

# secession

Vereinigung bildender KünstlerInnen Wiener Secession  
Friedrichstraße 12, A-1010 Wien  
T. +43-1-587 53 07, F. +43-1-587 53 07-34  
office@secession.at, www.secession.at

## Renovation of the Secession successfully completed

The Secession building shines in new splendor in time for its 120th anniversary. The art nouveau structure has undergone extensive renovations, including a restoration of its outward appearance, construction to provide improved barrier-free accessibility, technical infrastructure upgrades, and a remodeling of the basement galleries and museum shop. The project was implemented by the Association of Visual Artists Vienna Secession; architect Adolf Krischanitz directed the work. The renovation was completed on time and on budget. The Secession raised funds from private and corporate donors to defray one third of the total net costs of ca. €3.5 million; the Federal Chancellery and the City of Vienna each contributed €1.2 million.

### **Gernot Blümel, Federal Minister for the EU, Art, Culture and Media:**

“The Secession is a crown jewel of the Austrian artistic and cultural heritage. Its work has been—and still is—seminal in many ways. A bastion of the freedom of art, it is also a signature creation of the fin de siècle, one of the most innovative periods in the history of Austrian art and culture. More than a century ago, the Association of Visual Artists Vienna Secession embraced the ideas of international modernism. For example, it was one of the first institutions to introduce the Viennese public to works of Impressionist art. And so the Secession embodies an essential insight: art knows no national boundaries. I am delighted that the renovation of the building has been successfully completed and the iconic golden dome once again rises above its roof to proclaim the fame of this leading gallery for contemporary art.”

### **Veronica Kaup-Hasler, Vienna City Councilor for Art, Culture, and Science:**

“Around thirty years after the last general renovation of the building, giving the Secession—one of the most imposing art nouveau structures of its kind—a long-needed ‘facelift’ was the right decision at the right time. The project included the restoration of the Secession’s signature golden dome, the landmark-protected façade and glass roof, and the galleries as well as numerous other improvements to the building’s interior.

As the city councilor for culture, I am acutely aware of the significance and diversity of Vienna’s artistic treasures, which are integral our city’s unique vitality and cultural richness. That is why the city continually provides considerable funds for efforts to maintain and preserve these treasures. By committing its share of the renovation budget, the city lives up to its political responsibility for its cultural heritage and helps ensure that this formidably charming building, an indispensable part of Vienna’s cultural landscape, will continue to draw large public audiences with outstanding exhibitions in a splendid setting.

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**Boris Marte, Deputy Chairman of the Board, ERSTE Foundation:**

“What artists do has far greater relevance to the well-being of a society than is generally acknowledged. Their creativity and their engagement with reality chart new modes of perception and open up fresh perspectives. In this sense, each new work also expands our freedom in an unexpected direction. The Secession is much more than an exhibition venue. It is a beacon for the creative spirit whose widely acclaimed presentations draw visitors from far beyond Austria’s borders. The role it plays in artists’ lives cannot be overestimated. It is an authority—and an open space. The ideas and works showcased by the Secession are regarded as necessary and vital, as exceptions that set new standards.

The partnership between Erste Bank and the Secession is presumably one of the most unusual axes of cooperation in Vienna’s cultural life. Ours is a mutually beneficial relationship in the best sense. Key initiatives launched by Erste Bank / ERSTE Foundation and their affiliates were inspired by the work of the Secession: the establishment of the independent culture platforms tranzit in Prague, Budapest, Bratislava, and Bucharest; the foundation of the Kontakt Collection, which has grown into one of Europe’s most important art archives. With all these projects, the Secession was there from the outset, as a source of advice and lodestar, as a space and model of what is possible.

That is why we are enormously pleased by the successful completion of the renovations of the Secession’s home. We see it as a historic achievement and a vital signal that will spur us to continue in our efforts and help strengthen the Secession and those who confidently espouse the idea, stance, and aspirations for which it stands.

We speak for the entire Erste Group when we send our congratulations; a singular treasure has been restored to its original splendor. We would like to thank everyone who contributed funds to the effort and—if we may be selfish for a moment—wish the Secession a glorious future.”

**Herwig Kempinger, President, Association of Visual Artists Vienna Secession:**

“I am enormously pleased that we have successfully completed the renovation of our home, preserving this preeminent work of art nouveau architecture for future generations of visitors.

I would like to express my gratitude to everyone who supported us in this major undertaking: the Federal Chancellery, the City of Vienna, and, no less importantly, the many extraordinarily generous private and corporate donors. The Friends of the Secession have been unwavering in their support, and during our fundraising campaign, we have made many new friends in Austria and abroad; we have been humbled by the overwhelming show of love for the Secession.

I would also like to emphasize that we could not have implemented this project without the support of our longstanding partner, Erste Bank, which has been steadfastly at our side for twenty years.

Conscious of our reputation as a leading independent exhibition venue, we will continue to show wonderful art by international and Austrian artists in our magnificent home.”

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## **Renovation measures**

The Secession building is one of the most important works of art nouveau architecture in Austria. More than thirty years after the last general renovation, the landmark-protected structure was in urgent need of restoration and repair. We have sought to avoid a reinterpretation of the building wherever possible, emphasizing a technical modernization of the existing facilities. Adolf Krischanitz, the architect who led the general renovation in 1985–1986, agreed to direct the new round of measures. The work was undertaken in close consultation with the Federal Monuments Authority Vienna and executed between December 2017 and early September 2018. The Secession's program of exhibitions continued and the building remained open to visitors.

### **The renovations in detail:**

#### **Restoration of the building's outward appearance: dome, façade, and glass roof**

- Dome:  
A key measure whose effects are visible from afar was the restoration of the emblematic dome. The wrought-iron construction measuring 28 feet in diameter was taken down for ca. six months. The work revealed that the dome was in greater disrepair than had initially been assumed: the embedment anchoring the framework to the four pylons was almost completely corroded. Based on a comprehensive expert report, the framework was reinstalled in accordance with the original plans and using historic techniques. In addition to replacing the 800 rivets holding it in place, workers performed welding repairs and reconditioned the support structure. Leaves and berries were forged to replace those heavily damaged or altogether destroyed by corrosion; all 2,500 laurel leaves and 342 berries were resurfaced and regilded. Based on recent scholarship on the original color scheme, the support structure and the undersides of the leaves were painted a brighter shade of green than in 1985.
- Façade:  
After repair of areas where the plaster had suffered damage, the façade was repainted in keeping with the color scheme designed in 1985; the letterings and ornamentation were regilded.
- Glass roof:  
The glass roof was in urgent need of restoration; the glazing of the four lanterns was replaced with Okalux laminated glass panes.

#### **Improved barrier-free access**

- One focus of the measures in the building's interior was on improving barrier-free access.
- Installation of a new elevator: A newly installed elevator now provides barrier-free access for wheelchair users to the Beethoven Frieze on the second basement level. The construction works in the immediate vicinity of the frieze were monitored by highly sensitive vibration sensors to ensure the safety of the delicate work of art.

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- Renovation of the existing elevator facilities
- Installation of a barrier-free bathroom

### **Modernization of the technical infrastructure**

- Technical redevelopment of the building, including the climate-control, ventilation, and fire safety systems, and renovation of the bathroom facilities.
- All galleries now feature cutting-edge LED illumination with individually controlled brightness and color temperature settings.

### **Reorganization of the first basement level**

- Remodeling of the first basement level allowed for the creation of a new event space adjacent to the existing galleries that may be used for exhibitions as well as lectures, book presentations, or members' meetings.
- Reorganization of the storage rooms
- The members' bar of the artists' association on the first basement level was redesigned by the artist Maruša Sagadin, who created what she calls the *Heart Bar*.

### **Shop**

- The Secession's museum shop was redesigned with Vitra furniture.

## **Budget**

The renovations cost a total of ca. €3.5 million.

The budget plan was modified on one occasion early this year when it turned out that the dome and façade had suffered significantly more damage than had been previously assumed.

**With the help of private and corporate donors, the Secession raised well over €1 million**, roughly a third of the total construction costs.

## **Supporters**

The names of the numerous donors who contributed at least €10,000.– will be permanently inscribed in the Secession's lobby.

The donation campaign held under the motto ***Gild the Dome!*** was extraordinarily successful. More than 1,500 citizens responded to our appeal to donate €100.– to defray the costs of gilding one leaf of the dome. Their generosity was not only enormously helpful, it was also a powerful reminder of how deeply the people of Vienna and Austria feel attached to the Secession. The honor roll of donors is available online at [www.secession.at/kuppel](http://www.secession.at/kuppel).

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The Secession would like to thank all contractors involved in the project and the companies that supported the renovations with **donations in kind**:

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You can find more information here:

<https://www.secession.at/en/presstype/renovation-2017-18/>

## **Press contact**

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Hours: Tuesday–Sunday 10am–6pm  
Permanent presentation: Gustav Klimt, *Beethoven Frieze*

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**The renovation was made possible by:**

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