

KLAUS ALBRECHT SCHRÖDER TURNS 70!

Vienna, 8 September 2025 **On 15 September, Klaus Albrecht Schröder celebrates his 70th birthday. Over the past five decades, he has had a lasting impact on and shaped the Austrian museum world. His significance as a museum director extends far beyond his 25 years as Director General of the Albertina.**

Born in Linz in 1955 and educated there, Schröder moved to Vienna in 1975 to study art history and history (1976–1983). In 1995, he earned his doctorate with a dissertation on the Austrian painter Richard Gerstl. While still a teaching assistant, he worked as a newsreader for ORF from 1981 to 1983: as Schröder himself says, *'one of the most enjoyable and wonderful jobs'* he has had in his nearly 50-year career.

Founding Director of the Kunstforum Länderbank From 1985 to 2000

In 1985, Schröder founded the Kunstforum Länderbank – the exhibition space of a financial institution that has been renamed several times following various mergers and changes of ownership – and with it became the 'Kunstforum': most recently Kunstforum Bank Austria Wien, which closed its doors for good this summer, 40 years after its founding. Under his direction, the old ballroom of the Länderbank was redesigned by Gustav Peichl in 1988/1989, including the construction of a completely new entrance on Freyung with the two characteristic pylons in front and the golden sphere as a reference to the golden dome of the Secession on the portal.

In addition to successful retrospectives of Ferdinand Georg Waldmüller, Oskar Kokoschka, Herbert Boeckl, Victor Vasarely, Emil Nolde, Caspar David Friedrich and Arnulf Rainer, Schröder presented masterpieces from the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum. Probably the most successful exhibition was Cézanne. *'Perfect – Unfinished'*, which attracted nearly 300,000 visitors from January to April 2000.

During his tenure as director of the Kunstforum, Schröder was editor of *'Kunstpresse'*, an art magazine with a quarterly circulation of 70,000 copies, from 1988 to 1992.

CFO and Member of the Board of Directors at the Leopold Museum From 1996 to 1999

One of the most significant exhibitions in the Austrian museum world was the first presentation of the Leopold Collection, entitled *'Egon Schiele and His Time'*, in 1989 at the Kunstforum der Länderbank. With over 200,000 visitors, this exhibition prompted the Republic of Austria to acquire the Leopold Collection and led ten years later to the establishment of the Leopold Museum with Klaus Albrecht Schröder as its first Commercial Director.

Reorganisation of Salzburg's Museums From 1996 to 1999

After an almost two-year interlude as personal assistant to the legendary Viennese City Councillor for Culture Ursula Pasterk, Schröder was commissioned in 1987/1988 by Salzburg's Governor Franz Schausberger and Regional Minister for Culture Othmar Raus to reorganise Salzburg's museums. This comprehensive museum concept was gradually realised over the next two decades: the merger of the Carolino Augusteum Provincial Museum with the Baroque Museum and the Residenz Gallery, the relocation of the House of Nature to the former headquarters of the Provincial Museum, and the construction of a completely new Museum of Modern Art on the Mönchsberg in place of the old Café Winkler, which dated from the 1970s. Klaus Albrecht Schröder oversaw the competition tender and the development of the implementation plans for the Museum of Modern Art Salzburg until their submission. From 2000 onwards, the museum was built on the Mönchsberg as Schröder had conceived it with the three Munich architects Friedrich, Hoff and Zwink. With his appointment as director of the Albertina in 1999, he relinquished these functions.

General Director of the Albertina From 1999 to 2024

According to Schröder himself, he finally found fulfilment in his professional life when he was appointed to head the Albertina in April 1999: a position he took up on 1 August 1999 and held for

over a quarter of a century until 31 December 2024, longer than any other museum director in Austrian history.

'In the 1990s, the Albertina found itself in the most serious crisis in its history. It had lost touch with developments in contemporary art and the trust of its visitors. The isolation of graphic arts from all other art forms was a unique selling point that would ultimately become the Albertina's Achilles heel.'
Klaus Albrecht Schröder

Schröder lifted the quarantine on the art of drawing and printmaking, adopting a new presentation doctrine in 1999 that was based on the indivisibility of art and initially only brought drawings and paintings together in exhibitions, but subsequently flowed into a diversification strategy: the establishment of new collections. The first step was the establishment of the photography collection with the acquisition of the world's oldest photography collection, that of the Höhere Graphische Bundeslehr- und Versuchsanstalt (Higher Federal Teaching and Research Institute for Graphic Arts) in 2000. This was followed in 2007 by the transfer of the Batliner Collection to the Albertina, then the collection of classical Modern art, and in 2014 the establishment of the collection of contemporary art: a step that was crowned by the donation of the Essl Collection and the long-term loan of the Haselsteiner family collection. Schröder was thus able to expand the Albertina's collections by over 120,000 works worth almost two billion euros, not least thanks to numerous donations from artists.

With the measures he initiated, Klaus Albrecht Schröder fundamentally changed the identity of the Albertina and its history: these include the expansion of the museum space from two and a half thousand to a total of 35,000 square metres, the establishment of new collections and the first-ever creation of a permanent exhibition, the furnishing of the historic state rooms with the original furnishings, which were repurchased from many private collections, the reconstruction of the façades, the establishment of children's studios and the new staircase to the bastion with Hans Hollein's cantilevered canopy in 2004, and the construction of the underground four-storey study building with ten new depots. Schröder crowned his career as Director General of the Albertina with the establishment of two new locations: Albertina Modern in 2020 – the result of a collaboration and his friendship with Hans Peter Haselsteiner – and Albertina Klosterneuburg in 2024.

'I have always tried to recruit the best employees. The full legal capacity of the federal museums gave me the greatest possible freedom to transform the Albertina. Without this separation from the ministerial administration, there would be no Hollein Wing, no renovation of the state rooms, no construction of the many exhibition halls: all of this was financed privately. Without the patrons and sponsors and the collections of Herbert Batliner, Mathias and Eva Forberg, Carl Djerassi, Hans Peter Haselsteiner, Karlheinz Essl, Dagmar Chobot, Michael Kaufmann, Alfred Heinzel and many others, I would not have been able to realise my vision of a modern museum.' Klaus Albrecht Schröder

Major exhibitions on 'Pioneers of Modern and Contemporary Art' such as Claude Monet and Vincent van Gogh, Henri Matisse, Pablo Picasso, Joan Miró, René Magritte, Max Ernst, Roy Lichtenstein, Georg Baselitz, Anselm Kiefer, Gerhard Richter, William Kentridge, Robert Longo, Keith Haring, Ai Weiwei and Jean Michel Basquiat, Maria Lassnig, Arnulf Rainer, Hermann Nitsch and VALIE EXPORT, as well as Michelangelo and Raphael, Rubens and Rembrandt, Rudolf von Alt and Egon Schiele, have been on display at the Albertina.

With the establishment of the contemporary art collection in 2014 – a collection that has since grown to over 60,000 paintings, sculptures, installations, videos, drawings, prints and photographs – new target groups for art were tapped.

Before Schröder took office, the Albertina had between 7,000 and 15,000 visitors annually, but by 2003, the year of its reopening, 850,000 art enthusiasts had flocked to the Albertina. In recent years, the museum has recorded between 1.3 and 1.4 million visitors annually.

Director of the WIENER AKTIONISMUS MUSEUM

From 1 September 2025

It is hard to imagine Klaus Albrecht Schröder retiring. In fact, it was announced on 1 September that Schröder has taken over the management of the VIENNA ACTIONISM MUSEUM. Over the next six months, Klaus Albrecht Schröder will modernise and expand the specialised museum. The reopening will take place in March 2026 with a new programme: *'My goal is not only to modernise the Vienna*

Actionism Museum, but also to reposition it, which will require expanding its scope of activity. I am now looking forward to my new role at the WIENER AKTIONISMUS MUSEUM and to working with an incredibly dedicated and competent team.' Klaus Albrecht Schröder

Multiple Awards

Klaus Albrecht Schröder has received numerous awards for his work and commitment at the helm of major art institutions: 2024 Das Österreichische Ehrenkreuz für Wissenschaft und Kunst; 2018 Offizier des belgischen Kronenordens; 2016 Orden für Zivile Verdienste des spanischen Ministeriums für auswärtige Angelegenheiten und Kooperation in der Stufe des Kommandeurs; 2016 Verdienstkreuz 1. Klasse des Verdienstordens der Bundesrepublik; 2015 Verleihung des Berufstitels Professor; 2014 Goldenes Ehrenzeichen für Verdienste um das Land Wien; 2011 Ritter des Ordre des Arts et des Lettres; 2010: Großes Ehrenzeichen für Verdienste um die Republik Österreich; 2009: Ernennung zum Ritter des Ordens von Oranien-Nassau;

PRESS & INTERVIEWS

Christina Werner PR
werner@kunstpresse.at
M +43 699 10 48 70 72

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