

HERBERT BRANDL
TIME TO IMAGINE

Opening on Friday, 8 April 2022 at 6 p.m.
 8 April – 24 June 2022

On entering **HERBERT BRANDL**'s atelier in the 8th district of Vienna, you become immersed in a world that leaves behind hectic day-to-day life. You feel as if you are in a curiosity cabinet: this late Renaissance innovation, also known as an art chamber, evolved from the early chambers of rare or curious things and describes a collecting concept that presents objects of differing origins and classification together. The collections had the purpose of showing the universal context of all things in order to convey a view of the world in which history, art, nature and science merge as a unity. This is exactly what happens in **HERBERT BRANDL**'s atelier: you can admire things which particularly interest him, for instance, a huge variety of minerals, knife blades, plants and other artefacts in display cases and cabinets, arranged on shelves and tables. Works from very diverse phases of creativity hang on the walls. His statement "everything is a life, everything is in flow" subsumes his view of the world.

At present he is especially preoccupied with cultivating and fostering bonsais. We consider ourselves very fortunate in being able to present for the first time the new series of works on this subject. If you look up the word 'bonsai' in the Oxford English Dictionary, you discover that bonsai is the "art of growing ornamental, artificially dwarfed varieties of trees and shrubs in pots". If you enter the circle of followers of this art form, you realize that a presentation form of dwarf trees has become established internationally: against a black background, highlighted from the back, the artistically pruned plants unfold their full beauty. The new works of **HERBERT BRANDL** also reflect the manifold possibilities of bonsai art (various kinds of tree and cut): mostly on a black painting background, surrounded by a bright aura, we encounter all kinds of dwarf trees. The dishes belonging to them are left out. You could gain the impression that you are confronted with a forest of deciduous and coniferous trees. The size of the works intensifies this illusion. The thick layer of colour *King Sylvestris* is an example, and observers can sense the quintessence of the painting: you can imagine the artist and how he applies the acryl colour with spatula, paintbrush, trowel and roller in a dynamic process to the grounded canvas. A somewhat primitive element of the painting process can be experienced. The artist names Van Gogh, William Turner, late Monet and Pablo Picasso as his great, early models.

HERBERT BRANDL does not make nature tangible as an illustration but as a "frozen concentrated experience". This applies to the root made of aluminium which greets visitors to our exhibition in prominent position on the right wall. *Le cattive madri* by Giovanni Segantini, in the collection of the Austrian Belvedere Gallery, appears before the inner eye. A piece of dead wood in contrast to the living, blossoming or sprouting bonsais, a contrast which would also have pleased Segantini, the great painter of nature (*1858 Arco, former Austrian Empire – †1899 Pontresina, Switzerland).

In an interview in preparation for his major individual exhibition in the Belvedere in 2020 Herbert Brandl said, "I am an enthusiastic pessimist." If, however, one looks at his oeuvre from the past forty years, the colourful, large-scale paintings, one can assume a great optimist behind this virtuoso art.

Salzburg, April 2022

Katja Mittendorfer