

belvedere

# THE BELVEDERE

## Press Information

Upper Belvedere | Lower Belvedere | Orangery | Belvedere 21



Upper Belvedere Northside  
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## THE BELVEDERE – AN OVERVIEW

The two Belvedere palaces were built in the early 18th century by the famous Baroque architect Johann Lucas von Hildebrandt to be used as the summer residence of Prince Eugene of Savoy (1663–1736). One of Europe's most stunning Baroque landmarks, this ensemble – comprising the Upper and Lower Belvedere and an extensive garden – is listed as a UNESCO World Heritage site. Today the Belvedere houses the greatest collection of Austrian art, dating from the Middle Ages to the present day, complemented by the works of international artists including Claude Monet, Vincent van Gogh, and Max Beckmann. One of the highlights of the *Vienna 1880–1914* collection is the world's largest grouping of Gustav Klimt's paintings – including the famous golden Art Nouveau icons *The Kiss (Lovers)* and *Judith*. Works by Egon Schiele and Oskar Kokoschka are also included. Prominent pieces of French Impressionism and the most important collection of Viennese Biedermeier art are further attractions on display at the **Upper Belvedere**. Today, the **Lower Belvedere** and the former **Orangery** are home to temporary exhibitions.

Linking the Lower and Upper Belvedere, the **Palace Gardens** are a gem of Baroque landscape architecture that, together with the two castles, form a harmonious whole declared a World Heritage site by UNESCO. In the 18th century, the park, designed by garden architect Dominique Girard, served mainly as a stage for perambulation and conversation.

The former **Palace Stables** of Prince Eugene at the Lower Belvedere, which has been converted into the *Gallery of Medieval and Renaissance*, offers insights into art from the mid-14th to the first half of the 16th century.

The **Belvedere 21**, built by Karl Schwanzer in 1958 as a pavilion for the World Exhibition in Brussels, was renovated and adapted according to plans devised by architect Adolf Krischanitz. Since November 2011, it has provided the Belvedere with exhibition space for Austrian art from 1945 to the present in an international context.

## LOCATIONS

### UPPER BELVEDERE

#### Palace and Permanent Collection

Built between 1717 and 1723, the Upper Belvedere was designed by Johann Lucas von Hildebrandt. In the days of Prince Eugene, it served primarily for state functions, then became, during the reign of Empress Maria Theresa and Joseph II, one of the first public museums in the world as well as the exhibition venue for the imperial collections.

Today, Prince Eugene of Savoy's former ceremonial palace permanently displays principal works from all sectors of the Belvedere collection, ranging from the Middle Ages to the present day. In addition to architectural highlights such as the historic Marble Hall, where the Austrian State Treaty was signed in 1955; the Baroque Palace Chapel; the impressive Grand Staircase; and the magnificent Sala Terrena, the Upper Belvedere houses some of the most important works of Austrian art history. The highlights include the world's largest collection of Gustav Klimt's paintings, including the famous golden Art Nouveau icons *The Kiss (Lovers)* and *Judith*. The collection of outstanding works of Art Nouveau and Viennese Secessionist art is rounded out with masterpieces by Egon Schiele and Oskar Kokoschka as well as other international artists. In addition, the Belvedere has the most important collection of Viennese Biedermeier works – with numerous paintings by Ferdinand Georg Waldmüller among others – a comprehensive Baroque collection, remarkable medieval works of art, as well as significant works from the 19th and 20th centuries.

#### **Sala Terrena**

Four powerful Atlases support the stuccoed, vaulted ceiling of the Sala Terrena (the ground floor hall). Originally this room was designed as a single spacious hall but after structural damages during the winter of 1732/33, the installation of the four columns became necessary. The hall opens onto to the garden side of the Upper Belvedere and leads to the Grand Staircase, thus the Sala Terrena serves both as the garden hall and vestibule.

#### **Grand Staircase**

The original main entrance, still visible today in the access ramps, is located on the southern side of the Upper Belvedere. From there, guests would have accessed the main floor of the palace directly via the Grand Staircase.

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## **Carlone Hall**

The Carlone Hall, or Painted Hall, was named after its creator, the northern Italian fresco master and itinerant artist Carlo Innocenzo Carlone (1686–1775). He painted the impressive ceiling fresco depicting the Triumphs of Aurora (1722/23), while the trompe l'oeil architecture was executed by Marcantonio Chiarini and Gaetano Fanti.

## **Marble Hall**

The Marble Hall is the most magnificent room of the Upper Belvedere, dominated by reddish-brown marble and gildings. The ceiling fresco by Carlo Innocenzo Carlone, painted in 1721, shows Prince Eugene's eternal glory amidst the princely virtues, while History upholds his deeds and Fame praises the same. The illusionist architectural paintings were, in all likelihood, executed by Gaetano Fanti based on designs conceived by his father-in-law, Marcantonio Chiarini. The Marble Hall of the Belvedere came to be widely known to the general public for what was probably the most important event post-World War II: the signing of the Austrian State Treaty by Leopold Figl on May 15, 1955.

## **Palace Chapel**

The octagonal Palace Chapel is located on the southeastern side of the Upper Belvedere. An engraving by Salomon Kleiner dating from the 1730s reveals that the chapel has been largely preserved in its original condition. The decorative pattern of the two-story central structure echoes the same of the Marble Hall. The altarpiece is also exquisite and shows the Resurrection of Christ by Francesco Solimena, one of the most significant exponents of Neapolitan Baroque. Rounding out the upper part of the stately room is a fresco by Carlo Innocenzo Carlone depicting the Holy Trinity against a backdrop of the heavens.

## LOWER BELVEDERE

### Palace and Temporary Exhibits

The construction of the Lower Belvedere was accomplished between 1712 and 1716, with Lucas von Hildebrandt as its architect. While the Lower Belvedere functioned as a residential palace, the Upper Belvedere served primarily for state purposes. Parts of the prince's collections were also housed in the Lower Belvedere.

#### Privy Garden

The former private garden of Prince Eugene of Savoy, the so-called Privy Garden, is located to the west of the Lower Belvedere and offers a particularly intimate setting. Once, this garden area divided into two terraces was bordered to the north by the Orangery and to the south by an aviary. Reserved exclusively for the prince and his closest companions, the gardens featured fountains, ornately decorated pavilions with pergolas, and magnificent grounds decorated with flowers. Today the garden is used in the summer for events (for example, Cinema in the Privy Garden).

#### Marble Hall

Originally, guests would have been welcomed with great ceremony in the Lower Belvedere's two-story Marble Hall. The structure of the walls borrows from the architecture of triumphal arches, while war trophies and representations of prisoners allude to Prince Eugene's successes as an imperial commander. By contrast, the oval-shaped plaster medallions showing scenes from the life of Apollo recall the prince's aesthetic interests. The ceiling fresco by Martino Altomonte depicts Apollo in a sun chariot. Prince Eugene is represented as a nude hero as Mercury announces gifts from the pope honoring the prince's achievements at the Battle of Peterwardein in 1716.

#### Marble Gallery

In the Marble Gallery the walls are also embellished with stucco war trophies referring to Prince Eugene's military successes. On the ceiling a stucco relief glorifies the prince, showing him at the center, enthroned and armed, being honored with awards while Peace approaches banishing Envy and Hatred.

#### Hall of Grotesques

Decorating sale terrene and garden pavilions with painted grotesques on walls and ceilings was a popular practice in Vienna of the early 18th century. Augsburg-born painter Jonas Drentwett adorned the ceiling of the Lower Belvedere's Hall of Grotesques with the Four Seasons and the Four Elements (in the corners). The windowless walls show Vulcan's Forge and the Three Graces embodying masculine and feminine principles. Most of these paintings have been preserved in their original condition. However, the wall facing the Privy Garden was hit by a bomb in 1945 and thus required restoration.

## **Gold Cabinet**

Originally, the Marble Gallery was adjoined by a conversation room. Under Maria Theresa, this room was redesigned into a gold cabinet. Some of its decoration was taken from Prince Eugene's city palace on Himmelpfortgasse, with additions being made for the Lower Belvedere as required. The Gold Cabinet is believed to have been completed by 1765.

## **Palace Stables**

The Palace Stables, once home to the prince's horses, serve today as the *Gallery Middle Ages and Renaissance*. After the presentation was restructured and extensively adapted it now displays treasures dating from the mid-fourteenth to the first half of the sixteenth century. The Gallery houses a special gem: the *Salzburg Altar* by the Late Gothic painter Rueland Frueauf the Elder. The eight panels once adorned a monumental winged altar in Salzburg, most likely in the church of the archbishopric of St. Peter. Other exhibition highlights include panel paintings by Michael Pacher, Thomas von Villach and Urban Görttschacher, carved figures by Hans Klocker, and sandstone sculptures by the Master of Grosslobming.

## **Orangery**

The Orangery was originally a heated conservatory intended for orange trees. It featured retractable roof construction, which was rather uncommon for the time. Following Prince Eugene's death, the orange trees were transferred to Schönbrunn Palace and his Pomeranzenhaus (orangery) was converted into stables. After 1918, this building housed parts of the Moderne Galerie and, from 1953 to 2007, the Museum of Medieval Art. In 2007, the architect Susanne Zottl designed a modern, white cube exhibition space in the Orangery. Today, the space features major temporary exhibitions.

## BELVEDERE 21

### A venue for contemporary art, film and music, and a lively meeting place within an emerging urban district

Belvedere 21 is a venue for artistic and curatorial experimentation. It conveys art of the present, examines contemporary society, and fosters public discourse. Through a program of rotating solo and group exhibitions, Belvedere 21 presents contemporary artworks and practices, often featuring selections from the Belvedere collection. Its programmatic focus is on contemporary art produced in Austria, placing it in an international context. The spacious, open building—a key work of Austrian postwar Modernism—comprises three exhibition levels, the Blickle Cinema, an event space, and the Lucy Bar. Belvedere 21 also houses the Artothek des Bundes (Federal Art Library) and the estate of sculptor Fritz Wotruba. The sculpture garden features works by internationally acclaimed artists and is open to the public.

#### **Building History**

The building that houses Belvedere 21 is one of the most significant works of postwar architecture in Austria. It was originally designed by the Viennese architect Karl Schwanzer as the Austrian Pavilion for the 1958 World Expo in Brussels. At the time, its clear formal language, glass halls, and innovative use of materials were widely regarded as exemplary of modern architecture. After the exposition, the building was reconstructed in the Schweizergarten, adapted for museum use, and opened as the Museum of the Twentieth Century (20er Haus) (*20er Haus*). Since 2011, it has been operated by the Belvedere—first as *21er Haus* and, since 2018, as *Belvedere 21*.

#### **Blickle Cinema**

The Blickle Cinema at the Belvedere 21 is Vienna's only fully preserved cinema from the 1950s. Generous support from Ursula Blickle enabled the renovation of the space in 2012, bringing the cinema up to current technical standards and allowing it to host a wide range of programming formats. The Blickle Kino's program places particular emphasis on Austrian artistic (experimental) film, situating it within the broader context of international art history.

#### **Sculpture Garden**

The sculpture garden features works by internationally recognized artists, including Heimo Zobernig, who in 2013 created five stage-like concrete platforms that relate to the building's overall architecture and are suitable for various purposes. Other works—such as Fritz Wotruba's *Large Figure Relief*, Maruša Sagadin's participatory sculpture *B-Girls, Go!*, VALIE EXPORT's *Die Doppelgängerin*, and Lois Weinberger's *Wild Cube*—establish connections between the garden and the museum. The sculpture garden is open to the public free of charge during the museum's opening hours.

## **Arthothek des Bundes**

The Arthothek des Bundes collects, manages, and cares for artworks acquired since 1948 through the federal art acquisition program, thereby providing a comprehensive record of modern and contemporary Austrian art. Ongoing acquisitions by the responsible federal ministry ensure that the collection continues to expand and remain current.

## **Wotruba at the Belvedere 21**

The works of Viennese sculptor Fritz Wotruba (1907–75) are today considered key positions of postwar Modernism. The Belvedere manages his extensive artistic and documentary estate, which was initially held on permanent loan and has formed part of the collection since 2021. The Wotruba Depot and the study room at Belvedere 21 are accessible by appointment to curators, students, and researchers interested in Wotruba and his artistic context.

## **GUSTAV KLIMT AND THE BELVEDERE**

Gustav Klimt (1862–1918) and the Belvedere, which houses the most important collection of Austrian art, share a common bond. It was on the initiative of Klimt and other artists that the Moderne Galerie was founded in 1903 – the institution that has evolved into today's Belvedere. The objective was to create a place for contemporary Austrian art to be presented in an international context. To this day, the Belvedere's scientific activities and exhibition work are based on this premise.

### **First acquisitions: *The Kiss (Lovers)***

Gustav Klimt was a highly respected artist during his lifetime, despite the fact that he withdrew from the public eye after a scandal surrounding his faculty paintings in 1905 to work from then on exclusively for the liberal bourgeoisie. By the time of his death in 1918, some of his works had already been acquired for the Moderne Galerie, including the world-famous Art Nouveau icon *The Kiss (Lovers)*. The work was purchased by the Imperial-Royal Ministry for Culture and Education for the Moderne Galerie at the Vienna Kunstschau in 1908, the year it was created. It is still to this day considered to be the highlight of the Belvedere collection.

### **Largest collection of Klimt's paintings**

Owning altogether twenty-four works, the Belvedere holds the world's largest collection of oil paintings by Gustav Klimt, including the two masterpieces from his Golden Period, *The Kiss (Lovers)* and *Judith*; major portraits (*Sonja Knips*, *Fritza Riedler*, and *Johanna Staude*, etc.); landscapes; and allegorical depictions. The Belvedere collection also includes one of Klimt's sketchbooks and his monumental *Beethoven Frieze* at the Vienna Secession.

Gustav Klimt's masterpieces are on permanent display at the Upper Belvedere. In this comprehensive collection Klimt's development can be traced from his early explorations of Historicism, through Secessionism, to, finally, his late work, which reveals the influence of the Fauves and a younger generation of Austrian artists, including Egon Schiele.

The undisputed highlight of the collection is Klimt's world-renowned masterpiece *The Kiss (Lovers)*. It shows the allegorical depiction of a pair of lovers in an entwined embrace. On an almost four-square-meter canvas, Klimt's personal style is brought to life with impressive clarity. In the work, which incorporates design principles of not only Japanese art but also Byzantine mosaic works and medieval panel painting, the viewer will also detect the artist's examination of the works of Auguste Rodin, George Minne, and Edvard Munch. The precious ornamentation and the use of silver and gold plating create the impression that the couple is released from earthly life. *The Kiss (Lovers)* represents both the apex and the end-point of an artistic phase in Klimt's oeuvre, in which he juxtaposed naturalistically rendered, delicately painted sections of skin with a two-dimensional, ornamental conception of the other parts of the picture. The role of ornament in this case was to convey the symbolic message of the pictures.

Yet another Art Nouveau icon and an impressive example of Klimt's "Golden Period" is his portrait *Judith*. Heroine and savior of her people, she is portrayed as a sensuous and seductively provocative femme fatale. The ambivalence between the initial perception by Catholics of Judith as an allegory of chastity and the idea of the sexualized seductress contributes to the appeal and the subversive power of the picture.

The stylistic evolution of Klimt's portraits of women, commissioned by the wealthy Viennese bourgeoisie, can be clearly traced at the Belvedere from the early portrait of *Sonja Knips* (1898), to *Fritza Riedler* (1906), and on to the unfinished portrait of *Johanna Staude* (1917/18). During the summer months the artist frequently withdrew to the Attersee, where most of his landscape paintings, such as *Poppy Field* (1907), *The Sunflower* (1907), and *Avenue in Front of Kammer Castle* (1912), were created. On February 6, 1918, Gustav Klimt died at the age of 56 as a result of a stroke. He left behind numerous unfinished paintings including *Amalie Zuckerkandl* (1917) and *Adam and Eve* (1917), both of which are also in the holdings of the Belvedere collection.

## GENERAL INFORMATION

### Upper Belvedere

Prinz-Eugen-Straße 27, 1030 Vienna, Austria  
Monday to Sunday 9 am to 6 pm

### Lower Belvedere & Orangery

Rennweg 6, 1030 Vienna, Austria  
Monday to Sunday 10 am to 6 pm

### Palace Stables

Gallery Middle Ages and Renaissance  
Rennweg 6, 1030 Vienna, Austria  
Monday to Sunday 10 am to 6 pm

### Belvedere 21

Arsenalstraße 1, 1030 Vienna, Austria  
Tuesday to Sunday 11 am - 6 pm  
Late Night: Thursday 11 am to 9 pm  
Mondays only open on public holidays.

## CONTACT

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