

Vienna, May 2011

Wien Museum im Künstlerhaus, Karlsplatz 5, 1010 Vienna

**MAKART
AN ARTIST RULES THE CITY**

In Cooperation with the Belvedere and the Künstlerhaus

Exhibition Venue: Wien Museum in the Künstlerhaus, Karlsplatz 5, 1010 Vienna
Exhibition Duration: June 9 to October 16, 2011
Opening Hours: Daily 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., Thursdays to 9 p.m.
Press Photos: www.wienmuseum.at/de/presse

Press Conference: **Wednesday, June 8, 2011**
9 a.m. Press Conference: "Makart. Painter of the Five Senses" in the Lower Belvedere (Rennweg 6, 1030 Vienna)
10.15 a.m. / Press Conference: "Makart. An Artist Rules the City" in the Künstlerhaus (Karlsplatz 5, 1010 Vienna)
10 a.m. to 12 noon / Shuttle Service between the Lower Belvedere and the Künstlerhaus

Opening: **Wednesday, June 8, 2011, 6 p.m., in the Haus der Industrie, Schwarzenbergplatz 4, 1030 Vienna**

These days the name of Hans Makart signals not only giant canvases of effective colouristic painting, but also an excessive star cult and the glamour of a whole era – the Makart Era. Hardly any other Austrian artist in the 19th century achieved such an exalted position as did the "painter prince". From June 9th onwards two large exhibitions in Vienna are concurrently devoted to the Makart phenomenon, a result of the collaboration between the Wien Museum and the Belvedere. The Wien Museum is showing "Makart. An Artist Rules the City", while in the Lower Belvedere, the show "Makart. Painter of the Five Senses" can be seen.

At the centre of the Wien Museum exhibition, curated by the Historicism expert Ralph Gleis, are the highly varied relations between the artist, city and society. How was it possible for one artist to reach such an elevated status? The exhibition investigates the reasons for Makart's extraordinary popularity and attempts to explain this as a phenomenon of that period in European history. In Makart's work and self-promotion, we see already such modern phenomena as the mass event and the star cult.

From “Makart Red” to the “Makart Meringue”

From the springboard of painting, Makart exerted influence as a universal designer over opera and theatre, life style and fashion. In the 1870s he triggered virtually a Makart fashion craze in Vienna. The talk was all of Makart red and the Makart bouquet, even the Makart hat, the Makart *décolleté* or the Makart meringue. Makart was a universal artist, an aesthetic role model and the most influential “designer” of the Ringstraße Period. Included in the Makart style and at the centre of the exhibition is his studio, which was designed as a place of representation and self-staging. It was not only a place to work and to exhibit; it was also a social hub: here opulent artists’ parties took place; here was the place to which admirers trekked in order to pay homage to the latest “sensational pictures”.

Besides the main works from the museum’s own collection, high-calibre loans are shown, such as four paintings from Makart’s picture cycle for the “Ring of the Nibelungs”, which are on display in Vienna in their entirety for the first time since the debut presentation in 1883. Highlights include the original exhibits of the 1879 Procession of Homage for the Imperial Couple, which Makart artistically organised as a major event, and at which *toute Vienne* was out on the streets to see. Also to be found in the Wien Museum, besides oil sketches and drawings, are historical costumes, photographs and souvenirs of the spectacle as well as the model of a ceremonial carriage. Furthermore, interiors and fashion from the Makart Era are also on view.

Tour through the Exhibition

The exhibition begins with the central place of activity for Makart, his **studio**, which is described almost as a mythical location. A key part in this was played by the fairy-tale exoticism of the theatrically staged curiosities and precious items from a range of eras and countries. The objects, collected both for inspiration and for decoration, were arranged by the artist almost as a still life, while Makart’s own pictures could be admired on the walls and on easels.

While he painted in conventional fashion as a young man in Munich, Makart soon shifted to “**sensational pictures**” (chapter 2). His triptychs, “Moderne Amoretten” and the “Pest in Florenz” from 1868, perceived as decadent and “immoral”, were shown in Paris, and criticised for their “unhealthy, small, salacious colour effects”, which made them famous overnight. The result was that the Lord Chamberlain of the Austrian Court, Prince Konstantin Hohenlohe-Schillingsfürst, recommended the “unusual art genius” to the Emperor to bring fresh wind to Vienna’s art scene.

Great Expectations, Hardly Any Public Commissions

After the “sensational pictures”, a look at **Ringstraße Painting** follows. With its construction of the Ringstraße from 1857 onwards, Vienna had developed into one of the most important art centres in Europe. The hope of commissions lured artists of all types to the imperial city that was reinventing itself. While Makart was able to realise his “colour dreams” in the palaces of innovative, private patrons, it was a long time, however, before large public commissions came his way. Under the title of “Painted Music”, the fourth exhibition room explores **Makart’s relations with Richard Wagner**. Both are linked by the striving towards the *Gesamtkunstwerk*, and Makart, who worshipped Wagner, hosted one of his most famous studio parties for the composer in 1875. Moreover, he created the eight-part picture cycle for the “Ring of the Nibelungs”, which is set apart from his other work on account of its

reduced colouring and dramatic lighting, heralding a development in Makart which was stopped only by his early death. The next chapter concerns the **Makart Style**. To the present day, this is associated with overflowing interiors, filled with antiquities of various styles, oriental rugs, tapestries etc. The whole style of decor found in the years between 1860 and 1900 is retrospectively associated with Makart, whose luxuriousness was then rejected by modernist artists such as Adolf Loos. Yet Makart at the time was seen not only as the polar opposite, but also as a precursor of modernity, especially of Otto Wagner and Joseph Maria Olbrich.

Vienna`s Most Sought-after Portraitist

The stock market crash of 1873 resulted in fewer commissions for decor painting, leading Makart to concentrate fully now on **portrait painting** (Room 6). Virtually every lady in society – Makart painted almost exclusively women – aspired to sit as a model for the artist. The splendid robes of his models are striking, with Makart frequently using historicist Renaissance costumes, or those from the Rubens era; mostly the character of the picture is determined by one colour or one colour-tone.

Makart`s influence also dominated the **world of theatre** too, to which a separate area is devoted. Uniquely among 19th century fine artists, Makart shaped opera and theatre in Vienna. On the one hand he designed theatre curtains, on the other hand the opulence of his painting soon found expression in the design of stage sets and costumes. The most fruitful interplay of stagecraft and painting can be found in the Burg Theatre tragedienne Charlotte Wolter, whose portrait ranks among the masterpieces of the Wien Museum Collection.

A central room in the exhibition is dedicated to the **Makart Procession**. In January 1879 the City Council of Vienna had decided to hold celebrations to mark the Silver Wedding of the Imperial Couple, with Makart appointed Artistic Director. The procession turned into his greatest work of art. In only a few weeks the “Master of Ceremonies” devised a mass event of undreamed-of dimensions. Thanks to a 300-foot long frieze painted in record time, he succeeded in mobilising all the forces available. Any self-respecting person had to take part. On the frieze, of which 21 large-scale sketches are on show in the exhibition, Vienna society files past, ordered by trades and cooperatives, wearing Renaissance and Baroque costumes. Tailors, carriage builders and architects were able to turn these sketches into reality: on April 27, 1879, 27 ceremonial carriages and 14,000 participants, with the Ringstraße as the backdrop, offered over 300,000 spectators a unique visual spectacle.

In the final room of the exhibition, the focus is on the **Makart Cult** and the reception of the artist after his early death on October 3, 1884. Makart received a ceremonial funeral and an honorary grave at the Central Cemetery, yet just a few years later he was rejected by some as a mere “decorator”. A more positive reception was accorded the artist during National Socialism, with Adolf Hitler assembling a collection of Makart paintings for his planned “Führer Museum” in Linz. It was not until the 1970s that a more in-depth exploration of Salon Painting of the 19th century occurred. From today`s perspective, we need to assess both Makart`s qualities as a painter as well as his universal design talent, in order then to track down the Makart phenomenon as an expression of the Zeitgeist of his day.

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Press Photos: www.wienmuseum.at/de/presse
- Admission Fee:** Adults: 9,50 €. Reduced Rates 7,50 € (pensioners, Wien-Card holders, Ö1-Club members, disabled persons, apprentices, students up to 27, military and civilian service conscripts); Those under 19 – free admission!
- Guided Tours:** Sundays, 11 a.m. and 4 p.m.;
Registration for group tours :Tel.: (+43 1) 505 87 47- 85180;
e-mail: service@wienmuseum.at
- Related Programme:** Theme tours, city excursions, lectures, tours for children and schoolchildren (see attachment to folder)
- Visitor Information:** Tel. (+43 1) 505 87 47-0, www.wienmuseum.at;
e-mail: service@wienmuseum.at
- Curator:** Ralph Gleis
- Exhibition Production:** Bärbl Schrems
- Exhibition Design:** Christian Sturminger
- Graphic Design:** bauer – konzept & gestaltung
- Catalogue:** Makart – Ein Künstler regiert die Stadt. Ed.: Ralph Gleis,
11 essays, 276 pages, Prestel Verlag, EUR 29,-
- Main Sponsor of Wien Museum:** Wiener Stadtwerke
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