



WOLFSONIAN

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'SPANNING THE DIVIDE OF CENTURIES: VIENNA FROM THE LAST HABSBURGS TO THE AUSTRIAN REPUBLIC' ON VIEW IN THE RARE BOOK AND SPECIAL COLLECTIONS LIBRARY VESTIBULE

Miami Beach, FL (March 26, 2008)—Join The Wolfsonian-Florida International University as it presents *Spanning the Divide of Centuries: Vienna from the Last Habsburgs to the Austrian Republic*, an exhibition on view in the museum's rare book and special collections library vestibule through July 22, 2008. *Spanning the Divide of Centuries* was organized by The Wolfsonian's rare book cataloguer Nicolae Harsanyi and traces the evolution of Viennese modernism from aesthetic articulation to social concern as witnessed by the city's architecture and artistic scene.

Vienna, capital of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, emerged at the end of the nineteenth century as one of the major centers of the modern movement. New ideas about the individual and society found expression in the work of noted psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud, philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein, composers Arnold Schoenberg and Gustav Mahler, architects Otto Wagner and Josef Hoffmann, writers Robert Musil, Hugo von Hofmannstahl, and artists Gustav Klimt and Egon Schiele, among many other notables. The works on display reflect the changes that occurred in Viennese society from the fin-de-siècle to the First World War.

In 1897 Gustav Klimt, Koloman Moser, Josef Hoffmann, Joseph Maria Olbrich, Max Kurzweil, Otto Wagner, and others founded the Vienna Secession. Rejecting the stolid traditions of the renowned Viennese Academy of Fine Arts, they rallied around the motto, "To the age its art. To the art its freedom." Copies of the group's journal, *Ver sacrum* [Sacred Spring; 1893–1903], on view in the exhibition, demonstrate the group's interest in finding a new expression for the modern age. "Ver Sacrum" (Sacred Spring) refers to the idea of springtime rebirth, as well as to an ancient Roman custom in which elders pledged their offspring to save society from disaster. In breaking free from the Viennese Academy of Fine Arts, the Secessionists would save art from the decay of the past.

The display also focuses on the work of the *Wiener Werkstätte* [Vienna Workshops]. This association of designers, craftsmen, and artisan workshops was established in 1903 by Secession members Josef Hoffmann and Koloman Moser with the goal of elevating the level of the decorative arts. Influenced by

the British Arts and Crafts movement, they forged a new connection between the designer, the craftsman, and the public.

The First World War brought about the end of the Habsburg Empire, and the formation of a new Austrian Republic. Although the war temporarily interrupted the city's cultural endeavors, Viennese artists continued their innovations, enriched by the bitter experiences of war and social upheaval. An expressionist print by Mary Ilse Lodron, presented as part of the portfolio *Wiener Mode 1914-1915* (Viennese Fashion 1914-1915) portrays a dark, hyper-critical view of Viennese society at the time of the First World War, implying a selfish insensitivity to world events.

After the First World War, Vienna's new Social Democratic government embarked on a comprehensive program of construction aimed to solve the shortage of affordable housing in the capital. In the crowded city center modern buildings replaced decaying old structures. In the suburbs the government constructed large-scale public housing projects. Also on view are images of the Karl-Marx-Hof, constructed from 1927 to 1930. Comprised over 1,300 apartments to house five thousand residents, it included laundry facilities, baths, kindergartens, a library, and offices for doctors and other businesses.

On Tuesday, April 22 at 7pm, Nicolae Harsanyi and Florida International University professor Joseph F. Patrouch will address Viennese modernism at the turn of the twentieth century by looking at original materials taken from The Wolfsonian collection. The lecture, which is free and open to the public, takes place at The Wolfsonian and is copresented with the New World Symphony. For more information, call 305.531.1001 or visit www.wolfsonian.org.

About The Wolfsonian-Florida International University

The Wolfsonian is a museum, library, and research center that uses objects to illustrate the persuasive power of art and design, to explore what it means to be modern, and to tell the story of social, historical, and technological changes that have transformed our world. The collections comprise approximately 120,000 objects from the period of 1885 to 1945—the height of the Industrial Revolution to the end of the Second World War—in a variety of media including furniture; industrial-design objects; works in glass, ceramics, and metal; rare books; periodicals; ephemera; works on paper; paintings; textiles; and medals.

The Wolfsonian is located at 1001 Washington Avenue, Miami Beach, Fla. Admission is \$7 adults; \$5 seniors, students, and children six-12; free for Wolfsonian members, State University System of Florida staff and students with ID, children under six, and Miami Beach residents with ID. The museum is open Monday, Tuesday, Saturday and Sunday from noon-6pm; Thursday and Friday from noon-9pm; and is closed on Wednesday. Contact us at 305.531.1001 or visit us online at www.wolfsonian.org.

The Wolfsonian receives ongoing support from the State of Florida, Department of State, Division of Cultural Affairs, the Florida Arts Council and the National Endowment for the Arts; Miami-Dade County Department of Cultural Affairs and the Cultural Affairs Council, the Miami-Dade County Mayor and Board of County Commissioners; City of Miami Beach, Cultural Affairs Program, Cultural Arts Council; Crispin Porter + Bogusky; Continental Airlines, the preferred airline of The Wolfsonian; the Arthur F. and Alice E. Adams Foundation; and Pistils & Petals.

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