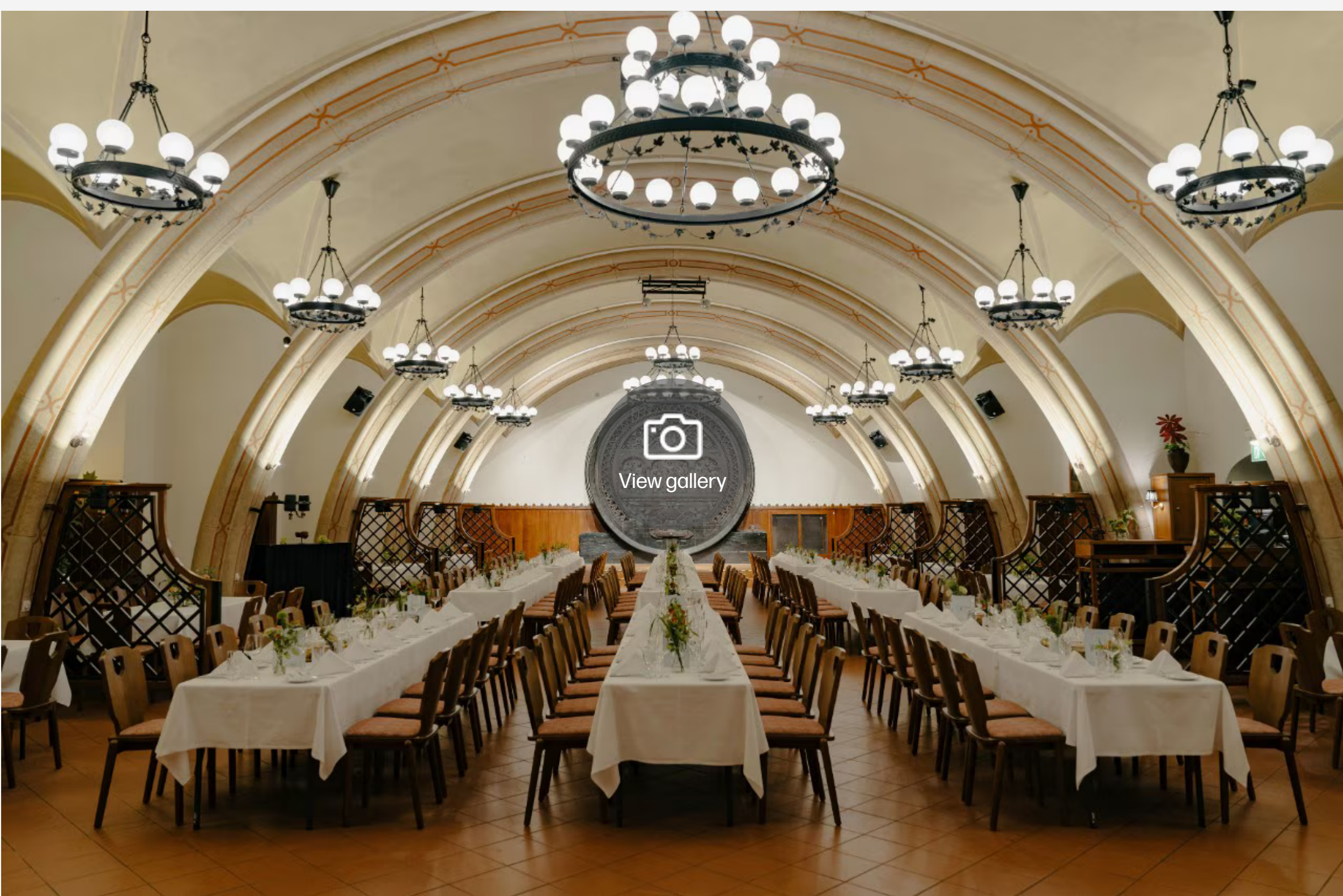


In the underground spaces of a Vienna town hall, a restaurant rediscovers the Ratskeller tradition

Historically established as basement taverns beneath town halls in the German-speaking Vienna area, Ratskellers have a long-standing tradition. Today, BWM Designers & Architects’ project renews a Rathauskeller, preserving its original charm without falling into postcard-style historicism.



PHOTOGRAPHY

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PROGRAM

High-end restaurant and event rooms within the historic town hall

COMPLETION

September 2025

SHARE



Ratskellers are a curious tradition of the German-speaking world. Since the Late Middle Ages, town halls – what we today call municipal buildings – in Austria and Germany have combined utility with pleasure by renting part of their spaces to house taverns. Often located in basements, the best Ratskellers have evolved into high-end restaurants, temples of traditional cuisine as well as civic life.

The aspiration to embody the city’s “best living room of taste” also characterizes [Vienna’s](#) Rathauskeller, housed in the neo-Gothic town hall built by Friedrich von Schmidt between 1872 and 1883 along the famous Ringstrasse, the grand boulevard constructed on the city’s old walls by Franz Joseph, who imagined it as a theatrical, tangible demonstration of the splendor of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.



BWM Designers & Architects aimed to restore the aura and atmosphere of Viennese elegance, working on the patina of the spaces to make them timeless. By removing the superfluous additions from previous renovations, the architects highlighted the original elements that define each room, such as the vaults, wood paneling, grilles, stuccoes, and chandeliers. The new color palette, ranging from beige to green, stands out not only for its sober tone but also for its ability to enhance the volumes and harmonize with the historical elements – among which the crowning jewels are the paintings by Joseph Urban, an international [Art Déco](#) figure who would later embark on a new career across the Atlantic as a Broadway set designer.

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As for the furnishings, the new additions aim to ensure a comfortable experience of the space, blending discreetly with classical-style pieces or custom-made solutions. The only exception is the room reserved for the mayor for official receptions, where the historic furnishings were faithfully restored. A way to freeze time and celebrate, even at the table, the city’s heritage.

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