

## PRESS RELEASE

### Palais Ferstel – one of the brightest jewels in Vienna’s crown

When it first opened its doors as a new bank and stock exchange building back in 1860, the magnificent Palais Ferstel was Vienna’s most modern – and expensive – building. Its architect Heinrich von Ferstel, aged just 27, gave the property its unique Venetian Florentine look. Shaped by numerous events over the years, the opulent mansion house at Strauchgasse 4 in the first district is today one of the most noble and historically rich event locations in the Austrian capital. It is also home to the world-famous Café Central – once a home from home for the leading Austrian literary figures, thinkers and artists of their day.

Interesting facts about Palais Ferstel...

- “Ferstel” came by its title of Palais relatively late in the day. To start with, it housed a bank and stock exchange. It is the only mansion house of its kind in the city that, rather than bearing the name of its blue-blooded owners, is named after its architect.
- Over the years the building has played host to the stock exchange, the imperial military casino and the Vienna basketball association. And it has been home to the famous Café Central since the legendary coffehouse’s inception in 1876.
- Superstitious stock brokers put their faith in the countless architectural details and symbols included to offer them protection.
- Highly advanced for its day, the water-cooled glass roof above the Arkadenhof not only revolutionised Viennese architecture, it also witnessed a landmark in women’s rights in 1876.

The new bank and stock exchange project soon became widely known as Vienna’s most modern building, and has enjoyed pride of place in the public eye ever since. The young star architect Henrich von Ferstel put an incredible amount of energy into the architectural details during its five-year construction, creating an exceptionally modern building for its time in the Venetian Florentine Trecento style. And it came at a price: the project cost the princely sum of around 2 million guilders, or EUR 25 million in today’s money.

#### Palais Ferstel: a work of art steeped in history

Inspired by a trip to Italy, the architect refined the building with an abundance of intricate detailing. Palais Ferstel is brimming with Italian quotations, masks and aquatic symbolism, all of which have a deeper meaning: The superstitious stock brokers turned to “Maskarone” to protect them from the devil. The terrifying gargoyles on the wall were intended to keep Beelzebub at bay. Meanwhile, the ceiling in the Grosser Ferstelsaal resembles the bow of a giant wooden ship. This was intended to make sure luck was on the side of the brokers, who saw themselves as the masters of the seven seas and world trade.

These carefully considered details paid off for the young Ferstel. The building was later named after him and is the only Viennese “Palais” to be named after its architect. A blessing that he was not called something as mundane as Schmidt or Meier...

#### ***Palais Ferstel / Café Central / Palais Daun-Kinsky / Börsensäule Wien***

Palais Events Veranstaltungen GmbH Herrngasse 14, 1010 Wien | T. +43/1/533 37 63 | F. +43/1/533 37 63-38 | office@palaisevents.at | [palaisevents.at](http://palaisevents.at)  
FN 355 868 k, Firmenbuchgericht HG Wien, Sitz: Wien, UID: ATU 661 39 813 | Erste Group Bank AG, IBAN: AT64 2010 0600 1498 4400 BIC: GIBAATWG



### **Palais Ferstel: technologically, artistically and culturally ahead of its time**

A first for its day – anno 1860. The gigantic steel and glass construction above the Arkadenhof was planned as a canopy for an outdoor café. Ferstel used steel as a building material years before the Vienna Ferris Wheel was built and even installed a water cooling system in the roof.

This glass roof, which was always intended to cover a coffee house, brought a revolutionary advantage for the city's gentlewomen. In the 19th century women were not allowed to go out socialising in public without male company, and had to remove their headgear in enclosed indoor spaces. But the open air ambience of Café Central, which opened in what is now the Arkadenhof in 1876, meant that ladies could keep their headcoverings on, uphold standards of decency and enjoy coffee without the need for a man at their side. A major breakthrough for women's rights in the city.

### **Palais Ferstel: from stock exchange to basketball court**

When the Vienna Stock Exchange moved to its new home in the Börsensäule on the Ringstrasse boulevard in 1877, the imperial military casino took its place at Palais Ferstel, where it remained until 1911. In the years between the wars the building was used for various purposes before it was reduced to rubble during the Second World War. The Viennese basketball community patched up the Palais after the war and transformed it into a basketball arena. It was not until 1978 that a painstaking restoration project was initiated under its new owners Österreichische Realitäten-AG (ÖRAG). By the time the work finished in 1982, the building had returned to its original lustre. In 1986 Café Central moved to its present-day location – the Säulensaal, while the Arkadenhof and the Grosser Ferstelsaal and Kleiner Ferstelsaal were used to host glittering events.

### **Palais Ferstel: one of the city's most opulent event locations**

“Palais Ferstel is the wonderful product of its history. It is extremely important for us to have such a historically interesting, opulent event location in our portfolio. Together with Café Central, Palais Ferstel offers the ideal spaces and options for every occasion,” confirms **Kay Fröhlich, Managing Director of Palais Events Veranstaltungen GmbH**. Café Central's excellent kitchens and patisserie cater to guests every whim while a dedicated team provides an impressive array of events services. The Grosser Ferstelsaal, Kleiner Ferstelsaal, the Portico and the Arkadenhof can accommodate anywhere between 80 and 700 guests, depending on the format of the event. Receptions, gala dinners, presentations, parties, seminars and exhibitions – anything is possible at Palais Ferstel thanks to the versatile spaces, state-of-the-art technical equipment and flexible stage elements.

Visit [www.palaisevents.at](http://www.palaisevents.at) for further information.

### **About Palais Events Veranstaltungen GmbH**

Palais Events – part of VERKEHRBUERO since 2011 – has around 2,500m<sup>2</sup> of prime historic event space in its portfolio, the second largest of its kind in Vienna. Each year our 100-strong team plays host to around half a million guests at around 300 events at Palais Ferstel, Café Central Wien, Palais Daun-Kinsky and the Wiener Börsensäule. The 180-seat historic Café Central, one of the best-known Viennese coffee houses, was added to the UNESCO List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2011. Its in-house patisserie is among the best in the city.

### **Press contact**

**Mag. Andrea Hansal, MSc.**

VERKEHRBUERO, Head Of Department/PR

Jakov-Lind-Straße 15, 1020 Vienna

Tel.: +43 / (0)1 / 588 00-172

[presse@verkehrsbuero.com](mailto:presse@verkehrsbuero.com)

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