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KUNSTHISTORISCHES MUSEUM / BELVEDERE, VIENNA: DYNASTICISM AND THE FUNCTION OF ART

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The modern Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna is without question one of the world's great art collections. Today it is housed in an impressive nineteenth-century Italianate edifice on the city's Ringstrasse, with the architecturally similar Museum of Natural History facing it across a spacious square. *Between the two buildings stands Kaspar von Zumbusch's imposing monument to the Habsburg empress Maria Theresa (1717–1780), glorified in Austria today as the monarch who ruled over the country's golden age of political and cultural achievement.* This urbanistic arrangement visualizes a historical interconnection of the Habsburgs, their art, scientific knowledge, and Vienna's urban spaces, but the square's message is actually as much misleading as illuminating. Maria Theresa did indeed transform the imperial art collection into a public museum, as this iconography suggests, but the collections arrived on the Ringstrasse only in 1891, over a century after her death. The original museum was housed in the Belvedere Palace, a building located south of the city center, in Vienna's Third District, and home today to the Austrian National Gallery (fig. 6-1).¹ The Belvedere, one of Vienna's most celebrated eighteenth-century palaces, was built between 1714 and 1723 as a summer residence for Prince Eugene of Savoy (1663–1736), the Parisian-born leader of the Austrian armies who was both a revered military hero and a much-emulated patron of the arts.² Long before it became a museum in the 1770s, contemporaries greatly admired Eugene's palace as itself a hugely successful work of art. With the transfer of the imperial collections from the Belvedere Palace to the Ringstrasse and the palace's recasting today as a temple of Austrian culture, filled with paintings by Gustav Klimt and Egon Schiele, the genesis of the modern Kunsthistorisches Museum as a specifically eighteenth-century museum is no longer obvious, and the relationship of the modern palace to the onetime Habsburg imperial collections is mostly severed. Impalpable as well is the Belvedere Palace's significance to the European culture of artistic display at a critical moment in the development of modern museological practice, namely the late eighteenth century.

Scholars have long understood the process whereby the Belvedere became Vienna's first publicly accessible art museum. Its eighteenth-century history

FIGURE 6-1.
North facade of the
Belvedere Palace,
Vienna, designed by
Johann Lukas von
Hildebrandt (1688–1745)

has been the subject of several richly documented studies as well as ambitious cultural criticism.³ Even during the eighteenth century the Belvedere attracted substantial attention in print, including guides and commentaries, and was the subject of lengthy informal discussion in private journals and letters, all of which offer opinions on its success as a space for encountering art. Yet the story of how the Habsburgs transformed their imperial art collection into a public museum remains a fascinating one, not least because its transformation was neither administratively simple nor universally acclaimed. The narrative of events reveals significant frictions and insecurities about artistic display at a moment when art's ontological status itself was undergoing rapid change. My goal in this essay is twofold. First I shall situate the Belvedere Museum's formation within the context of Viennese institutional politics to show how its installation polarized the city's arts authorities, and thereby demonstrate that its evolution was as much a political process as an aesthetic and museological one. Although no installation strategy is neutral, the critical literature on the Belvedere has tended to downplay politics in favor of viewing the museum as a generous gift from the Habsburgs to the Viennese populace. I shall show how that gift was fraught with apprehensions over power. My second concern will be to demonstrate that the Belvedere's arrangement stimulated widespread debates that reveal considerable diversity of opinion about what art offers its viewers. I contend that the Belvedere exemplifies in a single case study many of the issues that characterize late-eighteenth-century European museums generally, even as it emerged from a specifically Viennese unease with public freedom in a context where civic culture still remained largely under strict institutional control.

Forming an Imperial Collection

The Kaiserliche und königliche Bilder-Gallerie im Oberen Belvedere (Imperial and Royal Picture Gallery in the Upper Belvedere Palace) had its origins, as its name suggests, in the imperial art collection accumulated by Austria's Habsburg monarchs over several centuries. As Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann has shown, the Habsburg imperial collections have their origins in the *Schatz*, or medieval treasury, a hodgepodge of precious, rare, and costly objects understood as personal goods belonging to the imperial dynasty. Much of the *Schatz* consisted originally of metal ore and coins, but over time the *Schatz* gradually expanded to include jewels, silver plate, ornamental wrought objects, and, occasionally, paintings.⁴ As the Habsburgs grew in international prominence over the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, their collections became more complex and specialized, as can be seen in the formation of a Renaissance-type *Kunstkammer* at Schloss Ambras, in Innsbruck, under the supervision of Emperor Ferdinand I, who ruled from 1558 to 1564. Ferdinand installed there

a cabinet of coins and medals; an Ahnengalerie, or ancestral hall, featuring statues of prominent Habsburgs; a Rustkammer, or collection of armor; and a selection of natural curiosities.⁵ Habsburg collections tended to be widely dispersed among various residences and to reflect the collector's individual aesthetic proclivities. Rudolf II, for example, assembled a vast painting collection at the castle district of Hradčany, in Prague, his preferred residence and the seat of the empire during his reign (1576–1612).⁶ This was one of Europe's most impressive collections, one largely lost when Swedish armies looted Prague during the Thirty Years' War. By the later seventeenth century, the imperial collections were increasingly subdivided according to function and type even as they grew in sheer quantity.

The bulk of the works in the imperial painting collection came into Habsburg possession at a surprisingly late moment. Its core pieces were acquired by Archduke Leopold Wilhelm (1614–1662), the youngest son of Emperor Ferdinand II (r. 1619–37), who assembled a sizable painting collection between 1647 and 1650 while resident in Brussels, where he served as governor of the Spanish Netherlands.⁷ Many of these works derived from the English royal collection, part of which Leopold purchased after the fall of Charles I in 1648. He also established contacts with Italian art dealers, from whom he obtained paintings representative of the major Italian schools. Supervising Leopold's activities was his court painter David Teniers the Younger (1610–1690), who served as an art broker. One can glean something of the collection's grandeur from Teniers's idealized depiction of Leopold's gallery (fig. 6-2). Many of the fifty-one Italian paintings represented by Teniers remained in Habsburg possession and were to subsequently appear at the Belvedere and, later, the Kunsthistorisches Museum.

Getting there, however, was a complex process that took well over two centuries. Archduke Leopold transported his collection to Vienna when he relocated there in 1656, after which it was inventoried and in 1659 installed in the Stallburg, or imperial stables, located not far from the Hofburg complex. Central European monarchs often used stables as spaces for the display of art since their large interiors allowed oversized paintings to be viewed conveniently. Leopold's collection tilted heavily toward the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Italian schools, traditionally the most prestigious in the established academic canon. His Venetian holdings, in particular, were numerous and impressive—among the collection's 1,405 works of art, the 1659 inventory lists 47 Titians alone—and an overall slant toward Venice remains noticeable in the Kunsthistorisches Museum today. Likewise strong—resulting in almost 900 paintings—was Leopold's inclination toward Northern European art, particularly early Netherlandish painting and contemporary Flemish art. His acquisitions included works by Rubens, Anthony van Dyck, and their contemporaries, and he also sought out high-quality works by German artists.⁸



FIGURE 6-2.
David Teniers the
Younger (Flemish,
1610–1690), *Archduke
Leopold Wilhelm in
His Gallery in Brussels*,
1651. Oil on canvas, 123 ×
163 cm (48³/₈ × 64¹/₈ in.).
Vienna, Kunsthistorisches
Museum

After Leopold's death, the collection passed to his nephew Emperor Leopold I (r. 1658–1705), who added a few pieces to it, notably a series of imperial marriage portraits by Velázquez sent from Madrid during the Spanish Habsburgs' crisis of succession. Leopold Wilhelm's collection was originally kept separate from the imperial one; they were installed near each other in the Stallburg but not intermingled until 1719, when Emperor Charles VI (r. 1711–40) ordered them unified as part of a consolidation of Habsburg belongings.⁹ A modernization of the Stallburg's interior was undertaken, and new works of art were added. Forty-six paintings, the remains of Rudolf II's collection in Prague, were brought to Vienna, and twenty-two more traveled from Schloss Ambras, among them some of the collection's most impressive works. These included Rubens's *Helena Fourment in a Fur Coat* (ca. 1636–38), Van Dyck's *Portrait of Nicholas Lanier* (1628), and two canvases by Rembrandt, a self-portrait of 1652 and the celebrated *Titus van Rijn, the Painter's Son, Reading* (ca. 1656–57). Charles also sought to give the collection a modern Viennese dimension by adding paintings by artists associated with the Vienna Academy of Fine Arts, among them its director Jakob van Schuppen (1670–1751), the ecclesiastical painter Peter Strudel (ca. 1660–1714), and the court portraitist Martin van Meytens (1695–1770). In so doing, however, Charles laid the groundwork for conflicts that would arise when the collections were later relocated to the Belvedere.

For all these gradual changes, the imperial collections assumed something resembling their modern form only under Maria Theresa, whose rule began in 1740. Her reign represents a period of fluctuation and change in the Habsburg culture of display. In 1747 a series of exchanges took place between the Stallburg galleries and other Habsburg collections, with the intent of streamlining holdings. This brought, among many works, Correggio's *Jupiter and Io* and *Abduction of Ganymede* (both ca. 1530) into the Habsburg galleries. In the later 1760s Maria Theresa united all of the Habsburg imperial collections in Vienna, continuing a process begun by her father and essentially dismantling the remaining galleries in Prague, Budapest, Graz, and Innsbruck.¹⁰ This process transpired over several years and was not completed until 1773, when a comprehensive inventory was produced to ascertain the extent and diversity of Habsburg possessions.¹¹ Maria Theresa sought to sell less desirable works and acquire others in an effort to improve the collection's internal consistency. In 1748 she authorized the sale of sixty-nine works of art to the Saxon-Polish court in Dresden. These became part of the painting gallery of Augustus III, elector of Saxony and king of Poland (r. 1734–63), and included canvases by Rubens, Palma Giovane, and Van Dyck.¹² And when the empress, no great supporter of the Jesuits, tacitly enabled the order's dissolution in 1774, she transferred thirty works of art from their establishments to Habsburg ownership. Included were religious paintings from Jesuit institutions in the Austrian Netherlands, notably Caravaggio's *Madonna of the Rosary* (1606–7) and Rubens's *Saint Ildefonso Altar* (1630–32). She also inherited works of art from her brother-in-law Duke Charles Alexander of Lorraine and later acquired even more from her son-in-law Albert of Sachsen-Teschen, all of which she added to the imperial collection.

But Maria Theresa's most important move was to transform the Habsburg private collections institutionally into a public entity, a process begun during her lifetime but not completed until after her death. This transformation in the character of Habsburg art emerged out of the elaborate administrative restructurings that occupied much of her reign, the goal of which was to centralize the court's bureaucracy in the interest of greater efficiency and efficacy.¹³ Indeed, it is notable that although the eighteenth-century Habsburgs sometimes used agents to procure art, mostly in Brussels and Rome, the collection came together principally through Maria Theresa's merging of scattered imperial possessions. The transferal to the Belvedere began in 1776, when Maria Theresa and her coregent and son, Joseph II, jointly ordered the relocation of the Stallburg collections to Prince Eugene's palace, which they promptly opened for public access.¹⁴ The sculptor Johann Wilhelm Beyer (1725–1796) had earlier suggested that the collections be made available to his students in order for them to copy renowned works. The empress had decreed on February 13, 1773, that parts of the collection were to be made accessible

for this purpose, and it was this decision that she expanded in 1776 to permit general access to the entire Belvedere Museum, free of charge, three days a week. We know from a contemporary guidebook that the museum was open to the public on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, and that art students had the additional possibility of visiting the gallery outside normal hours to copy at their leisure.¹⁵

Moving the imperial collections to the Belvedere fit the monarch's administrative project in two essential ways. It made a private collection previously viewable only by select visitors accessible to the general public, including art students, tourists, and local "friends of art." It therefore rendered an aspect of Habsburg court culture viable within an Enlightenment-inspired sense of aristocratic identity, justifying Habsburg wealth at a time when such extravagance seemed increasingly at odds with an enlightened absolutist view of monarchs as stewards of the public good. It also served the less exalted purpose of making the Belvedere Palace functional. Maria Theresa had struggled to find an appropriate use for the building, which had been purchased from Prince Eugene's heirs in 1752, and lacked the finances to renovate it properly.¹⁶ The Belvedere held specific importance as a symbol of Habsburg military success and was a visual reminder of the city's artistic internationalism. Yet for over three decades it remained mostly uninhabited, except for its occasional use as the site for gala balls, most famously the celebration of Marie-Antoinette's proxy marriage to Louis XVI of France in 1770.

After her death in 1780 Maria Theresa's successor, Emperor Joseph II (r. 1765–90), again turned his attention to the Belvedere, but in continuing his mother's projects he instituted policies that frequently undid her actions. He ordered paintings moved out of the museum and shipped to various satellite venues around the empire, a move that reversed his mother's centralization. Between 1781 and 1787, he shipped 680 paintings to Bratislava and Budapest for installation in regional Habsburg residences. Some of these works were later sold to private buyers and lost to the imperial collections forever. Yet Joseph also purchased paintings for the gallery, and on balance the museum's holdings continued to grow in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.¹⁷ Between 1792 and 1821 a series of exchanges ensued between Vienna and Florence (the Grand Duchy of Tuscany had been under Habsburg control since 1737). In 1800 the prince Albani offered Emperor Francis II (r. 1792–1806) his collection of 174 paintings; the first director of the Belvedere, the Viennese painter Joseph Rosa (1726–1805), selected 31 and purchased them for the museum. Various other Italian cities, including Bologna and Ferrara, sent paintings to Vienna as diplomatic gifts, and these were typically deposited in the imperial museum.¹⁸ Most of the collection was evacuated to Bratislava during Napoléon's occupation of Vienna in 1809, but some works were looted by the French and absorbed into the Musée Napoléon (as the Musée du Louvre

was then called), in Paris, only to be repatriated in 1815, following Napoléon's defeat. There were, however, losses: a version of Tintoretto's *Danaë* eventually resurfaced in Lyon, where it is today in the Musée des beaux-arts, and a version of Jan Brueghel's *Four Elements* and a *Holy Family* by Giorgio Vasari are now in provincial French collections.

Mechel's Arrangement

In the years after its opening, the Belvedere Museum was best known not so much for individual paintings or the collection's broad quality as for its innovative installation. The arrangement employed there was the brainchild of the Basel-born art dealer Christian von Mechel (1737–1817). Mechel began his career as a printmaker, studying in Paris under Johann Georg Wille (1715–1808), after which he became a *marchand-mercier*, a marketer and distributor of luxury goods, while also continuing to design engravings.¹⁹ After traveling in 1766 to Rome, where he befriended the German historian of art Johann Joachim Winckelmann (1717–1768), Mechel returned to Basel to found a print academy, and commenced a highly successful international business of luxury-goods distribution and what today would be called arts consulting. He was familiar with the reorganization of the electoral picture gallery in Düsseldorf by Lambert Krahe (1712–1790) and had advertised its success by publishing a sumptuous catalogue of its contents (see chap. 5, figs. 5-3, 5-4).²⁰ Joseph II met Mechel while traveling through Basel in 1777 and soon thereafter summoned him to Vienna to supervise the imperial gallery's reinstallation.

One might ask why Joseph would bring in an outsider to organize the imperial collection when the city was home to a thriving, if rather disorganized and artistically conservative, community of academic artists. Mechel's invitation coincided with the court-instigated reorganization of the Vienna Academy of Fine Arts, an institution with a long history of undernourished leadership that the court sought to reinvigorate after the example of France's Royal Academy of Painting and Sculpture.²¹ Spearheading this process was the court's imperial chancellor, Wenzel Anton von Kaunitz-Rietberg (1711–1794), a zealous Francophile who devoted special attention to the institution.²² In the 1770s Kaunitz fostered a series of personnel changes there and through careful appointments sought to bring the academy up to international standards. Central to Kaunitz's vision was the promotion of the Viennese-born painter Joseph Rosa (1726–1805) as the public face of his ideas. Rosa had been active in Dresden at the court of Augustus III as an animal and landscape painter and had also drawn up plans, never realized, for reorganizing the Dresden picture galleries. On Kaunitz's recommendation, Maria Theresa and Joseph II recalled Rosa to Vienna, appointed him director of the collections, and charged him with installing them in the Belvedere.

The choice of Rosa for these responsibilities is noteworthy. Notwithstanding his artistic abilities, Rosa was a Viennese painter of Italian ancestry and therefore represented the local and international artistic cultures that Kaunitz sought to bridge. Rosa's understanding was that the Belvedere was to become, in his words, an "open school for artists and connoisseurs," a conception no doubt shared by Maria Theresa, Joseph II, and Kaunitz.²³ Rosa conceived of the Belvedere principally as an educational institution, and it is likely that he viewed his directorship as an offshoot of his academic responsibilities and a privilege of his position. Since the reign of Charles VI, the city's academicians had enjoyed a close relationship with the imperial collections, and Rosa perhaps took this institutional alliance for granted. His installation involved organizing paintings according to schools, but without partitioning Northern from Italian art, and then dividing the schools into *Unterschulen*, or subschools, that distinguished subjectively between major and minor achievements. Rosa's goal was to present what he felt were the collection's masterpieces and thereby enable visitors to admire the collection's quality. In so doing he adhered to a conception of the gallery as a showplace for imperial majesty, represented by the amassing of impressive paintings, and also sought to inspire the academy's students through the presentation of great achievements. For eighteenth-century elites this was a logical rationale for organizing an art gallery. Yet Kaunitz was unsatisfied with Rosa's work, and his displeasure likely had to do with fears that Vienna lagged behind the international vanguard, exemplified by the picture gallery at Düsseldorf. Mechel was intimately familiar with Krahe's organization there, an innovative but less systematic historical arrangement than the one he was later to introduce at the Belvedere. It was Kaunitz who encouraged Joseph II to summon Mechel to Vienna, no doubt with the hope that he could surpass in the imperial collections the success he had achieved in the German city.²⁴ Recent scholarship has shown that Kaunitz personally oversaw Mechel's activities at the Belvedere and that Mechel required Kaunitz's consent before any changes could be made.²⁵

From the outset Mechel seems to have realized that a golden opportunity lay before him. He wrote to a colleague in Basel that Joseph had charged him with creating "la première Gallerie du Monde" (the finest gallery in the world) and that the Belvedere was a near-ideal site in which to realize this objective.²⁶ He made only superficial changes to the palace's architecture.²⁷ The interior outfitting, as well as a great deal of the original furniture, remained in place; this included Venetian mirrors, marble tables, crystal light fixtures, and chairs. What seems to have stimulated Mechel was the shape and distribution of the palace's spaces, which enabled an installation of greater subdivision and specificity than did the traditional undivided rectangular format typical of German aristocratic galleries. Since they had originally served as palatial apartments, the Belvedere's rooms represented an aristocratic ordering of spaces, deter-

mined by degrees of status and accessibility. Mechel transformed this elite arrangement of architectural space into a system for differentiating regional schools, artists' oeuvres, and historical developments within a multilayered yet linear history of art, and thereby transformed a spatial scheme organized around courtly rank into one coordinated with artistic accomplishments.

Mechel was fully aware that the aristocratic characteristics of the Belvedere's architecture could be put to good use. The painting collection was installed in the palace's *noble étage*, which visitors accessed through a decorative staircase accessible from the garden entrance. Along the way visitors passed a group of Atlases, much beloved in Viennese architecture, holding up a grand central staircase. Upon reaching the first floor, visitors entered the Marble Salon, a room graced with a ceiling fresco, of 1714–16, by Carlo Carlone (1686–1775) representing *The Apotheosis of Prince Eugene of Savoy*. From there they proceeded through the palace's apartments, arranged *en enfilade*, to view the collection.²⁸ Most of the paintings were housed in fourteen rooms on this floor, but a significant, smaller collection was on view in galleries located on the floor above. Mechel ordered antique and modern sculptures installed on the ground floor, and he unified the coloration of the walls throughout the galleries by covering them with green damask.²⁹

At the time of Mechel's installation, which took place from 1779 through 1781, the imperial collection consisted of around thirty-five hundred works of art, of which some thirteen hundred could be displayed at the Belvedere. It is important to note that Mechel did not simply rearrange Rosa's installation; he swapped paintings for ones in storage in order to create a different selection.³⁰ In contrast to Rosa, Mechel separated the Italian from the Netherlandish schools completely, and located each in a different wing of the palace: the Italian school to the west of the Marble Salon, the Northern to the east (fig. 6-3). Mechel presented the collection's Netherlandish holdings comprehensively, with examples selected to illustrate the development of Dutch and Flemish art from Jan van Eyck through the seventeenth century. Italian art, however, remained mostly illustrated with Venetian works from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The collection had major lacunae in early Italian painting—the Roman and Florentine schools—and in eighteenth-century Italian art. French and Spanish painting were similarly scarce—the former consisted of little more than a painting each by Nicolas Poussin and Claude, and the latter was represented entirely through Velázquez's diplomatic portraits. But a notable strength, one reflective of Leopold Wilhelm's tastes a century earlier and mostly absent in contemporary collections, was German painting. The Habsburg collection included significant works by Albrecht Dürer, Lucas Cranach the Elder, Hans Holbein, and others, and for them Mechel even organized individual galleries, located on the palace's uppermost floor. This resulted in three general divisions within the collection: Italian, Netherlandish, and German.

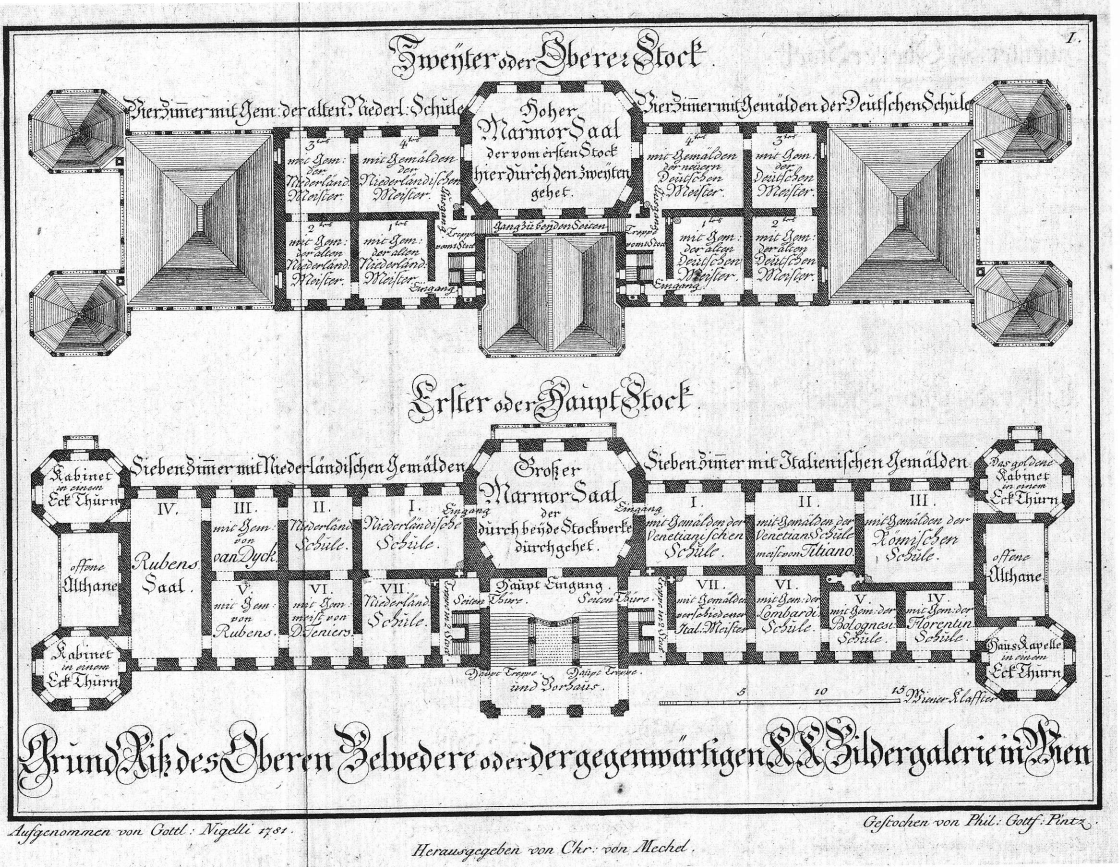


FIGURE 6-3.

Belvedere Palace, Imperial and Royal Picture Gallery, plan and arrangement of first and second floors. From Christian von Mechel, *Verzeichniss der Gemälde der kaiserlich königlichen Bilder Gallerie in Wien* (Vienna, 1783), plate bound into end of volume

Mechel subdivided the Italian school into the standard categories of the Roman, Venetian, Lombard, Florentine, and Bolognese schools. His innovation was in how he grouped paintings within these regional designations. He strove to hang paintings by a single artist together, so that works from different moments in an artist's career could be compared instantaneously. Viewers could not just judge a painting against others by contemporaries or from different schools; they could also form a picture of an artist's development over time. The result was an arrangement considerably more historically precise than that found in other European aristocratic collections. Intriguingly, this arrangement was employed only in the Italian galleries. In the galleries assigned to Netherlandish and German art, Mechel used a more conventional chronological arrangement. Mechel divided the Netherlandish paintings into the so-called Golden Age, which he installed in the seven rooms on the eastern side of the palace's first floor; smaller works by earlier artists, on the floor above; and "newer masters," namely Rubens and Van Dyck, each occupying his own separate room on the first floor.

Mechel utilized a special system for the German galleries, which he organized according to the Habsburg monarchs' successive reigns. The first German room was devoted to art made during the time of Charles IV (r. 1355–78),

Maximilian I (r. 1493–1519), and Rudolf II, whom Mechel termed “the fathers of the arts.” In the account of the collection that he published later on, Mechel claimed that painting had taken hold in central Europe through the enlightened monarchical patronage of the “fathers,” and his installation sought to tell the story of how art had developed in the region through imperial benevolence. Questions of artistic renown and quality held less importance in these galleries than did demonstrating that great art had a long history in central Europe. He emphasized this by importing several paintings from the Habsburg palace at Karlštejn, near Prague, and positioning them in the Belvedere galleries to exemplify the origins of German art. These included small panel paintings by Tommaso da Modena, of about 1325–79 but dated by Mechel to 1297; Theodoric of Prague, of about 1350–60; and Nicholas Wurmser of Strasbourg, of about 1357 (all three painters had worked at the court of Charles IV).³¹ Nearby he installed two additional rooms of paintings by living Germans, which he called “experiments by the newer [artists] that due to acclaim and diligence deserve attention.”³² The point here was to dispel the belief that fine art was relatively new to the Habsburg territories and that great achievements in pictorial representation had occurred only elsewhere. By creating a visualized and spatialized narrative of German art’s development, Mechel’s arrangement fulfilled Kaunitz’s double goal of internationalizing Vienna while also promoting Habsburg patronage as a long-standing stimulator of artistic greatness. Mechel’s own feelings about the underestimation of German art were at work, too, along with his economic interests: in 1780 his press in Basel reprinted Holbein’s Totentanz (Dance of Death) series in a complementary effort to raise German art’s international renown.³³

Mechel standardized the paintings’ frames in order to unify the rooms’ appearance and prevent distraction, adapting a practice begun in Italy at least a century earlier, albeit employing the florid ornamented frames popular in eighteenth-century Vienna. In addition, mounted alongside each frame was a small sign naming the artist and providing a number corresponding to one in the printed catalogue, which was written by Mechel and, though scholarly, was designed to be used by viewers while they visited the museum. Mechel’s innovative installation enabled the museum’s visitors not only to judge paintings by their intrinsic qualities but also to understand, through the systematic ordering of the paintings, the historical development of art.³⁴ The implication of such a presentation was that certain works, though not entirely successful aesthetically, might nonetheless be important historically for what they reveal about their makers’ progress—and that of art generally. In other words, educational value took precedence over quality.³⁵ As we shall see, this decision resulted in the display of paintings whose appearance was not always admired.

Scholars have long recognized the innovativeness of Mechel’s system and have offered multiple contexts in which to view his achievement. Alfons

Lhotsky (1903–1968), the first modern art historian of the Belvedere, claimed that the gallery was a near-perfect parallel to the palace's interior arrangement—a Gesamtkunstwerk.³⁶ Others have characterized the Belvedere as a “first modern museum,” one in which practices later taken as museological standards were first employed.³⁷ Debora J. Meijers, in contrast, sees the Belvedere as more conservative in conception, and interprets it as a statement about taxonomy and classification—a desire to control knowledge that she associates with the nearly contemporaneous reorganization of the Habsburg natural-history collections.³⁸ Mechel's own description indicates that he viewed the Belvedere as a “Lehrmittelsammlung,” a collection oriented toward learning and not primarily concerned with the display of princely power, a claim we should view skeptically given Mechel's retention of imperial iconography in the museum's interior. Rosa's earlier arrangement had been similarly motivated, but there the resemblance ended. Mechel's ultimate wish, in his own words, was to produce a “sichtbare Geschichte der Kunst” (a visible history of art) that would illustrate art's geographical and chronological development, and thereby position individual paintings within overlapping historical trajectories: their era of production, their makers' careers, and their place within the larger Continental evolution of art.³⁹

Mechel's system owes a great deal to Winckelmann's conception of art as a historical product, and he certainly formed some of his ideas about museums in discussion with the German antiquarian in Rome. He may have derived additional insights via the well-circulated writings of Giorgio Vasari, who in the sixteenth century had promoted the notion of progress in art.⁴⁰ But Mechel's system is not the pure historical statement it has sometimes been taken to be. It reveals considerable tension between the perceived achievements of the Italian schools and the imperial promotion of central European art. Since the display singles out the special complexity of Italian art, and by extension makes it deserving of special scrutiny, Mechel acknowledges that the greatest art has been made outside the Holy Roman Empire's boundaries. By devoting a section to German art and linking it to the Habsburg emperors, the installation promotes the idea that they had sought to stimulate artistic achievement in their territories for centuries. And by including works by living central European artists, the galleries show how the current monarchs promoted achievement among contemporary artists. It is significant that contemporary Italian and Dutch schools receive no such emphasis; indeed, contemporary paintings from those schools are mostly absent. The point, ultimately, of Mechel's installation was to show how great art achieved elsewhere could be matched in the Habsburg territories through the diligent work of native artists and thoughtful monarchical encouragement. Mechel conveyed this by making exemplars out of earlier German artists like Dürer and Holbein, who had begun the process of striving toward artistic glory. The museum

is very much a statement about improving the status of the arts in the Holy Roman Empire through a complex differentiation from and emulation of great art from elsewhere.

For all Mechel's glorification of the Viennese artistic legacy, his involvement in the Belvedere reinstallation annoyed the Viennese academicians more than it aided them, and his actions generated bureaucratic sparring.⁴¹ Rosa took offense at an interloper's tampering with his authority. His claim to the gallery's directorship enjoyed the support of Count Orsini-Rosenberg, a prominent court official and arts enthusiast, and the two sought to obstruct or delay Mechel's (and by extension Kaunitz's) activities at the Belvedere as much as possible. Despite their efforts, in January 1780 the emperor commanded Rosa to surrender the gallery's keys to Mechel, thereby granting him full control.⁴² Rosa resumed supervision in November of that year, though in name only, since at the last minute Mechel unearthed a cache of paintings in Bratislava that he wished to incorporate into the museum. This restricted



FIGURE 6-4.

Vinzenz Fischer
(German, 1729–1810),
*Allegory of the Transfer
of the Imperial Gallery
to the Belvedere*, 1781.
Oil on canvas, 57 ×
47 cm (22³/₈ × 18¹/₂ in.).
Vienna, Österreichische
Galerie Belvedere

Rosa's activities until the summer of 1781, when Mechel finally completed his work. Rosa never actually renounced or was removed from his position as gallery director, but practically speaking he had no power as long as Mechel was on the scene.⁴³ A painting dated October 13, 1781, by the court artist Vinzenz Fischer (1729–1810) commemorates the Belvedere's reinstallation by casting its subject in mythico-allegorical terms (fig. 6-4). Joseph II appears dressed as a Roman emperor, encouraged by Minerva to recognize the Belvedere, and Art, shown at left as an impoverished woman, presents to them her neglected treasures. Fischer's painting was probably a model for a larger work, never executed, that was intended to adorn the museum's entrance. By depicting this administrative transition allegorically, Fischer casts it as an act of monarchical generosity and diverts attention from the political sparring that actually brought it about.⁴⁴

After Mechel returned to Basel in 1783, Rosa regained control of the collections and began a gradual series of changes to better align the museum with his original vision, one derived from practices applied in semiprivate collections designed for aristocratic viewers and less oriented toward the museum's modern, public nature than Mechel's conception had been. In 1787 he replaced paintings in the Italian and Netherlandish galleries with others from storage and added several works purchased since Mechel's departure. Tellingly, Rosa removed the artists' names from the gallery signage and left only the numbers indicating the works' location in Mechel's catalogue.⁴⁵ These acts directed visitors' attention away from artistic identity and toward a more direct engagement with paintings' individual aesthetic qualities, and unraveled somewhat the "visible history of art" that Mechel had created so painstakingly.

Artists, Connoisseurs, and the Public Sphere

Mechel's and Rosa's differing views of the Belvedere's purpose might seem to be little more than squabbles over influence. Administrative struggles like theirs were hardly unique to Vienna, and museum employees today would probably find their battles more than a little familiar. But Mechel's and Rosa's diverging opinions enjoyed a long afterlife, since both expressed their ideas in published scholarly catalogues of the museum. These, along with another important source—a critique printed soon after the 1783 opening of Mechel's Belvedere—reveal a range of perspectives regarding the reinstallation's success and the broader purpose of artistic display.

Mechel's 1783 *Verzeichniss der Gemälde der kaiserlich königlichen Bilder Gallerie in Wien* (Catalogue of paintings of the Imperial and Royal Picture Gallery in Vienna) appeared first (fig. 6-5). It contains no illustrations, unlike many earlier books about aristocratic collections, though Mechel later planned to produce an illustrated catalogue raisonné, which never came to comple-

tion. A preface describing the gallery's history is followed by a list detailing the palace's contents, but omitting the lengthy descriptions typical of eighteenth-century catalogues. The reason for this is simple: Mechel designed his text to be used by visitors at the museum and not as a mnemonic substitute for it; it was more a gallery guide than a record of the collection for posterity.⁴⁶ Mechel includes only cursory information in his catalogue: artist's name, a brief title, and the painting's dimensions. The assumption is that the work of art itself



FIGURE 6-5.
Title page from
Christian von Mechel,
*Verzeichniß der Gemälde
der kaiserlich königlichen
Bilder Gallerie in Wien*
(Vienna, 1783)

does most of the educating. For those pressed for time, Mechel starred the works of art he deemed absolutely essential to see. At the time of its appearance the book was much celebrated, particularly among readers in Germany, for both its succinctness and its intelligent layout.⁴⁷ The philosopher Friedrich Nicolai praised Mechel's book for making the history of art "anschaulich" (transparent) and therefore accessible to the uninitiated.⁴⁸ The novelist and poet Johann Karl von Wezel compared the gallery to a natural-history cabinet and to a map, and likened the gallery labels to signposts, though he also criticized Mechel for not sticking to a strict chronological organization for the Italian paintings.⁴⁹ Others found Mechel's arrangement less convincing. A 1782 edition of the newspaper *Deutsches Museum* compared the Belvedere unfavorably with Dresden's electoral gallery (see chap. 5, fig. 5-2). The criticism centered around the assertion that Mechel's system was so focused on education that it reduced the pleasure of viewing—a claim that reappeared in subsequent literature.⁵⁰ The influence of Mechel's book was far wider than that of his activities at the Belvedere, and it has been cited as an inspiration for many later museums, including the Fridericianum in Kassel, the Altes Museum in Berlin, and even the comte d'Angiviller's planned Grand Gallery, at the Palais du Louvre (see chap. 8, fig. 8-2).⁵¹

The historical dimension of Mechel's vision emerges clearly in the publication's introductory essay. He notes that the Belvedere, alone among European princely collections, contained substantial numbers of older artworks, by which he means late medieval and early Renaissance paintings, and he characterizes such objects using the word *Denkmal* (monument), a term usually reserved for larger works, such as architecture.⁵² The value of these older paintings, Mechel asserts, is in how they reveal the ambitions of "our ancestors" in striving for excellence in art. Implicit here is a criticism of contemporary artistic activity and a claim that a process begun centuries earlier had not yet reached its apex. Mechel's historicist perspective also suits the Belvedere's more nationalistic elements by bringing to the fore the worldly ambitions of late medieval German culture, and in effect creates a textual parallel to the display of early German art in the museum itself.

He then launches into a brief history of art, which unfolds alongside a parallel history of art in the Holy Roman Empire.⁵³ The Austrian princes showed interest in the arts "[when] everything around them was dark," Mechel claims, and as early as the fourteenth century Charles IV collected art that viewers still admire centuries later.⁵⁴ Here Mechel combines transhistorical aesthetic criteria with the idea that old art provides a picture into historical values, a formulation that should seem familiar to twenty-first-century museumgoers. He dates the revival of central European interest in the arts to the reign of Maximilian I, followed by the substantial achievements of Rudolf II and Archduke Leopold Wilhelm.

After describing the palace, whose beauty he praises, Mechel arrives at the ultimate purpose of the institution: to teach visitors about the history of art. He likens the Belvedere to a library where the curious encounter diverse books from different historical eras. That diversity is key to the collection's success, Mechel believes, since it is only through comparing and contrasting that one becomes a "Kenner der Kunst," or a knowledgeable connoisseur.⁵⁵ Comparative viewing, which a century later Heinrich Wölfflin was to promote as the standard art-historical technique for developing visual literacy, had in Mechel an early proponent. Mechel acknowledges that works of art have different strengths and that some paintings are more successful than others in specific ways. There is, in other words, a relativist dimension to Mechel's art theory at work within his larger conception of art striving toward universal perfection.

Mechel's confidence in the visitor's historical and intellectual engagement with art was far from universally shared, however. One of the more distinctive critiques of Mechel's Belvedere comes from the Munich-based priest Joseph Sebastian von Rittershausen (1748–1820), who published his *Betrachtungen über die kaiserliche königliche Bildergalerie zu Wienn* (Thoughts on the Imperial and Royal Picture Gallery in Vienna) anonymously in 1785. In his writings Rittershausen strove to synthesize Enlightenment philosophy and Catholic theology, and his comments on the Belvedere Museum reveal how these seemingly disparate strains of thought coalesced around art. He writes in much more effusive, emotional language than did Mechel; his prose performs for readers the same function that he defines for art, namely to stimulate the senses. Like Mechel, he provides a work-by-work description of the collection, noting that many readers lamented the meager information in Mechel's list. Before doing so, however, Rittershausen launches into a lengthy treatise on what makes a connoisseur, and it becomes clear that his definition of the term is the opposite of Mechel's.

The connoisseur, Rittershausen claims, does not engage in lengthy viewing exclusively to ascertain a painting's maker, assess its subject matter, or judge technical facility, though he can comment on all these. His principal goal is to determine "whether a painting is truly beautiful."⁵⁶ The connoisseur must be an expert in numerous areas, such as optics, the psychology of expression, history, and mythology, and he must also possess "poetic fire" in order to grasp the inspiration behind great art. None of these mean much, says Rittershausen, unless the connoisseur also possesses the ability to be moved, so that artistic facility engenders the proper emotional response. He sums it up this way: "The true signs of a good painting consist of the following: if it awakens feelings in the heart of the viewer, to which the artist is directed. Everything else is miserable triviality, and belongs under the heading of puerility, like that art with which the Chinese decorate their palaces."⁵⁷ (The reference is to the decorative arts of the rococo, which often included chinoiserie themes and which

Rittershausen deemed both immature and ineffectual.) It is here that Rittershausen reveals his disappointment with Mechel's selection of paintings. Some of his chosen works might have historical value, he opines, but not enough of them are of the quality necessary to move the viewer.

These judgments derived from sensibility are for Rittershausen the guide to ascertaining a painting's success, and they should also determine how art is displayed and galleries installed. Without understanding art's emotional effect, he claims, one will place the finest works in the coatroom and honor the most miserable ones in the choicest salons. The artist's name is not much help in determining quality since, Rittershausen notes, the greatest artists occasionally produced disappointing paintings. The site of display, therefore, should be determined by the painting's aesthetic success, and in this respect Rittershausen finds the Belvedere sorely disappointing, particularly in comparison with the Bavarian electoral gallery. Mechel's arrangement results from the excessive intellectualization of art and the increasing bureaucratization of arts institutions, tendencies that, for Rittershausen, encourage artists to concentrate on technique at the expense of art's true purpose.⁵⁸ He sums up his feelings about the Belvedere by noting that it is designed for historians and not art lovers.⁵⁹

It is hard to say whether Rittershausen represents an older way of thinking, one that Mechel sought to supplant, or whether the two conceptions emerge from different but coexisting assumptions about art's social function.⁶⁰ Rittershausen expects works of art to engage the soul, aligning himself in this respect with nascent Romantic art theory. Components of this thinking were present in earlier German aesthetics and persisted right up to Kant, but in contrast to many philosophers, Rittershausen grounds his ideas in Catholic theology. Since art combines manifold beauties into a single illusion, it perfects nature and evokes God, and does so through the most noble of the senses, vision. Rittershausen elsewhere comments that people can actually receive nourishment from God by looking at art, since art stimulates the soul to moral improvement.⁶¹ Looking at less successful art hinders this spiritual union. By framing the contemplation of art in these terms, Rittershausen bases his ideal museum in earlier, Counter-Reformation notions of collecting and viewing as embodied in, among others, Federico Borromeo's *Ambrosiana*, in Milan, which stressed viewing diverse genres of art as the means to divine knowledge.⁶² Such notions are far from Mechel's pragmatic intellectualism, but their existence indicates that not all who visited the Belvedere shared Mechel's ideological presuppositions. Rittershausen's text indicates that even as some eighteenth-century museumgoers responded favorably to Mechel's "visible history of art," others found it detrimental to what they wished to experience in front of paintings. Rittershausen directs us both to the diversity of eighteenth-century expectations about art and to the central, continuing problem of educational museology. The modern discrepancy between the museum as a space

of learning and as a place where visitors expect to be moved and impressed existed at the moment the modern museum emerged.⁶³

The voice that Rittershausen gives to the sentimentalized connoisseur was amplified in subsequent writings on the Belvedere, particularly in a text published in 1796 by the Belvedere's director himself, Joseph Rosa. Rosa's *Gemälde der k.k. Gallerie* (Pictures of the Imperial and Royal Gallery) ostensibly seeks to update Mechel's catalogue from thirteen years earlier. It reverts to a more traditional conception of a museum publication by including lengthy descriptions of each painting alternating with brief theoretical essays. Yet Rosa uses his text as a platform for conciliation with Mechel's museology and, moreover, with the diversity of opinion about art that had proliferated since the opening of Mechel's Belvedere. Artists like Rosa were accustomed to influencing perceptions about art in a city that lagged in the development of published criticism. Strict imperial censorship hindered its development until the 1780s, when Joseph II lifted printing restrictions that had curtailed a thriving public discourse.⁶⁴ When that public discussion about art began, no doubt encouraged by the accessibility of Mechel's Belvedere, authority over art was lost by academicians like Rosa. It is difficult to read Rosa's book as anything other than an attempt to reclaim authority for the institutionalized arts establishment after the emergence of a comparatively free, unencumbered public discourse about art.

Rosa's text redresses that loss by casting the artist and the connoisseur as equals in the process of artistic understanding. He develops this idea in a chapter entitled "On Judging Works of Painting," inserted into the text after the catalogue of Italian artists. Just as the Italians achieved great artistic heights, Rosa postulates, so they developed sophisticated art criticism. He thereby links connoisseurship with art making and argues for their interdependency. Italian connoisseurs, he claims further, coexisted harmoniously with artists and learned from them the rules of art. Although anyone can make a judgment about art, Rosa states, this is not desirable unless dialogue with an artist is possible.⁶⁵ To judge a painting is, for Rosa, principally to assess its formal qualities in order to propose a specific attribution, and both artists and connoisseurs possess varying degrees of competency in this regard.⁶⁶ He notes that artists look at works of art differently than connoisseurs, and although the artist might seem to have the advantage, the connoisseur brings essential skills to the activity that the artist can acquire only with arduous study. He then recommends that the artist and the connoisseur each comment using their specific expertise and together achieve a perfect synthesis of artistic judgments. Following Cicero, Rosa claims that artists see what others cannot, but adds that the art lover sees important things, too.⁶⁷

He then shifts the terms of the discussion by noting that many people who love art are neither artists nor connoisseurs but simply interested laypeople,

and that these individuals comprise an art museum's largest public. They ask only for art to be beautiful and noble. Rosa criticizes both artists and connoisseurs for not taking such people seriously: "We invite them to our delicious feasts and tell them not to eat anything or make any judgments since they are not trained as chefs."⁶⁸ They answer, he claims, that although they may not cook, they bring with them an instinctive feeling that they trust. Here, in essence, is the eighteenth-century precursor to the modern novice's oft-repeated formulation: "I may not know about art, but I know what I like." Rosa does not disparage such innocent judgments the way some today might; rather, he acknowledges the importance of diversity in the field of public opinion.

What makes these passages so remarkable is that they appear in an official, state-authorized publication about the Belvedere Museum written by its director, someone who had much to lose by recognizing that anyone could form valuable independent opinions about paintings. Such a statement went against established academic policy, the function of which was precisely to educate the uninformed about the significance of art. Certainly Mechel's activities at the Belvedere had been justified partially along those lines. But by encouraging the public to encounter art and view it within a historical progression, Mechel opened the door for diverse responses that resulted in a plurality of opinion. Allowing the masses to ruminate on art did not automatically lead to public betterment; instead, it generated individual responses. The result was less a public uplifted morally to appreciate artistic quality than individuals whose heterogeneous tastes the museum's diverse holdings stimulated. Rosa's text reveals that the battle over artistic authority had to some degree been lost and that the artist, the connoisseur, and the uninformed person off the street could each take something valuable away from a museum visit.

In sum, the Belvedere Museum represents an overlapping of imperial, Enlightenment-inspired, and protomodern conceptions of art in a context where art's social function was no longer patently clear. The plans for the Belvedere's installation reveal how eighteenth-century institutions envisioned a museum's relationship to the populace it served, either uplifting them with greatness or moving them through sensation, or educating them with material embodiments of history. Yet the changes occurring in the broader art world, and the emergence of a lay public for art, prevented museum programs from consistently achieving their desired results. The changes in the public's relationship to art were occurring too swiftly, and with too little predictability, for that to be possible. In enacting their plans at a time of such instability, the Belvedere Museum invited more speculation, debate, and individuality than any of its patrons could have anticipated. It is in this, perhaps, that the Belvedere most resembles its modern successors, since for all the knowledge and delight the world's major museums seek to provide through art, the ultimate decision about their success remains the visitor's prerogative.

NOTES

- I thank Carole Paul for her helpful comments on an earlier draft of this essay, and Johannes Stoll for his assistance in obtaining new images from Mechel's treatise.
- 1 The imperial art collection was moved to the newly constructed Ringstrasse building as part of a grand project to transform that area—which encircled Vienna's historic inner core and had until the mid-nineteenth century remained undeveloped—with buildings showcasing the institutions of Austrian culture, science, education, and politics.
 - 2 For the most recent art-historical consideration of the Belvedere's design, see Peter Stephan, *Das Obere Belvedere in Wien: Architektonisches Konzept und Ikonographie; Das Schloss des Prinzen Eugen als Abbild seines Selbstverständnisses* (Vienna, 2010).
 - 3 Alfons Lhotsky, *Festschrift des Kunsthistorischen Museums zur Feier des fünfzigjährigen Bestandes*, 2 vols. (Vienna, 1941–45); Debora J. Meijers, *Kunst als Natur: Die Habsburger Gemäldegalerie in Wien um 1780*, Schriften des Kunsthistorischen Museums Wien, 2 (Vienna, 1995); Annette Schryen, "Die k.k. Bilder-Galerie im Oberen Belvedere in Wien," in *Tempel der Kunst: Die Entstehung des öffentlichen Museums in Deutschland, 1701–1815*, edited by Bénédicte Savoy (Mainz, 2006), pp. 279–307; Karl Schütz, "Aufstellungen der Wiener Gemäldegalerie im 18. Jahrhundert," in *Museen und fürstliche Sammlungen im 18. Jahrhundert / Museums and Princely Collections in the 18th Century*, edited by Jochen Luckhardt and Michael Wiemers, Kolloquiumsbände des Herzog Anton Ulrich-Museums, 3 (Braunschweig, 2007), pp. 44–50; and Gudrun Swoboda, *Die Wege der Bilder: Eine Geschichte der kaiserlichen Gemäldeausstellungen von 1600 bis 1800* (Vienna, 2008). My debt to Schryen's exhaustively researched study in particular will be apparent throughout this essay.
 - 4 Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann, "From Treasury to Museum: The Collections of the Austrian Habsburgs," in *The Cultures of Collecting*, edited by John Elsner and Roger Cardinal (Cambridge, Mass., 1994), pp. 137–38.
 - 5 Kaufmann, "From Treasury to Museum" (note 4), p. 141.
 - 6 For which see Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann, *The School of Prague: Painting at the Court of Rudolf II* (Chicago, 1988).
 - 7 Schryen, "Die k.k. Bilder-Galerie" (note 3), p. 284.
 - 8 Schryen, "Die k.k. Bilder-Galerie" (note 3), p. 285.
 - 9 Schryen, "Die k.k. Bilder-Galerie" (note 3), p. 285.
 - 10 Kaufmann, "From Treasury to Museum" (note 4), p. 150.
 - 11 Schryen, "Die k.k. Bilder-Galerie" (note 3), p. 286.
 - 12 For which see Gudrun Swoboda, "Venedig–Dresden via London, Brüssel, Prag: Der geheime Ankauf von Gemälden aus der Kaiserlichen Galerie in Prag (1748)," in *Venedig–Dresden: Begegnung zweier Kulturstädte*, edited by Barbara Marx and Andreas Henning (Dresden, 2010), pp. 253–61.
 - 13 Schryen, "Die k.k. Bilder-Galerie" (note 3), p. 297. The nature of Maria Theresa's reforms is analyzed in Charles W. Ingrao, *The Habsburg Monarchy, 1618–1815* (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 150–77, with additional bibliography. For the specific role of museums in larger German aristocratic moral programs, see James J. Sheehan, *Museums in the German Art World: From the End of the Old Regime to the Rise of Modernism* (New York, 2000), chap. 1.
 - 14 Schryen, "Die k.k. Bilder-Galerie" (note 3), pp. 280–81.
 - 15 Schryen, "Die k.k. Bilder-Galerie" (note 3), p. 300.
 - 16 Gertrude Aurenhammer, "Geschichte des Belvederes seit dem Tode des Prinzen Eugen," *Mitteilungen der österreichischen Galerie* 13 (1969), pp. 47–51.
 - 17 On Joseph's acquisitions from Bratislava particularly, see Gerlinde Gruber, "Das Bilderverzeichnis der Pressburger Burg von 1781: Ein Beitrag zur Sammlungsgeschichte der Gemäldegalerie des Kunsthistorischen Museums," *Jahrbuch des Kunsthistorischen Museums Wien* 8–9 (2006–7), pp. 354–400.
 - 18 Schryen, "Die k.k. Bilder-Galerie" (note 3), p. 287.
 - 19 Lukas Heinrich Wüthrich, *Christian von Mechel: Leben und Werk eines Basler Kupferstechers und Kunsthändlers (1737–1817)*, Basler Beiträge zur Geschichtswissenschaft, 63 (Basel and Stuttgart, 1956), p. 155. Wüthrich later published a catalogue raisonné of Mechel's prints: *Das Oeuvre des Kupferstechers Christian von Mechel: Vollständiges Verzeichnis der von ihm geschaffen und verlegten graphischen Arbeiten*, Basler Beiträge zur Geschichtswissenschaft, 75 (Basel and Stuttgart, 1959).
 - 20 Nicolas de Pigage, *La galerie électorale de Dusseldorf; ou, Catalogue raisonné et figuré de ses tableaux...*, 2 vols. (Basel, 1778). This catalogue has recently been reprinted in *Die Düsseldorfer Galerie des Kurfürsten Johann Wilhelms*, vol. 3 of *Kurfürst Johann Wilhelms Bilder* (Munich, 2009). See also Thomas W. Gaehgens and Louis Marchesano, *Display and Art History: The Düsseldorf Gallery and Its Catalogue* (Los Angeles, 2011). For Mechel's activities in Düsseldorf, see also Reinhold Baumstark, ed., *Galerie und Kabinette*, vol. 2 of *Kurfürst Johann Wilhelms Bilder*.
 - 21 Walter Wagner, *Die Geschichte der Akademie der bildenden Künste in Wien* (Vienna, 1967), pp. 35–54.
 - 22 Franz A. J. Szabo, *Kaunitz and Enlightened Absolutism, 1753–1780* (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 200–204.
 - 23 Joseph Rosa, *Gemälde der k.k. Gallerie* (Vienna, 1796), vol. 1, p. 206.
 - 24 Wüthrich, *Christian von Mechel* (note 19), pp. 148–89.
 - 25 Gerlinde Gruber, "En un mot j'ai pensé à tout": Das Engagement des Wenzel Anton von Kaunitz-Rietberg für die Neuaufstellung der Gemäldegalerie im Belvedere," *Jahrbuch des Kunsthistorischen Museums Wien* 10 (2008), p. 192; and Gerlinde Gruber, "Aus der Korrespondenz des Wenzel Anton von Kaunitz-Rietberg mit Christian von Mechel: Dokumente zur Geschichte der kaiserlichen Gemäldegalerie," *Acta Historiae Artium* 50 (2009), pp. 167–77.
 - 26 Mechel, Letter to an unknown colleague, dated Basel, July 6, 1779, in Wüthrich, *Christian von Mechel* (note 19), p. 151.

- 27 Schryen, "Die k.k. Bilder-Gallerie" (note 3), pp. 280–81.
- 28 By the early nineteenth century the Marble Salon contained imperial portraits by Anton von Maron (1733–1808): one of Joseph as a military hero and one of Maria Theresa as a widow. See Hellmut Lorenz, ed., *Barock*, vol. 4 of *Geschichte der bildenden Kunst in Österreich* (Munich, 1999), pp. 452–54; and Michael Yonan, "Conceptualizing the *Kaiserinwitwe*: Empress Maria Theresa and Her Portraits," in *Widowhood and Visual Culture in Early Modern Europe*, edited by Allison Levy (Aldershot, 2003), pp. 124–25. Kaunitz planned to install portraits of renowned Habsburg art collectors in this room, and ordered restorations to two portraits for this purpose: Francesco Solimena's *Count Althann Presenting the Gallery Inventory to Charles VI* (1728) and Franz van den Hoecke's *Equestrian Portrait of Archduke Leopold William* (1742/47). See Gruber, "En un mot" (note 25), pp. 193–94. Whether they actually were installed there is unclear.
- 29 Schryen, "Die k.k. Bilder-Gallerie" (note 3), p. 283. These changes did not survive the French occupation of Vienna in 1809. The focus of Mechel's attention was the main Belvedere palace, called the Oberes (Upper) Belvedere. The site also includes a smaller building, called the Unteres (Lower) Belvedere, with a formal garden connecting the two edifices. This building was also publicly accessible and offered battle paintings and imperial portraits for view.
- 30 Wüthrich, *Christian von Mechel* (note 19), p. 154.
- 31 Wüthrich, *Christian von Mechel* (note 19), p. 165. This was done to support the claim that the origins of oil painting were German, not Netherlandish, as had been suggested by Gotthold Ephraim Lessing.
- 32 Christian von Mechel, *Verzeichniss der Gemälde der kaiserlich königlichen Bilder Galerie in Wien* (Vienna, 1783), p. xvii. Mechel issued a French translation of this book the following year.
- 33 *Le triomphe de la mort, gravé d'après les dessins originaux de Jean Holbein par Chr. de Mechel...* (Basel, 1780).
- 34 Schryen, "Die k.k. Bilder-Gallerie" (note 3), p. 289.
- 35 Wüthrich, *Christian von Mechel* (note 19), p. 162.
- 36 Lhotsky, *Festschrift* (note 3), vol. 2, p. 451.
- 37 Kaufmann, "From Treasury to Museum" (note 4), p. 151; and Andrew McClellan, *Inventing the Louvre: Art, Politics, and the Origins of the Modern Museum in Eighteenth-Century Paris* (Berkeley, 1999), p. 80. The question of the Belvedere's influence is considered by Édouard Pommier, "Wien 1780—Paris 1793: Welches der beiden Museen war wohl das revolutionärste?" in Savoy, *Tempel der Kunst* (note 3), pp. 55–65.
- 38 Meijers, *Kunst als Natur* (note 3), p. 11. Meijers grounds her ideas in a Foucauldian conception of social power.
- 39 Mechel, *Verzeichniss* (note 32), p. xi.
- 40 Wüthrich, *Christian von Mechel* (note 19), pp. 33–34.
- 41 Detailed in Gruber, "En un mot" (note 25), pp. 195–96.
- 42 Wüthrich, *Christian von Mechel* (note 19), pp. 157–61.
- 43 Schryen, "Die k.k. Bilder-Gallerie" (note 3), p. 299.
- 44 Meijers, *Kunst als Natur* (note 3), pp. 17–18.
- 45 Schryen, "Die k.k. Bilder-Gallerie" (note 3), p. 291.
- 46 This is a separate issue from the gallery's arrangement, which Meijers argues was organized around mnemonic principles to facilitate moral improvement. Debora J. Meijers, "The Places of Painting: The Survival of Mnemotechnics in Christian von Mechel's Gallery Arrangement in Vienna (1778–1781)," in *Memory and Oblivion: Proceedings of the XXIXth International Congress of the History of Art, Held in Amsterdam, 1–7 September 1996*, edited by Wessel Reinink and Jeroen Stumpel (Amsterdam, 1999), pp. 205–11.
- 47 Schryen, "Die k.k. Bilder-Gallerie" (note 3), p. 295; and Wüthrich, *Christian von Mechel* (note 19), pp. 163–64.
- 48 Friedrich Nicolai, *Beschreibung einer Reise durch Deutschland und die Schweiz im Jahre 1781* (Berlin, 1784), vol. 2, reprinted in Savoy, *Tempel der Kunst* (note 3), p. 487.
- 49 Johann Karl von Wezel, quoted in Schryen, "Die k.k. Bilder-Gallerie" (note 3), p. 290.
- 50 Anonymous letter, *Deutsches Museum*, September 1782, quoted in Schryen, "Die k.k. Bilder-Gallerie" (note 3), pp. 289–90.
- 51 McClellan, *Inventing the Louvre* (note 37), pp. 79–80.
- 52 Mechel, *Verzeichniss* (note 32), p. v.
- 53 Mechel, *Verzeichniss* (note 32), p. vi.
- 54 Mechel, *Verzeichniss* (note 32), p. vi.
- 55 Mechel, *Verzeichniss* (note 32), pp. xi–xii.
- 56 Joseph Sebastian von Rittershausen, *Betrachtungen über die kaiserliche königliche Bildergalerie zu Wienn* (Bregenz, 1785), p. 7.
- 57 Rittershausen, *Betrachtungen* (note 56), pp. 24–25.
- 58 Rittershausen, *Betrachtungen* (note 56), p. 55.
- 59 Rittershausen, *Betrachtungen* (note 56), p. 89.
- 60 Rittershausen stands in opposition to the general trend in late-eighteenth-century German-language writings on the arts, which emphasized art's role in serving the public good. See Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann, *Court, Cloister, and City: The Art and Culture of Central Europe, 1450–1800* (Chicago, 1995), pp. 445–47; and Sheehan, *Museums* (note 13), pp. 4–14.
- 61 Rittershausen, *Betrachtungen* (note 56), p. 80.
- 62 Pamela M. Jones, *Federico Borromeo and the Ambrosiana: Art Patronage and Reform in Seventeenth-Century Milan* (Cambridge, 1993), pp. 68–84.
- 63 On this concern in the eighteenth-century culture of display, see Barbara Maria Stafford, *Artful Science: Enlightenment, Entertainment, and the Eclipse of Visual Education* (Cambridge, Mass., 1994), chap. 4, "Exhibitionism." On differing views of the museum's mission, see Andrew McClellan, *The Art Museum from Boullée to Bilbao* (Berkeley, 2008), chap. 1.
- 64 For which see the still-essential Leslie Bodi, *Tauwetter in Wien: Zur Prosa der österreichischen Aufklärung, 1781–1795* (Frankfurt am Main, 1977); and with specific attention to visual culture, Nora Sternfeld, "Ein Bildreporter im Dienste ihrer Majestät," in *Hieronimus*

Löschenkohl: Sensationen aus dem alten Wien, edited by
Monika Sommer (Vienna, 2009), pp. 116–19.

- 65 Rosa, *Gemälde* (note 23), vol. 1, p. 210.
66 Rosa, *Gemälde* (note 23), vol. 1, p. 212.
67 Rosa, *Gemälde* (note 23), vol. 1, pp. 218–19.
68 Rosa, *Gemälde* (note 23), vol. 1, pp. 220–21.