

Wedgwood Basalt Busts from the Collection of the ALBERTINA Museum Back on Permanent Exhibit for the First Time in a Century

Dark-hued ceramic likenesses of important historical personalities now exhibited permanently in the Colonnade

It was during the life of Duke Albert of Saxe-Teschen (1738–1822), founder of the ALBERTINA's original collections, that they were first displayed: ancient military commanders, politicians and poets, artists, philosophers, and scientists. Albert, son-in-law of Empress Maria Theresia and royal governor of Hungary, used them to crown the bookcases of his library, which numbered more than 25,000 volumes.

Josiah Wedgwood and the ALBERTINA

Now, for the first time since the exhibition *The Founding of the ALBERTINA* (2014), these nine busts of important historical personalities (Marcus Brutus, Junius Brutus, Aurelius Antonius, Marcus Aurelius, Pindar, Homer, Cato, Palladio, and Inigo Jones) can once more be seen—as a permanent exhibit in the palace's Colonnade. The renewed presentation of these works by the Englishman Josiah Wedgwood (1730–1795) means that yet another of Duke Albert's original collections can now be experienced at the ALBERTINA Museum alongside the Collection of Graphic Art, the Architecture Collection, and the palace's historical furnishings.

Josiah Wedgwood is also the namesake of the Wedgwood Cabinet in the palace's Habsburg State Rooms: the special quality of this small chamber lies in the four large wooden wall panels with naturalistic, imaginative, and compositionally elaborate painted scenes representing the four elements of earth, water, fire, and air. Set into the wooden panels are precious porcelain miniature reliefs made by Wedgwood's English manufactory that show mythological scenes.

English Ceramics

Josiah Wedgwood, who was trained as a potter, founded his business in 1759. He made major contributions to the development of new types of ceramics such as creamware (ca. 1762) and landed a large and lucrative commission straight off: the English royal house ordered an entire service made of this wonderful, cream-white ceramic material. The period around 1775 witnessed Wedgwood's most famous innovation: his manufactory's signature jasperware in the colors blue and cream-white, from which a multitude of ancient-style art and décor objects were produced.

Shortly before that, in 1768, Wedgwood had succeeded in producing basaltware, a variety of stoneware that is fired very hard at high temperatures and colored black by means of manganese and iron oxides. It was basaltware's popularity in the production of tableware and decorative objects that inspired Wedgwood to create his series of busts around 1774.