











KUNST
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MUSEUM
VIENNA

Cäcilia Bischoff

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pp. 12–13:

MARIA-THERESIEN-PLATZ

View from the roof of the Naturhistorisches Museum to the main facade of the Kunsthistorisches Museum. The monument to honour Empress Maria Theresa, who reigned 1740–80, was unveiled in 1888 on the central axis of the square that bears her name; the statue is oriented towards Ringstrasse and Hofburg.

pp. 14–15:

A PAINTING RETURNS

After two years in the workshop, a restored painting is returned to the Picture Gallery in 2015. At the centre of attention is a work by Benvenuto Tisi, called Il Garofalo, **Resurrection of Christ**, dated 1520, inv. 9551.

FOREWORD

The Kunsthistorisches Museum is a popular point of interest, a centre of scholarly research, successful cultural enterprise, cherished object of identification, and vibrant artistic landmark. Located in Vienna's historic centre, it thus belongs to UNESCO's World Cultural Heritage List; as part of the Hofburg imperial palace, it also bears the European Heritage Label.

Built in 1871–91 as the imperial Court Museum, it was intended at one fell swoop to solve the space problems and infrastructure deficits that beset the imperial collections. These were now displayed in a modern building, whose construction and future operation was financially assured; we continue to benefit from this historic munificence until the present day.

The galleries were from the outset conceived to permit subsequent modifications. The transfer of parts of the collection, or indeed entire sections – as was the case with the Imperial Armoury that was relocated as a whole – diminished neither the effect of the interior decoration nor the relevance of the museum.

We are part of an international network both as an institution and on a personal level. Our collections that are of high quality and comprehensiveness have been the object of decent scholarly study and are accessible to the public both at the museum and online.

This richly illustrated publication relates the story of the museum building and its architecture in all its facets. Works from the collections on Maria-Theresien-Platz are presented as cleverly chosen pairs: they are historically based, associatively matched with a playful note, and related to one another by a common thread. Finally, the artistic conception of the museum building is the subject of detailed consideration.

Our art historian and architecture expert Cäcilia Bischoff tackled conception of this volume with verve and enthusiasm. I owe her a great debt of gratitude. She was supported by Anja Gasser, Benjamin Mayr, Franz Pichorner, Daniel Sostaric, Thomas Ritter, and Stefan Zeisler. I would also like to express my appreciation to our publisher, Gautier Platteau, with whom we have realised numerous publications in the past, for the excellent cooperation.

Collecting, preserving, researching, and communicating are the legally mandated responsibilities of Austria's federal museums. Within this enduring framework however there exists an extensive ambit for activity and creativity that permits and calls for change, experiment, and response to the demands of present and future.

This book is dedicated to all those who wish to discover anew museums as lively and fascinating places.

Welcome to the Kunsthistorisches Museum Vienna!

Sabine Haag
Director General

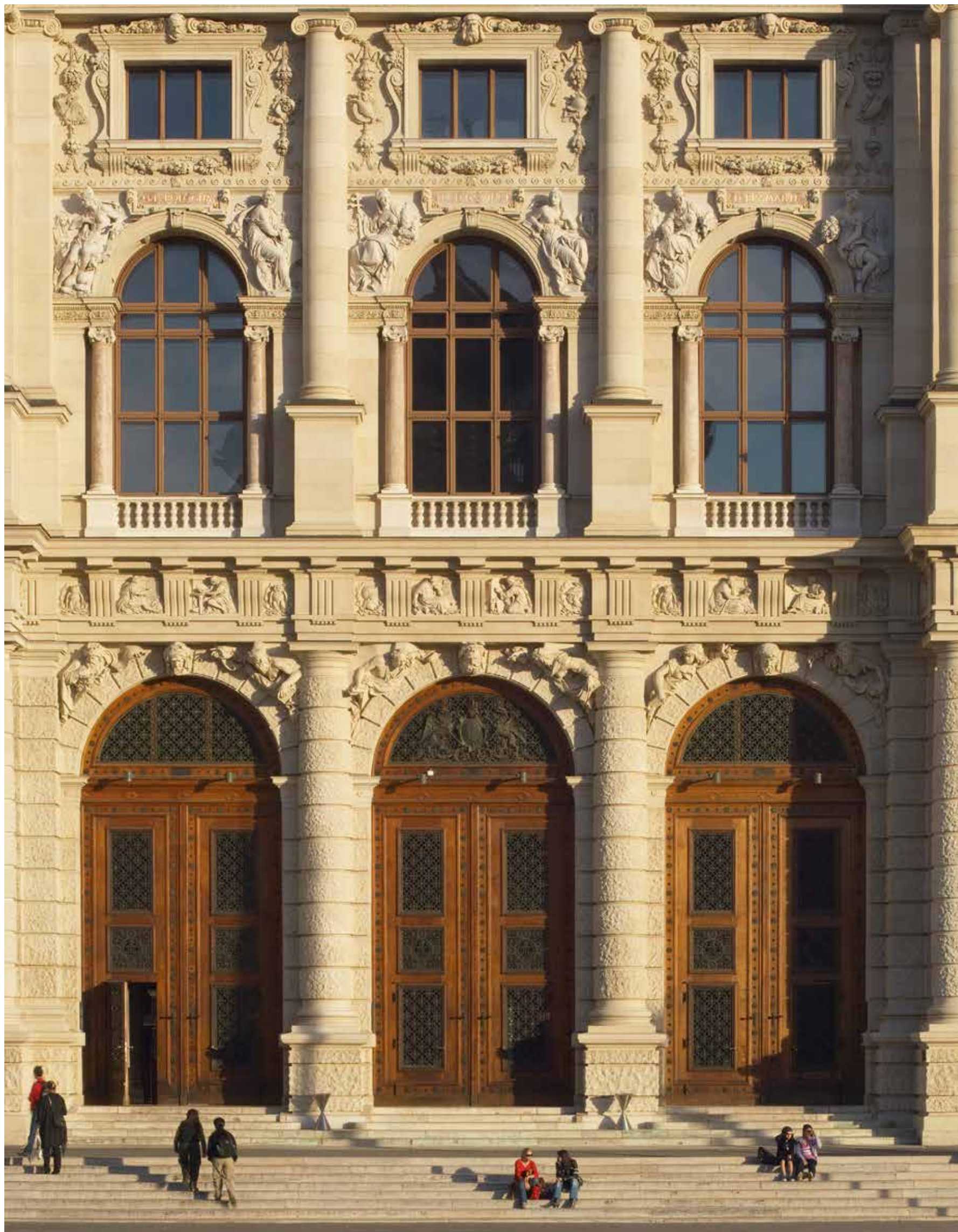
'Yesterday thousands converged from all districts of Vienna on the Kunsthistorisches Hofmuseum to view the splendid edifice and its priceless artworks. The public was directed to queue along the left facade of the Naturhistorisches Hofmuseum and thence over the square at whose centre stands the Maria Theresa monument to the main entrance of the magnificent building. The right side door was later opened for those leaving the museum. Despite the arrival of a continuous procession of visitors no disorder occurred. When at 12.30 a.m. the signal was given that access to the museum was no longer permitted and the entrances closed 13,154 persons had passed the turnstiles.'

(Kunsthistorisch
Menschen strömten ge
kunsthistorischen Hofm
unschätzbaren Kunstw
fügung getroffen word
linken Seitenfaçade
dann quer über den
vorüber zum Thor de
gang war später das
ununterbrochenem Zu
großen Menge kam fe
Mittags das Signal
mehr gestattet sei, un
hatten 13.154 Person

AFTER THE CEREMONIAL INAUGURATION,
17 OCTOBER 1891

The Court Museum opened to the general public
on 22 October 1891; admission was free of charge.
The 'Wiener Zeitung' reported on the situation at
the museum on 26 October.

ches Hofmuseum.) Tausende von
stern aus allen Bezirken Wiens nach dem
museum, um den Prachtbau mit seinen
erken zu besichtigen. Es war die Ver-
den, daß sich das Publicum längs der
des naturhistorischen Hofmuseums und
Platz am Maria-Theresien-Monumente
s Prachtbaues bewegte. Für den Aus-
rechte Seitenthor geöffnet worden. In
ge kamen die Besucher, und trotz der
eine Störung vor. Als um 12¹/₂ Uhr
gegeben wurde, daß der Eintritt nicht
d die Eingangsthore geschlossen wurden,
en die Tourniquets passirt.



ENTRANCE

Heat, cold, and noise are left behind outside. A different world opens up as one strides through the doors. The pace slows and observation becomes more focused.

Why visit a museum? In 2022, American museologist John Falk defined five aspects of well-being that are experienced when visiting a museum. Personal well-being coupled with interest, curiosity, joy, and harmony. Intellectual well-being gained by a comprehension of the relationships of history and stories. Social well-being when visiting in another's company, as well as identification with the institution and a sense of belonging to a group with common interests. Physical well-being imparted by being in safe and pleasant surroundings, where one is able to enjoy without hindrance, and is exposed neither to extremes of cold or heat; where one can eat and drink and give oneself over to daydreaming. Finally, beyond the bounds of our own sphere of life, global well-being, an aspect that is related to the environment and a future worth living. In a congenial environment – a museum should meet this condition – we are prepared to deal with subjects anew; unusual associations arise, intellectual journeys lead through territory uncharted or rediscovered.

In 2002, the responsibilities of Austria's federal museums were once again defined by the Federal Museums Act, 'as part of a permanent social discourse'. They are 'to collect, conserve, research, and document relics of the past and present, and make [these] accessible to a broad public. ... They are a place of vibrant and up-to-date encounters with the collections with which they are entrusted.'

Once inside there is no right or wrong way to explore the collections. Not every museum is endowed with an interior that plays a prominent role. There are major museums for example the Prado in Madrid and the Altes Museum in Berlin, with interiors of sober and restrained appearance. The magnificent halls of the Kunsthistorisches Museum are one of its impressive and unique features. The objects displayed here span four millennia and go back to the Egypt of the pharaohs. The permanent collections have no thematic focuses, such as portraits, or works depicting passion or landscapes. The objects are arranged as they have been since the museum opened: Egyptian and Near Eastern Collection, Collection of Greek and Roman Antiquities, Kunstkammer, Picture Gallery, and Coin Cabinet.

Take a few moments to study the works of art; have a seat on one of the many upholstered sofas. Your smartphone and the museum's wi-fi let you access information about the artworks that goes beyond the texts provided in the galleries. A floor plan indicates where to find highlights of the collections. Stories of heroes, legends of saints, wild animals, mummies, and masks offer possibilities for discussions with children, selfies, and photo stories. If you plan to visit with guests, friends or family, it is a good idea to prepare in advance and map out possible routes through the museum and obtain tickets online. You may consider whether you would like to dine or have a drink after your visit, whether at the museum (reservations are advisable), or somewhere nearby. The Picture Gallery is an inviting location for a tête-à-tête: the art is a feast for the eyes providing much to discuss, and there are any number of cosy and secluded places to sit.

A PRINCIPAL WORK OF THE EGYPTIAN
AND NEAR EASTERN COLLECTION
Hippopotamus, Egyptian, Middle Kingdom,
Eleventh/Twelfth Dynasty, c.2000 BC, inv. ÄS 4211.





Works of art were conceived for a variety of audiences. Their intention is not always fully apparent or understandable in detail without background knowledge, whether this is sought out or is part of the collective memory. Episodes drawn from mythology, religion, and history have been reinterpreted and changed again and again throughout the history of civilization with individual aspects being emphasised or quietly forgotten. Art also served as a means to communicate tolerated or sanctioned patterns of thought, and generally accepted behaviour or taboos.

Social norms are a reliable foundation in the midst of many variables: Until precepts and generally comprehensible rules evolved, much was invested. Friendship, love, and success – enmity, hate, and failure were resolved, experienced, or prevented through conflict and cooperation, by intellect and impulsiveness, in peace and war.

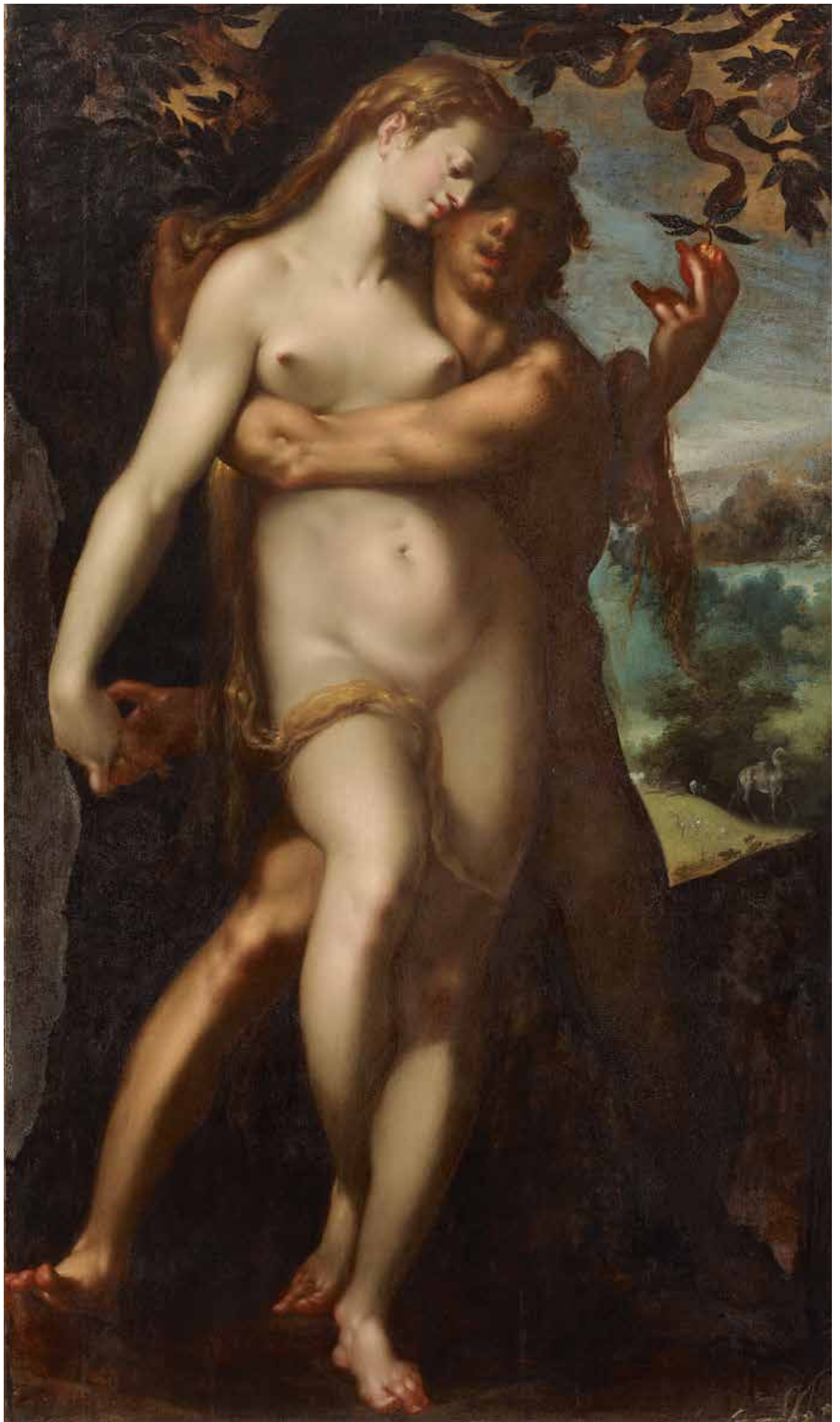
To distinguish sustainable from antiquated values, norms, and rules, a familiarity with the stories of their origins is useful.

A museum can help with this.



ADAM AND EVE

Hans Memling, **Outer Panels of St John Altar**,
1485/90, Picture Gallery, inv. 994a and 994b.



Bartholomäus Spranger,
Adam and Eve, 1593/95,
Picture Gallery, inv. 2417.



THE ART COLLECTION OF ARCHDUKE
LEOPOLD WILHELM

David Teniers the Younger, **Archduke Leopold Wilhelm in His Gallery**, c.1650, Picture Gallery, inv. 739.

Leopold Wilhelm, representative of the Spanish Habsburgs in the Netherlands, possessed in Brussels a collection of 1,400 paintings. These works formed the core of the Picture Gallery of the Kunsthistorisches Museum. Many of the paintings depicted here are part of the collection today.

THE COLLECTIONS A BRIEF HISTORY



A lively art trade already existed in Europe during the age of Emperor Rudolf II (1552–1612). He and his successors commissioned court artists and architects to establish the precursors of today's museums. In the wake of wars, collections were seized and wrested back again. To fill the coffers for conflict, objects were sold and melted down. There was some limited public access to the collections, and sumptuously illustrated inventories were produced. The Habsburg collections can be traced back to 1337, when this 'treasure' was kept near the chapel in the Schweizertrakt of the Hofburg. A century later, the records become more solid, for it was necessary to divide possession of jewels and documents among the three lines of the Habsburgs. In 1558, the first building for an 'art chamber' was constructed in the Hofburg. This was expanded in 1576 with a new 'gallery building'.

In the territories of the Austrian line of the dynasty there existed from the mid-sixteenth century three residences – Vienna, Prague, and Innsbruck – and hence three art collections that were relatively autonomous. In Prague, Emperor Rudolf II established a chamber of treasures, a chamber of armour, a chamber of art that included both artworks and natural objects, a picture gallery and a library. Rudolf was client, collector, and patron of the arts. Works in the collection by Albrecht Dürer go back to acquisitions that he made. Today, a central gallery in the museum's *Kunstkammer* is dedicated to Rudolf II. The art of his court developed a style that was shaped by Bartholomäus Spranger, Hans von Aachen, Ottavio Miseroni, and Giuseppe Arcimboldo. Rudolf's brother Matthias (1557–1619) moved his residence to Vienna. By this time the Bruegels and works by Dürer, Correggio, and Parmigianino were already a permanent part of the Habsburg patrimony.



During the same period, Archduke Ferdinand II (1529–1595) installed a chamber of armour and art in Innsbruck. Rudolf II purchased the collection in 1605 but was obliged by testament to keep the objects in Tyrol. As early as the seventeenth century, the public could for a small fee view the collection at Ambras Castle. In the second half of the seventeenth century, the collections were successively transferred to Vienna. Today, Ambras Castle belongs to the Kunsthistorisches Museum.

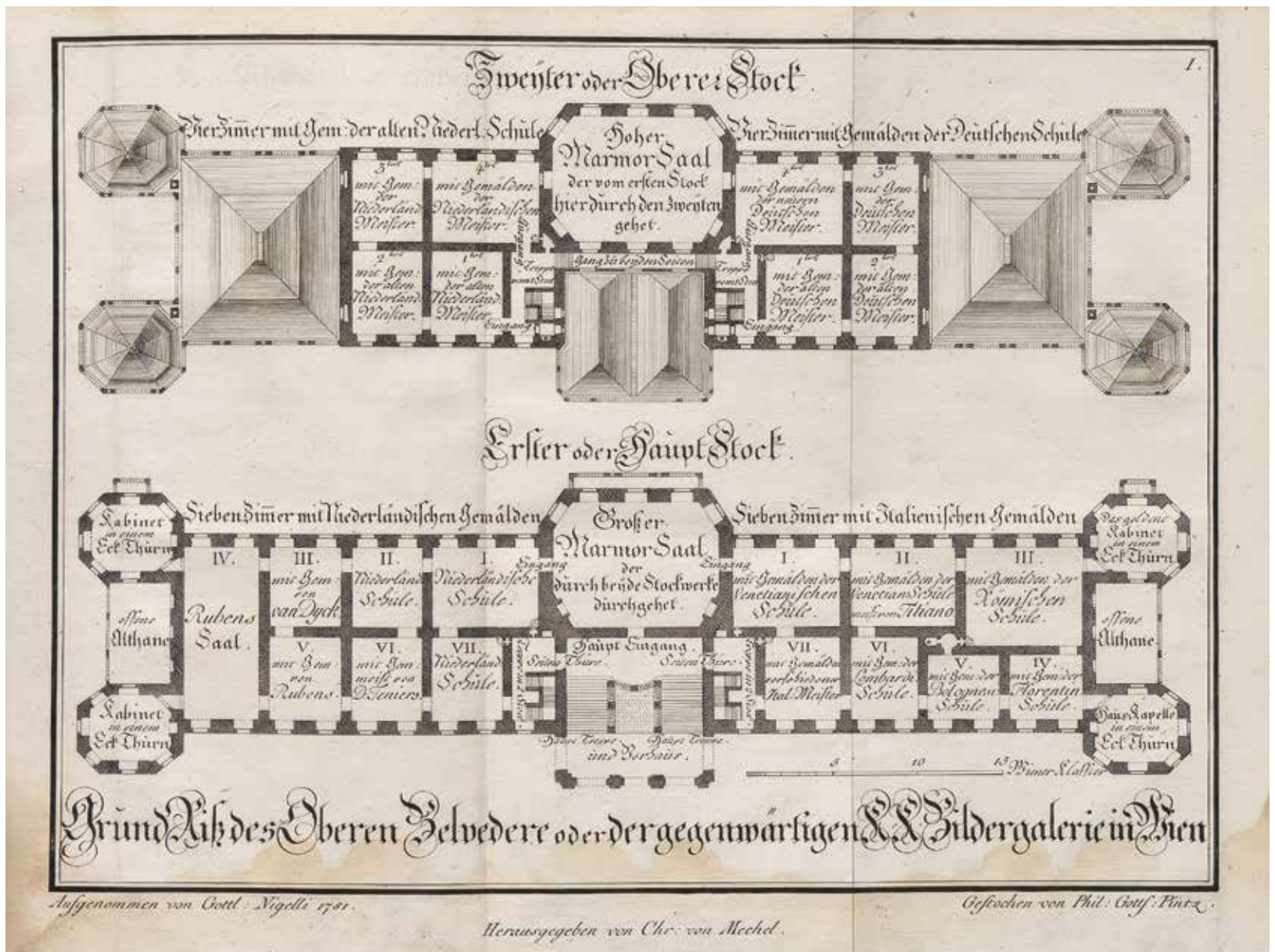
After Vienna was freed in 1683 from the second Ottoman siege, the city became the principal Habsburg residence. The collection of Archduke Leopold Wilhelm, the Habsburg governor of the Spanish Netherlands, was brought from Brussels to Vienna and presented in a new arrangement in the Stallburg (Imperial Stables) of the Vienna Hofburg. The 1,400 paintings of this collection formed the nucleus of the Kunsthistorisches Museum's Picture Gallery as we know it today.

The expulsion of the Jesuits by Empress Maria Theresa in 1773 made it possible to acquire large altar paintings by Peter Paul Rubens that had been in their possession. The artist had a close relationship to the Habsburgs, having served both as court painter and diplomat.

GALLERY IN THE STALLBURG

In 1656, major parts of Archduke Leopold Wilhelm's collection were moved from Brussels to Vienna, where they were exhibited in the centre of the Stallburg (Imperial Stables) built in the sixteenth century.

An engraving by Frans van den Steen after a drawing by Nicolas van Hoy, *Porticum Prospectus*, from: David Teniers the Younger, *Theatrum Pictorium* (Brussels, 1660), table 245.



A NEW APPROACH

Plan of the ground and first floors of the picture gallery in the Upper Belvedere; this shows Christian von Mechel's new installation of the collection introduced in 1781 with the designation of the different historical schools of art. This represented a ground-breaking innovation among European museums.

Engraving by Philipp Gottfried Pintz after Gottlieb Nigelli, from: Christian von Mechel, *Verzeichniß der Gemälde der Kaiserlich Königlichen Bilder Gallerie in Wien* (Vienna, 1783).

In 1781, the Picture Gallery was moved from the Stallburg in the centre of Vienna to the former summer residence of Prince Eugene of Savoy in the Upper Belvedere. In conjunction with this move the paintings were displayed in a revolutionary new arrangement. Christian von Mechel hung the works chronologically and according to schools of art, which usually also implied geographic criteria.

Maria Theresa commissioned Bernardo Bellotto to paint a number of views; thus was the famous depiction of Vienna as seen from the Upper Belvedere created. The antiquities collections of the imperial house were brought together as were the numismatic holdings. Major works of art were brought from Spain to Vienna: Velázquez's portraits of the Spanish infantas had come to the imperial court as diplomatic gifts in the year of their creation. The Napoleonic wars affected the history of the Habsburg collections. Fearing the depredations of French troops, artworks from Ambras Castle, the Insignia of the Holy Roman Empire from Nuremberg (exhibited today in the Imperial Treasury in Vienna), and the treasury of the Order of the Golden Fleece from Brussels were all removed to Vienna between 1794 and 1806.