

# ERWIN WURM | PHANTOMS

KÖNIG GALERIE | NAVE  
27 APRIL – 22 JUNE 2024

Where to start with Erwin Wurm, if not at the very beginning? There was Plato in his own way. He had instructed all those who practiced what we now call "art" that it was at best an illusion, a phantasm, of which they were capable. Via the French, the ancient Greek term became the familiar "phantom". This is the title Erwin Wurm has given to his current exhibition in the former nave of KÖNIG GALERIE. Phantoms, in other words, apparitions, imaginings with the scent of lies and deception.

But what is assembled here is not so intangible. Wurm's very successful artistic strategy consists of understanding the entire world as an act of sculpture. He suggests that there is an element of tactility in every visual effect; everything we see has a sculptural character. What you can touch, you can grasp. And if what is there is sculptural anyway, it lends itself to processing, to being transformed into the three-dimensional. The short-term turns into the long-term. Phantom becomes form.

The exhibition is dominated by colorful aluminum structures. Once again, and this is part of what makes them so versatile, the objects owe their existence to Wurm's special combinatorics. If one takes them figuratively, their central motif is the sweater. Since around 1990, this piece of clothing has been a kind of signature of his work: everyday, ephemeral and elementary, familiar to everyone's hand. The sweater can be slipped over all kinds of bodies, be they people or furniture. In the sense of paradox, which is another characteristic of Wurm's work, this malleability is now arrested by subjecting it to a casting process – and thus to a very classical way of practicing sculpture. Motif and method, both familiar in Wurm's work, combine to create something additional and new.

There is also something anthropological, as it were. The things that Wurm presents as sculptures have taken on something human. They take care of their outfits, because it has always been important in sculpture, whether they show the body naked or in draperies or folds. They deal with addition and subtraction, because volume is of course a genuine part of the profession. Or, they get limbs and work on the sculptural ultimate, the ponderation, balancing against gravity. And they start to think about themselves, because their titles give them language.

What Erwin Wurm is showing at KÖNIG GALERIE are facets of his oeuvre in a personal union of individual parts. For some time now, this oeuvre has also included sculptures that are very restrained in their dimensionality. They could be called paintings, but the artist prefers the term "flat sculptures". "The artist," Erwin Wurm once wrote down on a piece of paper, "works on the difficulty of living, which is always the same, regardless of whether you approach it with the help of philosophy or a nutritional diet." In the end, it's all sculpture.

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KÖNIG GALERIE

**KÖNIG GALERIE | ST. AGNES**  
Alexandrinenstr. 118 -121  
10969 Berlin  
Germany  
[www.koeniggalerie.com](http://www.koeniggalerie.com)

**OPENING HOURS**  
Tuesday – Saturday  
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**CONTACT**  
T +49 30 261 030 80  
[info@koeniggalerie.com](mailto:info@koeniggalerie.com)  
Instagram: [koeniggalerie](https://www.instagram.com/koeniggalerie)

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