



*Church of the Most Holy Trinity* on the Georgenberg in Vienna-Mauer, Photo: Johannes Stoll / Belvedere, Vienna

Vienna, May 5, 2021

**Belvedere 21**  
Arsenalstraße 1  
1030 Vienna

**Opening hours:**  
Tuesday to Sunday  
11 am to 6 pm  
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**Press contact:**  
Désirée Schellerer  
+43 664 800 141 303  
[d.schellerer@belvedere.at](mailto:d.schellerer@belvedere.at)

## WOTRUBA. HEAVENWARDS

### The Church on the Georgenberg

May 6, 2021 to March 13, 2022

An architectural icon created from concrete blocks. Today, *The Church of the Most Holy Trinity* is considered a modern landmark in Vienna, but in the beginning, the artistic design by sculptor Fritz Wotruba was the subject of much controversy. His design was implemented in collaboration with architect Fritz Gerhard Mayr between 1974 and 1976, resulting in one of Vienna's most striking sacred buildings. Forty-five years after its consecration, the Belvedere is for the first time presenting an exhibition expressly dedicated to the so-called Wotruba Church.

*"The church is a landmark, and for many, it has achieved cult status. Until now, little has been known about its genesis and place in the post-war era and art historical narrative. The exhibition seeks to fill this gap and provides a fresh perspective on this beloved building,"* says Stella Rollig, CEO of the Belvedere.

*The Church of the Most Holy Trinity* was consecrated on October 24, 1976, more than a year after Wotruba's death and thirteen years into a challenging evolutionary process. The initial mandate given to the sculptor in 1965 entailed designing a convent with a church for the Carmelite Sisters in Steinbach near Vienna. In 1966, Wotruba delivered his first sculptural sketches and drawings. However, the project never came to fruition. The model of the monastery church, though, served as the artistic blueprint for the construction of *The Most Holy Trinity* rectory church on the Georgenberg in the Vienna district of Mauer.

Fritz Wotruba (1907–75) is now recognized as one of the most important European sculptors of classical modernism. A critical voice and teacher of several generations at the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna, he became a central figure in the reconstruction of art and cultural life during the post-war era in Austria. Wotruba's work received considerable international recognition beginning in the 1950s due to his extensive exhibition presence in Europe and the United States.

After 1945, the sculptor began to develop his characteristic style of abstracting and giving architectural form to the human figure by using block-like elements and cylindrical forms. During this phase, Wotruba developed a novel and pared-down formal idiom. Beginning in the 1960s, he worked on set designs for the theater. The basic idea of three-dimensional set elements, situated between figure and architecture, allowed for a new kind of spatial extension in his works. Wotruba expanded his figures into "figurations," which he built, stacked, and layered from cubic forms. His sculptural church design is based on these foundations and marks the culmination of his lifetime oeuvre. Conceptions of nature, landscape, figure, and architecture merge to form organic compositions. In *The Church of the Most Holy Trinity*, the sculptor realized his dream, formulated in 1948, of a "sculpture in which landscape, architecture, and city become one."

### The Exhibition

*WOTRUBA. Heavenwards. The Church on the Georgenberg* illustrates the evolution of this important building, composed of 135 concrete cubes, while also presenting the archisculptural design in context with Wotruba's complete body of work. This dialogue between sculpture and architecture is evident throughout the artist's sculptural oeuvre. The show highlights his design drawings, church models, and additional sculptural works from the 1960s. It is the first time that almost all the sculptural designs for *The Church of the Most Holy Trinity* have been united in one exhibition.

The show covers several thematic topics: One highlights the controversial public debate on the church building project back in May 1968 following the presentation of Wotruba's designs for the Carmelite convent at the Galerie nächst St. Stephan in Vienna. Another concerns a more recent debate, sparked by the addition in 2019 of an elevator and the expansion of parish rooms situated within the hillside to include a new entrance and glass front; in this case, the wrangling shifted to preserving the original appearance of this architectural monument, the significance of which has long since become widely recognized.

The exhibition also focuses on Fritz Wotruba's lifelong exploration of International Modernism and Austrian artistic tradition, particularly the influence of Viennese Modernism on his sculptural work and the church's design. Architectural elements such as stelae and cubes captured the sculptor's interest at an early stage. Graves and monuments by artists such as Adolf Loos, Anton Hanak, and Josef Hoffmann served as models for his work. Wotruba's church model with no roof, and the blocks from the early building phase of the church that rise like sacred pillars, evoke memories of the Neolithic cult site known as Stonehenge – as do the stelae on the west facade that run from top to bottom.

The unique nature of Wotruba's artistic structure clearly stands out when compared with other international sculptural architecture, from the 1950s to the present, from Le Corbusier to Günther Domenig. His concentration on the figure, architecture, and space reveals the sculptor's connections with archisculptural works by Richard Serra, Max Bill, Aurélie Nemours, and Hans Hollein.

The extraordinary work of modern sculptural architecture continues to exert a strong pull on contemporary artists. As examples, the exhibition features Thomas Draschan's experimental film on the Wotruba Church (2014) and Evy Jokhova's transdisciplinary exploration of the architecture of the sacred building (2016–17). Aglaia Konrad's cinematic reflection *Wotruba Wien* has been in the Belvedere's collection since 2018.

The exhibits on view primarily originate from Fritz Wotruba's extensive estate, which consists of his artistic and written works and a large body of other documents. In 2011 they were entrusted to the Österreichische Galerie Belvedere, and since then, the Belvedere 21 has made them accessible to researchers and the public at large.

*"The formal genesis of The Church of the Most Holy Trinity can only be clarified from the sculptural work of Wotruba. Therefore, the exhibition focuses primarily on the dialogue between sculpture and architecture, which distinguishes Wotruba's sculptural work. The scientific reappraisal critically examines the creation of legends and myths relating to the church building,"* says Gabriele Stöger-Spevak, curator of the exhibition.

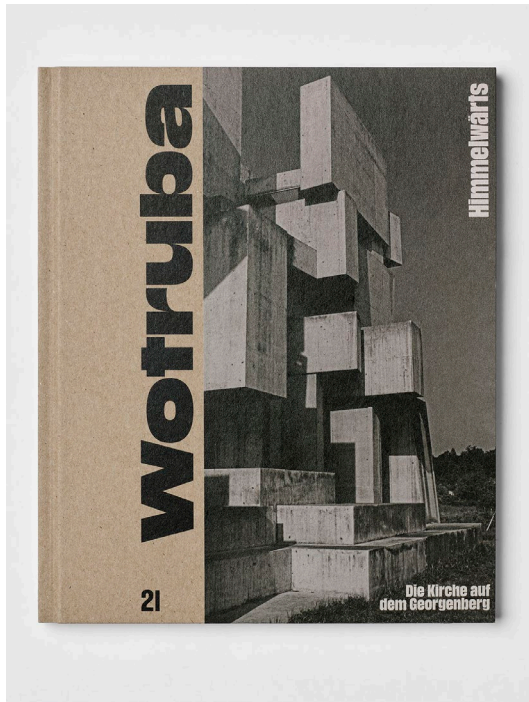
## BIOGRAPHY OF FRITZ WOTRUBA

\* Vienna 1907, † Vienna 1975

- April 23, 1907 Born in Vienna as the youngest of eight children to a Czech tailor and a Hungarian domestic worker.
- 1921-25 Apprenticeship in an engraving and die-cutting workshop in Vienna. From 1923 attends the evening class in life drawing at the Vienna School of Arts and Crafts.
- 1926-29 Attends the specialized sculpture class at the Vienna School of Arts and Crafts under Anton Hanak and Eugen Steinhof.
- 1929 Disciplinary proceedings and expulsion from the School of Arts and Crafts. Marries fellow student Marian Fleck.
- 1931 First solo exhibition at the Folkwang Museum in Essen. Until 1938 several solo and group exhibitions in Austria, Germany, Italy, and Switzerland.
- 1933 First exile in Switzerland from the dissolution of parliament in March until November 1933.
- 1939-45 Second exile in Switzerland with his Jewish wife Marian, largely in Zug. Participation in exhibitions in Swiss museums.
- 1945 In August 1945 appointed artistic director of a masterclass in sculpture at the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna. In December return to Vienna and start of a thirty-year teaching career.
- 1946 Start of extensive work in cultural journalism and in numerous functions and on several panels in the art industry.
- 1948 Publication of the first monograph on Wotruba by the Swiss historian and writer Jean Rudolf von Salis. Start of prolific international exhibition activity.
- 1951 Death of his wife Marian.
- 1953 From 1953 to 1965 artistic director of the Viennese gallery Würthle.
- 1954 Appointed full professor of sculpture at the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna.
- 1955 Marries Lucy Vorel.  
Wotruba monography by Elias Canetti.  
Grand Austrian State Prize (awarded in 1956).
- 1957/58 Commission for the piece *Großes Figurenrelief* [Large Figural Relief] for the Austrian pavilion at the World's Fair in Brussels in 1958.
- 1959 From 1959 to 1967 designs for stage sets and costumes.

- 1962 Installation of Wotruba's relief for Brussels in the Sculpture Garden of the newly opened Museum of the Twentieth Century, today's Belvedere 21, in the Schweizergarten park in Vienna
- 1965 Commission to design a convent complex with church for a Carmelite community in Steinbach near Vienna.
- 1967 Furnishes the chancel of the Church of St. Michael in Lucerne and creates a sculpture for the church square.
- 1969 Consecration of the chancel furnished by Wotruba and the crucifix of the Baroque court chapel in Bruchsal. Cancellation of the Carmelite convent project in Steinbach near Vienna by the archdiocese of Vienna.
- 1971 Austrian Decoration of Honor for Science and Art.
- 1974 From 1974 to 1976 construction of the *Church of the Holy Trinity* on the Georgenberg mountain in the Mauer neighborhood of Vienna after a design by Wotruba and plans by Fritz Wotruba and the architect Fritz G. Mayr.
- 1975 Fritz Wotruba dies in Vienna on August 28.
- 1976 Consecration of the *Church of the Holy Trinity* on October 24.

## CATALOGUE



### *WOTRUBA. Himmelwärts. Die Kirche auf dem Georgenberg*

Editors: Stella Rollig, Gabriele Stöger-Spevak  
Authors: Mathias Haldemann, Markus Kristan,  
Alice Käthe Mähr, Stella Rollig, Gabriele  
Stöger-Spevak

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## EXHIBITION PROGRAM

Subject to the current valid regulations.

The Exhibition Program can be found under [www.belvedere.at/programm](http://www.belvedere.at/programm).

We are looking forward to your visit!

## GENERAL INFORMATION

Exhibition title	<i>WOTRUBA. HEAVENWARDS. The Church on the Georgenberg</i>
Curator	Gabriele Stöger-Spevak
Works	16 drawings, 8 of them draft drawings by Fritz Wotruba 22 sculptural works 11 plans including one original plan by Roland Rainer and 10 plans (reproductions) by Fritz Gerhard Mayr 3 film works about the church by contemporary artists (Thomas Draschan, Aglaia Konrad, Evy Jokhova) 70 photographs (reproductions)
Dates	Mai 6, 2021 to March 13, 2022
Exhibition venue	Belvedere 21 Arsenalstraße 1, 1030 Vienna
Opening hours	Tuesday to Sunday 11 am - 6 pm Monday only open on holidays
Tickets	Regular   9 € Discounted   7 € Annual pass Belvedere   39 € Children and youth under 19   free
Web	belvedere.at facebook.com/belvedere21 twitter.com/belvedere21 instagram.com/belvedere21wien
<b>Wotruba church</b>	Church of the Most Holy Trinity
Location	Ottillingerplatz 1, 1230 Vienna
Opening hours	Saturday 2 pm – 8 pm Sunday and holiday 9 am – 4.30 pm
Web	georgenberg.at
	#Wotruba

The press release as well as high resolution press photos are available at [belvedere.at/en/press](https://belvedere.at/en/press) for download.