



**PALAIS  
LIECHTENSTEIN**  
*The Princely Collections*

# THE GOLDEN CARRIAGE

The Golden Carriage is one of the finest examples of eighteenth-century Parisian coach-building, and one of the few to survive the turmoil of the French Revolution. Numerous documents in the Liechtenstein dynastic archives shed light on the history of its construction and how it was used. Contemporary accounts and pictorial records of state occasions on which it was used attest to its importance.

Following the peace settlement of 1737 between France and Austria, Prince Joseph Wenzel I von Liechtenstein was appointed imperial ambassador to the French court at Paris. Before his official *entrée*, the prince travelled to Paris in 1737 in order to commission a total of five state coaches from the renowned Rococo sculptor and designer Nicolas Pineau. These *carrosses d'ambassadeur* constituted the climax of the magnificent trappings that accompanied Joseph Wenzel's formal *entrée* into Paris on 21 December 1738 and two days later at Versailles. The grand procession consisted of more than 50 carriages drawn by horses from the Liechtenstein stud at Eisgrub in southern Moravia.

More than twenty years later the coach was used on another important occasion of state: in 1760 the prince was tasked by Maria Theresia with fetching Isabella, the bride-to-be of her son, Emperor Joseph II, from her home in Parma and escorting her to Vienna. In September of that year Prince Joseph Wenzel arrived in Parma, entering the city in an elaborate procession of gala carriages, an event recorded in a painting by Martin van Meytens held in the Princely Collections. For the return journey the Golden Carriage was dismantled and carefully packed onto travelling wagons, to be reassembled for the princess's *grande entrée* into Vienna.

The Golden Carriage was used for the last time at the election and coronation of Joseph II as Holy Roman Emperor in Frankfurt in 1764, when Prince Joseph Wenzel served as *Prinzipalkommissar*, the emperor's highest representative at the imperial diet.

In technical terms the Golden Carriage is a 'berline de suite', one of the most modern and elegant types of carriage from that time, distinguished by its stability and comfort. The painted decoration was probably executed by the studio of François Boucher. Rather than the otherwise customary depictions of a ruler's virtues, it shows playful *putti* symbolizing the Four Elements and the Four Seasons. The name 'Golden Carriage' is not historical and probably derives from the second half of the nineteenth century.

The Golden Carriage remained at Schloss Feldsberg, the Liechtenstein family seat, throughout the nineteenth century and up to the outbreak of the Second World War. It was then brought to Vienna and put on display in the collection of imperial carriages at Schönbrunn. In the 'Long Night of the Museums' in 2003, the Golden Carriage was taken on a flatbed truck through the city to its present location, the Liechtenstein GARDEN PALACE in the Rossau quarter of Vienna.