The Kaiserlich Königliche Gemäldegalerie in Vienna seen from an International Perspective: 1780 - 1855 - 1891: It's architectural setting and museological embedding
Meijers, D.J.

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When viewed from an international perspective, the history of the Gemäldegalerie of the Hapsburg dynasty since the late eighteenth century displays a number of exceptional characteristics. (Fig. 2) From being extremely progressive in 1780, the gallery gradually lost its exemplary status after 1815 – at least in terms of its location and its museological situation – as compared with galleries in places like Berlin, Dresden, Munich, and London. A turn in the gallery’s fortune took place after 1858 with the planning and construction of the Ringstrasse.¹ It is true that it made up for lost ground in terms of modernization, but the result – the new museum building designed by Gottfried Semper and Carl von Hasenauer – ensured that it reverted once more to being something of an anomaly in the European museum landscape of the second half of the nineteenth century. (Fig. 3)

This was the case in at least two respects. In the first place, while elsewhere the general trend was towards greater specialization, the Viennese painting gallery was made part of a complex of two museums, which together continued to embrace the entire spectrum of art history and natural history departments. Secondly, whereas in the rest of Europe the newly built museums had gained independence from the traditional seat of power, namely the palace, the Viennese museums had their constituent parts moulded by the urban planners into a single unit with the Hofburg, known as the 'Kaiserforum'.

In this paper I should like to examine from an international perspective² the extent to which the K. K. Gemäldegalerie remained an exception to the rule, and what factors could have played a role in this. In doing so I don’t intend to enter the gallery, but rather to make a tour around it to investigate its siting. Let us take as our reference point the year 1855 and see if the characteristics of the gallery in that period already tell us something about the new Hofmuseum designed and built between 1867 and 1891 in terms of the encyclopedic character of the collection in which the painting gallery was embedded,¹ and of the dynastic character of its location, the Kaiserforum.

A British traveller in 1855
A hypothetical art expert – an Englishman, for the sake of argument (Fig. 4) – undertaking a tour of Europe in 1855 would have visited Berlin, Dresden and Munich, towns where, since 1825, five new royal museums had sprung up. He would deliberately have chosen to travel by train,¹ and to go in September of that year, because two of the museums would just have opened their doors to the public: in Berlin, Friedrich August Stüler’s Neues Museum (built, 1841–55/59, as a complement to Karl Friedrich Schinkel’s Königliches Museum of 1822–30, henceforth referred to as the Altes Museum); and in Dresden, Gottfried Semper’s Neues Königliches Museum (1847–55).
Fig. 2
Panorama of the Oberes and Unteres Belvedere from the south, with the fortified city in the background. Lithograph, before 1850. Vienna, ÖNB, 11.532C

Fig. 3
Gottfried Semper/Karl von Hasenauer, Grundzüge einer Anlage bezweckend die Verbindung der Hofburg mit den k.k. Museen in Wien (Design for connection between the Hofburg and the Imperial and Royal Museums in Vienna), pencil drawing, 1869

Fig. 4
English travellers consulting Baedeker or Murray. Coloured lithograph, 1852
From Dresden our British tourist would then have travelled to Munich to view Leo von Klenze’s pioneering work, the Glyptothek (1816–30) and the Pinakothek (1826–36). He would also have heard of Klenze’s New Hermitage in St Petersburg (1839–52), but viewing it would have been too ambitious for a single tour – the more so because his final destination would have been Vienna.

In the case of these German projects, all pre-1855, he would be confronted with modern urban development projects, which reflected the new demands of bourgeois society. Within these projects the new museum buildings were all allocated important sites, more or less separate from the palace as the traditional seat of power. In Berlin, Dresden and Munich clusters of museums arose relatively independently of the palaces, entering the public domain instead, in St Petersburg (to Klenze’s rage) the museum had to be built on to the Hermitage. This imperial museum thus displayed a certain resemblance to that of Vienna. London, by contrast, was a very different story, due to the parliamentary form of government already in place in Great Britain. The National Gallery (William Wilkins, 1833–38) was built entirely on a citizen initiative and was situated in the city centre, on Trafalgar Square, to make it easily accessible to the public.

His own experience in London and his museum tour through Germany would mean that our British traveller would now be familiar with recently built and usually centrally located galleries and museums. However, when he arrived in Vienna in 1855 to visit the Kaiserlich Königliche Gemäldegalerie, he would have had to go out of the town centre to reach it, at a location which ought, as he understood it, to have become unusual for the housing of a national or imperial collection. And what he encountered there would have been equally striking: an early eighteenth-century baroque country estate in the form of a long, sloping park, closed off on its two short sides by, respectively, an encyclopedic museum and a picture gallery. Even so, a great number of visitors did manage to find their way to it despite its decentralized location – a development that was facilitated...
Fig. 6

Fig. 7
Rudolf von Alt, The Gloggnitzer (right) and Brucker (left) railway stations near the Belvedere, on either side of an office building with a restaurant. Baedeker and Murray recommended this place to museum visitors for lunch. Watercolour, c. 1860. Vienna, ÖNB, Inv.no. D 16.735–B
by the two railway lines, which by c. 1850 brought travellers from especially the southern part of the empire almost to the main entrance to the park and the gallery in the Oberes Belvedere.\(^6\) (Fig. 7) The encyclopedic museum in the Unteres Belvedere, which was situated on the Rennweg, was a particular attraction however. There the visitors would have seen Egyptian sculpture and other antiquities, suits of armour, ethnographic objects and curiosities of all sorts, which had been gradually assembled – as the printed guide explained – since the former Schloss Ambras Kunstkammer had been installed there in 1814–16.\(^7\) They were interesting exhibits in themselves, but probably not what our British visitor had come to see, accustomed as he was to the collections of the British Museum. His destination would have been the gallery of paintings, which he would already have spotted at the top of the park, and whose opulence would not have disappointed him: the National Gallery in London (set up at great effort only a few decades before) bore no comparison with this collection.\(^8\)

Changes in the perception of the gallery and the park since c. 1780

In a number of respects, it was still possible for visitors in 1855 to imagine how at the time of its reorganization in 1780 the Vienna gallery had been one of the most progressive galleries in Europe: quite apart from its overwhelming riches, clear, instructive classification and easy access it would still have been appealing, particularly in view of a number of modern features that had been introduced by 1855.\(^9\) Its location was a different story altogether, as was the museological context in which the gallery had ended up. In the 1770s, when the paintings were moved from the gloomy Hofburg development to the Belvedere country estate, they were also seen as having been ‘liberated’ from the curiosities which had previously formed part of the gallery. Their setting in the natural environment of the park and its surrounding countryside was thought ideal in that enlightened epoch: its praises were sung by Christian von Mechel who deemed it to be an ideal union between art and nature: “Every window of this exquisite building reveals a delightful landscape, a new nature painting to our gaze.”\(^10\)

A royal or imperial gallery on a country estate – in the German-speaking territories this was a tradition which could be traced back to the beginning of the eighteenth century, when German sovereigns would, by preference, set up a gallery in or adjoining their summer palaces. It belonged to the tradition of Schloss Salzdahlum between Wolfenbüttel and Braunschweig (1687–1715) or Schloss Schleißheim near Munich (c. 1715–26) and also to the first freestanding gallery in Potsdam near Berlin (1755–64).\(^11\) A stroll through the garden combined with the delights of art gave respite from the demands of court life in the city. Moving the Bildergalerie to the Belvedere towards 1780 to some extent fitted in with this trend, with the important difference that park and mansion had already lost their original residential function and were now opened to a wider public, comprising artists, art-lovers and any interested citizens.

By around 1855, however, the rustic setting had become unusual: in the eyes of our Englishman such a location among verdant greenery was an appropriate setting for a private nobleman, but not for the collection of a monarch. By that time, the rightful place for a public gallery was in, or near, the town centre. The vicinity of the encyclopedic complex of cabinets in the Unteres Belvedere would probably have come across as even more singular.\(^12\) With its suits of armour, antiquities, ethnographic objects and other curiosities, these exhibits acted as a sort of introduction to the gallery of paintings from one end, or if you entered from the other end, they functioned as an unusual added bonus. The gradual relocation of these collections to this site after 1814 had inevitably placed the picture gallery in a different context, which begs the question as to whether the visitors of 1855 saw the paintings in a different light than those of 1780. In more
than one regard we get the impression that the Belvedere complex had become histori-
cized – a process by which the collections on display were given the function of a dynas-
tic museum.

Whereas it was lauded as long ago as the Mechel epoch for the links it evoked with its
builder Prince Eugene of Savoy, for instance with a presentation of battles in the Unteres
Belvedere,\(^\text{15}\) in this new era the whole development was being in a certain sense ‘museumi-
fied’. This can be witnessed in around 1850 when the gallery’s director Peter Krafft had the
fountains, gates and buildings restored to their original Baroque style dating back to the
time of its heroic patron.\(^\text{16}\) And whereas in 1780 the two galleries in the Oberes and
Unteres Belvedere already recalled the patronage of many generations of Hapsburgs, after
1815 this was intensified by the transfer of the former Ambras Kunstkammer with its many
suits of armour, portraits and genealogical trees of ancestors testifying to the greater glo-
ry of the Hapsburg dynasty. These tangible objects may have appealed more to people’s
imaginations than mere paintings of battles, the more so because the Ambras collection
had been evacuated in 1805 after the loss of Tyrol to Bavaria, and saved three times from
confiscation by the French. Due to its history this Kunstkammer had inevitably become a
memorial in the form of a museum, and this probably explained in part its great appeal to
a wide public.\(^\text{17}\) (Fig. 8)
But in addition to this, the different exhibits that had been added to the collection in the following years also referred to the achievements of the Hapsburg dynasty. For instance, there was the *Sammlung Kraushaar*, a collection of portraits, maps and atlases illustrating Austria’s history from 1454–1705, set up under the name ‘Maximilian library’, because it also contained a charter and a portrait of Maximilian I in his youth. What would, after all, have still been called a *Kunstkammer* a few decades earlier had, by 1855, become more of a historical museum displaying the achievements of the dynasty, intended for and actually visited by a broad public, including children.

**Temporary solution or precursor?**

This was how the Belvedere development, unlike museums in the German states of around 1815, had gradually been given a dynastic and encyclopedic boost – begging the question: should we see this as a precursor of the same two qualities which would later be the hallmarks of the new Hofmuseum on the Kaiserforum? Or to put it another way, did this development stem from merely practical considerations, amounting in fact to a “Notlösung”, as some authors suggest? Or was something more structural taking place – a deliberate choice to combine these differing sorts of collections, including the picture gallery, specifically on this site? The latter explanation seems more likely, for there were even plans for a further extension. In my view the concept of the dynastic total museum of the Ringstrasse was already in statu nascendi at the Belvedere, although practical factors probably played a role here too.

Seen from the perspective of the court authorities, transporting the Ambras collection to this country estate was a logical step. Where else could these suits of armour and valuable curiosities be shown to an ever-increasing public? There was no convenient place in the Hofburg and it would have been difficult to find space for the construction of new buildings inside the town walls. The Belvedere was already in use as a museum, with its painting gallery which drew visitors from home and abroad. So opting for this location for the Ambras collection must have been a foregone conclusion.

Even though pragmatism may have played a role in the choice of location, however, it does not mean that we are dealing with a “Notlösung” here. That is attested to by several plans that were launched by the Cabinet of coins and antiquities, situated in the Augustnergang of the Hofburg – the department which the Ambras collection fell under. There is an unimplemented proposal dating from 1816 to move this cabinet in its entirety from its cramped quarters to the Unteres Belvedere. Another plan, launched by the curator Josef Ritter von Arnheth in 1833, was more selective and betrays a more specific motive. Arneth proposed to leave the coins, cameos and “Preziosen” in the Burg as these were important for specialists, but to accommodate all the other more popular art collections in the Unteres Belvedere. As Lhotsky put it, Arneth’s aim in relocating the art collections to the Belvedere was to make them more accessible, prompted as he was by a belief that works of art were a ‘Mittel des Unterrichtes und der Bildung’. The proposal moreover affected not only the art, but also the natural history collections. This was incidentally not the first such attempt: there is even a design drawing for a museum of natural history, dating presumably from around 1820, and intended to be sited in the Kammergarten, next to the Unteres Belvedere. Because it was common practice everywhere to include ethnology under natural history, it would seem not improbable that this museum design was also intended for the ethnographic objects, which were the spoils of the expedition to the Portuguese colony of Brazil ordered by Emperor Franz II (I) in 1817 on the occasion of his daughter Maria Leopoldine’s marriage to the Portuguese heir to the throne, Dom Pedro. It was during these years after all that a search was being conducted for suitable premises to display this rapidly growing collection.
However this may be, none of these plans do suggest that we are dealing with a Notlö-sung or temporary solution due to lack of space, but with a deliberate choice for this particular location where, according to its director Anton Steinbüchel, the Ambras collection had already proved the "public’s favourite", attracting five or six hundred visitors a week. That the proposed move to the Belvedere was in part carried out, can be concluded from the fact that in 1821 a start was made on moving ethnographic objects, and in around 1840 parts of the collection of antiquities to the Unterer Belvedere, including the sculptures of the ‘Theseus’ temple in the Volksgarten. The same occurred with the Egyptian antiquities, which till 1836 had shared premises in the Johannesgasse with the Brasilianisches Museum.

Unfortunately the natural history collections mentioned in Arneth’s plan were ignored by the historians who were only interested in the art collections. In this connection however they should be looked at, because there was a great deal of activity going on at that time next door in the university botanical gardens that bordered on the Belvedere. (Fig. 9) Building had begun here in 1843 on a museum to house the botanical collection of the K. K. Hof-Naturalienkabinett, including the many plants from the Brasilianisches Museum, which means that these too, like the archaeological and ethnological collections just mentioned, were moved to the Rennweg.

Although the Belvedere complex developed in this way partly due to practical circumstances, we can perhaps discern here the features that would later define the new Kunsthistorisches Hofmuseum – the emphasis on the dynastic, and the combining of all the art-historical collections with the painting gallery embedded in it as one department among several.

Where did this unusual syndrome – as one might almost call it – come from, and what factors played a role in this phenomenon for which there had been increasing evidence from the early nineteenth century onwards? Did the founding since roughly 1805 of numerous Nationalmuseen and Landesmuseen have an influence on the policy regarding mu-

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*Fig. 9*
The museum in the Botanical Garden of the University, next to the Belvedere, built 1843–44. Photograph from: Fritsch 1894, Teylers Museum Haarlem
seums as pursued in Vienna? These questions should be viewed in the context of the peculiar constitutional history of Austria, which displays ever more conflict between the centre of power and the ‘periphery’ during this period. Due to its complexity this question is beyond the scope of this article and deserves separate study. I will therefore only touch tentatively on some aspects.

Enquiry into a syndrome 1: the Hapsburg Länder

As I have shown above, Vienna was slow off the mark in developing museums compared with the German states. From today’s point of view we would expect that the new building works in Vienna would have been fostered by this realization. Especially in the earlier writings about the history of the Kunsthistorisches Museum however reference is made not to activities abroad but to the situation in the Austrian-Hungarian monarchy itself. According to Alphons Lhotsky, the museums which had already been founded in the first decades of the nineteenth century in most of the parts of the empire formed one of the most important stimuli for the court and the city of Vienna to undertake new internal museum developments. One might deduce from this that internal competition weighed more heavily than that from outside. This sounds not improbable, because with these new internal museum developments patriotism played a considerable role, finding its expression for instance in the claims some of the Länder had begun to make on archaeological finds in their own regions, and in the growing tendency among the aristocracy to donate their art or other collections to their native land. This was the Länder’s response to the automatism by which since at least the mid-eighteenth century the most valuable collection items were transferred to Vienna. Moreover in some instances, these museums, which were built up in an encyclopedic fashion, aspired not only to provide a distinct local accent but also to collect work of international significance. The aim was to compare one’s own flora, fauna and archaeological finds with those from elsewhere, and the same applied to the arts and objects of antiquity. With the arts the national criterion could also lie in the origins of the collector instead of that of the art collected. This for instance was the case with the Viennese Esterházy collection, where Italian, Spanish and Netherlands masterpieces were sold to Hungary, the collector’s native land. Correspondingly in the case of the Tyrolean Stände a dominant factor was the wish to get back the Ambraser Sammlung that had been moved to Vienna, even though this collection did not actually contain any ‘Tirolensia’.

In brief then, the founding of these museums could have formed a threat to ‘Vienna’, and yet we get the impression that Franz I initially embraced the founding of museums in the Länder, as did the heir to the throne, Ferdinand (Innsbruck) and the archdukes Joseph (Pest) and Johann (Graz). Whether that was still the case after 1848 is not certain. It is a known fact that the relations between the central authorities and the Länder were subject to major changes in this period. The museum policies implemented by both parties should not therefore be studied in isolation but in relation to each other and in the context of nineteenth century constitutional developments – something that has regrettably occurred all too little up till now.

It is doubtful whether the wide scope of these local museums bore any relation to the equally generous composition of the imperial collections in Vienna – for instance, through having roots in a similar tradition. The Nationalmuseen and the Landesmuseen were generally encyclopedic in contents, but their backgrounds were different. They did not originate as the imperial collections did in an older, royal Kunstkammer tradition, but in the eighteenth-century optimism of the Enlightenment and they were often related to societies of the aristocracy or the bourgeoisie, who documented, studied and encouraged the countryside, crafts, agriculture, arts and literature of their region.
Nonetheless this sort of faith in progress and patriotism was also present in imperial circles. One can see it in Joseph II for instance, and in the man appointed by him in 1779 to rearrange the Gemäldegalerie, Christian von Mechel from Switzerland. In this light Mechel’s German section on the second floor, which has so often been a subject of debate, suddenly takes on the traits of a Nationalmuseum before the term existed. Possibly this may explain why this aspect of his German nationalist redesign enjoyed little appreciation in Viennese court circles. As Kugler put it: “[…] the great, public imperial collections didn’t amount to a Nationalmuseum. They established an identity with the dynasty and not with the people or the nation.” In the Hapsburg state with its variety of peoples, which was dominated by the German-speaking sector of the population, a German Nationalmuseum would have been inappropriate.

Enquiry into a syndrome 2: from Berlin to Vienna

It must be admitted however that there are cases elsewhere in the Europe of around 1855 of painting galleries being incorporated into a museum with a broader composition. But these were situations that dated from the eighteenth century and which still prevailed, like for instance the Hermitage in St Petersburg, the Uffizi in Florence, or the Museo Borbonico in Naples where antiquities of all sorts belonged to their stocks. The typical feature of Vienna on the other hand was that what was involved here was not the survival of, but rather a reversion to an embedding of the painting gallery. Something similar was also true of the architectural location. There definitely were some museums elsewhere in the second half of the nineteenth century that were directly linked to power centres; there too however it was a matter of a relation that had originated at an earlier stage and which was still maintained, as in the case of the Vatican. The situation in Vienna was quite different because there it was deliberately planned and repeated over again.
Apart from Emperor Franz Joseph, no European ruler in the course of the nineteenth century commissioned an encyclopedic art museum – with one exception. It is true that King Frederick William IV of Prussia did so, but the dynasty did not play such a crucial role there. (Fig. 10) Once again a comparison with this Berlin museum serves to cast light on the very particular character of the situation in Vienna.

Arriving in Berlin in the summer of 1855, our British art-lover would have been able to visit Friedrich August Stüler’s newly opened Neues Museum (built 1841–1855/59), where a range of collections representing various cultural fields was on display. The new building was connected by an overhead bridge to Schinkel’s Altes Museum opened shortly before, in 1830, which was deliberately dedicated exclusively to painting and original sculptures, cameos, coins, vases and other precious objects from classical antiquity. However, when the Neues Museum was added, the two museums with their different specializations – art and history – formed a new entity, with the two parts complementing each other. After first admiring the originals from classical antiquity, the 1855 visitor could walk from the painting gallery of the Altes Museum by way of the overhead bridge, enter the chronological survey of plaster casts in the Neues Museum, (Fig. 11) and then decide to go down to the departments of Egyptian antiquities, Vaterländische Altertümer and ethnological objects. Or alternately he could go up to the former Brandenburg Kunstkammer and the cabinet of drawings and prints.
In Vienna however, on arrival in the Belvedere, the traveller would have recognized few similarities. Even though the court cabinets would have been the starting point in both cities, in Berlin there were scarcely any references to the patron Frederick William IV and his dynasty, let alone any exaltation of it as was the case in Vienna. The Berlin museum development was originally intended to be a Freistätte, or sanctuary, totally devoted to the arts and sciences. Moreover, if the combination of the Altes and the Neues Museum could already have been called encyclopedic, then this was not so much in the traditional Kunstkammer sense of the word, but should rather be seen as meaning that it included the whole gamut of modern cultural and historical disciplines, from art history and archaeology by way of Egyptology to national archaeology and ethnology.

Furthermore in Berlin the different departments had already moved to their own, specialized museums by the time that a single all-embracing museum opened its doors in Vienna in 1890/91. For instance, in Berlin the Kunstkammer had already been moved to the Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe in 1875. What was definitely exceptional in Vienna was that a new museum of such an all-embracing nature should actually be built so late in the century, as twin sister to an almost identical natural history museum opposite, and that the departments should have stayed together to the present day.

Conclusion: The embedded gallery and the specific history of the Hapsburg museum
To sum up briefly then, when the plans for the museum’s new building in Vienna were developed after 1867, not only were they late, but they also took on a form of their own. This was the case in more than one regard. It is of course true that the painting gallery returned to the town centre, as was the trend, and was housed in a new building as a part of the urban renewal plan like everywhere in the German states. Nonetheless there were two crucial differences between Vienna and anywhere else in Europe.

Firstly, by moving the collections from the Unteres Belvedere and the Hofburg with it, the gallery was made part of a cultural and historical complex with, among other artefacts, Greek, Roman and Egyptian antiquities, applied art from the Middle Ages to more recent times, and historical weapons. That was at odds with the pattern of specialization, which had taken place elsewhere in Europe in the same period, since around 1870.

Secondly, the collections, including the painting gallery, once again became part of the Hof development, with the construction of a Kaiserforum linking the art history and natural history Hofmuseum with the Hofburg and converting them into the physical and symbolic centre of the new Ringstrasse. This deviated from the pattern of self-determination seen in museums elsewhere, which – physically, administratively and symbolically – were engaged in a process of freeing themselves from their ruler’s sphere of authority.

This meant that the Kunsthistorisches Museum didn’t become a museum in the modern sense, but rather a monument to the Hapsburg dynasty or, as Beatriz Kriller puts it, “an imperial palace of the arts, housing the private property of the emperor with its origins in the Hapsburg dynasty and making it public for ‘His peoples’. It reflects a unity of collection, building, decorations and the sovereignty of its builder, so that it can in fact be denoted as a monument.”

Both characteristics, I would suggest, had already taken shape in the Belvedere as it was before 1855, and were founded on age-old Hapsburg traditions. Two key quotations confirm this, one by Lhotsky, the other again by Kriller. Even though the picture they give here is of the museum in the form it acquired in the period from 1867 to 1891, their words refer implicitly to a Hapsburg tradition that dates back a long way, even further than 1855 or 1780, which are my self-imposed marker dates.
Benvenuto Cellini, Salt cellar. Gold with enamel, 1539–43. Vienna, KHM, Kunstkammer, Inv.no. KK 881. Since 1891 this precious object from the Kunstkammer of Archduke Ferdinand of Tyrol was displayed in room XIX of the new museum and given a specific context by the ceiling painting of J. V. Berger. Cellini is represented seated to the left holding the salt cellar on his lap.
Fig. 12
Julius Victor Berger, Habsburg emperors as patrons of the arts: Charles V with Titian and Cellini holding his salt cellar (left), Maximilian I with Dürer (centre), and Charles VI (right). Vienna, KHM, ceiling painting of room XIX, 1891
Lhotsky indicates that, in view of the tradition of the artistic policies of the Hapsburgs, the Kunsthistorisches Museum could not become a systematic museum with universal pretensions; instead he defines it as one of the last private Kunstkammern. He endorses the declared aim of 1875 of “bearing witness to the generosity and artistic sensitivity with which the rulers of Austria had dedicated themselves from times immemorial to protecting and patronizing the arts and sciences.”

Beatrix Kriller subscribes to this by describing the museum as “a watertight statement of intent, exclusively determined by the aim of proclaiming the sovereignty of the Hapsburg dynasty. […] Art is attributed the power here of maintaining the state and architecture, painting and the decorative arts are treated as means for conveying a self-image of sovereignty.”

In this sense this museum differed fundamentally from the trend in Europe, and if our British visitor had lived that long, he would have been surprised once again in 1891. He would then have been confronted with an enlarged version of the thing that had already impressed him in 1855 when the gallery was still housed in the Belvedere.

However, he would no longer have seen anything of the country-estate setting of its former location. (Figs. 14 and 15) The rustic character had vanished long ago due to the demolition of the town ramparts and the rapid growth of the suburbs.
Fig. 15
August Stauda, View of the south front of the Oberes Belvedere, with the railway in the foreground. Photo, 1873. Vienna, ONB, Inv. no. ST 2260F
Meijers From an International Perspective

This article was translated from the Dutch by Donald Gardner and Kats Williams.


3 The term ‘encyclopedic’ is used to mean ‘covering all fields of knowledge’, namely naturalia, scientifica and artificialia. In this article I use the term in a more limited sense, to refer to a wide range of only artistic artefacts, including various sorts of antiquity; coins and medals; cut stones and precious stones, shells and bone objects; wood and metal carving; ceramics; sculptures, paintings, drawings and prints.

4 As early as 1834 one can trace a relation in Vienna between museum attendance and the emergence of modern means of transport, as can be seen in the statement of Josef Ritter von Amellt, keeper of the cabinet of coins and antiquities in the Hofburg, Von Amellt argued successfully that the cabinet should open in August, by pointing out that the introduction of steamboats and trains it was in this month that great numbers of foreign visitors came to Vienna. See Lhotsky 1941–45 (note 1), vol. II, p. 542. By 1856 Vienna could be reached by train from Berlin via Krakau, Olmütz (1841), Brünn (1839) and Wagram (1838) in the north; and by 1857 from Triest in the south via Laibach (1849), Gratz (1844), Glacunze (1842) and Wiener Neustadt (1841). The eastern line, though planned on Austrian initiative via Raab on the southern banks of the Danau, was instead built by the Ungarische Centralbahno, connecting Vienna with Pest via Pressburg on the northern side of the river by 1852/54.

5 Although the railways were built for military and economic reasons rather than for tourism, it was an incidental stroke of fortune that the eastern and southern terminals were located not far from the main entrance of the Belvedere complex. Our British visitor in 1853, coming from Munich in the west, would however later have to rely on other means of transport for the final leg of his journey, as this route was only completely developed in August 1860. See Wolfgang Kow/Cinzia Denholld (eds.), Großer Bahnhof. Wien und die weite Welt, Ausst.-Kat. Wien-Museum, Vienna 2006, 215, 220, Ludwig Neunlinger, 150 Jahre Eisenbahn in Österreich, hg. von Franz Patzer, 210. Wiesenausstellung der Wiener Stadt- und Landesbibliothek, Wien 1897, 9–11.


9 In Prince Eugen's day (c. 1725) the ceremonial (but little used?) main entrance to the entire gardens was at the top end of the Heugasse (today's Prinz Eugen-Straße) and below on the Rennweg. Katrin Harter, Der Garten des Prinzen Eugen von Savoyen zum "Belvedere", in: Agnes Husslein-Arco/Katharina Schoeller (eds.), 150 Jahre Eisenbahn in Österreich, hg. von Franz Patzer, 210. Wiesenausstellung der Wiener Stadt- und Landesbibliothek, Wien 1897, 9–11.

10 The National Gallery was founded in 1824, with the purchase by the British Parliament of the Angerstein collection.
11 The layout of the collection was altered for instance in the 1830s by director Johann Krafft who, among other things, introduced a separate department for modern and contemporary Austrian painting. His predecessor Josef Rehbell still hung the paintings in question between works by artists of other schools, including older paintings. See Grabner in this volume and Sabine Grabner, Die kaiserlichen Gemäldesammlungen von den Napoleonischen Kriegen bis zum Revolutionsjahr 1848, in: Agnes Husslein-Arco/Katharina Schoeller (eds.), Das Belvedere: Genese eines Museums, Vienna 2011, p. 186. Furthermore the initially fairly free admission policy was revoked. In 1813 the director at the time, Friedrich Heinrich Füger, had complained about an undesirable public: while in the department of Antiquities and in the Naturwissenschaftenhaus, “Anstand und Ordnung” prevailed, the unconditional free access, which had been introduced in 1780 with the best and most humane intentions had for a long time led to exactly the opposite in the painting gallery, according to Füger. He then launches into a diatribe about the plebs who with their rowdiness and lack of cleanliness prevented the “gebildeten Stände” from enjoying the pleasures of the gallery, which required silent contemplation. To restore order, Füger had asked the Obersthofmeister for permission to introduce a system of tickets and to reduce admission from three to two days a week. His request was granted in the same year, 1813, and the new ruling was announced in the Wiener Zeitung.

Lhotsky 1941–45 (note 1), vol. II 2, p. 488.


14 This public presentation in the Unteres Belvedere replaced the Hapsburg family portraits and paintings of the heroic deeds of Archduke Leopold Wilhelm and Prince Eugene of Savoy that had hung there since 1766 and c. 1780 respectively and to which access was limited. Aurenhammer 1969 (note 8), p. 50–51 and 61; Mechel 1783 (note 12), X and 315.

15 At that time there were seven paintings by Ignace Parocel in the Unteres Belvedere depicting Prince Eugene's battles. Aurenhammer 1969 (note 8), p. 61. He was renowned especially for his victory over the Ottomans at the battle of Zenta in 1697.


17 In 1815, during the Congress of Vienna that was held in the Belvedere, the participating rulers and statesmen eagerly visited the former Ambras Kunsthof, thus spreading the fame of this collection internationally (Lhotsky 1941–45 (note 1), II, p. 490–91, 511–14). What the negotiators would have seen there had the character of a “Ruhmestempel des Hauses Habsburg”, according to Aurenhammer 1971 (note 8), p. 25. Lhotsky, II 2, p. 492 also mentions that after its removal to Vienna the Ambras collection was viewed through romantically-tinted spectacles, especially by Aloys Primisser, who was keeper of the cabinet from 1816 to 1827. According to Lhotsky he and his spouse Julie Mühle formed the hub of an eccentric circle who nasted lyrical about the German past.


19 The 1858 edition of Bergmann's guide (see note 9) mentions the opening times of the collection as being ‘the summer months up to November, Tuesday and Friday from 9 to 12 and 3 to 6’. In the winter the museum remained closed as there was no heating. Carl Goebel the Younger's watercolours give a good idea of the composition of the public in the years from 1875 to 1889; it is striking how often children are depicted. The process of ‘museumification’ was not unique to Vienna. The Kunsthofmuseum in Dresden was also converted in the 1820s into a sort of historical museum, under the influence of Johann Krain (oral account by Tizian Według, 26 November 2011).


21 Aurenhammer 1969 (note 8), p. 71 and note 179, refers to a floor plan by the court architect Johann Aman (HBA, Nr. 1033 in 1816), indicating where an area was reserved for the classical sculptures, coins and bronze, the library and the Etruscan collection in the building, which was already largely occupied by the Ambras collection.

22 Lhotsky 1941–45 (note 1), I, p. 36–37 does not mention the source of this plan of 1833. In 1842 Arnth again came up with a design, providing a sort of museum quarter abutting on the library of the Hof. His combination of collections was even more encyclopedic; he linked the proposed museum centre (minus the painting gallery) to a proposal for founding an Academy of Sciences (implemented in 1847). Lhotsky 1941–45, II 2, p. 547 and I, p. 36–37, again without naming the source. Lhotsky 1941–45, vol. I, moreover refers in note 4 to a plan for a museum building by Joseph Zweigl of 1827 (at that time: Städtische Sammlungen, Inv.no. 54309, Mappe Großformat), the background to which he has not succeeded in explaining.

23 In Vienna the ethnological collections were only removed from the Naturhistorisches Museum in 1927, in order to continue their existence as the Museum für Völkerkunde in the Neue Hofburg. Max Fischer/Imgodel Moscholios/Reiskel/ Schönherr, Die Naturhistorische Museum in Wien und seine Geschichte, in: Annalen des Naturhistorischen Museums in Wien, 80, November 1976, p. 1–24: http://www.landesmuseum.at/pdf/loci_remote/ANNA_80_0001-0024.pdf, 15.

24 Aurenhammer 1969 (note 8), p. 72, note 184 and p. 78, note 234, refers to a floor plan by Johann Aman (PLA, C IV 1, Nr. 8). See also Lhotsky 1941–45 (note 1), vol. II 2, 496–7; Christa Rickl-Dorn, Die grüne Welt der Habsburger. Zur Ausstellung auf Schloss Arnsburg, 1. April bis 2. November 1989 (Veröffentlichungen aus dem Naturhistorischen Museum Wien, Neue Folge 23), Vienna 1989, p. 44; Robert Stangl, Eine mystische Sammlung brasilianischer Holzer in der Fachbibliothek Botanik: http://bibliothek.univie.ac.at/sammlungen/objekt_direkt.txt, consulted on 13 Nov. 2011. In 1822 the Emperor Franz I founded the Brasilianische Museum, with its premises in the Johannesgasse, presently no. 7, for the consignments from his daughter Maria Leopoldine and the scholars and scientists who travelled with her to Brazil. This museum was closed down however in 1836 after which the collection was split over various court cabinets according to the kind of object. Those of ethnographic interest for instance went to the so called Kaiserhaus in the Ungargasse while botanic items were rehoused in the Naturwissenschaftenhaus and later on in 1844 in a newly-built museum in the university botanic garden. See also note 26.


26 Lhotsky 1941–45 (note 1), vol. II 2, p. 496–7. What was involved here was not the Brazilian ethnographic objects, but
those purchased in London in 1806 on the instructions of the Emperor Franz I from the museums of Ashton Lever and James Parkinson, and the James Cook collection. According to Fischer/Moschner/Schönmann 1976 (note 23), p. 6–7 these objects were in fact removed from the Unteres Belvedere in 1836, to be housed together with the ethnographic part of the Brazilianische Museum in the Kaiserbau in the Ungargasse.

27 This free-version of the ancient Thesmphon in Athens was built in 1829–22/23 by Peter von Nolle to accommodate Antonino Canova’s sculpture group of Theseus slaying the Centaur, originally ordered by Napoleon for the Corso in Milan but bought by Franz I after his defeat (since 1890 the sculpture adorns the stairwell of the Kunsthistorisches Museum). According to Lhotsky, the installing of a goodly number of Roman finds on Austrian soil in this temple in 1822 meant the creation of the first römische Provinzialmuseum in Austria. In 1840/41 the sculptures were moved to the Unteres Belvedere. Lhotsky 1941–45 (note 1), vol. II, p. 499 and 543. Lhotsky 1941, vol. I, p. 23–24.


29 Stangl s.d. (note 24). According to Leopold J. Fitzinger, 1848

Periode unter Kaiser Ferdinand I von Österreich von 1842 bis zum Rücktritte des Kaisers von der Regierung Anfangs December 1848, in: Sitzungsberichte der math.- naturwissenschaftl. Klasse der kaiserl. Akademie der Wissenschaften, LXXXII, Band, I. Abtlg., Jahrgang 1848, p. 298–299 the immediate reason was the appointment in 1840 of Stephan Endlicher as professor and director of the botanic gardens. Endlicher, who had up till then been the keeper of the Hof Naturländchen Cabinet, also wanted to be certain of the future availability of his familiar research material and had thus persuaded the Emperor to agree to the transfer of the botanic collection and the relevant part of the library.


32 For instance the considerable finds of coins and gold objects in Szilagy-Somlyö (1779) and Nagy-Szent-Miklos (1799).

33 On the increasing claims made on such finds by the provincial museums. See also Lhotsky p. 500 (minerals) and p. 510 (paintings).

34 Theseion in Athens was built in 1820–22/23 by Peter von Nobile to accommodate the Bavarian chiseling of Theseus slaying the Centaur, originally ordered by Napoleon for the Corso in Milan and a sense of the identity of one’s own people. Kugler 2004 (note 31), p. 90–91.

35 For instance the considerable finds of coins and gold objects in Szilagy-Somlyö (1779) and Nagy-Szent-Miklos (1799).


39 Kugler 2004 (note 31), p. 90: “die großen, öffentlich zugänglichen, kaiserlichen Sammlungen waren kein National-
museum. Sie stifteten Identität mit der Dynastie, nicht mit Volk und Vaterland.” And he goes on: “Dazu kam, dass in den kaiserlichen Sammlungen nur die internationale Kunst vorgreifend vertreten war, die Kunstoproduktion des österreichischen Kaiserreiches beziehungsweise bestimmte Regionen aber nur sporadisch oder zufällig. Lediglich die römischen Bodenfunde und die mannsfältigen Grab- und Schatzfunde der Völkerwanderungszeit, die in vielen Teilen des Monarchien gehalten wurden, waren seit der Regierungszeit des Kaisers Franz II. als Sammlungsgebiet des k. und k. Museums und Antikensammlungen anerkannt, aber ohne einen Bruch zum Fundort. Weder gotische Tafelbilder noch barocke Skulpturen aus den aufgehobenen Klöstern fanden ihren Weg in die kaiserlichen Sammlungen, noch die Zeugnisse der Alltagskultur.”

40 A separate instance was Dresden, where Gottfried Semper’s gallery building of 1847–55, with an additional fourth block, supplemented the existing natural history and physical science cabinets of the Zwinger.

41 Or else one could speak of an absence of historical synchronicity as with the museum in the Louvre, which was founded in the former royal palace as an anti-traditional statement. See Kriller/Kugler 1991 (note 1), p. 58.

42 Elsa van Wezel, Die Konzeptionen des Alten und des Neuen Museums zu Berlin und das sich sammlende historische Bewusstsein, in: Jahrbuch der Berliner Museen N.F. 43, Beih. (2001), Berlin 2003, p. 7–244. It can also be seen in the way the Berlin museum directors described the structure of the museum as a single entity in response to the questions on this subject by the Parliamentary Enquiry of 1833. See Report from the Select Committee on the National Gallery; together with the proceedings of the Committee, Minutes of Evidence, Appendix and Index ordered, by The House of Commons, to be printed, 4 August 1833. London 1835, Appendix No-VII: Answers [1 and 3 by Berlin] to Queries on the Galleries and Museums of Fine Arts in different Countries, 753–758; for this enquiry in general, see: Bergvelt 2005 (note 10). Max Schaden, Die Königlichen Museen von Berlin. Ein praktisches Handbuch zum Besuch der Galerien, Sammlungen und Kunstschätze derselben, Berlin 1864 (unnumbered page preceding p. 1), also shows that in practice the two museums were treated as a single entity; he describes their joint opening times and conditions for admission.

43 The role ownership relations played in this should be the subject of further study. See Meijers/Bergvelt/Tibbe/Van Wezel 2012 (note 2), p. 13–14; Robert W. Scheller, der der staatlichen: forms of government and their effect on the collecting of art E 1500–1800, in: Simiolus, 24, 1996, p. 284. The fact that the art collections always remained the emperor’s private property can possibly be understood in the light of this exaltation. In 1812 Franz I sold part of the natural history collection to the nation, mainly because he was short of cash. For the same reason in 1815 he decided to do the same with the Ambros collection, although the sale never went through. Lhotsky 1941–45 (note 1), vol. II, p. 472 and 524–6.

44 Bergvelt/Meijers/Tibbe/Van Wezel 2012 (note 2).


46 Schäper 1864 (note 42), p. 180 denotes the Kunsthalle in the Neue Museum as “Museum der Klinkinsonte, der Kunstinustrie und historischen Kuriostitäten”, which points to the change in meaning that the former Kunsthalle objects had undergone in this new context. The next step in Berlin was that part of this collection was moved in 1875 to the recently founded Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe, an museum of applied arts. See Lieske/Tibbe, Kunsthalle objects in museums of industrial arts: banishment or useful destination?, in: Ellinore Bergvelt/Debra J. Meijers/Lieske Tibbe/ Elsa von Wezel (eds.), Museale Spezialisierung und Nationalisierung ab 1830. Das Neue Museum in Berlin im internationalen Kontext Spezialisierung und Nationalisierung des National Museum after 1830. The Neue Museum in Berlin an International Context (Berlin: Schriftenreihe zur Museumsforschung, 29, Berlin 2011, p. 177–89. Although in Vienna the term “Kunstindustrie” was also employed for a significant part of the former Kunsthalle objects (see the floorplan of the Kunsthistorisches Museum of 1911), these continued to be kept there; despite the fact that the K. E. Museum für Kunst und Industrie had already been founded in 1863. Its originator and first director Rudolph von Eitenger had in vain attempted to integrate this museum with the Kunsthistorisches Museum, when it was still under construction. See Kriller/ Kugler 1991 (note 1), p. 23.

47 This occurred on the basis of the criterion that all art objects that were the personal property of the imperial family, and not that of the state, should be housed in the museum, under the same roof. The decision to earmark the new art museum for the private-property of the emperor with its origins in the Hapsburg dynasty gave its compilation the character of an exemplary Kunsthalle. In contrast with the art collections of the Hapsburgs the natural history collections had ended up in state ownership. Lhotsky 1941–45 (note 1), vol. II, p. 524–26, 533, 562–69.