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THE GOVERNANCE OF STYLE

Public Buildings in Central Europe,
1780–1920

Façade.

FAÇADENVARIANTE . . .

böhlau



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REI MONETARIAE – Paul Sprenger’s Imperial-Royal Central Mint in Vienna as a representative example of pre-March era public buildings

Their particularly small format, relatively fast production, and concise form of text and image have made coins and medals a valuable news carrier since ancient times. As ideal objects of imperial representation and bearers of political communication for an exclusive recipients circle as well as sought-after collector’s items, they experienced a boom in the 18th century. This was the glorious epoch of the Austrian Baroque medal and when it became a favoured social medium.¹ On the occasion of the Russian heir to the throne, the later Tsar Alexander II’s, stay in Vienna in the spring of 1839, he was also to visit the new mint building on *Heumarkt*, which had just been completed by the architect Paul Sprenger.² In commemoration of this event, State Chancellor Clemens Wenzel Metternich ordered medals in gold, silver, and non-ferrous metal (bronze) referring to the laying of the new mint building’s foundation stone to be presented as a gift from the Austrian emperor – as had been the traditional practice during diplomatic visits.³ In fact, today we know of a medal that refers to the new mint building: on the obverse, it features the staggered double portrait of Emperor Francis II/I and his son Ferdinand I to the right, both crowned with laurel wreaths together with a Latin inscription (fig. 1a). The reverse shows the new building’s main façade, also with a Latin legend (fig. 1b).⁴ In total, one gold medal, ten silver medals, and twenty bronze medals were to be issued to the Russian crown prince. All of the medals, with a total value

1 The research for this chapter was carried out in 2019 as part of the author’s doctoral thesis on the topic *Emperor Ferdinand I. (1793–1875) and the medal: Medal production between 1835 and 1848 in an art historical and historical context* at the Institute of Art History at the University of Vienna, finished in December 2020, with the financial support of the Austrian Academy of Sciences, and during my time at the Kunsthistorisches Museum Vienna’s coin collection from 2016 to 2019.

2 Austrian State Archives (OeStA), Finanz- und Hofkammerarchiv (FHKA), Münz- und Bergwesen (MBW), MP 1839, no. 282 and OeStA FHKA HMA 1839, no. 319.

3 OeStA FHKA MBW MP 1839, no. 282, OeStA FHKA MBW MP 1839, no. 296 and OeStA FHKA HMA 1839, no. 319. The presentation of medals as gifts on the occasion of a visit by foreign princes to mints or on the occasion of a visit by the emperor himself was traditionally common and had already been practiced in the 18th century under Maria Theresa and Francis I Stephan. See Anna Fabiankowitzsch, “Geprägt für die Ewigkeit: Medaillen Maria Theresias als Denkmäler der Herrscherrepräsentation,” *Zuhanden Ihrer Majestät: Medaillen Maria Theresias*, ed. Sabine Haag (Vienna: Kunsthistorisches Museum, 2017), pp. 53–67, here pp. 59–61.

4 OeStA FHKA MBW MP 1839, no. 282. As can be seen from the relevant files, this medal’s dies, which were made by the chamber medalist Joseph Daniel Böhm and the engraver Franz Zeichner, had already existed since 1837, but no minting had taken place with them until then.



Fig. 1a/b. Medal commemorating the construction of the new Mint at the *Heumarkt* in Vienna 1834–37, silver, Av.: Joseph Daniel Böhm (Boehm), Rv.: Franz Zeichner, Dm. 46.8 mm, 1839, Vienna Mint, Coin Collection of the Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna, KHM MK 24519/1914B.

of 130 florins, were to be kept and presented side by side in a beautifully decorated case.⁵ In addition to official coronation and homage medals, which also played an integral role during a courtly ceremonial, medals such as the mentioned ones functioned as counter-gifts to foreign princes or envoys and thus served to secure diplomatic relations.⁶ And what would be more appropriate than to present a medal with reference to the place where the heart of the entire Habsburg Empire's coin and medal minting was recently located?

Based on the sources on medal production in Vienna, not only can the conditions of creation and specific function of the pieces be reconstructed, but also the work processes within the new Vienna Imperial-Royal Central Mint. The following study is therefore devoted to the new mint office building, its construction and functional history, and the architect responsible for it, Paul Sprenger. As a State Building Council (*Hofbaurat*) member, Sprenger was essentially responsible for the administrative buildings erected in Vienna during the pre-March period.⁷ Aspects of the mint's architectural structure and furnishings, as well as the question of what distinguishes the new building from other already existing administrative buildings as a representative example of pre-March 'civil servants architecture' (*Beamtenarchitektur*), will be illuminated.

5 130 gulden C. M. in 1839 roughly correspond to today's purchasing power of 2,858.29 Euros. See <https://www.eurologisch.at/docroot/waehrungsrechner/#/>, accessed July 19, 2021.

6 See Fabiankowitzsch, "Geprägt für die Ewigkeit," p. 61.

7 On the building of the Central Mint and Paul Sprenger, see also Kurdiovsky's contribution to this volume.

Brief outline of the Viennese mint’s history

Generally, the beginning of minting in Vienna is dated to the time of Duke Leopold V, when Vienna became the Babenbergs’ residence city.⁸ The Vienna mint’s origins thus date back almost 825 years to the year 1194.⁹ Closely tied to the ruler’s seat, the first complex’s construction in the 13th century also brought coin minting into the immediate vicinity of the residence on today’s square *Am Hof*. In the course of time, the so-called *Münzhof* moved to *Wollzeile* (in today’s first district) and remained there until about the 1730s.

When Emperor Joseph I (r. 1705–11) appointed the Swedish-German scholar Carl Gustav Heraeus as “kaiserlicher Antiquitäten-Inspektor” in 1709 to look after the Emperor’s coin and medal collection, the Viennese court became increasingly interested in antiquities and numismatics in the course of the 18th century.¹⁰ Under Emperor Charles VI (r. 1711–40) not only fundamental coinage system reforms took place, but also the centralization of coin and medal minting in one place.¹¹ The Viennese mint moved to *Himmelfortgasse* in the immediate vicinity of Prince Eugene’s Winter Palace, the financial administration’s seat and today the representative seat of the Ministry of Finance.¹² The resulting establishment of a central Vienna minting office in 1733, which was to take over the entire production process’s administration and the artistic-technical training of the engravers by means of an engravers’ school, represented the starting point for the further consolidation of the minting of Austrian coins and the production of medals.¹³ In addition to the financial administration, all minting departments and workshops were housed in an adjacent complex of buildings in the first district’s *Johannesgasse*.

However, economic development and progressive modernization in the course of the 18th century, as well as the increasingly larger and louder production machines – in the 19th century, already operated with steam power – had the consequence that individual workshops for which there was no more room in *Himmelfortgasse* had to be accommodated in the *Stadt-*

8 Rudolph of Habsburg conferred minting privileges to the Viennese household in 1277. See Bernhard Koch, “Das Österreichische Hauptmünzamt,” *Die Wiener Münze: Eine Geschichte der Münzstätte Wien*, ed. Österreichische Numismatische Gesellschaft (Vienna: self-published, 1989), pp. 11–112, here p. 38.

9 According to other sources, the origins date back to 1203, when the first Viennese pfennigs were found in the Passau bishop Wolfger von Erla’s travel accounts. See Koch, “Das Österreichische Hauptmünzamt,” p. 12.

10 See Karl Schulz, “Die Medaille in Österreich,” *Numismatische Zeitschrift* 100 (1989), pp. 173–207, here p. 183. See also Franz Matsche, *Die Kunst im Dienst der Staatsidee Kaiser Karls VI: Ikonographie, Ikonologie und Programmatik des “Kaiserstils”* (Berlin/New York: de Gruyter, 1981), pp. 43–45.

11 See August Loehr and Fritz Dworschak, *Die Medaille in Österreich* (Vienna: Kunsthistorisches Museum, s. d. [ca. 1923]) p. 7. See Koch, “Das Österreichische Hauptmünzamt,” p. 38.

12 After the Prince Eugene’s death, the palace stood empty for a few years until 1752, when the state under Maria Theresa purchased the palace and the various offices of the financial authorities were set up here, including the Mint and Mining Directorate (*Hofkammer im Münz- und Bergwesen*). See Koch, “Das Österreichische Hauptmünzamt,” p. 38.; Johann Kräftner, “Paläste des Geldes: Österreichische Bankbauten im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert,” *Geld: 800 Jahre Münzstätte Wien*, ed. Wolfgang Häusler (Vienna: Bank Austria Kunstforum, 1994), pp. 249–279.

13 See Koch, “Das Österreichische Hauptmünzamt,” p. 38.

graben, the so-called *Münzgraben* near the *Wiener Neustädter Canal*.¹⁴ From a logistical and practical point of view, the General Court Chamber (*Allgemeine Hofkammer*) pushed for a consolidation of all production facilities under one roof. At the end of the 18th century, the state administration reforms pushed forward by Joseph II increased the need for administrative, educational, and utility buildings, but the court's austerity policy restricted spending on larger building projects and, not least, the state treasury stood almost empty.¹⁵ It was not until the mid-1820s that the project for a new Imperial-Royal Central Mint building was taken up, which was to be located near the *Münzgraben* – on *Heumarkt* – and at the same time outside the city walls. In the new building, the state minting of coins and medals was united in one place, where it is still located today. At the end of the 1980s, the private Austrian Mint (*Münze Österreich AG*) was founded as a subsidiary of the Austrian National Bank (OeNB), which is still in charge of minting coins and medals today, including the Austrian Euro coins.

Construction and functional history of the new building at *Heumarkt* – Paul Sprenger as architect

Due to financial stringency and the resulting limited possibilities, the new central mint's concrete planning and construction phase did not finally take place until the early 1830s. The new building was to unite both the administration and the mint's scattered production and workshops, and eliminate the increasingly pressing need for space in *Himmelpfortgasse*.¹⁶ The building was entrusted to Paul Sprenger (fig. 2), an architect already established as professor at the Vienna Academy of Fine Arts and very well connected at the Viennese court and the state administration, and whose biography is not only well documented in sources but also already well researched. For example, the author Elisabeth Schmalhofer, whose dissertation dealt with Sprenger and his work in detail, wrote:

When Paul Sprenger received his first public commission [the construction of the new mint] at the beginning of the 1830s, the bureaucratization of state building, which was expected to result in considerable savings, had long since been completed. The official style of art, supported by the Academy as the state's highest art authority, was characterized by conservative attitudes.¹⁷

Although Sprenger had already built several public buildings before his appointment as Imperial-Royal State Building Councillor (*k.k. Hofbaurat*) in 1842, his name is regarded as the

¹⁴ See Walter Cerny, *Paul Sprenger* (dissertation, University of Vienna, 1968), p. 11.

¹⁵ See Elisabeth Schmalhofer, "Paul Sprenger, 1798–1854," *Mitteilungen der Gesellschaft für Vergleichende Kunstforschung in Wien* 53/2–3 (2002), pp. 16–23, here p. 19.

¹⁶ See Bernhard Koch, "Die Geschichte der Münzstätte," *Geld: 800 Jahre Münzstätte Wien*, pp. 195–214, here pp. 205–206.

¹⁷ See Schmalhofer, "Paul Sprenger," p. 19 (transl. AM).

Fig. 2. Franz Eybl, portrait of Paul Sprenger (1798–1854), 1846. *Allgemeine Bauzeitung* 2 (1855), p. 221.



Fig. 3. Paul Sprenger, Vienna Central Mint, situation plan of 1833, OeStA AVA PKF PS II A-II-c/88.



Metternich era's building bureaucracy epitome.¹⁸ Corresponding criticism of the awarding of contracts and of the system behind it grew louder from the mid-1840s onwards and ultimately led to a change in thinking, which was expressed above all in the public invitation to tender for the major architectural competitions during the *Ringstrasse* expansion in the second half of the 19th century.

In November 1834, Emperor Francis II/I decided in favour of the mint's new building. Due to the Emperor's death, the foundation stone's laying took place only the following year under his successor Ferdinand I:

His Majesty, by the Most Highest Resolution of November 7 of this year, has graciously granted the construction of a new mint, then a stretching, grinding, amalgamation and hammering building on the site of the gold and silver wire train buildings and on the coal site on the main road adjoining it and belonging to the canal.¹⁹

With the resolution, the building site and basic orientation were determined, as can be seen from a projected floor plan that is now in the Austrian State Archives' plan archives (fig. 3). Sprenger followed the demands of classicist architectural theory and planned a regular rectangular building enclosing a central courtyard. The main building covers a length of about 79 m and a width of about 68 m. Due to the building site's location in proximity to the Vienna River, the Danube, and the *Wiener Neustädter Canal*, it required an appropriate solid foundation, which Sprenger demanded not only as an architect but also as a civil engineer.²⁰

As early as 1832, Sprenger submitted initial plans for a new minting office building, which were viewed quite positively by the General Court Chamber.²¹ A watercolour drawing by Paul Sprenger, signed and dated 1833, shows the planned building's view from the *Wiener Neustädter Canal* (fig. 4). The depiction shows not only the building site, but also the building's monumental orientation, which is further emphasized by the partially unde-

18 See the entry on Paul Sprenger in: *Architektenlexikon Wien 1770–1945* (<http://www.architektenlexikon.at/de/1285.htm>, accessed March 13, 2021); Schmalhofer, "Paul Sprenger," p. 16–17; Elisabeth Schmalhofer, *Paul Sprenger 1798–1854: Architekt im Dienste des Staates* (dissertation, University of Vienna, 2000).

19 OeStA FHKA HMA 1835, no. 36 ("Seine Majestät haben mit Allerhöchster EntschlieÙung vom 7. November d.J. die Erbauung eines neuen Münzhauses dann eines Streck:Schlemm: Amalgamir: und Hammergebäudes auf dem Platze der Gold: und Silberdrahtzugsgebäude und auf dem daraufstossenden zu dem Canal gehörigen Steinkohleplatze auf der Landstrasse, allergnädigst zu bewilligen geruht"). Emperor Francis II/I died on the day the new building's foundation stone was laid, March 2, 1835, so Emperor Ferdinand I undertook it. From 1838, all departments were moved from *Himmelfortgasse* to the address *Am Heumarkt* in the building designed by Sprenger. Full operations began there in 1839. Today, the building houses the Austrian Mint. See Koch, "Das Österreichische Hauptmünzamt," pp. 11–12, and Kräftner, "Paläste des Geldes," pp. 249–279.

20 See Schmalhofer, "Paul Sprenger," p. 19.

21 Sprenger made changes to the main staircase, which was approved by the Court Chamber, see Schmalhofer, *ibid.* These were presented to Emperor Francis II/I by the General Court Chamber on March 31, 1833. OeStA FHKA MBW MP 1834, no. 12.



Fig. 4. Vienna Central Mint, corner view with still visible *Wiener Neustädter* canal, design by Paul Sprenger, watercolour drawing, signed and dated 1833. Vienna, Austrian National Library, Picture Archive Pk 269, 1.

veloped area. With the imperial resolution of early November 1834, a further twelve plans were to be prepared by Sprenger as well as two inked façade designs by court architect Pietro (Peter) Nobile, all of which were submitted to court chamber president Francis Count Klebelsberg.²² In January 1835, Sprenger addressed the Presidium of the Mint and Mining Directorate (*Präsidium der Hofkammer im Münz- und Bergwesen*, in short: *Montanpräsidium*) and reported on the preparations for the new mint building’s construction.²³

The preserved files include detailed requests for construction licensing, stonemasonry work, lime stone deliveries, etc. Even though the new building was still in its development phase at this time, the *Montanpräsidium* already ordered the relocation of the departments and workshops from *Himmelfortgasse*.²⁴ In addition, at the beginning of April 1835, Sprenger requested the approval of four draftsmen for the duration of the mint office building’s work in order to graphically record the construction progress.²⁵ In May 1835, he applied to the *Montanpräsidium* for the allocation of 50,000 gulden in “construction funds” (“Baugelder”) for the mint, which were to be paid from 1825’s state debt fund reserves. In

²² OeStA FHKA MBW MP 1834, no. 12.

²³ OeStA FHKA MBW MP 1835, no. 68.

²⁴ OeStA FHKA FHKA HMA 1835, no. 36.

²⁵ OeStA FHKA MBW MP 1835, no. 242.

November 1835, Sprenger submitted proposals to the *Montanpräsidium* on how Vienna's first steam engine could be accommodated in the new building.²⁶

Architectural design and furnishings

After discussing the history of the new mint's planning and function, I will now turn to the building's architectural structure, as well as to the individual rooms' furnishings and function, starting with the main façade, which faces the present-day *Stadtpark* and thus the *Innere Stadt*. The façade is divided into an avant-corps with five axes crowned by an attic and incorporates the representative main entrance (fig. 5). In front of the three portals with semi-circular arches, a portico of double columns is placed, which support a balcony at the first floor's height. The portals' framing is formed by Doric columns with simple profiled entablature. The two upper floors appear visually unified by pilasters with blind panels. The attic wall above the avant-corps is formed by small pillars with relief figures of Mercury, Apollo, Diana, and Venus. In between, inserted framed fields lend the necessary structure. The four ancient deities symbolize the four metals (mercury, copper, silver and gold), the Latin inscription refers to the building's meaning and purpose: *REI MONETARIAE*, which means "monetary matters".²⁷

Sprenger is said to have made a total of three façade designs in 1832/33, which, however, have not survived.²⁸ Sprenger's 1833 watercolour, by contrast, provides information about the façade design's changes (see fig. 4): while a total of six free-standing fully sculptural statues were originally intended as the crowning, this was changed to the relief figures just mentioned. They were produced by the sculptor Joseph Klieber.²⁹ In the early 1810s, Klieber had made decorative sculptures for Prince Johann of Liechtenstein and had also worked on the sculptural decoration and more reliefs of the Vienna Polytechnic's (*k. k. Polytechnisches Institut*) central avant-corps (1816–18). From 1814 (until 1845), he was director of the Engravers' and Ore-Cutters' School (*Graveur- und Erzverschneiderschule*) at the Academy of Fine Arts, where his colleague Sprenger taught mathematics and perspective from 1827 onwards, and was appointed a member of this institution as *Ordentlicher Rat* in 1835.³⁰ In

26 OeStA FHKA MBW MP 1835, no. 337. OeStA FHKA MBW MP 1835, no. 785. In 1838, this very first steam engine (a Woolf's Balancier steam engine) was installed in the annex, the engine house, of the new Imperial-Royal Central Mint Building. This high-pressure compound steam engine, invented by the British engineer Arthur Woolf, was built for the Vienna mint and was only taken out of service in 1892 in the course of Austria's introduction of crowns, or rather the increased energy requirements for minting a large quantity of crowns associated with it. Thanks to Franz Artmüller (Austrian Mint, Vienna) for the information. On Arthur Woolf, see Thomas Robert Harris, *Arthur Woolf: The Cornish engineer 1766–1837* (Barton: Truro, 1966).

27 See Schmalhofer, *Sprenger*, p. 35.

28 See Schmalhofer, "Paul Sprenger", pp. 16–18.

29 On July 21, 1836, Paul Sprenger reported that the attic's sculpture work and the figures placed on it would be done by Joseph Klieber. See OeStA FHKA MBW MP 1836, no. 596.

30 See the entry on Josef Klieber in: *ÖBL – Österreichisches Biographisches Lexikon (1815–1950)*, III (Graz/Köln: Böhlau, 1965), p. 402.



Fig. 5. Austrian Mint (today: *Münze Österreich AG*), view of the main façade towards the *Stadt-park*, Vienna 2019. Photograph by the author.

Fig. 6. Sculpture group by Joseph Klieber, 1836–38. Photograph by the author.



addition, Klieber created sculptural representations on fountains, portrait busts, and monument figures, as well as of saints for church furnishings. The group of figures he designed for the mint consists of two seated female personifications: *Justitia* and *Fortuna*.³¹ Between the two figures is the Austrian Empire's coat of arms held by two griffins with their claws, with the year 1837 below (fig. 6).

³¹ Entry on the *Hauptmünzamt*, in: *Die Kunstdenkmäler Wien: Die Profanbauten des III., IV. und V. Bezirkes*, ed. Géza Hajós et al. (Vienna: Berger, 1980), p. 48.



Fig. 7. Hôtel de la Monnaie de Paris by Jacques-Denis Antoine, built 1765–75, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris, département Estampes et photographie, RESERVE FOL-VE-53 (G).

Viennese public buildings between 1810 and 1830

The mint building's architectural orientation and especially the main façade's articulation reveal its model: the *Hôtel de la Monnaie*, the Paris mint by the French architect Jacques-Denis Antoine, built from 1765 to 1775 (fig. 7).³² Sprenger was familiar with Antoine's plans from his teaching activities at the Vienna Polytechnic, but whether he had already been to Paris at this time cannot yet be proven. However, Sprenger did not simply copy the French architecture, but adapted it to Viennese conditions in a modified form. Thus, the Viennese building shows a strongly reduced formal arrangement and design, especially on the façade, even though initially, a takeover of the free-standing figures might have been considered (see fig. 4 and fig. 5).³³

³² Monique Mosser, "Jacques-Denis Antoine: Architecte créateur," *L'Institut et la Monnaie: Deux palais sur un quai*, ed. Délégation à l'action artistique de la Ville de Paris (Paris: Délégation à l'action artistique de la Ville de Paris/Hachette, 1990), pp. 161–175, see Susanne Kronbichler-Skacha, "Architektur des Klassizismus in Wien: Aspekte einer 'Zwischenzeit,'" *Österreichische Zeitschrift für Kunst und Denkmalpflege* 33 (1979), pp. 27–40.

³³ See Cerny, *Sprenger*, p. 18, and Schmalhofer, *Sprenger*, p. 35.

For the new mint's realization, though, Sprenger did not only follow the French model in Paris, but also already existing monumental public buildings in Vienna, notably the Polytechnic on *Karlsplatz* (today the Vienna University of Technology's main building) built in 1815–18, the façade of which strongly reminds of Antoine's *Monnaie de Paris*; the Veterinary Institute (by Johann Aman, today's University of Music and Performing Arts) built in 1821–23; or the first representative building of the National Bank in *Herrengasse* (by Charles von Moreau, used as an office building today), built between 1819 and 1823.³⁴

What they all have in common is their monumental, strictly reduced design, the articulation of the main façade and a representative design in different forms, either by applying columned porticos or pediments with figures or relief decoration.

The Imperial-Royal Central Mint's (k.k. Hauptmünzamt) interiors

As an administrative building, the new mint's furnishings included rooms for administration as well as for production, thus the workshops for minting coins and medals. The building comprised a basement and three floors, hierarchically divided according to the area of responsibility. The basement mainly contained cellar rooms and the magazine, the locksmith's workshops, and storage areas for wood and coal, while the second floor was used for administration and senior officials' apartments.³⁵

On the basis of detailed floor plans preserved in the Austrian State Archives, it is possible to reconstruct the main building's original spatial and functional layout, for example on the basis of the ground floor's plan (fig. 8).³⁶ Through the monumental main portal one entered the representatively designed vestibule, which is divided by a three-aisled passage hall with elevated side aisles.³⁷ Four columns of Doric order and a mighty pillar each set the three naves apart from each other and support the segmental-arched coffered ceiling above the central nave and the flat coffered ceiling above the side naves. On the ground floor, apart from the porter's lodge, there are mainly rooms for gold stocks, precious metal weighing and testing, the smelting kitchen (*Schmelzküche*) and boiling room (*Siederei*), and offices. In the respective central axes, the inner courtyard was reached through the above mentioned passages, which the room sequence on all floors takes into account. In the rear wing, staircases were built in the corners to the left and right, from which, in addition to the front wing's main staircase, the first floor could also be reached. However, these were much simpler in design than the main staircase, which opens on the right side at the end of the main entrance's passageway.³⁸ The representative staircase led to the first floor, where the front wing

34 For images of these buildings, see Kurdiovsky's contribution to this volume.

35 See entry on the *Hauptmünzamt*, in: *Die Kunstdenkmäler Wiens*, pp. 47–49.

36 See OeStA/AVA PKF PS II A-II-c/88. This folder of plans is undated; the plans are numbered IV through VII. Plan VI shows the 1st floor.

37 Entry on *Hauptmünzamt*, in: *Die Kunstdenkmäler Wiens*, p. 48.

38 *Ibid.*

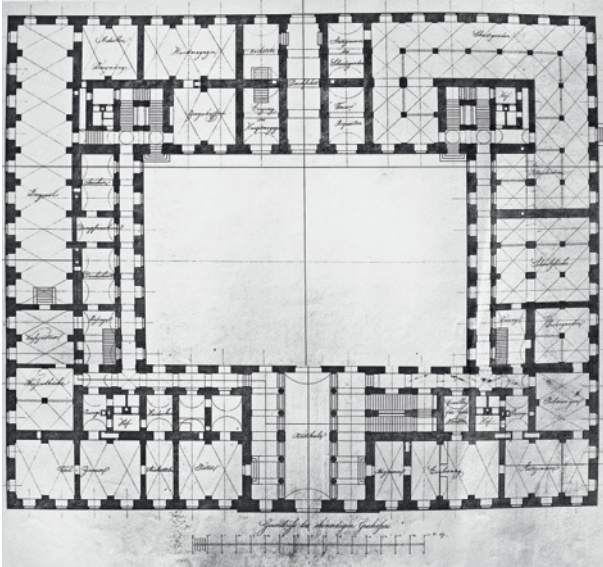


Fig. 8. Vienna Central Mint, ground plan of the ground floor, 1844, OeStA AVA PKF PS II A-II-c/88.

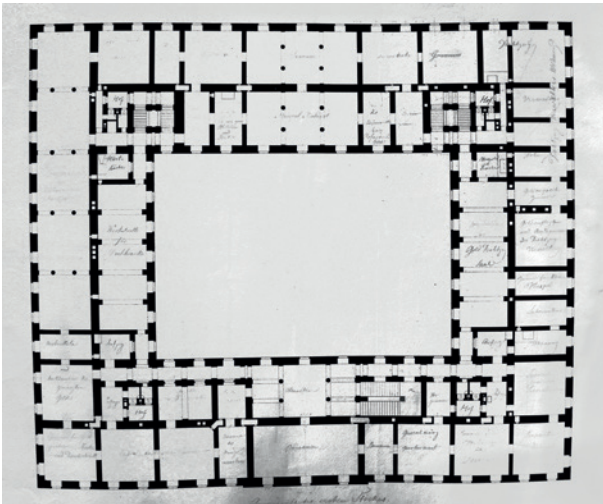


Fig. 9. Vienna Central Mint, ground plan of the first floor, 1844, OeStA AVA PKF PS II A-II-c/88.

housed the directorate's offices, the General Coin Probation Office (*General-Münz-Probieramt*), and the Master of the Mint (*Münz-Meister*). In the center of the rear wing's first floor were the medalists' rooms, including those of the first engravers and the court medalists, as well as the engraving room, which was adjoined by the Cabinet of Dies (fig. 9). This room extended over three window axes and was divided by two pairs of columns. It was flanked by the engraver's room (*Graveurie*), which consisted of an identical hall.

Excursion: Cabinet of Dies and Sculpture Collection

As mentioned at the beginning, the relatively fast production of medals made this medium an ideal imperial representation object. To sustain this high class product, it required ideal conditions for the engravers working at the mint and efficient production processes, from small sketches to clay models and producing the medals in certain metal. In addition to the official medal dies, hallmarks, and stamps, which remained in state possession from the beginning, from the 18th century onwards, minting tools were also acquired in part from the medalists' estates and kept in the mint.³⁹ This historical minting tool collection, known as the *k.k. Hofmedaillen-Prägestempel-Sammlung*, was closely linked to the establishment of the Academy of Engraving at the Imperial-Royal Central Mint. Its eventful administrative history as the training centre for all engravers working in other imperial mints ranges between the Academy of Fine Arts, the Imperial-Royal Central Mint, and the function of the chamber medalist (*Kammermedailleur*), who often held its directorship, can only be briefly referred to here.⁴⁰ The academy was responsible for theoretical training, the mint for technical training, and the medalist for teaching the engravers working at the mint.

For the engravers' technical and artistic development, the establishment of a central embossing die cabinet was to play an essential role. In 1825, Lord Chamberlain (*Oberstkämmerer*) Johann Rudolf Count Czernin, an important collector and patron of the arts, was concerned in detail with raising the engraving trade's artistic level and also pushed for the die cabinet's establishment.⁴¹ The presentation of the heavy historical dies, mostly made of cast iron steel, which had been envisaged since the end of the 18th century and was intended to serve the engravers for the "open and instructive display of this collection of dies, which is as interesting from a historical as it is from an artistic point of view,"⁴² could not be properly accommodated and set up in the old mint building for reasons of space. It was not until the new *Heumarkt* building that the collection was placed in wooden boxes with glass fronts,

39 See Anna Fabiankowitz, "Imageproduzenten: Medailleure im Dienste der Repräsentation Maria Theresias," *Zuhanden Ihrer Majestät*, pp. 77–83.

40 These mints' creation is closely linked to Carl Gustav Heraeus's appointment at the beginning of the 18th century. His task was not only to organize the existing imperial coin and medal collection, but he also proposed new medal production to advance the communication of the emperor's political program through medals. In this context, courtly commissions were to give Vienna's medal trade the necessary boost and artistically gifted die cutters were to be trained for their execution, which was finally implemented in the course of Emperor Charles VI's reforms. Always closely tied to its director, the engravers' academy at the mint formed the central training ground for all engravers working in the other mints of the empire until the end of the 19th century. See Schulz, "Die Medaille in Österreich," p. 183; Matsche, *Die Kunst im Dienst der Staatsidee*, pp. 43–45; Elisabeth Hassmann and Heinz Winter, *Numophylacium Imperatoris: Das Wiener Münzkabinett im 18. Jahrhundert* (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2016), p. 99; Fabiankowitz, "Imageproduzenten," pp. 78–83.

41 OeStA FHKA BW FM Einrichtung PrägstempKabin., *Kamerale Österr.* 1825, no. 1955.

42 OeStA FHKA HMA 1844, no. 831.

where it had remained until recently.⁴³ Especially the die, as the main piece of a medal's minting, is interesting for art historical analysis and stylistic development, even if during the 19th century a strongly mechanical-technical implementation in the minting technique prevailed.

Another collection of art historical interest includes the Engravers' Academy's sculptural collection, which consisted of bronzed plaster and wax sculptures partly from the bequest of the Baroque medalist and sculptor Matthäus Donner and the medalist Joseph Tautenhayn the Elder, who later worked here. The 1993 monograph on Georg Raphael Donner includes some of the works.⁴⁴ Even in the art topography of 1980, a total of more than twenty reliefs and sculptures are listed, some of which are now in the Vienna Kunsthistorisches Museum's inventory.⁴⁵ Among them, for example, is the plaster copy of *Apollo and Daphne*, modelled on Gian Lorenzo Bernini, or *Samson Fights with the Lion* (1732), both now on display in the Coin Collection of the Kunsthistorisches Museum.⁴⁶ The plaster reliefs and wax models, like the Academy of Fine Arts's study collection, served as rich illustrative material for drawing training. Closely tied to academic training, the engravers' first priority was drawing from three-dimensional objects and two-dimensional (graphic) model works.⁴⁷ In sum, the mission of these two facilities in close proximity to the engraving ateliers, was to serve the engravers as inspiration and guidance for the creation of new work.

Returning from a short view on the Cabinet of Dies and the Sculpture Collection to the new Mint's floor plan: To the engraving room's (*Graveurrie*) right one reached the rooms of the first engravers, to the left of it another engraving room, as well as the Chief Mint Engraver's (*Ober-Münz-Graveur*) room and a room designated as the Separate Stamping Room (*Abgesondertes Prägzimmer*). From the Cabinet of Dies, one passed a room and an antechamber on the left corner staircase to the second floor's largest room, the embossing room for Uhlhorn's machines (*Prägsaal für Uhlhorn'sche Maschinen*). It consisted of an elongated hall divided by four pairs of columns, where the embossing machines were located. The hardening kitchen, workshop, and lathe shop (*Härt-Küche, Werkstätte and Dreherei*) adjoined the courtyard's inner side. From the minting room, one reached various rooms for gold adjustment, followed by the *Casse-Amtierungs-Zimmer* (the cashier's office of the Impe-

43 Today, a large part of it is in the Kunsthistorisches Museum Vienna's depot and is being examined by Andrea Spinka of the Viennese Coin Collection's team as part of a current digital research project.

44 *Georg Raphael Donner, 1693–1741*, exhib. cat. Österreichische Galerie Belvedere Wien, ed. Sabine Grabner (Vienna: Österreichische Galerie Belvedere, 1993), pp. 392–414.

45 See the appendix to the entry on the *Hauptmünzamt* in: *Die Kunstdenkmäler Wiens*, pp. 190–193.

46 Ibid. According to the information here, *Apollo and Daphne* (height 88 cm) is a black lacquered plaster cast after a 17th-century bronze copy. *Samson* (here referred to as *Hercules*) *with the Lion* (height 52 cm) is a bronze-painted terracotta figure by Matthäus Donner from 1732 and thus the artist's first prize-winning work. He received the Academy of Fine Arts's golden prize medal for it in 1732. See Fabiankowitsch, "Imageproduzenten," p. 78 and p. 87, fig. 6.

47 See Bettina Hagen, *Die Auseinandersetzung mit der Antike an der Wiener Akademie um 1800: Eine Untersuchung zum Klassizismus in Österreich* (dissertation, University of Vienna, 2000), pp. 20–27.

rial-Royal Central Mint, where, among other things, medals could be purchased) and back again to the Mint Master’s office and the aforementioned rooms of the Directorate.

The representative staircase led to the second floor and to the offices and living quarters of the officials employed at the Imperial-Royal Central Mint, including the Mintmaster (*Münzmeister*), the Warden of the Mint (*Münzwardein*), the Counter Tester (*Gegenprobierer*), the Controller and the Head Gold Separator (*Obergoldscheider*). Thus, the new building included not only the production but also the living quarters of the officials working there. Against the alley front are the halls with the Mint and Mining Directorate’s mineralogical-geognostic collections and teaching rooms for lectures on those, which were attended by prospective montanist officials. They moved out at the end of the 19th century, allowing the *Graveurie* to move to the second floor.

Thus, a separation of storage, processing, production, and administration was also intended within the building and the different hierarchically structured floors.⁴⁸ The office rooms could therefore have served not only to ensure and guarantee smooth processes but also the necessary security. Interestingly, in the preserved floor plans, except for the ground floor porter to the entrance portal’s left, no corresponding security measures such as rooms for guards or barriers are recorded here. However, it is documented for 1893 that there were a total of four superintendents (*Oberaufseher*) and eleven guards (*Aufseher*) in the office who provided work security.⁴⁹ In the course of the 1848 revolutionary uprisings, the Mint requested guards from National Guard units to secure coin production.⁵⁰ The transport routes within the building from the basement to the second floor were via smaller staircases in the corners and passages. In addition, there were freight elevators that could be used to bring in heavy material like wood and coal.

In addition to structural separation, there were rules of mint staff conduct in the form of various instructions that precisely define the framework and duties of individual officials working there. As early as the 16th century, it was forbidden for people from outside the mint to stay there. Therefore, visits to the mint were considered exceptional and were rarely possible for the general public.⁵¹ Corresponding warnings were repeatedly sent by the administration to the mint’s staff and workers. Theft of materials or other misdemeanours were rigorously punished with loss of employment. The oath of service at the beginning of a position at the mint was supposed to guarantee the proper handling of precious metals. As part of the public service and in return, mint staff officials received state benefits in case of work accidents or as a pension. Numerous widow and orphan benefits are also documented in the sources.

The relocation from *Himmelfortgasse* took place step by step and involved the directors of all different departments.⁵² In April 1842, Sprenger reported to the *Montanpräsidium* that

48 See Susanne Jany, “Operative Räume: Prozessarchitekturen im späten 19. Jahrhundert,” *Zeitschrift für Medienwissenschaft* 7/1 (2015), pp. 33–43, here p. 35.

49 See Koch, “Das Österreichische Hauptmünzamt,” p. 84.

50 See OeStA FHKA HMA 1848 (index 30).

51 See Koch, “Das Österreichische Hauptmünzamt,” p. 60.

52 The furnishing of the individual rooms began in 1838. While the construction work was still in progress, quar-



Fig. 10. Vienna Central Mint Office Building, View from the Stadtpark, 19th century, Archive of Münze Österreich AG, Vienna.

the individual rooms' furnishing was determined in detail according to the respective managers' needs.⁵³ As of August 12, 1839, all official business took place in the Imperial-Royal Central Mint's new building (fig. 10). The building's total cost, compiled in 1843, amounted to 955,797 guilders for construction costs and furnishings.⁵⁴ Regarding the term "public service", as an architectural building the Mint was not only responsible for the Habsburg Empire's entire coin production, but also as an institution that had a social responsibility towards its staff. Countless requests for financial assistance from the Court Chamber were processed through the Central Mint Office: gracious gifts, remunerations, requests for support, pension payments, and so on were in some cases approved. As can be seen from the sources of 1843, even a contribution to funeral expenses was granted.⁵⁵

terly progress reports were received by the *Montanpräsidium*. For example, the report from June 27 to July 6, 1838, OeStA FHKA MBW MP 1838, no. 634.

⁵³ OeStA FHKA MBW MP 1842, no. 261.

⁵⁴ The costs compiled in 1843 were, for construction 658,755 gulden 15 1/4 kreuzers and for furnishings 297,041 gulden 44 3/4 kreuzers, making a total of: 955,797 gulden. See the stored plate in the Austrian Mint's archive. The sum is equivalent to 22,173,592 Euros in today's currency. Source: <https://www.eurologisch.at/docroot/waehrungsrechner/#/>, accessed July 14, 2021.

⁵⁵ See OeStA FHKA HMA 1843, no. 1799.

Reactions to and criticism of Sprenger’s construction

In principle, the new Central Mint building was received quite positively, for example in the *Allgemeine Theaterzeitung* of December 21, 1835, where it was stated:

Through the paternal care of His Majesty the Emperor, Vienna will shortly receive a new ornament in the form of the large, imposing Mint Building [...]. Not only that this building will be one of the most magnificent ornaments of the residence city, not only that the interior furnishings will surpass anything that has ever been seen of this kind; that expediency, completeness and arrangement will receive general admiration [...].⁵⁶

Barely ten years later, however, it was already stated:

The Imperial-Royal Mint presents itself quite pleasing from the outside. Inside it, however, the economy of the workforce is not taken care of in the least. The metals have to be transported from the first floor to the second floor and back down again. The heavy, shattering work of stamping is done upstairs [this probably refers to the embossing room on the first floor, editor’s note]. Costly machinery acts by means of an air pump on the countless wheels and little wheels above.⁵⁷

The quotation comes from Franz Tuvora’s *Letters from Vienna* published in Hamburg in 1844 where a fictitious native complains that in the new building efficient functionality was less considered than complacency. In fact, power was indeed transported and transmitted from the steam engine in the engine house via a king shaft through numerous belts and threads to the main building’s interior and here to the embossing machines in the second floor’s embossing room. All the material (wood, coal, gold, and silver) had to be transported up from the lower basement area, but this had not been unusual either.

From the mid-1840s, however, criticism was not so much directed at the architectural style of Sprenger’s buildings as at his person and the pre-March era building bureaucracy he represented.⁵⁸ In the absolutist state, strict adherence to the complex procedures within the

⁵⁶ *Wiener Theater-Zeitung (Bäuerles Theaterzeitung)*, 21 Dec 1835, p. 1010 (“Durch die väterliche Fürsorge Sr. Majestät des Kaisers erhält Wien in Kurzem einen neuen Schmuck durch das große, imposante Münzgebäude [...] Nicht nur, daß durch dieses Gebäude eine der herrlichsten Zierden der Residenz entsteht, nicht nur, daß die innere Einrichtung Alles übertreffen wird, was in dieser Art je gesehen wurde; daß Zweckmäßigkeit, Vollständigkeit und Anordnung allgemeine Bewunderung erhalten”).

⁵⁷ Franz Tuvora, *Briefe aus Wien: Von einem Eingebornen*, I (Hamburg: Hoffmann und Campe, 1844), p. 181 (“Das k.k. Münzamt präsentirt sich zwar von außen recht gefällig; allein im Innern desselben ist für die Oekonomie der Arbeitskräfte nicht im Geringsten gesorgt. Die Metalle müssen vom Parterre in den ersten Stock und wieder herunter transportirt werden. Die schwere erschütternde Arbeit des Prägens wird oben verrichtet. Eine kostspielige Maschinerie wirkt mittelst Luftpumpe auf die oben befindlichen unzähligen Räder und Räderchen”).

⁵⁸ See Othmar Birkner, “Eine Analyse des Historismus: Renate Wagner-Rieger: Wiens Architektur im 19. Jahrhundert,” *Das Werk: Architektur und Kunst/L’oeuvre: Architecture et art*, 58/12 (1971), pp. 837–838

state authorities meant less control over individual cases, authorities involved, officials, etc., and took a correspondingly long time.⁵⁹ It was only with the 1848 revolution that there was a structural change in the building industry, as already mentioned before.

Since Sprenger's Imperial-Royal Central Mint construction was his first public commission, but not his only state project of this time, his other buildings will be mentioned in the following section:

In the 1840s, Sprenger was responsible for further administrative buildings, including the Imperial-Royal Customs Office (*Hauptzollamt*, 1840–44, demolished after World War II) and the Financial Directorate (*Finanzlandesdirektion*, 1841–47), which essentially show parallels to the reduced formal language of the Imperial-Royal Central Mint on the façade. The *Hauptzollamt* was realized by the city master builders Adolph Korompay and Leopold Mayr and united with the Financial Directorate in one building complex.⁶⁰ Sprenger planned the main Financial Directorate's building over a strictly regular ground plan within the framework of the simple variant of classicist architecture characteristic for him. Above the portal zone there are four allegorical statues by Josef Klieber representing traffic, industry, trade, and commerce.

Among Sprenger's other public buildings were the conversion and extension of the Court Chamber Archives building (*Hofkammerarchiv* in *Johannesgasse*, 1843–44) and the Lower Austrian Governor's Office (*Niederösterreichische Statthaltereie* in *Herrengasse*, 1846–47).⁶¹ However, Sprenger is not only considered an architect of Viennese administrative buildings. As a civil engineer he was essentially responsible for the construction of Emperor Ferdinand's Water Pipeline (*Kaiser-Ferdinands-Wasserleitung*) in Vienna, the construction of which started in 1837. As an architect he completed the pipeline's machine house in 1840/41 and was appointed "wirklicher k.k. Hofbaurat" in 1842.⁶² In this position, he was responsible for assessing all submitted building plans according to a precise technical and economic examination, and for providing an expert opinion on all state building projects. Thus, Sprenger had to resign his Academy professorship and remained only a member of the *Hofbaurat*.

Sprenger also planned the provisional exhibition buildings for the third Austrian industrial and trade exhibition in Vienna in 1845. Sprenger was also a Lower Austrian Trade Association (*Niederösterreichischer Gewerbeverein*) founding member, which had initiated the three large Vienna exhibitions. Because, in 1845, the number of participants had already risen to over 1,860 and media coverage had strongly increased, this third exhibition represented the high point of such exhibitions in pre-March Austria.⁶³ It was also considered a true "temple of civic diligence" (*Tempel des Bürgerfleißes*) by the theatre writer Friedrich

59 See Waltraud Heindl, *Gehorsame Rebellen: Bürokratie und Beamte in Österreich*, I: 1780–1848, 2nd ed. (Vienna/Cologne/Graz: Böhlau, 2013), p. 84.

60 See <https://baudenkmaeler.wordpress.com/2012/08/10/finanzlandesdirektion-wien-iii/>, accessed March 28, 2022.

61 See the entry on Paul Sprenger at <http://www.architektenlexikon.at/de/1285.htm>, accessed October 16, 2019.

62 See Schmalhofer, *Sprenger*, p. 7.

63 Starting with 594 exhibitors in 1835, the number increased to 732 in 1839 and to 1868 in 1845. See Tomáš

Kaiser.⁶⁴ The building’s architectural orientation appears similar to a temple as the medal by Johann Baptist Roth (1845) and a watercolour by the painter Leander Russ show. Particularly noteworthy is the fact that Sprenger also created the medal’s design. As a civil engineer, Sprenger was commissioned to restore the dilapidated spire of St. Stephen’s Cathedral from 1839–43, which he replaced with an iron framework. Here, too, Sprenger was responsible for the corresponding medal’s design.

Conclusion

The Russian heir to the throne’s diplomatic visit to the newly built office for the Imperial-Royal Central Mint testifies to the Viennese court’s self-conception in its public buildings and their representative function. During the reign of Emperor Ferdinand I, a conservative attitude was cultivated, especially in domestic politics, and artistic innovations were generally seen with scepticism.⁶⁵

Nevertheless, a great number of new building tasks had to be mastered, resulting on the one hand from the growing Viennese population and the administration’s centralization efforts since Joseph II, and on the other hand from the advancing technical development and industry. The new mint building at *Heumarkt*, as the Habsburg monarchy’s central place for minting coins and producing medals, also fits in with existing construction projects for administrative buildings of the 1820s in its architectural orientation. Sprenger was well connected as an established architect and civil engineer, and was able to convince the Viennese administration with his reduced construction method, not only in terms of cost, but also stylistically. Referring to classicist architecture, the art historian Renate Wagner-Rieger wrote of an “aesthetic recognition of the massiveness and unity of the building block” and uses the term “cubic style”, which in principle emphasized a wall or building’s mass.⁶⁶ Particularly in the case of state buildings, the premise was to incur as few costs as possible, which brought with it the reduction as far as possible of ornamental architectural details that is observed in Sprenger’s buildings.⁶⁷ Particularly in his first public administration buildings, especially including the Viennese mint, Sprenger is regarded as the main master of this pre-March era cubic architecture, while in his later buildings characteristic traits of Romantic Historicism are increasingly found. Then, for instance, he used early Italian Renaissance stylistic elements, such as round-arched windows with rich decorative framing. Following the example

Kleisner, *Medaile císaře Ferdinandova Dobrotivého (1793–1875): Kritická edice sbírky Národního muzea / Medals of the Emperor Ferdinand the Good, 1793–1875* (Prague: National Museum, 2013), p. 126.

64 See Elke Wikidal, *Gewerbe- und Industrieausstellungen im österreichischen Vormärz: Ihre Entstehung und Bedeutung im Kontext der industriellen Entwicklung der Zeit* (diploma thesis, University of Vienna, 1994), p. 2.

65 Renate Wagner-Rieger, *Wiens Architektur im 19. Jahrhundert* (Vienna: Österreichischer Bundesverlag für Unterricht, Wissenschaft und Kunst, 1970), p. 13.

66 *Ibid.*, p. 79.

67 *Ibid.*, p. 83.

of the *Hôtel de la Monnaie* in Paris, Sprenger succeeded in his attempt at the Imperial-Royal Central Mint in Vienna “to achieve monumentality with economical means and to unite this with a logically thought-out functionalism.”⁶⁸ The building is thus considered a characteristic example of the pre-March period’s so-called “Beamtenarchitektur”⁶⁹ and ties in with Vienna’s existing administrative buildings.

⁶⁸ Quoted from the entry on the *Hauptmünzamt*, in: *Die Kunstdenkmäler Wiens*, pp. 47–48.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*