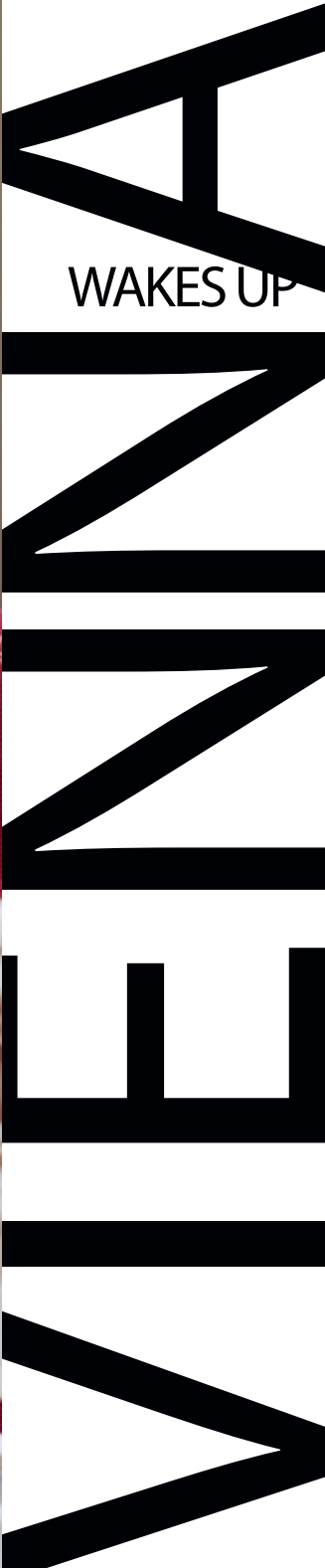




Layered with history—from Hapsburg splendor to Art Nouveau—Vienna looks to the future, remaking itself as the center of a dynamic and expanding Europe. By Michael Gross. Photographed by Adam Friedberg

The café at Vienna's Hotel Sacher.



'Vienna was always a meeting point,' Dr. Erhard Suess was saying. 'Now we are a gateway.'

Suess, the fiancé of a close friend, was having a coffee in the Onyx Bar at the Do & Co Hotel, which occupies the top floors of Haas Haus, a cylindrical, concrete-and-mirrored-glass postmodern landmark dropped into the heart of the centuries-old former capital of the Austro-Hungarian empire by the Pritzker Prize-winning architect Hans Hollein. The sixth-floor space has windows about 30 feet high looking straight across Stephansplatz at the tiled roof and towers of the Gothic St. Stephen's Cathedral. The clean-lined, hard-edged interior of the bar, with its bird's-eye view back through the centuries and international clientele, is a metaphor for the new Vienna, a place where old and new and East and West are mixed into a potent postnational energy shake.

Suess, a psychiatrist and neurologist on the faculty of the medical school at the University of Vienna, is just the man to analyze the disparate forces reshaping his city. "During the monarchy, people from all the crown countries moved to the capital and influenced its cultural life with everything from Czech cooking to Romanian literature," he says. But after World War II, Vienna was pushed to the far eastern limit of Europe, its back against the Iron Curtain. Later, during perestroika, Austrians were active investors in economic and infrastructural developments in Eastern European markets, and local companies did very well. "The roads, the buses, the banks—everything was either built or owned by Austrians," said Suess, exaggerating slightly. Still, Vienna, so long on the sidelines of Western Europe, found itself at the Continent's center of gravity again, and in recent years it's been reshaped by the currents of capital and expertise flowing from all directions, especially from the former Soviet Bloc. "We are not NATO, we are not Eastern Bloc," says Suess, pointing out the advantages of political neutrality. "A lot of foreign people are coming here to exchange ideas," says art dealer Georg Kargl, of Galerie Georg Kargl. The city has regained its multicultural dimension. The Do & Co Hotel, for instance, is owned by Attila Dogudan, a Turkish-Austrian. Another new hotel, the Levante Parliament, incorporates a gallery exhibiting glasswork by Romanian artist Ioan Nemto. A third, the ultraluxe Palais Coburg, was built by an East German-Austrian money manager, Peter Pühringer. Vienna is a world city again.



Kohlmarkt, in central Vienna, including the Demel bakery, at right.





What gives Vienna its palpable excitement is the way historical periods juxtapose—clashing, communicating, coexisting.



The Palais Coburg hotel at night. Center: Sixteenth-century city walls, preserved at the Coburg. Far right: A local woman, Lisa Walde, in the MuseumsQuartier courtyard.





An Egon Schiele drawing decorates the wall at the Do & Co Albertina restaurant. Far left: The Do & Co Hotel's Onyx Bar. Center: One of the hotel's suites.

VIENNA IS, TO BE SURE, still the city of Freud and Wittgenstein, Mozart, Schubert, Strauss, the Boys' Choir, and the Lipizzaner stallions of the Spanish Riding School. The ubiquitous imperial insignias and red-coated, white-wigged concert tous stationed throughout the city ensure that you never forget it. But now, as Vienna's 21st-century renaissance takes hold, its contemporary scene is as much of a draw as its favorite son, Wolfgang Amadeus. Perhaps even more so, for it offers up the added value of novelty—even to the Viennese, some of whom still remember, as one resident put it, “a gray, dirty, boring city where you couldn't get a beer after midnight.”

The local government has deliberately nudged its glorious past into a discourse with the present, aiming to “fill this historical stage with young life,” says Norbert Kettner, former managing director of Departure, a five-year-old economic development agency that supports creative businesses. “We want to change the state of mind.” With the opening of the East, Kettner says, jobs began migrating away from most Western European cities. And when Austria joined the European Union, it had to liberalize its immigration laws and economic policies. “This all could have caused decline,” he says. “But the city was smart enough to ask, What do we do with this new situation? You take your heritage not as a burden but as a basis upon which to build.”



The Albertina museum, on Albertinaplatz.



‘Austria is a success story—we are catching up with our glorious past.’



The Museum Moderner Kunst (center), in the MuseumsQuartier courtyard.

The city has been developing as a center of applied design for more than a decade, handing out public housing commissions to developers who hire creative young architects, and successfully encouraging the private sector to do the same. This has caused a riveting fusion reaction, releasing new energy from the two distinct periods of Vienna's past—Baroque imperial Vienna and the revolutionary Jugendstil, or Art Nouveau, of Egon Schiele and Gustav Klimt, and the Wiener Werkstätte of Josef Hoffmann and Koloman Moser. What gives the city its palpable excitement is the way the periods juxtapose: clashing, communicating, coexisting. "It's necessary to fight against tradition, as it's so present, so evident," says Dietmar Steiner, director of Architekturzentrum Wien, the city's architecture museum. "You have to fight history to create something interesting, but believe in it, too."

The newest hotels and restaurants reflect Vienna's regilded cosmopolitanism. The menu at *Österreicher im MAK*—the new home of Austria's star chef, Helmut Österreicher, inside the MAK design museum—serves Wiener schnitzel alongside sesame tuna over couscous, and its garden tables are set under "sun squares," an abstract system of canvas sails designed by Gerald Wurz. Design is omnipresent in these places: *Indochine 21* serves up highly refined French-Vietnamese food in a room punctuated by red umbrellas. At *Fabio's*, just off Graben—the pedestrian-only main drag that links the Hofburg Palace area with Stephansplatz—an award-winning steel-and-glass façade is

cantilevered onto the street. The restaurant more than lives up to its motto (Eat. drink. man. woman) and fashionable reputation, with its leather bar and walnut wood paneling. The *Do & Co Albertina* restaurant has a wide terrace with a view of the Hofburg Palace complex and an interior decorated with leather banquettes, a marble bar, and floors and walls hung with huge blowups of Schiele paintings.

In the neighborhood known as the Gürtel—a former red-light district—bars and clubs are now tucked into arches beneath an elevated railway track (designed, as were six of Vienna's most famous subway stops, by Jugendstil architect Otto Wagner). Traditional Vienna, meanwhile, is going strong: The classic Austrian restaurant *Julius Meinl am Graben*, in the gourmet shop that is Vienna's version of Fauchon, is always full.

PALAIS COBURG'S OWNER, Pühringer, who moved to Austria because of its attractive tax laws, went looking for a building for his foundation, and ended up buying the former summer residence of Ferdinand von Saxe-Coburg-Gotha, built atop the old walls of Vienna in the 1840's. After three years of planning, three more of refurbishing, and an expenditure of \$125 million, it opened as a hotel in 2003. Each suite is named after a member of the Saxe-Coburg family, and is completely up-to-date. To the side of the spare, modern lobby, a staircase leads down to an excavated section of the 16th-century city walls, on display in situ. (Continued on page 237)

GUIDE TO VIENNA



GETTING THERE

Direct flights are available from various U.S. cities on Delta Air Lines and Austrian Airlines.

WHERE TO STAY

Altstadt Vienna
GREAT VALUE 41 Kirchengasse; 866/376-7831 or 43-1/522-6666; altstadt.at; doubles from \$259.

Do & Co Hotel 12 Stephansplatz; 800/337-4685 or 43-1/24188; doco.com; doubles from \$471.

Hotel Sacher Wien
 4 Philharmonikerstrasse;

800/223-6800 or 43-1/5145-6555; sacher.com; doubles from \$684.

Levante Parliament
 9 Auerspergstrasse; 800/337-4685 or 43-1/228-280; thelevante.com; doubles from \$435.

Palais Coburg
 4 Coburgbastei; 800/735-2478 or 43-1/518-180; palais-coburg.com; doubles from \$747.

WHERE TO EAT

Court Confectionary Bakery Demel 14 Kohlmarkt; 43-1/535-1717, ext. 1.

Do & Co Albertina

1 Albertinaplatz; 43-1/532-9669; dinner for two \$137.

Fabio's 6 Tuchlauben; 43-1/532-2222; dinner for two \$180.

Indochine 21 18 Stubenring; 43-1/513-7660; dinner for two \$180.

Meinl am Graben 19 Am Graben; 43-1/532-3334; dinner for two \$213.

Österreicher im MAK
 5 Stubenring; 43-1/714-0121; dinner for two \$100.

WHAT TO SEE

Academy of Fine Arts Vienna
 Includes Hieronymus Bosch's *Last Judgment Triptych*. 3 Schillerplatz; 43-1/588-160; akbild.ac.at.

Albertina 1 Albertinaplatz; 43-1/534-830; albertina.at.

Belvedere Numerous works by Klimt (including his masterpiece, *The Kiss*), Egon Schiele, and Oskar Kokoschka. 27 Prinz-Eugen-Strasse; 43-1/795-570; belvedere.at.

Imperial Furniture Collection
 Many possessions of the Hapsburgs, as well as period rooms from two centuries of Austrian

design. 7 Andreasgasse; 43-1/524-3357; hofmobiliendepot.at.

Liechtenstein Museum Full of Raphaels, Van Dycks, and Brueghels. 1 Fürstengasse; 43-1/3195-7670; liechtensteinmuseum.at.

Museum of Fine Arts Vienna
 Maria-Theresien-Platz; 43-1/525-240; khm.at.

MuseumsQuartier

The complex includes the Architekturzentrum Wien; the Leopold Museum; the Museum Moderner Kunst; the Kunsthalle Wien; and more. See mqw.at for detailed information.

Natural History Museum

7 Burgring; 43-1/52177; nhm-wien.at.

Schönbrunn Palace

The Hapsburgs' former summer residence. *Schönbrunner Schloßstrasse*; 43-1/8111-3239; schoenbrunn.ac.at.

Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary Francesca von Habsburg's exhibition space. 13 Himmelpfortgasse; 43-1/513-9856; tba21.org.



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The more intimate and completely modern Do & Co Hotel opened in spring 2006 and features rooms and suites with dramatic curved walls. “This is the new Vienna opposite the old,” says Dogudan, who also owns Demel, the traditional pastry shop. “The city has well-preserved history alongside modern art and young people. Great classical music and famous DJ’s. It’s a good balance. Young people like it. Old people like it.”

At lunch at Milo, Wolfgang Waldner, director of the MuseumsQuartier, or MQ, the city’s new, self-contained museum district, explains the similar social balancing act on display in one of the arms of his complex, Quartier 21. It houses an ever-changing group of 50 tenants—fashion, media, Internet, video, art, performance, and publishing companies—all with renewable two-year leases. “The idea is a counterweight to permanence,” Waldner says. He hastens to add that government support isn’t limited to new projects. In the past 10 years, he says, the Austrian government has invested \$13.7 billion to upgrade Vienna’s world-class roster of existing museums as well. Private interests are putting up money too. “People are investing in their buildings, restoring the façades, making the city even more beautiful,” says Elisabeth Gürtler, owner of the venerable Hotel Sacher, which recently added two floors.

Even the Hapsburgs have gotten in on the act—or rather, the German baroness Francesca Thyssen-Bornemisza von Habsburg, wife of Karl Thomas-Lothringen of Austria. She would be in line to be empress and queen if the Hapsburgs still ruled, but as it is, her Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary collection and T-BA21 foundation are at the forefront of the local digital- and video-art scenes. In 2006, she commissioned a video installation by the Turkish artist Kutlug Ataman, who sailed

up the Danube from the Black Sea to Vienna on a barge following the route of the Turkish invasion of Austria 500 years earlier, presenting the work at six cities along the way. Its peaceful, ecumenical message, offered up in a region best known for ethnic strife—the piece was subtitled “Küba! Journey Against the Current”—was suited to the moment.

“The Hapsburg empire was a multipople, multilanguage state,” Waldner says. Central Europe is now being reorganized, he continues, so “many peoples can live together in relative peace. The European Union is a model, and Austria is one of its success stories. We are catching up with our glorious past.”

THIS CITY HAS LONG KNOWN the value of branding. Certainly, the MQ’s ubiquitous, Target-like red-and-white logo has helped establish it as the magnetic new open-late center of Viennese energy, with three museum buildings—the Kunsthalle Wien, for temporary exhibitions; MUMOK (short for Museum Moderner Kunst), for modern and contemporary art; and the Leopold Museum, whose collection of Austrian works includes the largest group of Schiele paintings and drawings in the world—plunked down on the site of the old imperial stables. Behind it is the up-and-coming Seventh District, a charming neighborhood of cobblestoned streets lined with restaurants, art and architecture studios, and shops. In front of it is the cultural heart of old Vienna, Maria-Theresien-Platz, flanked by the Natural History Museum and the Museum of Fine Arts, and beyond, the sprawling Hofburg Palace complex, the stronghold of the Hapsburgs.

Having lunch outside at Halle, one of several restaurants in the MQ quadrangle, can be either orienting or disorienting, depending upon your point of view. Ours took in the former emperor’s loge of the winter riding hall, the gray basalt façade of MUMOK, the old red-tile roof of the stables, and the weblike, modern steelwork of a grand outdoor staircase and elevator enclosure—every brand of modern Vienna, in a single vista. +

Michael Gross is a T+L contributing editor.