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Franz West
The Mathis Esterhazy Collection

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The history of the works of Franz West from the Mathis Esterhazy Collection, presented at Galerie Mezzanin in Geneva, is closely linked to the two artists' collaboration and friendship. They were all created between 1987 and 1991 — the years that saw congenial collaborations between Franz West and Mathis Esterhazy, which have been documented in numerous catalogues and exhibition reviews.

The exhibits presented here give a sense of Franz West's extraordinary artistic depth, not only representing his oeuvre's diversity but also marking his transition from soft materials such as paper and papier-mâché to the sturdier, more functional iron. In order to realize his sculptural ideas using this new material, West approached Esterhazy, who was internationally known for his radical designs of quickly produced wrought-iron furniture. Their teamwork has become manifest in furniture, "unnecessary" objects or frames—and, for Esterhazy, also in the placement of the sculpture *Die Ernte des Tantalos* (Harvest of Tantalus) in a glass-and-steel display case he built, in which he has kept the object for nearly thirty years.

Each work exudes Franz West's personal story: the two collages in which he integrated photographs of his friend (*Jantsch*) or his life partner and later wife (*Nadja*), the installation with chairs by Esterhazy in front of a photograph by Clegg & Guttmann that depicts him and his friend in front of an old closet—an Esterhazy heirloom—or the untitled papier-mâché sculpture, which he worked on with oddly colored lacquers from the Esterhazy sealing wax collection.

This exhibition takes visitors back to one of the most creative periods in Franz West's artistic career. It gives them a glimpse of one of the most internationally successful artists by way of some highly personal works that have been in the collection of his companion since their creation in the late 1980s. Not only is their provenance of the highest order, but they also convey intense emotions.

Gabriela Gantenbein