

COLOSSAL PAINTING ON A GRAND SCALE

Lower Belvedere
22 June to 27 August 2023



Karl Huck, *Erwachen (Adler)*, 1908
© Belvedere, Vienna

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At what point is a picture considered big, and what effect do large pictures have on us? What challenges do oversized canvases pose for artists? What questions and stories are tackled in colossal works?

It requires confidence, skill, imagination, and courage for an artist to tackle a huge canvas. The results are mostly major works of art: impressive, spectacular but rarely on display due to lack of space.

General Director and curator Stella Rollig: Paintings such as these need to be seen on location. They are a challenge for the artists themselves, but also for their audience. The sheer scale showcases all that painting is capable of achieving: opening up fictional cosmoeses, exerting a visual pull, invigorating both eye and mind. Whether classical or contemporary, representational or abstract—one can hardly resist their impact.

Featuring pictures of up to ten meters in length, the exhibition *Colossal* explores painting on a grand scale through works from the Belvedere's collection. The show reunites audiences with recently conserved works, opens up a dialogue between contemporary and historical art, offers fresh approaches to familiar artworks while at the same time promising new discoveries. Fascinating pictorial worlds, sweeping gestures, romantic landscapes, and monochrome color fields are all in store for visitors. The exhibition features monumental works by artists including Tina Blau, Herbert Brandl, Gunter Damisch, Carl Moll, Hermann Nitsch, Max Oppenheimer, and Hubert Scheibl, and others. An entire room is dedicated to Hans Makart and his opulent history paintings.

Curator Johanna Hofer: *The formal criterion of size as the exhibition's unifying element enables a fresh, playful look at the Belvedere's collection. On account of their scale alone, these huge pictures exert an immense draw and impact that is almost irresistible to viewers—one has to walk around them, step back and allow the gaze to wander. The juxtaposition of historical and contemporary art results in a rendezvous of giants in the rooms of the Lower Belvedere.*

Size is always a variable, dependent on its definition and the viewer's perspective. *Colossal* has brought together works that exceed human scale. To grasp these works in their entirety, one needs time to linger, to delight in really looking, and to alternate between viewing close-up and from a distance. Equally varied are the narratives surrounding these paintings—ranging from the artists' lives, the works' iconography, through to their creation and reception. A further focus is placed on the complexity and conditions behind the collection, conservation, and display of large paintings in a museum.

Accompanying the show, a podcast has been produced in collaboration with *Im Museum*, enabling a glimpse behind the scenes of the museum's work and inviting closer engagement with the pictures in all their details.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Exhibition	Colossal. Painting on a Grand Scale
Curators	Stella Rollig, Johanna Hofer
Exhibition design	Ivonne Stark
Duration	22 June 2023 to 27 August 2023
Location	Lower Belvedere, Rennweg 6, 1030 Vienna
Opening Hours	Monday to Sunday, 10 am to 6 pm
Media Contact	Press Belvedere, Prinz Eugen-Straße 27, 1030 Vienna T +43 1 795 57-177 M press@belvedere.at

#Colossal

For more information on the exhibition and high-resolution press photos please visit www.belvedere.at/en/press