

## Franz West

October 26–December 16, 2023  
612 North Western Avenue, Los Angeles



Franz West, *Telefonat (Phone Call)*, 1997 (detail)  
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David Zwirner is pleased to announce an exhibition of works by Austrian artist Franz West on view at the gallery's Los Angeles location. 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 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 it is presented to the public and how viewers interact with works of art and with each other.

A significant grouping of West's self-coined "legitimate sculptures" from the 1990s—colorful, abstract, painted papier-mâché and plaster forms that often rest on unusual supports—will anchor the presentation. While the interactive works he had focused on in the 1970s and 1980s remained characteristic of his practice, in this decade West became increasingly interested in different ways of subverting traditional notions of sculpture. With these standalone works, he sought to fundamentally question the function and legitimacy of the work of art by inviting the viewer to question its larger context. In *Three Times the Same* (1998), composed of three totemic, painted papier-mâché forms each mounted on a pedestal of a different height, West sets up an implicit relationship between the elements, each informing the viewer's understanding of the other. Similarly, in *Telefonat* (1997), two sets of brightly colored sculptural forms that resemble an abstracted telephone receiver and cradle are placed on abutting studio tables as if communicating with each other. Also on view will be examples of West's collaborations with his friends and fellow artists, including Janc Szeniczai and Heimo Zobernig, underscoring the importance of creative dialogue in his practice. *Limerick* (1994), first presented in the artist's solo exhibition that year at David Zwirner, New York, was made on site with Zwirner's assistance by applying thick layers of yellow paint to a surfboard. Slyly referencing his gallerist's hobby and frequent

pastime, West's sculpture is at once recognizable and completely unusable as a surfboard, creating a playful disjuncture between object and function.

A second gallery will feature a significant and rarely seen group of the artist's early *Passtücke* (*Adaptives*), which he began making in the mid-1970s. These abstract sculptural forms are intended to be handled by the viewer in a manner of their choosing, thereby "adapting" the works to the viewer's 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 unconditioned way. Also included will be a grouping of West's early drawings, which share the irreverent aesthetic and humor of his sculptures. In these compositions from the early 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 the artist was acquainted—echo the formal elements of the *Passtücke* while underscoring the communal and performative aspects of his work from this period.

Furniture was an important part of West's aesthetic output, and a number of examples of the artist's divans, tables, and chairs will be placed throughout the exhibition, creating a communal space where visitors can rest and reflect on the artwork and their experience of it.

A program of the artist's films from the 1990s, made in collaboration with Austrian filmmaker Bernhard Riff, will supplement the exhibition.

West's work was the subject of two major institutional presentations in Los Angeles: the survey exhibition *To Build a House You Start With the Roof*, on view at LACMA in 2009, and his first American site-specific museum installation, *Test*, presented on the roof of MOCA in 1994. This is the eleventh 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 his early work in 2004, a small survey in 2009, a show in 2014 that focused on work from the 1990s—accompanied by a catalogue published by David Zwirner Books, with essays by Eva Badura-Triska, Veit Loers, and Bernhard Riff—and a 2019 overview of the artist's work in London. Earlier this year, concurrent exhibitions of West's work were on view at the gallery's Paris and New York locations.

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 the Neue Galerie am Landesmuseum Joanneum, Graz, Austria (1986); Wiener Secession, Vienna (1986); Skulptur Projekte Münster, Germany (1987); Kunsthalle Bern, Switzerland (1988); Portikus, Frankfurt (1988); Museum Haus Lange, Krefeld, Germany (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, Germany (1992); The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (1994); Dia Center for the Arts, New York (1994); Carnegie International, Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh

(1995); Villa Arson, Nice, France (1995–1996); and the Städtisches Museum Abteiberg, Mönchengladbach, Germany (1996). A major mid-career retrospective, *Franz West: Proforma*, was organized by the Museum moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig Wien, Vienna, in 1996 (it traveled to Kunsthalle Basel and Rijksmuseum Kröller-Müller, Otterlo, the Netherlands); and solo exhibitions were held at the Kunstverein in Hamburg (1996); FRAC Champagne-Ardenne, Reims, France (1997); The Museum of Modern Art, New York (1997); Fundação de Serralves, Porto, Portugal (1997). West participated in Documenta X, Kassel, Germany (1997); and the Rooseum, Centre for Contemporary Art, Malmö, Sweden, presented a solo exhibition of his work in 1999. West's work was featured at The Renaissance Society, Chicago (2000); and Skulptur im Schlosspark Ambras, Innsbruck, Austria (2000); and ZKM Karlsruhe, Germany 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, 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, Austria (2003); Vancouver Art Gallery (2005); Museum für angewandte Kunst, Vienna (2008); and 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 Achter? (Where Is My Eight?)* was presented at the Museum moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig Wien, Vienna, and traveled to Museum für Moderne Kunst (MMK), Frankfurt, and The Hepworth Wakefield, United Kingdom.

A major survey of the artist's work opened at the Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, in 2018, and traveled to 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 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; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; The Museum of Modern Art, New York; Museum moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig Wien (mumok), Vienna; Philadelphia Museum of Art; Stedelijk Museum voor Actuele Kunst (S.M.A.K.), Ghent, Belgium; and ZKM | Museum für Neue Kunst, Karlsruhe, Germany.

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