

# KENNEDY

SUMMER, 2013

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– BIENNIAL JOURNAL OF CURIOSITIES –

# ERWIN WURM

The following interview attempts to shed light on a universe where sculpture lasts no longer than a minute, people try to balance buckets full of water on their heads, cars suffer from obesity, Art Basel Fucks Documenta, and pickles finally rule the world.

*Interview ... Stamatia Dimitrakopoulos*



*One Minute Sculpture*  
1997. C-print. 45 x 30 cm.  
Courtesy: Lehmann  
Maupin Gallery, NY, USA.  
Photo: Studio Wurm.

– Looking at the “dust pieces” you made some years ago, I was amazed by the way you were describing the objects by showing their tracks, the dust that marked their presence. Could you tell me some things about this process?

– The dust was never falling in real time, because the process was faked. I took dust out of a vacuum cleaner, put it in a piece of linen and was spreading the dust on the surface of the pedestal by hand. This has to be done very carefully otherwise the dust would have been cloudy and the intention was to make it look real!

– Many of your works are accompanied with instructions. Why do you use instructions? Is it a way to interact with the viewer and create some kind of a narration, or is it a way to guide the process of understanding the artwork?

– The instructions were necessary because it was easier to send art pieces to exhibitions far away without being there. The gallerist, the curator or the collector could realize the piece according to my instructions. And the other point is, I was very much interested by dealing with questions of authorship.

– You have said that through the one minute sculptures you abandon the idea of durability and infinity. Could you talk to me a little bit about this project? How did it start and how it was developed in time?

– “One Minute” was just a synonym for very short, it could have been 10 seconds or 2 minutes, it wouldn't matter. I was very much interested in the opposite of durability and infinity because I thought they are more equivalent to our time, we live in a very short-lived world and I

found the “One Minute Sculptures” more appropriate to this.

– What do you think that could be defining the qualities of sculpture today?

– Every artist has its own ideas to this. For me I found it important to relate to questions of our society. There are certain issues I work with for many years: health care, beauty business, xenophobia and all the others.

– I have noticed that sometimes you use humorous ways to comment on the mega-structures of contemporary art context. (Art Basel fucks Documenta, Be nice to your curator, The Artist and the Gallerist). Do you think that the use of humor is a way to deconstruct the essential roles of the contemporary art institutions? What is your relationship with satire?

– Actually I'm not at all interested in making jokes. I would rather my humor be described as cynicism. With this I can address certain commands and concerns in reality in a serious matter. I was always against pathos because I think that brings people down.

– Freud's ass, Wittgenstein's space warp, Deleuze kneeling down are some of your works that refer to philosophy and psychoanalysis. What's your relation with those areas of knowledge? Do you feel that as an artist you may connect to this process of finding a meaning in our world?

– Yes exactly, the big questions of our world, of our time, of our lives. Where do we go, where do we come from, who are we, whom do we eat next. We expecting to get answers for this questions from philosophers and both philosophers and artists

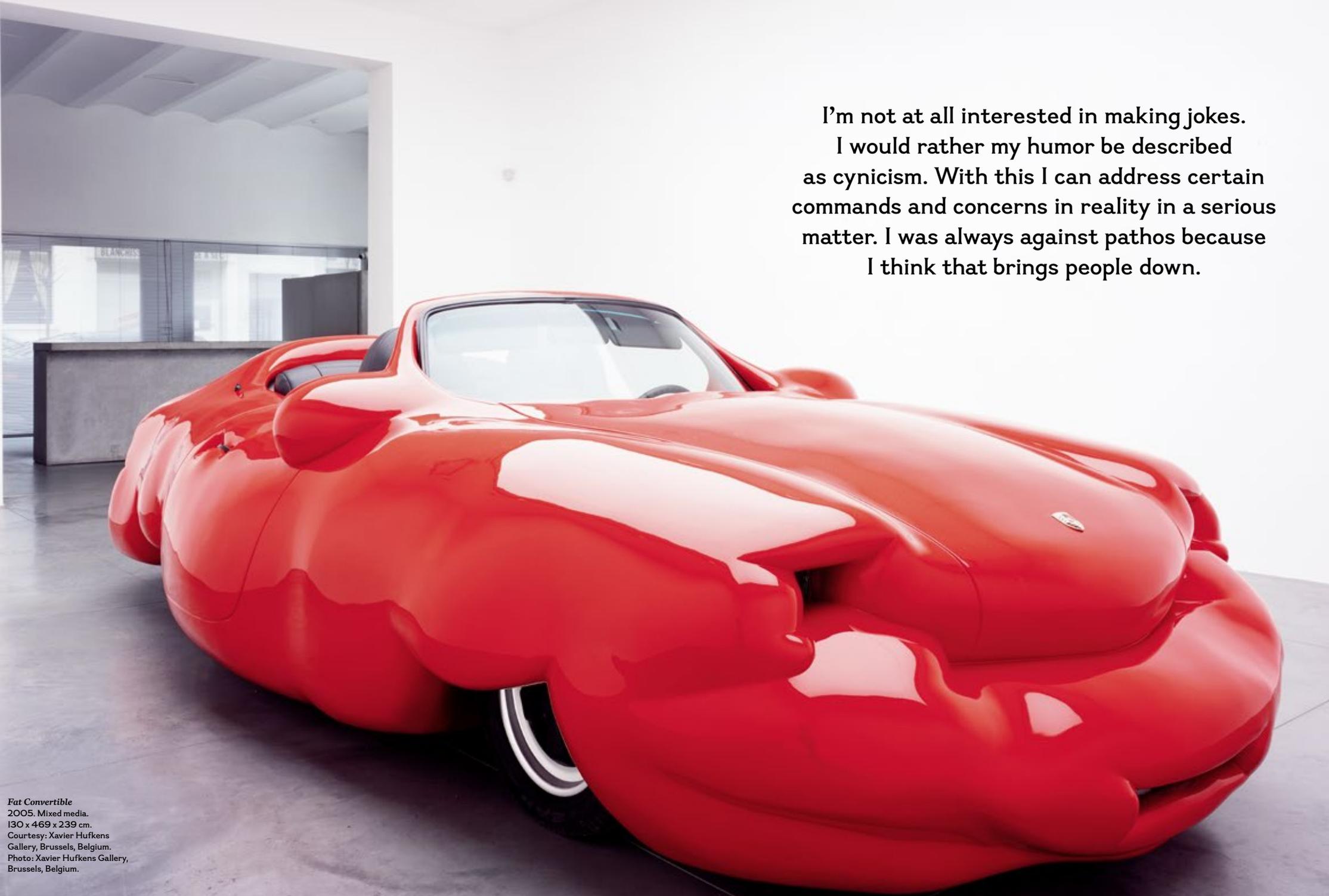


Untitled  
1990. Dust, wood, paint.  
Courtesy: Galerie Thaddaeus Ropac,  
Salzburg (A), Paris (F).  
Photo: Studio Wurm, installation  
view at Villa Arsen, Nice. Destroyed.



Untitled  
1990. Dust, wood, paint.  
25 x 60 x 70 cm.  
Courtesy: Galerie Thaddaeus  
Ropac, Salzburg (A), Paris (F).  
Photo: Studio Wurm.

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*Fat Convertible*  
2005. Mixed media.  
130 x 469 x 239 cm.  
Courtesy: Xavier Hufkens  
Gallery, Brussels, Belgium.  
Photo: Xavier Hufkens Gallery,  
Brussels, Belgium.



**Freud's Ass**  
2004. Beanbag, instruction drawing. 75 x 65 cm.  
Courtesy: Christina Guerra Contemporary Art, Lisbon, Portugal.  
Photo: Studio Wurm, installation view of Christina Guerra Contemporary Art, Lisbon, Portugal.



**Art Basel fucks Documenta**  
2006. Resin. 62 x 124 x 85 cm.  
Courtesy: Xavier Hufkens Gallery, Brussels, Belgium  
Photo: Studio Wurm

write about reality of our time, of our world and both fail constantly.

– *One could say that most of the time you are taking ordinary things to absurd extremes. Fat houses, fat cars, giant potatoes. Is it a way to take those things away of the world of consumption and use them as elements to create another kind of reality?*

– No, not at all. I try to describe our reality, or let's say my reality in a very precise way and by the way if you look very close to a potato before you actually open your mouth and eat it, it becomes gigantic and in a way scary!

– *Talking about ordinary objects, I would like to ask you about the use of pickles. I am a huge pickle fan, and I was wondering if you are a pickle lover as well, or is something else on them that make them a part of your story?*

– I basically grew up with pickles. I remember my grandfather, he was making a walk with me every day and in the end of the walk I got a jellyswabubble "Gabelbissen" with pickles in it. This was an excitement of the Fifties.

– *You come from Austria, a country that is historically related with extreme and avant-garde art. How do you relate yourself with this tradition?*

– Austria was a monarchy for nearly 700 years, ruled by one family, the Habsburgs. It was a strict, military state with an intense bureaucracy. On the other side, there was the Catholic Church. In between those huge blocks the Austrian character, or soul, or whatever you might call it, developed. Since it collapsed at the beginning of the 20 century, the swing moves from the left to the right, from up to down. And this is a gigantic

breeding ground for philosophy and art.

– *What do think about the contemporary art scene in Vienna right now?*

– Not much, I'm never there.

– *You divide your time between Vienna and Limberg. Why did you choose to live between a big city and a rather quiet place?*

– Because I have this fantastic area in the countryside with big halls to realize my work.

– *Describe your daily routine.*

– There is no daily routine every day is different

– *What is the biggest lie about being famous?*

– I'm not famous.

– *What are you reading these days?*

– *Saturn and Melancholy* by Raymond Klibansky, Erwin Panofsky and Fritz Saxl and *Red Sorghum* by Mo Yan.

– *What are you preparing these days?*

– New works.