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Erwin Wurm

Desperate Philosophers

29 October – 3 December 2009

Xavier Hufkens is pleased to announce its forthcoming exhibition *Erwin Wurm – Desperate Philosophers*. This is the artist's third solo exhibition at the gallery. Erwin Wurm is showing sculptures from his *Desperate Philosophers* series, alongside embroidered word paintings and clothed sculptures. Two life-size bronze sculptures are created especially for the occasion.

Erwin Wurm describes the point of departure for the exhibition as "dealing with the difficulty of mastering life, regardless of whether we do so with the aid of philosophy or of a nutritional diet." The art of Erwin Wurm addresses everyday life and yet he also seeks to distort and layer reality. This process is similar to what a philosopher does, and the relationship between philosophy and art is one of the areas explored by the artist in the exhibition.

The *Desperate Philosophers* are closely linked to earlier works by Wurm, and in particular to the idea of distortion. Physical deformation in his oeuvre often indicates an emotional or psychological condition. The same applies to the *Philosophers*: the person trapped inside his sweater in *Gulp*, or the man with the swollen head in *Pumpkin Head*. The artist gives a physical form to something intangible, in particular a psychological, emotional or intuitive consciousness.

In the clothed sculptures he created for the brand Hermès, Erwin Wurm departs from a simple visual resource such as a limb, a volume, or a garment. These are recurring elements in his work. He composes a constellation of these elements that speak to the spectator. The intriguing aspect lies in the visual standpoint, a perspective he knows how to share with the onlooker. Just like a philosopher, Erwin Wurm seizes one aspect of reality and processes it into a visual idea.

The work of Erwin Wurm establishes a link between material change and a psychological perspective. It also examines sculptural themes like mass, volume and surface. Alongside the sculptures, the exhibition includes new paintings and the installation *Crooked House Eiswerkstrasse*, inspired by the artist's childhood home.

Erwin Wurm has exhibited throughout the world in museums such as the MUMOK, Vienna, the Palais de Tokyo, Paris, the Contemporary Art Center, Cincinnati and the Drawing Center, New York. In 2009-2010, further exhibitions will follow in the Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus, Munich, the Essl Museum in Vienna and in the Kunstmuseum, Bonn.

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