

# Universalmuseum Joanneum Press office

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## Franz West Auto-Theatre, Cologne – Naples – Graz

### List of works

#### Untitled

Franz West invites you to undress and spend a few minutes behind the partition and act however you see fit. The iron frame roughly daubed with plaster thus becomes a garment, an *adaptive* that at the same time gives the nude user behind it a feeling of freedom and security. You could sit or keep watch. You could take stock, or just monitor what is going on outside. Experiencing the inside of a museum naked and out of sight could certainly have its charms. The experience is however reserved for owners of the work, which is why the notice that goes with the work can only be read from a retrospective point of view.

#### *UNTITLED, 1989*

Installation consisting of a partition, chair, adaptive, pedestal and text on wall  
Collection Generali Foundation, Vienna

#### Bellini and Rembrandt

In 1989, Franz West exhibited armchairs and couches in an interaction with classics of art history at the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna. Pictures of Vincenzo Bellini or Rembrandt could be contemplated sitting on the chairs West provided. The question was, did the classics look any different when you sat on a raised platform, as it were, eyeball to eyeball with the works? The public was rather taken aback and too inhibited to get on the plinth and accept the offer. Classic art-going in museums runs in clear grooves, which is why interventions like those by Franz West are unsettling.

#### *UNTITLED (REMBRANDT CHAIR), 1989*

#### *UNTITLED (BELLINI CHAIR), 1989*

Steel  
Herbert Foundation

## Lamps

*"For 15 years, I sat on a sofa every evening and leant back with a glass of wine. I found myself looking at the ceiling lighting, which I thought was awful,"* recalls Franz West, accounting for his interest in lighting. Disappointed with the aesthetic shortcomings of the commercial products on offer, he decided to design and construct some himself. The result was tall, slender lights whose shades bathe the surroundings in soft tones. As so often with Franz West, the support material is welded iron poles. Seen in a group, their sublime sculptural effect is enhanced still further.

### **THREE LAMPS 2009**

steel, Plexiglas, electric bulb paint, electric wiring, neon light  
Private collection

## Dortmund and Gmünd

With the two heads given shape by wide-open, emotionless mouths (wordplay on *-mund*), the old, worn cabinets are involved in a theatrical ambiguity that oscillates between furniture, sculpture and ensemble. On the one hand, the boxes act as plinths for the sculptures, but at the same time they are block-like containers that may conceal all sorts of things inside. But then again, with the characteristic print by Roland Göschl, it is a situation you might come across in an apartment, which reinforces the furniture aspect of the boxes. The title *Dortmund and Gmünd* accords with this rhythm, diverting attention to the openings in the two heads. The work behind (*Boxes*) features plain white boxes on wheels that can be used according to the spatial situation. This group of sculptures illustrates Franz West's cross-boundary approach, as does *All-Purpose Box*, where a tall white cabinet with marks of wear and tear acts as a base for a pink shape.

### **DORTMUND AND GMÜND (THE VISUALIZED RHYTHM), 1993**

Installation consisting of two sculptures on two wooden cabinets as well as a silk screen print by Roland Göschl  
Sculptures: wood, plaster, plastic, gauze, dispersion  
Collection Grässlin, St. Georgen

### **BOXES, 2008 / 2009**

Wood, dispersion, furniture wheels, metal, papier-mâché, paint; seven elements  
Private collection

### **ALL-PURPOSE BOX, 1998**

Wood, papier-mâché, gauze, plaster, paint, polyester, four wheels; two pieces  
Jan Piessens Collection, Sint-Katelijne-Wave, courtesy Tim Van Laere Gallery, Antwerp

## PLURAL

"I like it when you just see a blank wall from the chairs," says Franz West, and has implemented the idea in the exhibition room. *Plural* consists of two steel armchairs, four monochrome white pictures and two armchairs placed in a spatial relationship with each other by a slab of flooring. The pictures are taken from the lining of the studio wall, and the flooring likewise comes from there. As the title suggests, two viewers can each look at two pictures at the same time, i.e. on the wall there's one picture for each eye, making plural picture-studying possible. That is incidentally also how Dürer explained the way we see perspective.

### **PLURAL, 1995**

Installation consisting of two chairs, four objects on the wall and a floor slab  
Armchairs: steel, paint; Wall objects: dispersion, burlap; Floor slabs: wood, linoleum, paint  
Museum Ludwig, Köln / Cologne

## Tournure

You can of course 'turn' *Tournure* any way you want. But if you want to take the title in a different sense, you would have to pull down the parts to hip-level. A tournure was a kind of crinoline fashionable c. 1870. The crinoline no longer enveloped the whole lower body but puffed out the skirt only at the back. Why not have a 'turn' with the adaptive and see whether *Tournure* suits you?

### **TOURNURE, 2001**

Three adaptives  
Epoxy resin  
Galerie Bärbel Grässlin, Frankfurt a. M.  
[Usable](#)

## Autonomous sculptures

Good craftsmanship is important to Franz West. "*But I don't plan it ... What happens is, packaged material accumulates around me, and I use that to make volumes from the packaging.*" He works on it until it feels like sculpture. The amorphous and biomorphous shapes of *Group with Cabinet* stand very precariously on tables. They appear to outmanoeuvre their centres of gravity and only get a purchase as a group. The material used is papier-mâché. Making it is very absorbing work, leaving the imagination time to get going. The shape taken by the pulpy mass depends on the kind of paper used, and the mass can be applied to all kinds of objects and material. Franz West continues the protracted process of looking for the right shape until he feels that it's sculpture. *At last two good sculptures* and *Gupf* are good examples of this working technique.

### **GUPF, 2003**

Papier-mâché, lacquer, acrylic, metal box  
Private collection

### **GROUP WITH CABINET, 2001**

Installation consisting of eight sculptures on seven tables and one cabinet  
Papiermâché, paint, wood, Variable dimensions  
Centre Pompidou, Paris  
Musée national d'art moderne / Centre de création industrielle

**AT LAST TWO GOOD SCULPTURES, 2002**

Installation consisting of two sculptures, poster design and stool  
RROSE: Papier-mâché, acrylic, lacquer  
CIELO: Papier-mâché, acrylic, lacquer  
Poster design: digiprint painted on cardboard, double-sided  
LABYRINTH: steel  
Ernst Ploil, Vienna

## Approximation and Quotation

These two works reveal a minimalist approach. Quotation (at the beginning of the exhibition) is considered Franz West's first large-scale sculpture, in which an old bedstead is cloaked in humble leaden grey to the point of unrecognisability. It was produced for the *Spuren, Skulpturen und Monumente ihrer präzisen Reise* exhibition curated by Harald Szeemann for the Kunsthaus Zurich in 1985, and established Franz West's international reputation. 'Approximation' happens in West's work by the juxtaposition of the two parts, one of which features a red ear. In a figurative sense, one work gives voice to the quotation while the other represents hearing what is said. How does language work? In their complexity, both works draw on Wittgenstein, whose *Tractatus* was a formative influence on Franz West.

**APPROXIMATION, 1986**

Metal, paper, plaster covered with wax; in two parts  
Museum Moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig Vienna  
THE RED EAR REVEALS ITS VERTICALITY AND IS THEREFORE PRESENTED HERE IN A SPLIT SETTING.

**QUOTATION, 1985**

Wood, tin foil, polyester cement, papiermâché, steel  
Herbert Foundation

## AUTOTHEATER

*"I did adaptives because I'd love to have been able to respond actively myself in a museum."*  
Franz West wants viewers to be active and not just store his work away in memory. To avoid embarrassment, there is a booth where you can try out the adaptive you've selected. Or you can just go in and gesticulate vigorously. Both can be liberating experiences. *"The objects are there to be used. They constitute a potential attempt to give shape to neurotic symptoms. ... Their relationship with the vehicles concerned lends the objects an additional dimension. Which is independent of the creative capacities of the users."* Unlike Joseph Beuys, Franz West does not see everyone as an artist, but with his 'adaptives' he does offer an opportunity to give vent to personal conflicts or neuroses. He is interested in his art being used and how one can play with the body. The associated video is not intended as an instruction manual but merely as a prompt to try something out.

**INTEGRAL, 1997**

Partition, Steel, cardboard, fabric, dispersion, glue, plaster, papier-mâché  
Galerie für Zeitgenössische Kunst, Leipzig  
IF YOU ENTER THE CABIN AND GESTICULATE VIGOROUSLY, THIS COMPLIES WITH THE TITLE.

**MIRROR IN CABINET WITH ADAPTIVES (with Michelangelo Pistoletto), 1996**

Installation consisting of four adaptives, floor slab, cabinet, newspaper, video, monitor, pedestal, and mirror by Michelangelo Pistoletto  
Adaptives: Epoxy resin Cabinet: press wood, paint; Variable dimensions  
Private collection  
TAKE AN ADAPTIVE AND GO INTO THE CUBICLE  
[Usable](#)

## Devianz, POUF and Psyche

The word 'pouf' is onomatopoeic - if you sit heavily on the pouf, it may make a noise like the word. Though the pouf is obviously a seat, its shape also suggests the puffed-up hair-dos worn by 18th century ladies of fashion. The hair-do not only involved a great deal of effort but also produced a kind of sculptural headgear. *Psyche* is another example of how important wordplay is for Franz West. If you sit down in front of this piece of furniture and look in the mirror, you can ask yourself who you are in essence. According to Freud, the psyche represents the system in which perception and thought are based, i.e. the affective and rational motives of our actions. What will you do in front of the mirror? In *Deviance*, one piece is different from the other. Despite their mirror image positioning, they do not resemble each other. The ego in the mirror is often indeed someone else.

### *PSYCHE, 1987*

iron, wood, mirror, paint, acrylic paint  
Collection Grässlin, St. Georgen

### *DEVIANCE, 1989*

Installation, in two parts  
Day bed: steel; Pedestal: wood, gauze, glue  
Stiftung Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen

### *POUF, 2009*

Steel, foam, linen  
Private collection  
[Usable](#)

### *AUTO SEX (with Heimo Zobernig), 1999*

Installation consisting of a transparent mirror foil and a rubber floor slab by Heimo Zobernig as well as two chairs by Franz West  
Private collection

## Wegener Rooms

Franz West first exhibited *Wegener Rooms* in Vienna at the Galerie Pakesch. The Galerie Jürgen Wegener had already exhibited West's works early on in Frankfurt and was willing to swap old works for new works by the artist. The title of the installation thus becomes a double tribute - first to the loyal collector, and secondly to the famous polar explorer Alfred Wegener as well, who discovered Continental shift. By swapping the works, Franz West was able to combine earlier works with later ones so as to develop a collage in space that leads viewers into the middle of the picture. As in *Pangea*, the similarly structured rooms are clustered together. In this work you can sit, look, take in, reconsider, combine and reach personal conclusions. Does anything move?

### *WEGENER ROOMS 2/6-5/6, 1988*

Installation consisting of cruciform wall, four collages, four sculptures on pedestals and four seating objects  
Collection Grässlin, St. Georgen

## **Mutterings and The Impalpable**

Franz West is no respecter of demarcations. For him, there is no clear line separating furniture, a plinth and the sculpture standing on it, any more than there is between an autonomous work of art and a utilitarian everyday object. However, language does play an important part in all his works. *Mutterings* opens its mouth and issues surly remarks. This is one of the figures first exhibited in Venice in 1988, where Franz West noticed that a few minor changes to the papier-mâché could lend an abstract shape a human aura.

The *Genealogy of the Impalpable* puts a collection of superannuated adaptives into a showcase, thereby becoming as it were a museum within the museum. The adaptives date from 1981 to 1984. They had served their turn. In effect, a wide range of past neuroses are arrayed white on white behind glass in threedimensional form.

*Refreshers* are a particular form of adaptive. Franz West was paying tribute to bottles emptied of their contents, which (as he says) would otherwise have been inside him. With their contents removed, the bottles can only provide visual refreshment. His particular kind of languagebased humour is also evident in *Fake*, *German Measles* and *Temper*.

### ***GENEALOGY OF THE IMPALPABLE, 1997***

Installation consisting of 5 adaptives in a display case  
Collection Generali Foundation, Vienna

### ***REFRESHER, 1989***

Glass bottle, plaster, iron, linen  
Hall Collection

### ***MUTTERINGS, 1988***

Papier-mâché, steel, paint; in three parts  
Private collection

### ***(CITED) RESPONSE, 1986***

Papier-mâché, wood  
Private collection

### ***TEMPER, 1986***

Metal (pot), papier-mâché, wood  
Collection Günter Förg, Colombier

### ***GERMAN MEASLES, 1987***

Steel, plaster, papier-mâché, paint, brush and broomstick  
Private collection, Turin

### ***FAKE, 1997***

Epoxy resin  
Private collection

## **OUTDOOR SCULPTURES**

The showcases arranged as *Corner* contain 15 models for outdoor sculptures with which Franz West stamps a presence in urban or rural open-air locations. This collection of ideas shows three-dimensional collages into which Franz West incorporates cut-outs of human figures in order to demonstrate size relationships. Thanks to these roughly executed three-dimensional drafts, clients can gain a first impression. Hallmarks of these works are various attempts at capturing volumes in a way that defines public spaces, e.g. by coloration. The Graz outdoor sculpture *Ein Hod* is all pink, the intensity of which would make it bright pink (as opposed to a pale antique pink). Wherewith we come in conclusion full circle to Freud's psychoanalysis and Wittgenstein's play on words.

### ***CORNER, 2009***

Private collection

### ***EIN HOD, 2008***

Epoxy, painted

Studio Franz West, Vienna

"In 'La Pensée Sauvage', anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss suggests that testes were a man's most female part. It is not Eindhoven (ein Hoden / a testicle) but the name of a village in Galilee (Ein Hod) that reminded me of this thought. This is a memorial to that." (Franz West).  
Under CCTV surveillance!

Curator: Peter Pakesch

Text: Monika Holzer-Kernbichler