

**GALERIE NÄCHST ST. STEPHAN  
ROSEMARIE SCHWARZWÄLDER**

**HERBERT BRANDL**  
Oh Manitu  
Wien 1, Domgasse 6

11 NOV 2021 – 22 JAN 2022

Following the exhibitions by Sheila Hicks and Ernst Caramelle, Galerie nächst St. Stephan Rosemarie Schwarzwälder is now presenting Herbert Brandl's show "Oh Manitu" in the new gallery space at Domgasse 6. On view will be a series of new works revolving around the theme of trees. Shown individually in the center of each picture, Brandl's trees are presented almost as if they were portraits of individual personalities. The trees come in a variety of styles. Some are rendered in strong, expressive brushstrokes, standing in front of an impasto black background and conveying a diffuse, sinister atmosphere, while others show delicately placed colors interacting with dominant, white empty spaces to generate a pictorial effect that seems to refer to far Eastern aesthetics. For these latter works, in place of a traditional painterly method, Brandl has employed a new technique in which he essentially creates canvas prints using another canvas covered in acrylic paint. In other words, the artist draws on the principle of the monotype – a technique that has remained a constant factor in his work since 2009.

Brandl's work has been revolving around nature for over twenty years now. His emblematic paintings of mountains and alpine panoramas provide monumental and sublime views, while other works zoom in and blow up meadows and grass. Together, they reveal an oscillation between close-ups and distant views of nature. His work is not about the illustration of landscapes, however; it's about the fundamental examination of the relationship between humans and the nature around them. Unlike many of his pictures in which he seems to represent a pristine nature entirely untouched (or rather no longer touched) by humans, these newer works in the exhibition represent something different: the trees in the pictures are bonsais. This art of shaping trees from Japan (originally from China) is based on the idea of limiting the growth of the tree. The goal is to create a harmony between natural elements – a harmony that arises from a balance between nature that is alive, the powers of nature, and humans. A bonsai is a miniature representation of this: nature that is alive is symbolized by the tree, the powers of nature by the stones or gravel, and humans by their craft in the form of the pot or bowl. Although Brandl's trees are not giants growing freely in nature, but rather represent nature regulated by humans, they still symbolize the balance between humans and nature.

Brandl's art is interwoven with his passion for collecting material and visual phenomena. Along with his deep fascination with Japanese swords, quartz, and big African cats, over the last 10 years (especially recently), he has turned to the acquisition and care of bonsai trees. In his painterly transformation of these bonsais, quieter and more intimate subjects are coupled with the grand gestures of sublime scenes of nature, expressing the artist's direct and very personal approach to nature.

*Oh Manitu.* Brandl's universe is full of many facets and references. His collections are often the source of thematic and formal inspiration for his pictures, while his treasure trove of quotes from comics, films, music, and everyday media deliver the titles of his exhibitions. Dodging clear references and interpretations, these titles play with pop-cultural allusions and provide a humorous counterpoint as a way of inoculating his art against a far too sober or romanticizing interpretation.

Véronique Abpurg

HERBERT BRANDL was born in Graz in 1959; he lives and works in Vienna. 2004 – 2019 Professorship at the Kunstakademie Düsseldorf. In 1989 Herbert Brandl took part in the São Paulo Biennale and, in 1992, the Documenta IX in Kassel. In 2007 he represented Austria at the Venice Biennale.

Solo exhibitions (selected): Kunsthaus Graz; Kunsthalle Graz; Belvedere 21, Vienna (2020), Museum Franz Gertsch, Burgdorf, Switzerland (2017), Haus der Kunst St. Josef, Solothurn; Osthaus Museum Hagen (2016), Kunsthalle Emden; Altana Kulturstiftung, Bad Homburg; Bank Austria Kunstforum, Vienna (2012), Albertina, Vienna (2010), Deichtorhallen, Hamburg (2009), Künstlerhaus Graz, Austria; Neue Galerie am Landesmuseum Joanneum, Graz (2002), Kunsthalle Basel (1999), Secession, Vienna (1998), Museum Haus Esters, Krefeld (1994), Museum Van Hedendaagse Kunst, Ghent; Kunsthalle Bern (1991)

Solo exhibitions at Galerie nächst St. Stephan Rosemarie Schwarzwälder, Vienna: 1997 (with Adrian Schiess), 1998, 2003, 2005, 2007, 2010, 2012, 2014, 2016, 2019, 2020

Museum collections (selected): Albertina, Vienna; Centre Pompidou, Paris; Kunsthaus Zürich; Kunstmuseum Bonn; Musée d'Art Moderne de Paris; Museu Serralves, Porto; Museum Moderner Kunst, Vienna; Reina Sofia, Madrid; Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus, Munich; The Renaissance Society, Chicago; Universalmuseum Joanneum, Graz