

Vienna, June 2014

## RE-OPENING OF OTTO WAGNER'S IMPERIAL COURT PAVILION AT HIETZING STATION

**Press conference:** Freyday, 13 June 2014, 10.30 a.m.  
**Exhibition venue:** Otto Wagner Pavilion at Hietzing station  
**Address:** Schönbrunner Schloßstraße, 1130 Vienna (U4 station)  
**Open House:** 21 and 22 June, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Free entry!  
**Opening hours:** Saturday and Sundays, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.  
**Press photos:** [www.wienmuseum.at/de/presse](http://www.wienmuseum.at/de/presse)

Otto Wagner's Pavilion at Hietzing station is shining with renewed splendour following extensive restoration works. The Wien Museum venue, a metropolitan rail station designed exclusively to serve the Emperor and his court, was closed in 2011 when the need for repair and restoration works had become apparent. A restoration project was launched in 2012 and carried out by Wehdorn Architekten, the City of Vienna's chosen contractor for the venture, in close cooperation with Austria's Bundesdenkmalamt (federal monuments authority) and Andreas Nierhaus, Wien Museum's curator for architecture. With the recent completion of the restoration works and the re-opening of the Court Pavilion on 21 June, a key work of Viennese modernist architecture will once again be accessible to the public.

"Otto Wagner's Court Pavilion counts as one of Vienna's outstanding cultural monuments and is known beyond Austria's borders. Originally completed in 1899, the building was exposed to the elements for more than 110 years, which left its traces especially on the outer building shell, necessitating the restoration of this gem of Viennese architecture. The full cost of the restoration project, totalling some 1.8 million euro, was borne by the City of Vienna, acting through the Administrative Group for Housing, Housing Construction and Urban Renewal and the Administrative Group for Finance, Economic Affairs and Vienna Public Utilities. The City of Vienna is strongly

aware of its responsibility towards its cultural heritage and the importance of preserving it for generations to come. In this context, it is a great pleasure to see that an ambitious and timely restoration project has returned the Court Pavilion to its erstwhile splendour," comments Michael Ludwig, Vienna's Executive City Councillor for Housing, Housing Construction and Urban Renewal.

"Otto Wagner's pavilions at the Hietzing and Karlsplatz stations are quintessential components of Wagner's artistic vision for the metropolitan rail system he designed," says Wolfgang Kos, the Director of Wien Museum, whose holdings include hundreds of Wagner's architectural drawings and sketches as well as scale models and secondary materials on the artist's work and life. "In 2005, we installed a compact documentary exhibition on Otto Wagner in the pavilion he designed at Karlsplatz – an ideal introduction to the architect and the Vienna of his time. At Hietzing station, the focus is on the Court Pavilion building itself and its opulent interior. This is not so much a museum as an important Viennese sight, complete with detailed documentary material."

Architect Manfred Wehdorn adds: "The former metro station building is an iconic modernist building in which Otto Wagner laid down the tenets of his architectural credo. But even icons are subject to alterations and damage over the course of more than one hundred years. To cite but two examples: the iron supports of the driveway canopy, which are decorated with floral motifs, were heavily corroded and discoloured; and the plaster work, originally a radiant white, had been replaced with ordinary plaster soon after the construction of the pavilion, not least because the rail service was operated by steam locomotives at the time. The recent restoration was based on scientific research and the principles of monument conservation, i.e., materials, colour versions and many other aspects were explored with the help of modern technology to re-create every aspect of the original building as planned and realised by Otto Wagner."

### **"Pavilion of the Imperial-Royal Supreme Court"**

The commission for the architectural design of Vienna's Stadtbahn metro system, which Otto Wagner received in 1894, was a high point in his artistic trajectory, as well as a milestone in the history of architecture. It was the first time that a mass transit system would be shaped by an architect's design, so that a masterwork of engineering would be enriched by the aesthetic imprint of the artist's work. Architecture and engineering were to meet "in the most modern style of our time," as the Viennese daily *Neue Freie Presse* put it. Wagner's station buildings, rail lines, viaducts and bridges remain striking features of Vienna's cityscape to this day.

The idea for a special station building for the exclusive use of the "Imperial-Royal Supreme Court" was first broached by the architect himself. His aims were twofold: firstly, with this project, as with others, he was trying to garner the attention of the ruling dynasty, and secondly, he wanted to see his own magnum opus ennobled. But Wagner's first design sketches, which date from 1896/97, had to be adapted to fit in with the baroque architecture of nearby Schönbrunn Palace. Construction of the pavilion was finally completed in 1899. The building exterior blends imperial elements (dome, covered driveway, canopy, etc.) with pared-down modernist elements such as the stark

planes of the facades.

### **Opulent, precisely staged interiors**

The building's interior presents a clear succession of spaces from the sober entrance area with terrazzo flooring to the central octagonal waiting room where strong, warm colours dominate. Its opulent Secessionist decorations include embroidered wall hangings with plant motifs, a mantelpiece made of Laas onyx, a minimalist yet striking chandelier and an octagonal carpet by the textile company Backhausen whose original design was already reconstructed during repair works in 1989. The dominant feature of the room is a monumental painting by Carl Moll which presents a "View of Vienna from a balloon 3,000 m above the Schönbrunn gloriette". The bird's-eye view shows Vienna – at the feet of its imperial ruler, as it were – as a sprawling modern city. Major contemporary projects, such as the river engineering works on the Danube and the new Stadtbahn itself, feature prominently in the impressive panorama.

A small loggia adjacent to the waiting room, which also has terrazzo flooring and wall panelling, was intended as an office for the emperor to work in. A salon with a view of the rail line completes the suite. The restoration project succeeded in reconstructing Otto Wagner's original design for the apple-green carpet in the salon. All the furniture and furnishings in the room had of course been created by the architect himself (and produced by Portois & Fix), but have unfortunately been lost. "Otto Wagner's furnishings for the Court Pavilion created a modern imperial interior," says Andreas Nierhaus. "The traditional elements of feudal court interiors – polished, gilt-decorated wall panelling, opulent embroidered wall hangings and carpets, massive stone mantelpieces with mirrored overmantels – were translated into a 'modernist' idiom with great consistency, but without any fundamental questioning of their established representative function."

### **The Pavilion as a media event**

When Emperor Franz Joseph first inspected the new metro line along the Wien valley and the new vaulting above the Wien river on 16 June 1899, the daily Neue Freie Presse reported that "even before he left Hietzing, the Emperor showed himself especially pleased with the Court Pavilion". Apart from this occasion, however, the monarch actually used the metro station only one more time, on 12 April 1902. That is not to say, however, that the Hietzing Court Pavilion was a building of little significance – quite the contrary: its main purpose had always been that of a media showpiece exemplifying Wagner's modernist architecture. "It had been built to be photographed, described, publicised, so that it would lend an imperial face to modernism and thus give it weight," says Andreas Nierhaus. One example of its media impact is a laudatory article in the Secessionist journal *Ver Sacrum*, which said: "Modernism has won a glorious and, one may well hope, consequential victory in a field in which it has hitherto been a stranger." Otto Wagner himself repeatedly stressed the importance of the Pavilion, not least through many illustrations in his theoretical work *Moderne Architektur*.

## **Later use and restoration**

After the end of the monarchy, the pavilion was for many years used as a sculptor's studio. After 1945, it was in "derelict" condition, owing in part to damage caused by bombing. The building was rented as an exhibition venue by the Austrian Museum of Social and Economic History (Österreichisches Gesellschafts- und Wirtschaftsmuseum) from 1957 to 1987, when it was integrated into the Wien Museum group. A renovation project was carried out in 1987–1989 by architect Adolf Krischanitz.

With the most recent restoration project, the Pavilion at Hietzing station has been re-created as it was at the opening in 1899. Based on in-depth scientific research and analyses of this historic monument, the project team was able to implement a large number of measures. The dark green colour of iron components, doors and windows was reconstructed, as was the radiant white of the facade plaster work. Inside the building, original stucco surfaces were uncovered, and panelling and wall hangings were cleaned. Some later modifications were reversed, while others were maintained.

The Court Pavilion will be re-opened with an "Open House" event on the weekend of 21-22 June, with free admission from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. on both days. Thereafter, the regular opening hours of the renewed Wien Museum site will also be 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. on Saturdays and Sundays.

An 80-page documentation on the Court Pavilion and the restoration project has been published by Metroverlag (eds.: Andreas Nierhaus and Manfred Wehdorn).

<b>Admission:</b>	<p>Adults EUR 4 / Concessions EUR 3  <i>(senior citizens, Vienna Card and Ö1 Club Card holders, disabled persons, students up to 27 years of age, apprentices, conscripts in military/civil social service, groups of ten or more persons)</i>          Free admission for children and young people under 19 years of age          Free admission for all visitors every first Sunday of the month</p>
<b>Visitor information:</b>	T +43 1 5058747-85173, <a href="mailto:service@wienmuseum.at">service@wienmuseum.at</a> , <a href="http://www.wienmuseum.at">www.wienmuseum.at</a>
<b>Publication:</b>	<p>Der Pavillon des k. u. k. Allerhöchsten Hofes. Eine Stadtbahnstation für den Kaiser.          Editors: Andreas Nierhaus, Manfred Wehdorn          Metroverlag, 84 pages, EUR 12</p>
<b>Main sponsor:</b>	Wiener Stadtwerke
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