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Erwin Wurm. Stand quiet and look out over the Mediterranean Sea, 2016-2017. Performative One Minute Sculpture. Photo: Eva Würdinger

On the way to the 57th Venice Art Biennale

Four questions for Erwin Wurm, one of the artists presenting at the Austrian national pavilion 0

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At the 57th Venice Art Biennale, Austria will be represented by Erwin Wurm and Brigitte Kowanz, two artists with their own positions who focus on examining and refining the concept of sculpture in the international art discourse.

[ARCHIVE: On the way to the 57th Venice Art Biennale: Brigitte Kowanz.](#)

With his famous house-paraphrases, from House Attack (2006) to Narrow House (2010), Erwin Wurm has transformed architecture into sculpture, consistently evolving the performative turn of sculpture with his One Minute Sculptures. Instead of a three-dimensional object on a plinth, Erwin Wurm focuses on the human being and their actions with everyday objects in unusual positions, capturing this moment in time in photographs. With One Minute Sculptures, the audience become participants in designing the sculpture, and the sculpture becomes an open field of action. By consistently expanding the concept of sculpture, Erwin Wurm demonstrates that he can find an answer to the moods and social conditions of our time in an intrinsically artistic manner – sometimes sublime, often philosophical – in images and objects.



Erwin Wurm. Stand quiet and look out over the Mediterranean Sea, 2016 – 2017. Performative One Minute Sculpture. Truck, mixed media, 874 x 240 x 274 cm. Photo: Eva Würdinger

Already at the Venice Art Biennale in 2011, Erwin Wurm did an intervention in a public space with his *Narrow House* – a work with which the artist spectacularly sums up the confinement of the petit bourgeois family. In an exclusive interview with Arterritory.com, Wurm revealed what visitors to the Austrian pavilion at this year's Venice Biennale can expect.

What can you tell us about your project at the upcoming Venice Biennale?

There will be a large-scale object outside the pavilion, and smaller objects for *One Minute Sculptures* inside it. Outside, you will see a true-to-size 10-meter-high truck standing on its nose. Visitors will be able to go into the truck and climb up to the top of it – there will be a platform on which people can stand. There's a sentence, which says – Stand quiet and look out over the Mediterranean Sea. So, it is a performative sculpture. The problem is, you cannot see the Mediterranean Sea from there...you can just imagine it.



Erwin Wurm. *Ship of fools. (Just about Virtues and Vices in General, 2016 – 2017)* Mixed media, caravan. 245 x 205 x 592 cm. Photo: Eva Würdinger

Inside of the pavilion there is a caravan from the 1970s [project *Just about Virtues and Vices in General – O. F.*]. I have a modified trailer in which people can go and put their heads, legs and arms through the holes and follow the instructions for *One Minute Sculptures*. Around the caravan there's some furniture and other stuff, cast in aluminium and painted realistically. Visitors can also do *One Minute Sculptures* with these items – people can use the pieces: they can stand on the suitcase, they can kneel on the chair, they can use another chair as a parachute; they can stand on the water bottle and swim over the ocean.



Erwin Wurm. *Parachute*. Aluminium, paint. 75 x 55 x 60 cm. Photo: Eva Würdinger

What was the first impulse that sparked the idea for this project?

That would be the major issues that are changing our reality dramatically, and the project also relates to one of the themes that I have dealt with over the last two or three decades: mobility and capitalism, and all of the things that pertain to that. What I have realized is that there is not only a one-directional migration going on from the Middle East and Africa to Europe, but there is this mass tourism that is spreading over the world – which is also a kind of migration and a conquering of the world...in addition to the cultural tourism/imperialism that Americans, for example, execute through the film industry as they export their lifestyle to the rest of the world.

When you travel with a car and caravan, you're bringing your house with you; you're bringing a part of your country to another country. You are not participating; you do not even need to make contact with the people in this country that you have travelled to.

However, this has always been a part of our world – since the beginnings of human beings. The first people moved out of Africa and conquered the world. Whether it happens through aggression and war, or through tourism; whether for money or for economical power. It is a part of us. People are moving around the world and there is a constant change of identities taking place.



Erwin Wurm. *Floaties* (Ship of fools). Aluminium, paint. 40 x 40 x 70 cm. Photo: Eva Würdinger

When you speak about this changing of identities, do you also mean national identities?

We all are in our own reality, and we have to find a place in our world. We receive a projection of our world – which consists of our knowledge and social behavior and social contacts – and we project ourselves into this world. If you grow up in a narrow-minded society, if you cannot read or write, then you have a totally different concept of the world than if you could communicate by reading, writing, etc. Of course, the nation or state in which you live plays an important part because it provides you with the rules that you follow in your life – it gives you structure.

This is one of the main issues that our society is now facing – how can we go towards the future and create a structure in which we can live together in peace with the new groups of immigrants arriving in Europe.

How would you comment on your work in the context of the unifying theme for the 57th Venice Biennale – Viva Arte Viva?

They announced the theme when I had already finished my work. Yes – Viva Arte Viva! – art lives! Cool!

[ARCHIVE: The Freedom to Do Something That Makes “Not” Sense. Austrian artist Erwin Wurm](#)

More about the artist: www.erwinwurm.at

More about Austria's national exposition: labiennale2017.at