

**IN-SIGHT:**  
**FRANZ ANTON MAULBERTSCH**

Upper Belvedere  
12 April to 29 September 2024



Franz Anton Maulbertsch, *The Academy with Its Attributes at Minerva's Feet*, 1750  
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## IN-SIGHT: FRANZ ANTON MAULBERTSCH

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Marking the 300th birthday of Franz Anton Maulbertsch, the Belvedere is dedicating an IN-SIGHT exhibition to the artist's work.

*General Director Stella Rollig: Maulbertsch was already regarded as a "bold spirit" in his thirties, by which time he had presented his first major work in Vienna's Piarist Church. The exhibition highlights the painter's unconventional, innovative approach to composition and color and demonstrates how radical he was as an artist, making him appear particularly modern today.*

Maulbertsch was feted for his vibrant colors and dramatic lighting even during his lifetime. After the Baroque Museum was founded in the Lower Belvedere in 1923, many works by the artist were acquired. As a result, the Belvedere now holds the world's largest complete collection of paintings by Maulbertsch, covering every phase of his artistic career, as illustrated by the works *The Academy with Its Attributes at Minerva's Feet* (1750) or *The Death of Dido* (c. 1786).

Maulbertsch was one of the artists associated with the Vienna Academy of Fine Arts who broke with convention in around 1750 and adopted an expressive style. He went on to become an influential figure in Central European painting during the second half of the eighteenth century. Maulbertsch's early works are characterized by dramatic chiaroscuro and human figures with an expressiveness that at times verges on the grotesque. This attracted attention, particularly in clerical circles, leading to numerous commissions to paint frescoes and altarpieces for churches and monasteries. He also completed important commissions for the Habsburgs and the nobility.

*Curator Georg Lechner: Art historians first engaged with the work of Franz Anton Maulbertsch in the early twentieth century. The academic study of his oeuvre and the presentation of his work in museums led to a better understanding of the artist's stylistic development. At the same time, this contributed to Maulbertsch's growing popularity. By studying the artists in his orbit, we can also appreciate the painter's importance even during his lifetime.*

On the occasion of Maulbertsch's 300th birthday, many of his works from the collection have received extensive conservation treatment and analysis. The Belvedere conservators

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removed tarnished varnish and darkened retouching from some of the paintings in the exhibition. Many of these have been restored to their original vibrancy as a result.

## BRIEF BIOGRAPHY

### FRANZ ANTON MAULBERTSCH

**1724**

Date of birth not recorded. Baptism of Franz Anton Maulbertsch on June 7 in Langenargen on Lake Constance

**1739**

Moves to Vienna and starts studying at the Imperial Academy

**1745**

Marries Barbara Maria Anna Schmid

**1750**

First prize for his painting The Academy with Its Attributes at Minerva's Feet in the Academy competition

**1760**

Proper Member of the Academy

**1770**

Member of the Engraving Academy

**c. 1772**

Appointed imperial court painter

**1780**

After his first wife dies in 1779, marries Katharina Schmutzer, daughter of the Engraving Academy director Jakob Matthias Schmutzer

**1796**

Franz Anton Maulbertsch dies on August 7 in Vienna

## EXHIBITION TEXTS

Dramatic chiaroscuro and expressive, grotesque figures characterize the art of Franz Anton Maulbertsch, particularly his early work. Born 300 years ago, the painter, who is known for his idiosyncratic style, had a profound influence on Late Baroque art in Central Europe. Maulbertsch was one of the artists associated with the Vienna Academy of Fine Arts who broke with convention in around 1750. His visual language stands out from the conservative, idealized style of his time. It was new and expressive, and met with great popularity—especially among patrons from the Church. After completing his first monumental scheme of frescoes in Vienna's Piarist Church (1752/53), he was soon awarded many commissions for wall paintings and altarpieces. Maulbertsch collaborated with other artists in order to meet this demand. And these artists subsequently ensured the dissemination of his style.

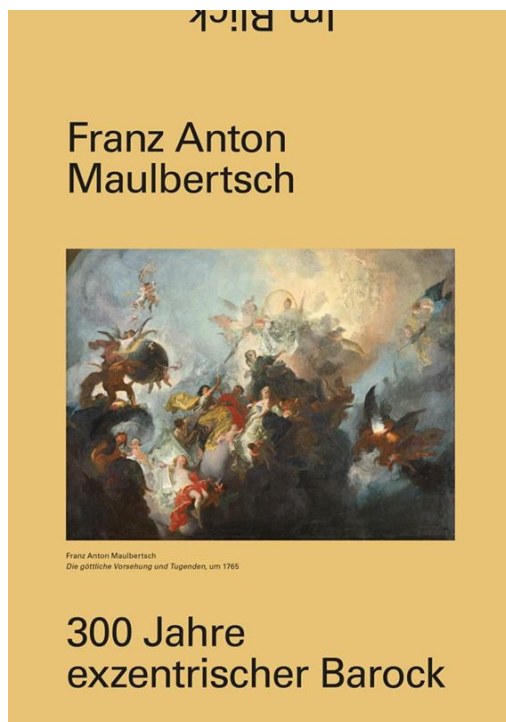
### **Glimpses behind the Scenes**

Maulbertsch's main patron was the Church, although he also received commissions from the Habsburgs and the nobility. His theatrical depictions and individual style were popular with his audience. Maulbertsch meticulously prepared his large frescoes and paintings in drawings and oil sketches. These would have been presented to patrons for approval before executing the final work. Often such sketches can be linked to a specific fresco, altarpiece, or print. In several instances, however, no evidence can be traced of the work's actual realization. In another scenario, some sketches are now important documents, shedding light on works of art that have since been destroyed.

### **New Conditions, New Formats**

In 1782 Emperor Joseph II enacted a reform whereby monasteries that served no social function would be dissolved. As a result, the number of Church commissions declined. This is reflected in Maulbertsch's output with monumental frescoes and altarpieces being replaced by small and medium-format paintings and prints intended for private collectors. The artist again reveals his talent as an imaginative history painter in these works depicting episodes from the Old Testament and mythology as well as genre scenes. In this field he also looked to Dutch painting for inspiration. Maulbertsch produced several works based on pictures by Rembrandt van Rijn, sometimes more loosely, sometimes more precisely. In the 20th century, Maulbertsch's theatrical and evocative painting was rediscovered and admired by Austrian Expressionist artists.

## EXHIBITION CATALOGUE



### Franz Anton Maulbertsch. 300 Jahre exzentrischer Barock

Editors: Stella Rollig, Georg Lechner

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## GENERAL INFORMATION

<b>Exhibition</b>	IN-SIGHT: Franz Anton Maulbertsch
<b>Curator</b>	Georg Lechner
<b>Duration</b>	12 April to 29 September 2024
<b>Location</b>	Upper Belvedere, Prinz Eugen-Straße 27, 1030 Vienna
<b>Opening Hours</b>	Monday to Sunday, 9 am to 6 pm
<b>Education</b>	Belvedere Education T + 43 1 795 57-134   M <a href="mailto:public@belvedere.at">public@belvedere.at</a>
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For more information on the exhibition and high-resolution press photos please visit [www.belvedere.at/en/press](http://www.belvedere.at/en/press)