

**La Biennale di Venezia
57. Esposizione
Internazionale
d'Arte**

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13 May – 26 November 2017

Press preview: 10 - 12 May 2017

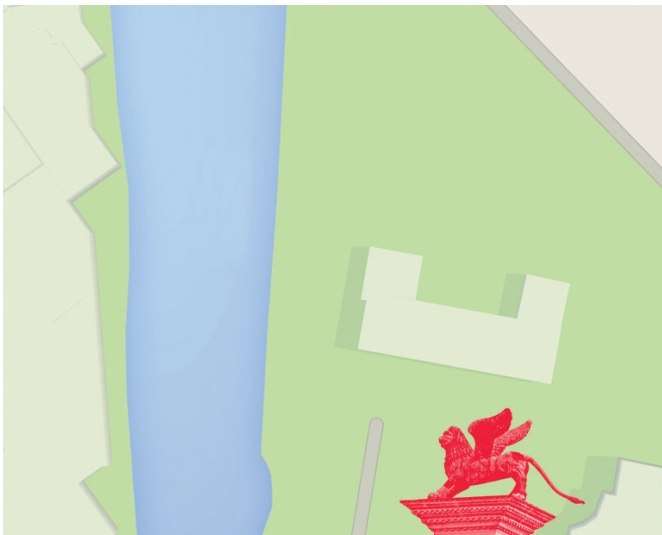
Opening: Saturday, 13 May 2017

www.labiennale.org

Opening Austrian Pavilion

12 May 2017, 3 pm

Apéro Austria until 6 pm



**Austrian Pavilion
La Biennale di Venezia 2017**

Commissioner
**Christa
Steinle**

**Brigitte
Kowanz**

**Erwin
Wurm**

Commissioner

Christa Steinle

“Art adds value to life.”

Press statement

Concept for the Austrian Pavilion – 2017 Venice Biennale

Reason for artists' selection

My exhibition concept for the Austrian Pavilion – 2017 Venice Biennale envisages two internationally successful Austrian artists: Erwin Wurm and Brigitte Kowanz. Both are state prize winners, who have had numerous solo exhibitions in the most important art centres from Paris to New York. Their art works can be found in important museum collections and private collections.

Over the last decades, both have played an important role in shaping Austria's contribution to international trends. Through her light work, Brigitte Kowanz has extended the concept of image in terms of immateriality. She makes light objects, light installations, light spaces and light architecture. Erwin Wurm has extended the concept of sculpture in terms of materiality. He has given an essential impulse to the performative turn– the transformation of art objects into forms of action and the extension of sculpture into media. Wurm creates sculpture performances, sculpture installations, spatial sculptures and architecture sculptures. In his work, sculpture becomes architecture, action and medial notation.

Wurm and Kowanz are connected by their interest in the relationship between image/ sculpture and architecture. Using her light installations, Kowanz has redefined public space and architecture in an immaterial manner. With his famous house paraphrases, from Narrow House to House Attack, Wurm has transformed sculpture into architecture.

Time and again, the Austrian Pavilion has become a site of architectural metamorphosis, a place of artistic and cultural reflection. The work of the two artists I have selected show that everyone is capable of contributing to tradition in their own way and bringing about convincing artistic surprises. Kowanz and Wurm work at the front line of international avant-garde movements: they have extended sculpture and imagery into architecture and public participation.

Erwin Wurm

“Whether you try to master life using diet or philosophy, at the end of the day, we all fail.”

Erwin Wurm is an artist who has made a globally recognised autonomous contribution to an international trend – to the performative turn in the field of sculpture and to sculpture as a form of action. Photography and video have become sculptural media, and sculpture itself an object of utility. Classical sculpture was a three-dimensional object on a pedestal. First, Wurm reinterpreted and processed the classical criteria of sculpture – volume, weight, structure, gravity, form and mass. He took people and their actions with everyday objects in unusual positions, which they would only be able to hold for a short period of time, and locked them into position using photography. These one-minute-sculptures became famous; he involved the public in the designing of the sculpture and transformed sculpture into an open field of action. He then provided the public with different instructions and let them create sculptures in the museum space. Public participation is necessary, their actions shape the form of the art. In a subversive manner, Wurm encourages the individual to participate in social action. Instead of passive consumption, you have active art. In precarious times marked by crises, such a turn of culture can release energy within a society that has the potential to solve conflicts. Again and again, Wurm has proven that he can find an answer to contemporary moods and social conditions in images and objects – in a genuinely artistic manner, sometimes sublime, often philosophical. In his work, which revolves around an extended definition of the term sculpture, encompassing very different materials and media, Wurm refers explicitly to international avant-garde traditions, in which provocative and daring approaches are always sedimented.

In his most recent groups of work, it is possible to see a countertransference of insights into action sculptures onto static objects. He has thus succeeded in creating spectacular signature works such as the house on a house and the boat on the roof of a house. With his architectonic interventions and large-scale sculptures, particularly in public space, Wurm has succeeded in opening up new possibilities in the field between sculpture and architecture. Wurm’s often playful work is more than just an aesthetic strategy. The over-sized police cap from 2010 is more than simply a biographical reference to his father’s job as a policeman; it is also a precise, sculptural translation of the topics of authority and surveillance. The lack of space in a lower middle class family was transformed perfectly into sculpture with his Narrow House at the 2011 Venice Biennale, attracting much attention. All his works hint at a critical, analytical consideration of the concept of sculpture and its media: he straddles the boundaries between object and performance, architecture and design, sculpture and photography, artist and public, meaning that his work also provides a broad basis for reflection on social and cultural questions.

Brigitte Kowanz

“Perception is translation, art is transformation – interaction between showing and imagining, during which the criteria and assumptions of this experience become transparent...”

“Leaving the picture”, which played such an important role in the second half of the 20th century, prompted the pictorial space to be extended by light. The works of Brigitte Kowanz meant that Austria also contributed autonomously to this international trend. She extended the two paradigms of the pictorial concept – “colour is light” (Van Gogh) and “light is colour” (Moholy-Nagy) – not only using real electric light but also using words alongside colour and light. Her light works are colour and word works, continuing the trend begun by the Vienna Circle, which analysed and criticised language and was Austria’s main contribution to 20th century philosophy. She uses light to create not as a pictorial continuum but also as literature. She doesn’t just use light to expand the picture into the space; she also uses words to expand thinking space, using mirrors and poetic techniques to develop self-referential systems. Her light objects and light installations go beyond an attractive aesthetic effect. Her conceptual and analytical methodology investigates the mechanisms of codes such as language and writing. Deconstructing, multiplying and separating them, she analyses the play of language as a cultural and social game. Her neon characters reflect the complexity of communication.

Kowanz also designs three-dimensional spaces with light, mainly using white rather than coloured light, or uses glass and mirrors to create virtual light spaces. By linking light and virtual spaces, words and images, she is able to make permeable the borders between the real and the virtual, the exterior and the interior, the open and the closed. With her works, she has created a new relationship between painting and architecture, between light and architecture.

Kowanz’ light art encompasses painting, writing, sculpture and architecture, meaning that she references a position that perfectly complements Erwin Wurm’s extended concept of sculpture.

Christa Steinle

Born 1951 in Graz



Fotocredit: Ulrike Rauch

As of 1970 degree in Art History, Romance Studies and Philosophy at the University of Graz and University for Foreigners Perugia, graduation in 1977

As of 1983 academic staff member, from 1998-2011 director of Neue Galerie Graz at UMJ, then curator for art of the classical modernism at UMJ.

Exhibition curator in Austria and abroad, author of numerous publications on 19th and 20th century art as well as contemporary art (e.g. N. Bresslern-Roth, W. Thöny, G. Brus, R. Wilson, G. Uncini, H. Schmalix, E. Bohatsch, H. Kupelwieser, S. Fleury, O. Oberhuber, P.P. Pasolini, G. Paolini, M. Walde).

CURATORIAL ACTIVITIES – A SELECTION

2016 Norbertine Bresslern-Roth. Animal paintings, Neue Galerie Graz/UMJ

2014 Wilhelm Thöny – Under the Spell of Modernism, Neue Galerie Graz/UMJ (together with Günther Holler-Schuster)

2011 Moderne – Modernism: Suicide of Art, The Neue Galerie as a collection, Neue Galerie Graz/UMJ (together with Peter Weibel and Gudrun Danzer)

2010 Günter Brus, Pécs Capital of Culture, Pécs Museum (together with Anke Orgel)

2003 Phantom of Desire: Visions of Masochism in Art, exhibition, symposium and accompanying events for Graz Capital of Culture 2003 (curator with Peter Weibel and Elisabeth Fiedler)

2006 Condición postmedia, Medialab Madrid, Centro Cultural Conde Duque, ARCO 2006, Madrid (together with Peter Weibel and Elisabeth Fiedler)

2005 Religion Power Art – The Nazarenes, Schirn Kunsthalle, Frankfurt (together with Rainer Metzger)

2002 Erwin Wurm, Fat Survival – Handlungsformen der Skulptur (sculptural forms of action), Neue Galerie Graz/UMJ, co-production with: Centre national de la Photographie, Paris, Galleria d'arte Moderna Bologna, ZKM Karlsruhe (project management with curator Peter Weibel)

2001 The Magic Hour. The Convergence of Art and Las Vegas. Künstlerhaus Graz (curator: Alex Farquharson, project management: Christa Steinle and Günther Holler-Schuster)

2000 Olafur Eliasson: Surroundings Surrounded, Neue Galerie Graz/UMJ (with Peter Weibel)

1998 Jenseits von Kunst/Vorbij de Kunst (Beyond Art), MUHKA Museum van Hedendaagse Kunst, Antwerp (project management and co-curator)

1997 Egon Schiele, Leopold Collection, Vienna, a cooperation with the MOMA, New York, (project management)

1996 Pasolini or Crossing the Border, Neue Galerie Graz/UMJ and Ludwig Museum, Budapest (together with Giuseppe Zigaina)

1995 Quasi per gioco. The Game in the Art, Trigon'95, Neue Galerie Graz/UMJ, Fondazione Querini Stampalia, Venice (project management with curator Chiara Bertola)

Pipilotti Rist, I'm not the girl who misses much, Neue Galerie Graz/UMJ in cooperation with Kunstmuseum St.Gallen and Kunstverein Hamburg (project management)

1992 Identity:Difference – a Topography of Modernity, academic advisory council and project management, Neue Galerie, Künstlerhaus, Stadtmuseum Graz

1991 Un musée en voyage, together with Wilfried Skreiner, Musée d'art contemporain, Lyon

PANELS, JURIES, COMMITTEES – 1993-2012 A SELECTION

2004 Austrian commissioner for the 9th international Cairo Biennale: Johanna Kandl

Member of the Österreichischer Kunsthistorikerverband (Austrian association for art historians) and ICOM

Member of the Österreichischen Kunstbeirat des Bundeskanzleramtes (Austrian federal arts council), 2004-2007.

Juror for awards, annual scholarships and foreign exchange scholarships, acquisition of fine art for Arts and Culture Division of the Federal Chancellery of Austria

ERWIN WURM

Born 1954 in Bruck/Mur



Fotocredit: Inge Prader

SOLO EXHIBITIONS IN MUSEUMS – A SELECTION

Albertina, Vienna, Austria
Kunsthaus Bregenz, Austria
MUMOK – Museum Moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig Wien, Vienna, Austria
Neue Galerie Graz at Landesmuseum Joanneum, Austria
Wiener Secession, Austria
Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, Australia
Middleheimmuseum, Antwerp, Belgium
UCCA – Ullens Center for Contemporary Art, Beijing, China
Berlinische Galerie – Museum of Modern Art, Germany
Deichtorhallen Hamburg, Germany
Hamburger Kunstverein, Germany
Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg, Germany
Ludwig Forum für Internationale Kunst, Aachen, Germany
Stiftung Wilhelm Lehmbrock Museum, Duisburg, Germany
Städel Museum, Frankfurt, Germany
Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus und Kunstbau, Munich, Germany
ZKM – Zentrum für Kunst und Medientechnologie, Karlsruhe, Germany
Studio K – Museum of Contemporary Art Kiasma, Helsinki, Finland
Sara Hildén Art Museum, Tampere, Finland
Centre National de la Photographie, Paris, France
Musée d'Art Contemporain de Lyon, France
Palais de Tokyo, Paris, France
Villa Arson, Nice, France
Galleria d'Arte Moderna, Bologna, Italy
MACRO – Museo d'Arte Contemporanea Roma, Italy
Gemeentemuseum Den Haag, Netherlands
Museo de Arte Carrillo Gil, Mexico City, Mexico
MOCAP – Museum of Contemporary Art in Krakow, Poland
Museu do Chiado, Museu Nacional de Arte Contemporânea, Lisbon, Portugal
Central House of Artists, Moscow, Russia
CAC Málaga – Centro de Arte Contemporáneo, Spain
Fundació Joan Miró, Barcelona, Spain
Centre pour l'Image Contemporaine, Geneva, Switzerland
Kunsthaus Zürich, Switzerland
Kunstmuseum St.Gallen, Switzerland
MAMCO – Musée d'Art Moderne et Contemporain, Geneva, Switzerland
Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art, Newcastle, UK
The Photographers Gallery, London, UK
Bass Museum of Art, Miami Beach, USA
Contemporary Arts Center, Cincinnati, USA
Dallas Contemporary, USA
Drawing Center, New York, USA
IMA – Indianapolis Museum of Art, USA

GROUP EXHIBITIONS – A SELECTION

Examples include work in MoMA - Museum of Modern Art (New York), Centre Pompidou - Musée National d'Art Moderne (Paris), Tate Modern (London), Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia (Madrid) and at numerous international biennales and triennials.

REPRESENTED BY THE GALLERIES Thaddäus Ropac (Salzburg, Paris), Lehmann Maupin (New York, Hong Kong) and Xavier Hufkens (Brussels).

www.erwinwurm.at

Brigitte Kowanz

Born 1957 in Vienna



Fotocredit: ©_kollektiv fischka

Since 1997 Professor for Transmedia Art at the University of Applied Arts Vienna

NUMEROUS SOLO AND GROUP EXHIBITIONS IN AUSTRIA AND ABROAD INCLUDING:

Westkunst, Cologne 1981; Venice Biennale 1984; Museum van Hedendaagse Kunst, Ghent 1987; São Paulo Biennale 1987; Sydney Biennale 1990; Secession Wien 1993; Neuer Berliner Kunstverein, 1994; Museum of the 20th Century, Vienna 1995; Ausstellungshalle der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, Bonn 1996; Staatsgalerie Stuttgart, 1998; Galerie Bayerle, Basel, 2000; Fondation Beyerle, Basel 2000; Shanghai Art Museum, 2001; Joanneum Graz, 2005; ZKM Karlsruhe, 2006; MUMOK Museum Moderner Kunst, Vienna 2010; Kunsthalle Weishaupt, Ulm, 2011; MACRO Museo d'Arte Contemporanea di Roma, Rome 2012; Hayward Gallery, London 2013; Belvedere Vienna, 2014; Auckland Art Gallery, 2014; Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, 2013; Corp Artes, Santiago de Chile, 2016

AS WELL AS IN THE FOLLOWING GALLERIES

Häusler Contemporary, Zurich,

Ruzicka, Salzburg

Bryce Walkowitz, New York

www.kowanz.com

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