

Press Release

Artists in Focus #11

WALTER PICHLER

Sculptures Models Drawings

Press Preview	Tuesday, 27 September 2011, 10:30 a.m.
Exhibition Venue	MAK Permanent Collection – Contemporary Art MAK, Stubenring 5, 1010 Vienna
Exhibition Term	27 September 2011–26 February 2012
Opening Hours	Tues MAK NITE® 10 a.m.–midnight Wed–Sun 10 a.m.–6 p.m., Mon closed

Only rarely does Walter Pichler (*1936), one of the most important artistic visionaries of the present day, allow his sculptures to travel. At an old homestead in St. Martin in the Province of Burgenland, Pichler—who walks the borders between sculpture, architecture and drawing—created a sculpture compound in which each work can claim its own, individual space. One of the rare opportunities to examine Pichler's important groups of works will present itself beginning on 27 September 2011 in the exhibition *Artists in Focus #11. Walter Pichler. Sculptures Models Drawings* at the MAK.

Walter Pichler conceives of art as a program. He removes it from the present-day dynamics of art production and works at a very slow pace, often spending many years on one sculpture, and he frequently returns to themes which he has treated before. His works are the products of drawings; these stand on their own and are ensconced in a subtle narrative network together with his sculptures. An obvious tension between the genres of sculpture and architecture is something that characterizes his overall oeuvre.

The late 1950s saw Pichler create his first sculptural works, and during the period that followed he developed utopian architectural models pertaining to city planning and buildings. In 1963 he published his legendary manifesto *Architecture* on the occasion of a joint exhibition with Hans Hollein at the Galerie nächst St. Stephan in Vienna. The conception of his architectural objects and environments, situated on the fine line between design and sculpture, reflects social scenarios. In the production of his works, he repeatedly sought out innovative approaches, also borrowing from the automotive and aerospace industries and employing novel materials such as plastics, aluminum and pneumatic elements. Most of his objects are intended for some sort of actual use, with the human body functioning as a parameter of design.

The forms developed by Walter Pichler met with great resonance in the fields of architecture and art. His *Prototypes* (1966/69), for example, were

trailblazing works which serve to expand the human body and architectural forms of space.

Walter Pichler's tendency to create "comprehensive works of art" manifests itself in his expanded atelier in St. Martin, which he made his showplace in 1972. On the one hand, the compound presents itself as a sort of "Acropolis" of sculpture with "laboratory character" where he stores the lion's share of his sculptural works. On the other hand, he continues to engage in the basic architectural studies which he began together with Hans Hollein and Raimund Abraham. For the presentation of his sculptures, Pichler adapts existing buildings and also designs his own architectural constructions which relate interior to exterior space, with sculpture and architecture forming a temporary, self-contained system of references.

Specifically for the exhibition at the MAK, Walter Pichler has developed an ensemble that gives rise to a dense scenario at which center are placed the figurative sculptures which he has been creating in St. Martin since 1970. Essential sculptural works such as the two torsos *Rumpf* (1982) and *Kleiner Rumpf* (1993), as well as the *Bewegliche Figur* [Movable Figure] (1984), his first whole figure to imitate human proportions, will be complemented by models and drawings in interlocking and symmetrically arranged fields of presentation.

Light is shed on the human figure as a fragment and as an overall composition, as a model, with clothing, standing in position, sitting and lying, or symbolizing a friendship as in the sculpture *Zusammengesetzte Figur (Kopf von Dieter Roth)* [Composite Figure (Head of Dieter Roth)] (1999). Here, one can observe and understand the phenomenon of autobiographic, frequently psychologizing referral which is generally a feature of Pichler's oeuvre, as can also be seen in the overall work group of "bed sculptures" (1971–2011).

The beginning of this exhibition, which is also its end, is marked by the sculpture ensemble *Schwebender Stab* (1997) and *Drei Stäbe* (1998), referring to an architectural project currently in progress (to be completed in 2011): a subterranean art-chamber integrated into the landscape.

In his work as a sculptor and architect, Walter Pichler has remained true to his minimalist design criteria to this very day. The objects are set up in an axial and strictly frontal manner, with individual elements taking up archaic forms. Pichler treats the sculpture as a cultic object embedded in a flexible system of reflection. The construction of his atelier in St. Martin had a significant influence on more than just Pichler's selected material iconography (featuring the use of found wood, clay, stone, and bones) or the close interplay between production and presentation. A unique effect of this has also been the way in which Pichler contextualizes each sculpture within his art compound and, over a period of decades, has placed them in new allegorical contexts stage-by-stage, always as part of public exhibitions.

Walter Pichler was born in Deutschnofen, South Tirol in 1936. He lives and works in Vienna as well as in St. Martin (Burgenland), where he acquired a former farmstead in 1972. Pichler and the MAK have long been engaged in a continuous artistic dialog. He designed the *Gate to the Garden* in 1990 as an artistic intervention connecting the exhibition wing of the museum with the space outside, and he also developed the presentation *Walter Pichler. Sculpture*. In the MAK Collection, Pichler is represented by numerous works including models, sketches, drawings, objects and photographs.

With *Walter Pichler. Sculptures Models Drawings*, the MAK concludes the Artists in Focus series, which since 2006 has been introducing artistic stances from the MAK Collection of Contemporary Art which lie at the interface between applied art, fine art and architecture. A central aspect of this effort has been the realization of necessary acquisitions via sponsors and patrons in order to expand and enrich important parts of the MAK Collection.

Press photos relating to the exhibition are available for download at www.MAK.at/presse.

Press Data Sheet

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Curator	Bärbel Vischer
Publication	<i>WALTER PICHLER. Sculptures Models Drawings</i> , published by the MAK, German/English, ca. 112 pages, with ca. 90 illustrations (mostly color), MAK Vienna / Jung und Jung Verlag, 2011, € 35 / CHF 47.90
MAK Admission	€ 9.90 with MAK guide / € 7.90 / reduced: € 5.50 Free admission every Saturday®
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