

Vienna, December 2015

REOPENING OF THE CHAPEL OF ST. VIRGIL

- Press conference:** Thursday, 10 December 2015, 10 a.m.
- Opening House:** Saturday and Sunday, 12 to 13 December 2015, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.
- Exhibition venue:** Stephansplatz, Underground Station, 1010 Vienna
- Opening hours:** Tuesday to Sunday and public holidays, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.
24 and 31 December, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.
Closed 1 January, 1 May and 25 December
- Press photos:** www.wienmuseum.at/en/press

A Museum of the Middle Ages

The Chapel of St. Virgil was discovered in 1973 during the building of the subway line and was integrated soon after into the Wien Museum network of sites. This fascinating underground chapel is one of the best-preserved Gothic interior spaces in Vienna. Many questions concerning the early days of the chapel remain unanswered, however, for no written records about its thirteenth-century construction have been found. To this day, we do not know who built the Chapel of St. Virgil, and the original use of this sacred space is shrouded in mystery. We do know that the chapel dates back to around 1220-1230, and that it was conceived as the foundation of another early-Gothic chapel planned for Stephansplatz.

Around 1246, what is now the Chapel of St. Virgil was furnished with paintings covering the architectural seams (Fugenmalereien), along with circumscribed crosses (Radkreuzen) in the niches. Later, the Chapel of Mary Magdalen was erected above this base. The floor plan of this chapel still visible today as an outline in the cobblestones of Stephansplatz.

After the building of a partially submerged mezzanine level above the subterranean structure, the chapel and the space beneath it were used for a variety of purposes from the early fourteenth century onward. The original structure (visible again today as the Chapel of St. Virgil) served as a devotional chapel for an influential Viennese merchant family involved in the textile trade. Among other things, the chapel was outfitted with an altar dedicated to St. Virgil, and the mezzanine level was set aside for use as an ossuary. The Chapel of Mary Magdalen above was subsequently used as a cemetery chapel. At the same time, its galleries provided a gathering space for the "Schreiberzeche," a confraternity of scribes and notaries.

The Chapel of St. Virgil was temporarily closed in 2008 due to conservational concerns, but is again open to the public after comprehensive restoration measures. A visitor-friendly entrance on the subway thoroughfare level (U-Bahn-Passage) grants access to this fascinating sacred space, while a compact exhibition provides a historical summary of medieval Vienna. With the reopening of the Chapel of St. Virgil, the Wien Museum is present once again in the heart of the city. On the weekend of December 12-13, the Chapel of St. Virgil will hold an open house with free admission.

A Musical Sensation: Arvo Pärt Composes Piece for the Chapel of St. Virgil

In addition to the reopening of the Chapel of St. Virgil, it gives the Wien Museum great pleasure to announce a veritable musical sensation. For the first time in years, the Estonian composer, Arvo Pärt, has taken on a new commission. On the occasion of the reopening of the Chapel of St. Virgil, he has composed a piece entitled "Kleine Litanei," a four-minute liturgical vocal work dedicated to the Arnold Schoenberg Choir and its founder and artistic director, Erwin Ortner.

Admission: Adults: EUR 8 / concessions EUR 6
Free admission for school pupils and students under 19 years of age;
Free admission for all visitors every first Sunday of the month

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