KUNST
HISTORISCHES
MUSEUM
WIEN

MARCH 28, 2017 -
FEBRUARY 18, 2018

IN HER MAJESTY'S HANDS
MEDALS OF MARIA THERESA

"Historie métallique" – History in your Hand

The Kunsthistorisches Museum's Coin Collection holds both the largest and by far the most important collection of coins minted under Maria Theresa; it is the best place, and now is the best time, to host an exhibition that presents the monarch's life in medals to celebrate what would have been her 300th birthday on May 13, 2017.

The exhibition focuses on the most important topoi in Maria Theresa's private and public life. It presents her in the company of her large family, running the gamut of events from dynastic marriages to heart-breaking calamities. It showcases her role as a ruler forced to fight several wars for her inheritance and, together with her son and co-regent Joseph II, as a pioneering social reformer. The artefacts on show also illustrate the extent of Maria

Theresa's realm, which comprised many different ethnicities and cultures.

All these topoi are reflected in medals that emblematise historical events with the help of allegories. Maria Theresa was already widely glorified and celebrated during her lifetime, but the exhibition also documents how she was portrayed by her enemies. So-called satirical medals, which were passed around in private, turned Maria Theresa into an object of derision.

The exhibition focuses too on the historical background of medal production to illustrate the requisite technical skills, expenditure and effort, introduce the most important protagonists, and document range, purview and media-value of Maria Theresa's medals.

Miniature Memorials – Minted for Eternity

Maria Theresa (1717-1780) became a legend during her lifetime, and few female rulers were depicted more frequently or diversely. Her many likenesses – among them portraits, engravings, medals and medallions – were designed to preserve her memory for posterity, turning her into an 18th century media-star.

Medals played a central role in this propaganda effort controlled by the imperial court. Among the period's foremost artistic mass media, medals were minted under the aegis of the court, and they continue to reflect the ruler's political aims and the way she saw herself. Over three hundred different medals were produced during Maria Theresa's reign to commemorate or celebrate either members of the imperial family or political events, both national and international.

Medals functioned as a way to commemorate important events of her reign, and as they were minted in large numbers, the material is noted for its longevity and their handy format made it easy to disseminate them, they were regarded as a historical record that would last forever. Contemporaries called these miniature memorials show- or commemorative coins, and they evolved into much sought-after and frequently exchanged collectors' pieces. The monarch presented them as signs of imperial favour, in recognition of the recipient's merits or achievements, or to strengthen diplomatic ties, and the majority of the medals

produced in Vienna were destined for the court – ending up in Her Majesty's hands.

Exhibition curators: Anna Fabiankowitsch and Heinz Winter

PRESS PHOTOGRAPHS

These images may be used free of charge when writing about the exhibition; to download them please go to http://press.khm.at.

In Her Majesty's Hands
Exhibiton poster
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Maria Theresa as Duchess of Milan
Golden chain with medal
Jean Dassier, 1763
gold
Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Kunstkammer
inv.no. KK 992
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Maria Theresa
Bust
Matthäus Donner, Vienna, 1750
bronze
Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Kunstkammer
inv.no. KK 6142
© KHM-Museumsverband

Maria Theresa
Medal commemorating her coronation as Queen of Hungary
Matthäus Donner, Vienna, 1741
gold
Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Coin Collection
inv.no. 1885bβ
© KHM-Museumsverband

Maria Theresa
Medal commemorating her coronation as Queen of Hungary
Matthäus Donner, Vienna, 1741
gold
Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Coin Collection
inv.no. 1885bβ
© KHM-Museumsverband

Maria Theresa and Franz Stephan
Commemorative medal celebrating the fourfold-ensured imperial line of succession
Anton Matthias Domanöck, Vienna, 1754
silver
Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Coin Collection
inv.no. 49bβ
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Maria Theresa
Medal celebrating the restoration of court offices in Transylvania
Franz Würth, Vienna, 1762
gold
Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Coin Collection
inv.no. 1862bβ
© KHM-Museumsverband

Maria Theresa
Medal celebrating the restoration of court offices in Transylvania
Franz Würth, Vienna, 1762
gold
Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Coin Collection
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Maria Theresa
Medal celebrating the revival of the University of Pavia
Johann Martin Krafft, Vienna, 1770
gold
Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Coin Collection
inv.no. 1795bβ
© KHM-Museumsverband

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Medal celebrating the revival of the University of Pavia
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Maria Theresa
Box medal, containing hand-coloured drawings
Matthäus Donner / Andreas Vestner
silver, hand-coloured drawing on paper inside the medal
Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Coin Collection
inv.no. 5955/1914B
© KHM-Museumsverband

Maria Theresa
Box medal, containing hand-coloured drawings
Matthäus Donner / Andreas Vestner
silver, hand-coloured drawing on paper inside the medal
Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Coin Collection
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© KHM-Museumsverband

Maria Theresa
Satirical medal
anonymous medallist, 1744
non-ferrous metal
Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Coin Collection
inv.no. 128543
© KHM-Museumsverband

Maria Theresa
Satirical medal
anonymous medallist, 1744
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Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Coin Collection
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Curator Anna Fabiankowitsch
Preparation work for the exhibition
© Photograph: Lukas Beck

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OPENING HOURS AND ENTRANCE FEES

Tuesdays – Sundays, 10 a.m. – 6 p.m.

June, July and August open daily!

Annual Ticket	€ 34
Adults	€ 15
Vienna City Card	€ 14
Concessions	€ 11
Annual Ticket U25	€ 19
Children under 19	free
Group ticket (p.p.)	€ 11
Guided Tour	€ 3

Buy your online-tickets at:
https://shop.khm.at/en/ticket-shop/

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