

PETER WEIBEL

Erwin Wurm: Behavioral Forms of Sculpture

Erwin Wurm - Fat Survival: Handlungsformen  
der Skulptur: Peter Weibel (Hrsg.), Ostfilden-Ruit,  
2002

Twentieth century art appears under the control of the authoritative paradigm of photography. Artistic practices derived from the primacy of photographic methods have not only led to fundamental changes in painting and sculpture but also to very new art forms such as film. The performative conditions of art "in the age of its technical reproducibility" (Walter Benjamin) do not apply to photography alone, but have also forced the already existing historical art forms, sculpture and painting, to make new decisions that have decisively transformed them. Thus the impact of the radical change following Duchamp's ready-mades in 1913 cannot be explained merely in a nominal sense as a discursive operation on the meaning and institution of art. Nor can it be explained as a simple proposition declaring, "This is art," the standpoint expressed in the books of Thierry de Duve.<sup>1</sup> Rather, the truth of the Duchampian gesture is legitimated through references to new modes of production that had already existed for 100 years during industrialization and new image-manufacturing processes through reproduction techniques such as photography. Photographs, through the invention of the negative, could now be industrially produced as serial products that no longer required the signature of the artist nor even the handiwork or hand of the artist since the device was capable of producing the image on its own, as the title of the famous lecture by W. H. F. Talbot in London on 31 January 1839 underscored: "An account of the art of photogenic drawing or the process by which natural objects may be made to delineate themselves

without the aid of the artist's pencil." From this point on, it was clear that through the logic of art artists were forced to carry this process over into other forms of image production and into art production in general. Not only pictures, but also sculptures would be producible without the artist's hand or tool. In 1977, the two authors Jean Clair and Rosalind Krauss noted that from various perspectives parallels could be drawn between the production process of the ready-made and photography.<sup>2</sup> The ready-made is tantamount to three-dimensional photography. The print, the proof, and other image production procedures, which had been devalued, gained a new, primary position with photography. Rosalind Krauss first pointed this out and later George Didi-Huberman in a comprehensive publication and exhibition in 1997 in Paris.<sup>3</sup> The print as process has obviously made an essential contribution to modernity in sculpture and, in this light, it is obvious that Duchamp's entire sculptural work shows evidence of indexical processes, prints, and traces, from the famous *Dust Breeding* (1920), which Man Ray photographed on *The Large Glass*, to the work *Female Fig Leaf*, (1950) and the foam rubber breast on black velvet (1947) with the title *Please Touch*. Thus Duchamp radically enlarged the register of sculpture by introducing the object in place of the sculpture. The object represents the first great transformation in the concept of sculpture and has had far-reaching effects. Included among these effects, as is readily noticeable, is the transition from the sphere of the human figure or

oppo  
OUT  
c-pri  
120:

(2002)

S. 70-20



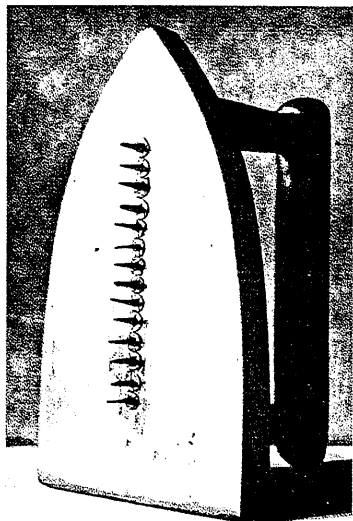
PETER WEIBEL

Erwin Wurm: Behavioral Forms of Sculpture

Twentieth century art appears under the control of the authoritative paradigm of photography. Artistic practices derived from the primacy of photographic methods have not only led to fundamental changes in painting and sculpture but also to very new art forms such as film. The performative conditions of art "in the age of its technical reproducibility" (Walter Benjamin) do not apply to photography alone, but have also forced the already existing historical art forms, sculpture and painting, to make new decisions that have decisively transformed them. Thus the impact of the radical change following Duchamp's ready-mades in 1913 cannot be explained merely in a nominal sense as a discursive operation on the meaning and institution of art. Nor can it be explained as a simple proposition declaring, "This is art," the standpoint expressed in the books of Thierry de Duve.<sup>1</sup> Rather, the truth of the Duchampian gesture is legitimated through references to new modes of production that had already existed for 100 years during industrialization and new image-manufacturing processes through reproduction techniques such as photography. Photographs, through the invention of the negative, could now be industrially produced as serial products that no longer required the signature of the artist nor even the handiwork or hand of the artist since the device was capable of producing the image on its own, as the title of the famous lecture by W. H. F. Talbot in London on 31 January 1839 underscored: "An account of the art of photogenic drawing or the process by which natural objects may be made to delineate themselves

without the aid of the artist's pencil." From this point on, it was clear that through the logic of art artists were forced to carry this process over into other forms of image production and into art production in general. Not only pictures, but also sculptures would be producible without the artist's hand or tool. In 1977, the two authors Jean Clair and Rosalind Krauss noted that from various perspectives parallels could be drawn between the production process of the ready-made and photography.<sup>2</sup> The ready-made is tantamount to three-dimensional photography. The print, the proof, and other image production procedures, which had been devalued, gained a new, primary position with photography. Rosalind Krauss first pointed this out and later George Didi-Huberman in a comprehensive publication and exhibition in 1997 in Paris.<sup>3</sup> The print as process has obviously made an essential contribution to modernity in sculpture and, in this light, it is obvious that Duchamp's entire sculptural work shows evidence of indexical processes, prints, and traces, from the famous *Dust Breeding* (1920), which Man Ray photographed on *The Large Glass*, to the work *Female Fig Leaf*, (1950) and the foam rubber breast on black velvet (1947) with the title *Please Touch*. Thus Duchamp radically enlarged the register of sculpture by introducing the object in place of the sculpture. The object represents the first great transformation in the concept of sculpture and has had far-reaching effects. Included among these effects, as is readily noticeable, is the transition from the sphere of the human figure or

opposite:  
OUTDOOR SCULPTURE CAHORS, 1999  
c-print on aluminium  
120 x 80 cm and 186 x 126,5 cm



Man Ray  
CADEAU, 1921



Meret Oppenheimer  
FUR CUP, 1936

creature to the sphere of the object. Common objects and industrially produced use objects were seen as sculpture, as the series of ready-mades by Duchamp was shown to be a consequence of photography, which allowed the industrial fabrication of serial objects without the hand of the artist. Through the selection and signature of the ready-mades, Duchamp created a small universe of vastly diverse game rules. Along with that, it is also notable that Duchamp himself did not exhaust this universe of ready-mades but, rather, left the consequences open to subsequent generations of artists. For example, the rare production of ready-mades violates that law originating from industrial manufacture: the series. In principle, Duchamp presented ready-mades as original works and, after their disappearance, recreated them years later as replicas or limited multiples. Yet the creation of the ready-mades in series would have been logically consistent. Also the signature of industrial products like the urinal, the *Fountain* (1917), is restorative because it harkens back to the artwork's historical conditions of production. Lautréamont demanded in the nineteenth century that everyone write poetry and thus Philippe Thomas aptly titled his work *Le Ready-made appartient à tout*. Duchamp has drawn the artistic consequence of the photographic paradigm without becoming a photographer. The next step is thus suggested: the direct formulation of sculpture as photography, therefore giving the equation sculpture and its reproduction a new twist; not asking how sculpture can be reproduced as a photograph or image and not

asking how sculpture can be reproduced and duplicated through a mold, but rather, asking how sculpture can be realized as photography, as solitary reproduction itself. The object as a consequence of photography in the realm of sculpture finally metamorphizes into sculpture in photographic form. This, however, is not possible in the object status of sculpture but, rather, as a behavioral form of sculpture. Thus we are able to speak of three great metamorphoses of the plastic form in the twentieth century: sculpture, object, and behavior; which Duchamp, regardless of the limitations mentioned, nevertheless effectuated with his ready-mades. Surrealism was of special importance for the dialectical development of the object; similar to the collage, the surrealists combined real and painted objects. They used manufactured commercial objects but also mathematical and other scientific models and even objects of nature, so-called "found objects," "objets trouvés." These objets trouvés were either transformed by the artist or combined with other objects; finally, there were also objects with symbolic functions that were fabricated by the artist. The development of the object thus occurred along two axes: usefulness and uselessness. The sphere of objects can thus be divided into functional and non-functional realms. As the term "use object" already suggests, objects are normally useful. Likewise, art objects are not useable in an everyday sense. Thus Duchamp provocatively suggests using a Rembrandt as an ironing board. A sculptural strategy for the future therefore consisted in making

art objects useable, in direct opposition to their historical function. Duchamp's ready-mades are common objects that are not significantly disturbed in their functionality. The surrealists exerted their strategy by making common objects useless and unusable, for example affixing nails to an iron, such as Man Ray's renowned *Cadeau* (1921) or Meret Oppenheimer's *Fur Cup* (1936). The development of the object as sculpture thus followed that paradoxical dialectic of making hitherto unusable art works useful and useful objects unusable. Brancusi, whose friendship with Duchamp was so close that Duchamp acted for decades as his agent and dealer, played a significant role in this counter movement in the transformation of sculpture. André Breton recognized the role that Brancusi played in the development of the object: "La sculpture au cours de ces trente dernières années où l'objet devait accomplir sa révolution, a participé au même tourment que la peinture. C'est en ce sens que Brancusi lui a donné l'impulsion initiale. L'objet, encore tiré chez lui du monde extérieur, apparaît tout entier tendu vers l'accomplissement de sa fonction déterminante."<sup>4</sup> Well known about Brancusi is the way he used the pedestal, which, depending on the organization of the studio, could be employed as furniture or sculpture. The pedestal could stand on its own as a sculpture, or serve as a base for another sculpture or even a seat. It is however less commonly known that, as of the 1920s, Brancusi produced wooden furniture for his atelier in a free interpretation of a rustic

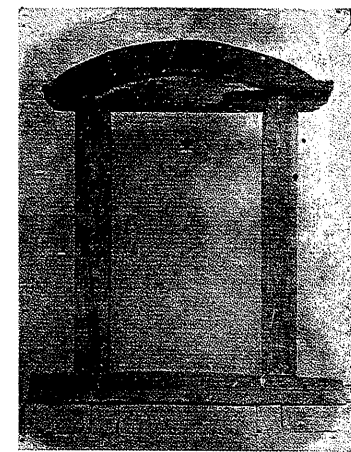
Romanian style and exhibited it not as furniture, but as sculpture equally important to his bronze or marble pieces. The benches thus overstepped their function as subordinates to sculpture to the extent that the artist photographed them and presented them as autonomous sculptures. Brancusi received instruction in the craft of photography from Man Ray and thereafter proceeded to photograph his own sculptures. Thus the game actually began with Brancusi's exhibiting as unusable art works, useable use objects in their sub-form as furniture. Brancusi also began the genre of the object with his furniture sculpture, which Richard Artschwager completed in the 1960s. With sculptures such as *Socrates and Cup* (1922) and *Arc* (1914-1916), Brancusi made use objects unuseable and sculptural art works such as his benches (1914-16), useable. In contrast to Duchamp, Brancusi produced his art works by hand, thereby asserting the proposition, that all objects made by Brancusi, whether abstract geometric sculptures or furniture pieces, are art works. By using the furniture functionally within the framework of his studio, but then for his exhibitions transforming its function to a pedestal for his sculpture, Brancusi produced an important contribution in the transition of the sculpture to object; and the reverse was also true, the pedestal could be used as furniture or sculpture. Nonetheless, he still believed in the "intelligence of the hand," whereas Duchamp preferred objects that were produced by a machine, neither realized nor conceived of by an artist, but, rather, merely chosen.

creature to the sphere of the object. Common objects and industrially produced use objects were seen as sculpture, as the series of ready-mades by Duchamp was shown to be a consequence of photography, which allowed the industrial fabrication of serial objects without the hand of the artist. Through the selection and signature of the ready-mades, Duchamp created a small universe of vastly diverse game rules. Along with that, it is also notable that Duchamp himself did not exhaust this universe of ready-mades but, rather, left the consequences open to subsequent generations of artists. For example, the rare production of ready-mades violates that law originating from industrial manufacture: the series. In principle, Duchamp presented ready-mades as original works and, after their disappearance, recreated them years later as replicas or limited multiples. Yet the creation of the ready-mades in series would have been logically consistent. Also the signature of industrial products like the urinal, the *Fountain* (1917), is restorative because it harkens back to the artwork's historical conditions of production. Lautréamont demanded in the nineteenth century that everyone write poetry and thus Philippe Thomas aptly titled his work *Le Ready-made appartient à tout*. Duchamp has drawn the artistic consequence of the photographic paradigm without becoming a photographer. The next step is thus suggested: the direct formulation of sculpture as photography, therefore giving the equation sculpture and its reproduction a new twist; not asking how sculpture can be reproduced as a photograph or image and not

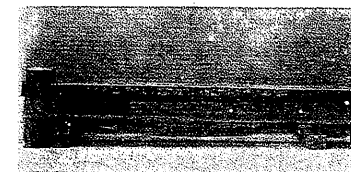
asking how sculpture can be reproduced and duplicated through a mold, but rather, asking how sculpture can be realized as photography, as solitary reproduction itself. The object as a consequence of photography in the realm of sculpture finally metamorphizes into sculpture in photographic form. This, however, is not possible in the object status of sculpture but, rather, as a behavioral form of sculpture. Thus we are able to speak of three great metamorphoses of the plastic form in the twentieth century: sculpture, object, and behavior; which Duchamp, regardless of the limitations mentioned, nevertheless effectuated with his ready-mades. Surrealism was of special importance for the dialectical development of the object; similar to the collage, the surrealists combined real and painted objects. They used manufactured commercial objects but also mathematical and other scientific models and even objects of nature, so-called "found objects," "objets trouvés." These objets trouvés were either transformed by the artist or combined with other objects; finally, there were also objects with symbolic functions that were fabricated by the artist. The development of the object thus occurred along two axes: usefulness and uselessness. The sphere of objects can thus be divided into functional and non-functional realms. As the term "use object" already suggests, objects are normally useful. Likewise, art objects are not useable in an everyday sense. Thus Duchamp provocatively suggests using a Rembrandt as an ironing board. A sculptural strategy for the future therefore consisted in making

art objects useable, in direct opposition to their historical function. Duchamp's ready-mades are common objects that are not significantly disturbed in their functionality. The surrealists exerted their strategy by making common objects useless and unusable, for example affixing nails to an iron, such as Man Ray's renowned *Cadeau* (1921) or Meret Oppenheim's *Fur Cup* (1936). The development of the object as sculpture thus followed that paradoxical dialectic of making hitherto unusable art works useful and useful objects unusable. Brancusi, whose friendship with Duchamp was so close that Duchamp acted for decades as his agent and dealer, played a significant role in this counter movement in the transformation of sculpture. André Breton recognized the role that Brancusi played in the development of the object: "La sculpture au cours de ces trente dernières années où l'objet devait accomplir sa révolution, a participé au même tourment que la peinture. C'est en ce sens que Brancusi lui a donné l'impulsion initiale. L'objet, encore tiré chez lui du monde extérieur, apparaît tout entier tendu vers l'accomplissement de sa fonction déterminante."<sup>4</sup> Well known about Brancusi is the way he used the pedestal, which, depending on the organization of the studio, could be employed as furniture or sculpture. The pedestal could stand on its own as a sculpture, or serve as a base for another sculpture or even a seat. It is however less commonly known that, as of the 1920s, Brancusi produced wooden furniture for his atelier in a free interpretation of a rustic

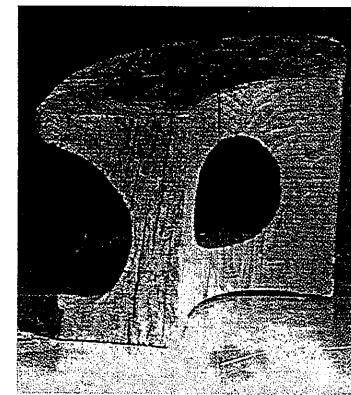
Romanian style and exhibited it not as furniture, but as sculpture equally important to his bronze or marble pieces. The benches thus overstepped their function as subordinates to sculpture to the extent that the artist photographed them and presented them as autonomous sculptures. Brancusi received instruction in the craft of photography from Man Ray and thereafter proceeded to photograph his own sculptures. Thus the game actually began with Brancusi's exhibiting as unusable art works, useable use objects in their sub-form as furniture. Brancusi also began the genre of the object with his furniture sculpture, which Richard Artschwager completed in the 1960s. With sculptures such as *Socrates and Cup* (1922) and *Arc* (1914-1916), Brancusi made use objects unuseable and sculptural art works such as his benches (1914-16), useable. In contrast to Duchamp, Brancusi produced his art works by hand, thereby asserting the proposition, that all objects made by Brancusi, whether abstract geometric sculptures or furniture pieces, are art works. By using the furniture functionally within the framework of his studio, but then for his exhibitions transforming its function to a pedestal for his sculpture, Brancusi produced an important contribution in the transition of the sculpture to object; and the reverse was also true, the pedestal could be used as furniture or sculpture. Nonetheless, he still believed in the "intelligence of the hand," whereas Duchamp preferred objects that were produced by a machine, neither realized nor conceived of by an artist, but, rather, merely chosen.



Constantin Brancusi  
ARC, 1914/16



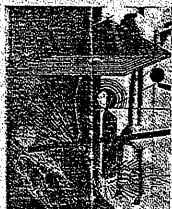
Constantin Brancusi  
BENCH, 1914-16



Constantin Brancusi  
STOOL, c. 1920



A regarder d'un œil, de près, pendant  
presque une heure.



MARCEL DUCHAMP

Marcel Duchamp  
TO BE LOOKED AT (FROM THE OTHER SIDE OF  
THE GLASS) WITH ONE EYE, CLOSE TO, FOR  
ALMOST AN HOUR, 1918  
"391", Paris, Nr. 13, July 1920, p. 2



Yves Klein  
LEAP INTO THE VOID, 1960

The sculpture's index was thus expanded by the regime of the use object, whose utilitarian function was also questioned or removed, in order to transform it into an unusable artwork. The difference between use object and artwork was abolished. At the same time, Brancusi was also essentially involved in the development of sculpture to abstraction, which likewise served as the release from the human body. A human head became ever more geometric for Brancusi, and in the end was filed down to an egg shape. Abstraction in sculpture meant, primarily, abstraction from the anthropomorphic form, from human dimensions. All objects, whether abstract or concrete, could be made sculptural.

Duchamp also introduced the third phase of the transformation of sculpture, which developed along the axis of the material state. The work *Paris Air* (1919) exhibited immaterial air. In the 1960s, the material states of sculpture were declined, so to speak, through fire, water, earth, and air. Artists such as Yves Klein, Robert Morris, Carl André, Richard Serra, Klaus Rinke, Robert Barry and many others, worked with the gaseous, liquid, and solid states of matter. Following these material investigations of the objects was the counter movement of the dematerialists. The material-bound object-like paradigm was relinquished through the term "conceptual art" or "post-objectiveness." Fundamental in the idea of conceptual art is insight into the linguistic nature of all artistic statements, regardless of the elements used in production. In addition to Lawrence Weiner, Douglas Huebler, and Sol LeWitt, also worthy of mention are the works from Joseph

Kosuth and Art & Language, who described themselves as the purely analytical branch of conceptual art because they did not produce any materials, drawings, or paintings, but, rather, carried out investigations of art and its conditions purely through language analysis. (Kosuth 1996: "Works of art are analytical propositions.") They replaced the conventional methods of painting and sculpture with linguistic operations in the field of visual representation. The results of the expanded view of conceptual art, namely land art, process art, behavior art, etc., were, in principle, documented through photography. Thus the photographic paradigm once again shifted into the position of painting and sculpture, even in those movements which were keen on expanding or even abandoning the referential framework and the practice of painting and sculpture under the heading: "departure from the image." Parallel to this expansion of the idea of art in the 1960s, it was primarily fluxus, Happening and actionism that transformed the concept of sculpture. Interestingly, the otherwise antagonistic forms of concept art and action art have a common artistic practice in one field, namely, the "propositions", "instructions" and "statements" (according to the title of the 1968 book from Laurence Weiner). In *Art after Philosophy* (1969) Kosuth wrote: "A work of art is a kind of proposition presented within the context of art as a comment on art." There are numerous written instructions from the fluxus and event artists: "Draw an imaginary map" wrote Yoko Ono in 1962. The famous telegram that Robert Rauschenberg sent to Iris Clert in 1961 as a

contribution to a portrait exhibition stated: "This is a portrait of Iris Clert if I say so." Conceptualism and actionism meet at the level of information. This propositional aspect of art was also already developed in Duchamp. Recall the famous work, *To be looked at (from the other side of the glass) with one eye, close to, for almost an hour* (1918). The model for the art of the instruction is clearly the score, which presents instructions for a performer as to how to play a certain piece of music. Therefore, the advance of the allographic arts – which Nelson Goodman describes in his 1968 book, *Languages of Art*, as those arts that know no original, and instead consist of only notation which is realized, staged, interpreted, and presented in various sites at various times – can be observed as the advance of music into the fine arts in the 1960s. These techniques of instruction were addressed to the viewer of art, from which the model of audience participation in the construction of the artwork developed in the 1960s in various forms. Robert Morris, in his 1971 retrospective at the Tate Gallery, London, developed sculptures specifically for audience participation: plywood constructions on which visitors could walk; ropes, on which they could balance, and wooden walls they could lean against. After the innovative decades of the 1960s, sculpture was completely transformed and changed almost into its opposite; dematerialized and made semiotic, it was staged under very new conditions, on the one hand as a medium of reproduction under the photographic paradigm, as Duchamp had already anticipated

with his *Boîte en valise* (1936), and on the other hand as a model of participation. Seen from a conservative perspective, these changes led to a general aesthetic of disappearance and absence (of the object). This aesthetic of absence, of emptiness, and the void had already been foreshadowed by Yves Klein in the late 1950s, primarily with his renowned exhibition "Le vide" (1958, Paris), and his "Leap into the void" and "Zone de sensibilité picturale immatérielle."

These lines tracing the tradition of the avant-garde culminate in Erwin Wurm's work. He makes explicit references to the important stations in the expansion of the concept of sculpture. His *22° C room temperature* (glass, thermostat, and heater) 1994, refers to the *Air Show* and the *Air-Conditioning Show* from Art & Language (1967), which considered the volume and the temperature of a body, the spatial extension of the temperature, and the dimension of the temperature and the air as sculptural elements. If, for example, an air conditioner is put into operation, the room fills with cooled air, similar to the way Dan Flavin filled the room with light. Wurm uses these de-materialized and conceptualized forms of sculptural concepts in a strict examination of the classical concepts of volume, space, and weight. If air has volume and temperature has something to do with space, as shown by many pneumatic art works in the 1960s, then concern is not merely with the orchestration of emptiness such as for Yves Klein. Instead, historical concepts of space are newly defined and practiced. The

The sculpture's index was thus expanded by the regime of the use object, whose utilitarian function was also questioned or removed, in order to transform it into an unusable artwork. The difference between use object and artwork was abolished. At the same time, Brancusi was also essentially involved in the development of sculpture to abstraction, which likewise served as the release from the human body. A human head became ever more geometric for Brancusi, and in the end was filed down to an egg shape. Abstraction in sculpture meant, primarily, abstraction from the anthropomorphic form, from human dimensions. All objects, whether abstract or concrete, could be made sculptural.

Duchamp also introduced the third phase of the transformation of sculpture, which developed along the axis of the material state. The work *Paris Air* (1919) exhibited immaterial air. In the 1960s, the material states of sculpture were declined, so to speak, through fire, water, earth, and air. Artists such as Yves Klein, Robert Morris, Carl André, Richard Serra, Klaus Rinke, Robert Barry and many others, worked with the gaseous, liquid, and solid states of matter. Following these material investigations of the objects was the counter movement of the dematerialists. The material-bound object-like paradigm was relinquished through the term "conceptual art" or "post-objectiveness." Fundamental in the idea of conceptual art is insight into the linguistic nature of all artistic statements, regardless of the elements used in production. In addition to Lawrence Weiner, Douglas Huebler, and Sol LeWitt, also worthy of mention are the works from Joseph

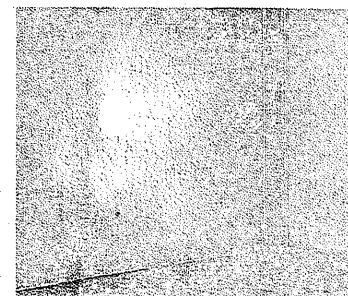
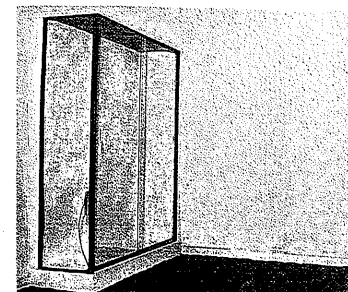
Kosuth and Art & Language, who described themselves as the purely analytical branch of conceptual art because they did not produce any materials, drawings, or paintings, but, rather, carried out investigations of art and its conditions purely through language analysis. (Kosuth 1996: "Works of art are analytical propositions.") They replaced the conventional methods of painting and sculpture with linguistic operations in the field of visual representation. The results of the expanded view of conceptual art, namely land art, process art, behavior art, etc., were, in principle, documented through photography. Thus the photographic paradigm once again shifted into the position of painting and sculpture, even in those movements which were keen on expanding or even abandoning the referential framework and the practice of painting and sculpture under the heading: "departure from the image."

Parallel to this expansion of the idea of art in the 1960s, it was primarily fluxus, Happening and actionism that transformed the concept of sculpture. Interestingly, the otherwise antagonistic forms of concept art and action art have a common artistic practice in one field, namely, the "propositions", "instructions" and "statements" (according to the title of the 1968 book from Laurence Weiner). In *Art after Philosophy* (1969) Kosuth wrote: "A work of art is a kind of proposition presented within the context of art as a comment on art." There are numerous written instructions from the fluxus and event artists: "Draw an imaginary map" wrote Yoko Ono in 1962. The famous telegram that Robert Rauschenberg sent to Iris Clert in 1961 as a

contribution to a portrait exhibition stated: "This is a portrait of Iris Clert if I say so." Conceptualism and actionism meet at the level of information. This propositional aspect of art was also already developed in Duchamp. Recall the famous work, *To be looked at (from the other side of the glass) with one eye, close to, for almost an hour* (1918). The model for the art of the instruction is clearly the score, which presents instructions for a performer as to how to play a certain piece of music. Therefore, the advance of the allographic arts – which Nelson Goodman describes in his 1968 book, *Languages of Art*, as those arts that know no original, and instead consist of only notation which is realized, staged, interpreted, and presented in various sites at various times – can be observed as the advance of music into the fine arts in the 1960s. These techniques of instruction were addressed to the viewer of art, from which the model of audience participation in the construction of the artwork developed in the 1960s in various forms. Robert Morris, in his 1971 retrospective at the Tate Gallery, London, developed sculptures specifically for audience participation: plywood constructions on which visitors could walk; ropes, on which they could balance, and wooden walls they could lean against. After the innovative decades of the 1960s, sculpture was completely transformed and changed almost into its opposite; dematerialized and made semiotic, it was staged under very new conditions, on the one hand as a medium of reproduction under the photographic paradigm, as Duchamp had already anticipated

with his *Boîte en valise* (1936), and on the other hand as a model of participation. Seen from a conservative perspective, these changes led to a general aesthetic of disappearance and absence (of the object). This aesthetic of absence, of emptiness, and the void had already been foreshadowed by Yves Klein in the late 1950s, primarily with his renowned exhibition "Le vide" (1958, Paris), and his "Leap into the void" and "Zone de sensibilité picturale immatérielle."

These lines tracing the tradition of the avant-garde culminate in Erwin Wurm's work. He makes explicit references to the important stations in the expansion of the concept of sculpture. His *22° C room temperature* (glass, thermostat, and heater) 1994, refers to the *Air Show* and the *Air-Conditioning Show* from Art & Language (1967), which considered the volume and the temperature of a body, the spatial extension of the temperature, and the dimension of the temperature and the air as sculptural elements. If, for example, an air conditioner is put into operation, the room fills with cooled air, similar to the way Dan Flavin filled the room with light. Wurm uses these de-materialized and conceptualized forms of sculptural concepts in a strict examination of the classical concepts of volume, space, and weight. If air has volume and temperature has something to do with space, as shown by many pneumatic art works in the 1960s, then concern is not merely with the orchestration of emptiness such as for Yves Klein. Instead, historical concepts of space are newly defined and practiced. The



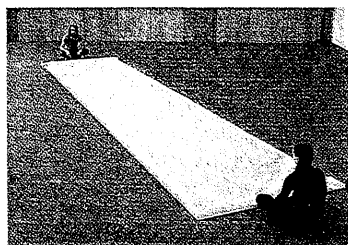
Yves Klein  
LE VIDE, 1958  
interior views of Yves Klein's exhibition at Galerie Iris Clert, Paris, April 28 - May 12, 1958: empty vitrine and whitened room.



Yves Klein presenting a "Zone de sensibilité picturale immatérielle" at the Hesselhuis exhibition, Antwerp, March 17, 1959



Franz Erhard Walther  
WALKING ON A LIMITED AREA (PLINTH FORM),  
1964



Franz Erhard Walther  
ARRANGEMENT, 1969  
first unrolling the object, then rolling it again –  
decision: rotation – waiting time as event

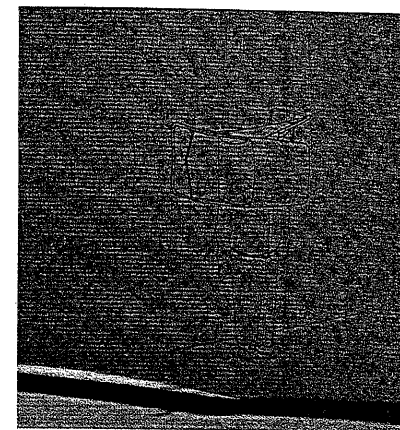


Franz Erhard Walther  
GAIN IN VOLUME – RESTRICTION OF MOVEMENT,  
1965

filling of space through object sculptures is produced through a new procedure. After exercises within the aesthetic of absence, which recall Duchamp's *Dust Breeding*, Wurm cleansed the classical field of sculpture of all its object and anthropomorphic references to such an extent, leading sculpture to a null state, that it could confront anthropomorphism and the world of objects under new conditions. The human body, already utilized for sitting on furniture, walking on sculptures, using objects in various ways, once again came into the field of vision. In his 1968, *Objects, to use*, Franz Erhard Walther presented a whole volume in which the activities of persons using prescribed objects results in a new definition of sculpture. Walther writes: "The pieces are a kind of pedestal and the persons standing on them can be seen as sculptures. Correlates of activity, referring to position, space, and time, change. Meaning is first produced in the handling of these." The condition under which Wurm offered his attempt to reconcile anthropomorphism and the world of objects was the photographic paradigm. If an increase or decrease in temperature constitutes a sculptural process that has to do with volume, then any person's weight gain or loss must be a sculptural process. This process can, however, only be captured in a visually convincing way through the medium of photography. In a strict logic, Wurm built various singular elements of his sculptural extension. In this, the process of contiguity was dominant: a linguistic operation based on spatial exclusion. A pedestal is tangent to a sculpture,

dust is tangent to an object, and clothing is tangent to a body. Thus Wurm, in a first phase, hung sweaters on the wall, and exhibited dust, a pedestal and a showcase of emptiness. The empty sweaters mirrored the empty showcases; the absence of the objects mirrored the absence of the bodies. Then he began to multiply and thicken these elements as metonyms corresponding to the logic of their contiguity. Dust came into the showcases and onto the pedestals; the sweaters clothed and covered the pedestals. Of course he also produced outdoor sculptures: dust on the streets and public squares. On occasion, the dust was merely painted, as Duchamp had already pointed out that dust has the effect of color. The empty sweaters filled themselves with bodies, initially not with anthropomorphic bodies, but rather with geometric objects. The pedestals were dressed so to speak; pieces of clothing disappeared into open wooden cases that looked like coffins. The costumed pedestals referred to the absent human figures, in harmony with the postmodern thesis of the disappearance of the subject. When people die and their bodies disappear into the earth, their clothing is left behind. In another gesture, he again fills the sweaters with human bodies; but not in an everyday functionality, but rather in a functionally distorted form. The stretched and pressed sweaters emphasized the sculptural aspect of the human body. Through certain anatomical positions and holes in the sweaters, these positions have the effect of parodying abstract modern sculptures. Photographs and videos comprise the medium of these plastic

constructions assisted by live human bodies. A decisive change took place in 1993 with a new concept of the filling of the room – not by gas and temperature – but by the human body that expanded through multiplied clothing pieces. Volume, weight, static, and form – the classical criteria in sculpture – were presented in a new, if not grotesque way. This also offered the first chance for instruction. In a 1993 textbook, *From Men's Size 50 to Size 54 in 8 Days* which resembled the classical books of conceptual art, Wurm could give instructions for a sculpture: "Sleep late," "70 degrees indoor temperature," "Slow regular movements," "Read or watch TV lying down." After this transformation of the classical parameters of sculpture such as gravitation, weight, balance, static, stability, volume, etc., Wurm introduced a new criterion of sculpture through the media of photography and film: time. After he expanded the world of objects to sweaters and chairs and other pieces of furniture or vehicles that border the human body, he arranged encounters between everyday objects and human positions in a way reminiscent of the surrealist tradition of the "coincidental encounter of a sewing machine and an umbrella on an operating table." In public and private rooms, in modest middle class apartments and glamorous representation spaces, persons could be found in grotesquely construed situations and positions with and without objects that they could assume less permanently the further the phase of the work progressed. Thus, the series *One Minute Sculptures* was produced, featuring Wurm himself



and other actors. Human bodies in association with objects and in positions they could assume only for minutes became the ideal extension of sculpture into the media of photography and video.

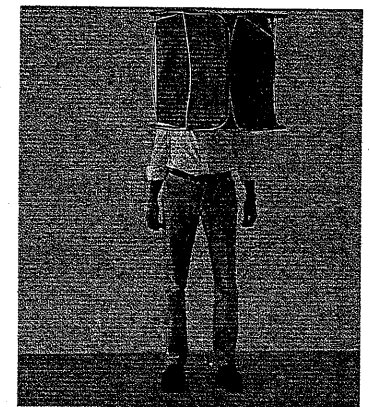
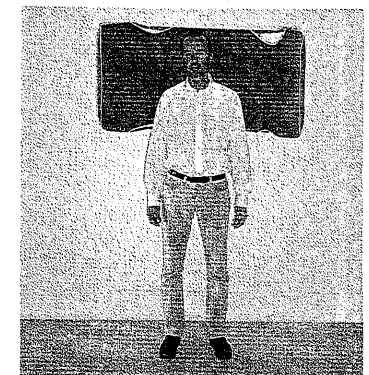
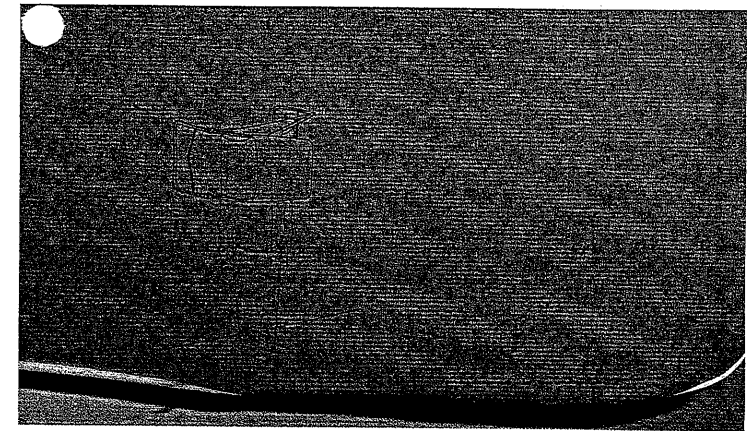
The dematerialization of sculpture, in contrast to conceptual art, did not lead to just texts and sentences. Nevertheless, Wurm maintained the fundamental claim of conceptual art; the insight into the linguistic nature of all artistic statements, regardless of the elements used in production. The elements that he uses are objects, bodies, and media, but the way in which he combines these elements and actualizes them is of a linguistic nature. He continually uses the methods of contiguity (tangibility, adjoining) and metonymy (i.e., pars pro toto). The works of Anna and Bernhard Blume, *Vase Ecstasies* (1987), *In the Room of Madness* (1984), offer a comparison for the related language operation in the photographic media. With Wurm, language operations conduct the elements of sculpture in the semiotic medium of photography. These linguistic methods become the algorithms for the creation of works, ideas, machines that produce art:

filling of space through object sculptures is produced through a new procedure. After exercises within the aesthetic of absence, which recall Duchamp's *Dust Breeding*, Wurm cleansed the classical field of sculpture of all its object and anthropomorphic references to such an extent, leading sculpture to a null state, that it could confront anthropomorphism and the world of objects under new conditions. The human body, already utilized for sitting on furniture, walking on sculptures, using objects in various ways, once again came into the field of vision. In his 1968, *Objects, to use*, Franz Erhard Walther presented a whole volume in which the activities of persons using prescribed objects results in a new definition of sculpture. Walther writes: "The pieces are a kind of pedestal and the persons standing on them can be seen as sculptures. Correlates of activity, referring to position, space, and time, change. Meaning is first produced in the handling of these." The condition under which Wurm offered his attempt to reconcile anthropomorphism and the world of objects was the photographic paradigm. If an increase or decrease in temperature constitutes a sculptural process that has to do with volume, then any person's weight gain or loss must be a sculptural process. This process can, however, only be captured in a visually convincing way through the medium of photography. In a strict logic, Wurm built various singular elements of his sculptural extension. In this, the process of contiguity was dominant: a linguistic operation based on spatial exclusion. A pedestal is tangent to a sculpture,

dust is tangent to an object, and clothing is tangent to a body. Thus Wurm, in a first phase, hung sweaters on the wall, and exhibited dust, a pedestal and a showcase of emptiness. The empty sweaters mirrored the empty showcases; the absence of the objects mirrored the absence of the bodies. Then he began to multiply and thicken these elements as metonyms corresponding to the logic of their contiguity. Dust came into the showcases and onto the pedestals; the sweaters clothed and covered the pedestals. Of course he also produced outdoor sculptures: dust on the streets and public squares. On occasion, the dust was merely painted, as Duchamp had already pointed out that dust has the effect of color. The empty sweaters filled themselves with bodies, initially not with anthropomorphic bodies, but rather with geometric objects. The pedestals were dressed so to speak; pieces of clothing disappeared into open wooden cases that looked like coffins. The costumed pedestals referred to the absent human figures, in harmony with the postmodern thesis of the disappearance of the subject. When people die and their bodies disappear into the earth, their clothing is left behind. In another gesture, he again fills the sweaters with human bodies; but not in an everyday functionality, but rather in a functionally distorted form. The stretched and pressed sweaters emphasized the sculptural aspect of the human body. Through certain anatomical positions and holes in the sweaters, these positions have the effect of parodying abstract modern sculptures. Photographs and videos comprise the medium of these plastic

constructions assisted by live human bodies. A decisive change took place in 1993 with a new concept of the filling of the room – not by gas and temperature – but by the human body that expanded through multiplied clothing pieces. Volume, weight, static, and form – the classical criteria in sculpture – were presented in a new, if not grotesque way. This also offered the first chance for instruction. In a 1993 textbook, *From Men's Size 50 to Size 54 in 8 Days* which resembled the classical books of conceptual art, Wurm could give instructions for a sculpture: "Sleep late," "70 degrees indoor temperature," "Slow regular movements," "Read or watch TV lying down." After this transformation of the classical parameters of sculpture such as gravitation, weight, balance, static, stability, volume, etc., Wurm introduced a new criterion of sculpture through the media of photography and film: time. After he expanded the world of objects to sweaters and chairs and other pieces of furniture or vehicles that border the human body, he arranged encounters between everyday objects and human positions in a way reminiscent of the surrealist tradition of the "coincidental encounter of a sewing machine and an umbrella on an operating table." In public and private rooms, in modest middle class apartments and glamorous representation spaces, persons could be found in grotesquely construed situations and positions with and without objects that they could assume less permanently the further the phase of the work progressed. Thus, the series *One Minute Sculptures* was produced, featuring Wurm himself

and other actors. Human bodies in association with objects and in positions they could assume only for minutes became the ideal extension of sculpture into the media of photography and video. The dematerialization of sculpture, in contrast to conceptual art, did not lead to just texts and sentences. Nevertheless, Wurm maintained the fundamental claim of conceptual art; the insight into the linguistic nature of all artistic statements, regardless of the elements used in production. The elements that he uses are objects, bodies, and media, but the way in which he combines these elements and actualizes them is of a linguistic nature. He continually uses the methods of contiguity (tangibility, adjoining) and metonymy (i.e., *pars pro toto*). The works of Anna and Bernhard Blume, *Vase Ecstasies* (1987), *In the Room of Madness* (1984), offer a comparison for the related language operation in the photographic media. With Wurm, language operations conduct the elements of sculpture in the semiotic medium of photography. These linguistic methods become the algorithms for the creation of works, ideas, machines that produce art:

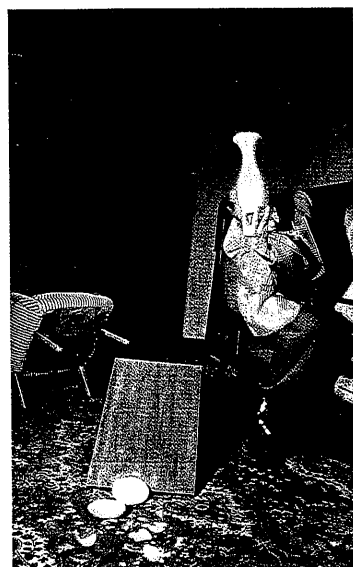


MAKE YOUR OWN FRANZ ERHARD WALTHER, 2001  
instruction drawing, deck chair  
installation, Galerie Ars Futura, Zurich





Anna and Bernhard Blume  
from the series VASE ECSTASIES, 1987



Anna and Bernhard Blume  
from the series IN THE ROOM OF MADNESS, 1984

"The idea becomes a machine that makes the art." (Sol LeWitt, 1965) The sculpture becomes a field of signifiers in which the index reigns, which as is known to be the case, represents that drawing class that has a physical relationship to the object of representation like smoke to fire. The extension of instruction through ads in newspapers, in which people are called on to be photographed with everyday objects from their environment, according to Wurm's or their own wishes, is also indexical. These photos could also be mailed to the artist and, for a fee, signed by him and sent back to the owner as the final artwork. The instructions were not only published in print media, books and newspapers, but were finally brought back to the useable object itself, so that the user could come into direct contact with the sculpture or object and realize a sculpture as a behavioral form. This results in a complex ambient in artistic and public spaces. Large white walls or flat platforms, which have sculptural aspects themselves and recall Wurm's beginnings, carry written instructions. Found alongside these sculptural instructions and statements are trivial everyday objects, clothing, etc. which are necessary to carry out the task. Likewise, a camera can be found close by, so that the objects' users can capture their sculptural behavioral form directly. "If you would like to have an original work by Erwin Wurm, please follow the artist's instructions and send the photos to: Erwin Wurm, Eiswerkstrasse 9, 1220 Vienna, Austria together with US \$ 100. He will sign your photo and return it to

your address."

Thus a cybernetic circulation of sculptural processes consisting of three elements: instruction, participation, and the medium of photography, is completed. The artist as signateur and the material fade more into the background than they do with Duchamp's ready-mades. The verbal instruction, the world of trivial use objects, the user, the mediums of photography and video and the elements of traditional sculpture such as the wall, floor, room, and pedestal combine in a new form of sculpture: the behavioral form. Among the works "The extended Sculpture" (Andreas Spiegl), "the Zero Point of Sculpture" (Jérôme Sans), "The Sweater as Plastic Process" (Roland Wäspe), or "Sculptural Statements" (Rainer Fuchs) – Wurm's singular achievement consists of bundling together the claims and traditional lines of twentieth century avant-garde and neo avant-garde into a new concept of sculpture. Sculpture as a behavioral form replaces abstract sculpture and the sculpture of the object as innovations of the twentieth century. Predictably, Erwin Wurm, in a new work phase that continues his metonymic operations and sets furniture pieces side-by-side (without anthropomorphism) or thickens objects (such as *Fat Car*, 2001), thus once again dives into the solitary world of objects with the arsenal of his contiguous language operations. And it is in this way that it becomes possible to avoid the theatrical performativity of Vanessa Beecroft or Felix Gonzalez-Torres, who also imply the behavioral form of sculpture through the medium of photography. The behavioral patterns

which Wurm designs question the border between art and daily life and allow the sociability of behavioral patterns to occur in individual activities through the noted cybernetic circulation. Socially relevant work is not depicted, but, rather, released from abstraction through sculptural behavioral patterns. The ambiguity of what is art and what is not art, created by Wurm's sculptural system, is furthered through critique, irony, paradox, and the allowance of the hitherto inadmissible, through to the admittance of deterioration. The admittance of the everyday, of the non-art in art, as well as the admittance of deterioration is known to be the achievements of art, which Wurm now sharpens in the contingency of the subject in the *One Minute Sculpture*. The idea, the instruction, the algorithm, the machine for the production of art

become a sequence for the creation of future, an ensemble of experimental systems where the time structure itself plays a part in the works. The objects and operations of the acting persons leave behind traces through the medium of photography. The sculptures become inscriptions of the real in the dispositive of photography. In the representational space of photography, the sculptural elements become a writing game in which letters are shifted around and put together. Each new sequence, in which not only the artist as subject but also the user as object participates equally, creates a world of traces (like dust, like signs). Wurm's sculptures are signals for research into a world of traces, which hinder the closing of the subject through both the anthropomorphic dimensions and the weight of the world (the objects!).

- 01 Thierry de Duve, Nominalisme pictural: Marcel Duchamp, Paris 1984
- 02 Rosalind Krauss, "Notes on the Index," in the same: Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Myths, Cambridge/Mass 1985, Jean Clair, Duchamp et la photographie, Paris 1977
- 03 George Didi-Huberman, L'Empreinte, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris 1997
- 04 In: Sidney Geist, Cat. Constantin Brancusi, 1876-1957, Guggenheim, New York 1969, p. 92

"The idea becomes a machine that makes the art." (Sol LeWitt, 1965) The sculpture becomes a field of signifiers in which the index reigns, which as is known to be the case, represents that drawing class that has a physical relationship to the object of representation like smoke to fire. The extension of instruction through ads in newspapers, in which people are called on to be photographed with everyday objects from their environment, according to Wurm's or their own wishes, is also indexical. These photos could also be mailed to the artist and, for a fee, signed by him and sent back to the owner as the final artwork. The instructions were not only published in print media, books and newspapers, but were finally brought back to the useable object itself, so that the user could come into direct contact with the sculpture or object and realize a sculpture as a behavioral form. This results in a complex ambient in artistic and public spaces. Large white walls or flat platforms, which have sculptural aspects themselves and recall Wurm's beginnings, carry written instructions. Found alongside these sculptural instructions and statements are trivial everyday objects, clothing, etc. which are necessary to carry out the task. Likewise, a camera can be found close by, so that the objects' users can capture their sculptural behavioral form directly.

"If you would like to have an original work by Erwin Wurm, please follow the artist's instructions and send the photos to: Erwin Wurm, Eiswerkstrasse 9, 1220 Vienna, Austria together with US \$ 100. He will sign your photo and return it to

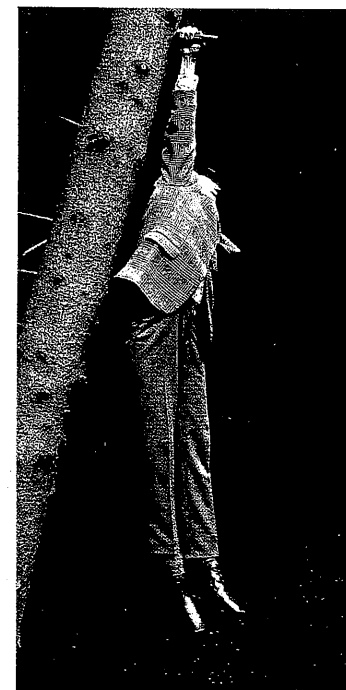
your address."

Thus a cybernetic circulation of sculptural processes consisting of three elements: instruction, participation, and the medium of photography, is completed. The artist as signateur and the material fade more into the background than they do with Duchamp's ready-mades. The verbal instruction, the world of trivial use objects, the user, the mediums of photography and video and the elements of traditional sculpture such as the wall, floor, room, and pedestal combine in a new form of sculpture: the behavioral form. Among the works "The extended Sculpture" (Andreas Spiegel), "the Zero Point of Sculpture" (Jérôme Sans), "The Sweater as Plastic Process" (Roland Wäspe), or "Sculptural Statements" (Rainer Fuchs) – Wurm's singular achievement consists of bundling together the claims and traditional lines of twentieth century avant-garde and neo avant-garde into a new concept of sculpture. Sculpture as a behavioral form replaces abstract sculpture and the sculpture of the object as innovations of the twentieth century. Predictably, Erwin Wurm, in a new work phase that continues his metonymic operations and sets furniture pieces side-by-side (without anthropomorphism) or thickens objects (such as *Fat Car*, 2001), thus once again dives into the solitary world of objects with the arsenal of his contiguous language operations. And it is in this way that it becomes possible to avoid the theatrical performativity of Vanessa Beecroft or Felix Gonzalez-Torres, who also imply the behavioral form of sculpture through the medium of photography. The behavioral patterns

which Wurm designs question the border between art and daily life and allow the sociability of behavioral patterns to occur in individual activities through the noted cybernetic circulation. Socially relevant work is not depicted, but, rather, released from abstraction through sculptural behavioral patterns. The ambiguity of what is art and what is not art, created by Wurm's sculptural system, is furthered through critique, irony, paradox, and the allowance of the hitherto inadmissible, through to the admittance of deterioration. The admittance of the everyday, of the non-art in art, as well as the admittance of deterioration is known to be the achievements of art, which Wurm now sharpens in the contingency of the subject in the *One Minute Sculpture*. The idea, the instruction, the algorithm, the machine for the production of art

become a sequence for the creation of future, an ensemble of experimental systems where the time structure itself plays a part in the works. The objects and operations of the acting persons leave behind traces through the medium of photography. The sculptures become inscriptions of the real in the dispositive of photography. In the representational space of photography, the sculptural elements become a writing game in which letters are shifted around and put together. Each new sequence, in which not only the artist as subject but also the user as object participates equally, creates a world of traces (like dust, like signs). Wurm's sculptures are signals for research into a world of traces, which hinder the closing of the subject through both the anthropomorphic dimensions and the weight of the world (the objects!).

- 01 Thierry de Duve, Nominalisme pictural: Marcel Duchamp, Paris 1984
- 02 Rosalind Krauss, "Notes on the Index," in the same: Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Myths, Cambridge/Mass 1985, Jean Clair, Duchamp et la photographie, Paris 1977
- 03 George Didi-Huberman, L'Empreinte, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris 1997
- 04 In: Sidney Geist, Cat. Constantin Brancusi, 1876-1957, Guggenheim, New York 1969, p. 92



Anna and Bernhard Blume  
from the series CONTACT WITH TREES, 1987-90



Charles Ray  
PLANK PIECE 1, 1973