

## ERWIN WURM

### *Dreamers*

6 May - 22 November 2026

Curated by Elisabetta Barisoni and Cristina Da Roit

Museo Fortuny, Venice

The Museo Fortuny presents a major solo exhibition dedicated to **Erwin Wurm** (Bruck an der Mur, Austria, 1954), one of the most influential contemporary artists, whose work has profoundly redefined the very concept of sculpture throughout his career. By expanding notions of time, mass and surface, abstraction and representation, Wurm places the body and everyday objects at the centre of a reflection that transcends the traditional boundaries between art and life. Humour, a fundamental tool in his practice, opens up philosophical and social questions: Wurm stages the tensions of contemporary society, critiquing the pressures of capitalism and the identity constructs imposed from without. The liminal space between 'high' and 'low', between the monumental and the banal, becomes the privileged territory of a farcical and paradoxical reality. As Erwin Wurm states, *the ordinary is so close and so familiar to us that we are inclined to overlook it. To view the ordinary through the lens of the absurd and the paradoxical offers an opportunity to perceive something different, and perhaps more compelling.*

To host his work within the rooms of the Museo Fortuny is to embrace a dual challenge to gravity: the physical one, which governs volumes and masses, and the historical one, exerted by the cultural stratification of one of the city's most memory-laden sites.

### **Sculpture as ephemeral experience**

After studying at the Academy of Fine Arts and the School of Applied Arts in Vienna in the late 1970s and early 1980s, Wurm gained international recognition with his celebrated *One Minute Sculptures* (1996–97), presented on the museum's second floor, where visitors can engage directly with them. In these works, the artist provides instructions that invite the public to perform actions or assume poses using everyday objects – chairs, bottles, books, jumpers – thereby transforming the human body into a temporary sculpture. The work is ephemeral by nature: it exists in the gesture, lasting just one minute, and endures through photographic documentation, often produced using the immediate medium of the Polaroid, offering a veritable 'taxidermy of the moment'.

At the same time, Wurm anthropomorphises everyday objects in unexpected ways, as in the *Dreamers* series, in which oversized cushions supported by human limbs (legs, arms, feet), often arranged in awkward or precarious positions, become a metaphor for the dream world, exploring the tension between the physical body and the psychological dimension of the unconscious.



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### **Presence and absence: the body as sculpture**

The exhibition's dialogue focuses in particular on garments as a sculptural extension of the body. In the *Substitutes* series, Wurm presents garments devoid of human figures: monuments to absence, or membranes that retain the final gesture of those who once inhabited them. The analogy is with Fortuny's *Delphos*: a shell ready to receive the body, yet lacking any independent structure without it. An emblematic comparison emerges between Fortuny's *Knossos* shawl and the sculpture *Yikes*: simple rectangles of material that acquire meaning only in relation to the person. The *Knossos* is an 'open' scenic device, requiring a creative gesture in order to become a living sculpture; *Yikes*, by contrast, fixes the instant in which that gesture has just dissolved. In both cases, the work exists in the moment of action, on the threshold between presence and absence.

It is in these terms that the extraordinary dialogue with Mariano Fortuny takes shape. A multifaceted genius – set designer, inventor, painter and designer – Fortuny transformed Palazzo Pesaro degli Orfei into a total laboratory, where light, architecture and fabric merged into a comprehensive work of art. Today, the Museo Fortuny assumes the form of a physical 'semiosphere': an environment in which texts, forms and layered memories collide, generating new eruptions of meaning.

### **Museo Fortuny: a living organism**

Stepping into Palazzo Fortuny during this exhibition, in particular, means immersing oneself in a living architectural organism, a sensitive membrane where objects and their setting engage in a continuous dialogue. Wurm's work fits into this programme as an element of controlled destabilisation: his sculptures bend, swell and contract under the weight of thought and irony, transforming the museum into a laboratory of contemporary identity. Yesterday, as today.

In this encounter between the solidity of the past and the precariousness of the present, a crucial question emerges: in a world where we are constantly called upon to 'adopt a pose', what remains of us when that pose dissolves?

The exhibition invites the public to engage with this tension, recognising the human being itself as a shapeable material par excellence.

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#### **Information for the press**

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#### **Information for the public**

Title > *ERWIN WURM. Dreamers*

Where > Museo Fortuny, San Marco 3958, Venice

Dates > 6 May – 22 November 2026

Curated by > *Elisabetta Barisoni, Cristina Da Roit*

Opening times > 10 am – 6 pm (last admission 5 pm) closed Tuesdays

Tickets > the exhibition is included in the ticket for the museum tour.

For further information: [fortuny.visitmuve.it/it/pianifica-la-tua-visita/biglietti](https://fortuny.visitmuve.it/it/pianifica-la-tua-visita/biglietti)