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# The Historic Centre of Vienna World Cultural Heritage and Vibrant Hub

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**Rudi Schicker,  
Executive City  
Councillor for  
Urban Development,  
Traffic and Transport  
Vienna and its  
World Heritage status**

## Interview

**What does the cachet of being a World Heritage Site actually signify in your opinion?** The City of Vienna is aware that its historic centre is part of our common world heritage. It is our responsibility to make sure the high quality of this legacy of humankind in its worldwide unique form will be preserved for future generations. Yet we should not forget that Vienna must remain a prospering, competitive metropolis at the heart of Europe that offers space for new, innovative developments and exciting architecture. Awareness of the historic heritage and a sense of responsibility must coexist in harmony with the role of Vienna as a cosmopolitan city.

Obviously, Vienna is – like many historic cities – exposed to massive pressures engendered by the manifold needs of mobility, economy, housing and the service society. Changes and adaptations to novel social and economic challenges are viewed by the City of Vienna as an integral part of urban development that must always be balanced against the preservation of our cultural heritage.

**In your mind, what are the present-day challenges Vienna faces with regard to its UNESCO World Heritage status?** I believe that there exists a link between the proverbially high quality of life that is typical of Vienna and the effort to create a balance between preservation and development in the World Heritage area.

In the study annually conducted by Mercer Management Consulting regarding the quality of life in 215 cities, Vienna for the first time took the top place in April 2009. If these two efforts – preservation and development – were off balance, the result would hardly have been as favourable for the Austrian capital, I believe.

Thus it must remain our goal for the future to make sure that Vienna will evolve like a living organism – in keeping with social and economic requirements, without yet losing its very own identity.



## Interview

**What direction do international developments in the cultural heritage field currently take?** There is more focus on the integrity of cultural properties. This means that there is an effort to maintain the original functional, structural and visual relationships within the property and its environment. For cities, this is important because there are many potentially destructive forces that must be dealt with. Changes are becoming larger in scale and therefore have a bigger impact on the site and its surroundings, leading to such unfortunate results as fragmentation of the area and isolation of different elements. Ultimately, the site can lose its significance as heritage. UNESCO is currently developing a standard-setting instrument in the form of a recommendation on the conservation of the historic urban landscape in order to pave the way for effective preservation measures.

**Which challenges do you see for the cultural heritage between the conflicting priorities of preserving and developing historic cities?**

The challenges of preserving historic cities, while allowing them to grow and develop naturally, are significant. Until recently, these types of issues have only truly been addressed in the academic world, and so when they are presented for the first time to local authorities or communities, they test the limits of the legal, policy and public participation system, often with detrimental effects. We need to incorporate cultural heritage significance into city development strategies from the beginning, just as environmental sustainability issues are now.

**How would you define the specific characteristics of the European city as a living organism?** European cities developed gradually over centuries, with a harmonious blending of multi-layered, multi-functional styles. The problem is that the society for which the city was first created doesn't exist anymore – and today there are different communities, such as incoming migrants, ethnic minorities and highly educated yuppies, all creating a new vision of what the city should be, including the role its heritage should play.

**How do you assess the World Heritage Site – Historic Centre of Vienna in an international comparison?** Vienna has always been considered to be a “total work of art” in terms of its coherence in urban planning and urban fabric, including the three distinctive styles present in the area designated a World Heritage Site (from the Middle Ages, the Baroque period and the Gründerzeit). This poses challenges to Vienna's authenticity and integrity, probably even more so than other World Heritage cities. Because of this, Vienna has both a competitive advantage and a unique challenge.

Francesco Bandarin,  
Director of the  
UNESCO World  
Heritage Centre, Paris  
UNESCO and  
Vienna as a  
World Heritage Site



## Interview

**In your personal view, what are the mega trends regarding the world cultural heritage?** Over the past thirty years, the professional heritage community has worked ceaselessly to secure broad support for conservation from the general public and to ensure that heritage conservation became a permanent – and not an ancillary – component of territorial planning. Those efforts have been largely successful, but success has given rise to unexpected results that we are now trying to understand and determine how they fit within our overarching aim of preserving our built heritage.

The widespread public appreciation for cultural heritage has also meant that in the political arena, the public has also appropriated it, demanding a voice in the socio-economic decision-making discussions on the use and treatment of heritage places. Since the public often lacks the long-term vision of heritage professionals, it at times expects and demands certain uses and transformations of heritage places that, while perhaps temporarily advantageous, erode the significance of the place, diminish its authenticity and reduce the traditional role of heritage for future generations.

In a parallel vein, the emergence and eventual adoption of cultural landscapes as a heritage category fulfilled a long wish of the heritage community to envision our environment comprehensively as the dynamic setting where many inter-connected heritage elements exist, both tangible and intangible in nature. The issue of change as an integral part of the historic environment has forced a massive reassessment of the nature of heritage and the doctrine for its protection in order to understand the limits of change that a heritage place can undergo without losing its values, authenticity and significance.

**In your opinion, what are the major challenges inherent in the conflicting priorities of preserving and developing cities?** In principle, I do not see a real conflict in historic cities developing, since that has always been a fundamental part of their nature. The conflicts in urban and territorial development only arise when the historic evolutionary patterns that have allowed cities to remain healthy and useful to sequences of generations are broken or stretched beyond their elastic limits. The present crisis, of course, is due in part to the accelerated pace of growth in today's society in contrast to that in the past, and we are all aware that the current rate of change in cities has to keep pace with it. The real conflicts, however, have exploded not so much from decisions on how the overall city should evolve or how fast it should grow, but from isolated mega-projects that under the guise of economic development, functionalism and artistic freedom defiantly disregard both the city's existing morphology (the tangible aspect) and its historic pattern of change (the intangible aspect).

Gustavo Araoz,  
President of  
ICOMOS, Paris  
ICOMOS and  
Vienna as a  
World Heritage Site



## World Heritage Site – Historic Centre of Vienna

The care and protection of landmarks at an international level are tasks of UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization), which was founded in 1945. In 1972, this body held the 17<sup>th</sup> UNESCO General Conference in Paris, in its context approving “The Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage”.

The adoption of this agreement was decisively motivated by the fact that our heritage is increasingly and visibly threatened with destruction, not only due to conventional decay, but also because of the change in social and economic circumstances. Therefore, at least the cultural and natural Heritage Sites of special and universal significance should be listed and preserved as the world heritage of all of humankind. This led to the birth of the World Heritage List.

The Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage provides joint, worldwide support for the listed monuments; it does not replace the measures taken by the respective state and is indeed meant as an effective complement.

The Convention is also exceptionally important for another reason: for the first time, a written, internationally adopted document established that natural memorials and monuments are as important as manmade monuments. Therefore, the Convention divides the existing monuments around the world into the categories “Cultural Heritage”, “Natural Heritage” and “Mixed Ensembles”; the latter are examples in which manmade structures are combined with nature. As per May 2009, the UNESCO World Heritage List comprises a total of more than 878 properties, of which 679 are Cultural Heritage Sites; 174, Natural Heritage Sites; and 25, Mixed Ensembles. To add to the World Heritage concept, it ought to be mentioned that the actual “monument” or “core zone” should also be surrounded by a sufficiently large “buffer zone”.

World Heritage List

Cultural Heritage  
Natural Heritage  
Mixed Ensembles

Core zone  
Buffer zone

The Austrian UNESCO World Heritage Sites are:

- Historic Centre of the City of Salzburg (nominated in 1996)
- Palace and Gardens of Schönbrunn (1996)
- Hallstadt-Dachstein Cultural Landscape in the Salzkammergut region (1997)
- Semmeringbahn Railway and the surrounding countryside (1998)
- Historic Centre of the City of Graz (1999)
- Wachau Cultural Landscape including the monasteries of Melk and Göttweig as well as the historic centres of the towns of Melk and Krems (2000)
- Fertő-tő/Neusiedlersee Cultural Landscape (2001, a cross-border nomination by Austria and Hungary)

The nomination of the historic centre of Vienna was equally announced in 2001. This area, which not only includes the historic city centre, but also the areas of Schwarzenberg Palace, Belvedere Palace and the convent of the Salesian Sisters on Rennweg, comprises a core zone of approx 3.7 sq km with around 1,600 objects. The buffer zone covers approx. 4.6 sq km and around 2,950 objects. The total surface and number of objects represent less than 2 percent of the city area and building stock of Vienna.

Criteria for Vienna's inscription

The inscription was justified on the basis of the following criteria:

1. *The urban and architectural qualities of the Historic Centre of Vienna bear outstanding witness to a continuing interchange of values throughout the second millennium.*

2. *Three key periods of European cultural and political development – the Middle Ages, the Baroque period, and the Gründerzeit – are exceptionally well illustrated by the urban and architectural heritage of the Historic Centre of Vienna.*

3. *Since the 16<sup>th</sup> century Vienna has been universally acknowledged to be the musical capital of Europe.*

The arguments for the inscription of Vienna on the World Heritage List emphasise the value of the “historically evolved” city with all its cultural facets. However, this recognition also implies that a city whose architecture has developed over more than a millennium must not be put under a bell jar, as it were, but has to evolve further in order to remain the vibrant centre of a prospering and prosperous city.

Folbert van Alten-Allen  
Bird's-eye view of the  
city of Vienna and its environs,  
circa 1683 (1686)



© Wien Museum

Vienna, west view



© C. Chinnia





## World Heritage Management Plan

A basic demand of UNESCO for the inscription of a property in the World Heritage List is the submission of a management plan that must conform to the following objectives:

- a regulation of legal procedures
- a regulation of the administrative structures
- measures for the “authentic” preservation of the cultural property
- measures for ensuring and maintaining public accessibility of the cultural property

From this angle, the management plan for the World Heritage Site – Historic Centre of Vienna does not require any new legal basis or new administrative institutions. The existing laws and administrative levels are certainly sufficient. The management plan for Vienna is thus primarily a structural task – a kind of concentration of existing resources with a view to the World Heritage. However, the City of Vienna has appointed a World Heritage Co-ordinator to fine-tune all necessary measures and represent these vis-à-vis UNESCO.

**Instruments and measures.** From the legal standpoint, Vienna’s World Heritage area is doubly protected: in its entirety, by protection zones (as part of the Building Code for Vienna, and thus under a law of the Federal Province of Vienna) and, with respect to its most important buildings, by monument protection (which in Austria is a federal competence).

Already on 20 December 1973, most of the historic city of Vienna was declared a protection zone by the City Council through an amendment to the Vienna Old City Protection Ordinance. In addition, approx. 780 objects of the World Heritage core zone (amounting to around half of the building stock) are currently under monument protection. For around 30 more objects, protection procedures are underway.

Due to a 2000 amendment to the Monument Protection Law, it was for the first time possible to include gardens in state-level monument protection. As a result, the gardens of the Vienna Hofburg complex (Volksgarten, Heldenplatz, Burggarten and Maria-Theresien-Platz) were thus placed under protection as well.

All decisions relating to architectural or structural modifications are based on Vienna’s land use and development plan. In the period from 2003 to 2005, the planning documents were made to incorporate a number of zoning restrictions for the 1<sup>st</sup> municipal district of Vienna with the objective of preserving the architectural heritage, i.e.:

- dedication and use of built structures according to the Building Code
- restriction of roofspace conversions/additions to a maximum of 5.50 m above eaves height
- prohibition of terraced (penthouse) levels
- various regulations for building design, e.g. with regard to bay windows, balconies, etc.

Another legal requirement provides that the land use and development plan of the City of Vienna – as well as all architectural projects of significance for the city – must be submitted for evaluation to the Advisory Board for Urban Planning and Urban Design, whose members act on an honorary basis, free of any form of political influence or pressure.



© C. Chinna

Practically, all forms of dealing with the architectural heritage are determined by the scientific cataloguing of the building stock, which was systematically initiated in Vienna with the adoption of the 1972 amendment to the Old City Protection Act. This statute was amended several times and may be called pioneering if compared with other international regulations of this kind. The data and photos as well as ample archival material on the individual objects are part of the register of cultural heritage objects of the City of Vienna, which was established in its current form in 1996 and may also be accessed online in a simplified form ([www.kulturgut.wien.at](http://www.kulturgut.wien.at)).

The register of cultural heritage objects of the City of Vienna also comprises maps on the cultural-historical and urbanistic development of Vienna, e.g. a plan detailing the various ages of the individual buildings in Vienna’s old city. Interested persons can thus access key identity traits of the Austrian capital, since only knowledge about cultural heritage can promote an understanding of its significance.

Key focuses of recent years include the following:

With regard to the architectural heritage:

- analysis of visual links, i.e. of key visual axes, vistas and panoramic views
- development of a high-rise concept based on “exclusion zones”, i.e. areas where no high-rise building may be erected
- overview and analysis of roofspace conversions
- studies on winter gardens and streetside gardens
- criteria for advertising hoardings within the World Cultural Heritage area
- general concepts, programmes and guidelines for improving the quality of planning and construction as summarised in the Vienna Architecture Declaration

With regard to the natural heritage:

- detailed overviews and analyses of green spaces within the World Cultural Heritage area and development of garden and park maintenance programmes

With regard to a general overview:

- development of a 3D model

All explorations of the status quo and all studies serve the purpose of reinforcing control over the architectural implementation of the manifold requirements of monument protection, old city preservation and urban design.

In fact, the management plan for any World Heritage Site is a very complex concept: surveillance of environmental influences, in particular those of air pollutant emission, is likewise part of the management plan, as are tourism monitoring and control or targeted PR work. With regard to subsidies, special mention should be made of the Vienna Old City Preservation Fund set up in 1973, which since its inception has disbursed around Euro 218 million of subsidies for additional monument protection measures (as per June 2009).

Left page

Historic City of Vienna

Right page

Church of St. Charles Borromeo

Wedding Fountain, Hoher Markt

Dorotheerkirche Church



© Wiener Wasserwerke  
© C. Chinna



Protection zones  
Monument protection

Vienna’s land use and  
development plan

Advisory Board for  
Urban Planning and  
Urban Design



## Addressing the interactivity of priorities between old and new: Current projects



01



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## Public space

Public space is an integral part of the cultural identity of a city. The historic squares, parks and streets of a city are primarily places of recreation and leisure, of culture and communication.

In recent years, the City of Vienna has been paying particular attention to high-quality design for its public space. The latest example is the redesign of the pedestrian zones of Kärntner Strasse, Graben, Stockim-Eisen-Platz and St. Stephen's Square, which was initiated in February 2009. This project not only comprises a contemporary revamping of the surfaces with generously-dimensioned stone flagging, but also a new illumination and urban furniture concept as well as clearcut zoning of open spaces regarding the physical arrangement of streetside cafés, kiosks and other facilities.

A project exemplifying the significance, importance and scope of each individual intervention in urban space is the visitors' centre of the Austrian Parliament inaugurated in 2006. Building an underground car park below Schmerlingplatz and redesigning the forecourt resulted not only in barrier-free access to the edifice, but also placed Theophil Hansen's original urbanistic concept once more at the visual focus.

>>

01 Pedestrian zone  
Kärntner Strasse and Graben  
Architect Clemens Kirsch  
Project under construction  
© ZOOM VP

02 Judenplatz –  
square design and monument  
Artist Rachel Whiteread  
Built 1998-2000  
© Rupert Christanell

03 Forecourt of Austrian Parliament  
Architect Herbert Baier  
Built 2004-2006  
© Christian Hlkade

04 Albertinaplatz square design – Comprehensive rehabilitation of Albertina building  
Architects Erich Steinmayr and Friedrich H. Mascher  
Built 1998-2001  
Soravia Wing  
Architect Hans Hollein  
Built 2001-2003  
© Albertina, Margherita Spiluttini

As a UNESCO World Heritage Site, our splendid old city is one of the main destinations for visitors from all over the world. In my capacity as Executive City Councillor for Cultural Affairs and Science of the City of Vienna, I am particularly delighted that the Vienna Old City Preservation Fund is able to contribute so much to conserving the historic cityscape through subsidisation.

Andreas Mailath-Pokorny | Executive City Councillor for Cultural Affairs and Science of the City of Vienna

As long as the interests of protection can be combined with modern quality of life in the World Heritage area, it is a welcome “exclamation mark”.

Brigitte Jilka | Director General of Urban Planning, Development and Construction of the City of Vienna



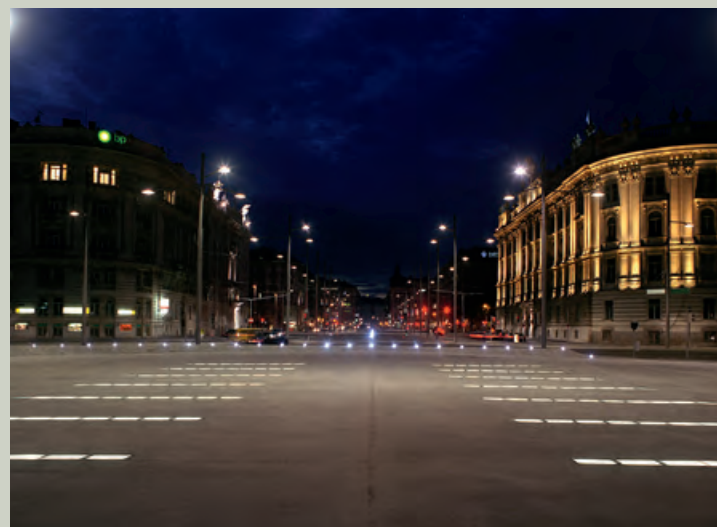
## Addressing the interactivity of priorities between old and new: Current projects



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## Public space

Within Vienna's World Heritage area, the Ringstrasse boulevard with its length of over four kilometres is the biggest and most significant coherent sub-ensemble. Solemnly inaugurated in 1865, it was necessary, after roughly 135 years, to develop a new outlook for this characteristic traffic artery based above all on a contemporary illumination concept. While striving to preserve the historic appeal, it was the objective of the project to include state-of-the-art lighting technology, which reduced illumination intensity by 20 percent while cutting down on energy cost by approx. 30 percent.

The importance of an attractive illumination concept was also “highlighted”, as it were, by the 2004 redesign project for Schwarzenbergplatz square. Alongside traffic regulation, which is of particular importance for this major and complex traffic hub, the project above all impresses with its light design during evening and night hours.

05 07 Schwarzenbergplatz square design

Architect Alfredo Arribas

Built 2004

© Rupert Christanell

06 Ringstrasse – illumination concept

Planned by Municipal Departments 33 and 19

Built 2005-2007

© MA 33

The historic centre of Vienna is a cultural heritage of worldwide significance, whose preservation entails great responsibilities. Yet being a UNESCO World Heritage Site does not mean being a museum. Current developments and contemporary architecture have their role to play, but must comply with stringent quality and quantity standards.

Eva Nowotny | President of the Austrian Commission for UNESCO

If Vienna had not been “demolished into a metropolis” (Karl Kraus), it would have remained a staid provincial town. The “small town in metropolitan guise” still remains a model for dealing with the urbanistic and architectural heritage.

Friedrich Achleitner | Writer and architectural theoretician



## Addressing the interactivity of priorities between old and new: Current projects



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## Restoration and revitalisation projects: A new lease of life for ancient buildings

In keeping with the principle of preserving the building stock, which is assigned maximum priority within the scope of the World Heritage Site, restoration and revitalisation projects are given particular prominence as well. Tourists walking through Vienna are often astonished by the excellent structural condition and solid quality of restoration works: buildings whose dilapidated, uncared-for appearance impairs the impression of well-kept rows of houses and squares are rare indeed.

In this respect, too, attention should be drawn to the role of the Vienna Old City Preservation Fund, since 80 percent of the additional cost of monument protection is covered by this institution: since its inception, 4,243 objects were rehabilitated with Fund subsidies. Numerous projects to restore the façades of old-city buildings – but also of St. Stephen's Cathedral, the Church of St. Charles Borromeo or the Dominican Church in Postgasse, to mention only three sacred sites – owe significant financial aid for their restoration to the Vienna Old City Preservation Fund.

>>

### 08 09 MuseumsQuartier

Architects Ortner & Ortner Baukunst  
and Manfred Wehdorn

Built 1998-2001

08 © Rupert Steiner 09 © Rupert Christianell

### 10 Urania building

Architect Dimitris Manikas

Built 2000-2003

© Dimitris Manikas

A city that boasts attractions that are part of the cultural heritage of the world has a duty to treat them responsibly. More than 150 years ago, a rigid, merely conservation-oriented attitude would have made it impossible for Vienna to build the Ringstrasse. Fortunately, decision-makers even then were foresighted enough to understand that not only the emergence of a cosmopolitan metropolis, but its continued survival, too, is contingent on constant evolution, also in the field of architecture.

Norbert Kettner | Managing Director of the Vienna Tourist Board

I would like to paraphrase Albert Camus by saying: the struggle against the heirs is enough to fill a man's heart. One must imagine Sisyphus happy.

Kurt Puchinger | Executive Director for Urban Planning of the City of Vienna

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## Addressing the interactivity of priorities between old and new: Current projects



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## Restoration and revitalisation projects: A new lease of life for ancient buildings

Another rehabilitation project completed in 2005 is the Wien River Gate in Stadtpark with its adjacent promenades – a Jugendstil masterpiece constructed between 1903 and 1906 based on designs by Josef Hackhofer and Friedrich Ohmann.

The comprehensive rehabilitation and revitalisation of the Liechtenstein city palace was initiated in July 2008. After completion of the extensive restoration works, the palace – which is considered the earliest example of High Baroque in Vienna – will again be publicly accessible as an exhibition and event venue. In this way, the Viennese domain of the princely Liechtenstein family will once more resume its traditional position in the artistic and cultural life of the city.

Directly facing this palace in Bankgasse, we find the Concordia building, traditionally the domicile of the eponymous club for journalists and writers. The rehabilitation of this structure, which dates back to the late 16<sup>th</sup> century and forms part of the most valuable building stock of Vienna's historic centre, will soon be initiated as well.

As these examples show, finding appropriate uses for the historic building stock is of special importance within the World Heritage area. Flexible adaptation to mutable economic, social and user-specific frame conditions poses a particular challenge in order to safeguard a sustained mix of different functions, such as housing, work and leisure in the city centre. Only in this way will the old city of Vienna remain the heart of a vibrant metropolis able to meet ever-changing demands.

11 Revitalisation Palais Epstein  
Architects Alexander van der Donk and Georg Töpfer  
Built 2002-2005  
© Rupert Christanell

12 Revitalisation  
Liechtenstein city palace  
Wehdorn Architekten  
Project under construction  
© Rupert Christanell

13 Rehabilitation project  
Wien River superstructures  
by Friedrich Ohmann  
Wehdorn Architekten  
Built 2000-2005  
© Wehdorn Architekten



The periodically erupting conflict between world heritage and urbanistic and architectural projects is not so much due to any antagonism between old and new, but rather to the presumptuousness and exaggerated dimensioning of purposes. With a focus on World Heritage Sites, what is primarily called for is a review of the underlying purposes that measures the spectrum of what is possible and practicable against the respect for the intrinsic value of what has come down to us from the past. Only this attitude will allow for a development of high-quality contemporary architecture in a context of worldwide historic significance.

Wilfried Lipp | President of ICOMOS Austria, Vice-President of ICOMOS International



## Addressing the interactivity of priorities between old and new: Current projects



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## Top of the town: Roofspace conversions

Attic conversion is one of the most attractive ways of living and working in the old city. It cannot be denied that a few such projects inviting justified criticism were built in the past, partly also motivated by a desire to optimise cost.

For this reason, the City of Vienna was constrained to drastically restrict the possibilities for roofspace conversions: the amendments to the Building Code and the development plans adopted in the years until 2007 practically limited any such projects to the addition of one storey and an additional gallery level of equally limited floorspace; terraced storeys were thus principally banned.

>>

### 14 Rooftop addition Mariahilfer Strasse 1

Architect Arkan Zeytinoglu

Built 2007-2008

© Zeytinoglu ZT, Foto Hertha Hurnaus

### 15 Rooftop addition Herrengasse 10

Steigenberger Hotel Herrenhof

A.C.C. Architekten

Built 2007-2008

© A.C.C.

### 16 Rooftop addition Nibelungengasse 1-3

Architect Rüdiger Lainer + Partner

Built 2005-2008

© ÖRAG, Matthias Silveri

Like e.g. Rome or Jerusalem, Vienna is a “world heritage site” in itself that required no designation as such. There are world heritage properties that are static – eternal statements. But there are also world heritage properties that are dynamic – engaged in continuous transformation: cities.

Ruins are often a more honest definition than reconstructions. Complementing the incomplete in the mind leads back to the original idea.

Hans Hollein | Architect, professor at the University of Applied Arts Vienna



## Addressing the interactivity of priorities between old and new: Current projects



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## Top of the town: Roofspace conversions

Moreover, the City of Vienna has developed a strategy paper on roofspace conversions that places the concept of functional, ecological and design quality at the centre of planning considerations. Many of the projects executed in recent years are emblematic of this “new quality” of roofspace conversions and highlight the fascination inherent in balancing old and new. The range of solutions developed extends from traditionally styled conversions (Herrengasse 10, Mariahilfer Strasse 1) or the contemporary transformation of historic attic styles by means of steel and glass (Goethegasse 1, Schottengasse 1, Wipplingerstrasse 1) to the creation of new roofscapes that logically and organically evolve from existing structures or uses (Fleischmarkt 16, Nibelungengasse 13, Stephansplatz 10/11).

17 Rooftop addition Stephansplatz 10/11  
Architect Hans Hollein  
Built 2002-2006  
© Atelier Hollein / Sina Baniahmad

19 Rooftop addition Schottengasse 1  
Planned by ÖRAG Österreichische Realitäten AG  
Built 2007-2008  
© ÖRAG, Matthias Silveri

18 Rooftop addition Wipplingerstrasse 1  
Architect Gert M. Mayr-Keber  
Built 2003-2006  
© Gert M. Mayr-Keber

20 Rooftop addition Goethegasse 1  
Silberpfeil Architekten  
Built 2003-2004  
© Rupert Christanell



The continuity of the spatial structure is decisive for an even balance between preservation and change, such as that remarkably exemplified by Vienna’s historic city. This is not decided by the architectural design of the individual buildings defining (and thus delimiting) public space, but by the experience of context and dimension in their formative interaction.

Irene Wiese-von Ofen | Former President of the International Federation for Housing and Planning, The Hague

Being a World Heritage Site means assuming responsibility: responsibility for the historic heritage, but also for future-oriented urban development.

Manfred Wehdorn | Architect, monument protection expert and urban planner, Vienna



## Addressing the interactivity of priorities between old and new: Current projects



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## New structures in the historic context

A historic city that wants to retain its liveliness and vibrancy must be able to grow and change. Vienna's cityscape is the result of over two millennia of development; apart from its very necessity, judicious evolution is a natural, "healthy" process.

"The central challenge of contemporary architecture in the historic urban landscape is to respond to development dynamics in order to facilitate socio-economic changes and growth on the one hand, while simultaneously respecting the inherited townscape and its landscape setting on the other." This was the principle adopted in the Vienna Memorandum by 600 experts from 55 countries all over the world, who had convened in Vienna in May 2005 for a UNESCO conference on "World Cultural Heritage and Contemporary Architecture".

>>

21 Schwarzenbergplatz 5  
Architects Martin Kohlbauer  
and Sepp Frank  
Built 2006-2008  
© Rupert Steiner

23 Neutorgasse 4-8  
RATAPLAN-Architektur  
Project under construction  
© Rataplan

22 "Wave" Am Stadtpark 1  
Architect Hans Hollein  
Built 2006-2008  
© Rupert Christianell

24 Department store Kärntner Strasse 29-33  
Architect David Chipperfield  
Project in planning stage  
© Jens Gehrken, Berlin

In view of the added value gained for the historic city, further developing Vienna's historic centre, adapting its structure to modern-day requirements, organising its functions in a more varied manner and touching up its face are imperative. This can be achieved in harmony with the preservation of the cultural heritage.

The right approach is shown in the Vienna Memorandum, with its demands for greater care in concept development, responsible weighing of a variety of factors and transparent process design. Vienna is also committed to the idea behind the Vienna Memorandum.

Kunibert Wachten | Professor of Urban Design and Regional Planning at RWTH Aachen University



## Addressing the interactivity of priorities between old and new: Current projects



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## New structures in the historic context

To allow for an understanding of the few new construction projects within Vienna's World Heritage perimeter, it must be specified that the Building Code for Vienna principally prohibits the demolition of houses situated within a protection zone. Thus to obtain a permit to construct a new building within the World Heritage perimeter, the developer must demonstrably prove that the old structure's condition warrants demolition or lacks architectural quality. The reasons for demolition requests must not only be proven, but are also subject to in-depth examination by the City Administration.

For a long time, the Haas Haus constructed in 1985 – by now enjoying worldwide fame for its architecture – was therefore the only contemporary building in Vienna's old city. Only in recent years, a few more new projects were implemented, all of them characterised by supreme quality in the spirit of the Vienna Memorandum. The following projects were completed or are underway:

- the office and commercial building "k47" in Franz-Josefs-Kai 47
- the future headquarters of OPEC (Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries) in Wipplingerstrasse 33
- the residential and office building in Neutorgasse 4-8
- the office and residential building in Schwarzenbergplatz 5
- "Wave", an office building at the edge of the buffer zone of the World Heritage area, Am Stadtpark 1

The "Peek & Cloppenburg" fashion department store in Kärntner Strasse 29-33, which engenders particular interest because of its central location, but also as a result of an expert opinion procedure involving international architects of worldwide fame, promises to maintain the same high quality level.

25 "k47" office and commercial building  
Henke und Schreieck Architekten  
Built 2002-2003  
© Rupert Christanell

27 Wipplingerstrasse 35 /  
Hohenstaufengasse 12  
ARGE TW+S - Tillner & Willinger,  
Gerhard Steffel  
Built 2007-2009  
© ZOOM VP

26 Wipplingerstrasse 33 - OPEC  
Atelier Hayde Architekten  
Built 2007-2009  
© ZOOM VP

"Laudantur urbes similiter atque homines"! This praise applies both to cities and to people and their attainments, to what they have wrought to create visible urbanity – houses and cities, squares, streets and monuments. Cities should be beautiful, and their buildings should be striking and outstanding. The old "praise of cities" provides for just that, and Vienna boasts the very best prerequisites to meet and even surpass these expectations. Only the best architecture is good enough and should fulfil this task, today and tomorrow.

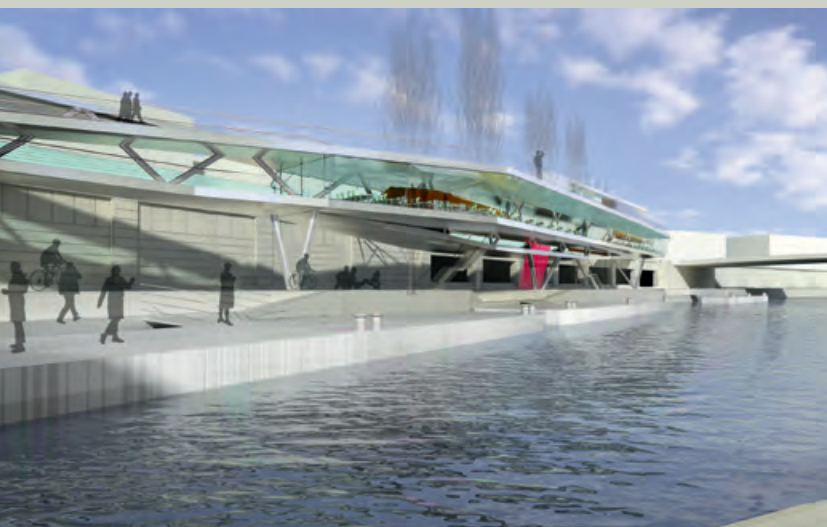
Werner Oechslin | Professor of History and Theory of Architecture at ETH Zurich



## Addressing the interactivity of priorities between old and new: Current projects



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## Urbanistic environment

Every historic centre is embedded – visually, but even more so functionally – in a much larger urbanistic environment. From the viewpoint of urban preservation, this is taken account of by the buffer zone of the World Heritage area and its conservation through protection of the adjacent periphery; from the functional angle, all infrastructure-related measures – also those touching on traffic and transport – and their effects on the core zone must be kept track of as well.

A location of great visual importance is thus the area north of Danube Canal, although it is actually situated outside both the core and buffer zones. This part of the city had been so heavily hit by World War II bombings that a new neighbourhood strikingly diverse from historic Vienna with regard to building heights, volumes and structures emerged here after 1945. The very central position and related massive economic interest made for constantly changing building structures and a silhouette effect that in its turn exerts an exciting influence on the World Heritage. Together with the Generali Media Tower, which was already completed in 2000, the multifunctional architectural complex in Taborstrasse with its hotel tower (currently underway), provides something akin to a gateway to the World Heritage Site – Historic Centre of Vienna. All projects planned in this area are carefully vetted for their compatibility with World Heritage requirements with respect to their potential impact on the silhouette effect.

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28 Danube Canal

View towards

Ringturm high-rise

© Rupert Christanell

29 Vienna-City landing stage

fasc & fuchs architekten

Project in planning stage

© laublab

30 Danube Canal

Herrmann Beach Bar

© Rupert Christanell

Vienna has coped very successfully with the new urbanistic challenges that arose in the period after the dismantling of the Iron Curtain. A few examples include the big infrastructure ventures, such as the Underground extensions and the development of the Donau City project, or the achievements of municipal housing construction. However, Vienna's urban planning authorities are also responsible for the city's built heritage of the past. I am convinced that Vienna will continue to evolve as a cosmopolitan city without losing its unique identity recognised by the World Heritage status.

Arnold Klotz | Vice-Rector of Leopold Franzens University Innsbruck, former Executive Director for Urban Planning of the City of Vienna and World Heritage Co-ordinator



## Addressing the interactivity of priorities between old and new: Current projects



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## Urbanistic environment

In the field of transport and traffic, the superstructure that will cover the Wien Mitte railway station, situated at the north-easternmost periphery of the buffer zone, assumes maximum priority: Wien Mitte is the biggest inner-city development project and provides for an architectural complex with leisure facilities extending over approx. 80,000 sq m. Following vehement discussions and multiple design modifications in co-operation with the UNESCO World Heritage Centre, construction works were initiated in October 2007.

The project for the new Main Station is important not only for the World Heritage Site – Historic Centre of Vienna: on a 109-hectare surface, a central nodal point for the trans-European railway network including the construction of an entire city quarter will emerge. Due to its vicinity to Belvedere Palace, this project, too, was agreed in consultation with the UNESCO World Heritage Centre. The railway station will gradually take up operation starting in 2012.

Positive effects on the World Heritage Site – Historic Centre of Vienna are also expected from the already initiated upgrading of historic Danube Canal into an urban leisure and shopping area. It is the objective of the master plan for Danube Canal to bring citizens closer to the water's edge by employing barrier-free techniques. A new landing stage building for the Twin City Liner catamarans linking Vienna and Bratislava in slightly over one hour is under construction; a new restaurant and bar section with Otto Wagner's historic lock-keeper's house as its centre is being created as well. The open spaces along Danube Canal are an excellent example of how new qualities can be discovered and developed even in a historic city, with the declared aim of not only preserving, but rather improving Vienna's internationally renowned quality of life.

### 31 Vienna Main Station

Architects Ernst Hoffmann  
and Albert Wimmer

Project in planning stage

© Hotz / Hoffmann-Wimmer

### 32 Wien Mitte station

Henke und Schreieck Architekten,  
Architekten Wien Mitte (Ortner & Ortner,  
Neumann + Steiner, Lintl + Lintl)

Project in planning stage

© beyer.co.at

For a vibrant city, it is essential to ensure a balanced relationship between present and tradition as well as future development. To ward off the allegations of lacking a clear position or orientation, it is increasingly important for urban planning departments to consider new perspectives. Urban planning is more than mere decoration, design and architecture; rather, it is about the further development and shaping of the urban fabric as a multifaceted living environment.

Thomas Jakoubek | Developer, Vienna





© stadt wien marketing

## Vision

Vienna's historic centre is one of 13 target areas defined in the Urban Development Plan STEP 2005. The existing development potentials of these areas are to be made effective use of to allow for shaping the city's future in a socially and ecologically viable manner, safeguarding and further improving its high quality of life and at the same time reacting flexibly to new developments.

Towards this purpose, the following concrete development objectives for the city centre were established:

- preserving the city centre as a hub of national and international importance
- preserving the historically valuable old city while giving space to contemporary developments within the historic fabric
- further improving tourism projects
- preserving and supporting the manifold tasks of Vienna's historic city as well as preserving non-commercialised zones, e.g. leisure areas, alternative cultures, etc.
- rendering the old city even more attractive as a residential quarter, also by ensuring adequate local supply options
- further optimising the footpath and bikeway networks as well as public transport

With regard to the World Heritage Site, these development objectives can be summarised very concisely: Vienna's historic centre is not and should not be a museum. All measures taken are therefore aimed at providing a balance between the interests of preservation and those of use. While the protection of the valuable cultural heritage is given priority, the integration of the historic building stock into a vibrant urban organism is regarded as equally essential. In this, art and music are assigned the same importance as the urban fabric with its streets, squares and green spaces. The ultimate goal of all projects is to exemplify a holistic understanding of the living urban ensemble.