



AMERICAN FOUNDATION OF SAVOY ORDERS, INCORPORATED



REPORT

**FOURTEENTH ANNUAL SAVOY HISTORY LECTURE,
RECEPTION AND DINNER**

**Prince Eugene of Savoy, the Great Statesman and Soldier,
as Collector, Bibliophile, Naturalist**

by

Dr. Agnes Husslein-Arco

November 10, 2016



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Fourteenth Annual Savoy History Lecture, Reception and Dinner November 10, 2016

Prince Eugene of Savoy, The Great Statesman and Soldier, as Collector, Bibliophile, Naturalist

On Thursday, November 10, 2016, the American Foundation of Savoy Orders sponsored the 14th edition of the Savoy History Series, at the Knickerbocker Club in New York City. Over the years, History Series Chairman, Savoy Foundation President Marco Grassi, has brought to the podium a wide range of speakers and topics, in a variety of different venues, devoted to the history of the Savoy Dynasty and its pivotal role in European and Italian culture, the military and politics.

In 2002, Prince Eugene of Savoy's exploits as a statesman and great military commander were the subject of the first installment of the Savoy History Series. It was delivered in these rooms by our dear friend and confrere, the late William Warren, Esq. Recalling his contribution to our Foundation, it was only fitting that our Series revisit the august historical figure of Eugene; this time, not as one of the most successful military commanders in modern European history, rising to the highest offices of state at the Imperial court in Vienna, but as one of Baroque Europe's great collectors, builders and patron of the arts, who devoted his considerable wealth and energy to his humanistic interests after his military battles had been fought. These achievements are vividly symbolized by three monumental residences most intimately associated with his life in Vienna and environs, nearing completion of a decades-long restoration effort: The Belvedere Palace on the outskirts of the city, the Stadtpalais at its center and the Schloss Hof in lower Austria.

Dr. Agnes Husslein-Arco

The Savoy History Series was enormously pleased and honored to welcome to its podium Dr. Agnes Husslein-Arco whose distinguished career in the arts, as a scholar, author, auction-house specialist and museum administrator, spans several decades. After receiving her doctoral degree in Art History at the University of Vienna, Dr. Husslein-Arco continued her studies in Paris at the Sorbonne and the École



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du Louvre. During the late 1980's, she was associated with Sotheby's International, managing their affairs in Budapest and, subsequently, opening the firm's Prague branch office. From 1990 to 1998, Dr. Husslein-Arco served as Director of European Development for the Guggenheim Museum, New York. More recently, she has been associated with the *Rupertinum* of Salzburg, the *Museum Moderner Kunst of Kärnten* and was Managing Director of the *Museum der Moderne* of Salzburg. Since 2007, Dr. Husslein-Arco has been Director of the *Österreichisches Galerie Belvedere* in Vienna, overseeing the palace's continuing restoration program as well as several important exhibitions mounted there, notably the Gustav Klimt 2012 show that attracted more than a million visitors. Dr. Husslein-Arco is a member of the European Academy of Arts and Sciences, and is the recipient of a number of important prizes and recognitions, including France's Legion of Honor, Austria's decoration of Honor for Arts and Sciences and Italy's *Ordine della Stella d'Italia*.

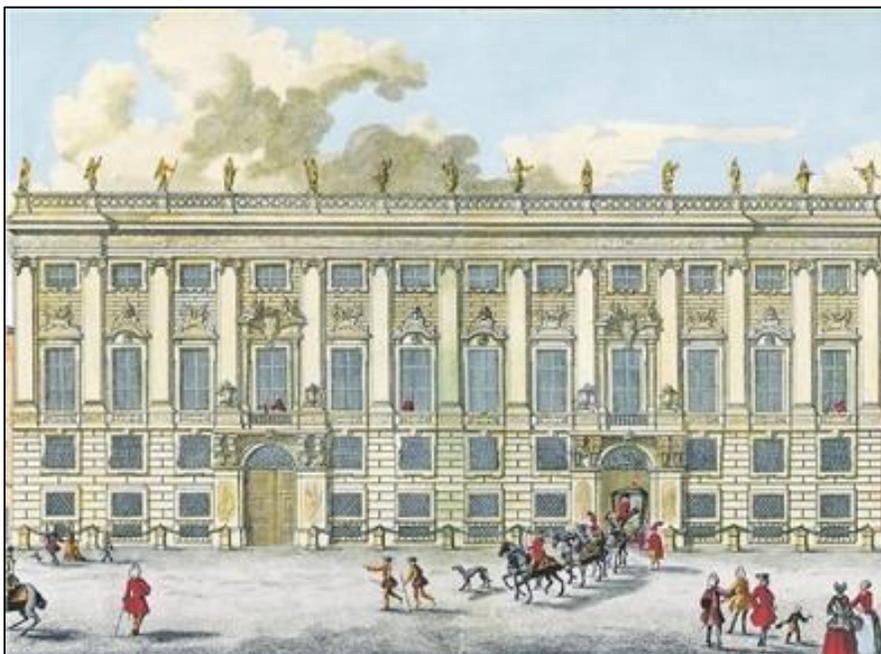
The lecturer discussed the personal life and interest of this lifelong bachelor prince, his building of palaces, his book and art collections, and his role as one of the most influential patrons of his age. Although the encyclopedic and rich personal collections of Prince Eugene were scattered throughout Europe after his death, Dr. Husslein-Arco was able to reconstruct the many facets of his interests and the immense importance of his collections in various fields—architecture, natural sciences, horticulture, art, and literature—and reinforce his standing as not only a great field marshal but also as a more humanistic “lord of the manor,” philosopher and friend of the arts. Dr. Husslein also discussed one of the rare portraits of Prince Eugene painted in 1725 by Johann Gottfried Auerbach, depicting Prince Eugene, not in full military garb but in civilian finery, wearing the Hapsburg's highest chivalric honor, the Order of the Golden Fleece.

The lecture was followed by a pre-prandial cocktail reception in the adjoining room and dinner in a private dining room of the Knickerbocker Club where the guests enjoyed sparkling conversation and gourmet cuisine under the direction of the Knickerbocker chef and staff.

Prince Eugene of Savoy as Collector, Bibliophile and Naturalist

Born into a noble but impecunious cadet branch of the Savoy family (his father, Eugene Maurizio of Savoy-Carignano-Soissons, was the youngest son of a youngest son), Prince Eugene's brilliant and meteoric military career led in 1707 to his appointment as Imperial Field Marshal of the Hapsburg Empire, which provided, after each successful campaign, generous financial rewards. His military successes against the Ottomans at the battles of Zenta (1697) and Oradea, Timisoara and Belgrade (1716/17) and against the French armies of Louis XIV enabled the expansion of the Hapsburg Empire, for which he also received rewards and benefits from the Italian Peninsula to Flanders. Eugene's rewards for his military victories, his share of the spoils of war, his revenues from abbeys in Piedmont, and a steady income from his Imperial offices and governorships, enabled him to indulge his interests on the grandest scale in civilian life. An avant-gardist in spirit, he invested mainly in buildings, art, gardens, and science. He was in the military field for more than fifty years. The last ten peaceful years of his life were devoted to literature and the arts.

Besides mastering the art of war, he was an expert on flora, fauna, exotic animals and birds. In all the fields of his interest, he took care of every detail, particularly in the transport and preservation of his collections. He was concerned with the welfare of his menagerie of carefully selected animal species. He sought out the best fabrics, carpets, and furniture for his opulent residences. His picture galleries were filled with 16th and 17th century Italian, Dutch and Flemish art. He corresponded with the leading philosophers and scholars of his day, such as Leibniz and Voltaire, and literary giants such as Rousseau and Montesquieu. He built resplendent, historically important architectural masterpieces: his Summer Palace- Schloss Belvedere, his Winter Palace-the Stadtpalais and his country Hunting Manor-Schloss Hoff, which all housed his enormous collections. His acquisitions went down in the annals of European art and cultural history and facilitated the transfer of works of art from the court of Louis XIV of France to Vienna. His library consisted of 15,000 volumes, 237 manuscripts as well as a huge collection of prints (of particular interest were books on natural history and geography), which were later bought by the Austrian Emperor and became the core of the Austrian national library after his death. His art collection was bought by the Savoy King Charles Emmanuel III of Sardinia-Piedmont.



Winter Palace of Prince Eugene of Savoy in Vienna by Johann Adam Delsenbach, undated



Belvedere Castle by Canaletto



Schloss Hof (Hunting Lodge) by Canaletto



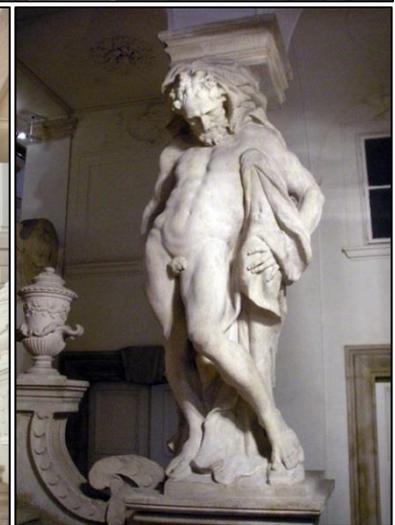
The façade and interiors of the Stadtpalais (Winter Palace)

Stadtpalais (Winter Palace)

When Prince Eugene died in his Winter Palace, on the night of April 20/21 in 1736, he left an immense fortune worth millions in today's currency. Having lost all his brothers and nephews, his sole heiress was a niece, Anna Vittoria (1683-1763). She hurriedly disposed of his properties, art collection and all other valuables at almost give-away prices for the buyers. Even so, the Winter Palace, shorn of most of what once adorned it, still provides a glimpse of the splendor which once reigned there. The Winter Palace was designed and constructed by Johann Bernhard Fischer von Erlach from 1695 to 1700, and by Johann Lukas von Hildebrandt from 1702 to 1724 following his predecessor's plans. Embellishment of the palace was entrusted to Italian, French, Austrian and German artists. A common motif, grand staircase included, is that of Mars, god of war, and Hercules, demi-god and hero.

The Winter Palace has a twelve-bay flat Baroque façade with three portals, each given double corbels that support a balcony and decorated balustrade. In place of standard columns or pillars, Fischer von Erlach designed bas-reliefs depicting military scenes from ancient mythology—Hercules fighting the giant Antaeus on the left, and Aeneas saving his father Anchises from burning Troy on the right. These images from the classical world were meant to invoke Prince Eugene's glorious military accomplishments.

In 1738, the Empress Maria Theresa bought the palace along with most of the prince's other buildings later turning the palace into the Court Treasury. In 1752, the palace was converted by Nicolò Pacassi into the seat of various state institutions. The palace housed the Finance Ministry of the Austrian Empire from 1848 to 1918. After the dissolution of



the Habsburg Empire in 1919, the palace housed the Federal Ministry of Finance. From 2007 to 2013, the palace was extensively renovated. The Winter Palace of Prince Eugene is considered one of the most magnificent Baroque edifices in Vienna.

Belvedere Summer Palace

Of more importance is the grandiose complex of the two **Belvedere palaces** in Vienna. The single-story **Lower Belvedere**, with its exotic gardens and zoo, was completed in 1716. The living quarters of the Prince of Savoy were in the Lower Belvedere. The **Upper Belvedere**, completed between 1720 and 1722, is a more substantial building; with sparkling white stucco walls and copper roof, it became a wonder of Europe. A highlight is the Marble Hall which is magnificently decorated with stucco reliefs and statues. The ceiling fresco, painted by Martino Altomonte in 1716, shows Prince Eugène as Apollo. Another interesting room is the Hall of Grottesques, decorated with wall murals of grotesques, painted by the German artist Jonas Drentwett in a style similar to those found in ancient Roman houses. Also notable in this room are the bizarre sculpted heads with extreme facial expressions.



Main Entrance Gate



Grand Staircase in the Upper Belvedere Interior

The Upper Belvedere, considered the greatest masterpiece of architect Johann Lukas von Hildebrandt, had a purely representative function and contained grand reception rooms and banquet halls. Its exterior is much more impressive than the rather modest Lower Belvedere. Particularly, the main façade, facing south, is magnificent. The many sculptures that adorn the facade are references to the victory over the Turkish army. The rooftop structures are said to evoke tents at Turkish army camps. Between the Upper and Lower lies the Belvedere garden. It was laid out between 1700 and 1725 by Dominique Girard in the formal French style.

The garden is decorated with numerous statues, fountains and cascades. The view from the top of the sloping garden towards the Lower Belvedere is magnificent and explains its name - Belvedere - which is Italian for beautiful view. The garden has three levels, separated by two large cascades. The upper cascade consists of six basins flanked by statues. Even more statues adorn the lower cascade, a small waterfall. Prince Eugene enriched his gardens with rare plants and displayed his exotic animals and birds in his menagerie. The variety of animal species included Indian hoopoe, Indian sparrow, Indian fallow deer, Sardinian sheep, ibex, Tripoli sheep, Turkish sheep and aurochs, Indian cows, a young lion, an Indian wolf, a porcupine, various lynx, chamois, and Indian eagle, Indian guinea-fowl, five ostriches, a cassowary and some muskrats.

These magnificent palatial residences of Prince Eugene of Savoy became the repositories of his immense and comprehensive collections of paintings, copper engravings, incunabula, illustrated manuscripts, books, plants, animals and birds. His library numbered countless works on natural history and health, metals, fossils, stones, lakes and rivers, shells, agriculture, as well as plants, zoology, and everything to do with gardens.



Belvedere Interior



Gardens of the Belvedere



Marble Hall of the Upper Belvedere



Large statues of sphinxes - symbols of strength and intelligence - decorate the upper levels of the garden. Classical statues of eight muses adorn the lower level while statues along the staircase between the lower and middle part of the garden symbolize the twelve months of the year.





The Schloss Hof (Hunting Manor)

In 1725, the 62-year-old military commander Prince Eugene of Savoy purchased a one-story Renaissance citadel with rectangular ground plan and commissioned Johann Lucas von Hildebrandt to remodel it into a prestigious hunting manor. The prince created for himself a synthesis of architecture, garden design and nature, a *tusculum rurale*, where he could breathe fresh air and could hunt deer and boar, shoot wildfowl and course hares. The grounds of Schloss Hof extend across fifty hectares in eastern Lower Austria and it is the largest palace complex in the Austrian countryside. The resplendent ensemble consisting of a two-story palace, the gardens and the estate farm is of outstanding significance in the history of art and culture. Its gardens can perhaps best be described as a small version of Versailles or Sanssouci in Potsdam. The two orangeries are among the largest and oldest in Europe.

The magnificent architectural assemblage of high stately residential buildings, ornate terrace garden and idyllic manor farm in which the architect was able to accommodate the whims of the Prince, unfettered by financial constraints, since he was working for one of the wealthiest men of his time. Hundreds of workers, day laborers, craftsmen and gardeners were engaged to realize Hildebrandt's plans. By 1732, the hunting manor was completed as one of the most impressive works of art in the European Baroque period.



Sala terrena, the hall on the ground floor, forms the link between the architecture of the palace and the natural scenery of the garden.



Bernardo Bellotto's painting of Schloss Hof, ca. 1760



The two-story dome-vaulted chapel has to a great degree kept its original appearance as it was in the days of Prince Eugene.



Aerial View of the Schloss Hoff Palace Complex

The coffee room of the Schloss Hoff was decorated with 53 closely hung animal pictures by Ignaz von Heizenthal, described in the inventory of the Prince's estate as animal pieces, painted from life in his highness's garden in Vienna. It is in the Schloss Hof that the only original furniture and fabrics have been preserved.







Post Lecture Dinner



Le Menu

Morel & Porcini Mushroom Risotto
Extra Virgin Olive Oil, Shaved Parmesan

Château Les Tuileries
Bordeaux 2014

Pan Roasted Griggstown Quail
Foie Gras Pan Perdue Stuffing

Montecarrubo Syrah
Il Carrubo 2014

Warm Granny Smith Apple Tart
Tahitian Vanilla Ice Cream

Café Demi-Tasse

Thursday November 10th, 2016





We are pleased that the following members and friends attended or contributed to the Savoy Foundation's 14th Annual Savoy Lecture.



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Savoy History Series Chairman
Gr. Uff. Marco Grassi



*By Larissa Van Duser
Photography by Adam Cohen*

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