



Tchoban Foundation
Museum für
Architekturzeichnung

Press Release

Berlin, 2 January 2026

Otto Wagner – Architect of Modern Life

Tchoban Foundation. Museum for Architectural Drawing
Christinenstrasse 18a, 10119 Berlin, Germany

Exhibition duration: 31 January – 17 May 2026
Opening hours: Mon–Fri 2 pm – 7 pm, Sat–Sun 1 pm – 5 pm
Admission: 6 €; reduced: 4 €

Press tour: 30 January 2026, 6 pm

Exhibition opening: 30 January 2026, 7 pm

Otto Wagner (1841–1918) is one of the internationally most influential figures of early modern architecture. Many of his buildings – for instance, the Vienna City Railway, the Postal Savings Bank and the Church at Steinhof – are now considered key works of twentieth-century architecture because they shed their historical stylistic trappings and speak instead a language appropriate to “modern life”, based on purpose, materials, and construction.

Wagner's early work was influenced by the historicism of Vienna's Ringstrasse. From the late 1880s onwards, however, he, unique in his generation, became convinced that this architecture was at odds with the political, economic and social dynamics of the time. In 1896 he set out his ideas on “modern architecture” in a treatise of the same name, which



met with great acclaim and is now considered one of the most important and influential texts on architectural theory.

Wagner's great influence was achieved not only through his buildings but also through his teaching at the Vienna Academy of Fine Arts. Engaging in creative exchange with students decades his junior, he became the "father" of the Vienna Secession, training a whole group of modern architects according to his artistic vision to form the "Wagner School" and thus ensure the spread of his ideas. These ideas were so radically new around 1900 that they provoked vehement opposition from the representatives of tradition. Revelling in his role as a provocateur and fearless champion of modernism, Wagner made many enemies.

Drawings played a central role in his commitment to resolute architectural renewal. Using the architect's traditionally most important medium, Wagner created impressive images of a radiant future architecture long before the first modern buildings were erected. The compositionally sophisticated and technically elaborate drawings produced in Wagner's studio under his guidance are now considered absolute masterpieces of architectural drawing. They also mark the beginning of the visual propaganda for modern architecture that, after 1918, was continued primarily through photography by the proponents of the "New Building" movement.

The present exhibition at the Tchoban Foundation is the first in Berlin to be dedicated to the work of Otto Wagner. It is also the first time in more than sixty years that the work of this pioneer of modern architecture has been shown in Germany. Berlin is well-chosen because the city played an important role in Wagner's career: while studying at the Building Academy, he became acquainted with the work of Karl Friedrich Schinkel, whose *Sammlung architektonischer Entwürfe* (Collected Architectural Designs) became the model for his own highly influential book *Einige Skizzen, Projekte und ausgeführte Bauwerke* (Some Sketches, Projects and Completed Buildings). Wagner also took part in the competition for the Berlin Cathedral and the Reichstag building, developing model



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solutions for contemporary monumental architecture in his engagement with these significant historicist construction projects.

Featuring a selection of Wagner's most significant drawings from the Wien Museum's collection of more than 1,000 graphic works, the exhibition presents the most important stages and themes in the career of this pioneer of modern architecture. The spectrum ranges from his little-known early historicist works to spectacular projects for the Vienna Secession and the radical, traditional ornament-free buildings of his later period, which established Wagner's central position in the history of modern architecture. In addition to exploring Wagner's architecture, the exhibition also examines the compositional and technical characteristics of the drawings and their strategic use as "weapons of paper" in the "battle" for modern architecture.

The exhibition, curated by Andreas Nierhaus, curator for architecture of the Wien Museum, is accompanied by a catalogue.

Lenders:

Wien Museum

Architecture Museum of the Technische Universität Berlin

Sergei Tchoban Collection

The Wien Museum and its Architecture Collection

The Historical Museum of the City of Vienna, today's Wien Museum, was founded in 1887 and collects, curates, researches, presents and communicates all aspects of the history, culture and art of the Danube metropolis. With holdings of more than one million objects, it preserves large parts of the city's historical, cultural and artistic heritage, ranging from Stone Age artefacts to paintings by Gustav Klimt and Egon Schiele. The museum's Architecture Collection contains numerous bequests from important architects whose



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buildings continue to shape Vienna's cityscape to this day. Along with the medieval construction plans from the St. Stephen's building workshop, the Otto Wagner estate forms the core of this collection. In recent years, the Architecture Collection has been significantly expanded through donations, with a focus on the period from 1945 to the present.

Tchoban Foundation. Museum for Architectural Drawing

Tchoban Foundation Museum for Architectural Drawing was built in 2013 on the site of the former Pfefferberg brewery. The foundation was established in 2009 by the architect Sergei Tchoban with the aim of promoting the art of architectural drawing. The Museum for Architectural Drawing shows three exhibitions a year, with works from its own collection and loan exhibitions from international partner institutions, including well-known museums such as the Sir John Soane's Museum in London, the Albertina in Vienna, the École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts in Paris and the DAM in Frankfurt am Main.

The exhibition is organised in cooperation
with:

wien
Museum

Under the patronage of:

 **Österreichische
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Images



1. Otto Wagner, The “Artibus” ideal city project, bird’s-eye view, 1880
Pencil, pen, $74,8 \times 131$ cm
Wien Museum, Inv. 57.148



2. Otto Wagner, Competition project for the Reichstag building in Berlin, view of the main façade, 1882
From: *Auswahl aus den Entwürfen zum deutschen Reichstagsgebäude 1882 (mit den zehn angekauften Projecten)* (Selection from the Designs for the German Reichstag Building 1882 (with the ten purchased projects)), Berlin: Wasmuth 1883
Wien Museum, Inv. 317.778



3. Otto Wagner, Study for Berlin Cathedral, 1890/91
Pencil, pen and wash, $57,5 \times 81,4$ cm
Wien Museum, Inv. 96.001/2



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4. Otto Wagner, Presentation drawing with the Akademiestrasse-Technik and Gumpendorfer Strasse stations of the City Railway, 1898
Pencil, pen, watercolour, spray technique, white highlights, gold paint, $64,8 \times 46,2$ cm
Wien Museum, Inv. 77.262



5. Otto Wagner, Project for the new building of the Academy of Fine Arts, Hall of Honour, 1898
Pencil, pen, watercolour, spray technique, opaque paint, white highlights, gold paint, $104,4 \times 70,5$ cm
Wien Museum, Inv. 96.287



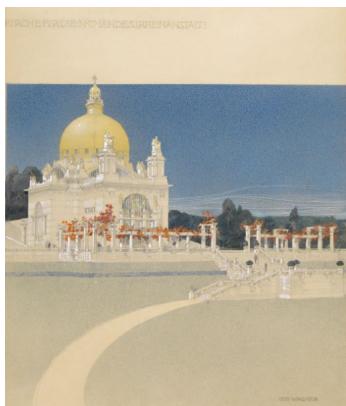
6. Otto Wagner, "Large Project" for the City Museum on Karlsplatz, view from Canovagasse, 1903
Pencil, sepia, white highlights, gold paint, $67,5 \times 59,7$ cm
Wien Museum, Inv. 96.006/28



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7. Otto Wagner, Competition project for the Austrian Postal Savings Bank Headquarters, site plan and perspective view, 1903
Pencil, pen and wash, white highlights, gold paint, $86 \times 41,7$ cm
Wien Museum, Inv. 96.017/34



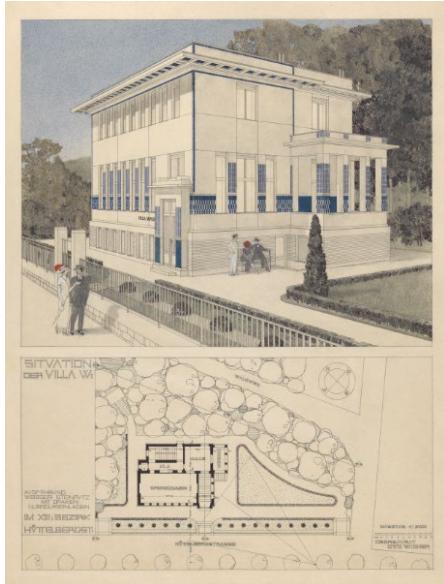
8. Otto Wagner, Competition project for St. Leopold's Church at Steinhof, 1902/03
Pencil, watercolour, spray technique, opaque paint, $55,8 \times 47$ cm
Wien Museum, Inv. 96.011/2



9. Otto Wagner, Ideal design of Vienna's 22nd district, 1911
Pencil, pen and wash, $60,5 \times 81,7$ cm
Wien Museum, Inv. 96.022



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10. Otto Wagner, Second Wagner Villa, 1912
Pencil, coloured pencil, pen, watercolour, 56,3 ×
46,4 cm
Wien Museum, Inv. 96.003/1