

# GAGOSIAN

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## FRANZ WEST

### Sisyphos Sculptures

Opening reception: Thursday, June 7, 6–8pm

June 8–July 27, 2018

17–19 Davies Street, London

Franz West, *Sisyphos V*, 2002, papier-mâché, Styrofoam, cardboard, lacquer, and acrylic, 60 × 48 × 48 inches (152.4 × 121.9 × 121.9 cm) © Archiv Franz West

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June 1, 2018

*Sit down in a wood, and immediately ants creep into your shoes, mosquitoes bite, perhaps a bird shits on you. A serpent might even frighten you, or inspire you to eat an apple.*

—Franz West

Gagosian is pleased to present three large papier-mâché sculptures by Franz West, from the *Sisyphos* series (2002).

Throughout his career, West manipulated everyday materials and imagery in order to examine art's relation to life and collective experience. From collages and interactive sculptures to tables, seating, and large abstract forms, his works focus on the tensions between public and private, considering the controlled behaviors and impulsive actions of the body.

Despite their lighthearted ambiguity, West's sculptures often flirt with philosophical archetypes, alluding to common myths, linguistic theories, and conceptual paradoxes. The *Sisyphos* sculptures are amorphous masses of papier-mâché, Styrofoam, and cardboard, expressively painted with

lacquer and acrylic. They are named after the mythical first king of Ephyra, who deceived and plotted against others in order to advance his own power and prestige. Zeus punished Sisyphos for his hubris by forcing him to repeatedly roll a heavy boulder up a steep hill, only to have the rock tumble back down just as he reached the top. This eternal burden, West implies, is echoed in the unrelenting frustration of the creative process, the Sisyphian struggle inherent to all artistic pursuits.

Like archeological specimens, the sculptures are mottled, earthy fragments, coagulating beneath layers of viscous paint. Fleshy splotches overlap in *Sisyphos V* (2002), with drip patterns moving upward against gravity; *Sisyphos IV* (2002), encrusted with naturalistic gray and terra-cotta tones, balances atop several cardboard tubes; and yellow and blue splatters give *Sisyphos VIII* (2002) a sense of forward momentum, intensified by the wide, wheel-like cylinder and wooden scraps wedged in at its base.

**Franz West** was born in Vienna in 1947, and died there in 2012. Collections include Tate, London; Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris; Museum Ludwig, Cologne, Germany; Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt, Germany; Museo Nazionale delle Arti del XXI Secolo, Rome; Albertina Museum, Vienna; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; Philadelphia Museum of Art; Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, DC; and Museum of Modern Art, New York. Recent institutional exhibitions include the 52nd Biennale di Venezia, Venice, Italy (2007); *Sit on My Chair, Lay on My Bed*, Museum Angewandte Kunst, Vienna (2008); *To Build a House You Start with the Roof: Work, 1972–2008*, Baltimore Museum of Art (2008, traveled to Los Angeles County Museum of Art in 2009); Fondation Beyeler, Basel, Switzerland (2009); *White Elephant*, Museo Tamayo, Mexico City (2009); *Auto-Theatre*, Museum Ludwig, Cologne, Germany (2010, traveled to Museo d'Arte Contemporanea Donnaregina, Naples, Italy; and Universalmuseum Joanneum, Graz, Austria, through 2011); 54th Biennale di Venezia, Venice, Italy (2011); Philadelphia Museum of Art (2012); *Franz West: Where is my Eight?*, Museum Moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig, Vienna (2013, traveled to Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt, Germany; and The Hepworth Wakefield, West Yorkshire, England, through 2014); *Les Pommes d'Adam*, MASS MoCA, North Adams, MA (2014); and 57th Biennale di Venezia, Venice, Italy (2017).

In September 2018, the first major retrospective of West's work since his death will open at the Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris. It will travel to the Tate Modern, London, in 2019.

#FranzWestSisyphos

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