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Franz West Auto-Theatre, Cologne – Naples – Graz

Space01, Kunsthaus Graz

Duration: 25th Sept 2010 – 9th Jan 2011

Opening: 11am, 25th Sept 2010

Curators: Peter Pakesch (Kunsthaus Graz), Kasper König, Katia Baudin (Ludwig Museum, Cologne), Mario Codognato (MADRE, Naples)

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In collaboration with *steirischer herbst*

Austrian sculptor Franz West (*Vienna, 1947) is one of the most influential artists of the present day. *Auto-Theatre* is his first major retrospective in Europe. It is a collaborative project with the Ludwig Museum in Cologne and MADRE in Naples, and pays tribute to West's work as one of the most important and key oeuvres in sculpture.

When the first 'adaptives' (*Passstücke*) were exhibited at *Westkunst* in Cologne in the early 1980s, West was correctly described as an outsider in art. The importance and recognition that is now attributed to the oeuvre came only post-1992 following West's brilliant contribution to *documenta IX*. Equally unforgotten are works such as *Eo Ipso* (1987), West's first installation in public space, and the urinal *Étude de Couleur* (1991) for *Skulptur.Projekte* in Münster in 1997.

Auto-Theatre features more than 30 works from the period from 1972 to today, some of them combined into groups of works, so that the public can experience the complexity and individuality of the oeuvre. West intentionally combines works from different creative periods, thus opening up new cross-references within the oeuvre.

The title of the exhibition is a reference to the performative, interactive dimension of his work. Interaction with art is an underlying aspect of Franz West's work, and also runs through this exhibition like a leitmotif. In numerous cases, visitors are invited to use the objects and connect with the work so as to become protagonists of the exhibition. According to West, the adaptives are more or less 'sculptures you can pick up and wave around as you see fit.' This dialogue with the public also applies to the furniture sculptures he has produced since the mid 1980s, which blur the boundaries between the fine and

applied arts. Since the 1990s, he has been increasingly working with other artists such as Michelangelo Pistoletto (*Mirror in Cabin with Adaptive*) and Heimo Zobernig (*Auto Sex*).

The various media and techniques show the different facets of West's work, which retains its topicality between shape and non-shape, functional object, artistic object and interaction with the public and always convinces with its originality and humour.