

GOLD

An Exhibition in the Imperial BELVEDERE Palace Museum, Vienna



The Belvedere Museum (www.belvedere.at) is currently preparing for a major exhibition about the concept and use of gold in art history. It will open in the spring of 2012. The space allocated for this show includes the Lower Belvedere, the Orangery and the former stables („Prunkstall“). GOLD will be guest curated by art historian Thomas Zaunschirm (www.zaunschirm.de).

On top of the museum's own inventory (ranging from late gothic altars to the art nouveau period), there will be works on loan from other museums, collections and galleries, mostly 20th century and contemporary art. It is a commonly held view that gold was used mainly in medieval painting. But from the 19th century on, especially around the boom years of 1900, gold has achieved a new importance in contemporary art that has been overlooked so far. This show wants to contradict the premise that the avant-garde as well as the Renaissance banned the use of gold.

„Der Kuss“ (1908), the world famous picture by Gustav Klimt, will open the exhibition. This iconic work will be confronted with characteristic masterpieces from different periods. Caspar David Friedrich created his „Tetschener Altar“ (1808) exactly one century before „Der Kuss“. After the Middle Ages, the use of gold was limited to the frame; but Friedrich includes it in an iconographic way. The „Tetschener Altar“ shows the contrast between a gold-free painting and the use of a very precious frame in a unique way. Friedrichs work can not be transported. But William Blake and Philipp Otto Runge were interested in using gold foil too. An early work of Blake of the collection of the Society of Antiquaries of London will demonstrate the early historicist interest of the artists. In the 18th century, Giandomenico Tiepolo used gold leaf for the first time in the frescoes of the Porto family in Vicenza (1757). These monumental works were in a private collection and were first shown in 2009 in the Arp Museum/Germany.

Up to then the use of gold leaf had been banned from painting or become all but invisible. In the 17th century, artists sometimes used gold foil as a primer coat on copper plate, as did Rembrandt in his „Bildnis einer betenden Frau“ (1625) and Frans von Mieris d.Ä. in „Besuch des Arztes“ (1657). A work from the early 21st century (by Damien Hirst, Marc Quinn or Not Vital) will conclude the layout of the centuries in this room and take the topic of gold into the present time. These masterpieces ranging from the 17th to the 21st century summarise the use of gold in the history of painting, and they also point to the following rooms which will focus on themes or topics like still life, frame, landscape, sculpture, the use of gold in public spaces in Vienna, triptych and halos. Traditional works will be contrasted with contemporary art. In the last room we will show the origins of the use of gold by exhibiting examples of book illumination, icons and mummy portrait.



Goldcabinet und Prunkstall

The gold cabinet in the opposite wing of the building will conclude the lower Belvedere part of the show. The new connecting archway leads to the Orangery and the Prunkstall. In the Prunkstall we will show many of the late gothic works on gold background from our own inventory. They will be confronted with large contemporary works on gold leaf and offer a fresh view on tradition.

The wide spectrum of the manifold visual art of the 20th and 21st century will be displayed in the white cube of the 350 m² Orangery. This gold treasure of contemporary art comprises over 100 works and can be experienced here for the first time in this rich abundance and depth. Among the classics of the 20th century you will find Willi Baumeister, Joseph Beuys, James Lee Byars, Lucio Fontana, Robert Rauschenberg, Yves Klein,

Louise Nevelson, Andy Warhol and others. In the contemporary section there will be, to name but a few, John Armleder, Georg Baselitz, Chris Burden, Cristian Eckart, Elmgreen & Dragset, Jan Fabre, Helmut Federle, Anish Kapoor, Terence Koh, Iannis Kounellis, Milan Kunc, Fang Lijun, Chris Ofili, Mimmo Paladino, Sigmar Polke, Gerwald Rockenschaub, Nedko Solakov, Philip Taaffe, Tenmyouya Hisashi, Not Vital.



Orangery of the Belvedere