

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**MAJOR TRAVELING EXHIBITION OF MASTERPIECES
FROM THE AUSTRIAN HABSBURG DYNASTY BRINGS
IMPERIAL SPLENDOR TO THE HIGH MUSEUM OF ART**

Unprecedented loans from the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna illustrate 500 years of collecting from the late Middle Ages to the early 20th century

Atlanta, Oct. 12, 2015 – A major American collaboration brings masterworks amassed by one of the longest-reigning European dynasties to the High Museum of Art. “Habsburg Splendor: Masterpieces from Vienna's Imperial Collections,” on view Oct. 18, 2015, through Jan. 17, 2016, showcases masterpieces and rare objects from the collection of the Habsburg Dynasty—the emperors of the Holy Roman Empire and other powerful rulers who commissioned extraordinary artworks now in the collection of the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna.

“Habsburg Splendor,” largely composed of works that have never traveled outside of Austria, was co-organized by the High, the Minneapolis Institute of Art (MIA), the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston (MFAH) and the Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna.

The exhibition explores the dramatic rise and fall of the Habsburgs’ global empire, from their political ascendance in the late Middle Ages to the height of their power in the 16th and 17th centuries, the expansion of the dynasty in the 18th and 19th centuries to its decline in 1918 at the end of World War I. The more than 90 artworks and artifacts that tell the story include arms and armor, sculpture, Greek and Roman antiquities, court costumes, a carriage and sleigh, decorative art objects, and paintings by such masters as Correggio, Giorgione, Rubens, Tintoretto, Titian and Velázquez.

Key masterpieces traveling for the first time to the United States include:

- “The Crowning with Thorns” (c. 1602/1604) by Caravaggio
- A portrait of Jane Seymour (1536), Queen of England and third wife to Henry VIII, by Hans Holbein the Younger
- “Jupiter and Io” (c. 1530/32) by Correggio

“For many visitors, this exhibition is a once-in-a-lifetime chance to explore hundreds of years of art collecting by the Habsburg family,” said Gary Radke, consulting curator for the High.

“Viewers will find themselves feeling a bit like royalty, sensing both the wealth of these extraordinary rulers and the splendid attention they paid to detail in all of their works of art.”

“We’re delighted to share our Museum’s unique wonders with our American friends,” said Sabine Haag, general director of Kunsthistorisches Museum Wien. “The exhibition will show the

extraordinary wide range of the Habsburgs' collections, including masterpieces of Roman antiquity, medieval armory, early modern painting and craftwork, as well as gorgeous carriages and clothing. We hope this will inspire visitors to make the trip to Vienna to see the collection in person and to discover even more of our treasure."

"Habsburg Splendor: Masterpieces from Vienna's Imperial Collections" chronicles the Habsburgs' story in three chapters, each featuring a three-dimensional "tableau"—a display of objects from the Habsburgs' opulent court ceremonies—as context for the other works on view.

DAWN OF THE DYNASTY

The first section features objects commissioned or collected by the Habsburgs from the 13th through the 16th centuries. In this late medieval/early Renaissance period, Habsburg rulers staged elaborate commemorative celebrations to demonstrate power and to establish their legitimacy to rule, a tradition that flourished during the reigns of Maximilian I and his heirs. Works from this era—including sabres and armor, tapestries, Roman cameos, and large-scale paintings—illustrate the significance of war and patronage in expanding Habsburg influence and prestige.

Tableau: Suits of armor displayed on horseback and jousting weapons from a royal tournament

Highlights include:

- Armor of Emperor Maximilian I (c. 1492) made by Lorenz Helmschmid
- Bronze bust of Emperor Charles V (c. 1555) by Leone Leoni
- A rock crystal goblet made for Emperor Frederick III (1400–1450)

GOLDEN AGE

The second and largest section of the exhibition highlights the apex of Habsburg rule, the Baroque Age of the 17th and 18th centuries. The dynasty used religion, works of art, and court festivities to propagate its self-image and claim to rule during this politically tumultuous time. Paintings by Europe's leading artists demonstrate the wealth and taste of the Habsburg rulers, while crucifixes wrought in precious metals and gems, as well as sumptuous ecclesiastical vestments, reflect the emperor's role as defender of the Catholic faith.

Tableau: A procession featuring a Baroque ceremonial carriage and sleigh, with carvings by master craftsman Balthasar Ferdinand Moll

Highlights include:

- An ivory tankard (1642) by Hans Jacob Bachmann
- "Infanta Maria Teresa" (1652–53), a portrait of the daughter of Philip IV of Spain and eventual wife of Louis XIV of France, by Velázquez
- An alchemical medal (1677), illustrated with portraits in relief of the Habsburgs, by Johann Permann

TWILIGHT OF THE EMPIRE

The exhibition concludes with works from the early 19th century, when the fall of the Holy Roman Empire gave rise to the hereditary Austrian Empire—a transition from the *ancien régime*

to a modern state in which merit determined distinction and advancement. Franz Joseph, who would reign longer than any previous Habsburg, saw the growth of nationalism and ultimately ruled over a dual monarchy of Austria-Hungary. As heir to the Habsburg legacy—and in the spirit of public education and enrichment—he founded the Kunsthistorisches Museum in 1891. Reflecting the modernization of the Habsburg administration, the exhibition will end with a spectacular display of official court uniforms and dresses.

Tableau: Uniforms and women’s gowns from the court of Franz Joseph

Highlights include:

- Campaign uniform of Franz Joseph (1907)
- A velvet dress made for Empress Elisabeth (c. 1860/65)
- An evening gown made for Princess Kinsky (c. 1905)
- Ceremonial dress of Crown Prince Otto for the Hungarian Coronation (1916)

The exhibition is curated by Dr. Monica Kurzel-Runtscheiner, director of the Imperial Carriage Museum, Vienna. At the High, the consulting curator is Gary Radke, professor emeritus of art history at Syracuse University.

The exhibition is accompanied by a full-color catalogue published by the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, with essays by Dr. Monica Kurzel-Runtscheiner, director of the Imperial Carriage Museum, Vienna; Dr. Franz Pichorner, deputy director, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna; and Dr. Stefan Krause, curator of arms and armor, Kunsthistorisches Museum.

A Brief History of the Habsburgs

The noble House of Habsburg rose to prominence in the late Middle Ages through strategic marriages, political alliances, and conquest. In 1273, count Rudolph IV gained control of Germany as King of the Romans, and Habsburg domains continued to grow leading up to Pope Nicholas V’s coronation of Frederick III as Holy Roman Emperor in 1452. Under Frederick’s son Maximilian I and his successor, Charles V, the Habsburgs achieved world-power status, assuming the title of emperor without papal consent and enfolding Spain and Burgundy into the Habsburg-controlled territories. The dynasty split into Spanish and Austrian branches shortly thereafter, and in the 17th and 18th centuries the male lines died out, resulting in the loss of Spain.

In 1740, Maria Theresa—the sole female Habsburg ruler, who reigned for a remarkable 40 years—seized control of the Austrian line to become the final ruler of the House of Habsburg. The early 19th century witnessed the final demise of the Holy Roman Empire and the establishment of the main Habsburg line’s successors: the House of Habsburg-Lorraine. A hundred years later, in 1916, Emperor Charles I inherited a dual Austro-Hungarian monarchy upon the death of longtime Emperor Franz Joseph. More than 600 years of Habsburg sovereignty came to an end in 1918 with the close of World War I.

Exhibition Organization and Support

“Habsburg Splendor: Masterpieces from Vienna’s Imperial Collections” is organized by the Minneapolis Institute of Art; Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; High Museum of Art, Atlanta; and

Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna.

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High Museum of Art

The High is the leading art museum in the southeastern United States. With more than 15,000 works of art in its permanent collection, the High Museum of Art has an extensive anthology of 19th- and 20th-century American art; a significant collection of historic and contemporary decorative arts and design; significant holdings of European paintings; a growing collection of African American art; and burgeoning collections of modern and contemporary art, photography, folk and self-taught art, and African art. The High is also dedicated to supporting and collecting works by Southern artists. For more information about the High, visit high.org.

About The Woodruff Arts Center

The Woodruff Arts Center is one of the largest arts centers in the world, home to the Tony Award–winning Alliance Theatre, the Grammy Award–winning Atlanta Symphony Orchestra and the High Museum of Art, the leading art museum in the Southeast. Each year, these centers of artistic excellence play host to more than 1.2 million patrons at The Woodruff Arts Center’s midtown Atlanta location, one of the only arts centers in the United States to host both visual and performing arts on a single campus. The Woodruff Arts Center also offers remarkable educational programming through each of its arts partners. Through the combined efforts of its arts partners, The Woodruff Arts Center serves more than 300,000 students annually and is the largest arts educator in Georgia. www.woodruffcenter.org

Minneapolis Institute of Arts

Home to more than 85,000 works of art representing 5,000 years of world history, the Minneapolis Institute of Arts (MIA) inspires wonder, spurs creativity, and nourishes the imagination. With extraordinary exhibitions and one of the finest wide-ranging art collections in the country—Rembrandt to van Gogh, Monet to Matisse, Asian to African—the MIA links the past to the present, enables global conversations, and offers an exceptional setting for inspiration. The 2013 fiscal year marked the highest attendance—679,357 visitors—in the nearly 100-year history of the MIA. For more information, visit www.artsmia.org

Museum of Fine Arts, Houston

Founded in 1900, the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, is among the 10 largest art museums in the United States. Located in the heart of Houston’s Museum District, the museum comprises two gallery buildings, a sculpture garden, theater, two art schools, and two libraries, with two house

museums for American and European decorative arts nearby. The encyclopedic collection numbers some 65,000 works and embraces the art of antiquity to the present. The museum's collection of some 30,000 photographs spanning the full history of the medium is internationally renowned. For more information, visit www.mfah.org

Kunsthistorisches Museum

The Kunsthistorisches Museum Wien is one of the foremost museums in the world, with rich holdings comprising artworks from seven millennia, from Ancient Egypt to the late 18th century. The collections of Renaissance and Baroque art are of particular importance. The Kunsthistorisches Museum Wien's extensive holdings are on show at different locations: the main building on Ringstrasse houses the Picture Gallery, Kunstammer Wien, the Collection of Greek and Roman Antiquities, the Egyptian and Near Eastern Collection and the Coin Collection. Other collections of the Kunsthistorisches Museum Wien are housed in the Neue Burg (i.e. the Collection of Historical Musical Instruments, the Collection of Arms and Armour, and the Ephesus Museum), in Hofburg Palace (the Treasury), and in Schönbrunn Palace (the Collection of Historical Carriages). The collections on show at Ambras Castle in Innsbruck are also part of the holdings of the Kunsthistorisches Museum Wien.

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