

PRESS RELEASE

Glasses from 1500 to 1850

The enlargement of the museum building now also allows the presentation of the glass collection of the Herbert Liaunig Private Trust to a broader public. In a purpose-designed room and exhibition showcases, glasses from various epochs are on display. The exhibits range from the beginnings of artistic, European glass in Venice to the products manufactured for the Congress of Vienna and the wealthy patrons of the Bohemian spas.

The splendour of the Renaissance is best illustrated by the tazza from the service of the Medici popes. During their reigns such fine, transparent glasses were regarded as being as precious as gold and gems. Indeed, potentates such as Ferdinand of Tyrol had to request the Doges of Venice for the temporary loan of their famed glassblowers, as they were more or less permanently resident in Murano.

While it was only possible to paint these fine glasses or score them with diamonds, in the 17th century inventive alchemists not only invented gold ruby glass, but also changed the glass flow in such a way as to facilitate the manufacture of a hard, thick glass for engraving with a copper wheel, which first and foremost commenced a triumphal progress north of the Alps. This advance is represented in the exhibition by a glass art incunabulum in the form of a sheet from the engraver Caspar Lehmann, which has returned after twenty years on loan to the British Museum in London

However, it was not only these inventions alone, but also technical improvements such as water-powered cutting works that greatly eased the workload of the “Hochschnitt” (high face) goblet engravers in Silesia. Apart from rock crystal pieces, the extremely complex works from Friedrich Winter of Hermsdorf number among the most coveted objects of the time.

The cultivated nobility and princes of the period created artistic and curiosity cabinets in their palaces and such glasses were a source of great wonderment. Indeed, the glasses of the 17th and 18th century afford a fascinating insight into European history that is just as diverse as the methods employed by the various masters and the manner in which they were sponsored by their patrons.

The spectrum of high-face and deep-cut goblets, beakers and bowls extends from representative works for the princes with their exquisite tableware, to gifts for high-ranking personages and souvenirs as mementos of battles, hunts and festivities at the respective courts. Many significant events such as the Battle of Belgrade fought by Prince Eugene are depicted in masterly engraved goblets.

The collection is rounded off by splendid glasses from Gottlob Mohn und Anton Kothgasser with their transparently painted views, which evoke the Biedermeier period and the Congress of Vienna with its aim of establishing a new order in Europe.

In the spas of Bohemia the aristocracy and the affluent bourgeoisie were not only able to recuperate, but also have their portraits engraved by outstanding master craftsmen such as Dominik Biemann. The imperial family and numerous members of the nobility also numbered among his clientele, as well as wealthy families with children.

The glasses on display form a representative cross-section through all of these eras, their special features, stories and the idiosyncratic personalities of the various masters of the art of glass, as well as the various techniques involved.

The exhibition is accompanied by a catalogue.

Regine Kovacek
(Exhibition curator)

Exhibition "Glasses from 1500 to 1850"

April 26th to October 31st 2015, Museum Liaunig, 9155 Neuhaus/Suha 41, Austria

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Wednesday to Sunday from 10 am to 6 pm, guided tours at 11 am and 2 pm