

ERWIN WURM

BIOGRAPHY

“The question that has pervaded my work for four decades now is the following: can I use the idea of the sculptural to process everyday life and our time and to gain a new perspective or a new possibility for interpretation?”
—Erwin Wurm

Erwin Wurm (b. 1954 in Bruck an der Mur, Austria) lives and works in Vienna and Limberg, Austria. Over the course of his career, Erwin Wurm has radically expanded conceptions of sculpture, questioning its notions of time, mass and surface, abstraction and representation.

Erwin Wurm came to prominence with his *One Minute Sculptures*, began in 1996/1997. In these works, Wurm gives instructions to participants that indicate actions or poses to perform with everyday objects such as chairs, buckets, fruit or sweaters. These sculptures are by nature ephemeral and by incorporating photography and performance into the process Wurm challenges the formal qualities of the medium as well as the boundaries between performance and daily life, spectator and participant.

With his *One Minute Sculptures* series, Wurm explores the idea of the human body as sculpture, other works anthropomorphize everyday objects in unsettling ways—adding legs to handbags, contorting sausage-like forms (*Abstract Sculptures*) or expanding the volume of technical objects (*Fat Car, Fat House*). Wurm considers the physical act of gaining and losing weight as a sculptural gesture and often creates the illusion of bodily growth or shrinkage in his work. «Changing volume is the essence of sculpture, may it be by reducing (wood and marble cut) or adding mass (modeling and adding up material). It is crucial for me to underline that when you change volume, you change content.»

While Wurm considers humor an important tool, his work opens to essential philosophical, psychological and social questions. There is often an underlying critique of contemporary society, particularly in response to the capitalist influences and resulting societal pressures that the artist sees as contrary to our internal ideals. Wurm emphasizes this dichotomy by working within the liminal space between high and low, to explore what he views as a farcical and invented reality.

“The ordinary is so close and so familiar to us that we overlook it. Looking at the ordinary from the perspective of the absurd and the paradox gives us the opportunity to see something different, perhaps more interesting.”

Erwin Wurm graduated from University of Graz, Austria, in 1977, and University of Applied Art and Academy of Fine Art, Vienna in 1982. Solo exhibitions of his work have been organized at Albertina, Vienna, Austria (2024); Yorkshire Sculpture Park, West Bretton, United Kingdom (2023); Tel Aviv Museum of Art, Tel Aviv, Israel (2023); Suwon Museum of Art, Suwon, South Korea (2022); Bratislava City Gallery, Bratislava, Slovakia (2022); Museum of Contemporary Art, Belgrade, Serbia (2022); Museum Jan Cunen, Oss, Netherlands (2022); König Galerie, Vienna, Austria (2022); Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, Venice, Italy (2022); Museum Hartberg, Hartberg, Austria (2021); K11 Atelier, Tianjin, China (2021); Taipei Fine

Arts Museum, Taipei, Taiwan (2020); Kunstraum Dornbirn, Dornbirn, Austria (2020); Vancouver Art Gallery, Vancouver, Canada (2019); Vieille Charité, Marseille, France (2019); K11 Musea, Hong Kong (2019); Musée d'Art Contemporain, Marseille, France (2019); The Albertina Museum, Vienna, Austria (2018); Ludwig Museum, Budapest, Hungary (2018); Kunstmuseum Luzern, Luzern, Switzerland (2018); Public Art Fund, New York, NY (2018); Ayala Museum, Manila, Philippines (2018); Indianapolis Museum of Art, Indianapolis, IN (2015); Museum of Contemporary Art in Kraków, Poland (2013); Centro de Arte Contemporáneo de Málaga, Spain (2012); and Dallas Contemporary, TX (2012).

Select group exhibitions featuring his work include *The 80s*, Albertina Modern, Vienna, Austria (2021); *Diversity United. Contemporary European Art. Berlin. Moscow. Paris.*, Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow, Russia; Tempelhof Airport, Berlin, Germany; Palais de Tokyo, Paris, France (2021); *Moment. Monument: Aspects of Contemporary Sculpture*, Kunst Museum Winterthur, Winterthur, Switzerland (2021); *So wie wir sind 2.0*, Weserburg, Museum für moderne Kunst, Bremen, Germany (2020); *Objects of Wonder – from Pedestal to Interaction*, ARoS Aarhus Art Museum, Aarhus, Denmark (2019); *Fashion Drive: Extreme Clothing in the Visual Arts*, Kunsthaus Zürich, Zürich Switzerland (2018); *Face to Face*, Israel Museum, Jerusalem, Israel (2018); *The Myriad Forms of Visual Art. 196 Works with 19 Themes*, National Museum of Art, Osaka, Japan (2018); *Carl Spitzweg – Erwin Wurm, Delicious! Delicious?*, Leopold Museum, Vienna, Austria (2017); *Collins Park*, Bass Museum of Art, Miami Beach, FL (2016); *The Language of Things*, Belvedere Museum, Vienna, Austria (2016); *Performing for the Camera*, Tate Modern, London, United Kingdom (2016); *Moving Parts: Time and Motion in Contemporary Art*, Mildred Lane Kemper Art Museum, St. Louis, MO (2014); *Out of Fashion*, GI Holtegaard, Copenhagen, Denmark; Kunsten Museum of Modern Art, Aalborg, Denmark (2013); *Desire for Freedom*, Museum of Contemporary Art Krakow, Krakow, Poland (2013); and *Funny*, FLAG Art Foundation, New York, NY (2012).

Wurm's work is in numerous international public and private collections, including the Albertina, Vienna, Austria; Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, NY; The Baltimore Museum of Art, Baltimore, MD; Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive (BAMPFA), Berkeley, CA; CA2M Centro de Arte dos de Mayo, Madrid, Spain; CAC Málaga – Centro de Arte Contemporáneo, Málaga, Spain; Centre Pompidou, Paris, France; Colección Fundación ARCO, Madrid, Spain; Essl Museum - Kunst der Gegenwart, Klosterneuburg/Vienna, Austria; Gemeentemuseum, The Hague, Netherlands; Henry Art Gallery, Seattle, WA; Indianapolis Museum of Art, Indianapolis, IN; Kunsthalle Bremen, Bremen, Germany; Kunsthaus Zürich, Zürich, Switzerland; Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg, Wolfsburg, Germany; Long Museum, Shanghai, China; Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Humlebaek, Denmark; Ludwig Museum, Budapest, Hungary; Manarat Al Saadiyat, Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates; MARTa Herford Sammlung, Herford, Germany; McNay Art Museum, San Antonio, TX; Musée d'Art Contemporain, Marseille, France; Museo de Arte Carrillo Gil, San Angel, Mexico City, Mexico; Museum für moderne Kunst, Frankfurt am Main, Germany; Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest, Hungary; Museum Jorn, Silkeborg, Norway; Museum Ludwig, Cologne, Germany; Museum Moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig Wein (MUMOK), Vienna, Austria; Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY; Museum Voorlinden, Wassenaar, Netherlands; National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, Australia; National Museum of Art, Osaka, Japan; Palm Springs Art Museum, Palm Springs, CA; Peggy Guggenheim Collection, Venice, Italy; Smart Museum of Art - The University of Chicago, Chicago, IL; Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, NY; Städel Museum, Frankfurt, Germany; Tate Modern, London, United Kingdom; Towada Art Center, Towada, Japan; Vancouver Art Gallery, Vancouver, Canada; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, MN; and the Zentrum für Kunst und Medientechnologie (ZKM), Karlsruhe, Germany.

In 2011, Wurm's *Narrow House* was installed at the Palazzo Cavalli Franchetti as part of *Glasstress 2011*, a collateral event of the 54th Venice Biennale. In 2017, Wurm returned to Venice for the 57th Biennale, where he represented Austria.

Erwin Wurm is represented by the galleries Thaddaeus Ropac, Lehmann Maupin and König Galerie.