

belvedere

**FACE TO FACE  
MARC QUINN *MEETS* FRANZ XAVER  
MESSERSCHMIDT**

Upper Belvedere  
24 February to 3 July 2022



Marc Quinn, *Emotional Detox II*, 1995 (copyright Marc Quinn Studio) and Franz Xaver Messerschmidt, *Character Head No.33*, 1777/1783 (copyright Belvedere, Vienna)  
Image courtesy of Marc Quinn studio

## FACE TO FACE MARC QUINN *MEETS* FRANZ XAVER MESSERSCHMIDT

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**A compelling dialogue between contemporary art and major works from the museum's collection: for the first time, the Belvedere is juxtaposing British artist Marc Quinn's suite of works *Emotional Detox* with the iconic "character heads" of Baroque sculptor Franz Xaver Messerschmidt. Messerschmidt's work has long been an inspiration for Quinn – and the direct influence of the character heads on the creation of *Emotional Detox* can now be seen at the Upper Belvedere.**

Marc Quinn's eight life-size sculptural self-portraits are the product of a challenging period in the artist's life. In the early 1990's, Quinn was struggling to overcome the physical and emotional agony of alcohol withdrawal. During this period, he regularly visited the Messerschmidt sculpture *The Strong Smell* at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London. This powerful 18th-century depiction inspired Quinn to express his own experience in the *Emotional Detox* series. Using lead and wax, Quinn turned his feelings into physical expressions. Traces of the production process remain suspended in the materiality of each artwork. For this series of works that portray him in his own living hell, Quinn borrowed from the traditional iconography of the seven deadly sins. The demon at his throat is himself. The sculptor's hands choke and poke his likeness, punch his face, press on his skull. The bust, which extends down to the waist, is lumpy, raw, riddled with holes. The hands are detached from the arms and have taken on a sadistic life of their own. The sculptor takes matters into his own hands and lays them on himself.

Stella Rollig, Belvedere general director and curator of the exhibition: *"The great thing about Emotional Detox, besides the gripping depiction and masterful technique, is the pictorial ambiguity. The sculptor shows the basic principle of his work, molding with his own hand; life runs through the body, leaving scratches and scuffs. We are our own worst tormentors, but, like Baron Munchausen, we can pull ourselves out of the morass by our own hair."*

The desire to record the fleeting emotive qualities of facial expression and gesture, and to capture them through sculpture, connects Marc Quinn and Franz Xaver Messerschmidt over the centuries. Both artists use lead, a toxic substance that plays an essential role in the fabled alchemical transformation of lead into gold. The autobiographical works of both artists grapple with profoundly personal transitions and provide poignant self-dramatizations. *Face to Face* is the first time the works of Franz Xaver Messerschmidt and Marc Quinn have been exhibited together.

Marc Quinn: *"Since I first started looking at art, I have been drawn to the sculptures of Franz Xaver Messerschmidt and his incredible ability to depict emotion. His work managed to break through the formality of 18th-century court art and evoke the real-life subject of the human condition, which still speaks to us now 200 years later. In the early 90s, when I had to change my life and give up a hedonistic lifestyle, the Character Heads were a huge source of comfort. Unable to work for a year, I found my way back into making art through Messerschmidt's pieces, which led me to make the Emotional Detox series. To see these works exhibited together in the extraordinary rooms of the Belvedere Palace is a dream come true for me."*

Franz Xaver Messerschmidt created the group of so-called character heads during the last years of his life, from 1770/71 to 1783. Frustrated by the Vienna art scene, he withdrew to Pressburg/Bratislava. The faces, some of which are distorted to the point of grotesquerie, continue to puzzle us to this day. The heads were given their descriptive titles only later in posterity. Precisely what motivated the artist to create these pieces is still hotly debated. With sixteen originals, the Belvedere owns the most extensive collection of Messerschmidt's

character heads, which continue to attract widespread fascination. Each generation experiences their relevance anew, making them a natural choice for juxtaposition with contemporary works of art.

Marc Quinn, born in London in 1964, is one of the leading artists of his generation. His sculptures, paintings, and drawings explore the relationship between art and science, the interaction between humans and nature, and the human body and the perception of beauty. His work frequently references art history – from modern masters to antiquity. Quinn rose to prominence in 1991 with his sculpture *Self* (1991), a cast of the artist's head made from ten pints of his own frozen blood. While much of his early work focused on the exploration of self, Quinn soon became fascinated with reflecting on the experiences of others, questioning values, perceptions, and the fault lines of society. Other critically acclaimed works include *Alison Lapper Pregnant* (2005), exhibited on the Fourth Plinth of London's Trafalgar Square; *Planet* (2008), a monumental representation of the artist's son as a baby, permanently installed in Gardens by the Bay, Singapore; *Breath* (2012), a colossal recreation of *Alison Lapper Pregnant* commissioned for the 2012 London Paralympics opening ceremony; and *Self-Conscious Gene* (2019), a 3.5-meter-tall bronze sculpture of “Zombie Boy” Rick Genest, on permanent display at the Science Museum in London.

Quinn's work is featured in collections around the world including: Tate, London (UK); Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (USA); Guggenheim, Venice (Italy); Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam (Netherlands); and Centre Pompidou, Paris (France).

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## LIST OF WORKS

Plaster cast after Franz Xaver Messerschmidt:

A Lecherous and Careworn Fop, before 1923

A Dismal and Sinister Man, 1964

The Vexed Man, before 1923

The Enraged and Vengeful Gypsy, before 1923

A Grievously Injured Person, before 1923

Franz Xaver Messerschmidt, A Dismal and Sinister Man, 1770/83, cast lead

Franz Xaver Messerschmidt, An Arch-Rascal, 1777/83, tin alloy

Franz Xaver Messerschmidt, The Simpleton, 1777/83, brown-flecked alabaster

Franz Xaver Messerschmidt, A Hanged Man, 1771/83, alabaster, gray-white stone with brownish spots

Franz Xaver Messerschmidt, A Haggard Old Man with Aching Eyes, 1771/83, alabaster, mottled brownish-gray stone

Franz Xaver Messerschmidt, A Mischievous Wag, 1777/83, brown spotted alabaster

Franz Xaver Messerschmidt, Second Beak Head, 1777/81, brown spotted alabaster

Franz Xaver Messerschmidt, The Sneeze-Inducing Odor, 1777/83, cast lead, permanent loan from a private collection

Marc Quinn, The Oneironaut I (Emotional Detox), 1994–2022, plaster

Marc Quinn, The Oneironaut II (Emotional Detox), 1994–2022, plaster

Marc Quinn, The Oneironaut III (Emotional Detox), 1994–2022, plaster

Marc Quinn, The Oneironaut IV (Emotional Detox), 1994–2022, plaster

Marc Quinn, The Oneironaut V (Emotional Detox), 1994–2022, plaster

Marc Quinn, The Oneironaut VI (Emotional Detox), 1994–2022, plaster

Marc Quinn, The Oneironaut VII (Emotional Detox), 1994–2022, plaster

Marc Quinn, Emotional Detox I, 1994, cast lead and wax

Marc Quinn, Emotional Detox II, 1995, cast lead and wax

Marc Quinn, Emotional Detox III, 1995, cast lead and wax

Marc Quinn, Emotional Detox IV, 1995, cast lead and wax

Marc Quinn, Emotional Detox V, 1995, cast lead and wax

Marc Quinn, Emotional Detox VI, 1995, cast lead and wax

Marc Quinn, Emotional Detox VII, 1995, cast lead and wax

Marc Quinn, Fear of Fear, 1994, cast lead

## CATALOGUE

### *Face to Face. Marc Quinn meets Franz Xaver Messerschmidt*

Editors: Stella Rollig, Marc Quinn

Authors: Georg Lechner, Cat Marnell, Stella Rollig, Tim Smith-Laing, Lou Stoppard

Graphic Design: Kellenberger-White, London

Publisher: Buchhandlung Walther & Franz König

c. 192 pages, c. 94 illustrations

German and English Edition

ISBN 978-3-903327-01-6

Price: EUR 19,-

## EXHIBITION PROGRAM

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<https://www.belvedere.at/en/on-request-groups>

Subject to the current valid regulations!

## GENERAL INFORMATION

|                       |  |
|-----------------------|--|
| Exhibition Title      | FACE TO FACE.<br>Marc Quinn <i>meets</i> Franz Xaver Messerschmidt   |
| Exhibition Duration   | 24 February to 3 July 2022   |
| Exhibition Location   | Upper Belvedere  |
| Works                 | 28 Objects   |
| Curator               | Stella Rollig  |
| Assistant Curator     | Johanna Hofer  |
| Exhibition Management | Tanja Angermann-Cekinmez, Agathe Boruszczak  |
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The current opening hours and ticket prices can be found on the website at [www.belvedere.at](http://www.belvedere.at)

*Further information and exhibition press photos are available to download at [belvedere.at/en/press](http://belvedere.at/en/press).*

**#FacetoFace #MarcQuinn #FranzXaverMesserschmidt**