

VIENNA BRONZES

This group of usually small, decorative bronze figures, known as Vienna bronzes or Austrian bronzes, were made in small factories (or artists studios/workshops) in Vienna, Austria, starting about 1850.

The bronze figures of high quality were mostly individually cast in the cire-perdue or lost wax



method. Some larger figures were sand cast. For each figure a master model was made by the head of the workshop or by a master artist. Copying these, the workers modeled figures in wax, or in wax over a plaster core, if the resulting figure was to be hollow cast. The wax models included vent paths and pouring spouts for the molten bronze. Each model was individually made and exhibited slight differences. After casting, the figure was engraved, cleaned, polished, and details added by hand. Hand painting was usually done by women. These



workshops were usually small, with the reception area upstairs and displayed as in a factory setting.

Geschutz is frequently seen impressed on Vienna Bronze. This is simply a protection, as in a copyright. One of the well known artists was Franz Bergmann. The original Bergmann signature is a B



inside a two handled vase. Franz Bergmann used Namgreb (Bergman(n) spelled backwards) usually on erotic bronze figures. Successive generations of Bergmanns worked at the factory and would develop specialties (blackamoors, birds, etc.) and explore that line for some time.

Since production began in the late 1850's, these figures can be dated no earlier. Beyond that, their age can be estimated by wear, both of the paint oxidation, wear on the bottom, and clothing styles on figures. Modern bronzes use acrylic based paint for faster drying - another clue to age.

Most of the old figures were bought by the English, so very few are now found in Austria. They are usually found in England and America.