

# ALBERTINA MODERN

## Vienna's New Museum of Modern Art

ALBERTINA MODERN, the second exhibiting venue of the Albertina Museum, will open its doors on 27 May 2020. With its over 60,000 works by 5,000 artists, it is set to be among the world's major museums of art from the present era.

As the newest addition to Austria's federal museum landscape, ALBERTINA MODERN will open with the exhibition *The Beginning. Art in Vienna, 1945 to 1980*, which will be the first-ever complete overview of an era of Austrian art that encompasses those three important decades following 1945.

### The Founding of ALBERTINA MODERN

ALBERTINA MODERN was born out of Hans Peter Haselsteiner's question to Klaus Albrecht Schröder, Director General of the Albertina Museum, as to what vision he would develop for the Essl Collection. The common objective that they soon worked out was the collection's permanent preservation and its transfer to the Austrian capital of Vienna.

Haselsteiner, the Essl family, and Schröder ultimately agreed to establish a dedicated museum of modern art managed by the Albertina Museum as soon as the Albertina's holdings had been combined with those of the Essl Collection.

Since the very beginning, all of the federal ministers of culture who have been in office (Josef Ostermayer, Thomas Drozda, Gernot Blümel, and Alexander Schallenberg) have supported their undertaking, including the plan to eventually establish the Albertina Museum's second venue. And in terms of this venue's location, the Künstlerhaus on Vienna's Karlsplatz—in which Hans Peter Haselsteiner had acquired a controlling interest in 2016—was successfully reserved as the future home for Vienna's new museum of modern art.

The founding of ALBERTINA MODERN serves to more strongly underline the significance that art from the present and recent past, following many decades of disinterest and stagnation, now enjoys in Austria's capital.

Moreover, Hans Peter Haselsteiner—with his establishment of the company *Künstlerhaus Besitz- und Betriebsgesellschaft*—additionally committed to renovating this formerly magnificent exhibiting facility (which had fallen victim to increasing neglect) as well as modernizing it in keeping with the Albertina Museum's museological requirements.

It is thus that this masterpiece of historicist architecture is now in the process of becoming the home of ALBERTINA MODERN (which will occupy over 2,500 m<sup>2</sup> of floorspace) and will also remain home to its original occupant's successor organization, the artists' association *Künstlerhaus – Gesellschaft bildender Künstlerinnen und Künstler Österreichs* (which will use 900 m<sup>2</sup>).

### **A Gift to Artists**

The Künstlerhaus was originally presented to the city's artists in 1865 as a gift by Emperor Franz Joseph; it was to be constructed near Vienna's magnificent Ringstraße as a model work of architecture and a prestige project together with Hotel Imperial and the Musikverein building on Karlsplatz.

Following multiple remodeling projects and repeated plans to tear down this masterpiece of Viennese Historicist architecture (the earliest of which came about in 1906) as well as the decline of the resident Association of Austrian Artists (*Verein der Künstler Österreichs*) during the interwar and postwar periods, the Künstlerhaus eventually experienced a second golden era during the 1980s and 1990s when its spaces were made available to the music and theater festival Wiener Festwochen and then to both the Historical Museum of the City of Vienna and the Kunsthistorisches Museum, which used them for successful major exhibitions including *Türken vor Wien*, *Traum und Wirklichkeit. Wien, 1870–1930* (for which the architect Hans Hollein created elaborate designs) and Werner Hofmann's *Zauber der Medusa. Europäische Manierismen*.

During the past 20 years, however, the building has frequently been hidden from public view behind construction scaffolding.

### **Renovation – Expansion – Modernization**

The past three years have seen this prestigious historicist building restored to its original appearance both inside and out under the aegis of the Albertina Museum's Architecture Collection in consultation with Austria's Federal Monuments Office. The original wall paintings and decorations from that era have been re-created, as has the original terrazzo flooring. At the same time, the Künstlerhaus has been adapted to comply with today's standards for public buildings; changes in this respect include the barrier-free accessibility of all galleries as well as the construction of two new fire escape stairwells.

Finally, this 150-year-old exhibition building has been modernized according to the Albertina Museum's museological requirements in terms of security, lighting, and climate control as well as expanded on both its lower and upper levels.

The upper level of this magnificent historicist structure continues to be the domain of the association *Künstlerhaus – Gesellschaft bildender Künstlerinnen und Künstler Österreichs*, and they now have the use of an additional space called the "Factory". This space has been designed both as a gallery and as a venue for performances and multimedia productions.

## **Contemporary Art at the Albertina Museum**

Following the World War II and prior to the establishment of the *20er Haus*, the Albertina Museum was Austria's leading federal museum of modern art. And under the general direction of Klaus Albrecht Schröder since 2000, the Albertina Museum has been and continues to be expanded and renovated with its contemporary art collection also being substantially enlarged.

Major retrospective exhibitions featuring important names such as Baselitz, Richter, Kentridge, Kiefer, Rainer, Lassnig, Brus, Helnwein, Fischl, Sturtevant, Katz, and Gertsch have taken place at this new Albertina Museum.

And with its recently enlarged holdings of contemporary art, the collection of ALBERTINA MODERN—now home to altogether 60,000 drawings, watercolors, printed graphics, and photographs—numbers among the world's great collections of art from the present era.

A major emphasis is embodied by the collections of Austrian art with extensive and important holdings of artworks by Arnulf Rainer, Maria Lassnig, Franz West, Erwin Wurm, and VALIE EXPORT. Outstanding features of the museum's international collections are large blocks of works by the German artists Georg Baselitz, Anselm Kiefer, Markus Lüpertz, Jörg Immendorff, and Günther Förg. And the most important groups of works in its American art holdings are by Andy Warhol, Alex Katz, Eric Fischl, Robert Longo, Cindy Sherman, Sherrie Levine, Ross Bleckner, and Michael Heizer.

Klaus Albrecht Schröder, Director General of the Albertina Museum and ALBERTINA MODERN, states: "With the opening of ALBERTINA MODERN, we can finally show our collections of contemporary art in a way that is better and more sweeping than ever before. ALBERTINA MODERN also entails that Vienna is to become home to a new museum of modern art where masterpieces from the Essl Collection and from our most recent acquisition, the Jablonka Collection, will be shown together with our longstanding holdings and serve as the basis of major exhibitions the likes of which have never before been seen in this city. And last but not least, the museum intends to bring about an entirely new status for Austria's post-1945 art history."

## **The Beginning**

As of 27 May 2020, when ALBERTINA MODERN welcomes the general public for the first time with its opening exhibition *The Beginning. Art in Vienna, 1945 to 1980*, the net exhibition floorspace of the Albertina Museum will have grown by a further 2,000 m<sup>2</sup>.

*The Beginning* is being developed by Director General Klaus Albrecht Schröder together with a curatorial team that includes Brigitte Borchhardt-Birbaumer, Berthold Ecker, Elisabeth Dutz, Antonia Hoerschelmann, and Angela Stief.

This exhibition zeroes in on that pre-1980 era that was such a formative one for international contemporary art, presenting Austria's most important artistic stances at the threshold to postmodernism.