

## NOT VITAL

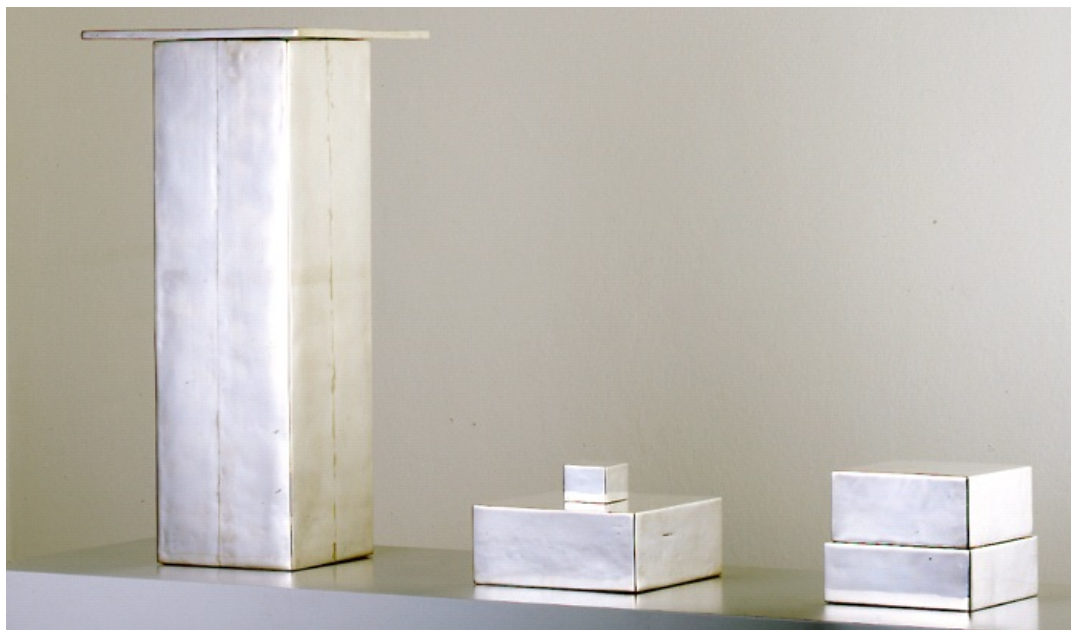
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### 10 AUSTRIANS + MORE

SALZBURG VILLA KAST

26 Saturday - 25 Sunday

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Galerie Thaddaeus Ropac, Salzburg, is pleased to announce the exhibition "10 Austrians + more" by the Swiss artist Not Vital. In this solo exhibition, Not Vital will present ten portraits as well as new sculptures made of various materials. The artist will attend the opening on the evening of 26 April 2008. The actress Marie Colbin will recite poems by Georg Trakl on the occasion of the opening.

The portraits by Not Vital are not to be imagined as busts or similar figurative sculptures, because the shape of the portrayed person is derived from his date of birth. Each portrait is made up of two silver rectangular blocks installed on top of each other on a pedestal. Adolf Hitler, for instance, was born on 20 April 1889, so the upper part of his portrait is 20 cm long and wide and 4 cm high. The lower block is 18 cm long and wide and 89 cm high. Based on this principle, ten portraits of Austrians will be shown at the exhibition. All in all, roughly 90 kg of silver have been processed for this purpose.

Be it in the visual arts, architecture, music, literature, sports, or politics: Austria has brought forth internationally esteemed personalities in many fields. On the other hand, the probably most hated and detested person is also from Austria. All the more, it is consistent of Not Vital to dare to point that out in the exhibition: Adolf Hitler between Romy Schneider and Toni Sailer - personalities who are unlikely to have been mentioned in one breath before.

The work Lotus Flowers has a strong presence at the Salzburg exhibition. Roughly three metres high stems carry the high-polished lotus blossoms made of stainless steel. Not Vital is presenting a similar work at an exhibition in China that is being held at the same time as that in Salzburg. For China, Not Vital has created an installation made of one hundred lotus flowers. Even if all flowers represent the same motif and their shape is almost alike, none of them are identical. Each flower is made by hand. Yet, they are not cast in chrome steel, as one might assume at first glance. Thin chrome steel plates are cut to size, hammered to the shape of lotus blossoms, welded together, and high-gloss polished. What looks like an edition of the same object is actually a group of one hundred unique works that are the result of a labour-intensive artisan process. This technique quite clearly reflects the intentions of the artist. Not Vital lives in the Engadine (Switzerland), New York, Lucca (Italy), and Agadez (West Africa). His hometown in the Engadine and the nature of that Alpine region are important sources of his creativity.

Moreover, his countless journeys and stays in various countries and cultures, especially in Africa, South America, and South-East Asia, also shape his work considerably. Not only the contents of his works are inspired by foreign cultures, but also the way he manufactures the sculptures. It is not a coincidence that the lotus flowers were made by hand in China, but part of his artistic intention: the cultural context of the represented motif and the applied technique form a unit.

The lyric poet Georg Trakl, born in 1889 in Salzburg, plays an important role in the exhibition. A whole room is dedicated to him. "I have always been interested in Trakl. I am particularly fascinated by his intensive and extreme lifestyle," says Not Vital. The artist considers the room dedicated to Trakl a type of shrine. "Not only in theory: The floor is clad with a type of foam, so it physically forces one to one's knees."

Among the works is also The Boyfriend: a marble sculpture of a naked man lying on a fur sleeping bag. "The Boyfriend does not refer to my or your particular boyfriend. I do not mean to idealise anyone. Rather, it is about the idea that we all want someone like that, and in his sleeping bag, there might be room for all", explains the artist.

An interesting aspect of the exhibited works is that they were made on three different continents: the Lotus Flowers were manufactured in Beijing, the portraits in West Africa, and a group of bronze sculptures was made in a foundry near Milan. The Boyfriend was chiselled in Pietrasanta (Tuscany) from fine white Carrara marble, which is another example for the precious materials that are characteristic for Not Vital's works.

Not Vital (\*1948) was born in Sent, a village in the Engadine in the East of Switzerland. His career as an artist started in the seventies, but only in the early eighties did he turn to sculpture. The oeuvre of Not Vital includes sculptures, plastics, and multiples, as well as drawings and graphic prints. He uses precious materials such as bronze, marble, gold, and silver for his works, or plaster and glass.