

JOSEPHINUM AND ITS COLLECTIONS OF MEDICAL HISTORY – NEW PERSPECTIVES

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Josephinum – Collections of the Medical University of Vienna, Vienna, Austria

Founded in 1785 as a medico-surgical military academy, the Josephinum is one of Emperor Joseph II and Enlightenment era Austria's greatest legacies. Its original purpose was to train prospective doctors and midwives for civil and military service using then-groundbreaking teaching methods. Today, the Josephinum – now part of the Medical University of Vienna – is one of the most prominent examples of neoclassical architecture in Austria's capital, housing a world-renowned anatomical wax model collection, numerous collections of historic medical instruments, a library containing manuscripts and books from the 15th to 18th centuries, as well as its archive and picture collection.

The anatomical wax model collection was personally commissioned by the Emperor Joseph II (1741 – 1790) and realized at the '*Reale Museo di Fisica e Storia Naturale (La Specola)*' in Florence. 1200 anatomical and obstetrical wax models were produced by genius modeler Clemente Susini (1754 – 1814) with the help of other sculptors from '*La Specola*', under the supervision of anatomists Felice Fontana (1730 – 1805) and Paolo Mascagni (1755 – 1815). The models were delivered to Vienna's Josephinum between 1784 and 1788, where they have stood as an example of the unity between art, medicine and science ever since. Originally, the collection was used as a learning tool mainly for students of the medico-surgical academy. In the spirit of the Enlightenment, the collection was also open to the public. Today the models are exhibited in six rooms, situated in the northwest wing of the Josephinum's first floor. Next to nearly 1000 of the well-preserved anatomical wax models, the Josephinum also

displays the original accompanying color drawings and descriptions in the German and Italian languages.

The instrument collection includes items from every discipline of medicine from the 18th to the early 20th centuries, covering everything from tourniquets to cystoscopes. It also contains various other objects, such as moulages, votive offerings, death masks, and so on. Of particular importance is the so-called 'Instrumentarium Chirurgicum Viennese', developed from the 1770s onwards by the the first director of 'Medico-Surgical Joseph's Academy', Giovanni Alessandro Brambilla, in collaboration with Viennese instrument maker Joseph Malliard. These instruments served both to train aspiring surgeons and as a model for 'standardised' production, for use throughout the Habsburg realm. The core of the Archive Collection is its stock of handwritten texts – originally known as the 'Manuscripts Collection' – which includes written correspondence, lecture notes, manuscripts, medical memos and diaries, reports and prescriptions, as well as printed circulars and reports. This extensive collection of source material was established by Max Neuburger and constantly expanded, as a result of which it now documents a good three hundred years of medical history. The Archive Collection also holds certificates, coins and medals relating to medicine.

The Picture Collection was also established by Max Neuburger, who, from 1906 onwards, collected and recorded photographs, paintings, watercolors, and more on a variety of topics relating to the history of medicine. Over the years, this archive has grown through gifts, inheritance, and permanent loans to include more than 60,000 items. The Josephinum's library heritage is as old as the institution itself, beginning at its foundation. Since then, its stocks have been widened and expanded continuously through concerted efforts and many generous gifts from private supporters and major institutions. As a result, numerous special collections, including the Josephina Library, now form part of the History of Medicine Library.

The Josephinum was for a long time considered a hidden gem, visited by a small audience with very specific interests. In 2012, a new corporate design was adopted, and a new concept for exhibitions was developed. Today, the onus is on keeping the collections vital and open to growth and new interpretation, with the goal of attracting and engaging the general public while continuing to serve science and research.

An important interface between medicine, history, art, culture, and politics, the Josephinum also allows essential social questions to be tackled publicly. This is achieved through a series of lectures, events, and temporary exhibitions that fuse the collection's history with present day medical science and contemporary art. Between 2014 and 2018, six temporary exhibitions took place and three permanent lecture formats were introduced. Not only did this boost visitor numbers, but it also expanded the variety of visitors to the museum to include school children, families, tourists, medical and history professionals, and many others.

The Josephinum's façade was recently restored, drawing significant attention to the building. In 2019, a major interior refurbishment will also begin. The concept for the renovation is clear and simple: preserve the museum's valuable cultural and historical heritage, but present it in a modern and appealing manner.

At present, the anatomical wax model collection is exhibited in six rooms on the first floor. Some offices are also located on the same floor, which interrupts the visitors' flow. Furthermore, the space for the wax models is limited, constricting the space for visitors to move. The medical instruments, along with the majority of the inventory from the Archive and Picture collections, are stored in depots. A small part of these is occasionally exhibited within temporary exhibitions.

As part of the renovation, the building's forecourt as well as the exhibition rooms of the anatomical wax models will be reconstructed to resemble the original 18th century conditions. The central entrance will be opened for the visitors and adapted to give access for people with disabilities. It will lead directly to the exhibition area, which will cover both the ground and the first floors. Permanent exhibitions on the history of the Josephinum and the Viennese Medical Schools, as well as medicine in the era of National Socialism, will also be present.

The historical amphitheater used to be the heart of the Josephinum. Due to renovations in the 1950s, the hall was split into multiple rooms and limited to the first floor. An important task of the renovation will be the reconstruction of this lecture hall. Building equipment and appliances will also be modernized and renewed. Along with a technical and structural upgrade, the renovation period will see the digitalization of the collections and a thorough inventory of their content. New storage space will be designed, and the objects

will be treated and prepared for the new permanent exhibitions. Furthermore, new projects and programs will be developed and acquired. This will open up new possibilities to enhance the museum's programs and offerings, while providing an opportunity to process the museum's content and display its collections in new and innovative ways.

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