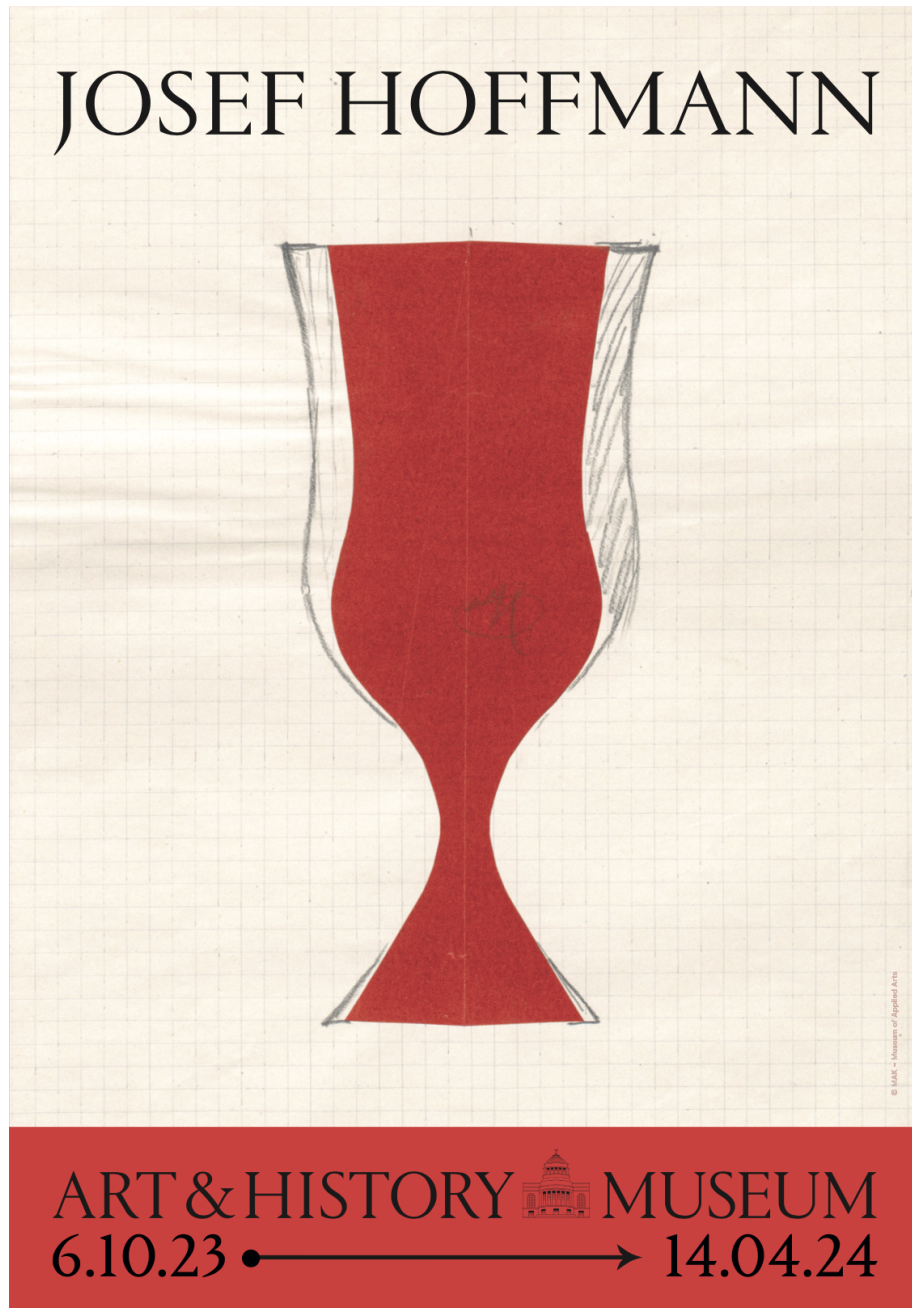


PRESS KIT

JOSEF HOFFMANN : FALLING FOR BEAUTY

6.10.2023 – 14.04.2024



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1. PRESS RELEASE

JOSEF HOFFMANN: FALLING FOR BEAUTY

October 6, 2023 - April 14, 2024

For the first time in Belgium, and as part of the Art Nouveau year in Brussels, in collaboration with the Museum of Applied Arts in Vienna and the Austrian Ministry of Culture, the exhibition JOSEF HOFFMANN: Falling for Beauty aims to present the work of a prominent figure in the evolution of modern design of the 20th-century. This exhibition will be a unique opportunity to discover an artist who regarded beauty as an essential element in individual and social transformation.

—

The Viennese architect Josef Hoffmann (1870-1956) is best known in Brussels as the designer of the Stoclet House, a project that would become famous as the "Stoclet Palace" and mark a turning point in his life and career. The myth surrounding this building and the product culture that emerged from the craftsmanship of the Wiener Werkstätte (Vienna Workshop) still influences the study of his work today. The Stoclet House will remain in history as one of the finest examples of the modern interpretation of beauty. A new economy of space and comfort gives way to a different experience of luxury and art, precisely through simplicity and austerity, culminating in the dining room with two 7-meter-wide mosaics by Gustav Klimt. Josef Hoffmann's design, with his choice of contemporary materials, use of color, and geometry, heralds the 20th century. Once again, art and history intersect in shaping a new humanity and a new worldview. After the exhibition dedicated to Henry van de Velde in 2013-14 at the Art & History Museum, and parallel to Victor Horta and his Brussels contemporaries who are receiving special attention during the Art Nouveau year, Josef Hoffmann could not be overlooked.

The timeless beauty of Hoffmann's creations demonstrates his relevance not only as a historical figure but also as a source of inspiration for different generations of students, whether at the School of Applied Arts in Vienna or elsewhere, making him an international reference. This retrospective, the first dedicated to Hoffmann in Brussels, aims to offer a deeper analysis of the artist's ideals and their evolution, both due to and independently of the various ideological and social circumstances in which they took shape. The exhibition presents a range of well-known works as well as several rare pieces from private collections. The narrative is interspersed with biographical details and new analyses of aspects that were previously overlooked, thus deepening our understanding of this central figure in the modern movement.

Each section of the exhibition focuses on one or more prototype models, including a new model of the pavilion designed by Hoffmann for the Werkbund exhibition in

Cologne in 1914, which serve as key examples and references for understanding a constellation of furniture, objects, designs, textiles, and documents. A juxtaposition of narratives is thus offered, covering every aspect of Hoffmann's artistic production: architecture, design, decorative arts, scenography, writing, and teaching. The exhibition also examines his creative method and use of color. The images of the exhibition's publicity campaign, which are sketches of vases and glasses, encapsulate this creativity and rigor.

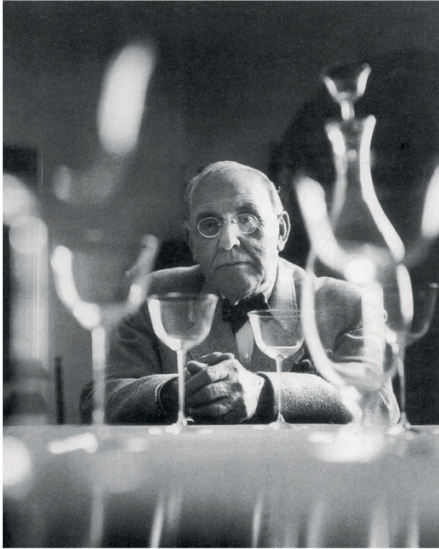
Developed in collaboration with the Museum of Applied Arts in Vienna (MAK), this project builds on the major scholarly work presented in the exhibition JOSEF HOFFMANN: Progress Through Beauty (2020/2021), organised by Matthias Boeckl, Rainald Franz, and Christian Witt-Döring. The exhibition is one of the key events of the Art Nouveau year 2023 in Brussels.

It is in the room where the exhibition JOSEF HOFFMANN: Falling for Beauty will be held that the permanent Art Nouveau and Belgian Art Deco collections of the Museum will be displayed at the end of 2024. This new presentation will benefit from the support of the Baillet-Latour Fund and the Buildings Agency (Régie des Bâtiments / Regie der Gebouwen). The central element will be the reconstruction of the winter garden of the Cousin House, created by Victor Horta. This project has received support from TotalEnergies, the National Bank of Belgium, and numerous private sponsors. With the previous reconstruction of the Wolfers store, also designed by Victor Horta, the Art & History Museum will become the most important showcase of Art Nouveau and Art Deco art and architecture in Belgium.

—

Born in 1870 in Brtnice, Moravia, a region that was then part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and is now in the Czech Republic, Josef Hoffmann was a "versatile" architect and designer—a term that describes him perfectly. Endowed with an innovative spirit, he was nonetheless deeply attached to tradition. After receiving education from Karl Freiherr von Hasenauer and Otto Wagner at the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna, he co-founded the Vienna Secession and the Wiener Werkstätte (1903-1932). His most notable works include the Purkersdorf Sanatorium in Austria (1904-1905) and the Stoclet Palace in Brussels (1905-1911). Hoffmann passed away in 1956 at the age of 85 (having lived through five different political regimes), and he remained active for over 60 years, influencing hundreds of designers to this day. Amid changing trends, the Austrian artist always managed to stay true to his own creative standards.

2. VISUALS FOR THE PRESS



Yoichi R. Okamoto, Josef Hoffmann,
1954, MAK, KI 13740-5



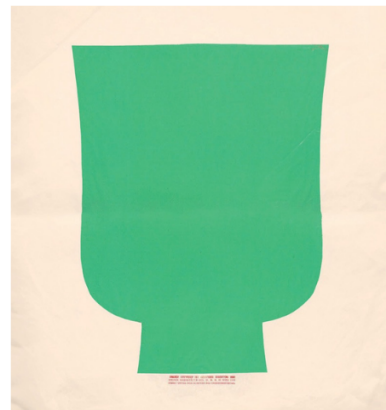
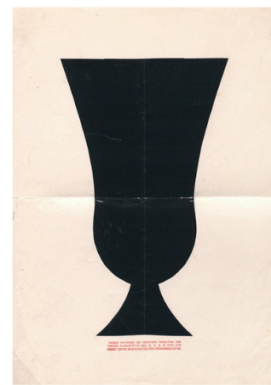
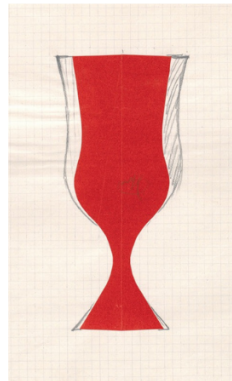
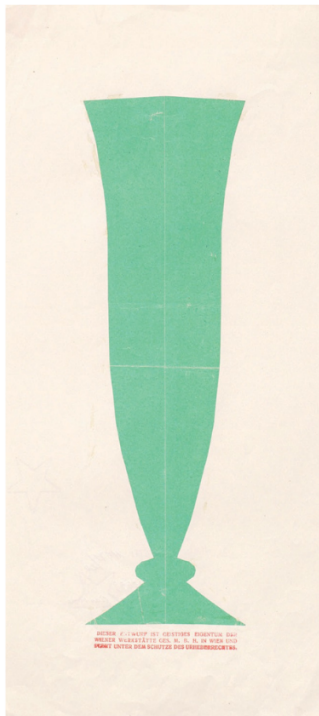
Josef Hoffmann, dining hall Stoclet
House with the mosaic frieze by
Gustav Klimt, Moderne Bauformen XIII,
1914



Josef Hoffmann, centerpiece for Dr.
Hermann Wittgenstein, executed by
the Wiener Werkstätte, 1905, Silver,
agate, MAK, GO 2011
© MAK/Katrin Wisskirchen



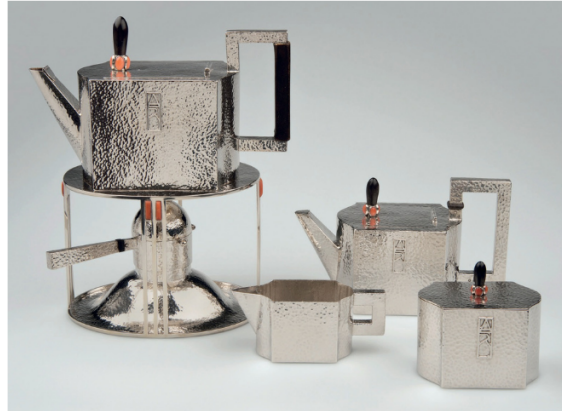
Josef Hoffmann, pepper/paprika pot,
executed by the Wiener Werkstätte,
1903, Silver, carnelian, MAK, GO 2108
© MAK/Katrin Wisskirchen



Josef Hoffmann, colored glass cuts,
paper, 1927-1928 © MAK



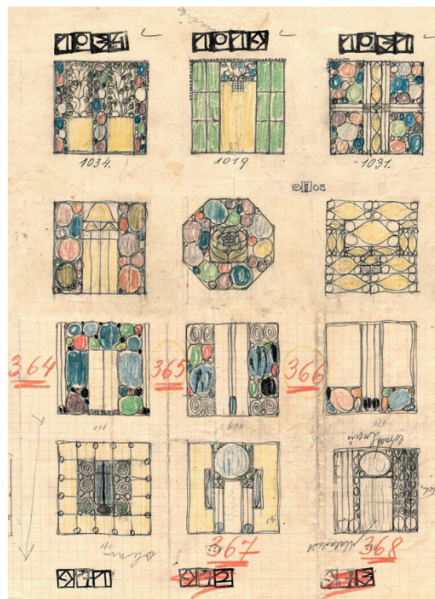
Josef Hoffmann, pieces from a flatware set Fritz and Lili Waerndorfer, executed by the Wiener Werkstätte, 1903, Silver, niello, MAK, GO 2009
© MAK/Aslan Kudznofsky



Josef Hoffmann, tea set, executed by the Wiener Werkstätte, 1903, Silver, coral and ebony, MAK, GO 2005
© MAK/Katrin Wisskirchen



Josef Hoffmann, Stoclet House, Brussels, 1905-1911, street façade on the Avenue de Tervueren, © MAK



Josef Hoffmann, design for twelve brooches for the Wiener Werkstätte, 1926, MAK, KI 12144-45



Josef Hoffmann, vase, executed by Ludwig Moser & Söhne, Karlsbad, for the Wiener Werkstätte, 1923, Radon-colored glass, mold-blown, MAK, GL 3785
© MAK, Georg Mayer

Josef Hoffmann, footed dish, executed by a Bohemian manufactory for the Wiener Werkstätte, 1922, Iridescent glass, mold-blown, MAK, GL 3309
© MAK/Georg Mayer



Josef Hoffmann, Pendant, 1907, Silver and semi-precious stones. Josef Hoffmann, designer (1870-1956). Manufactured by the Wiener Werkstätte.
© MAK/Katrin Wisskirchen



Josef Hoffmann, letter-paper box, executed by the Wiener Werkstätte, 1926, Leather, gold embossing, DR. E. Ploil Collection



Josef Hoffmann (attributed), the so-called "Fledermaus" chair (model n°728 by J.&J. Kohn), Vienna, 1905/6
© MAK/Georg Mayer

3. ACTIVITIES AROUND THE EXHIBITION

Josef Hoffmann - Falling for Beauty

EVENTS

Za / sa / Sat 15.10.2023

12:00

Pauline Claes / Sturm und Klang - La Jeune Fille à la fenêtre

concert-performance as part of Artonov Festival (7 - 15.10.2023)

€22 / gratis -19 jaar / gratuit -19 ans / free -19 years (combi performance + expo)

Za / sa / Sat 21.10.2023

19:00 - 01:00

Museum Night Fever

expo + dance / singing performances & workshops Bodies & Voices x Hoffmann
by Marie Martinez & Artists and l'Ecole de Cirque de Bxl

€ 15 (voorverkoop / prévente / presale)

Zo / dim / Sun 19.11.2023

Kunstendag voor Kinderen / Journées des Arts pour Enfants / Kids' Art Day

expo + activities for children (4-12) and their parents

en collaboration with Czech Center Brussels

€ 0 (0-4, 13-18, museumpass) / € 12 (4-12) / € 6 / € 12 / € 18

Vrij / ve / Fr 8.12.2023

Lezing & rondleiding ism Amarant - Josef Hoffmann en de Wiener Werkstätte

Deeviet Caelen / in het NL

Inschrijven via www.amarant.be

CARNAVAL VACATIONS WORKSHOPS

ma 12 – vr 16.02.24

Krokusatelier 'Mijnheer Hoffmann' / in het NL

5 dagen / 6-12 jaar

€ 125 / € 100 (zus of broer)

lu 4 – ve 8.03.24

Stage de carnaval 'Monsieur Hoffmann' / en FR

5 jours / 6-12 ans

€ 125 / € 100 (frère ou soeur)

GUIDED TOURS

Guided tours for individuals

On :

13:30 NL

14:30 FR

15:00 EN

14 & 28.10.23

4 & 18.11.23

2 & 16.12.23

13 & 27.01.24

10 & 24.02.24

9 & 23.03.24

€ 20 / € 8 (-19 jaar / - 19 ans / - 19 years & Museumpass)

GROUP VISITS

Practical information

Prijs / Prix:

€ 105 + tickets / adults

€ 90 + tickets / schools (€ 0 -19y)

Duur/durée: 90min

Max. 15 pers / group

Reservation via the form or by calling : +32 (0)2 741 73 02

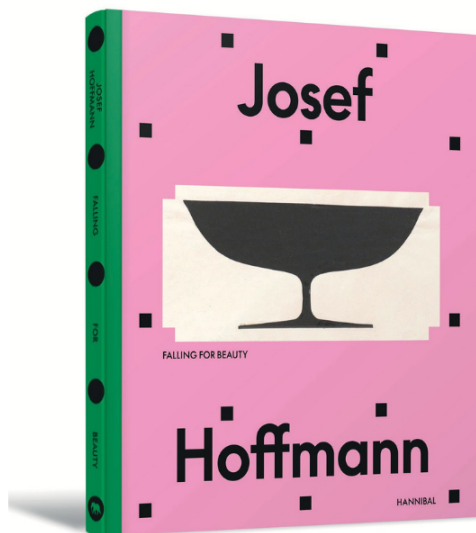
- *The program and the prices are subject to change*

4. CATALOGUE : JOSEF HOFFMANN - FALLING FOR BEAUTY



HANNIBAL BOOKS

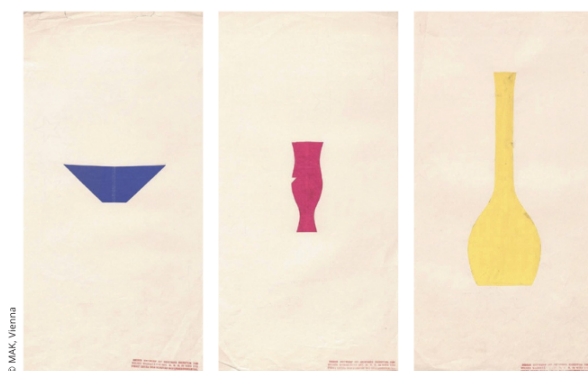
WWW.HANNIBALBOOKS.BE

JOSEF
HOFFMANNFALLING
FOR BEAUTYAdrián Prieto &
Christian Witt-Döring**Innovative introduction
to the iconic work of
architect and designer
Josef Hoffmann**

The Viennese architect and 'allround designer' Josef Hoffmann (1870-1956) is much more than just the founder of the Wiener Werkstätte. This book offers a wide-ranging look at his oeuvre, which took shape over no less than sixty years. The timeless beauty of Hoffmann's creations demonstrates his importance not just as a historical figure, but as a source of inspiration for several generations.

Richly illustrated with furniture, objects, designs, textiles, photos, drawings and documents. Special attention is paid to his creative method and his misunderstood use of colour.

This monograph accompanies the exhibition *Josef Hoffmann – Falling for Beauty*, to take place at the Art & History Museum in Brussels from 6 October 2023 to 14 April 2024. The project was developed in collaboration with Vienna's Museum of Applied Arts (MAK) and is one of the eye-catchers of Art Nouveau Brussels 2023.



© MAK, Vienna

© MAK, Vienna / Georg Mayer



Hardcover – 208 pages – 24 x 27 cm – € 39,95 – English edition – ISBN 978 94 6466 677 9

5. PREFACE OF THE CATALOGUE

Parisian ‘classical’ architect Charles Girault completed the triumphal arch at the beginning of Avenue de Tervueren to mark the 75th anniversary of Belgium. At the far end of this new boulevard, he also built the Congo Museum. These royal structures could hardly be described as modern, in contrast to an approximately contemporaneous building erected on that same Avenue de Tervueren between 1905 and 1911: a spacious house for the Stoclet-Stevens family, designed by Viennese architect Josef Hoffmann (1870–1956)

The ‘Stoclet House’, later known as the Palais Stoclet, will forever be remembered as an archetypal example of modernist beauty. A new economy of space and comfort made room for a different experience of luxury and art through simplicity and austerity in every respect – culminating in two 7-metre-long friezes by Gustav Klimt in the dining room. Hoffmann’s design, for which he selected contemporary materials, colour schemes and geometry, is a harbinger of the 20th century. Again, art and history stand at the intersection of a new vision of humanity and the world.

Adolphe and Suzanne Stoclet-Stevens lived in Vienna in the early 20th century. It was the Vienna of Klimt, Loos, Freud, Wittgenstein, Webern, Schönberg,... and a host of new artists’ societies that were then emerging. It is where the Stoclets, as young art lovers, met Josef Hoffmann. Like many after them, they were impressed by his ideas and designs. When they wanted to build for themselves, they resolutely chose him as their architect. Their return to Brussels was unexpected. The young Austrian architect and designer, himself a founder of the Wiener Secession and co-founder of the Wiener Werkstätte, completed his assignment in the Belgian capital. Thus, with his Palais Stoclet, Brussels acquired a world-class stately urban palace, located a stone’s throw away from the Cinquantenaire Park. Its timeless beauty is unrivalled. Hoffmann designed everything, right down to the tiniest details: not only the building, but also the garden, the picture frames and plinths for the art collection, carpets, furniture, porcelain and cutlery... It is one of his most prestigious ‘total’ designs.

This iconic building, which is still owned by the Stoclet family and not open to the public, belongs to the early phase of Hoffmann’s long artistic career; it is just one of his countless creations across multiple artistic disciplines. Hoffmann was possessed of prodigious talents and an insatiable urge to create beauty. He was an innovator yet conscious of tradition. The exhibition highlights the evolution of his ideals across six decades, including two world wars. Independent of the prevailing fashions, or the shifting ideologies and social conditions of his time, he remained true to individual and highly creative standards. After Henry van de Velde, who was the subject of an in-depth retrospective at the Art & History Museum in 2013–2014, and alongside Victor Horta and other Brussels contemporaries who are the focus of the ongoing Art Nouveau Year, we cannot ignore Josef Hoffmann.

Matthias Boeckl, Rainald Franz and Christian Witt-Döring have conducted exhaustive research on Josef Hoffmann and unlocked, among other things, new material on the architect’s attitude towards Nazism. Their research underpinned the

2022 exhibition at the Museum für angewandte Kunst (MAK) in Vienna, Josef Hoffmann. Fortschritt durch Schönheit / Progress through Beauty. We are grateful to them, as well as to MAK director Lilli Hollein, MAK vice-director Martina Kandeler-Fritsch and former MAK director Christoph Thun-Hohenstein, for their cooperation and permission to restage the exhibition concept. For the Cinquantaire presentation, we enjoyed the exceptional support of several Austrian federal ministries and the Brussels-Capital Region, which was the catalyst for making Brussels the European capital of Art Nouveau. It has allowed us, for the first time in history, to mount a comprehensive exhibition in the city that underscores Josef Hoffmann's seminal importance to 20th-century European architecture and design.

Adrián Prieto, doctor in architectural history, took on the role of artistic and scientific project leader of the Brussels exhibition and accompanying publication. Many people have contributed to its success, from the generous lenders to the museum personnel, the staff of Horizon 50-200, urban.brussels and visit.brussels, scenographer Kris Kimpe, lighting designer Chris Pype, project collaborator Nikolaas Verstraeten.

In particular, we would like to thank the Stoclet family, and especially Mrs Aude Stoclet and her son Laurent Flagey, who contributed to this publication and offer the reader an exceptional insight into the captivating childhood years they were privileged to experience in the Palais Stoclet. As heirs, they are still falling for Josef Hoffmann's beautiful legacy. As are we.

Bruno Verbergt

Director General a.i.

Royal Museums of Art and History

Paul Dujardin

Commissioner General

Art Nouveau Year

6. IN THE WORDS OF THE CURATOR

The exhibition features a range of well-known works and rare pieces. Can you highlight some specific items that offer unique insights into Hoffmann's artistic vision ? (I recommend you choose 3 objects)

No doubt the Palais Stoclet is astounding but the idea that Hoffmann's highlights always equal his biggest works would be misleading. Hoffmann hardly made any distinction between the detailing of a sugar spoon, a stool or the façade of a massive villa. In that sense, everything Hoffmann created becomes a highlight.

Some pieces are, however, particularly dear to me. A first would be a massive chest of drawers. It originally furnished a hypothetical smoking room in the Austrian Pavilion for the worldscale decorative arts exhibition that took place in Paris in 1925. A private lender who still uses the commode daily, as well as yearly to store the Christmas decoration, was so generous to share it for a few months. This piece, especially, helps to understand how Hoffmann was a master of disproportion. You can discover the very same baroquely undulating surface blown up to the walls of the Austrian Pavilion itself, or downsized to a little box, or a teapot (a teapot which then again appears massive, regardless of its reasonable size).

I am also particularly excited about seeing a series of architectural models, constructed by the students of Prof. Johannes Spalt in the 80's at Vienna's Applied Arts University, after Hoffmann's 40s designs for garden, or pleasure pavilions. These unrealized projects – in Austrian-German called *Salettls* – are exhibited in Brussels for the very first time since that classroom. They are beautiful examples of Hoffmann's imagination, and his particular flair for playful utopias, decades before this became a postmodern hallmark.

A suite of cut-outs for glass designs is interesting for this exhibition, in particular, as well. The glossy colourful paper, cut out in all kinds of shapes and forms, and pasted on paper, give insight into Hoffmann's freestyle way of working, his intuitive exploration of this and that proportion, such and such silhouette. His playful yet disciplined learning about forms for future objects. He sometimes drew on the collages to correct curves, widths or heights, or he simply started all over again. These drawings are first and foremost working drawings. For preservation's sake we now look at these 'working drawings' in frames, and on a wall, though looking at a wall filled with them, I think it's not too hard to picture Hoffmann working at his table on one collage after the other. It's essentially the creative joy that speaks from this repeated cut and pasting – as playful as it is precise – that I enjoy so much in Hoffmann, and why we chose to use three as campaign imagery, in the hope that one eyes a green glass at Simonis, and meets a yellow vase at Schumann.

How does this exhibition contribute to a broader perspective of his work ?

Josef Hoffmann's work has now quite often been shown in context of the Wiener Werkstätte or fin-de-siècle developments. Displaying work from the beginning to the end of his work-life, however, truly shows how consistent Hoffmann is in his convictions, and his methods. The scenography of Kris Kimpe, made to measure in both structure and sensitivity to Hoffmann's ideas, shows this very well. In the open exhibition space, you will see that it's not that easy to discern a strong evolution in Hoffmann's work over time, he constantly reworks a historical and local formal vocabulary, he also constantly revisits his own ideas in surprising ways. Perhaps one of the biggest surprises here will be to discover the many designs and projects of his later work. Even though his last building, the Austrian Pavilion for the Venice Biennale, dates from 1934, he continued to design until his death in 1956.

What was the significance of the Stoclet Palace in Josef Hoffmann's life and career, and how did it shape his artistic trajectory ?

You could say the Palais Stoclet is architectural stoicism pushed to the extreme, designed as if there were no such thing as artistic or financial limits. This titanic madness was undertaken *and* undergone by Hoffmann as well as the director of the Wiener Werkstätte, Fritz Waerdorfer. It led to the near destruction of their personal lives and the financial bankruptcy of the company. For the interior and exterior, Hoffmann called on excellent craftsmanship, and the talent of artists such as Carl Otto Czeschka, (most famously) Gustav Klimt, or even the Belgian native Fernand Khnopff.

The Palais Stoclet was not Hoffmann's first attempt to implement his ideal total work of art but it was definitely the most ambitious. Hoffmann very well understood this was probably the first and last time he had the chance to truly design as he wished. The six long years between 1905 and 1911 spent working on a family home were undoubtedly defining. Looking back on his life in his short autobiography, Hoffmann laments how such instances of pure idealism put in practice vanished with the First World War and the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Not harbouring any illusions about what the Palais Stoclet required from both artist and patron, it's a testament of where a proper understanding of art and work can get us, if we're willing to risk it.

We shouldn't forget that the Palais Stoclet is – above all – a modern house. The house was technically highly advanced, from the central heating to the central vacuum system to hot water across the various bathrooms. The Palais Stoclet would be one of the first houses in Brussels to adopt double glazing. Fundamental for me in understanding the Palais was a chronicle published anonymously in 1924 but written, in fact, by the architect Robert Mallet-Stevens – a nephew of the Stoclet-Stevens family, by the way. With utmost fascination and in technical detail, he

describes the innovative restrooms, bathrooms and servants' quarters, devoting but a few words to the most representative rooms (the dining room, for example, with Klimt's mosaics). Not really a statement on social structures, this article shows that Hoffmann was as concerned with the mechanics as with the aesthetics of the Palais Stoclet. New mechanisms governed new aesthetics; this, especially, was a decisive break with previous generations of architects.

7. UPCOMING EXHIBITIONS

Europalia Georgia : A Story of Encounters

27.10.23–18.02.24

This autumn, Europalia will dedicate its festival to Georgia. From 4 October 2023, a comprehensive programme, teeming with exhibitions, performances, concerts, films, dance shows, theatre pieces and literary encounters, will roll-out across Belgium. In this context, the Art & History Museum will host a heritage exhibition focussing on the culture, history, and art of Georgia since the Neolithic period.

8. PARTNERS

 Federal Ministry
Republic of Austria
Arts, Culture,
Civil Service and Sport

 Federal Ministry
Republic of Austria
European and International
Affairs



9. PRACTICAL INFORMATION

JOSEF HOFFMANN: Falling for Beauty

October 6, 2023 - April 14, 2024

Address

Art & History Museum
Parc du Cinquantenaire 10
1000 Brussels
+32 (0)2 741 73 31

info@mrah.be

<http://www.artandhistory.museum>

Opening Hours

Tue-Fri: 9:30 AM – 5:00 PM

Sat-Sun: 10:00 AM – 5:00 PM

Closed on Mondays, November 1st, November 11th, December 25th, and January 1st

Admission

18 € / 12 € / 6 €

Press Contact

Anne Goffart

E : a.goffart@mrah.be

T : 32 (0) 473 81 36 42

En célébrant le génie de Josef Hoffmann, nous rendons hommage à l'esprit d'innovation qui a caractérisé l'époque de l'Art nouveau. Avec cette exposition, le Musée royal d'art et d'histoire montre une fois de plus qu'il est une plateforme où des histoires diverses convergent autour du patrimoine et de l'innovation, où le passé et le présent se rencontrent. Les collections des musées fédéraux ont la force de nous inspirer et de nous fédérer. C'est pourquoi je crois fermement à l'importance de l'investissement de ce gouvernement à l'horizon 2030 pour transformer le parc du Cinquantaire en hub d'innovation et de patrimoine, où l'inspiration peut mener à l'innovation et où l'héritage de l'Art nouveau à Bruxelles est célébré de manière permanente.

THOMAS DERMINE

Secrétaire d'État pour la Relance et les Investissements stratégiques,
chargé de la Politique scientifique

Door het genie van Josef Hoffmann te vieren eren we de geest van innovatie die het tijdperk van de Art Nouveau kenmerkte. Het Koninklijk Museum van Kunst en Geschiedenis toont met deze tentoonstelling opnieuw dat het een platform is waar diverse verhalen samenkomen rond erfgoed en innovatie, waar heden en verleden elkaar vinden. De collecties van de federale musea hebben de kracht om ons te inspireren en te verbinden. Ik geloof daarom sterk in het belang van de investering die deze regering in aanloop naar 2030 doet om het Jubelpark om te vormen tot een tijdloos centrum van innovatie en erfgoed, waar inspiratie tot vernieuwing kan leiden en waar de erfenis van Art Nouveau in Brussel blijvend wordt gevierd.

THOMAS DERMINE

staatssecretaris voor Relance en Strategische investeringen,
belast met Wetenschapsbeleid