



H I G H

H I G H M U S E U M O F A R T **A T L A N T A**

High Museum of Art

***Habsburg Splendor:
Masterpieces from Vienna's Imperial Collections***

An Acoustiguide Tour

Adult Tour AR Script

**Acoustiguide Inc.
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101. INTRODUCTION AND TOURNAMENT SCENE (PREP NOS. 002 & 003)

GARY RADKE Knights in shining armor. Damsels in distress. Welcome to the High Museum of Art and to the spectacle of Habsburg Splendor: Masterpieces from Vienna's Imperial Collections. I'm Gary Radke, guest curator and Professor Emeritus of Art History at Syracuse University. You are able to experience Habsburg splendor today thanks to unprecedented loans from the imperial art collections at the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna, Austria.

The Habsburgs were one of the most powerful ruling families in Europe. Their dynasty gained prominence during the Middle Ages, when political power was decided on the battlefield and – as in this scene in front of you – on the mock battlefield. The knights here are jousting, a form of military training that evolved into an elite sport. Charge your opponent, aim your lance at his shield. The goal is not to kill him, but to knock him off his horse.

Dr. Stefan Krause, Curator of Arms and Armor at the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna.

STEFAN KRAUSE It was a dangerous sport, and it maybe looked a little bit aggressive to our point of view, to the view of the 21st century. But if you compare it to, for example, Formula One, or downhill skiing, that's basically the same. People get injured, even die in these sports. But on the other side, it is also a political event and a social event.

GARY RADKE Jousting took place at tournaments, festive public events that also included music, dancing, colorful costumes, and even processions of spectacular floats.

Many of the pieces in this exhibition have never left Vienna. Until now. The curatorial team of the Kunsthistorisches Museum, interviewed on site, joins us on this tour, including Stefan Krause, whom you have just heard; Dr. Sabine Haag, Director; Agnes Stillfried, Curator of Education, and Dr. Monica Kurzel-Runtscheiner, Director of the Imperial Carriage Museum and curator of this exhibition.

For detailed instructions on using this Acoustiguide, press 4-1-1 and the 'play' button at any time.

[word count: 315]

411. Opus Touch User Instructions

Look for the audio tour icon and a number by selected works. Enter that number on your keypad, then press the green “play/pause” button. If you make a mistake, press the red ‘stop’ button.

You can pause the commentary by pressing the green Play/Pause button. Press that button again to resume. The volume control is on the left side of the player.

To fast forward or rewind within the commentary, press the left or right arrow buttons at the bottom of the screen.

To enter a new commentary number, press the red stop button. This will return you to the entry screen.

102. LORENZ HELMSCHMID, ASSEMBLED ARMOR OF EMPEROR MAXIMILIAN I, (PREP NO. 001)

GARY RADKE Dr. Stefan Krause, Curator of Arms and Armor at the Kunsthistorisches Museum.

STEFAN KRAUSE This armor was made by one of the great masters, and that is Lorenz Helmschmid. If you compare him to painters of the same time, it is Raphael or Titian of the armorers. And if you take a closer look at the armor, you see what makes this armor a real masterpiece of armor making. Some of the edges of the armor are cut in floral ornament, and in other parts you see these golden bronze applications applied to it but that was something the emperor itself would get from the armorer.

GARY RADKE Look closely to see Lorenz Helmschmid's signature or master's mark on the leg pieces. It's a helmet with a cross on the outside of each knee.

STEFAN KRAUSE Armor is not cloth, it's not silk but it is hardened steel that you are wearing here. It takes thousands and thousands of hammer blows to get this plate of steel in the right shape. And then, all the different parts of the armor, there are 20, 30, 40 different steel parts that have to work together like a clockwork.

GARY RADKE To really appreciate this armor, imagine it in motion. Whoever wore it would have been fighting a war or competing in a tournament. He had to be able to move, and the armor had to protect him from the driving point of an opponent's lance. But it also had to have style: after all, the decorative flourishes were themselves a kind of weapon--propaganda designed to communicate rank and power. Habsburg Emperor Maximilian I commissioned this armor at the very moment that he was extending his family's authority from Austria to Belgium and Holland.

[word count: 288]

103. JÖRG SEUSENHOFER, “EAGLES GARNITURE” OF ARCHDUKE FERDINAND II OF TYROL, (PREP NO. 005)

GARY RADKE Archduke Ferdinand II of Tyrol could put together the 87 pieces of this armor in a dozen different ways, depending on the type of combat. The assembly here was used for a jousting contest fought with lances.

During the Renaissance, armor was much more elaborately decorated than in the Middle Ages, and this suit is no exception. Look closely at the golden eagles adorning the armor. This is the Austrian heraldic symbol. Anyone close enough to see it would know this knight was a member of the imperial family. In fact, Emperor Ferdinand I commissioned this armor as a gift for his second eldest son, Archduke Ferdinand, who had just turned seventeen.

Stefan Krause, Curator of Arms and Armor at the Kunsthistorisches Museum.

STEFAN KRAUSE There are different price ranges of armor. A very cheap armor for a normal foot soldier, they cost almost nothing. But what we are looking here is something completely different, that's a custom-made armor for one person.

If you relate it to the 21st century, it's like a sports car or an expensive apartment. It was a really expensive work of art you were acquiring.

GARY RADKE This armor cost seventeen times the annual salary of many a high-ranking court official.

[word count: 233]

104. MADELEINE GONZALEZ (PREP NO. 076)

GARY RADKE This is one strange painting. First, of course, because the young woman, Madeleine Gonzales, who is portrayed in this portrait, is not your usual youthful courtly beauty.

She was afflicted with Ambras or werewolf syndrome, which causes excessive hair growth on the body. The painter must not have seen her in person. Otherwise, he probably would have painted her hands covered in hair as well.

The other thing that makes this painting strange is the technique. It's not very carefully painted, not at all what we normally expect in a finished portrait. The artist is not celebrating Madeleine as an individual; rather, he's displaying her as an object. People with rare deformities were considered living wonders. The nobility in Europe treated them as collector's items, acquiring them for their entourages.

In the case of Madeleine Gonzales and her family, they were found in the island of Tenerife, brought to the court of France, and treated very much like one might treat members of an exotic collection of animals. In this case they were actually given away to Alessandro Farnese, who then had them put up at his family court in Parma in Northern Italy.

While Madeleine and her family lived in the courts of the King of France and then the Farnese Court in Parma, everyone wanted to have them. And by making paintings of these people, they could be possessed by numerous owners.

[word count: 249]

**105. EWER WITH SEYCHELLES NUT AND EWER WITH “TRITON HORN”
(PREP NOS. 047 AND 048)**

GARY RADKE This case contains two of the most spectacular ewers, that is, vessels for beverages that could be poured out of them. They're spectacular because they're made out of these enormous pieces of actual nature, surrounded by silver that is gilt to look as though it is gold.

This big black object, the sea coconut, floated to the shores of the Maldives and other islands and was collected because it was itself so large and so peculiar. I find the setting of this thing doubly peculiar because, you have it set onto a tiny little pitcher supporting this very large object on the top of its rim.

There are two straps that tie that upper lid on either side, and they feature harpies. Harpies are wild women who are bare-breasted and have wings and then they have, in this case, snakes that are biting their breasts and their legs turn into these serpent-like forms and a strange doglike mask emerges between them. It indicates that the makers of this object clearly thought of it as a wild and unusual object, something outside of the ordinary.

The coconut ewer is accompanied by a pitcher made from a large shell known as a Triton's trumpet.

SFX IMAGE

In Greek mythology, Triton was the son of Poseidon, the god of the sea, and his father's messenger. Triton blew into this type of shell to stir up or calm the waves. Here, though, the artist shows him as a small merman bearing the enormous trumpet aloft on his back rather than raising it to his lips.

The face of the Triton is very, very haggard. And the arms look slightly bloated and he's working hard to support this thing that is almost slipping off of his back. This object, again, is more about the wonder, the unusualness, the outsized marvelousness of the object that is being framed. I think there's, in both of these objects, a sense of keeping them imbalanced. To constantly keep us thinking about the craft of making elegant objects out of the elegant creations of nature herself.

[word count 356]

106. NIKOLAUS PFAFF, GOBLET OF RHINOCEROS HORN (PREP NO. 038)

GARY RADKE The artist Nikolaus Pfaff carved this goblet from a rhinoceros horn.

Dr. Sabine Haag, Director of the Kunsthistorisches Museum.

SABINE HAAG Rhinoceros horn was a material which was quite new to Europe around 1600. At that time, people strongly believed in the magical powers of the exotic materials. Rhinoceros horn was believed to be helpful in love matters as an aphrodisiac. Furthermore, it was meant to be an antidote, meaning that if someone drank out of a rhinoceros horn cup, he could not be poisoned.

GARY RADKE At the tapering point of the horn, the artist carved out three satyrs, lascivious creatures who are half-human, half-goat. They lace their legs together – an erotic innuendo. Their raised arms transform into knobby branches of coral, another antidote to poison.

This goblet comes from the Kunstkammer, the core collection of the Kunsthistorisches Museum, which was assembled during the 16th century, the Age of Discovery. Many royal collectors throughout Europe created such Chambers of Wonders.

SABINE HAAG The Kunstkammer was an archive of wisdom, where the patrons collected all the latest trends in technology and exotic materials, all different kinds of objects that were to explain the world.

GARY RADKE This is not so much a scientific collection as much as a display of the wealth and the power of the Habsburgs, because they are able to collect such spectacular objects and make them even more spectacular.

[word count: 244]

107. TINTORETTO, SUSANNAH AND THE ELDERS (PREP NO. 068)

GARY RADKE This painting is by the Venetian artist Tintoretto. It depicts the biblical story of Susannah and the elders.

The beautiful Susannah would bathe outdoors. One day, two old men agreed to secretly observe her, and when she was alone, they leapt out and tried to take advantage of her. She screamed, but when her servants rushed to the scene, the elders accused Susannah of adultery with another man. Their deception was eventually revealed, and they were both put to death.

Other Renaissance painters usually depict the elders grasping Susannah as she struggles to hide her naked body. Tintoretto chose something different.

This painting celebrates Susannah celebrating herself, as I read it. She's looking into a mirror, she is reveling in her own beauty. That bright light that comes across on her body makes her look so much like a great pearl, a kind of pure and innocent figure. She makes the two men who are skulking about just look ridiculous. They seem foolish in their lasciviousness when, in fact, there's nothing lascivious about this painting at all. It is sensuous. We can almost smell the roses, we can feel the water, we can sense the air in those little trees. But it's all because, in fact, it's natural beauty. It is one of the most gorgeous images of a woman in nature that I know.

[word count: 230]

108. TITIAN, ISABELLA D'ESTE (PREP NO. 057)

GARY RADKE Portrayed here is Isabella d'Este, wife of the ruler of the North Italian city of Mantua and the first noblewoman to create a private study filled with objects she collected and commissioned from leading artists of the day. Agnes Stillfried, Curator of Education at the Kunsthistorisches Museum.

AGNES STILLFRIED She was famous all over Europe for her beauty and her style sense. They had little dolls made of her outfits, and sent to other courts to copy. She was a female collector, and she was very keen on owning a portrait of herself by Titian. And this is this painting.

GARY RADKE Titian evokes the different textures here with his luscious, free brushwork. At the end of her sleeves, a few dots of red gleam on that gold embroidery. The fur she wears is just a soft smear of paint.

In fact, Titian was sometimes criticized because he didn't get concerned with the sculptural hardness of his forms; rather, he took that canvas and let the paint just sing across its surface.

And yet behind this soft brushwork, we sense Isabella's strong personality. She was 60 years old when this portrait was painted, but she didn't allow Titian to paint her that way.

AGNES STILLFRIED She said I have no time to sit for Titian. And she sent him an old portrait of herself instead. So he copied the old portrait, her aged about 20; that's why she looks so young and beautiful here. But of course she wears the clothes of today. The clothes of today with a face of 40 years ago. I think that's an ideal (Laughs) combination.

[word count 290]

109. CORREGGIO, JUPITER AND IO, (PREP NO. 063)

GARY RADKE This painting brings a classical myth to life. Whenever Jupiter, the king of the gods, visited his mortal lovers, he would disguise himself to escape detection by his jealous wife. Agnes Stillfried:

AGNES STILLFRIED With Io, he changed himself into a cloud. And if you look at the painting carefully, you can see his arm embracing her and you can even see his face in the cloud, kissing her on the cheek. It's one of the most erotic paintings we have. Look at how he contrasts the silky skin to the cloud, to the texture of the cloud behind her. Look at the expression on her face.

GARY RADKE It is the sensuality, the quiet of that moment as she embraces that cloud, when she becomes part of the nature that is surrounding her. Notice how all of the objects here seem to grow one into the other. She is like a great vine or a great root, her limbs splayed as though they are growing in and around the landscape and the cloud.

One other detail that's slightly difficult to make out at first emphasizes this theme. Look carefully at the very bottom right corner of the canvas and you will see the head of a stag who is lapping at the cool pool of water at Io's feet. He is either a symbol of soulful yearning for the divine or, just as likely, an image of unquenchable physical desire.

This painting originally hung in a gallery with other equally erotic works. To hear more, press play.

APP ALT To hear more, tap the more button.

[word count: 250]

109. LAYER

GARY RADKE Renaissance princes enjoyed paintings like this one by Correggio's in their private chambers. They invited both their paramours and fellow rulers to enjoy these works, in the first case to illustrate and enhance their seductive powers and in the second to emphasize their roles as conquerors in all arenas: political and military as well as erotic.

Correggio's painting was probably commissioned by Federico Gonzaga, duke of the North Italian city of Mantua, who gave it and three other images of the loves of Jupiter to Habsburg Emperor Charles V. When Charles visited Mantua, he famously asked to dine alone in one of Gonzaga's raciest rooms. Correggio's sexy painting, then, was the perfect present for the emperor.

[word count: 82]

110. GIORGIONE, THREE PHILOSOPHERS, (PREP NO. 061)

GARY RADKE During the Renaissance, paintings usually illustrated biblical stories or events from history. This painting by Giorgione is called “The Three Philosophers” for convenience sake, but it does not have an identified subject. It’s up to the viewer to decide what this painting is about.

We notice that in the background, the sun is just rising. It seems to show that something is dawning on us... something that we have to figure out as a subject.

The painting may represent the three ages of man. We see a young man, a middle-aged man wearing a turban, and an old man. They all seem to be lost in thought.

My favorite is the youthful figure, who looks at the most unlikely place. He looks to this big, dark cavern. He looks into the unknowable and tries to sort it out. And he delights at it. He’s smiling, relaxed, imagining that all the world is yet to be revealed to him.

And this is where you as the viewer have the great opportunity here in this exhibition ... in that darkness Giorgione does not leave just black emptiness. It’s there where, in fact, some of Giorgione’s most interesting details of paint, of little leaves, of the variety of the bark, of the rocks that get lost or begin to get lost into that cave ... where that all calls our attention.

The painting was acquired by Archduke Leopold Wilhelm, one of the main collectors of the Habsburg dynasty. To hear more, press play.

APP ALT To hear more, tap the more button.

[word count: 265]

110. LAYER

GARY RADKE Dr. Monica Kurzel-Runtscheiner, Director of the Imperial Carriage Museum and curator of this exhibition.

MONICA KURZEL-RUNTSCHNEINER Giorgione's painting comes from the wonderful collection of Archduke Leopold Wilhelm, which is the core of our painting gallery. Leopold Wilhelm was the first Habsburg, and the first person in history, who was also publishing a catalog of his paintings collection, and, therefore, we are extremely well informed about all the wonderful things he had assembled.

GARY RADKE Agnes Stillfried.

AGNES STILLFRIED We call him the founder of our Picture Gallery because many of the paintings now in the collection were acquired by him. He was a bishop, he was a general; he wasn't much interested in either profession. But he truly loved art.

GARY RADKE Leopold Wilhelm was very particular about how his collection was displayed, and many of the paintings he collected were cut so they would fit into their designated spaces. Originally, the marvelous cave in this painting was even bigger; it was trimmed down by about 7 inches. Giorgione died young, and very few of his paintings survive. It is absolutely extraordinary that this, one of his finest works, was able to travel as part of the exhibition. How fortunate we are to experience this work, in Atlanta.

[word count: 178]

111. FURY MASTER, CRUCIFIX (PREP NO. 037)

GARY RADKE Christ is agonizingly alive in this crucifix. You look at his face and you see his mouth is open, his teeth and tongue are caught in a kind of rigor and dryness from the asphyxiation which is going to overcome him in crucifixion. His eyes roll up in his sockets and the artist drills out the pupils so that they almost seem to flutter underneath his eyelids.

The artist elongates Christ's torso and his arms to an unnatural degree. His skin hangs in a translucent veil over his bones and sinews. It's as though he is literally stretched to the limits of his humanity.

The torso is one of the most painfully beautiful works I've ever experienced. The virtuosic artist was able to conjure flesh out of ivory. In a single piece of ivory, we can see at least three layers of Christ's body: thin, transparent skin is stretched over emaciated muscle, all atop a bony substructure. The loincloth is so thin as to be transparent, as though the cloth itself is sweaty. We can see the light pouring through it.

This work would have been used for private contemplation. It was one of many that the Habsburgs collected to display their devotion to Roman Catholicism.

[word count: 237]

112. CARAVAGGIO, CHRIST CROWNED WITH THORNS (PREP NO. 064)

GARY RADKE This is a powerful, stunning painting by Italian Baroque master Caravaggio.

The figures are all meticulously rendered so that we see both the horror and the beauty of the visual world around us.

At the center is the bowed but heroic figure of Christ, illuminated from above by a magnificent, dramatic burst of light. A sumptuous red cloak slips down his body and his crown of thorns – the bramble of a rosebush – bites into his bleeding skull.

On the left hand side of the painting, an elegantly dressed soldier observes him.

The man fully capable of intervening or appreciating that surely this torture should stop, and yet the drama, the moment that makes this such a powerful painting, is that he seems to refuse the very opportunity that's put in front of him.

The emotional force of this painting comes from the spareness of the composition. Of the four figures, Caravaggio reveals only the lips of Christ. Ironically, Christ is renowned for having not spoken out at his trial, for not trying to defend himself. And by showing us his lips, Caravaggio makes us feel the weight of his silence.

It is an emotion that I think comes as well from that hollow that is just to the right of him as we look at the composition. Caravaggio's basically left that part of the canvas almost blank. We are forced to imagine, how will the narrative continue and how will it tragically end?

[word count: 250]

113. PETER PAUL RUBENS, LAMENTATION OF CHRIST (PREP NO. 066)

GARY RADKE This painting shows the moment after Christ's body has been taken down from the cross and his few remaining friends and supporters gather around that dead body.

Rubens here has put the faces of Christ, the Virgin Mary above him and Mary Magdalene to the left in incredibly close proximity. They knew Christ best, it would seem. His mother, his most devout female follower. And both of them do something with their hands. Mary closing her son's eyes; Mary Magdalene, nervously disturbed, pulling at her hair and feeling the pain, both physically, as well as spiritually.

The hands of the figures are crucial to fully understanding this scene. In Italian culture, hands – or mani – were a window into a person's character – or maniera. Beauty both interior and exterior was thought to be revealed through a person's hands. Rubens, who spent some of his formative years in Italy, may be referring to that tradition.

John, in red here the only apostle who remained near Christ, tenderly reaches out to enfold the body of Christ, as if to say "We're going to have to pick him up. We're going to have to move him on."

[word count: 262]

114. VELÁZQUEZ, INFANTA MARIA THERESA (PREP NO. 065)

GARY RADKE In this painting by Velazquez, we have the pleasure of meeting the Spanish princess Maria Theresa. And in fact, that's exactly the purpose of this portrait: it was made to introduce the 14 year-old princess to a potential husband. The portrait was sent to her cousin, the eldest son of the Habsburg Emperor in Vienna.

Velazquez was then the Spanish court painter and is today considered one of the unparalleled masters of handling pigment. He painted the princess in white, silver, and pink. Agnes Stillfried.

AGNES STILLFRIED The dress, in case you're wondering, it's a guardainfanta, and it's an iron frame over which you wear this very uncomfortable dress. Some of the dresses were so wide that the ladies had to walk sideways through the doors because they couldn't fit through the doors otherwise.

GARY RADKE At her waist, those small round disks hanging from pink ribbons are especially rare and expensive accessories: they're watches.

AGNES STILLFRIED If you look at the front of her dress, it's a very open handling, very open brushwork. You see some of the details, but only a few details of the fabric itself.

GARY RADKE Take a few steps back from the painting, and you'll see how these unrestrained, lavish brushstrokes merge suddenly into a single illusion. Notice also how the pink colors highlight her face, appearing in her bright cheeks and the bows on her wig.

AGNES STILLFRIED It really adds a wonderful feeling of liveliness to her.

[word count: 237]

115. PRINCE'S DRESS CARRIAGE, CA. 1750 – 1755 (PREP NO 092)

GARY RADKE Monica Kurzel-Runtscheiner, Director of the Imperial Carriage Museum.

MONICA KURZEL-RUNTSCHNEINER Talking about carriages in the Baroque period, you don't think of just means of transportation. In that period not everybody was allowed to use a carriage. Not at all. It was really something reserved to the highest classes in society.

Normally, these carriages were drawn by teams of six horses. This is also a sign of rank. Four horses are very efficient, six horses are just beautiful and show the importance of the person sitting in the carriage.

GARY RADKE The carriage itself is a combination of different art objects. An architect designed the overall shape; a wood carver adorned it with beautiful sculpture; a painter added color to the panels; and finally, a decorator finished the interior with silk, velvet, and special golden tassels that were extremely difficult to make. The woman who did these interior decorations earned the most money of all the people involved in the construction of the carriage.

MONICA KURZEL-RUNTSCHNEINER It is also glazed all around, which means that the person sitting in the carriage can be seen from everywhere. At the occasions of coronations, for instance, or weddings, imperial weddings, the whole court society went out with a procession of carriages, all beautifully carved, richly gilded, painted, and this was, in fact, the only time, normally, ordinary people could see the ruler and his family.

GARY RADKE During one of its last public appearances, this carriage was reserved to transport the crown jewels. A new window was added in the back of the carriage and the sparkling jewels were placed on a platform inside so everyone could see them.

[word count: 280]

116. POMPEO BATONI, EMPEROR JOSEPH II AND GRAND DUKE PETER LEOPOLD OF TUSCANY, 1769 (PREP NO 070)

GARY RADKE Here we see Joseph II, who became Habsburg emperor in 1765, and his younger brother Leopold in white, on a trip to Italy. Agnes Stillfried.

AGNES STILLFRIED They went to Rome and they sat to the then most prestigious, most highly regarded portrait painter, Batoni. And you see the two brothers, and you see that they like each other. There is brotherly solidarity and friendship, but he very carefully identifies the more important one, which is Joseph II, the one in the middle. He's the eldest son. He has the more prominent position.

And arranged around them are various objects which identify their policy, if you like; so there is Montesquieu and there is the goddess Roma, on which the emperor leans.

GARY RADKE The French lawyer and philosopher Montesquieu is famous for his treatise, *The Spirit of Laws*, visible on the table there by the map of Rome. The treatise includes a description of the ideal monarch, who should rule according to established law, rather than his own whim. Roma represents the imperial power of ancient Rome, an empire the Habsburgs emulated.

Notice how Batoni has arranged the composition here – Roma offers her orb to Joseph, almost like a gift, and if you follow the line of her spear, you'll see how it seems to pass directly into Joseph's relaxed grip. That relaxed hand is very important as a sign of his enlightened attitude. He accepts absolute power, but he doesn't brandish it.

[word count: 252]

117. **BELLOTTO, THE IMPERIAL SUMMER RESIDENCE OF SCHÖNBRUNN, COURTYARD SIDE, 1759 – 1761 (PREP NO 071)**

GARY RADKE Bernardo Bellotto painted this veduta, or view, of Castle Schonbrunn, which was the favorite residence of the Habsburg empress Maria Theresa. Monica Kurzel-Runtscheiner.

MONICA KURZEL-RUNTSCHNEINER Bellotto's painting is not just a veduta, it's also a political painting. It shows a very specific moment in the life of Maria Theresa, because we see one of her generals, Count Kinsky, entering with his army the courtyard of the castle, to bring her the news of a gorgeous victory over her enemy, Frederick II, King of Prussia.

GARY RADKE Look for the fountain near the center of the plaza. To the right of it, we see Count Kinsky's carriage, rushing towards the left wing of the palace. The Empress herself is on that balcony. She's just a few dots of light and color.

The building is not in the very center of the composition but slightly shifted to the left so it feels as though you are entering from the left, and you're joining in this great procession that's going up to Schonbrunn Palace. All of these figures seem to be conversing with one another, seem to be engaged, and you as the viewer can enjoy making up their conversation, thinking about and inventing what's going on in such a publically diverse and magnificently open space.

[word count: 226]

**118. IMPERIAL SLEIGH AND SLEIGH HARNESS OF THE VIENNA COURT
(PREP NOS 013 AND 014)**

GARY RADKE Monica Kurzel-Runtscheiner.

MONICA KURZEL-RUNTSCHNEINER One of the highlights in the exhibition is the gorgeous completely gilded sleigh of Empress Maria Theresa. Sleigh rides have been very popular in Europe since the Middle Ages. So the court went out with carriages during the nice period, in summer and spring. But in winter they did the same with sleighs.

You see that this sleigh is really an art object because it's like a mountain of curls which completely cover the technical parts of the sleigh, so you could not say how the sleigh itself works, because it's just like a cloud of ornaments of really extraordinary artistic quality.

Not only the sleigh was beautiful but also the horse, covered with beautiful harnesses made of silk, velvet, and gold embroidery, also made of real gold, and in addition hundreds of beautiful gilded bells.

SFX SOUND OF SLEIGH BELLS

GARY RADKE There are 350 bells on this sleigh and harness. They made a joyous clamor and signaled the approach of the sleigh.

MONICA KURZEL-RUNTSCHNEINER And the bells have different tones and so a very pleasant music is played by the horse moving over the snow.

Every time the court went out, it was a way to depict its power, its glory, and also its internal hierarchy. And it was, of course, a kind of spectacle, which ordinary people enjoyed watching. And it's something like nowadays shows in the television. People did not have that kind of entertainment, but they had the outings of the court.

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119. ANTONIO CANOVA, EMPEROR FRANZ II, 1805 (PREP NO 046)

GARY RADKE All artists from the Renaissance on not only wanted to imitate antiquity and, therefore, make their works look like ancient Roman ones, but they wanted to surpass those works, to make them even more spectacular, either in their lifelikeness or in their psychological presence.

This is a very subtle and I might even say somewhat subversive bust created by the great Italian sculptor Antonio Canova. From the left hand side we see the Emperor Francis II just as he and his court would want him to be seen. There's a kind of dignified profile that looks very much like images of the Roman Emperors that the Habsburgs were regularly imitating. If we turn to the right, however, and we look at this sculpture slightly from the other side, there's a slightly nervous set to the face and the eyes.

When Francis II commissioned this bust, he was engaged in an ongoing war against Napoleon Bonaparte. Francis had recently conquered Venice, Canova's hometown, and he hired the artist to depict him in contemporary uniform. It was Canova's idea to portray him in the clothing of a Roman emperor instead. The finished bust was installed at the Marciana library, one of Venice's most famous public buildings.

Less than a year after the bust was carved, however, Francis lost the city to Napoleon, and Canova's bust had to be moved to Vienna.

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120. UNKNOWN ARTIST, ROBE OF A KNIGHT OF THE ORDER OF ST. STEPHEN, 1764 – 1765 (PREP NO 079)

GARY RADKE Membership in the Royal Hungarian Order of Saint Stephen was awarded for outstanding civil service. Only duly initiated members could wear these robes. The deep forest green, brilliant scarlet, and white fur reference the national colors of Hungary, one of the key territories of the Habsburg Empire.

Note the splendid silver emblem at the center of the cape-collar of this regalia . In the center of that emblem are the letters M. T., which stand for none other than the Empress herself, Maria Theresa, who founded this order in 1764.

Apart from this emblem, there's a single motif: golden oak leaves, embroidered over and over around the sleeves, on the borders of the cape, and on the red robe beneath it.

The Habsburgs used this motif to emulate ancient Rome, where citizens were honored for their service with wreaths of oak leaves.

Oak, of course, is a symbol of great strength. The oak tree that does not lose its leaves until very, very late in the winter. It's a symbol of fortitude, it's a symbol of perpetual loyalty. We frequently say, "He's as sturdy as an oak" and I think that's part of the intended imagery here, a loyal citizen, who now is rewarded with these semi-aristocratic robes.

Lavish as these robes are, compare them to the even more extravagant red robes also on view in this gallery. They were worn by aristocrats belonging to an order where nobility was a requirement for membership.

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121. COURT SERVICE UNIFORM OF A CAPTAIN OF THE FIRST ARCIÈREN LIFE GUARDS, 1917 AND DRESS UNIFORM OF A BOHEMIAN NOBLEMAN, 1820-1830 (PREP NOS 088 AND 089)

GARY RADKE Monica Kurzel-Runtscheiner.

MONICA KURZEL-RUNTSCHNEINER Until 1918, most of the male persons all over Europe were wearing uniform, and in most cases these were not military uniforms but civil uniforms. So when you looked at a male person, who was wearing a uniform, you knew exactly who he was, for which group he was working, and which rank he had within the hierarchy of this group and, therefore, you also knew how you should behave with him.

GARY RADKE The uniform embroidered in silver is the dress attire of a political representative. The buttons indicate that he was from Bohemia: those rearing lions are its national emblem.

Also displayed in this case is the uniform for the captain of the imperial bodyguards.

The uniform has a helmet of spectacular dimensions. Hiding under that buffalo hair is a great imperial eagle. Put that on the top of this man's head; put on those great tall black leather boots; make sure that you're wearing your sabre and you have your walking stick to the side, and you have a man who is going to protect the entire imperial family with great dignity and panache.

The designs of these uniforms remained unchanged for centuries. As you entered the court of the Habsburgs, you almost lost your sense of time. Despite this sense of timelessness, the empire, at the beginning of the twentieth century, stood on the brink of collapse.

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122. CAMPAIGN UNIFORM OF AN IMPERIAL (FRANZ JOSEPH I) AND BLACK VELVET DRESS BELONGING TO EMPRESS ELISABETH (SISI), (PREP NOS 081 AND 082)

GARY RADKE The couple who wore these understated but elegant clothes were among the last of the Habsburg rulers: Emperor Franz Josef I and his wife Elisabeth, better known as Sisi. Monica Kurzel-Runtscheiner.

MONICA KURZEL-RUNTSCHNEINER Franz Josef was a very conservative ruler. And on all his portraits and representations we always see him in this uniform. This is the uniform for everyday. So it seems very lavish to us but at that period it was the simple uniform.

GARY RADKE He wore this uniform so frequently it's how most of his subjects recognized him. The Emperor's numerous medals and stars once hung from those loops on the left side of his chest, under the first row of braiding.

Like the Emperor's uniform, the Empress's blue-black dress was also considered simple attire. Empress Elisabeth wore it for daytime events, not to balls or court celebrations.

MONICA KURZEL-RUNTSCHNEINER Elisabeth was something like the Lady Di of the 19th Century. She was really well known all over Europe and even all over the world for her extraordinary beauty, and she was also a fashion icon. She was known also for her thin waist. And this waist is, of course, not at all natural.

GARY RADKE It's called a wasp waist because it looks like the segmented body of that insect. Sisi had to be strapped into a very tight corset to make it look like this. The sweeping skirt with its exuberant layers of ruffles and the off-the-shoulder neckline completed the typical silhouette of the Empress. The dress is probably the work of the famous designer Charles Frederick Worth. Sisi was one of his favorite clients.

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123. GYULA EDER, QUEEN ZITA AND CROWN PRINCE OTTO ARRIVE AT THE CORONATION IN BUDAPEST, 1929 (PREP NO 016)

GARY RADKE By the time this painting was made, in 1929, the Habsburg Empire had collapsed. Defeated in World War I, its vast territories had been split into smaller sovereign states, and the last Habsburg Emperor had gone into exile. His 1916 coronation is the subject of this painting. By the early twentieth century photography had become the go-to medium to capture important events, but this work gives us a different perspective on the last great spectacle of the Habsburg Empire.

To make a painting of this subject is to make it in many ways much more romantic. There's also a sense that all the detail is softened. That it is looked at through a gauzy veil, recalling rather than recording what actually happened.

We have the Empress Zita seated in the imperial coronation carriage in Hungary while her son, Crown Prince Otto, here descends. Three of the spectacular costumes that are depicted in this painting are visible in this gallery of the exhibition. Most impressive, though smallest, is this gold-embroidered and ermine-lined robe that is worn by little Otto, who is four years old at the time of the coronation of his father in 1916.

Though the Habsburgs fell from power at the end of World War I, the objects they commissioned and collected continue to dazzle us with their spectacular craftsmanship and showmanship. We still dream of dancing waltzes in their palaces and taking sleigh rides through their imperial capitals. From knights in shining armor to court ladies dressed in shimmering silks, from paintings by Europe's leading artists to wondrous objects set in gold and silver, Habsburg wealth, power, and prestige shine as splendidly as ever.

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