



BERLINISCHE GALERIE

LANDESMUSEUM FÜR MODERNE
KUNST, FOTOGRAFIE UND ARCHITEKTUR
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Erwin Wurm. Bei Mutti

15.04. – 22.08.2016

Press conference: 13.04.2016, 11 am, opening: 14.04.2016, 7 pm



Erwin Wurm: The Idiot III (One Minute Sculpture), 2010
© Erwin Wurm, VG BILD KUNST Bonn, 2016
Courtesy Galerie Thaddaeus Ropac, Salzburg, Paris
Photo: Studio Erwin Wurm

The Austrian Erwin Wurm (*1954) visited Berlin in 1987 as a DAAD artist-in-residence. During this formative period, his artistic technique underwent a radical change: he began probing the boundaries between sculpture, object and performance. Erwin Wurm is now to have his first monographic exhibition at a Berlin museum.

The show at the Berlinische Galerie presents key aspects of his output, some of it only recent. Centre stage are the human body with its sculptural potential and Wurm's participatory approach to letting the viewer become part of his artwork.

The title of the exhibition (at face value, "bei Mutti" means "at Mum's") is a nod to the *Narrow House*, a replica of Wurm's childhood home in Bruck an der Mur but shrunk to a depth of 1.10 metres. In 2011 this surreal abode was displayed at the Venice Biennale. The artist has turned this typical detached family house with its pitched roof into a walk-in sculpture. Here visitors can physically experience the middle-class domestic culture of the post-war years, but also – quite literally – the cramped narrowness of provincial life. Faithfully furnished, even down to the reproductions of family photos, a visit to this house taps without judgmentalism into the collective memory of several post-war generations.

In his *One Minute Sculptures*, which he has been making since 1997, Wurm radically challenges the very concept of sculpture. These sculptural interventions often resemble little stage plays: they are short performances in which people struggle with a task or an object given to them by the artist with the aid of an instruction sheet – entangling themselves in the sleeves of a woolly jumper, wedging themselves between chair legs, attempting to lie on top of tennis balls or to sit grotesquely astride a sofa, even to weld with it. The *One Minute Sculptures* illustrate Wurm's deep interest in philosophy and demonstrate the performative side to his art. Critical explorations of art history alternate



with sarcastic commentaries on Catholicism or the contemporary cult of the body. A dozen of these mostly tongue-in-cheek, witty playlets can be enjoyed in the hall around the Berlinische Galerie's distinctive stairway. Erwin Wurm's theatrico-sculptural mises-en-scène are humorous, surprising, off-the-wall – profound, yet easy to stage. Funny, sensual works that are incomplete without the visitor's participation.

The exhibition also scores a first with its detailed presentation of Erwin Wurm's drawings. There are about 80 of these on show, most of which accompany and complement the *One Minute Sculptures*. The compact little book *From size 50 to 54 in eight days* is about a process of transformation. With snappy instructions, diet plans and recipes, it invites us to increase our body mass substantially over the course of a week. Thus, carrying the technique used for the *One Minute Sculptures* to extremes, our own body provides the material to make this sculpture. The work is a provocative riposte to all those self-help books about achieving healthy bodies and slender, idealised figures. At the Berlinische Galerie, the pages are individually displayed in a showcase.

The third section of the exhibition is devoted to sculptural works produced in recent months. There are dented refrigerators alongside huge deformed telephones and collapsing sideboards. These pieces investigate the sculptural qualities of furniture and other everyday utensils. Wurm reproduces familiar objects from a variety of materials, alienating them by distorting dimensions, warping shapes and adding marks of destruction. Cast in bronze or polyester, the original function and significance of these objects has been altered. At the same time, the colour reflects the content of the quoted object: the creamy white, for example, of *Body*, a bottle of body lotion, or the yellow of *Butter*, the reconstructed fridge. This playful treatment of inside and outside is typical of Erwin Wurm's work. What we are seeing is a "de-form-ation", a tension between the depiction of everyday objects, their materiality and the traces left by bodily actions and prints.

The exhibition is accompanied by a catalogue from Prestel Verlag with approximately 80 illustrations primarily devoted to the drawings, hitherto only been published as excerpts. (ISBN museum edition: 978-3-940208-43-9, ISBN book trade edition: 978-3-7913-5545-0)

The exhibition and the catalogue were funded by the Capital Culture Fund and the Förderverein Berlinische Galerie.