

BELVEDERE

In the colorful forest of art

- The Lower Belvedere exhibits trees of art and thus creates a diverse forest.

Johannes Gaisfuss from 09/29/2022, 3:00 pm | updated: 09/30/2022



Rona Pondick inspired a hallucination on "Head in Tree".
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"A tree that falls rumbles more than a blade of grass that you mow," says a proverb. This underlines that the loss of forests, or even an individual tree, has lasting consequences for humans, animals and the entire planet, not only in this time of concern about climate change. The tree's universal importance, not only as a protective force, has also left its mark on art: the tree was and is an important symbol. The Lower Belvedere presents a current exhibition with the focus on this very plant, themed 'Grow. The tree in art'.

This exhibition is dedicated to a very topical subject, says Stella Rollig, the Director General of the Belvedere. Stella explains that the tree is to be understood, among other things, as a symbol of the climate crisis. She is also pleased that the show is a "green exhibition." "Grow. The tree in art" was designed to be ecologically sustainable, for example there were no plastic adhesive letters on the walls. Instead, the wall texts were painted. Miroslav Hal'ák, curator of the exhibition, also emphasizes that it was a great challenge "not to present such a big topic in an excessive manner."

The tree as the backbone

The show was divided into three "chapters." In the first part, the plant can be seen as a spiritual symbol. The second deals with the tree as a sign of knowledge and as a source of inspiration. The third chapter is a "merging" of the first two, as Hal'ák reports. The "heart", as Rollig calls it because of its central placement in the exhibition, is the sculpture "Head in Tree," by the American artist Rona Pondick. There is a head in a leafless treetop. The idea for this work of art came to her after a spinal operation, as the artist reports.

In addition to this work, the show also includes a human sculpture made from bronze laurel leaves. "Respirare l'ombra" by Giuseppe Penone is open at the front and presents her golden lung made of golden laurel leaves. The message is unmistakable: Man can only exist with healthy trees. It acts as a reminder of the endangered "green lungs" caused by the deforestation of the rainforest.



An allusion to the "Green Lung": "Respirare l'ombra" by Giuseppe Penone. - © Bildrecht, Vienna 2022, Archivio Penone



A look at the "wooded" exhibition. - © Johannes Stoll / Belvedere, Vienna

You can also see "Quantum Gap" by Elisabeth von Samsonow. The debarked trunk shows that a tree is not "just" a tree. A carved face has metal strings in its mouth that run across the bridge to the tuning pegs. A symbol for the musical use of the wood - or for the fact that the tree itself is musical. The face can also be understood as a sign of the life of the tree, while the gap symbolizes the scientific importance of the plant. Also on display in the exhibition are "The Woodcut" by Ferdinand Andri, "The Bad Mothers" by Giovanni Segantini and "Alma Mater" by Jimmy Zurek. A total of 102 works by 76 artists can be seen.

Own soundtrack

A soundtrack was also curated for the musical accompaniment of the show. This includes compositions by Erik Truffaz, David Kollar and other artists. The pianist Nora Skuta also interprets a sonata by John Cage on the soundtrack. However, the music will not play in the background of the exhibition, but can only be heard via the audio guide or the app. You can enjoy the show through several senses at the same time.