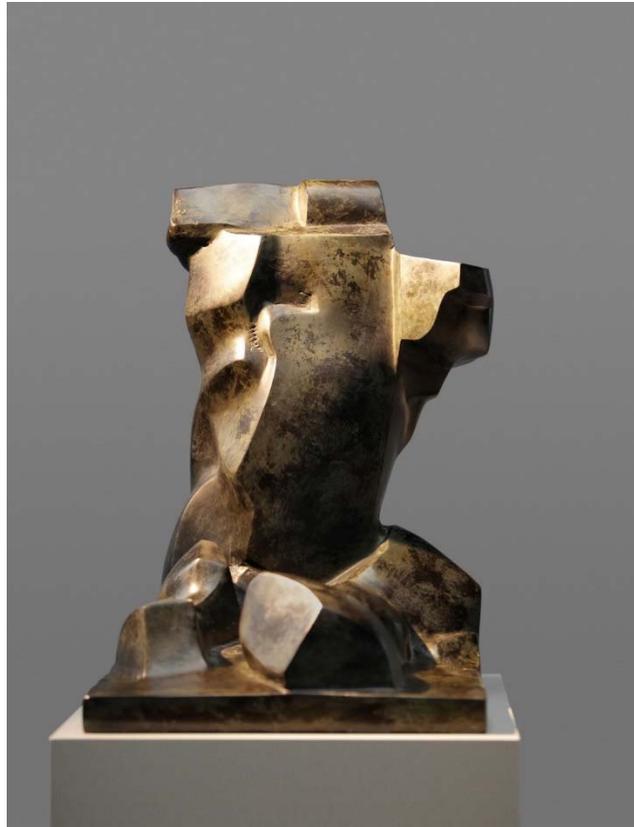


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**SEPTEMBER 19, 2017  
TO JANUARY 14, 2018**

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**HERBERT ALBRECHT  
STONE AND BRONZE**

To celebrate the 90<sup>th</sup> birthday of Herbert Albrecht, the renowned sculptor from Vorarlberg, the Kunsthistorisches Museum Vienna is collaborating with the vorarlberg museum in Bregenz and hosting an exhibition in the galleries of the Collection of Greek and Roman Antiquities, showcasing the work of this fascinating representative of contemporary Austrian art history.

Albrecht studied with Fritz Wotruba and is today regarded as one of Vorarlberg's leading representatives of twentieth century art, and his work resonates far beyond the state's borders. Since the 1960s, Albrecht has focused on the human body. The exhibition in the Collection of Greek and Roman Antiquities juxtaposes his works with ancient Greek and Roman statues. Standing or seated figures, and especially the human head – Herbert Albrecht continues to search for new forms and aspects of his chosen topic. "The image of man has become fragile, at least following the horrors of the NS-era", he said. He feels it is no longer possible to

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idealise man, which is why “I reduce him, in a way I turn him into a symbol of man”.

Herbert Albrecht has always stayed true to this doctrine – and the sculptor’s traditional materials, stone and bronze. Most contemporaries refuse to take up this heavy work but ninety-year-old Albrecht can be found in his studio every day. “Stone demands attitude and poise, and its hardness defies the fast pace of our time and thus the zeitgeist.”

## **BIOGRAPHY OF HERBERT ALBRECHT**

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Written by curator Walter Fink

### **Origins**

Herbert Albrecht was born in deepest Bregenz Forest, in Rehmen, a part of Au, in 1927. His father, Gebhard Albrecht, was the local schoolmaster and a dedicated teacher who reached out and encouraged gifted children. His uncle was Kaspar Albrecht, a sculptor and architect working in Au. His parents had many artist friends who visited regularly, among them Karl Eyth and Bartle Kleber from Bregenz, and the “blue painter” Alfons Luger from Dornbirn. Stefanie Hollenstein, a painter from Lustenau, was frequently accompanied by Herbert Albrecht on her painting trips into the Bregenz Forest. Herbert Albrecht was familiar with art and artists from a young age, so the fourteen-year-old’s wish to become an artist was not surprising. In 1941, Albrecht was accepted into the sculpture class of the Kunstgewerbeschule at Innsbruck where he studied with Hans Pontiller.

### **His artistic environment**

The 2007 Bregenz Festival exhibition organised by the Berufsvereinigung der bildenden Künstler (Organisation of Visual Artists) at Thurn und Taxis Palace in Bregenz was dedicated to Herbert Albrecht in honour of his 80th birthday. Entitled “Albrecht und Zeitgenossen” (Albrecht and contemporaries; this is also the title of the comprehensive exhibition catalogue), it brought together works of twenty-seven Austrian sculptors, mainly fellow students from the time he studied with Fritz Wotruba at the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna (1951–1955). The list of names reads like a Who’s Who of Austria’s leading

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sculptors: Joannis Avramidis, Wander Bertoni, Otto Eder, Roland Goeschl, Rudolf Hoflehner, Alfred Hrdlicka, Oswald Oberhuber, Josef Pillhofer, Franz Pöhacker, Karl Prantl, Erwin Reiter, Andreas Urteil or Rudi Wach. Some of them are Albrecht's close friends, some just colleagues and acquaintances. In addition, the show included artists from Vorarlberg with whom he was, or remains, in contact. One of his closest life-long friends was the painter Hubert Berchtold (1922–1983).

## **The human body**

From the moment Herbert Albrecht produced his first sculpture, man has formed the centre of his work. The whole figure or some detail of it, a standing, sitting or reclining figure, the torso, and especially the head. In 1964, he produced a small abstract bronze head, the first of his series of heads that continues to this day. It comprises hundreds of heads, some large, some huge, some small, some displayed in public spaces (e.g. in front of the Juridicum, the building housing the Law Faculty of Vienna University) and some in his home. Fritz Wotruba said "let us not allow the person who transposes the image of our dreams into art to violate it. Let us give art its freedom – and then we own it too. It is the most precious thing we have." And Albrecht added "it is the sculptors who again and again return man to man; not as an individual but in the unity of human expression." We find proof of this in each of Herbert Albrecht's figures.

## **Working in stone**

Herbert Albrecht has remained faithful to the sculptor's oldest material. Stone. Contrary to the zeitgeist and despite all the hardship inherent in this work, stone has remained his preferred medium for over six decades. He once said that "stone is ancient, as Wotruba once pointed out, it is difficult, it is expensive, in one word: it is arduous. But thus is also defies easy handling, it defies the fast pace of modern life. The difficulties it creates are its very strength. So it will remain my material – I cannot find another one". The only other medium in which Albrecht can work is bronze. This places him in the tradition of the great sculptors of the 20th century. The Austrian sculptor Karl Prantl (1923–2010) once wrote in a letter to Herbert Albrecht: "what unites us is the stone – and freedom." He meant the freedom inherent in the stone.

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## **The studio as an island**

The Spanish philosopher and poet, José Ortega y Gasset, once described an artwork as an imaginary island against which laps reality. You believe this sentence when, travelling from Wolfurt (near Bregenz), you take the old road to Buch, and just behind the church you pass Herbert Albrecht's studio. Or rather, you do not pass it you stop to look. Involuntarily and every time. Rubble covers the ground like wood shavings the floor of a carpenter's workshop. On a wood-horse rests a large stone, next to it sit stone figures. It is the island of which José Ortega y Gasset speaks, it is the workplace of a sculptor where he wields chisel and hammer, and the world around him disappears. It is slow work, there is something meditative about how the artist pounds the stone, stroke, stroke, he wipes off the fine dust, checks his work by running his hand over it, checks it by looking at it, steps back and then returns once more to work on the growing sculpture that is slowly emerging from the stone.

## **A fateful time**

Over three decades ago I travelled to Greece with Herbert Albrecht, his wife Brigitte, and my wife Cilli, who has since passed away. Our itinerary took us from Athens to the ancient sites on the Peloponnese – Corinth, Epidauros, Mycenae and Olympia – to Delphi. Shortly before our trip something terrible happened: Albrecht's son Phillip died in a climbing accident. His spirit accompanied us to all those places where death and dissolution are ever-present. Thirty years later we retraced our steps, the Albrechts and my second wife, Ursula. Accompanied by a wealth of memories. And today, just as then, we visited at Olympia a very special place, the workshop of Phidias, the greatest sculptor of classical antiquity. Here in a room that is no longer a room were born some of the greatest sculptures that also no longer exist. When we returned from our first trip, after the loss of his son, Albrecht found it difficult to return to work. But he produced three large white marble statues, extracted from the calamity.

## **His main subject matter: the human head**

His earliest heads date from the 1940s, i.e. while he was still enrolled at the Kunstgewerbeschule in Innsbruck and before he moved to the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna. Terracotta

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portraits, realistic depictions of relations, friends, acquaintances. Since then, Albrecht has never abandoned this subject matter. A small abstract bronze head, no more than eighteen centimetres high and produced in 1964, marks a caesura in his oeuvre: it is the end of portraits and the beginning of his intense interest in the head, the “most important, interesting and beautiful part of man” (as Albrecht once explained in a conversation), which continues to this day.

Since then he has produced hundreds of heads, most of them made of stone, a few cast in bronze. They come in different sizes, small ones, on a human scale, or monumental. The one in Vienna, in front of the Juridicum, is a huge bronze head, the one in front of the “Cubus” in Wolfurt near Bregenz a large “head as a disc” made of black granite. And a 1996 finalised white marble head the size of a grown man stands in front of the new Illwerke Zentrum Montafon in Vandans.

In the exhibition Albrecht is represented by his most characteristic subject-matter, the head, and his most important medium, stone. Of course, their size alone makes them anything but realistic heads, they are more the notion of a head, or what Herbert Albrecht once described as “when all thought has receded so far from the head that it becomes a shape, like a house, a ‘house of the head’, so that it can still be felt but no longer recognised, than the large format is also permissible for a head.”

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## PRESS PHOTOGRAPHS

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These images may be used free of charge when writing about the exhibition; to download them please go to <http://press.khm.at>.



*Poster image*

Herbert Albrecht  
**Sitting figure**  
1988, bronze, h. 64 cm  
© Photo: Gabriel Rűf



Herbert Albrecht in his studio  
© Photo: Gabriel Rűf



Herbert Albrecht and curator Walter Fink  
© Photo: Gabriel Rűf



Herbert Albrecht at work  
© Photo: Gabriel Rűf



Herbert Albrecht  
**Head**  
1964, bronze, h. 18 cm  
In the Collection of Greek and Roman Antiquities of  
Kunsthistorisches Museum Vienna  
© Photo: Gabriel Rűf

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Herbert Albrecht

**Head**

2004, glauconite, h. 40 cm

In the Collection of Greek and Roman Antiquities of  
Kunsthistorisches Museum Vienna

© Photo: Gabriel Rűf



Herbert Albrecht

**Double Head**

2016, bronze, h. 39 cm

In the Collection of Greek and Roman Antiquities of  
Kunsthistorisches Museum Vienna

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Herbert Albrecht

**Owls Head**

1972, bronze, polished, h. 17 cm

© Photo: Gabriel Rűf



Herbert Albrecht

**Head**

1964, bronze, h. 18 cm

© Photo: Gabriel Rűf



Herbert Albrecht

**Figure Stele**

2005, diabase, h. 204 cm

© Photo: Rudolf Zűndel



Herbert Albrecht

**Torso**

1980, Russian marble, h. 49,5 cm

© Photo: Gabriel Rűf

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Herbert Albrecht  
**Idol 1 and Idol 2**  
2016, Brazilian marble, h. 108 cm  
© Photo: Gabriel Rűf



**Emperor Augustus**  
Roman-Augustan, early 1<sup>st</sup> century AD  
Marble, h. 36 cm  
Kunsthistorisches Museum Vienna,  
Collection of Greek and Roman Antiquities  
© KHM-Museumsverband



**Torso of Doryphoros**  
Roman copy of a Greek original of ca. 440 BC  
Marble, h. 126 cm  
Kunsthistorisches Museum Vienna,  
Collection of Greek and Roman Antiquities  
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## OPENING HOURS AND ENTRANCE FEES

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Tuesdays – Sundays, 10 a.m. – 6 p.m.  
Thursdays until 9 p.m.  
*Open daily in December!*

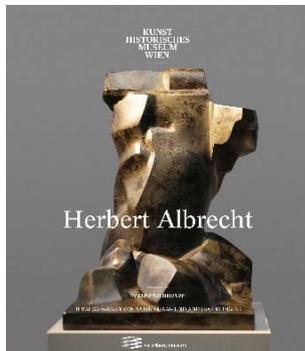
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Concessions	€ 11
Vienna Card	€ 14
Group ticket p.p. (groups of 10, or over)	€ 11
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<https://shop.khm.at/en/ticket-shop/>

## CATALOGUE

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Sabine Haag – Andreas Rudigier (Hgg.)

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