

Vienna, April 2019

RED VIENNA 1919 to 1934

Press conference: Monday, 29 April 2019, 10:00 a.m., **Wien Museum MUSA**
Grand opening: Monday, 29 April 2019, 6:30 p.m., **Volkshalle Rathaus**
Location: Wien Museum MUSA, Felderstrasse 6-8, 1010 Vienna
Duration: 30 April 2019 through 19 January 2020
Opening times: Tuesday to Sunday and holidays, 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.
Press photos: www.wienmuseum.at/de/presse

In May 1919, the first free elections to Vienna's Municipal Council delivered the Social Democratic Workers' Party an absolute majority. Thus began a social, cultural, and pedagogical reform project that garnered both a high level of attention internationally and bitter opposition domestically. The Red Vienna project strove toward a thoroughgoing improvement of the living conditions of workers, along with a democratization of all spheres of life. Several of these ideas predated the First World War, but when Vienna achieved its new status as a federal state in 1920, the Social Democrats' scope of action expanded considerably.

The initial postwar situation was catastrophic. Viennese living conditions, already poor by international standards prior to World War One, worsened dramatically during the war. By war's end, Vienna was in a state of massive crisis, its citizens suffering more than any other city on the continent. Hunger, cold, and homelessness prevailed. Housing was the most pressing challenge for the new municipal government. On the basis of a revolutionary fiscal policy (a luxury tax), the city founded numerous social programs and health initiatives, created countless leisure, educational, and cultural facilities, and built more than 60,000 apartments by 1934. Instead of building smaller-scale settlements on the outskirts of the city — a building program favored internationally during this period and also promoted in Vienna initially — the municipal authorities exhibited a preference for multi-storied apartment blocks. This predilection, along with the monumentality of individual complexes like the Karl Marx Hof, was not without controversy.

The question of “how to live” was intensely debated in Red Vienna. This debate touched all aspects of daily life: the role of women and men; the care and education of children; forms of leisure time; one’s choice of pleasures; the outfitting of apartments; and the distribution of housework. Debates also centered on the function of art and culture, along with how people related to their bodies and to death. Euphoria was in the air: The ideas were creative and won over a prominent segment of Vienna’s intellectual elite to the red reform project. As representatives of “intellectual Vienna,” Sigmund Freud, Hans Kelsen, and Robert Musil urged Viennese voters to choose the Social Democratic Party in 1927. Anna Freud engaged herself with the training of kindergarden teachers, and Käthe Leichter surveyed workers about their daily living conditions. Counseling centers were established, advice pamphlets were published in high volumes, projects based on the latest social research were in high demand, and new exhibition techniques were tested in museums. Otto Neurath developed his method of visual statistics as a means of communicating “social facts and connections” to a broad audience.

Regarded as a model internationally, the Viennese School Reform introduced by Otto Glöckel sought to overcome the former “drill school” mentality by activating children’s autonomy. The public welfare system, which was presided over politically by the anatomist Julius Tandler, aimed above all to promote the physical health of children and adolescents, even as it drew on eugenicist thinking. As a result, charity institutions like the 9th District’s Child Foster Care Facility (*Kinderübernahmestelle*) with its glass corridors and sparkling cleanliness are also remembered as spaces of control and instantiations of power.

The idea of the “new man or woman” aimed at the formation of an enlightened and class-conscious workforce on the basis of a new culture. The Workers’ Olympics of 1931 is but one example of the pathos inherent in these attempts to forge a community through mass festivals and marches. Critics viewed these initiatives as imitations of religious forms of life.

In contrast to its efforts in the cultural sphere, Red Vienna had few opportunities to influence the world of work. Here the social achievements of the young republic — such as the eight-hour work day and employee co-participation rights — remain decisive. Yet conditions following the Great Depression of 1929 limited the government’s room for manoeuvre considerably. So, too, did the intensifying pressure of the bourgeois federal government and the growing threat of fascism. The last years of Red Vienna reveal an ambivalence between symbolic strength and the actual loss of power.

The exhibition inquires about the specific conditions of Red Vienna and its long-term effects on the city's structure and form. It shines a light on the relationship between Austro-Marxist ideology and political pragmatism, examines the appeal emanating from Red Vienna, and evaluates its influence internationally. The exhibition also considers the current political potential of these dynamic and experimental fifteen years of Viennese communal politics.

The exhibition transcends the boundaries of the MUSA, incorporating Red Vienna's rich and deeply ingrained architectural heritage — a built utopia still visible throughout Vienna. The broader exhibition makes more than ten diverse places around Vienna accessible to the public as "walk-in objects." These include: the Tanzsaal im Karl-Seitz-Hof, a dancehall preserved largely in its original form; a house in the Freihofsiedlung (settlement) in Kagran dating from the 1920s; and the unique Einküchenhaus (today's Heimhof) on the Schmelz, an apartment block in which household chores like cooking and cleaning were centrally organized. Other sites include: the Vorwärts-Haus along the Wienzeile, erstwhile Social Democratic Party headquarters and central printing house; the monumentally executed Zweite Wiener Gewerbliche Fortbildungsschule, an industrial trade school amply provided with artworks; and the Prater Stadium (today's Ernst Happel Stadium) erected for the Workers' Olympics. The exhibitions beyond the MUSA also introduce visitors to the Atelier der ArbeiterfotografInnen der Naturfreunde, a photography atelier in the tower of the Lassallehof for workers interested in nature; the Karl Marx Hof with its museum in the former laundry rooms; the Ledigenheim designed by Ella Briggs, the only independent woman architect in Red Vienna; the former Child Foster Care Facility in Alsergrund; the Museum of Society and Economy founded by Otto Neurath; and Ottakring's Kongressbad, a public bathhouse featuring a witty Viennese melange of constructivist and baroque architecture.

The exhibition is the result of a partnership between the Wien Museum and the Verein für die Geschichte der ArbeiterInnenbewegung (VGA).

During the renovation phase of the Wien Museum on Karlsplatz, MUSA (which the Wien Museum acquired as a new location in 2018) will serve as a temporary location for the Wien Museum's cultural and historical exhibitions. MUSA is also home to the Startgalerie, an exhibition space for young artists, and the City Artothek (Artothek der Stadt), which provides opportunities for people to borrow art for their homes. Both sites will continue to operate free-of-charge during the renovation phase. MUSA will again serve as an exhibition space for contemporary art once the renovation of the Wien Museum is complete.

Admission fee:	Adults: € 7 / discounted rate € 5 (senior citizens, Vienna Card, Ö1-Club, persons with disabilities, students up to 27 years of age, apprentices, Austrian military and civil social service personnel, groups of 10 or more) Children and adolescents under 19 years of age — free admission! First Sunday of every month (all visitors) — free admission!
Visitors' information:	+43 1 5058747-85173, service@wienmuseum.at, www.wienmuseum.at
Curators:	Werner Michael Schwarz, Elke Wikidal (Wien Museum) und Georg Spitaler (VGA)
Curatorial Team:	Christian Dewald, Veronika Duma, Berthold Ecker, Wolfgang Fichna, Bernhard Hachleitner, Marion Krammer, Katrin Pilz, Georg Vasold, Gernot Waldner, Susanne Winkler, Marie-Noelle Yazdanpanah
Exhibition architecture:	Thomas Hamann
Graphic design:	Olaf Osten
Exhibition production:	Isabelle Exinger
Accompanying catalogue:	Das Rote Wien: 1919 bis 1934
Main sponsor:	Wiener Stadtwerke
Press:	Angelika Seebacher , Wien Museum +43 664 882 938 54 angelika.seebacher@wienmuseum.at Florian Pollack , Wien Museum +43 699 1899 1899 florian.pollack@wienmuseum.at