

Room 3

On Saturday, 21 February 1942, one day before committing suicide with his wife, Stefan Zweig took the typescript of *Schachnovelle* (*The Royal Game*) to the post office in Petrópolis, Brazil.

In it Zweig tells the life story of the Viennese lawyer Dr. B., who is arrested by the Gestapo in March 1938, just before the German occupation of Austria. During his incarceration at Gestapo headquarters (in the formerly fashionable Vienna hotel Métropole) he plays chess with himself, as a means of distraction from his total isolation, and this provokes a psychotic crisis. With the help of a physician, Dr. B. is eventually able to flee Austria. Sailing from New York to Buenos Aires, he tells his story to a fellow passenger. And to the astonishment of the other passengers, he also defeats a world champion chess player.

Schachnovelle was the last work that Stefan Zweig completed and the only one in which he referred directly to the destruction of Austria and the terror of National Socialism. His narrative was translated into more than 60 languages and adapted for film, theatre, opera and radio.

»We need a completely different kind of courage.« Stefan Zweig – Farewell to Europe

With his wife, Lotte, Stefan Zweig boarded the British passenger ship *Scythia* on the evening of 25 June 1940 and sailed from Liverpool to New York. Neither of them was ever to see Europe again.

In February 1934 Zweig had moved out of his house in Salzburg. One year earlier Hitler had become chancellor of the German Reich, and life in Austria as well became characterized by the intolerance and hostility of those in power to the intellectual spirit.

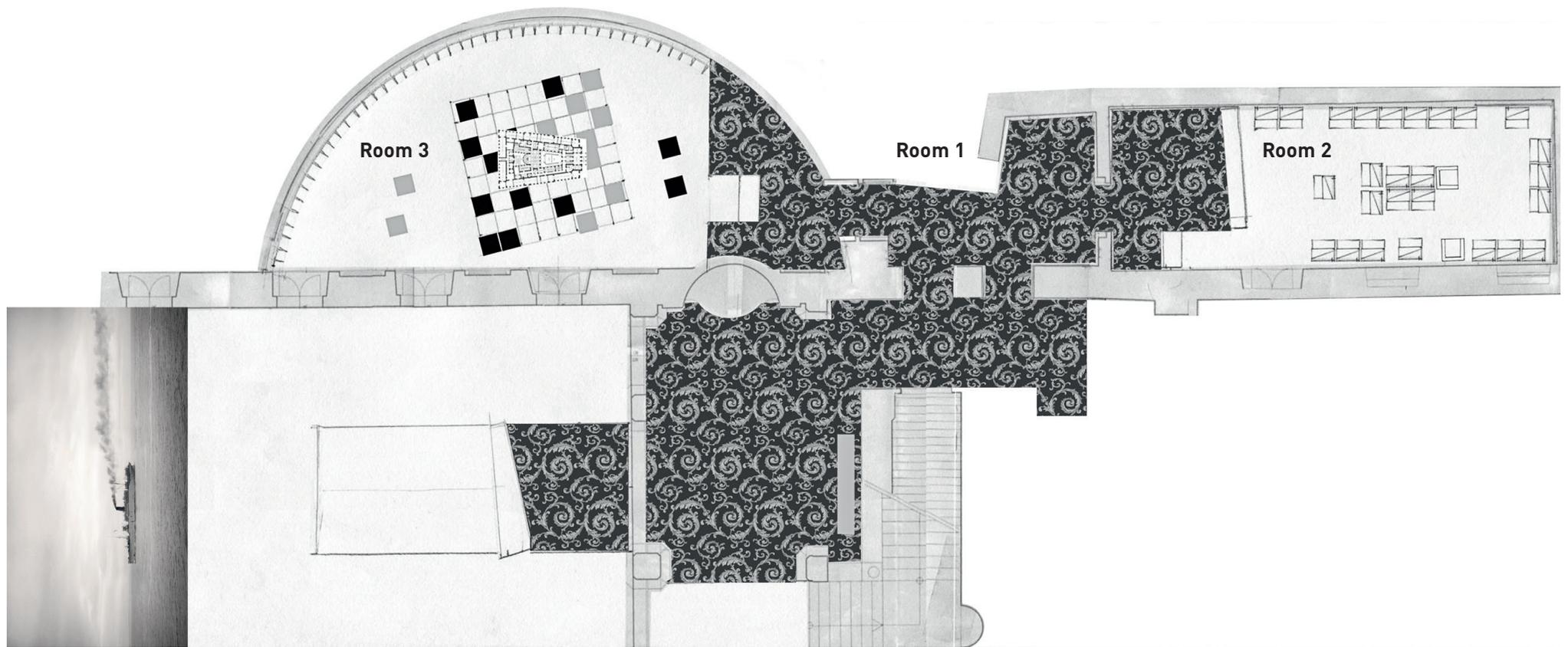
The first stop in Zweig's exile was London, where he wrote his biography of Mary Stuart and the novel *Ungeduld des Herzens* (*Beware of Pity*). After divorcing his first wife in 1938, Zweig married his London secretary, Charlotte Elisabeth Altmann, a German emigrant, in September 1939. Both of them adopted British citizenship and lived for a few months in Bath before crossing the Atlantic. In February 1942, their suicide in the Brazilian city of Petrópolis made news around the world.

The exhibition focuses on the scenario of parting: we look back on the lost »world of security« that Stefan Zweig described with great feeling in his memoirs. By this time the Belle Époque was already history, Europe was at war, the paintings had been taken down from the walls, the carpets rolled up, and the packing cases were ready to go.

Stefan Zweig wrote his two most celebrated works in exile in the United States and Brazil: *Die Welt von Gestern* (*The World of Yesterday*) and *Schachnovelle* (*The Royal Game*). These two books were a final farewell to his homeland, Austria. A room of the exhibition is devoted to each of them.

Stefan Zweig had a great passion for collecting autographs. In 1937 he gave a number of them to the »Theatersammlung« (the collection of documents to the history of theatre) of the Austrian National Library in Vienna. Some of the most precious items can be seen here for the first time. In addition, the Theatre Museum is offering a chance to become acquainted with Zweig's work as a dramatist, and aspect of his career that has largely been forgotten today.

»We need a completely different kind of courage«, wrote Stefan Zweig in a letter to his friend, the writer Paul Zech, from New York on 5 June 1941. By this time he was aware that his life in Europe had no future.



Room 1

Stefan Zweig's extraordinary success resulted in part from his enthusiasm for the theatre. He wrote ten plays, all hardly known today. They are written in a number dramatic genres: Greek tragedy and farce, biblical drama and Rococo comedy, opera buffa and psychological drama.

Zweig's plays were mostly performed on major stages before being taken up by other theatres. Several of his dramas were translated and were successfully staged at theatres throughout Europe as well as North and South America.

Although Zweig was represented by one of the best German theatrical publishers, he left no stone unturned in his efforts to persuade the managers of major theatres and the most prominent directors and actors of the day to secure premier productions of his works.

Room 2

Lotte and Stefan Zweig lived in Latin America from August 1940 to January 1941 before returning to the United States. Following weeks of intensive work in the library of Yale University in New Haven, the couple rented a house in the town Ossining, New York, in July 1941.

Here Zweig, who was suffering from severe depression, worked on his autobiography. The first chapter of this »Memoir of a European«, which became world famous as *Die Welt von Gestern* (*The World of Yesterday*), was dedicated to his childhood and youth in Vienna. As Zweig wrote in the foreword: »it will not be so much my own story I tell as that of an entire generation.«

In individual chapters Zweig depicts the enthusiasm for the arts in Vienna before 1914, the young author's exploration of the European literary scene, the tragedy of the First World War and his successful years in Salzburg. He sketches portraits of his friends and his encounters with cities and countries. In this volume he also tells the story of his remarkable collection of autographs by writers and composers.