

...From the shop window to the museum display case... The history of the Schell Collection

7500 finely detailed to pompous keys, elaborate locks, lavishly decorated caskets and precious boxes – 3000 cast and forged iron treasures – 3000 ethnological objects from Africa and Asia - 2500 m² - three floors – one building and one name:

Schell Collection.

Hanns Schell is not only a successful shareholder in the companies Odörfer, Segro und Filli-Stahl, he is also a mountaineer who has conquered several 8000 meter mountains (Nanga Parbat, Gasherbrum I+II, Shisha Pangma) and a passionate collector.

Mister Schell's interest was awakened by Prof. Albert Berger the former marketing manager of the Odörfer Co. At the end of the 50s, he started buying old locks and keys to decorate the display windows of the shop in Griesgasse. This not only showed the contrast between the industrially production and handcrafted masterpieces, but also demonstrated the unique craftsmanship behind today's deceptively simple locks.



Hanns Schell, Pakistan 1965

In 1965 Hanns Schell embarked on an expedition to Isfahan and Teheran, Iran which finally awoke his passion for collecting. At bazaars Mr. Schell purchased his first locks. This was followed by many years of forming relationships with collectors and dealers, as well as many Sundays spend at flea markets in Graz.

As a result of the continuous interest in new objects, the collection at Griesgasse grew so quickly that the search for a new location for the Lock and Key Museum was started. It finally found its home in the Wienerstraße 10 where the collection remains to this day. First, however, the old decaying buildings had to be torn down to make way for a new building to house the museum.



Hanns Schell

A new name also had to reflect the expansion of the collection to the area of iron works. This passion originates in the oldest hardware store in Styria, namely Odörfer itself.

Since 1985 the museum is called *Hanns Schell Collection - Museum für Schloss, Schlüssel, Kästchen, Kassetten und Eisenkunstguss* (*Museum for Locks, Keys, Caskets, Boxes and Cast Iron Art*).

All of the hard work was rewarded with the opening of the first floor in 1992.

The department Cast Iron Art and Forged Iron was opened in its own space in 2002 on the

Heading: History of the collection
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second floor of the museum. It should be noted here that there was once an iron casting and machine factory located at this very location. It was the Juhász Co. which cast iron objects in the 19th century.



Hanns Schell
at a bazaar in Kathmandu

Until 2007, the first floor of the museum displayed European and non-European keys, caskets and boxes. Due to the increase in the number of objects it was decided to redesign the third floor, which originally was not intended to be used as exhibition space, for the display of non-European pieces.

The area of non-European cultures has been expanded through the purchase of the ethnological collection of Prof. Gert Chesi, the „*Museum der Völker*“ (*museum of Peoples*) in Schwaz, Tyrol. A dream that is hoped to be realized in the future is the construction of a separate building for this collection and to bring the 3000 ethnological objects to Graz.



Christof Schell

What remains certain though is that the museum will remain open to the public for many years to come since Christof Schell, one of Hanns Schell's sons has inherited his father's passion.