

Press information

Hofmobiliendepot · Imperial Furniture Collection

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Schloß Schönbrunn Kultur- und Betriebsges.m.b.H.

The Imperial Furniture Collection as an internationally unique furniture museum

Originally established to store the imperial holdings of furniture, today the Imperial Furniture Collection contains 165,000 objects and is thus one of the largest collections of furniture in the world. Here furnishings spanning three decades are displayed. Exhibits include items of imperial furniture together with displays illustrating various furnishing styles such as Biedermeier, Historicism and the Viennese Modern movement, and a section showcasing contemporary furniture design. Temporary exhibitions explore the architecture, design and furniture of the twentieth century or famous personalities from the Habsburg dynasty.

The Hofmobiliendepot · Imperial Furniture Collection houses outstanding holdings of historical cultural artefacts. The core of the collection is original items of furniture from the Habsburg court household that were used to furnish Schönbrunn Palace, Belvedere Palace, Laxenburg Palace and many other imperial residences. On display are carpets, chandeliers, paintings, tableware, chairs, tables, beds, commodes and even entire suites. Linked to individual personalities such as Prince Eugene of Savoy, Crown Prince Rudolf or Empress Elisabeth, these objects reflect not only political events and imperial court ceremonial but also day-to-day life.

The approximately 6,500 items on display derive from the furniture depository established by Empress Maria Theresa in 1747 in which all the furniture of the imperial court household was stored and maintained until the end of the monarchy. The depository has been in the ownership of the Republic of Austria since 1919, and in 1924 the first permanent display was opened. Part of this original display in the form of fifteen 'Biedermeier alcoves' has been preserved as a kind of 'museum within the museum' and integrated into the current permanent exhibition. The alcoves contain furniture from the imperial household arranged into ensembles illustrating lower middle class interiors.

The current display goes back to 1998, when the museum was reopened following extensive remodelling and restoration. The reorientation of the museum was to focus not only on presenting the holdings according to customary museum conventions but also to emphasise its continuing role as a repository. For this reason, 'walk-in' access was created to a repository that has remained virtually unchanged since the time of Emperor Franz Joseph. The holdings still supply furniture for federal offices, embassies and state receptions.

Since its reopening, the museum has also focused on Viennese furniture design from the Modern era to the present day, holding items of furniture by major Austrian architects such as Adolf Loos, Otto Wagner, Josef Hoffmann and Margarete Schütte-

Lihotzky as well as contemporary designers. It also collects ensembles that otherwise are slowly but surely disappearing from contemporary life. Individual aspects of architecture and design in the twentieth century are explored in a regular series of temporary exhibitions.

The Hofmobiliendepot · Imperial Furniture Collection has always had a particularly close relationship with the film industry. Up to the 1970s almost all films shot in Vienna sourced their furniture from the repository, including the legendary ‘Sissi’ films directed by Ernst Marischka in the 1950s. A dedicated Sis(s)i Trail – Sisi in real life and Sissi in the movies – leads the visitor through the museum, juxtaposing the items of furniture used on the film sets with original furniture actually used by Empress Elisabeth and her family, and thus contrasting the celluloid Sissi with the real Sisi.

This internationally unique furniture collection is managed by Schloß Schönbrunn Kultur- und Betriebsges.m.b.H. (SKB). Since 2010 the SKB has made the lives of the Habsburgs and their historical residences accessible online. The interactive web portal World of the Habsburgs (www.habsburger.net) enables interested persons to take a virtual walk in the footsteps of the Hapsburgs. Through a wealth of detailed texts and images the lives of the most important Habsburg rulers and their times are critically examined and the contemporary background explained. The platform is the perfect complement to a visit to the Hofmobiliendepot · Imperial Furniture Collection.

A brief outline of the history of the Imperial Furniture Collection

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

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Contact and booking

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