

Vienna, June 2020

Corona in Vienna A Collection Project on the History of the City

The outbreak of the Coronavirus and the measures taken against it radically changed life in Vienna. How will we look back on this time in the coming years, decades, and centuries? How will future generations know what the Corona crisis meant for Vienna?

On 25 March 2020, the Wien Museum launched an appeal to collect and asked for photographs of objects that accompany the changed private or professional lives in the times of Corona. Accompanied by international media coverage, we received a great response: 2,086 photos have been submitted so far. More than 200 of them can be viewed at www.wienmuseum.at.

The time with Corona is frightening, but for a historian also incredibly exciting. How often do you have the opportunity to experience history in such an extreme form. Epidemics, much like other traumas, accelerate and change the urban environment enormously.
(Matti Bunzl, Director Wien Museum)

After the gradual lifting of the lockdown, the second phase is now commencing: a team around curator Martina Nußbaumer decides which objects are included in the collection of the City of Vienna, administered by the Wien Museum. The selection is made according to the following criteria: Does the object have a concrete reference to Vienna? Does it tell a representative story? Does it have social relevance? Can its material properties be permanently preserved?

The aim of the collection campaign is to document for posterity, through a precise selection of objects, how the Corona crisis has changed professional, public, and private life in the city. What challenges are people facing in the crisis, and what individual and collective forms of crisis management are there? Through the object proposals submitted so far, we will gain comprehensive insights into how people are responding to imperatives such as social distancing and movement restrictions with creative improvisation, new forms of communication, and new forms of neighborhood

assistance. At the same time, we also learn about the fears that accompany our own everyday lives and the pressures that families, for example, are facing in juggling home office and home schooling. (Martina Nußbaumer, Curator Wien Museum)

Among the selected objects are a pass for Vienna's North Hospital that allowed an expectant father to be present at the birth of his daughter; a fever diary, in which the man's body temperature was recorded during the several-day wait for a Covid-19 test; a home theater with home-made "Stanislaus" dolls, which was made to entertain grandchildren via Skype; a door opener created in a 3D printer, allowing use of a gate without touching its handle; four handwritten notes on which neighbors could enter song requests for daily balcony concerts held during the corona lockdown. All objects are witnesses to a time when the usual rules of our social lives were suspended.

My favourite object is the crocheted Corona virus. I find it extremely interesting from a cultural and historical point of view. It shows that we live in an age where we all have at least a rudimentary understanding of molecular biology. It thus signifies a great development; in the times of the plague and cholera, for example, the pathogen could neither be imagined nor depicted. It is also interesting that the representation of the virus has something almost charming about it. It is therefore an attempt to curb the fear and control the danger of the virus. (Matti Bunzl, Director Wien Museum)

After discussion with respective owners, objects will be collected, handed over, or sent by mail. The objects are inventoried and stored in the museum's depot – and thus secured for posterity as well as future exhibitions, publications, and research.

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