



## **21er Haus**

Museum of  
Contemporary Art

Quartier Belvedere  
Arsenalstraße 1  
1030 Vienna, Austria

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PRESS CONTACT  
Julia Aßl, Head  
+43 1 795 57-185  
+43 664 800 141 185  
[j.assl@21erhaus.at](mailto:j.assl@21erhaus.at)

Pia Sääf  
+43 1 795 57-339  
[P.Saeaeef@21erhaus.at](mailto:P.Saeaeef@21erhaus.at)

## **OSWALD OBERHUBER**

**9th March to 26th June 2016**

**One of the most comprehensive solo exhibitions on Oswald Oberhuber to date**

Oswald Oberhuber (b. 1931) is one of the most influential living Austrian artists. The current retrospective at the 21er Haus can be seen as the most comprehensive presentation of Oberhuber's work to date, showcasing his prolific output from the late 1940s to the present through approximately 300 objects divided into 13 chapters, including informal sculpture, drawings and paintings, collages, assemblages, writing and number pictures, big fabric works, and many more.

"One shouldn't develop a style; actually, every picture should be new. At some point, you get into a routine and know how things will turn out. As soon as I feel like that, I'm bored," says Oswald Oberhuber about his principle of "permanent change", which has informed not only his artistic practice, but also his roles as exhibition maker, gallery owner, professor and director at the University of Applied Arts Vienna.

Oswald Oberhuber's work represents permanent change and hence a radical break with the idea of a homogeneous, stylistically consistent oeuvre – he is, as it were, a postmodern artist *avant la lettre*. This is reflected in the diversity of the exhibition.

"Simultaneously", say the curators Luisa Ziaja and Alfred Weidinger, "throughout the diverse range of styles, media, materials and techniques used, ultimately Oswald Oberhuber is always visible. His approach to form and color, his focus on the line, are common themes that run through his work and are made strikingly apparent in the way the works are positioned opposite and alongside each other in this exhibition. Based on an idea by Oberhuber himself, the exhibition

architecture for the 21er Haus and its interplay with the artworks on display facilitate precisely that: surprising moments between reorientation and continuity.”

### **Pioneer of informal art in Austria**

Oswald Oberhuber initially learnt sculpture at the federal vocational school in Innsbruck, Tyrol. At barely twenty years old, he developed an entirely independent artistic approach to French post-war art, particularly Tachisme and Informalism in the media of drawing, painting and sculpture. This non-figurative art – also called Lyrical Abstraction – aspires to completely dissolve form by means of a spontaneous, subconscious creative process. Not only is Oberhuber one of the first informal artists in Austria, but rather by translating these principles from painting into his concept of “informal sculpture” he also made a unique contribution in an international context. These works are mostly realized as three-dimensional spatial drawings made of plaster, wire and other fragile materials. They contrast radically with the then canonical vocabulary of modernism in general and post-cubist sculpture in particular. In the mid-1950s, at the height of the Informalism Oberhuber brought this phase to a close, started working realistically and took the first of a great number of artistic leaps, which would define his work from this moment on.

### **Permanent change**

Oberhuber followed this pattern of surprising new beginnings – a testament to his open and agile mind – with great consistency. Referring to Leon Trotsky’s theory of “permanent revolution”, he set forth his Principle of Permanent Change in Art in 1956. Always evading definition and categorization, unaffected by reservations, Oberhuber explores a wide range of artistic movements, discovers and devises, experiments and assimilates, to exhaust each potential before moving on to the next new thing. His anti-heroic approach to art manifests itself in his constant questioning of his own method as well as the parameters of the artistic production of meaning and the concepts of work and author, which repeatedly begin to unravel.

### **Catalogue**

Across the 454 pages of the accompanying exhibition catalogue, Oswald Oberhuber is interviewed by the curators about all of his phases of artistic production and the subjects of his creative work: from his artistic beginnings and his informal works to his return to figuration, his portraits and self-portraits, writing and number pictures, collages and assemblages, his contribution to the Venice Biennale in 1972, his fashion designs and wooden sculptures of the 1980s to his paintings and drawings of recent decades.

To mark the exhibition, the sculpture *Hand und Traube* [Hand and grape], one of several generous endowments by the artist to the contemporary art collection of the Belvedere, has been installed in the Sculpture Garden of the 21er Haus.

In addition to the collection of the Belvedere, works are on loan from the *Artothek des Bundes*, Essl Museum, Costume and Fashion Collection of the University of Applied Arts Vienna, Leopold Museum, *Museum moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig Wien*, Neue Galerie Graz at the Universalmuseum Joanneum, University of Veterinary Medicine, Vienna, *Galerie bei der Albertina*, Galerie Elisabeth & Klaus Thoman and Galerie Meyer Kainer as well as from the Cajetan Gril, Hummel, Philipp Konzett and Rudi Molacek private collections and the schmutz collection.

### **#Ossi21**

For the first time, the 21er Haus is inviting all visitors to share their impressions and photos of the exhibition on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram using the hashtags #Ossi21 #21erHaus.

[www.21erhaus.at](http://www.21erhaus.at)  
[facebook.com//21erHaus](https://facebook.com/21erHaus)  
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## OSWALD OBERHUBER: BIOGRAPHY

born on 1st February 1931 in Merano (I).

### 1940

Family moves from South Tyrol to Innsbruck as a result of the agreement between the German Reich and fascist Italy, which aimed to resettle the German-speaking population of South Tyrol in the German Reich ("South Tyrol Option Agreement").

### 1945–49

Attends the vocational school in Innsbruck, sculpture department.  
Contact with contemporary French art via the cultural institute in Innsbruck as well as via the French bookshop (Tyrol is a French occupation zone from 1945–1955).  
First non-figurative drawings as well as literary works.

### 1948/49

Starts to practise informal painting and establishes informal constructed sculptures as well as creating his first *Grümpelplastiken* (sculptures from waste materials).

### 1950

Studies at the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna under Fritz Wotruba, as well as at the Staatliche Akademie in Stuttgart under Willi Baumeister. One hour with each.

### 1952

Exhibition of sculpture and graphic arts, Tiroler Kunstpavillon, Innsbruck (other solo exhibitions there in 1955, 1958 and 1964)\*.

### 1953

Bursary for study visits in Paris and Cologne.

### 1955

Moves to Vienna.

### 1954/56

Manifesto of *Permanent Change in Art*, a core thesis of which was to reject the formation of any kind of style.  
Moves from informal painting to figurative painting.

### 1960

Marries Elisabeth Hohenbruck, with whom he goes on to have three children.

### 1961

Member of the Kulturbeirat of Tyrol.  
Designs and organizes exhibitions in Innsbruck.  
Develops the Modern Gallery at the Ferdinandeum Museum of Tyrolean Regional Heritage.

### 1962/63

Beginning of the series *Ich als Kind* [Me as a child]; creates monumental self-portraits.

\* Of over 200 solo exhibitions and over 500 participations in joint exhibitions, only a few are mentioned here. Furthermore, Oswald Oberhuber has curated and organized 300 exhibitions.

### 1964–65

Beginning of the series *Zahnbilder* [Tooth pictures].

First solo exhibition at the Galerie nächst St. Stephan, Vienna.

Beginning of his friendship with Monsignor Otto Mauer; Artistic Advisor at the Galerie nächst St. Stephan, Vienna.

Beginning of a four-year editorship at the architectural magazine "BAU", together with Hans Hollein, Walter Pichler and Gustav Peichl.

### 1966

Creates his first environments; attempts to realize *Art Without Artists*.

Lecturer under Fritz Wotruba at the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna (until 1973).

### 1967

Participates at *Trigon*, Graz.

### 1968

Founds the *Oberhuber* newspaper.

### 1969

Exhibition: *Surrealism without Surrealists, Art without Artists* at the Galerie nächst St. Stephan, Vienna and the Galerie im Taxispalais, Innsbruck.

### 1970

Founds the recognition award "Artwork of the Year"; first award winner is Simon Wiesenthal.

Exhibition: *Gallery at Rest – The Empty Gallery*, Galerie nächst St. Stephan, Vienna.

### 1971

Exhibition: *The Beginnings of the Informal in Austria*, Museum of the 20th Century, Vienna.

Exhibition: *Feelings: Oberhuber Paints His Exhibition*, Neue Galerie Graz at the Universalmuseum Joanneum, Graz.

A film with and about Oberhuber is shot, but not broadcast on ORF as planned.

### 1972

Official representative of Austria at the Venice Biennale (together with Hans Hollein).

### 1973

Artistic Director of the Galerie nächst St. Stephan (until 1979).

Professor at the University of Applied Arts Vienna.

### 1977

Participates in documenta VI, Kassel (D).

### 1978

*Museum im Museum* [Museum in the museum], dedicated to Austrian artists of the 1930s, is donated by Oberhuber to the Museum of the 20th Century in Vienna (now the mumok – Museum moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig Wien).

### 1979

Exhibition: *Permanent Change*, Galerie nächst St. Stephan, Vienna.

Rector of the University of Applied Arts Vienna (until 1987; introduces temporary professorships, establishes visual media design as a field of study, founds the university archive, proposes creating the Oskar Kokoschka Prize, contributes instrumentally to the presentation of an Austrian museum concept).

### 1980

Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Austrian Ludwig Foundation (until 1992).

**1982**

Participates in documenta VII, Kassel (D).

Exhibition: *Insights*, MAK – Austrian Museum of Applied Arts / Contemporary Art, Vienna.

**1983**

Exhibition: *Garden of Paradise*, Kulturzentrum bei den Minoriten, Graz.

Honorary member of the Akademie der bildenden Künste, Stuttgart.

Marries Rosemarie Schwarzwälder, with whom he goes on to have two children.

Creates a series of furniture sculptures on the basis of drawings between 1983 and 1989.

**1984**

Exhibition: *Works on Paper 1948–1984*, Albertina, Vienna.

**1985**

Exhibition: *Pinturas – Dibujos – Esculturas*, Museo de Bellas Artes, Bilbao (E).

**1986**

Participates in the exhibition *Chambres d’Amis*, Ghent (B).

Professor of painting at the Salzburg Summer Academy.

**1987**

Takes over the Institute of Museology, University of Applied Arts Vienna.

Designs the clothing collection *Effektiver Sommer* [Effective summer], presented in the context of a fashion show at the MuseumsQuartier, Vienna.

Exhibition: *Oberhuber in October: Posters from Oswald Oberhuber 1979–1987*, MAK – Austrian Museum of Applied Arts / Contemporary Art, Vienna.

Acts in the film *Back to fucking Cambridge – A film about Vienna at the turn of the century* (by Otto Mühl and Terese Schulmeister) in the role of Arnold Schönberg.

**1988**

Documentary film on Oberhuber *Das Fragmentarische in der Kunst* [The fragmentary in art] by Erwin Wagenhofer.

Exhibition: *Oswald Oberhuber 1947–1986*, Museum of Modern Art, Bolzano (I).

Exhibitions: *Oberhuber Collections 1947–1986*, Museum of the 20th Century, Vienna (now the mumok – Museum moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig Wien).

**1989**

Creates a series of forged steel sculptures on the basis of drawings between 1989 and 1993.

**1990**

Awarded the Austrian State Prize for International Culture.

Awarded the Tyrolean Art Award.

Chairman of the “Museum in Progress” (to the present day).

Member of the Austrian Ludwig Foundation.

**1991**

Re-elected as Rector of the University of Applied Arts Vienna (until 1995).

Acts in the film *Andy’s Cake – Stories aus Andy Warhols Factory* [Andy’s cake: stories from Andy Warhol’s Factory] (by Otto Mühl and Terese Schulmeister) in the role of Jackson Pollock.

Exhibition: *The Irritation in Art*, Wien Museum, Vienna.

**1993**

Exhibition: *Oswald Oberhuber*, Museo de Bellas Artes, Bilbao (E).

**1995**

Exhibition: Furniture Sculptures, Neue Galerie Graz at the Landesmuseum Joanneum, Graz

**1999**

Exhibition: *Oswald Oberhuber: Written Pictures. Up until now*, MAK – Austrian Museum of Applied Arts / Contemporary Art, Vienna.

**2001**

Beginning of the series of sculptures created from cardboard.

**2003**

Exhibition: *Mutation Permanent Change*, Kunst Meran, Merano (I).

**2004**

Awarded the Austrian Cross of Honour for Science and Art, First Class.  
Marries Imma Rasinger.

**2006**

Exhibition: *Oswald Oberhuber: The Eternal Process of Birth*, Secession, Vienna

**2009**

Exhibition *The Passions of Prince Eugene*, Belvedere, Vienna

**2013**

Designs the safety curtain for the Wiener Staatsoper (Vienna State Opera), Vienna

**2015**

Designs the glass windows of Schwanenstadt church.  
Exhibition: *Gives Oberhuber. Oberhuber Gives*, Ausstellungszentrum Heiligenkreuzerhof,  
University of Applied Arts Vienna.

## **PUBLIC PROGRAMS**

### **TALK**

**by Oswald Oberhuber**

Sunday, April 24, 2016 | 11 am | Blickle Kino at the 21er Haus

Attendance fee: € 3 or free with a valid ticket for the exhibition

Seating is limited | Registration

### **TALK**

**Oswald Oberhuber's Artistic Vision**

**by Robert Fleck** (Professor at the Art Academy Düsseldorf, Germany)

Wednesday, May 18, 2016 | 7 pm | Blickle Kino at the 21er Haus

This talk attempts to cover the entire oeuvre of Oswald Oberhuber since the immediate post-war years as well as incorporating his cultural and political activities within this framework.

Attendance fee: € 3 or free with a valid ticket for the exhibition | Registration

## **ART EDUCATION**

### **GUIDED TOUR OF THE EXHIBITION**

**Oswald Oberhuber: Retrospective**

Sundays and Public Holidays | 3 pm

March 13, 20, 27 and 28,

April 3, 10, 17 and 24,

May 1, 5, 8, 15, 16, 22, 26 and 29,

June 5, 12, 19 and 26, 2016

Attendance fee: € 4 (excl. admission) | Duration: 1 hour | Registration not required

### **CURATOR-GUIDED TOUR**

**Oswald Oberhuber**

With Luisa Ziaja and Alfred Weidinger

Wednesday, March 16, 2016 | 6 pm

Wednesday, June 22, 2016 | 7 pm

Attendance free with a valid ticket | Registration

## **BABY ON BOARD AT THE MUSEUM**

**Oswald Oberhuber**

Wednesday, April 13, 2016 | 2:30 pm

Parent-baby-group with art included! The 21er Haus offers new parents guided tours that have been adapted to the needs of you and your baby (aged 12 months and under). In a calm and quiet atmosphere, we turn our attention to the exhibitions of contemporary art as well as the history and architecture of the museum. Nappy-changing table and bottle warmer available. Prams permitted, baby carriers recommended.

Attendance fee: € 4 (plus admission) | Duration: 1 hour | Registration

## **WORKSHOP**

**Masterworks and Tea Towels**

Saturdays, April 9 and June 4, 2016 | 3 pm | *For children aged between 3 and 6*

Sundays, April 10 and June 5, 2016 | 3 pm | *For children aged between 7 and 12*

Oswald Oberhuber is celebrating his 85th birthday this year. Having been an artist for so many years, he has created an incredible number of artworks. Just like Ossie, we too love playing with form and colour. Which materials does he work with? And what can you see in his pictures? Join us on an exciting journey through his life's work and be inspired! In the workshop we will paint on tea towels like the artist does.

Attendance fee: € 4.50 | Duration: 2 hours | Registration

## **Art Education & Visitors Service 21er Haus**

Michaela Köppl, head

+43 1 795 57-707

M.Koeppel@belvedere.at

+ 43 1 79557-770

public@21erhaus.at

## GENERAL INFORMATION

<b>Exhibition Title / Artist</b>	Oswald Oberhuber
<b>Exhibits</b>	294
<b>Curators</b>	Luisa Ziaja, Alfred Weidinger
<b>Exhibition Dates</b>	9th March to 26th June 2016
<b>Catalogue</b>	<i>Oswald Oberhuber</i> Ed: Agnes Husslein-Arco, Alfred Weidinger, Luisa Ziaja Belvedere 2016, 454 p., 22.5 x 27.5 cm, Hardcover German edition + English supplement ISBN 978-3-902805-99-7, € 49
<b>Public Program</b>	<b>Talk by Oswald Oberhuber</b> Sunday, April 24, 2016   11 am   Blickle Kino <b>Talk by Robert Fleck</b> Wednesday, May 18, 2016   7 pm   Blickle Kino
<b>Curator-Guided Tours</b>	Wednesday, March 16, 2016   6 pm Wednesday, June 22, 2016   7 pm
<b>Venue</b>	21er Haus – Museum of Contemporary Art Quartier Belvedere Arsenalstraße 1 1030 Vienna, Austria
<b>Museum Hours</b>	Wednesday 11 am–9 pm Thursday through Sunday 11 am–6 pm open on Public Holidays
<b>Tickets</b>	General Admission   € 7 21er Haus Annual Ticket   € 21 Reduced   € 5.50 Under 18   free
<b>Art Education Contact</b>	Art Education & Visitors Service 21er Haus Michaela Köppl +43 1 795 57-707 M.Koeppel@21erhaus.at
<b>Press Contact</b>	Press 21er Haus Julia Aßl +43 1 795 57-185 +43 664 800 141 185 j.assl@21erhaus.at

High-resolution images as well as a PDF of the exhibition catalogue are available for download:  
[www.21erhaus.at/21h\\_en/press](http://www.21erhaus.at/21h_en/press)