of the senior court offices and services were relieved of their duties. Together with the disbanding of the personal guards, offices with what had now become obsolete duties were abolished, such as the Oberstmarschallamt (marshal’s office), the Ordenskanzlei (office in charge of imperial orders) and the Department of Ceremony. With the dissolution of the imperial household, employees who had been in the personal service of the ruling family, such as ladies-in-waiting and servants of the chamber, were also dismissed.

The remaining officials in the Court Exchequer, who were charged with the administration and upkeep of the palaces and gardens as well as the collections and holdings of furnishings, or worked in establishments such as the court theatres, the court stables or the forestry administration, demanded permanent positions in the civil service of the Republic.

From their point of view, the Republic, having assumed ownership of the assets of the Court Exchequer, had also assumed the obligation to afford them an adequate living, since they were now engaged in administering state assets. Moreover, they had already served the new Republic loyally during the difficult time of transition. The Senior Administrator of the Court Exchequer, Eugen Beck-Mannagetta, shared this conviction, writing that ‘the State owed a great debt of gratitude to the former staff of the Court Exchequer, since in no other state in these times of upheaval were objects of value preserved in such good condition as in Austria.’

However, the catastrophic state of the national finances made further reductions in staff necessary. Savings were made through early retirements.
and the dismissal of all hired staff who were not permanently employed as well as employees of non-Austrian nationality. By 1920, the just under 2,500 individuals who were in service on the reference date of 31 October 1918 had been reduced by a third (830). For many employees this meant a life devoid of material security, and for a few even a threat to their very existence. The staff of the Court Exchequer complained about the long period of uncertainty they had had to endure as employees of an organization that was being wound up. Not until July 1921 was the legal basis created for transferring the remaining employees of the court to the service of the state or the War Veterans and Dependents Fund. After examining each individual case in the light of staffing needs, however, only 1,089 employees received the assurance they had been hoping for.

18. The issue of the art holdings

The imperial collections constituted significant elements of the Habsburg patrimony. A large part of the holdings of art had been made subject to fidei commissa during the time of the dynasty. After the end of the monarchy these were appropriated as tied assets by the Republic. While it was necessary to secure these enormous assets for the fledgling state, the growing sense of Austria’s identity as a cultural nation also played an important role.

This appropriation without compensation, which was carried out with extreme haste, was a particularly radical step. Karl’s refusal to abdicate was given as the reason: if he had behaved as cooperatively as the Hohenzollerns or Wittelsbachs in Germany, for example, who had put aside their claims to the throne with little resistance, the Republic would have accepted a solution similar to that arrived at in Germany. There the former ruling families had been allowed to retain a significant part of their art collections.

However, the Habsburg-Lorraine family clung to their conviction that all the holdings of art should be regarded as private property – whether they belonged to the dynastic holdings or were the property of individual members of the family – and commissioned legal opinions to claim what they regarded as their rights.

This set the stage for a long-drawn-out series of court cases that was additionally aggravated by the enormous mass of objects involved. The gradual handing over by the commission of art objects that were formally recog-
nized as private property was regularly accompanied by polemical articles in the press. Public attention was aroused particularly by the case of the Marie Antoinette tapestry that was handed over to the Habsburg-Lorraine family in 1920. During the course of the 1920s, despite the legal validity of the expropriation of the tied assets, the Christian Social governments conceded the moral questionableness of the procedure, stating that the Habsburg Act was an ‘exceptive law against a single family, as it were a congenital defect of the Republic.’ Eventually, in 1935, during the Austrofascist period, the Habsburg Acts were rescinded and part of the holdings restored to the family. However, when the National Socialists seized power this decision was revoked. In December 1945 the constitution of 1920 – and thus including the Habsburg Acts – was re-enacted. With the signing of the Austrian Independence Treaty in 1955, the Republic undertook to uphold the Habsburg Acts according to international law.

18.1 Wilhelm von Weckbecker: court official and cultural policy maker

Wilhelm von Weckbecker was a leading civil servant in the sphere of the arts during the transitional phase between the Monarchy and the Republic. Deeply interested in music and literature, Weckbecker left behind a wealth of pioneering reflections on the importance of the museums and how they should be designed and arranged. Wilhelm Freiherr von Weckbecker was born in Vienna in 1859 into a family of senior civil servants and began his career in the Ministry of Education in 1885. In 1898 he entered court service, and as head of the office of the Oberstkämmereramt was involved in the organisation and administration of the imperial holdings of art. As the senior official he was also implicated in the affair surrounding Showcase XIII in the Treasury. On 1 November 1918, on the emperor’s orders, Weckbecker handed over the crown jewels to Oberstkämmerer Count Leopold Berchtold, who took them to Switzerland. After the end of the Monarchy, as head of Section II of the Administration of the Court Exchequer, as the former Oberstkämmereramt was now called, he was responsible for overseeing the transfer of the former imperial holdings of art to the ownership of the Republic. Even after retiring in 1920, Weckbecker continued to devote himself to literature, music and art.
Conscious of the changed political circumstances and ownership of the imperial collections, he wrote at length about the current situation in several publications. These are among the most important sources for the new challenges that had arisen in relation to the handling of the imperial art holdings after the end of the war. He published a number of commentaries on the subjects of contemporary cultural policy, monument protection and the former imperial collections.

18.2 The case of the Albertina

Located on Vienna's Augustinerbastei, the collection and palace of the same name go back to Archduchess Marie Christine and her husband Duke Albert of Saxe-Teschen. The palace and the holdings were extended significantly by Archduke Carl, victor against Napoleon at the battle of Aspern. The Albertine Line was one of the wealthiest branches of the Habsburg dynasty. To ensure the continued existence of the collection a fidei commissum (comparable to a modern-day trust) was set up in which the palace and the core holdings of this huge estate were amalgamated with the collection of art.

On the basis of the Habsburg Acts of 1919 all the fidei commissa in the ownership of the imperial dynasty or ‘branches thereof’ were expropriated. The formulation was significant in this case, as the Albertina fidei commissum was the only one in the ownership of a collateral line. The special status of the collection – it being neither part of the Crown Estates nor an asset owned by the ruling line of the dynasty and thus excepted from the embargo on the sale of the former imperial collections stipulated in the Saint-Germain peace treaty – made the Albertina collections a potential object for sales in order to secure urgently needed funds for the heavily indebted fledgling Republic. However, this plan was ultimately not put into action.

Despite these difficult circumstances, in September 1919 Josef Meder, the director of the collection, which was now in the ownership of the state, succeeded in organizing an initial exhibition of selected holdings from the Albertina Collection in order to engender public awareness of the value of the art treasures preserved at the palace. The exhibition was mounted in the rooms of the palace, which had been initially earmarked for commercial use after it had been vacated by its Habsburg occupants. This circumstance, together with a decision made
in December 1920 to amalgamate the engravings held in the former Court Library with the Albertina Collection, led to the palace being preserved for cultural use.

**19. Claims by successor states and victorious powers**

Directly after the collapse of Austria-Hungary in November 1918 the new nation states that had emerged on the territory of the former Habsburg Empire attempted to claim the assets of the Monarchy for themselves. The individual successor states appropriated the immovable property of the Court Exchequer and the various Habsburg Funds situated on their respective territories. A special situation arose in the case of the art collections: it became apparent that the majority of the art treasures were located in the Republic of Austria, chiefly in Vienna as the former imperial capital and residence. The other successor states as well as the victorious powers thereupon promptly launched their own claims on these collections. In their eyes, the material inheritance of the Monarchy constituted a liquidation trust, which was merely under the administration of German-Austria as the communal property of all successor states but was not the property of the Republic itself. Initially there was a proposal that all assets should be divided equally among the successor states. Italy as one of the victorious powers took a far more radical course of action: a particularly spectacular case was the confiscation of objects from the Kunsthistorisches Museum that in Italy's eyes had been unlawfully transferred to Vienna during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries when large parts of northern Italy had come under Habsburg rule. Eventually the peace treaty of Saint-Germain imposed the territorial principle: the assets were assigned to the state on whose territory they were located. For Austria, this meant that the Republic was now confirmed unequivocally as the owner of the imperial collections. Nonetheless, the Republic was obliged to hand over objects that belonged to the cultural heritage of a successor state. Mainly involving archival materials and holdings of books, this resulted in protracted negotiations that partly dragged on into the 1930s.
19.1 The dispute over the contents of Miramare Castle

According to the terms of the Saint-Germain peace treaty Austria was obliged to enter into negotiations with the successor states concerning the reciprocal transfer of objects belonging to the cultural property of a particular state. This concerned above all objects that had been removed after the outbreak of war in 1914 from territory that had in the meantime become Italian, with the aim of ‘making reparations for objects that have been unlawfully carried off’.

In 1920 conflict with Italy arose over the inventory of Miramare Castle near Trieste, which consisted not just of furniture but also the library and art collection of Maximilian of Mexico. After Maximilian's death in 1867 Miramare became the property of the Court Exchequer. In 1894 the most valuable of the objects had been taken to Vienna. In summer 1914, well before the Italian declaration of war against Austria on 24 May 1915, the remaining furniture was removed from Miramare. The administration of the Court Exchequer as the owner of these assets regarded this as entirely legitimate, arguing that changes of location or admissions to storage were frequent occurrences, and that the place where an object was kept was not of decisive importance.

When the Saint-Germain treaty was concluded in September 1919 the inventory of Miramare was no longer on territory assigned to Italy. Neither was it explicitly mentioned in the peace treaty. As a consequence a protracted discussion ensued as to which inventories from which time were to now be taken into consideration. The compensation negotiations of 1924 finally brought clarity in the matter: while everything that had been removed to Austria before 1914 was to remain in Austrian ownership, items evacuated during the war had to be returned.

20. The ‘republicanized’ Hofburg

The Vienna Hofburg had a special position in the structure of the city: having grown over a period of more than six hundred years, the complex of buildings was not only the main residence of the emperor but also the seat of a whole range of offices belonging to the court administration. The Hofburg also housed parts of the imperial collections such as the Treasury, and cultural institutions like the Court Library.
The Hofburg retained its multifunctional character even after the fall of the Habsburg Monarchy. Having contained the offices of the court administration before 1918, after the war the palace housed international commissions and observers from the successor states and victorious powers who were overseeing the dissolution of the Habsburg inheritance. The cessation of its function as an imperial residence constituted a clear break with the past. Initially, however, the Republic shied away from giving this symbol of Habsburg rule – so recently overcome – a new function on a political level by quartering the highest authorities in the palace. In contrast to Prague, where the former royal palace was reinterpreted by skilfully effected architectural alterations as the centre of the newly established Republic, in Austria it was to take until after 1945 before the Hofburg was reactivated as the official seat of the head of state. Immediately after 1918 the path taken in respect of the Hofburg was one of museification and commercialization. The reasons for this striking lack of a use for the 'republicanized' Hofburg were only partly to be found in the financial crisis of the times. A certain role was perhaps played by the young Republic being loath to be identified with the centre of monarchical power.

20.1 Opening the showrooms – the museification of the Imperial Apartments

In October 1919 the former imperial apartments in the Hofburg were opened to the general public. There was already a precedent for this. The Ceremonial Apartment in the Leopoldine Wing had been accessible for the public with certain restrictions even before 1918. This suite of rooms was not used for residential purposes but as a ceremonial space for the emperor in his function as head of state. They could be viewed as long as the court did not need them for its own purposes. Now the hitherto inaccessible private apartments of Emperor Franz Joseph and Empress Elisabeth were also to be opened to the public. There was great general interest in these: since the reign of the last imperial couple Karl and Zita, which had lasted from 1916 to 1918, was too short to have left any lasting traces, Emperor Franz Joseph and his wife Elisabeth were the last imperial occupants of the palace that were anchored in the public mind.
20.2 The Neue Burg – a building site with history

When the Republic took over the Neue Burg from the Monarchy in 1918, they took on not only a building site but also the unsolved question of how this monumental edifice was to be used. The Neue Burg as the central element in the ‘imperial forum’ was conceived on a far larger scale than the old Hofburg. However, after several changes of architect, alterations to the plans and not least the diminishing interest of the imperial family, the project – even though its dimensions had been considerably reduced – was still uncompleted by the outbreak of the First World War.

The architect Ludwig Baumann, who had been appointed head of construction works in 1906, was commissioned by the Republic in 1919 to draw up a completely revised plan: the huge building was no longer to be an imperial residence but completed as a ‘People’s Palace’. Based on the concept of combined use, his design provided for public education institutions, catering facilities and official reception rooms for the Republic. In 1921 the plans for commercial use were expanded when Baumann drew up plans for a palatial hotel in the Neue Burg. However, lack of money meant that none of these projects was ever carried out.

In the end it was decided to use the space for museums. However, this was carried out in a piecemeal fashion, since the funds for a large, inclusive project were lacking. The use of the Neue Burg was a question that occupied the museum scene in Austria for most of the twentieth century, and one that is still capable of provoking debate, as shown by the history of the Haus der Geschichte Österreich (Austrian History Museum), which opened in November 2018.

20.3 The Hofburg as an events centre

At first only a provisional arrangement, the idea of using the ceremonial halls of the Hofburg for events proved to be a lucrative gap in the market. Once the scene of imperial magnificence, these historic rooms became an attractive venue for organisers seeking a touch of imperial flair for their events.

Despite the concerns voiced by monument conservators, the administration of the Court Exchequer began leasing the rooms for large-scale events, since high rental income could be generated with comparatively little outlay.
To start with, only the outer areas of the ceremonial apartments in the Swiss Wing of the old palace were available for hire, since the suite of ceremonial rooms in the Neue Burg had remained uncompleted. The commercial success of the leasing operation eventually provided the necessary impetus to complete these extensive rooms, which today are still in use as a conference centre.

21. From Imperial-Royal Court Depository of Moveables and Materials to the ‘Federal Collection of Antique Period Furniture’

Founded in 1747 by Maria Theresa as the Hofmobilien-Inspektorat (Inspectorate of Court Moveables), the task of the Hofmobiliendepot until the end of the Monarchy was the acquisition, inventorying, upkeep and distribution of the furnishings of the imperial palaces and court offices. Like the other assets of the Court Exchequer, the Hofmobiliendepot was supposed to be assigned to the War Veterans and Dependants Fund after 1918. However, the public administration, which in accordance with the Habsburg Acts had been granted the right to claim parts of the former imperial assets for the purposes of cultural protection or for its own requirements, showed a keen interest in taking over the Hofmobiliendepot. This eventually led to the holdings being put under the control of the Ministry of Trade and Transport as the ‘Bundesmobiliendepot’ (Federal Furniture Depository) in April 1923.

Nonetheless, the continued existence of the Bundesmobiliendepot was repeatedly discussed. In the face of the precarious post-war situation, the federal government commissar in charge of making savings in public expenditure proposed disbanding the Mobiliendepot as an institution. There were also regular offers from private entrepreneurs to buy or lease the former Hofmobiliendepot and its holdings. For example, in 1923 the architects Josef Frank, Oskar Strnad and Oskar Wlach, later to found the Haus und Garten furnishings company, submitted an application to the Ministry of Trade to take over the Hofmobiliendepot. On the model of similar initiatives in Paris, London and Berlin, they proposed to transform the Depository into a ‘workshop for furnishings based on modern artistic perspectives’, where the holdings would serve as a source of inspiration for ‘the further development of modern decorative arts’.
However, the repeated plans for disbandment met with resistance from the Trade Ministry. The arguments for securing the valuable items of furniture for official use are reflected in the division of the holdings into four groups that was made in March 1924:

1) Especially valuable museum-grade objects are to be assigned to the Austrian Museum for Art and Industry.

2) The remaining items that are of art-historical or cultural significance will be assembled to form a publicly accessible collection in the Mobiliendepot.

3) Furthermore, the holdings will be used to furnish the former imperial residences or to supplement existing furnishings so that the state rooms may be opened to public view.

4) The great remainder of furniture and other items of furnishing formerly belonging to the Court Exchequer will be earmarked for the furnishing in appropriately formal style of the newly created federal offices and embassies. Objects that appear unsuited for this purpose should be turned to account by being leased for a fee.

21.1 The Court Silver and Table Room

The former Court Silver and Table Room, which had been taken over by the Republic as part of the assets held by the Court Exchequer, was expanded in 1923 with the extensive holdings of the former imperial household, which included the Porcelain, Silver and Bronze Storeroom, the Glass Storeroom of the Court Wine Cellars, the Court Confectionery Kitchen, the Court Light Room, the Court Kitchens and the Court Linen Room.

When the assets of the Court Exchequer were divided up between the Republic and the War Veterans and Dependants Fund, the initial aim was solely to preserve a small number of artistically and historically valuable items from the Court Silver and Table Room in order to secure culturally significant property for the nation and to furnish the household of the federal president. However, in the face of the countless requests for tableware – from ministries to the canteens of various federal teaching institutions and convalescent homes – it was decided in July 1922 to hand over the entire holdings to the state.

After the holdings had been inspected and their value assessed, a permanent exhibition with museum-grade objects was set up in the historical storerooms of the Hofburg which opened in May 1923. In addition, several gala banquet
exhibitions were mounted at which elaborately decked tables were displayed in the Great Gallery of Schönbrunn Palace and in the Hall of Ceremonies at the Hofburg.

The dining services used on official state occasions by all the federal ministries formed a discrete group that remained in the care of the Silver Room: 26,416 items from services together with kitchen utensils were subsequently assigned permanently to government agencies.

The Court Linen Room, part of the holdings belonging to the Court Exchequer, continued to operate together with the Court Washhouse until the middle of 1923, when they were disbanded to make savings. Part of the linen was transferred to the ministries, and part was sold publicly, bringing in revenue of 1.9 million crowns. Two thirds of the linen, in particular the large tablecloths and napkins, were handed over to the Silver Room so that they could be used together with the tableware for official receptions.

21.2 From depot to museum

The fact that the holdings were now displayed as museum objects and served to promote Austrian craftsmanship was an important argument for the continued existence of the Mobiliendepot. Even as far back as 1903 museum-type objects and valuable items of furniture had been assembled in small-scale settings which were extended in 1920 and were initially open only to craftsmen and designers. In 1924 the arrangements of furniture were redesigned and expanded to form a public collection based on didactic principles intended to educate and inform the tastes of craftsmen and their clients. Spread over two floors, these displays were now open to the general public.

22. The Red Archduchess – A Habsburg bequest to the Republic

Born on 2 September 1883, Archduchess Elisabeth Marie was the only child of Crown Prince Rudolf and Princess Stéphanie of Belgium. Father and daughter were very close – Rudolf saw in her ‘the only thing that will remain of me’. At the time of his death, Elisabeth, who was known as ‘Erzsi’ in the family, was just five years old.
As her guardian, Emperor Franz Joseph paid especial attention to his grand-daughter and made sure that she received an upbringing appropriate to her station. Having developed into a strong-willed young woman, in 1902 at the age of sixteen she persuaded her grandfather to allow her to marry Otto von Windisch-Graetz, who was below her in rank, thus obliging her to renounce her rights to the succession. The marriage was not happy; however, a separation was impossible during her grandfather’s lifetime. It was not until 1924, after a lengthy and sensational fight for custody of the couple’s four children, that she managed to achieve a legal separation, at that time the only form of civil divorce.

Around this time she met and fell in love with Leopold Petznek (1881–1956), a Social Democrat representative in the Lower Austrian state diet and president of the Court of Auditors. The archduchess had been a member of the Socialist Party since 1923, which she supported financially and in practical terms. She participated actively in the Socialist Party children’s organization and in the women’s movement. In 1948, once it was allowed by law, she divorced Otto Windisch-Graetz, and she and Leopold Petznek legalized their union.

When she drew up her will in 1956, her republican sympathies led her to make a generous bequest to the Republic of Austria of five hundred objects that she had inherited from her grandparents Elisabeth and Franz Joseph, and from her father: ‘I have given instructions for all the art objects and books which used to be in imperial ownership, against the will of my husband, who wished them to be preserved for my children, to be put back into museums or restored to their former places, since I am of the view that imperial property should not end up in the hands of foreigners and must not be sold at auction.’

Following her death in 1963 the objects she had specified – furniture, pictures, sculptures and family mementos – were divided up between the Albertina, the Kunsthistorisches Museum, the MAK (Austrian Museum of Applied Arts), the National Library and the Bundesmobilienverwaltungen. In accordance with Elisabeth Petznek’s wishes, a large part is displayed at the Hofmobiliendepot and in the Imperial Apartments in the Vienna Hofburg.

22.1 Polyhymnia – a sculpture with history

One of the most important works of art in the present-day Imperial Apartments of the Hofburg is the Polyhymnia, a figure by Antonio Canova (1757–1822), the foremost sculptor of the neoclassical period.
In 1809 Canova was commissioned to make a full-length portrait sculpture of Princess Élisa Bonaparte, a sister of Napoleon. After the Congress of Vienna the sculpture (together with the marble vases on display here) arrived in the imperial capital in 1816 as a gift from the City of Venice to mark the marriage of Empress Carolina Auguste and Emperor Franz II (I). However, the figure's features had previously been altered to represent Polyhymnia, the muse of sacred poetry.
The statue and the vases were passed by way of inheritance from Empress Elisabeth to her granddaughter Elisabeth, the daughter of Crown Prince Rudolf. Empress Elisabeth's estate was not distributed among her heirs until after the death of Franz Joseph, however, probably because he wished to leave Elisabeth's rooms untouched.
The sculpture remained where it had been set up in the Large Salon, even after the end of the Monarchy, when the empress's private apartments were opened to the public.
In March 1925 the Federal Ministry of Trade and Transport informed the Burghauptmannschaft (the body responsible for administering the palace) that the statue of Polyhymnia was the property of Elisabeth Windisch-Graetz, who was proposing to sell the sculpture. As a result, the Federal Monuments Office placed a preservation order on it, prohibiting it from being sold abroad. However, negotiations with the Österreichische Galerie failed when neither party could agree on a price. In 1929 the Bundesmobilienverwaltung eventually handed Polyhymnia over to her owner, who installed the statue in her recently purchased villa in Hüttdorf on the outskirts of Vienna.
In 1941 Elisabeth Windisch-Graetz started sales conversations via her lawyer with Hans Posse, commissioner of the Linz Special Commission charged with establishing Hitler's 'Führermuseum'. The negotiations ran on until March 1943, when the erstwhile archduchess succeeded in obtaining the 250,000 reichsmarks she was asking for the piece.
After the Second World War the statue fetched up at the Central Art Collecting Point in Munich, where the art carried off by the Nazis was being held for safekeeping by the US military administration. An application for restitution by the Republic of Austria was initially not allowed, since the work had not been forcibly purchased from an individual persecuted by the Nazis.
In 1956, when the formalities for the gift of 500 works of art from the estate of Elisabeth Petznak to the Republic of Austria were being negotiated, the Austrian authorities filed an application for the return of Polyhymnia with the German Federal Office for Foreign Restitution. The latter institution
finally acknowledged the Austrian claim (albeit without passing any legal judgement on the sale), since the object had been on Austrian soil before 1938. In March 1958 the German authorities handed over the sculpture to the Federal Monuments Office. In 1964 it was relinquished to the Bundesmobilenverwaltung to be inventoried and was subsequently re-installed in its original place in Elisabeth’s Large Salon in the Imperial Apartments. In 2015 a claim was submitted to the Restitution Advisory Board of the Republic of Austria by one of Elisabeth Petznèk’s heirs, but this was rejected in 2016. The reasons given were that the sale of the statue in 1943 did not represent a void legal transaction within the meaning of the Restitution Act, since it ensued voluntarily, and moreover since Elisabeth Petznèk was not an individual who had suffered from persecution by the National Socialists.

23. Using the past as a film set – exploiting the holdings of the Court Exchequer in the movie industry

The international boom in the silent movie industry played an important role for the young Republic. Movie productions boosted the domestic economy. Moreover, audiences’ moral attitudes could be influenced by the type of film presented. Vienna was well on the way to establishing itself as a centre of the film industry. The continuing currency crisis and concomitant inflation meant that film production costs were comparatively low. By 1921 there were forty-two film companies in Vienna, and on average one film was shot every two weeks. In particular, Vienna provided favourable conditions for historical films, which required elaborate sets and costumes and large numbers of extras. For the administration of the Court Exchequer, cooperation with film companies and the hiring out of props represented an extremely lucrative new source of income. The singularly rich stock of former court holdings enabled the sets to be elaborately dressed with authentic historical furniture, and the former imperial palaces and gardens provided the perfect backdrops for historical films. The administration of the Court Exchequer was soon overwhelmed by the flood of hire applications. The Austrian Film Service was therefore set up as a point-of-contact office for foreign film companies to deal with location
applications and/or the provision of props, passing them on as a package to the administration of the Court Exchequer. The latter specified the leasing charges, rental fees and security deposits. In addition, the film companies had to pay for transport and any repairs that arose. However, the use of former court furnishings and household goods as film props was frequently criticized as a ‘sell-out of the past’. Critical comments were also made about damage caused to buildings and objects. Nonetheless, hiring out props remained a profitable form of utilizing the holdings of the Bundesmobilenverwaltung until well into the 1970s.

24. Schönbrunn – a palace without an emperor

After the death of Franz Joseph in November 1916, Schönbrunn Palace, the principal residence of the elderly emperor during the final years of his life, faded from the spotlight. At first Karl and Zita did not use Schönbrunn as their residence as an extensive programme of renovation and refurbishment had been started in order to bring the palace up to modern standards of comfort.

It was not until the end of October 1918 that Schönbrunn was once again the focus of events when the imperial couple decided at short notice to take up residence there. The palace was thus the scene of the negotiations that took place on 11 November 1918 and led to the emperor signing a renunciation of participation in the affairs of government.

While the end of the monarchy brought about a caesura in the history of the palace, it having lost its function as the monarch’s residence, the resumption of public tours of the public represents an interesting continuity. This had been allowed under imperial administration, albeit with restrictions, and was now extended to the palace as a whole.

In stark contrast to the notion of turning the palace into a museum, however were ideas for radically different use. In manifestations of the prevailing revolutionary mood a number of claims were made on the palace as a symbol of Habsburg rule. There were scenes of unrestrained appropriation, when groups of disabled war veterans occupied parts of the palace complex. In addition, the palace administration was confronted with numerous applications by associations, social organisations and municipal authorities to use premises and areas of the park. However, in order to fund the enormous costs of maintaining the palace complex and the gardens, other innovative ideas for profitable exploitation had to be found.
Soon after ascending the throne, Karl and Zita began to draw up plans for a comprehensive remodelling of the palace. Since Franz Joseph had been undemanding in terms of furnishings and amenities, the residential apartments now needed to be modernized to meet the needs of the young couple's rapidly growing family.

In April 1917 an ambitious project of construction and renovation was drawn up, including the complete remodelling of the suite of rooms in the west wing formerly occupied by Franz Joseph and Elisabeth. In order to relieve the uniformity of the opulent Rococo Revival style favoured in Franz Joseph's time, designs were developed for new wall décor, complemented by furniture in the Empire and Biedermeier style, which had come back into fashion after 1900.

Great attention was paid to bringing the palace's hopelessly outdated technical infrastructure up to contemporary standards. It was planned to install lifts, bathrooms and lavatories, and to modernize the heating and ventilation systems.

That neither costs nor efforts were to be spared is shown by the plans to install and equip a treatment room to provide the best possible healthcare for the family, and the construction of an air raid shelter that was briefly under discussion.

However, the wartime scarcity of building materials and labour constituted a serious problem. In view of the general state of emergency it was also deemed politically inadvisable to go ahead with an all-too-extravagant remodelling of the imperial residence. Many projects thus had to be postponed indefinitely until the time after the war. When the Monarchy finally came to an end on 11 November 1918, the Republic was left with a building site on its hands at Schönbrunn.
24.2 Opening the palace and turning it into a museum after 1918

After the outbreak of the First World War tours of the palace were suspended. Immediately after the fall of the Habsburg Monarchy in November 1918 the situation was far too unstable even to consider reopening the palace. At the beginning of 1919 political efforts started to make the former crown estates accessible to the general public, and on Easter Sunday, 20 April 1919, the state rooms were opened to visitors.

It was now planned for tours of the palace to include the private apartments that had previously been closed to visitors. However, these were more or less a building site, as the modernization work commissioned by Karl and Zita in 1917 had not been completed. A decision was taken to reverse as far as possible the alterations that had been carried out since the death of Franz Joseph. On 1 November 1919 this part of the palace was subsequently also opened to the public.

24.3 From imperial palace to palace museum

In order to meet public expectations, the original furniture was re-installed in Franz Joseph’s residential apartments. Writing on 20 March 1919, Schlosshauptmann Ruprecht, head of the body responsible for administering the palace, described the start of the reconstruction work, which was aimed at recreating ‘the former state [of the rooms] ... as it had been during the time of the late Emperor’. The work was carried out on the basis of information supplied by two former members of Franz Joseph’s personal staff, Leibbüchsenspanner Egger (His Majesty’s personal gun-charger) and Kammertürhüter Rukovansky (doorkeeper to the imperial chamber).

Art objects and other items privately owned by the emperor had already been handed over to his heirs. Eventually, by popular demand, the rooms were decorated with portrait paintings of their former occupants Franz Joseph and Elisabeth, which had not been part of the original interiors.

24.4 The Schönbrunn School

In summer 1919 the debate about the future use of Schönbrunn palace threatened to escalate. The background to this was a conflict of interest:
while the disabled war veterans regarded themselves justified as primary victims of ‘Habsburg injustice’ to be accommodated in the former imperial palace, the administration of the Court Exchequer saw an urgently needed source of revenue in the letting of apartments in the palace and ancillary buildings of Schönbrunn. 

In order to prevent the war veterans from taking over even more of the palace, the palace administration showed itself amenable to another demand, namely to dedicate parts of the buildings as a children's home run by the ‘Kinderfreunde’ Social Democrat organization. The dramatic nature of events is demonstrated by the fact that they had to move in within forty-eight hours. The rooms were hurriedly furnished in makeshift fashion to accommodate the first seventy children.

The establishing of the children’s home in the former imperial palace was celebrated by the Social Democrats as a manifest symbol of the new era. Originally conceived simply as a convalescence home, Schönbrunn soon became a central location for the Kinderfreunde in Vienna. A training school for nursery school teachers was also established here which exposed its students to new, progressive ideas in the field of child education.

The Schönbrunn School existed until 1924, when it was forced to close for financial reasons. The ideals of social-democratic forms of education continued to live on the ‘Arbeitsgemeinschaft sozialistischer Erzieher’ (Association of Socialist Educators), also known as the Schönbrunn Circle. Even today, the Kinderfreunde continues to maintain a presence at Schönbrunn, running a nursery school in one of the ancillary buildings.

24.5 The park – recreational amenity and source of income

In the search for financial means to maintain the gardens the suggestion was repeatedly made to charge an admission fee to the park. Plans to that effect were, however, soon dropped, ‘since the populace has always regarded Schönbrunn as a freely accessible and popular place of recreation, and any change in this regard, especially at this juncture, would be very unfavourably received’, as the garden administration noted in 1919.

In the urgent need to open up new revenue streams, the leasing of ancillary buildings for catering outlets was considered.

This was not uncontroversial and was vehemently criticized as the ‘squaldering of historical patrimony’ in the press. Particularly controversial was the leasing of the Kaiserstöckl, a palatial building beside the Hietzing Gate.
A furore was caused by the circumstance that the lease included the original fitments, including a famous series of paintings of the coronation of Joseph II in Frankfurt in 1764 from the studio of Martin van Meytens. Although the paintings were eventually removed, public indignation was slow to subside. The conservative daily Reichspost spoke of a ‘second-rate club for racketeers’, complaining that the Kaiserstöckl was being stolen from the good burghers of Hietzing and ‘allocated as a scene of revelry for ‘those with the means to pay, to whom this ghastly, demented present is enslaved’.

24.6 Large-scale events and sports facilities

The park at Schönbrunn has always been a popular setting for festive events. This already had a certain tradition, since during the Monarchy festive demonstrations of homage had been organized in the park to mark special occasions. After 1918 the spirit of democratization also became noticeable in the themes that were being celebrated: now, rather than appearing in the role of extras and spectators, the ‘people’ were celebrating themselves. Soon, however, criticism was expressed that these festive events were not always in keeping with the historic setting or compatible with the need to protect and preserve it. Increasing damage from overuse and occasional acts of vandalism soon led to restrictions being imposed. It was decided to establish sports facilities in the peripheral areas of the park. However, these plans ultimately came to nothing due to lack of money.