

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

February 24, 2009

EXHIBITION:

**FRANZ WEST** works from the 1990s  
February 27 – April 25, 2009

opening reception: Friday, February 27, 6-8 pm



Zwirner & Wirth is pleased to present an exhibition of work from the 1990s by Austrian artist Franz West. Considered one of Europe's most influential living artists, West is known for work that has played a critical role in redefining the possibilities of sculpture and the ways that art is experienced.

Since the 1970s, West has experimented with a variety of media and genres. While he is known primarily as a sculptor, his work has incorporated drawing, collage, video, and installation, using papier-mâché, furniture, cardboard, plaster, found imagery, and other diverse materials to create not only a singular aesthetic, but also a conceptually coherent oeuvre that calls artistic and societal conventions into question. By playfully manipulating everyday materials and imagery in novel ways, he creates objects that serve to redefine art as a social experience.

This exhibition will focus on a decisive decade within the artist's practice, presenting a selection of sculptures and collages from the 1990s, a prolific period during which his work was presented in significant solo exhibitions at the Austrian Pavilion of the *XLIV Venice Biennale* (1990); *documenta 9* (1992); Kunstverein Graz (1993); Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (1994); DIA Center for the Arts, New York (1994); and the *Carnegie International* (1995). A major traveling retrospective (*Franz West: Proforma*) was organized by the Museum Moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig, Vienna in 1996; and his work was presented in a *Projects* exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art, New York; the *XLVII Venice Biennale*; *documenta X*; a solo show at the Fundação de Serralves, Porto (all in 1997); and at the Rooseum, Centre for Contemporary Art, Malmö (in 1999). During the 1990s, West's work was featured in four solo exhibitions at David Zwirner: the gallery's inaugural show in 1993 was dedicated to his work; *Franz West: Home Elements (A Retrospective)* was presented in 1994; and further exhibitions of the artist's sculptures and installations took place at the gallery in 1996 and 1999; *Franz West: works from the 1990s* will bring together several works that were first shown in those exhibitions.

West's sculptures and installations often invite the public's interaction, engaging his viewers in order to subvert traditional exhibition models. The exhibition will include examples of his so-called *Paßstück* (*Adaptive*) sculptures, an ongoing series of ambiguous three-dimensional forms that are generally made from cardboard, wire, gauze, and other found materials that the artist has covered with plaster and

painted white. West intended for the *Paßstücke* to be picked up, carried, or worn so as to be physically experienced in a psychologically intimate kind of performance.

While interactive work remains characteristic of his practice, West became increasingly interested in autonomous sculpture in the 1990s, creating a series of abstract, painted papier-mâché and plaster forms that rest on unusual supports, humorously playing with the notion of the sculptural pedestal. *New York*, 1993, for instance, is comprised of a painted, amorphous sculptural form that has been placed on top of a found television set that rests on a wooden stool. Other such sculptures from the period are supported by paint cans and other common materials, or by pedestals that could easily also serve as cupboards or liquor cabinets.

West himself has perhaps best characterized the way his work blurs the boundaries between art and everyday life:

*Early on I realized that the purely visual experience of an artwork was somehow insufficient. I wanted to go beyond the purely optical and include tactical qualities as well. My works aren't things one just looks at, but things that the viewer is invited to handle. There have been many theories of art that try to break down the border between art and the world, but I don't find such attempts to be particularly meaningful. Art remains art. I really see my work as quite compatible with the l'art pour l'art philosophy. One may think that I try to bring the art object out into the world since my works sometimes appear to have a practical function, but really it's the other way around: things in the world can, under certain special circumstances, enter the realm of art. And, in fact, once they have entered this realm they are art.*

-Franz West, 1998

**Franz West** (b. 1947) continues to exhibit internationally. Most recently, his work was presented in a comprehensive solo exhibition at the Whitechapel Art Gallery, London (2003) and in an outdoor installation of large-scale aluminum sculptures at Lincoln Center Plaza sponsored by the Public Art Fund (2004). His work is currently the subject of a major retrospective, *Franz West, To Build a House You Start with the Roof: Work, 1972-2008*, organized by the Baltimore Museum of Art and traveling to the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (March 15-June 7, 2009).

For further information, please contact the gallery at 212 517 8677.

Illustration:

Franz West. *New York*, 1993; enamel, iron, papier-mâché, television, and wooden stool, 50 x 22 1/2 x 16 inches.