



Press Release

Erwin Wurm: Trap of the Truth

10 June 2023 – 28 April 2024

Underground Gallery and Outdoors

Yorkshire Sculpture Park presents *Trap of the Truth* – the first UK museum exhibition by renowned Austrian artist Erwin Wurm.

Opening to the public on Saturday 10 June 2023, *Trap of the Truth* at Yorkshire Sculpture Park (YSP) features more than 100 works, including 55 sculptures indoors, 19 sculptures in the landscape, paintings, photographs, videos and drawings created over 30 years of the artist's career. Several works will be shown for the first time.

Erwin Wurm (b.1954) is one of Austria's most prominent artists, highly regarded for his 2017 Austrian Pavilion at the Venice Biennale. Over three decades he has challenged the rules of sculpture, the limitations of the human body, and its relationship to the spaces we inhabit. His work disrupts perceptions of the familiar and sensible and in a process that abounds with humour and experimentation, he frequently reimagines commonplace objects by giving them human characteristics. Wurm ponders what sculpture is and what it can be, stretching its boundaries, and calling into question the value and importance we place on everyday objects. He is both playful and political, using ludicrous scenarios to create work that addresses how we conform to society's demands and how sculpture can upend cultural beliefs.

"At some point I came to realise that everything surrounding me can be material for an artistic work, absolutely everything. To begin with, because I had no money and worked relatively quickly, I used scraps of wood and cans. Then I used old clothing, which did not cost anything, before ultimately realising that I could actually use anything around me. That was the decisive step, as then anything was possible."

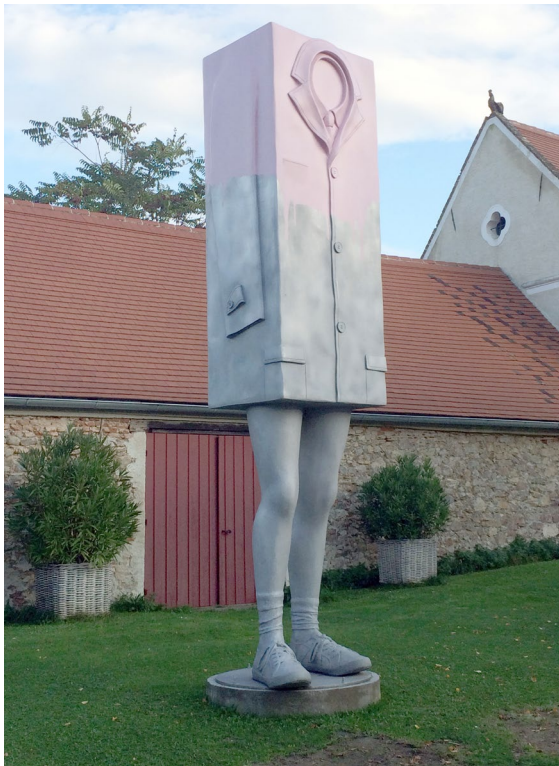
Erwin Wurm



Erwin Wurm, *Ship of Fools*, 2017 © Eva Würdinger

Introducing us to Wurm's philosophical contemplation, the exhibition title *Trap of the Truth* refers to the thinking of influential 17th-century French philosopher René Descartes, who set out to interrogate the subjectivity of truth. This questioning of reality is immortalised in the phrase "I think, therefore I am".

Outdoors, 19 sculptures will occupy YSP's heritage landscape, including new and never-before-seen works. Three sculptures from Wurm's *Bags* series explore consumer culture and objects of status. They include the five-metre-tall, pastel blue *Big Step* (2021), which is a personified couture bag, with long elegant legs, wearing fashionable boots. *Dance* (2021) and *Trip* (2021) – a briefcase and suitcase respectively – complete the series, with their long, dynamic legs giving a sense of human life within the landscape.



Erwin Wurm, *Big Kastenmann*, 2012.
© Studio Erwin Wurm

Big Kastenmann (2012), which translates as 'big box man,' stands at five metres tall, with a large box for a torso wearing a formal pink and grey suit jacket. This was Wurm's first large-scale public art project, displayed outside The Standard Hotel in New York City in 2012. His 3.2-metre-tall bronze *Balzac* (2023) will be shown for the first time – the majestic human form created by elaborate layers of robes reminiscent of ancient classical statuary and referencing Rodin's sculpture of the same name.

Drawing on his nation's historic and cultural identity, Wurm interprets popular Austrian food items, the most iconic of which is the gherkin, or pickled cucumber, with which he has a longstanding fascination. It is presented here with the four-metre-high bronze *Der Gurk* (2016), while three of Wurm's *Giants* from the *Abstract Sculptures* series (2014-18), are anthropomorphised bronze sausages that reference the wiener hot dog, which takes its name from Austria's capital, Vienna. Both foodstuffs lend themselves to being monumentalised as sculpture and propose contemporary readings of totems, idols, obelisks and other ancient sculptural forms.

"Erwin Wurm's sculpture will be a riot of expression and colour against the green Yorkshire landscape and in the galleries. His imaginative powers are limitless, and we hope that visitors will be inspired, energised, confounded, and amused by sculptures that portray familiar objects but in a way that is entirely unexpected. Couture handbags grow long legs and arms and have real attitude; a four-metre-high hot water bottle becomes a big, warm mother; a real truck bends and climbs a gallery wall; a gigantic gherkin stands proud. Wurm draws attention to the ways in which humans conform to society's demands, to the psychological impact of contemporary culture, and to how we use history and tradition to scaffold our lives. The exhibition will provoke and captivate and it's a great pleasure and privilege to stage Erwin Wurm's first museum show in the UK."

Clare Lilley, Director of Yorkshire Sculpture Park.

In the Underground Gallery, a selection of over 50 sculptures unravels the complexities of Wurm's practice, alongside 60 two-dimensional works illustrating the artist's prolific drawing practice in pen, crayon, and watercolour.

The earliest gallery work is *Renault 25* from 1991. It is a full-size adapted Renault 25 car that has been reformed on a tilt, as though distorted by cornering at speed. This reference to animation, comic-book illustration and popular culture sets the scene for Wurm's inclination to the absurd and desire to undermine conformity.

In Gallery One, works from Wurm's *Attacks* and *Concrete Sculptures* series reference philosophers, psychologists and thinkers from the mid-19th to the mid-20th century, including Friedrich Nietzsche, Karl Marx and Ludwig Wittgenstein. Such intellectuals are frequently memorialised by their houses or cabins and Wurm continues this notion of lionising spaces for solitude by representing his own workspace with the aluminium *Eiswerk – My Studio (The Kitchen and Bedroom Hanging Down)* (2005), an irrational and self-deprecating representation of his home and studio in Limberg, Austria.

The *Concrete Sculptures* from 2022 take what appear to be fragments of demolished structures, including iron wire, wood and stone, and merges them with cast-concrete forms of houses and cars. The 2022 *Attacks* are bronze and aluminium buildings and cars that have been squashed by oversized sausages and bananas in a humorous, yet discomfiting manner. A 5.6-metre-long Mercedes truck shows the vast variation in scale with which Wurm works, and the bright red bending *Truck II* (2011) appears to have reversed up the gallery wall where it rests, precariously.

Wurm came to prominence in the 1990s with his *One Minute Sculptures* – an ongoing series of works where the artist gives written or drawn instructions for participants to pose with ordinary objects such as buckets, fruit or chairs for a limited time. He documents these fleeting interactions, where the viewer becomes the artwork, with photographs and video, a selection of which will be displayed alongside several of the objects. Extending the idea of viewer as artist, art object and participant, *Ship of Fools* (2017) is an adapted caravan with which visitors can interact by putting their heads, hands, bottoms, or feet through apertures, encouraging disruption and disorder in the normally hallowed museum setting.

Carved from marble, the *Icons* sculptures immortalise bread, sausages and a coffee bean – literally giving them the status of classical statuary by putting them on a pedestal. Alongside are seven ceramic sculptures from the *Dissolution* series, which Wurm started to make in 2018 in a bid to return to the physical and direct act of making. Including works titled *Double Ear Head*, *Noser* and *Mud Kiss*, they incorporate body parts associated with human senses continuing Wurm's consideration of the body and how we experience the world around us.

Completing the exhibition are six *Flat Sculptures* – oil on canvas works that the artist started painting 2020. Primarily working with sculpture, Wurm translates notions of form and volume to the brightly painted canvases, which have stretched and distorted letters spelling out their respective titles into almost unrecognisable shapes.

This exhibition will be accompanied by a lively programme of engagement activity centred around play, exploration of materials and experimentation of making processes. An illustrated guide and catalogue featuring in-situ photography will accompany the exhibition.

The exhibition is supported by Thaddaeus Ropac and Lehmann Maupin.

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Erwin Wurm, *Der Gurk* (2016) Blickachsen 11
Katalogretuschen © Archiv Stiftung Blickachsen GmbH,
Germany

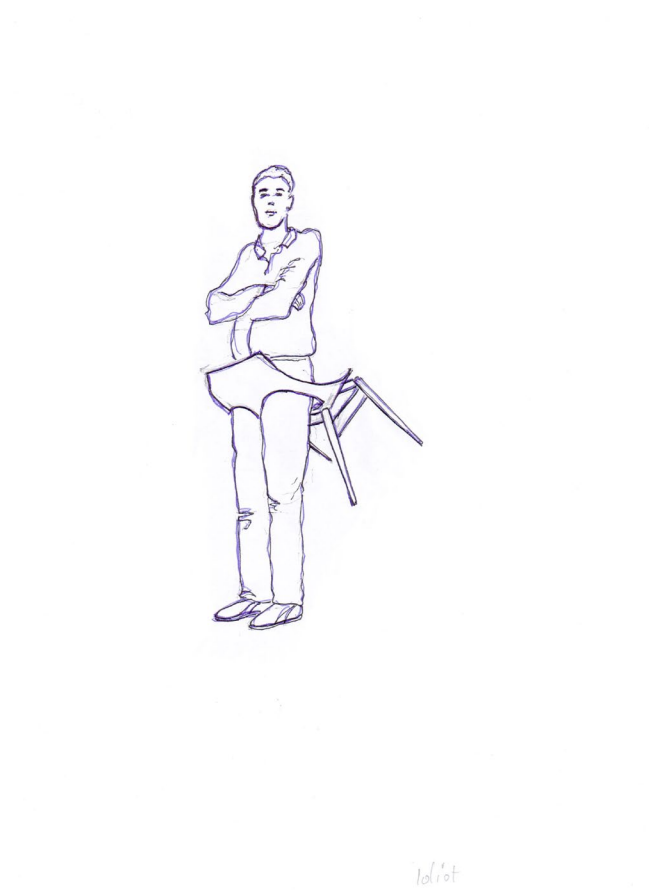


Top: Erwin Wurm, *Truck II*, 2011. Photo by Rafał Sosin. © Studio Erwin Wurm

Bottom: Erwin Wurm, *Modesty*, 2021. Photo by Ulrich Ghezzi, Courtesy Thaddaeus Ropac, London Paris Salzburg Seoul
Big Step, 2022 © Studio Erwin Wurm



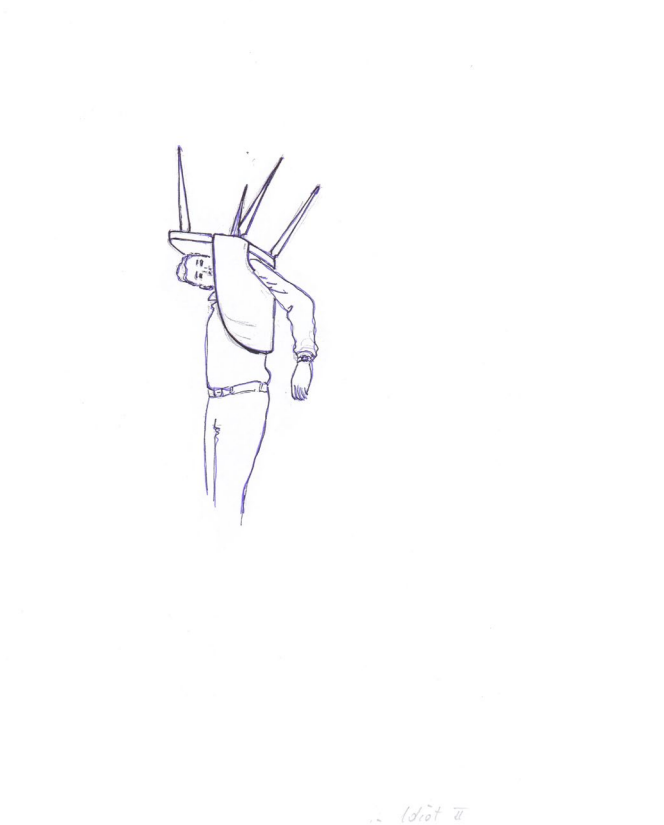
Erwin Wurm, *Eames*, 2021. Photo by Markus Gradwohl.
© Studio Erwin Wurm



Erwin Wurm, *The Idiot I*, 2003. © Studio Erwin Wurm



Erwin Wurm, *Crash (Long)*, 2022. Photo by Ulrich Ghezzi
© Studio Erwin Wurm



Erwin Wurm, *The Idiot II*, 2003. © Studio Erwin Wurm



Erwin Wurm, *Cabin Thoreau Concrete II*, 2022.
Photo by Ulrich Ghezzi. © Studio Erwin Wurm

Notes for Editors

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Download images at [ysp.org.uk/press](https://www.ysp.org.uk/press)

Listings information

Erwin Wurm: *Trap of the Truth*

10 June 2023 – 28 April 2024

Underground Gallery and Outdoors

Yorkshire Sculpture Park, West Bretton, Wakefield WF4 4LG

Near Wakefield and Barnsley – M1 Junction 38

+44 (0)1924 832631 | [ysp.org.uk](https://www.ysp.org.uk) | @YSPsculpture

Open seven days a week, except Christmas Eve and Christmas Day

Booking recommended, via [ysp.org.uk](https://www.ysp.org.uk)

Social media

Instagram and Twitter: @YSPsculpture

Facebook: @YorkshireSculpturePark

#ArtWithoutWalls

About Erwin Wurm

Over the course of his career, Erwin Wurm has radically expanded conceptions of sculpture, space and the human form. His sculptures straddle abstraction and representation, presenting familiar objects in a surprising and inventive way that prompts viewers to consider them in a new light. He often explores mundane, everyday decisions as well as existential questions in his works, focusing on the objects that help us cope with daily life and through which we ultimately define ourselves. These include the material objects that surround us – the clothes we wear, the cars we drive, the food we eat and the homes we live in.

With his *One Minute Sculptures* – in which, using simple props, the viewer becomes the artwork for a limited time – Wurm erases the boundary between sculpture and viewer. The static presence of the sculpture is reversed, becoming instead a participatory process that incorporates the viewer's own body. The ephemerality of these works subverts the permanence of traditional sculpture, with 'one minute' denoting the brevity of the action rather than a literal timeframe. There is often a contemplative or philosophical dimension to the *One Minute Sculptures*, which act as catalysts for a moment of introspection by placing the viewer in an awkward or paradoxical relationship to the prescribed objects.

Wurm lives and works in Vienna and Limberg, Austria. The artist has twice participated in the Venice Biennale: with his installation *Narrow House* at the Palazzo Cavalli-Franchetti in 2011 and when he represented Austria in 2017. Recent solo museum exhibitions have been held at the Suwon Museum of Art, South Korea (2022); Taipei Fine Arts Museum (2020); Musée Cantini, Marseille (2019); K11 MUSEA, Hong Kong (2019); Vancouver Art Gallery (2019); Albertina Museum, Vienna (2018); 21er Haus at the Belvedere, Vienna (2017); Leopold Museum, Vienna (2017); Centro Cultural Banco do Brasil, São Paulo (2017); and Berlinische Galerie, Berlin (2016).

About Yorkshire Sculpture Park

Yorkshire Sculpture Park (YSP) is a leading international centre for modern and contemporary sculpture.

Welcoming 380,000 visits in 2022, YSP is an independent charitable trust and registered museum situated in the 500-acre, 18th-century Bretton Hall estate in West Yorkshire.

Founded in 1977 by Sir Peter Murray CBE and since 2022 led by Clare Lilley, YSP is the largest sculpture park of its kind in Europe. It is the only place in Europe to see Barbara Hepworth's *The Family of Man* in its entirety, alongside a significant collection of sculpture, including bronzes by Henry Moore, important pieces by Phyllida Barlow, Roger Hiorns, Damien Hirst, Studio Morison, Hemali Bhuta and Ai Weiwei, and site-related works by Katrina Palmer, Andy Goldsworthy, Alfredo Jaar, David Nash, Sean Scully and James Turrell.

YSP mounts a year-round temporary exhibitions programme including some of the world's leading artists across six indoor galleries and outdoors. Recent highlights include exhibitions by Fiona Banner, Anthony Caro, Tony Cragg, Robert Indiana, Amar Kanwar, Rachel Kneebone, KAWS, Lindsey Mendick, Joan Miró, Henry Moore, Annie Morris, Giuseppe Penone, Jaume Plensa, Ursula von Rydingsvard, Sean Scully, Yinka Shonibare CBE, Chiharu Shiota, David Smith, Joana Vasconcelos, and Bill Viola.

Across its 45-year history, YSP has worked with over 1,000 artists from more than 40 countries, on varied projects from short-term residencies to major surveys. YSP supports artists at vital stages in their careers and is rare in having the accommodation, workshops and expertise to enable open-ended and risk-taking practice, giving artists space, time and support to think and to develop new ideas.

Over this time, YSP has sought to ignite, nurture and sustain interest in and debate around contemporary art and sculpture, especially with those for whom art participation is not habitual or familiar. It enables open access to art, situations and ideas, and continues to re-evaluate and expand the approach to considering art's role and relevance in society. Supporting 40,000 people each year through YSP's learning programme, this innovative work develops ability, confidence and life aspiration in participants.

YSP's core work is made possible by investment from Arts Council England, Wakefield Council, the Liz and Terry Bramall Foundation and Sakurako and William Fisher through the Sakana Foundation. YSP was named Art Fund Museum of the Year in 2014 and awarded VisitEngland's gold accolade in 2021-22 for an outstanding visitor attraction.

Creative Case for Diversity

Yorkshire Sculpture Park was founded in 1977 to enable fairer cultural access and opportunity and we are committed to being part of change towards a fairer world. We do not tolerate discrimination in any form and are proactive in our programme, policies and behaviours to address inequalities locally, nationally and internationally. We recognise that economic, social and cultural disadvantage is complex and intersectional and shape our activity accordingly. Diversity and equality are crucial to the arts because they release the true potential of our nation's artistic talent – from every background. At YSP, we support Arts Council England's mission – great art and culture for everyone. We share ACE's commitment to promote and embed diversity in our workforce and cultural programme. This is called the 'Creative Case for Diversity'.

Thaddaeus Ropac

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