

## An interview with the man who “rebuilt” the Palais Erzherzog Wilhelm... with Lego

Viennese artist Harald Gach is best known not for working in oils, stone or acrylics, but Lego bricks. He has made nearly 120 tiny, scaled recreations of Viennese landmarks, including the 1,775-piece Palais Erzherzog Wilhelm, the Headquarters of the OPEC Fund. You can view his work at [www.viennabricks.at](http://www.viennabricks.at).



**OPEC Fund Quarterly:** Tell us how you started building Viennese buildings out of Lego.

**Harald Gach:** The initial spark for me was a picture of Cologne Cathedral made of Lego bricks. I didn't think it was possible, so I spent a lot of time searching the web and discovered a large community of Lego enthusiasts of all ages.

**OFQ:** How long does it take to design a typical model before construction begins?

**HG:** The planning phase is the most time-consuming. If possible, I visit and photograph the building myself, research plans and floor plans and identify its characteristic features. With this information, I begin planning a design model using Stud.io (a kind of Lego computer-aided design program). I need about a week for a typical model.

**OFQ:** Can you explain your process from concept to finished model?

**HG:** Once the draft model is planned, I build some parts to test things like the strength and stability. I often find that I can design the structure on a smaller scale without compromising its recognizability. For commissioned work, there are one or two rounds of feedback and then the model is finished. After that, I create the building instructions, which are then available digitally as a PDF file.

**OFQ:** What do you find interesting about the Palais Erzherzog Wilhelm and were there any particular challenges in building the model?

**HG:** The Palais Erzherzog Wilhelm is, of course, an imposing building with an interesting history. The challenge was that this palace doesn't have a single defining characteristic. Rather, its recognizability is achieved through the interplay of various features.



Harald Gach's model of Palais Erzherzog Wilhelm – and the original building

**OFQ:** Do you see your work as art, architecture, or engineering – or a combination of all three?

**HG:** I see the artistic aspect of my work in finding the smallest form in which the model is still clearly recognizable as a representation of the original. This creative and intensive process of omission and reduction to the essentials inspires me anew each time.

Lego bricks are a material like any other with which one can create something. Whether acrylic, oil, pastels, wood, stone, plaster and indeed Lego bricks – these are all materials that have their own characteristics and limitations, which one must be aware of and know how to work with. Whether it's art, is for everyone to decide for themselves.

*Note: This interview was conducted in German and then translated into English. ■*

## The current Palais Colloredo-Mannsfeld

In 2021, the OPEC Fund purchased the adjacent building at Parkring 6, the Palais Colloredo-Mannsfeld. Designed in 1865 by the architects Romano and Schwendenwein, the neo-renaissance palace boasts its own historic pedigree.

Although the Colloredo-Mannsfeld family only occasionally used it as a residence, the building remained in family ownership until 1958, when it was sold to a bank and commercially used for the next few decades.

By the time the OPEC Fund acquired the property, it was clear that extensive renovation was required to bring the palais back to its former glory.

When staff moved into the new premises in early 2024, they entered a space where heritage and modernity

