

Splendour & Power: Imperial Treasures from Vienna

16 August 2011 to 8 January 2012

Hapsburg Imperial Treasures go on display in Cambridge with lost Royal masterpiece

- Fitzwilliam Museum to host only UK showing of collection from the Imperial Treasury of the Hapsburg emperors
- Miseroni's lost Royal masterpiece reunited with original treasures before going to a private collection

Never before seen together in the UK, on 16 August 2011 the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge will be opening an extraordinary exhibition of precious decorative arts - the treasures of the Hapsburg emperors. Now joining this remarkable exhibition is a lost Royal masterpiece by the greatest of all the hardstone engravers of the Renaissance period, Giovanni Ambrogio Miseroni.

Splendour & Power: Imperial Treasures from Vienna displays a glittering selection of beautifully crafted cameos, jewellery, vessels and other objects made from gems, precious metals and hardstones from the renowned *Kunstkammer* collection of the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna. This is the first time that so many pieces from the collection have been loaned to Britain, and this rare opportunity is only possible due to the current refurbishment of the *Kunstkammer* galleries in Vienna.

Originating in the medieval treasure trove of the House of Hapsburg, the collection was once safeguarded in the Imperial Treasury in Vienna. These objects, almost all of which are unique creations, were designed to demonstrate the incredible wealth, power and glory of the Hapsburg dynasty, and initially only visitors of noble birth - such as princes of neighbouring countries or diplomatic delegations - were granted access.

The lost Royal treasure joining the exhibition, *Venus and Cupid Sleeping on a Shell*, was created around 1600 from precious agate and set in a silver mount. Sold to a private collector at Sotheby's London in July 2011, this incredible Renaissance treasure will be reunited with other masterpieces made by the Miseroni workshop for the Royal House of Austria during the Cambridge showing.

Venus and Cupid Sleeping on a Shell is believed to have been created for Emperor Rudolph II in the late 16th century. At an unknown point it left the Imperial collection and ended up in the collection of King Louis XIV of France. Sold on in 1796, it was untraced until very recently when it was rediscovered in a Swiss private collection.



Cup Cover with Venus and Cupid Sleeping on a Shell being observed by Jupiter in the form of a Swan
Attributed to Giovanni Ambrogio Miseroni (1551-1616)
Milan, late 16th century
Private Collection



Gold ewer from the toilette set for Emperor Franz I, made by Anton Matthias Domanek (Domanöck)
Vienna, c. 1750



Reclining Venus with Cupid attributed to Giovanni Ambrogio Miseroni
Milan or Prague, c. 1600/1610



Casket of gold filigree and diamonds
Goa (India), mid 17th century; late 17th or first third of the 18th century (diamond setting)

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Thanks to the generosity of its new owner following the auction at Sotheby's, it will be included in the exhibition, reuniting it with other Miseroni masterpieces from the Imperial collection.

The exhibition's focus is upon artworks from the late Renaissance and Mannerist periods - the heyday of treasuries and 'cabinets of curiosities' - as well as from the Baroque. Many of the works on display belonged to Emperor Rudolph II - Holy Roman Emperor (1576-1612) - and Empress Maria Theresa, the only female Hapsburg ruler and the last of the House.

Giving a rare glimpse into the opulent world of the Hapsburg emperors, the exhibition features:

- exquisite jewellery, from necklaces, pendants and lockets to rings and ensembles, complemented by pre-eminent examples of medieval and Renaissance jewellery
- intricate portrait cameos, many bearing the likenesses of the Hapsburg sovereigns crafted in the style of ancient Roman imperial portraits
- ornate goldwork, vessels and coffers, including a bowl featuring embedded Roman coins, and a serpentine tankard
- stonework, carving and sculpture, with precious objects crafted from agate, jasper, rock-crystal and lapis lazuli, including a cup made from rhinoceros horn and a Chinese jade bowl
- a 15th century enamel model of the Annunciation from the Fitzwilliam's own collection. Once kept in the Imperial Treasury, it is now reunited with these other Hapsburg treasures for the first time since the 1860s.

Dr Timothy Potts, Director of the Fitzwilliam Museum, said: "The Fitzwilliam is delighted to welcome this superb collection to Cambridge for its first and only UK showing. Widely regarded as the most important collection of its kind anywhere in the world, the Vienna Kunstkammer provides a fascinating insight into how European princely collections have evolved, from medieval troves of relics to the 'cabinets of curiosities' of the Renaissance and early Baroque, eventually giving birth to the modern-day museum."

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Press View: Monday 15 August 2011 at 12 noon

To confirm attendance or to arrange interviews, please contact the Marketing and Press Office:

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Further information and images are available on request



Thumb ring (zehgir)
Ottoman Empire, second half of the
16th century
Nephrite, gold, rubies



Portrait medallion of
Emperor Charles V
Northern Italy, c. 1535/1540
Ivory capsule c. 1600



Heart-shaped pendant containing
locks of hair of Empress Maria Theresa
Vienna, late 18th century

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OPEN: Tuesday - Saturday: 10.00 - 17.00
Sundays and Bank Holidays: 12.00 - 17.00
CLOSED: 24, 25, 26 and 31 December 2011 and 1 January 2012

FREE ADMISSION

Notes for Editors

Catalogue

Splendour & Power: Imperial Treasures from Vienna

Publication date: 16 August 2011

Explore the history of the Vienna *Kunstkammer* from its beginnings as an Imperial Treasury to the present-day collections. Looking at art history and culture, the history of collecting and princely representation, the latest research into *objets de vertu*, *Kunstkammer* and court history, this catalogue reveals the fascinating history of this spectacular collection and its artworks, and their use as objects of power.

With essays by Dr Paulus Rainer, Curator, *Kunstkammer*, *Kunsthistorisches Museum*, Vienna and Rudolf Distelberger, former Director of the *Kunst- und Schatzkammer*, *Kunsthistorisches Museum*, Vienna.

The Fitzwilliam Museum

The Fitzwilliam Museum houses the University of Cambridge's art collection and is a public museum and art gallery with an international reputation. More than half a million objects and works of art are held in five curatorial departments: Antiquities, Applied Arts, Coins and Medals, Manuscripts and Printed Books and Paintings, Drawings and Prints. The Fitzwilliam's treasures range from Ancient Egyptian, Greek and Roman antiquities to the arts of the 21st century and include masterpieces by Titian, Canaletto, Stubbs, Constable, Monet, Renoir and Picasso, one of the world's foremost Rembrandt print collections, Handel music manuscripts and the famous Fitzwilliam Virginal Book, one of the most significant collections of Korean ceramics outside South-East Asia, medieval illuminated manuscripts and outstanding collections of pottery, porcelain and medieval coins. The Fitzwilliam Museum welcomes over 350,000 visitors a year, offers a wide-ranging programme of temporary exhibitions and events, and has an award-winning Education Service.

The Kunsthistorisches Museum

The *Kunsthistorisches Museum* in Vienna numbers among the most important European museum buildings constructed during the 19th century. The monumental structure, built at the behest of Emperor Franz Joseph I as part of his expansion of the city in 1858, was intended to both unite and appropriately represent the artistic treasures that had been collected by the Hapsburgs over the centuries. The collections of the Museum are amongst the most important and spectacular in the world. The 16th century *Kunst- und Wunderkammer* (art and treasure chambers) of Archduke Ferdinand and of Emperor Rudolph II, together with the Baroque collections of Archduke Leopold Wilhelm, form the nucleus of the Museum's magnificent collections, in which the taste and artistic preferences of these and other connoisseurs of the Imperial Family are still discernible today, conveying a sense of the Imperial glory of the art-loving Hapsburg dynasty. The Museum's collections range from Ancient Egyptian and Greek and Roman Antiquities to the Collections of Medieval Art to the splendid Renaissance and Baroque Collections. In all, the Museum is divided into eight different collections, some of which are housed in the Hofburg and in Schönbrunn Palace.

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