



ERWIN WURM

BAD THOUGHTS

OPENING 10 NOV. 10 pm
10 NOVEMBER - 04 JANUARY 2017

Erwin Wurm (Bruck an der Mur, Austria, 1954) will present the exhibition *Bad Thoughts* at Cristina Guerra Contemporary Art gallery. Including works from different series created in the last few years, this exhibition will give special emphasis to the patinated bronze sculptures from the homonymous series, one of Wurm's most recent works.

In Wurm's body of work, one can recognize a close connection to a collective repository of images, to a contemporary everyday life that, under the different guises of an expanded social ideal, voraciously produces its own reinterpretations and survives this process by re-appropriating its own clichés, which are absorbed, idolized, and transformed by society. Erwin Wurm's field of action, subverting the models that stratify and define our social, economic and cultural reality, can be placed within this field of possibilities; one which is as vast as the current proliferation of objects, life styles, brands, routines, and different states of human psychology.

His *Gurken modernistisch* (Modern Cucumbers) – a series of bronze sculptures – is a good example of how form can translate a fine irony that, avoiding the risible, does not hide a corrosive and critical perspective. The myth of modernity is transferred to the vernacular identification with the vegetables that lend their shape to the sculptures. Approaching a theme of popular culture, this action focuses instead on the historical models in which sculpture – which the artist has repeatedly questioned – is also the protagonist of a disruptive transformation that makes one wonder if we're looking at a simple pun or at the product of the articulation of a language that feeds on a powerful lexicon of materials. Materials seemingly recovered from that same array of clichés, but that the artist uses as his raw material.

On the other hand, the series of sculptures *Bad Thoughts* appears to contradict this ironic dimension, confronting us with the blackness of these wrapped objects we know nothing about, but are nevertheless the containers of a gesture, often not without its violence, crumpled heavy bodies we usually associate with dark and harrowing states of mind. Of key importance to Erwin Wurm's work, the written word is used to compose the titles of his pieces and series.

Among those, we would like to point out his series and performances, such as Wittgensteinian Grammar of Physical Education (2015), Wear me Out (2011), or House Attack, Performance (2012), where the object's corporeality (e.g. a piece of furniture) and human body are approached with a sculptural performativity that leads us into thinking about the absurdity of human actions and about the ambiguous validity – attributed by other disciplines, such as design and architecture – that certain objects have as the symbols of a stratified and elitist society. Exemplifying this point, and in this particular show, we can point to the series Furnitures and the piece Flugsimulator (Flight Simulator), dating from 2014.

It is impossible not to react with strangeness, but also with humor, to the figures that announce a body – an absent body – and the state of mind we can infer from their movement. Pronouncing the titles – she-pop and he-pop – in front of their respective sculptures, we summon an entire set of correlations, oral, musical and vernacular references that articulate with the sculpture in the construction of a polysemous image. The written word also shows its importance in the wall objects, which function like paintings in which its materials, wool and canvas, define visual and semantic – almost phonetical – structures, for example, in Untitled (He) or in Untitled (But), both created in 2009.

Being confronted with Erwin Wurm's work, one is compelled to question contemporary societies and the hypothetical veracity imposed by their models. Much like we are still being confronted with the questioning of modernity present in Jacques Tati's movies; a filmmaker who, using an almost grotesque genre of comedy, leads us into a profound questioning of our imposed functional identities, but also an artist who, to this day, recovers the idea of being "modern". In our time.

João Silvério
September, 2016