



THE KAISERHAUS COLLECTION

*Over 2,000 items
formerly owned
by the imperial family*



LANDESSAMMLUNGEN
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*Over 2,000 objects
from imperial ownership*



HAUS DER GESCHICHTE IN ST. PÖLTEN

One of the highlights of the State Collections of Lower Austria is the Kaiserhaus Collection. Acquired in 2015, it is one of the largest compilations of objects from the House of Habsburg worldwide! In purchasing the collection of private items formerly owned by the imperial family, the permanent preservation is assured with constant conservational care of its excellent condition. Whether practical objects like tableware and clothes or very personal things such as handwritten notes or gifts to the children of the imperial couple – the items vividly document everyday and family life as well as relations at court, likewise the close interrelationship of the Imperial House with the region of Lower Austria. The Lower Austria Museum in St. Pölten has arranged a permanent exhibition of parts of the collection. The outstanding quality and diversity of the collection holdings offer the option of putting together an impressive touring exhibition.

THE STATE COLLECTIONS OF LOWER AUSTRIA

The state's cultural and natural heritage

The State Collections of Lower Austria hold more than six million museum objects from the fields of prehistory, Roman archaeology, cultural and contemporary history, flora and fauna, as well as art from the Middle Ages until the present. They preserve a historical and contemporary testimony for future generations, support research and generate new knowledge based on collected artefacts and specimens. Valued in toto at 1.5 billion euros, the holdings comprise the greatest movable asset of the Federal State of Lower Austria. Presentation to the public takes place in the form of exhibitions and publications.



VARIOUS COURT DEJEUNER
AND BALL GIFTS



HUNGARIAN
FULL-DRESS
UNIFORM



RING OF HONOUR "SUB AUSPICIIS
IMPERATORIS", AWARDED BY THE EMPEROR



ORDER OF
THE GOLDEN
FLEECE -
THE HIGHEST
IMPERIAL
DECORATION

WHITE-AND-GOLD DINNER
SERVICE, ORIGINALLY OWNED
BY EMPEROR FERDINAND I



LIFE AT THE IMPERIAL COURT

The imperial daily routine started at half past three in the morning and the attire was always befitting. Even the Emperor's dressing gown, his "Bonjournl", which he wore during the first appointments of his working day, is kept in the style of a uniform. The many duties involved in the business of ruling filled the day with appointments; life at the Viennese Court was very strictly regimented and tightly planned, especially for the Emperor.

Even in the evening there were courtly obligations to fulfil: for instance, court balls in general and the Ball at Court in particular were annual highlights of social life in the Danube Monarchy. At the end of every ball it was the custom to present the ladies with little gifts. The *Hofballzuckerl* – little boxes of sweets made by the Imperial and Royal Court Confectionary Bakery Demel – were amongst the most popular, as they featured portraits of various members of the imperial family.



IMPERIAL DRESSING GOWN: THE "BONJOURL"



ARMCHAIR FROM THE ACHILLEION ON CORFU ISLAND

THE LIFE OF THE IMPERIAL COUPLE

The young imperial couple announced their betrothal on 19 August 1853 and celebrated their wedding on 24 April of the following year. Elisabeth, who was fondly called "Sisi", had spent her childhood in the countryside and in a liberal environment. She always felt confined at the Imperial Court with its ceremonial and rigorous etiquette. She escaped from it in 1860 by embarking on her first extended journey, which was to last over two years and would take her first to Madeira, then to the island of Corfu. The latter enchanted her so much that she had a Greek palace built there in Pompeian style between 1889 and 1891 – the Achilleion. All the furnishings for the Achilleion were marked with a dolphin symbol. An impressive example is an armchair now held by the Kaiserhaus Collection. The dolphin was Sisi's favourite symbol and can be found on many of her personal objects.



For instance, Emperor Franz Joseph I had the famous white-and-gold dining service that had initially belonged to Emperor Ferdinand I adorned with golden dolphins for his spouse.

Sisi was renowned as one of the most beautiful women of her time, and it was important to her to retain this beauty. Her constant accessories included a fan, like the cream-coloured one she received as a birthday present from her youngest daughter Marie Valerie, who had made part of the lace mount herself. The fan acted as a sunshade for the Empress and as a means of concealing herself.

The imperial couple's most ardent mutual passion was horse riding. Sisi loved equestrian dressage and devoted plenty of time to perfecting the piaffe, passage and levade. She became one of the best female equestriennes of her day. Along with the Emperor she joined in the hazardous hunts on horseback in England and Ireland. Her riding hat, now in the Kaiserhaus Collection, is a precious historical witness of the Empress's private life.



CROWN PRINCE
RUDOLF
COMMEMORATIVE
MEDAL

THE IMPERIAL FAMILY

Sisi and Franz Joseph I had four children. Crown Prince Rudolf was the imperial couple's only son and as future heir to the throne played an important part in the Monarchy. However, his great interest in science and his liberal ideas informed by the education encouraged by Sisi led to frequent conflicts with his father Franz Joseph: while Rudolf endeavoured to comply with the wishes of his authoritarian father, the latter denied him any part in government or state affairs. Rudolf published his liberal political views under a pseudonym, which, alongside his profligate lifestyle with wild hunts and innumerable love affairs, fanned his father's disapproval even more. The Crown Prince's life was increasingly dominated by resignation and apathy – and finally ended with his tragic suicide on 30 January 1889 in the Mayerling hunting lodge.

This great tragedy in the life of the imperial family, exacerbated even more by the later murder of Sisi in Geneva, has never ceased to be the stuff of legend and scientific investigation. Along with the glamour of the imperial couple, it contributes substantially to the international public's unbroken interest in the history of the imperial family.



EMPEROR FRANZ JOSEPH I WITH HIS ADJUTANT GENERAL,
PAINTING BY RUDOLF SWOBODA



EMPRESS
ELISABETH'S
FAN



EMPRESS ELISABETH'S
RIDING HAT



EMPEROR FRANZ
JOSEPH I'S RIDING CROP



CROWN PRINCE RUDOLF'S
CHILDREN'S WRITING
SET, GIVEN TO HIM AROUND
THE AGE OF SEVEN

The Kaiserhaus Collection

More than 2,000 items in the State Collections of Lower Austria have formerly been owned by the imperial family and document the life of the members of the Imperial House. The collection with emphasise on the end of the 19th century is outstanding in its variety and reflects a historical epoch of great importance.

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IMPERIAL AUSTRIAN
DOUBLE EAGLE

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Portrait of the young Emperor shortly after ascending the throne

Portrait of the Empress from the workshop of Franz Xaver Winterhalter

Photo credits

Hungarian full-dress uniform © Hermann Historica

White-and-gold dinner service, originally owned by Emperor Ferdinand I © Dorotheum

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