

Franz West

March 2–April 13 2023
108, rue Vieille du Temple
75003 Paris



Franz West in his studio in Vienna, 1995
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David Zwirner is pleased to announce an exhibition of works by Austrian artist Franz West (1947–2012) on view at the gallery's Paris location. Following the major retrospective that was on view at the Centre Pompidou in 2018 and subsequently traveled to Tate, London, this exhibition will survey a range of West's sculptures, works on paper, and installations produced between the late 1970s and early 2000s.

Emerging in Vienna in the early 1970s, West developed a unique aesthetic that engaged equally high and low reference points and often privileged social interaction as an intrinsic component of his work. By playfully manipulating everyday materials and imagery in novel ways, he created objects that served to redefine art as a social experience, calling attention to the ways in which it is presented to the public, and how viewers interact with works of art and with each other.

A significant and rarely seen group of the artist's early *Passstücke (Adaptives)* will open the exhibition. These roughly hewn, abstracted sculptural forms are intended to be handled by the viewer in a manner of his or her choosing, thereby "adapting" the works to their own physical being and context. Many of the forms are reminiscent of everyday objects, allowing the viewer to make loose associations while still handling the objects in an autonomous and unconditioned way. Also on view will be a grouping of West's early drawings, which share the irreverent aesthetic and humor of his sculptures. In these compositions from the 1970s, West depicts figures in enigmatic scenes. Consistent with his later collages and sculptures, his figurative drawings of this period convey a mood of comic unease through the discordant relationships between people, objects, and their environment. Likewise, a group of West's *Namensbilder (Nameplates)*—painted papier-mâché forms inscribed with the names of people with whom West was

acquainted—echo the formal elements of the *Passtücke* while underscoring the communal and performative aspects of his work from this period.

While interactive work remained characteristic of his practice, West became increasingly interested in creating what he began to call “Legitimate Sculpture” in the 1990s, several examples of which will also be included in the exhibition. These abstract, vibrantly painted papier-mâché and plaster forms rest on unusual supports and were, like the *Passtücke*, intended by the artist as an invitation to the viewer, in this case on an intellectual level, to question the larger context of the exhibition as well as the way in which viewers interact with works of art and with one another.

Furniture was also an important part of West’s aesthetic output, as it allowed him to create a space for visitors to rest and reflect on the artwork and their experience of it, thus privileging social interaction as a central component of his work. In the 1990s, he developed this concept further, executing several works that created variations on a lounge, cafe, theater, or lecture hall environment while also pairing furniture elements with his sculptures to create interactive tableaux. Among these works are *2 to 2 (do too 2 [too do 2 {to do two}])* (1994), which consists of four abstract sculptural forms that sit atop bookcases filled here with philosophical and literary volumes that viewers are invited to engage with. Also on view is *Curaçao* (1996), which comprises a divan intended for visitors to sit on and a sculptural form that holds several glasses. West frequently accompanied his installations with text and for this work, he provided the following instructions when it was first presented in his 1996 solo exhibition at David Zwirner New York: “If you would like to be seated, please take off your clothes to a large extent, but your shoes at the very least. At the top of every hour, a museum attendant will serve you a glass of Curaçao. However, please ask to be served!”

A program of the artist's films from the decade, made in collaboration with Austrian filmmaker Bernhard Riff, will additionally be on view.

A concurrent solo exhibition presents an immersive late installation from 2010 and will be presented at the gallery’s 533 West 19th Street location in New York from 9 March to 15 April. Together, these shows mark the tenth presentation of the artist’s work at David Zwirner since 1993, when his solo exhibition *Investigations of American Art* inaugurated the gallery’s program. During his lifetime, West presented several solo exhibitions at David Zwirner, in 1993, 1994, 1996, 1998 (with Heimo Zobernig), and 1999. The gallery further organized an exhibition of the artist’s early work in 2004, a small survey in 2009, a show in 2014 that focused on work from the 1990s—which was accompanied by a catalogue published by David Zwirner Books, with essays by Eva Badura-Triska, Veit Loers, and Bernhard Riff—and, more recently, a 2019 overview of the artist's works in London.

Franz West (1947–2012) studied at the Akademie der bildenden Künste, Vienna, from 1977 to 1982. He began exhibiting his work in the 1970s in Austria and Germany and gained recognition across Europe in the 1980s, with significant shows at such venues as Kunsthaus Zürich (1985), the Neue Galerie am Landesmuseum Joanneum, Graz (1986); Wiener Secession, Vienna (1986); Skulptur Projekte Münster (1987); Kunsthalle Bern (1988); Portikus, Frankfurt (1988); Museum Haus Lange, Krefeld (1989); and the Institute for Contemporary Art, P.S.1, Long Island City, New York (1989).

The 1990s brought widespread international recognition, and the artist’s work was presented in numerous prestigious venues worldwide including the Austrian Pavilion of the *44th Venice Biennale* (1990); *documenta IX*, Kassel (1992); The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (1994); Dia Center for the

Arts, New York (1994); Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh (*Carnegie International*, 1995); Villa Arson, Nice (1995–1996); and the Städtisches Museum Abteiberg, Mönchengladbach (1996). A major, mid-career retrospective (*Franz West. Proforma*) was organized by the Museum moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig, Vienna in 1996 (it traveled to the Kunsthalle Basel and Rijksmuseum Kröller-Müller, Otterlo); and solo exhibitions were held at the Kunstverein Hamburg (1996); FRAC Champagne-Ardenne, Reims (1997); The Museum of Modern Art, New York (1997); Fundação de Serralves, Porto (1997). West participated in *documenta X*, Kassel (1997); and the Rooseum, Centre for Contemporary Art, Malmö, presented a solo exhibition of his work in 1999. West's work was featured at The Renaissance Society, Chicago (2000); Skulptur im Schlosspark Ambras, Innsbruck, Austria (2000); and Museum für Neue Kunst, ZKM Karlsruhe and the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid presented the traveling survey *Franz West: In & Out* (2000–2001).

Further exhibitions were held at the Museum für angewandte Kunst (MAK), Vienna and MASS MoCA, North Adams, Massachusetts (2001–2002); Deichtorhallen, Hamburg (2001–2002); Wexner Center for Contemporary Art, Columbus, Ohio (2001); Musée d'Art Contemporain, Marseille (2002); Whitechapel Art Gallery, London (2003); Kunsthaus Bregenz (2003); the Vancouver Art Gallery (2005); Museum für angewandte Kunst, Vienna (2008); Fondation Beyeler, Basel (2009); and the exhibition *Franz West. Autotheater* traveled from the Museum Ludwig, Cologne to the museo d'arte contemporanea donnaregina, Naples in 2010.

A significant grouping of outdoor sculptures was installed in the Lincoln Center Plaza in New York in 2004 (organized by Public Art Fund). In 2008–2009, The Baltimore Museum of Art organized the retrospective *Franz West: To Build a House You Start with the Roof*, which traveled to the Los Angeles County Museum of Art; and in 2013, a significant posthumous overview of the artist's work *Franz West. Wo ist mein Acher? (Where Is My Eight?)* was presented at the Museum moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig Wien, Vienna, followed by Museum für Moderne Kunst (MMK), Frankfurt/Main and The Hepworth Wakefield, England.

A major survey of the artist's work opened at the Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, in 2018, and traveled to the Tate Modern, London, in 2019.

Work by the artist is held in major museum collections, including the Albertina Museum, Vienna; Bonnefanten Museum, Maastricht, the Netherlands; CAC Centro de Arte Contemporáneo, Málaga, Spain; Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris; Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, DC; Kröller-Müller Museum, Otterlo, The Netherlands; Kunsthaus Bregenz, Austria; Kunsthalle Bern, Switzerland; Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Humlebæk, Denmark; Museum Boijmans van Beuningen, Rotterdam, The Netherlands; The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; The Museum of Modern Art, New York; Museum Moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig Wien, Vienna; Philadelphia Museum of Art; S.M.A.K. – Stedelijk Museum voor Actuele Kunst, Ghent, Belgium; and ZKM | Museum für Neue Kunst, Karlsruhe, Germany.

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