



**PALAIS
LIECHTENSTEIN**
The Princely Collections

THE PRINCELY COLLECTIONS

The Princely Collections contain major works of European art spanning five centuries and are among the most important private collections in the world. Dating back to the seventeenth century, they are rooted in the Baroque ideal of princely patronage of the arts. For generations, the House of Liechtenstein has consistently nurtured this ideal, systematically adding to the collection's holdings in keeping with an active acquisitions policy which continues to this day. This allows existing focal areas of the collection to be extended and enhanced through the acquisition of artworks of the highest quality, thus ensuring the enduring attraction of the Princely Collections.

THE HISTORY OF THE PRINCELY COLLECTIONS

Relatively little is known about the early period of the collection's history. Through his marriage to Anna of Ortenburg, the *Portrait of Count Ladislaus von Haag* by Hans Mielich came into the possession of Hartmann von Liechtenstein (1544–1585), who also brought important and still extant holdings of books into the family collections.

The collection experienced its first heyday at the turn of the sixteenth to the seventeenth century. Surviving correspondence dating to 1597 between Emperor Rudolf II and Karl I von Liechtenstein (1569–1627), the first of the princes to be seized by a true passion for collecting, indicates that the latter possessed a remarkable collection of paintings and *Kunstkammer* pieces in his Prague residence. The existence of a silver chamber with more than 900 different items is documented at Feldsberg/Valtice. Inventories indicate that the prince kept tapestries and carpets, precious items of furniture, objects of silver and gold, vessels carved out of semiprecious stone as well as paintings in his *Guardaroba*, which may be regarded as the original 'germ cell' of the Princely Collections.

Karl I collected not only existing works but also commissioned major pieces for his collections. It was at his request that Adrian de Fries executed the life-sized bronze of *Christ in Distress* in 1607, and shortly afterwards the figure of *St Sebastian* (1613/15).

Like his father, Karl Eusebius I von Liechtenstein (1611–1684) was also driven by a passion for collecting and was the first of the family to make systematic use of the international art trade to acquire particular works of art. He wrote theoretical treatises, including a work on the education of princes and a tractate on architecture which also had an influence on the nature of the collection.

Karl Eusebius initiated a large number of major building projects, and was the first prince of the House of Liechtenstein to engage architects, masons, stuccateurs and painters on a grand scale. In 1643 he acquired Rubens' monumental *Assumption of the Virgin Mary* as the altarpiece for the parish church in Feldsberg that he had commissioned, a work that is today on display at the Liechtenstein summer palace.

Karl Eusebius' son, Prince Johann Adam Andreas I von Liechtenstein (1657–1712), continued on his father's path. He had numerous palaces built, including the GARDEN PALACE in the Rossau quarter as well as the CITY PALACE on Bankgasse, decorating and furnishing them according to his own predilections. He was responsible for the acquisition of major works by Peter Paul Rubens (the *Decius Mus cycle*, *Portrait of Clara Serena Rubens*), Anthony van Dyck and other masters of the Flemish Baroque which still constitute the glory of the Princely Collections.

With Prince Joseph Wenzel I von Liechtenstein (1696–1772) French art gained a more important place in the collection. The two portraits of the prince by Hyacinthe Rigaud belong to this era as well as the enamel plaques by Pierre Courteys with scenes from the Trojan War, which are among the finest examples of enamel work produced in Limoges during the sixteenth century. Around 1759 Joseph Wenzel also

commissioned Bernardo Bellotto to paint the two vedutas which give a detailed impression of the appearance of the Liechtenstein GARDEN PALACE in the Rossau quarter and its gardens at that time. On the occasion of his appointment as imperial ambassador to the French court in 1737 the prince commissioned several state coaches from Nicolas Pineau, of which only the *Golden Carriage* displayed in the Sala Terrena of the Liechtenstein GARDEN PALACE has survived. Its artistic quality and historical importance combine to make it one of the most important state coaches of the French Rococo.

Prince Joseph Wenzel also commissioned the first inventory documenting the part of the collections that were displayed in the CITY PALACE on Bankgasse at the time. This formed the basis for the first printed catalogue of the Princely Collections, compiled by Vincenzo Fanti, the director of the princely galleries. During the era of Prince Alois I von Liechtenstein (1759–1805) the collections were augmented by various acquisitions as well as commissioned works, the latter including a portrait of his wife, Princess Karoline von Liechtenstein, as *Iris*, and one of his sisters, Princess Maria Josepha Hermenegilde von Esterhazy, née Princess Liechtenstein, as *Ariadne on Naxos*, both painted by Elisabeth Vigée-Lebrun. A particular interest of his was the collection of prints and drawings as well as the holdings of books, which were shelved together in their entirety for the first time in 1792 after the palace on Herrengasse had been refurbished in early classicistic style.

From 1807, under the regime of Prince Johann I von Liechtenstein (1760–1836), the collections were gradually transferred to the GARDEN PALACE, where there was considerably more space for them to be adequately displayed than in the rather cramped premises of the CITY PALACE on Bankgasse. A great lover of art, he increased the holdings of the collection, particularly in the fields of Dutch and Italian painting.

Prince Alois II (1796–1858) developed a particularly close relationship with a number of contemporary artists: his children received drawing lessons from Josef Höger and were portrayed by Friedrich von Amerling. The most touching portrait in this series is without doubt that of *Princess Marie Franziska von Liechtenstein (1834–1909) at the age of two*, dating from 1836. Intimate, delightfully informal ‘snapshots’ of the children were captured in watercolour sketches by Peter Fendi. Rudolf von Alt was commissioned by Alois II to paint a series of vedutas which record the Liechtenstein estates in Vienna and Moravia in meticulous detail. In 1837 he commissioned the remodelling and decoration of the Liechtenstein CITY PALACE on Bankgasse in the Rococo Revival style, its first occurrence in Europe. Advised by the Berlin art historian Wilhelm von Bode, who compiled the first illustrated catalogue of the gallery, published in 1896, Prince Johann II von Liechtenstein (1840–1929) focused his collecting on the art of the fourteenth, fifteenth and early sixteenth century. Nonetheless, he was also interested in the Venetian masters of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Johann II gave orders for the gallery to be completely reorganised, lending it a distinct character. Deliberately avoiding the severe impression of a collection hung according to strict academic principles, the interior of the gallery was enlivened and broken up by the eclectic variety of art objects exhibited. The mixture of furniture, tapestries, sculptures and paintings created the warm, lavish atmosphere of a family collection that distinguished the Liechtenstein gallery from all others, making it famous far beyond the imperial capital.

In 1938 the 130-year-old exhibition of the Princely Collections at the Liechtenstein GARDEN PALACE came to an abrupt end when the gallery was closed to the public. The same year, for the first time in its history, the family moved its principal residence to Vaduz, transferring its art treasures there in the last few weeks of the war. The capital of Liechtenstein thus remains to this day the headquarters of the collections of the Prince von und zu Liechtenstein.

The return of the collections to the Liechtenstein GARDEN PALACE in March 2004 marked the resumption of the centuries-old tradition of the Princely Collections. A rich selection of major works of art from the princely holdings conveys to today’s visitors the variety and opulence of one of the world’s largest and most important family collections.

THE PRESENTATION OF THE PRINCELY COLLECTIONS IN AUSTRIA AND ABROAD

Today the Princely Collections contain some 1,700 paintings with masterpieces from the early Renaissance to the Biedermeier era, including works by Lukas Cranach the Elder, Raphael, Peter Paul Rubens, Anthony van Dyck, Frans Hals, Rembrandt, Rudolf von Alt, Ferdinand Georg Waldmüller and Friedrich von Amerling. Of equal art-historical importance is the collection of Italian bronzes, the focus of which lies in masterpieces of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In addition to these outstanding paintings and sculptures, the Princely Collections also contain important holdings of prints and engravings, *pietra dura* objects, enamelwork, ivories, decorative arms, porcelain, tapestries and furniture, all of which once graced the castles and palaces owned by the family.

The return of these art treasures to the historic setting of the Liechtenstein GARDEN PALACE in the Rossau quarter, where the collection was on public view from 1807 to 1938, as well as the considered way in which it is presented, conveys authentically both the history of the House of Liechtenstein and the central importance of art to the dynasty. A selection of works from the Princely Collections remains on display at the Liechtenstein GARDEN PALACE and may be viewed exclusively as part of a guided tour.

Outside Vienna, the Princely Collections are also represented abroad in a range of temporary exhibitions. International presentations in Europe (Milan, Antwerp, Moscow, Prague, Evian, Aix-en-Provence, Forte di Bard, Salzburg, Bern) and Asia (Japan, Singapore, China, Taiwan, Korea) have strengthened the reputation of the Princely Collections and attracted thousands of visitors. Last but not least, selected objects from the collections are regularly loaned to museums all over the world.

THE BIEDERMEIER-COLLECTION AT THE LIECHTENSTEIN CITY PALACE

Since April 2013 paintings and furniture from one of the most productive and independent periods in the history of Viennese art, the, in the case of Vienna, almost inseparable Neoclassicism and Biedermeier era, are on view in the newly renovated Liechtenstein CITY PALACE, including masterpieces from the works of Friedrich von Amerling, Friedrich Gauermann and Ferdinand Georg Waldmüller.

Johann I and Alois II, the two princes of the House of Liechtenstein whose reigns extended over the Biedermeier era, were keen connoisseurs and patrons of the art of their times, commissioning significant architectural projects as well as works of art for their collections. Prince Alois II von Liechtenstein (1796–1858) travelled extensively in the Salzkammergut with the painter Joseph Höger (1801–1877) and had the journey documented in a unique series of watercolours.

Peter Fendi (1796–1842) and Friedrich von Amerling (1803–1887) captured the childlike unselfconscious artlessness and carefree childhood of the little princes and princesses of the Liechtenstein family in touching watercolour studies and portraits. Here, as in contemporaneous landscape painting, it is the observation of the moment, the narration of the smallest details and the rendering of the mood of the light that still fascinate the viewer. Another important artist of the 19th century was Ferdinand Georg Waldmüller (1793–1865), whose vivid characterisations of the human face or detailed renderings of daily peasant life are also on display in the galleries of the Liechtenstein CITY PALACE.

The artist Friedrich Gauermann (1807–1862) also executed a number of commissions for the Liechtenstein family. Numerous drawings and paintings attest to the esteem in which he was held by several generations of the princely family. Thanks to the collections assembled by his ancestors over the centuries and his own acquisitions policy, Prince Hans-Adam II von und zu Liechtenstein today owns one of the richest collections of Viennese Biedermeier art, including paintings, watercolours and furniture together with major holdings of porcelain. Masterpieces from all genres of this epoch complement the unique ambience of the CITY PALACE and can be viewed as part of a public or individual guided tour of the palace.