



*Sculptor celebrated for his monumental designs and  
distorted outsize replicas of everyday objects*  
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## INDEPENDENT

Bruno Gironcoli was one of Austria's most important sculptors of recent times, best known as the creator of monumental, organic shapes and huge distorted replicas of domestic objects, covered in silver or gold paint. These are works which resist attempts at classification or alignment and, like the artist himself, stand apart from any particular stylistic movement.

In 1960 he moved to Paris for a year to undertake an in-depth study of the Impressionists, whose paintings were hard to find in the Austrian public galleries of the time. It was during this visit that he discovered the work of Alberto Giacometti and developed three-dimensional pieces in the form of fragile wire and cardboard figures inspired by the Swiss master.

The period 1966-1967 witnessed his first group and solo exhibitions at the Galerie Nächst St Stephan, Vienna and Galerie Heide Hildebrand, Klagenfurt. By the late Sixties, and following a period of work together with members of the Vienna Actionism group, his oeuvre had changed dramatically. The work now featured scaled-up and distorted models of everyday domestic items such as plugs, shoes and cutlery in wood, metal and polyester. He used these fetish objects to represent complex ideas, dealing primarily with the subjects of power, repression and sexuality.

Summing up his intention to represent such abstract ideas in three-dimensional form, Gironcoli explained succinctly that, "For me, a sculpture is the outcome of a train of thought." His work was first exhibited in the UK in 1973 as part of The Austrian Exhibition, a show at Richard Demarco's gallery in Edinburgh and at the ICA, London.

"This was part of a programme of events which included the French and Yugoslav avant-garde", Demarco recalled. "I was trying to place the Austrian avant-garde within this context and to link East and West Europe, putting Vienna on the cultural map. Gironcoli was the personification of the Austrian art world of the time and part of a solid team of 11 artists in the show."

In 1977 Gironcoli succeeded the sculptor Fritz Wotruba as the head of the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna. This gave him a large studio working space and allowed him for the first time a degree of financial independence away from the vagaries of the art market. His reputation grew steadily from the late 1980s. In 1989 he received the sculpture prize from the Generali Foundation and in 1993 he was awarded the Grand Austrian State Prize for visual art. Gironcoli represented Austria in 2003 at the 50th Venice Biennale. A catalogue raisonné of his work, *Bruno Gironcoli: Die Skulpturen 1956-2008*, edited by Bettina M. Busse, was published in 2008.

Upon retirement from the Academy of Fine Arts in August 2004, he assisted with the final preparations for the establishment of a permanent home for his sculptures, which he had sought for many years. The resulting Gironcoli Museum was designed by the architect Hermann Eisenköck and inaugurated in September 2004 in a wing of the Herberstein Castle in the Austrian region of Styria. It houses a collection of 35 large-scale pieces, providing an impressive and fitting testament to the man and his life's work.