



The Park & Gardens at Schönbrunn

BAROQUE GARDEN DESIGN

Highlights



THE GREAT PARTERRE
— 28 —



THE NEPTUNE
FOUNTAIN
— 48 —



THE MAZE
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— 54 —



THE SCHÖNER BRUNNEN
& ANGEL FOUNTAIN
— 64 —



THE ROMAN RUIN
— 68 —



THE OBELISK FOUNTAIN
— 76 —



THE GREAT
PALM HOUSE
— 108 —



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ELFRIEDE IBY

The Park & Gardens at Schönbrunn

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The Great Parterre



Around the middle of the eighteenth century, the Great Parterre on the central axis of the palace complex was extended to the foot of Schönbrunn Hill and divided into three sections by four transverse avenues, as documented in the painting by Bernardo Bellotto. The star-shaped pool from around 1700 is flanked by pairs of beds which are designed as *parterres à l'angloise*, with largely plain expanses of lawn intersected by paths and ornamental motifs picked out in gravel, the latter subdivided with strips of box. The beds are outlined by borders of flowering plants.

At the centres of the larger parterres to the south are *boulingrins*, a French expression derived from the English 'bowling green', a

sunken lawn for ball games. However, in French garden design these were purely ornamental features.

The long sides of the parterre beds were decorated with small topiarized trees in spherical form, whose lower parts were clipped into the shape of tubs; towards the central axis there was another row of small trees clipped into cones. To either side of the parterre are the geometrical rows of hedges in the flanking boscsages, which extend from the Lichte Allee (Light Avenue) on the south side of the palace to the Rustenallee (Elm Avenue) at the foot of the hill (⇒ Bellotto, pp. 144/145).

The Great Parterre was included in the designs for the hill behind the palace and was remodelled during the 1770s into the form in which it still exists today. The original design by the architect Johann Ferdinand Hetzendorf von Hohenberg with its elaborate system of fountains could not be carried out owing to the permanent shortage of water and the excavations for the fountains dug in 1776 had to be filled in again.

A plan of the whole complex executed by Franz Boos in 1780 shows the final design of the central parterre. Of the eight beds in the parterre, the smaller beds at each end are quadrant-shaped while the central beds are of varying sizes. All the beds are edged by a ribbon of grass which scrolls into a volute in the smaller beds at each end. The centre of each bed is accentuated by a medalion, probably planted with flowers.

The statues intended for the beds of the parterre and the hill that had been proposed in Hohenberg's design were now moved to the tall clipped hedges flanking the parterre, and were set up in shallow semi-circular recesses.



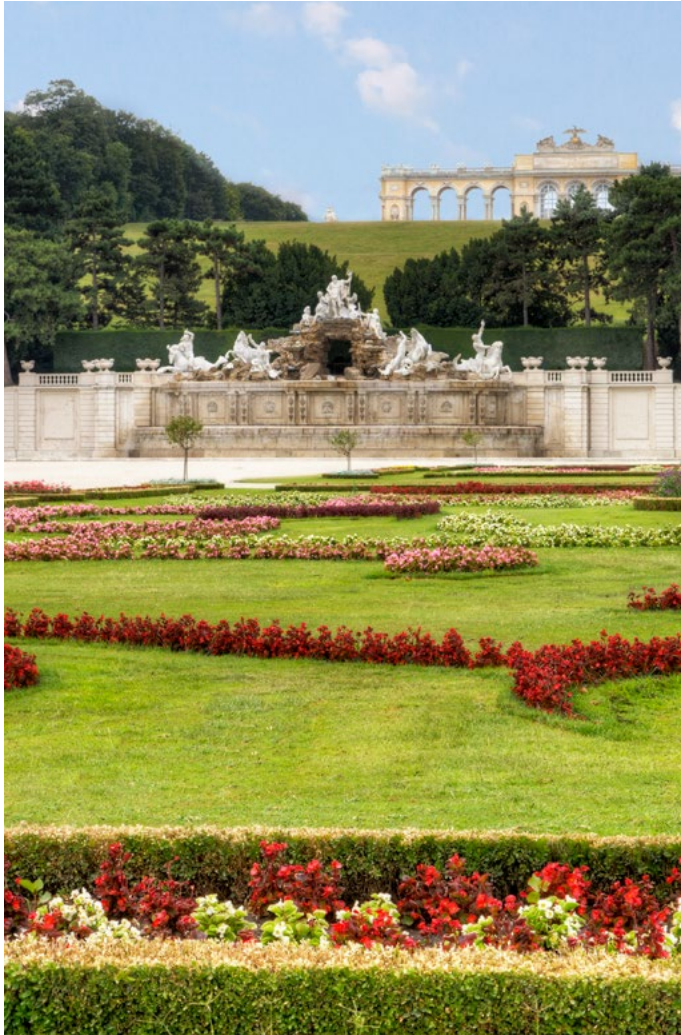
Sculptures made of Sterzing marble
on tall plinths line the clipped hedges
of the Great Parterre

The series of statues by the Great Parterre was executed by the sculptor Johann Christian Wilhelm Beyer and his studio. The planning was the result of fruitful collaboration between the sculptor and the court architect Hohenberg.

Trained in Paris and Rome, Beyer was probably given the commission for the series of statues at Schönbrunn because he had discovered quarries with high-quality marble which, in the artist's own words, 'was not inferior to that of Carrara', near Sterzing in the southern Tyrol, today an autonomous province of Italy but at that time part of the hereditary Austrian lands. In addition, he was able to organize transport efficiently and economically. The figures were roughly worked out in Sterzing on the basis of pre-fabricated models in order to reduce the weight of the blocks of marble before they began their journey. The individual items were then transported by water – via the rivers Inn and Danube – to Schönbrunn, where they were finished.

Beyer completed the series of statues in collaboration with fifteen sculptors from his studio, some of whom worked independently. The most important among these were Johann Baptist Hagenauer, Benedikt Henrici and Franz Anton Zauner. Together with his team Beyer created thirty-two statues standing on tall plinths for the Great Parterre. Representing mythological and historical figures, they were executed after classical models. The final siting of the statues was determined not by Beyer but by Hohenberg as the architect responsible for the overall design of the gardens. The series starts at the palace end of the eastern hedge and ends at the western end of the Great Parterre (see map on inside cover).





There would seem to be no coherent iconographical programme in the way the statues were finally positioned, since they were originally intended to be part of the design for the Great Parterre and the hill. In 1777, for reasons apart from the water shortage that have not yet been satisfactorily explained, the plans were changed and orders were given for the 'removal to the garden of the figures sited on the hill together with their plinths'. Nonetheless, connections can be made between the individual groups of figures. Thus for example the figure of *Calliope* (2) as muse of heroic poetry and *Amphion* (31), the inventor of the lyre, are linked by their association with music. The *Abduction of Helen* (28) and the *Flight from Troy* (5) mark the beginning and end of the Trojan War, although Aeneas' flight was also seen as a symbol of filial solicitude and piety, two important princely virtues.

The statues that stand at the intersections with the Finstere Allee (Dark Avenue) can be interpreted as the four main virtues of power, with *Jason* (7), *Aspasia* (8), *Fabius Cunctator* (26) and *Perseus* (25) symbolizing initiative, wisdom, circumspection and fearlessness respectively.

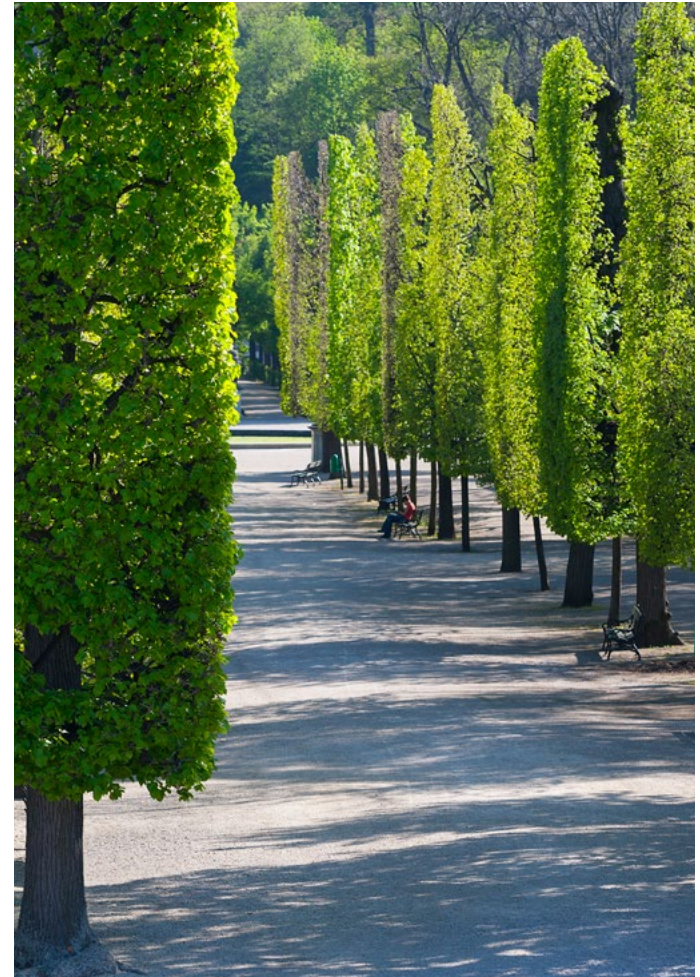
At the close of the Baroque era, representations of the gods were still used to symbolise the power wielded by earthly rulers. However, like the virtuous heroes of the Ancient World who possess intrinsic meaning and value, they were also intended to evoke particular feelings in the sensitive and cultured observer. Drawing on the ideal figure of Antiquity, Beyer was responsible for introducing the neoclassical canon of forms into Viennese art. He saw the perfection of classical statues as residing both in their ideal imitation of Nature and in their ideal embodiment

of specific qualities of character which were manifested in the physical appearance of the figure represented.

The Great Parterre remained unchanged until just before 1900 and was then remodelled with neo-Baroque scroll and knot motifs which were picked out with flowering plants, a design that has prevailed until today, the plants varying according to season.



The decorative compartments of the Great Parterre are picked out with seasonal bedding plants



The tall stands of trees lining the paths are clipped once a year

The Lateral Boscages



The star-shaped system of avenues laid out in 1753 still forms the basic framework of the gardens at Schönbrunn, with the avenues running from east to west and the broad diagonal avenues linking the parterres and the boscages. The majority of the avenues are dual avenues consisting of four rows of trees with a broad central aisle and two narrower lateral aisles, and are made up of a total of 4,681 trees.

Around the same time the extensive boscages on either side of the Great Parterre were planted to a design that has likewise endured to the present day. Behind the avenues, which were laid out on strict architectonic principles, the boscages form

hedged walks and enclosures of different sizes, the high walls of the espaliered hedges often leading to small, secluded spaces. Between the Lichte Allee and the Finstere Allee, the latter lined with its original 250-year-old copper beeches, and to either side of the Great Parterre, are two boscages. The one on the Meidling (eastern) side of the park is known as the Bosque by the Statue of the Emperor, and the other, on the Hietzing (western) side, as the Bosque by the Fish Pool. Their original rectilinear shape dating from the time of the Dowager Empress Wilhelmine Amalie was curtailed by the newly laid out diagonal avenues.

Both boscages are articulated by two intersecting paths with a central oval space, with a lozenge-shaped perimeter path giving onto small hedged enclosures. In the case of the bosque on the Meidling side, the plan drawn by Boos shows a further narrow hedged walk that has only recently been rediscovered and cleared. It was originally used for the games of ninepins that were so popular at court.

Both areas are flanked by symmetrical boscages, on the Meidling side with an arciform system of paths and on the Hietzing side with a tri-radiate pattern of walks. These originally belonged to the adjacent sunken gardens but were cut off from them by the broad avenues running from north to south which were created in 1760. On the Hietzing side this avenue is known as the Hundehofallee (Kennels Avenue), as it once led to the kennels housing Empress Elisabeth's dogs.

Between the Finstere Allee and the Lindenallee (Linden Avenue) and to either side of the Great Parterre are the linden groves laid out around 1700, which are also transected by the later diagonal avenues.