

# ALTSTADT

V I E N N A

## Matteo Thun designs for the Altstadt Vienna

### The Flair of the Turn of the Century

Based in a building dating from what is known as the Foundation Period (Gründerzeit), the Altstadt Vienna situated in Vienna's 7th District, near the "Spittelberg" area, commissioned Matteo Thun, one of Italy's star architects to design eight new rooms and a suite. As he breathed new life into these fine rooms, the architect, with his fresh, modern interpretation of the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> -20<sup>th</sup> century, brought back the flair and created a celebration of the lifestyle of that epoch.

The upper middle classes and middle classes of the turn of the century fluctuated between a euphoric view of the future and a sense of weariness with life, between a mood of liberation and disillusionment with the world. The period is characterised by an easygoing approach to life, a fascination with death, frivolity and decadence. The members of these classes basked in their own sense of wellbeing and on the surface led a carefree and somewhat mundane existence in a celebratory round of cafés, cabarets, salons, and concert halls. The desire for a more light-hearted approach to entertainment allowed art and culture to flourish and often a less satisfying reality to be neatly ignored.

No other capital city in Europe provided such an ideal framework for the exploration of the nude body and a rediscovery of sexuality. Nowhere else was the lust for scandal greater, nowhere else was sophisticated unveiling such a cause of celebration. Josefine Mutzenbacher, Vienna's most notorious courtesan, stands as a symbol of the period and represents the expression of the breaking of bounds of conventional morality, and her personality has even today lent inspiration to Matteo Thun.

### A breath of the erotic

On entering the rooms, the guest travels back in time to the Vienna of the turn of the century and the world of Josefine Mutzenbacher. The eye is immediately caught by the large format picture on the wall, a study of the nude from the period between 1900 and 1950.

The eight rooms are designed in principle as very dark, with parquet made of stained oak and wall papers with a dark damask pattern as the decorative element. This sense of dark gravity is refined by the furniture, with red velvet coverings ("Villa Gallia" upholstered armchair by Josef Hoffmann) and chandeliers from Prague, recalling associations with the Vienna salons and their sumptuous receptions. The setting is relaxed by the cream-coloured curtains, which reflect the same damask pattern as the wallpapers. Some items of furniture, such as the writing desk and the "capitoné", are custom-made by Wittmann, after drawings by Matteo Thun. Each of the rooms has its own name, which is woven into the dark grey carpet (custom-made by Tollgate).

The walls of the bathroom are designed completely in black with mosaics from Bisazza, with individually placed Swarovski stones to create points of light, with the floor of black reflective marble. The dark background makes an elegant contrast with the chrome-plated brass of the fittings ("Bellagio" from Zucchetti) and the cool white of the basins ("Roma" from Catalano), creating an atmosphere of pure luxury.

### The Belle Epoque – newly interpreted

The suite in the ensemble of rooms created by Matteo Thun is what may be referred to as the Master's Chamber. This is how we would imagine the rooms to appear, dedicated to the master of the house and his guests in the Vienna of the Belle Epoque. In contrast to the other rooms, the wallpapers here are striped, sofa and armchairs by Wittmann are upholstered in brown leather, the bed is of dark design, and the carpet is cognac in colour.

A striking feature of the Master's Chamber is the open bathroom, with the bath standing freely on a podium, next to the basin and mirror. Baths ceremonies are celebrated here in a special way, one's own body put on show, a ritual of seduction set in scene.

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