



Who's Wearing the Pants?

25 March 2025 to 1 February 2026
Weltmuseum Wien

In 2025, Weltmuseum Wien will take a journey through three millennia of global legwear history in its major special exhibition, using this symbolic item of clothing as an opportunity to ask: 'Who's wearing the pants?' Many histories have been sewn into them: of domination and rebellion, of triumph and fear of loss, of provocation and intimate details.

Treasures and quite a few oddities from the collections of the Weltmuseum Wien, the Kunsthistorisches Museum, and the Theaternmuseum will be brought together with loans from other Austrian museums and international collections. The exhibition extends over five rooms, in which historical artefacts enter into a dialogue with contemporary art.

A total of 120 exhibits, including around 60 pairs of trousers of different origins and materials, tell a tale of perfected functionality as well as craftsmanship and design. They bear witness to the conditions of human existence – in luxury or poverty, during daily routines, and in finery.

The exhibition traces the construction and deconstruction of trousers – on the one hand, very specifically, on the basis of patterns, cutting layouts, and wearing habits, and on the other hand, in a figurative sense, on the basis of linguistic and symbolic meanings that have been attributed to this garment at different times and in different cultures. It is about roles and words for trousers as well as about pants as a symbol of male power and female emancipation.

The narrative thread spans from the Bronze Age and the oldest kinds of trousers to the mythical Amazons and from ancient Greece to the self-confident women of recent history. At the same time, the discussion focuses on the evolution of trousers in European menswear, where sporting competitions, the need for status, and developments in military technology were the driving forces. Habsburgs' trousers are also on display: in addition to Emperor Franz Joseph's well-known military uniform trousers for everyday wear and knee breeches made of loden for hunting, the



exhibition features surprising imperial riding leggings made of goatskin – a tribute by Franz Joseph's brother Maximilian to the traditional costumes of Mexico.

And last but not least, undergarments get their turn: from the oldest preserved medieval braies to (thong-like) Japanese *fundoshi* to contemporary works of art, there is much that is unknown to discover. This journey of discovery through the world of pants ends with a thought-provoking look at the current challenges facing jeans and textile production in the age of 'ultrafast fashion' and a promising outlook on 'trousers for the 21st century' as a symbol of change.

Videos, films, and interactive media and hands-on stations invite you to explore a wide variety of fabrics and functional details, try on virtual pants, and reflect on the downsides of textile production, AI-supported production on demand, or even greenwashing and upcycling. Young visitors can discover *Who's wearing the pants* through special child-friendly exhibition texts.

Curators: Barbara Pönighaus-Matuella, Julia Zeindl, Bettina Zorn, and Hanin Hannouch
Exhibition designer: büro wien. Inszenierte Kommunikation Marketing GmbH

Exhibition website: <https://www.weltmuseumwien.at/en/exhibitions/whos-wearing-the-pants/>

Publication



Wer hat die Hosen an? / Who's Wearing the Pants?

Hg. von / Edited by Claudia Banz

112 pages, 24 x 28 cm, soft cover

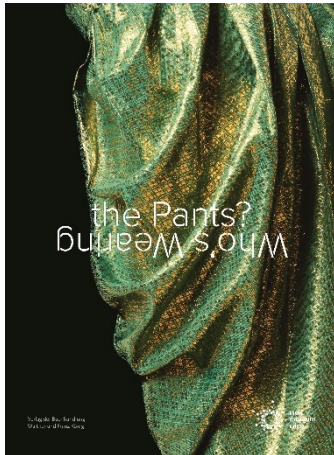
German/English bilingual

Publisher: Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther und Franz

König

Price: € 29

The exhibition is accompanied by an illustrated book with 56 pairs of trousers from the holdings of the Weltmuseum Wien, photographed by Stefan Zeisler, and an essay on the subject of trousers by art historian Barbara Vinken. The publication can be purchased at the museum shop or online.



Press photos

Press releases and images for up-to-date coverage of special exhibitions and projects at the Weltmuseum Wien are available for download free of charge from our press area:

<https://www.weltmuseumwien.at/en/press/>

sokoto

Maker unknown
Nigeria, c.1980
Jacquard fabric made of cotton, synthetic fibres, and lurex with machine stitching
Weltmuseum Wien, Barbara Plankensteiner Collection
© KHM-Museumsverband



tunbān

Maker unknown
Baghdad, Iraq, before 1886
Cowhide and sheepskin, cotton fabric with quilted seams and animal hair padding, metal buckle
Weltmuseum Wien, Josef Troll Collection
© KHM-Museumsverband



Suit trousers

Maker unknown
Haiti, before 1947
Cotton twill with leg buttons and machine stitching
Weltmuseum Wien, Kurt Fisher Collection
© KHM-Museumsverband



Ceremonial men's trousers

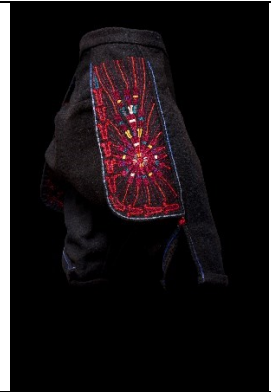
Maker unknown

Chichicastenango, Guatemala, before 1962

Napped wool fabric with embroidery and hand stitching

Weltmuseum Wien, Etta Becker-Donner Collection

© KHM-Museumsverband



Men's trousers

Maker unknown

Todos Santos, Huehuetenango, Guatemala, 1967

Cotton fabric with hand stitching

Weltmuseum Wien, Etta Becker-Donner Collection

© KHM-Museumsverband



gharara

Maker unknown

Pakistan, before 1980

Lancé brocade fabric made of silk and metallic thread with machine stitching and hand-stitched hems

Weltmuseum Wien, Mohammed Asad Zia Collection

© KHM-Museumsverband





welt
museum
wien

saroar/sawal

Maker unknown

Mindanao, Philippines, 2nd half of 20th cent.

Stitch-tied and dyed on banana fibre fabric with embroidered cotton edging and hand stitching

Weltmuseum Wien, Rudolf Kratochwill Collection

© KHM-Museumsverband



Odissi dance costume trousers

Maker unknown

India, mid-20th century

Silk ikat with machine stitching, metal hooks and snap buttons

Weltmuseum Wien, Collector unknown

© KHM-Museumsverband



sokoto

Maker unknown

Ibadan, Nigeria, 1970s

Cotton fabric with industrial eyelet embroidery and machine stitching

Weltmuseum Wien, Barbara Plankensteiner Collection

© KHM-Museumsverband



kembe

Maker unknown

Southwest Nigeria, late 1970s

Narrow strip cotton and lurex fabric with embroidery and machine stitching

Weltmuseum Wien, Barbara Plankensteiner Collection

© KHM-Museumsverband



Winter trousers

Maker unknown
Western Arctic North America, 1950s
Polar bear and seal fur with leather edging, plastic buttons,
and hand stitching
Weltmuseum Wien, Collector unknown
© KHM-Museumsverband



Reconstruction of the "Turfan Man's" trousers

Karl-Uwe Heußner (spinner), Ulrike Beck (reconstruction of
the design), Moa Hallgren (weaver)
Berlin, Germany, 2003–2017
Wool twill with *kilim* and *tāniko* techniques
German Archaeological Institute, Berlin
© Photo: Jan Kersten/DAI-EA



The Morning After

Ian Berry
U.K., 2014
Assemblage of denim fragments
AWWG Collection, Pepe Jeans®, Madrid
Courtesy of Pepe Jeans®
© Bildrecht, Wien 2025



The Somnambulist

Laura Eckert
Germany, 2017
Oak parquet, gesso, paint
Wageningen, Het Depot, Beeldengalerij
© Bildrecht, Vienna 2025 – photo: Tom Dachs



Revenge of the Geisha Girl

Yuko Shimizu
2005
Courtesy of the artist
© Yuko Shimizu



**Katharina Schrott as "Young Goethe" in
*Der Königsleutnant***

Julius Gertinger
Vienna, 10 April 1874
Reproduction of a photographic print on card
Vienna, Theatermuseum
© KHM-Museumsverband



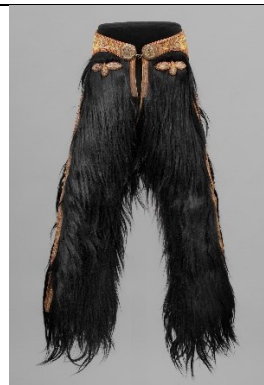
Fähnrich (ensign) as a trick drinking vessel

Christoph Gandtner
Innsbruck, Austria,
end of the 16th century (after 1585)
Clay, tin glaze
Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Kunstammer
© KHM-Museumsverband



pantalón de charro

Joseph Kowarz
Mexico, 1864–1867
Goatskin, gold and silver embroidery on leather, silver
buckle, gold-plated decorative buttons
Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Department of Court
Uniforms
© KHM-Museumsverband



wayang wong actresses

Tassilo Adam
Java, Indonesia, 1921–26
Reproduction of 3 autochromes
Weltmuseum Wien, Photo Collection, donated by
Tassilo Adam
© KHM-Museumsverband



Teacup with lid

Jingdezhen porcelain manufactory, China
People's Republic of China, 1973
Porcelain
Weltmuseum Wien, Helmut Opletal Collection
© KHM-Museumsverband



Dinar: Kanishka I

Maker unknown
Bactria or Kapisa, Central Asia,
127–151 CE or 227–251 CE
Gold
Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Coin Cabinet
© KHM-Museumsverband



Field armour

Wolfgang Großschedel (armourer);
Ambrosius Gemlich (etcher)
Landshut, Germany, 1535/40
Iron, forged, chased, partly etched; etched decoration:
partly fire-gilt, partly etched black; leather; brass
Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Imperial Armoury
© KHM-Museumsverband





Opening times, tickets, entrance fees

www.weltmuseumwien.at/en/information

Additional information regarding your visit

Guided tours, bookings, and reservations for events

+43 1 534 30 - 5150

kulturvermittlung@weltmuseumwien.at

Information, questions, and suggestions

+43 1 534 30 - 5052

info@weltmuseumwien.at

Exhibition programme and events

All events are listed online in the Weltmuseum Wien [event calendar](#).

Social Media

Follow the Weltmuseum Wien on Facebook and Instagram. #WeltmuseumWien

Journalist accreditation

Journalists visiting the KHM-Museumsverband for professional purposes are entitled to free admission to its exhibitions and locations. Please register at presse@weltmuseumwien.at at least two working days in advance.

Please identify your medium, specify the date of your visit and attach a scan of your valid press pass. Thank you!

Press Office

Weltmuseum Wien

T +43 1 525 24 – 4025 / - 4019

presse@weltmuseumwien.at