
Universalmuseum
Joanneum

Erwin Wurm

Football-sized lump of clay
on light blue car roof

24.03.-20.08.2017

Space01

Quick Tour

Erwin Wurm originally wanted to be a painter, but his university put him on the sculpture class instead.

He was confused: what does a sculptor do?

Since then he has focused on sculpture and what it actually means:

Producing space, forming shapes,

Shrinking and stretching bodies.

For Erwin Wurm, gaining or losing weight is also a work of sculpture.

Whatever he creates as a sculptor is connected with thoughts about the society that we live in.

A climbing wall?

How does it feel to climb on an artwork?

What looks like a climbing wall here is actually the enlargement of an artwork by Josef Pillhofer: Pillhofer's *Figure* is just 58 centimetres tall, while Erwin Wurm's version is an impressive four metres high. Whereas Pillhofer cast his work in elegant bronze Erwin Wurm made his from cheap polystyrene. And he also attached climbing grips to it.

The artwork now looks like something we would not expect to see at an art exhibition—it looks more like something you'd find at a playground. What we see here is that art doesn't have to be deadly serious. We can't actually climb it, but the idea is fun, anyway.

A gigantic pullover?

The Kunsthau Graz reminds us of a living creature: It has a natural shape, its blue panels are called its 'outer skin' and the grey mesh inside is its 'inner skin'. And now it also has a pullover. For the Space01 exhibition space, Erwin Wurm had a woollen pullover made that is 40 metres long: the *Space Sweater*—in German: Weltraumschwitzer. It divides the room like a big curtain. Even empty, it is enormous—we can only imagine how big it would be if it were 'filled'. Is this a fitting garment for a world in which only the gigantic and powerful matter?

People on Pedestals?

There are no artworks on show on the pedestals here.
They still need to be created—in your imagination!
The people on the pedestals say sentences like:
'Football-sized lump of clay on light blue car roof' or
'Walking over a bed, sinking into it like snow
and leaving a track'.
What do you see in your mind's eye
when you hear these descriptions?
The sculpture begins to exist in your imagination.

Figure with sausage roll?

Can art laugh about itself?
Erwin Wurm puts artworks in strange situations:
So he has placed a sausage roll
on Fritz Wotruba's *Reclining Figure*.
Wotruba depicted the human body
using simple shapes.
He was himself a strict teacher.
The sausage roll is meant to make the sculpture less austere.

Lamps?

Join in the action yourself!
If you follow Erwin Wurm's instructions
you will become part of his *Lamp Sculptures*.
And you will find yourself in a strange situation.
Is it embarrassing to do weird things in the name of art?

Erwin Wurm does not create sculptures
so that they will last hundreds of years.
Often they only last a couple of minutes.
In this way, an action can also become a sculpture.

A gherkin with a door?

Can a pickled gherkin be intimidating?
Erwin Wurm's work *Der Gurk* is cast in precious bronze,
looms over four metres above us
and weighs 445 kilograms.
And yet it does not command our respect—
it makes us smile instead.
The pickled gherkin is typical of
Austrian cooking in the winter:
Because in the past
there were no fresh vegetables during the winter months,
gherkins and other pickles became a staple.
Even today, the pickled gherkin
remains an essential part of everyday life in Austria.

Robert Rauschenberg also embedded
everyday life within his art:
His work *Door* is built from plain cardboard.
Erwin Wurm binds it to his own work with a transport belt.
So he has joined two artworks together to make a new one.
Both no longer stand alone:
Do they complement or detract from one another?

Accompanying programme

(in German language)

Artist's Talk

Tue, 13.06., 6:30 Uhr with

Erwin Wurm, Günther Holler-Schuster and Barbara Steiner

Special guided tours

take a deep breath and hold it

Meeting point: Foyer, cost: 2,50 € excl. entrance

Sun, 07.05., 3:30pm

with Christof Elpons

Sun, 14.05., 3:30pm

with Barbara Lainerberger

Fri, 02.06., 3:30pm

with Christof Elpons

Sat, 03.06., 11am

with Barbara Lainerberger

Sun, 11.06., 3:30pm

with Christof Elpons

Fri, 23.06., 3:30pm

with Antonia Veitschegger

Fri, 30.06., 3:30pm

with Barbara Lainerberger

Fri, 14.07., 3:30pm

with Antonia Veitschegger

For further informations please visit our website: www.kunsthausgraz.at

Texts about all of the works on show here can be found in the publication on the exhibition, available for purchase at the exhibition or in our shop.

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