



FEMALE BUST FRANZ HAGENAUER CA. 1968-72

Female bust with pearl necklace, design by Franz Hagenauer, execution by Werkstätte Hagenauer
Wien, ca. 1968-72, brass, chased, polished,
marked

In his sculptural designs, Franz Hagenauer responded sensitively to international avant-garde movements as well as to the new visual impulses of early modernism. His consistent reduction to fundamental geometric forms, combined with only subtly suggested details, places his metal repoussé heads and busts in a fascinating zone of tension: on the one hand they echo the formal language of Constantin Brâncuși, Amedeo Modigliani, and French Cubism; on the other, they reflect the aesthetic currents of the 1920s that profoundly reshaped modern perceptions of the human body.

For instance, the contemporary fascination with mannequins, figures that increasingly shaped the cultural image of the idealized body as embodiments of staged elegance, finds a striking resonance in Hagenauer's work. Poised between object and human presence, these artificial figures touch upon many of the questions that preoccupied the visual culture of the early modern period. They blur the boundaries between fragment and completeness, between artifice and humanity, between natural appearance and stylized representation. The mask-like face of our female bust, defined by a single precise line that links eyebrow to nasal ridge, and further animated by a meticulously applied eye and an enamelled red mouth, evokes the spirit of those non-Western ritual objects that inspired so many avant-garde artists toward increasingly abstract modes of expression. The added pearl necklace introduces a deliberate note of realism whose refined materiality subtly recalls the aesthetics of early shop-window figures, a delicate interplay between abstraction and stylized reality. This exceptional bust exemplifies the clear formal reduction, distinct modernity, and superb craftsmanship that define the work of Franz Hagenauer and the unmistakable tradition of the Hagenauer workshop.

