

## “Images in mind, bodies in space“

### FRANZ ERHARD WALTHER

22 March – 28 July 2024

#### Biography Franz Erhard Walther

1939

Franz Erhard Walther is born on 22 July 1939 in Fulda.

1955

Walther takes evening classes in drawing, and produces his *Umrißzeichnungen* [*Outline Drawings*]. He terminates his apprenticeship as a baker in his parents' business.

1957

Enrolls at the Werkkunstschule, Offenbach, where he attends the class for typeface design and pursues his interest in typography. He produces his *Schraffurzeichnungen* [*Hatched Drawings*]. Walther begins to focus on the active participation of the viewer, not least while developing his *Wortbilder* [*Word Images*].

1958

Together with two friends, Walther founds the *Junge Gruppe 58*, which begins organising exhibitions. Co-founds the *Jungen Kunstkreis Fulda*.

1959

Walther transfers to the Hochschule für bildende Kunst (today Städelschule), Frankfurt am Main. At *documenta 2* he is impressed by works from Jackson Pollock and Wols, Barnett Newman and Robert Rauschenberg, as well as Lucio Fontana's slashed paintings.

1961

Discovers the frame form as a new theme, and the rear side of his early paintings as autonomous works. With this Walther is expelled from the Städelschule.

1962

Takes up studies at the Staatliche Kunstakademie Düsseldorf under Karl Otto Götz, alongside Gerhard Richter and Sigmar Polke, among others. Develops the material process as a work form using procedures like crumpling, folding, gluing and stacking, placing and hanging, leading to the stored work being established as a work form in its own right. First Action Pieces point to his growing concentration on physical action.

1963

Discovers fabric as a material and the seam as a technique through the daughter of a tailoring family, Johanna Frieß, whom he marries one year later and who from then on sews all of Walther's fabric works. His direct reference to the human body is presaged in

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his *Vier Körperformen* [*Four Body Shapes*]. The possibility of the works being used by the viewer emerges later in the *Work Set*. Beginning of his *Diagramme* [*Diagrams*], which later transition into the *Werkzeichnungen* [*Work Drawings*].

1964

Completes his studies in Düsseldorf. Takes part in the exhibition *neue impulse fulda – objekt – bild – plastik*. Walther breaks with the traditional concept of the artwork, which meets with harsh criticism in the reviews of the exhibition. Birth of Moritz, his first son with Johanna Walther.

1965

Decision to emigrate to the USA. Sells *Duftobjekt* [*Scent Object*] to the Baum Collection, Wuppertal, which is his first sale.

1966

First public demonstration of parts of what would become the *1. Werksatz* [*First Work Set*] at Galerie Aachen. At the exhibition *Frisches* organised by Jörg Immendorff and Chris Reinecke in their apartment, Nam June Paik, Charlotte Moorman and Joseph Beuys activate Walther's works, including *Sackform und Kappe* [*Sack and Hood*], 1966, No. 14, and *Weste* [*Vest*], 1964, No. 11 from the *First Work Set*. Birth of son Lehmann.

1967

All the Action Pieces created until then are performed at the Akademie in Düsseldorf. Move to New York. Makes friends with Walter De Maria, Richard Artschwager, James Lee Byars, Donald Judd, Robert Ryman, Richard Serra, Lawrence Weiner and other artists of his generation. Frequent meetings with Barnett Newman.

1968

*Objekte, benutzen* [*Objects, to use*], in which Walther sets down his approach to objects in quasi manifesto form, is published by Kasper and Walther König. Barbara Brown photographs the elements of the subsequent *First Work Set* in a loft on East Broadway. Marcel Duchamp phones and arranges to visit Walther in his studio in Fall 1968, but dies in the summer of 1968 in southern France.

1969

Walther realises that the action pieces he has made in recent years, beginning with *Stirnstück* [*Forehead Piece*] (1963, No. 1 of the *First Work Set*), constitute a larger integral work, the *First Work Set*. The first of eight complete editions of the *First Work Set* is purchased by Paul Wember for the collection at Museum Haus Lange Krefeld. Ten *Work Set* elements are shown in Harald Szeemann's epochal exhibition *Live in Your Head. When Attitudes Become Form. Works – Concepts – Processes – Situations – Information*. A complete *Work Set* is shown in its own space from late that year until 1970 in the group exhibition *Spaces* at the MoMA in New York. Throughout the entire exhibition Walther activates pieces from the *Work Set* with the visitors.

1970

Guest professor at the Hochschule für bildende Künste, Hamburg. numerous activations of *Work Set* pieces in Cambridge and Philadelphia, USA. Embarks on the *Standstellen* [*Places to Stand*] (until 1975).



1971

*Raumelemente* [*Spatial Elements*] and *Raumformen* [*Spatial Forms*] (1971 – 1973). From 1971 onward (until 1981) the *First Work Set* is activated for one week each year at the Hessisches Landesmuseum Darmstadt. Walther becomes professor of sculpture at the Hochschule für bildende Künste, Hamburg.

1972

Participates in *documenta 5*, Kassel and commences work on his *Schreitbahnen* [*Stride Paths*], a work group that marks Walther's turn to architectural space. Solo exhibitions with early works at Museum Haus Lange Krefeld, Kunsthalle Tübingen, and the Van Abbemuseum Eindhoven.

1973

Develops the *Schreit- und Standstücke* [*Places to Walk and Stand*], which can be activated, first in steel for outdoors, and in 1976 – 78 wood and cotton for indoors. Participates in the exhibition *Kunst in Deutschland, 1898 – 1973* at the Hamburger Kunsthalle.

1974–1976

Solo and group exhibitions at the Städtisches Kunstmuseum Bonn, the Staatliche Kunsthalle Baden-Baden, and the Frankfurter Kunstverein.

1977

Participates in the 14th *São Paulo-Biennale*, curated by Götz Adriani, and *documenta 6*, curated by Manfred Schneckenburger. Participates in the exhibition *Working Party* at the Whitechapel Gallery in London.

1978

Walther begins work on the central work group of *Wandformationen* [*Wall Formations*] (until 1986).

1979

Solo exhibition at the Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus in Munich.

1981

Solo exhibition at the Nationalgalerie Berlin. Participates in the group exhibition *Art Allemagne aujourd'hui* at the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville der Paris.

1982

Participates in *documenta 7*, curated by Rudi Fuchs. Walther shows *Wandelemente* [*Wall Elements*], *Wall Formations* and *Ölzeichnungen* [*Oil Drawings*]. Solo show of the *40 Sockel* [*40 Pedestals*] at Kunstraum München.

1983

Participates in the exhibition *Sculpture from Germany*, with venues in among other cities San Francisco, Houston, and New York.

1985–1986

Participates in the group exhibitions *1945 – 1985: Kunst in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland* at the Nationalgalerie in Berlin, and *Wild, Visionary, Spectral. New German Art*, which tours Australia.



1987

Participates with Wall Formations in *documenta 8*, again curated by Schneckenburger. Awarded the Günter Fruhtrunk Prize. Commences the work group Configurations. Solo show at Kunsthalle Winterthur.

1989

Walther's involvement with space and architecture leads him to design Kunsthalle Ritter in Klagenfurt. Building is finished in 1991. Solo exhibition at the Vienna Secession and participation in the group exhibition *Object, Site, Sensation. New German Sculpture*, at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago.

1990

Solo exhibition at Villa Arson, Nice, curated by Christian Bernard. The exhibition marks the beginning of a lively reception of Franz Erhard Walther in the French-speaking world. Solo exhibitions at Kunstverein Hamburg, Kunstverein Düsseldorf, and the University Gallery of San Diego State University.

1990 – 1996

Creates the work group *Das Neue Alphabet [The New Alphabet]*.

1993

Solo exhibitions in Istanbul and Ankara, where Walther shows *Work Pieces* and *Work Drawings*.

1994

Solo exhibitions at MAMCO in Geneva, Kunsthalle Ritter in Klagenfurt, Sprengel Museum Hanover, and the Davis Museum and Cultural Center in Wellesley, MA.

1997

Susanne Walther, whom he married in 1996, now assumes the planning of the exhibitions and publications.

1997–2004

Develops earlier work ideas in the newly created work groups *Raumabnahmen [Space Skinings]*, *Handlungsbahnen [Action Paths]* and *Körperformen [Body Shapes]*.

1997

The *First Work Set* is activated for the first time in almost 25 years at the Mamco, Geneva. Solo exhibitions in the Kunsthalle Dresden and the Kunstsammlung Gera. Participates in the group exhibition *Deutschlandbilder. Kunst aus einem geteilten Land* at the Martin-Gropius-Bau in Berlin.

1998 – 1999

Solo exhibition *Der Kopf zeichnet – Die Hand denkt* at the Hessisches Landesmuseum Darmstadt. Participates in the group exhibitions *Das XX. Jahrhundert. Ein Jahrhundert Kunst in Deutschland* at the Neue Nationalgalerie Berlin and *Out of Actions between Performance and the Object: 1949 – 1979* at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, the Österreichisches Museum für angewandte Kunst / Gegenwartskunst, Vienna, the Musée d'Art



Contemporani de Barcelona, and the Museum of Contemporary Art Tokyo. *Orte der Entstehung – Orte der Wirkung. Ausstellungen 1962 – 2000* at the Städtischen Galerie Nordhorn.

2001

Daughter Giorgina born to Franz Erhard and Susanne Walther. Solo exhibition at the Lehmbruck Museum Duisburg with the *New Alphabet*.

2004

Participates in the exhibition *Beyond Geometry. Experiments in Form, 1940s – 70s* at the LACMA in Los Angeles and the Miami Art Museum.

2005

Walther retires as professor emeritus from the Hamburger Hochschule für bildende Künste. Among the artists he has taught are Rebecca Horn, Lili Fischer, Martin Kippenberger, Santiago Sierra, Christian Jankowski and Jonathan Meese.

2006

Participates in the group exhibition *High Times, Hard Times. New York Painting 1967 – 1975*, curated by Katy Siegel.

2007

Founding of The Franz Erhard Walther Foundation on the initiative and under the direction of Susanne Walther. Participates in the group exhibition *The Living Currency* curated by Pierre Bal-Blanc in STUK, Leuven, Tate Modern, London, and the Museum of Modern Art, Warsaw.

2007–2009

Creates the biographical suite of drawings *Sternenstaub [Dust of Stars]* covering the years 1942 to 1973.

2009

Participates in the group exhibition *Art of Two Germanys / Cold War Cultures* at the LACMA in Los Angeles, the Germanisches Nationalmuseum Nuremberg, and the Deutsches Historisches Museum in Berlin.

2010

Two-year exhibition with early works and the *First Work Set* at Dia Beacon, on show for the first time since its inclusion in the collection in 1978. Extensive solo exhibition at MAMCO, Geneva, curated by Christian Bernard. Solo exhibition at Kunstmuseum Luzern. Participates in the group exhibition *Move. Choreographing You* at the Hayward Gallery, London, Haus der Kunst, Munich, and the K20 Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen in Dsseldorf. Symposium on Walther's work at the Ecole des Beaux Arts, Paris.

2011

Award of the Ernst Franz Vogelmann Prize for Sculpture, Heilbronn. Solo exhibitions at the Kunsthalle Vogelmann, Heilbronn, and Museum Haus Lange, Krefeld.



2012

Participates in the 30th São Paulo Biennial, the group exhibition *Eyes Closed / Eyes Open*. The MoMA in New York purchases the *First Work Set* and *Work Drawings*, and exhibits them accompanied by public activations (2013). Solo exhibitions at ZKM, Karlsruhe, Marta, Herford, and the Drawing Room, London. Symposium on Walther's work in DIA Beacon.

2013

Solo exhibition at the Hamburger Kunsthalle (a cooperation with The Franz Erhard Walther Foundation) and participation in the group exhibition *When Attitudes Become Form: Bern 1969 / Venice 2013* in the Fondazione Prada in Venice.

2014

Extensive solo exhibitions at WIELS, Brussels, curated by Elena Filipovic, and CAPC, Bordeaux in collaboration with The Franz Erhard Walther Foundation.

2015–2016

Solo exhibition in the Henry Art Gallery, Seattle (curator Luis Croquer), in the MUDAM, Luxemburg (curator Marie-Noëlle Farcy), and in The Power Plant, Toronto (curator Gaetane Verna) in collaboration with The Franz Erhard Walther Foundation.

2016

Award of the Art Prize Aachen.

2017

Receives the Golden Lion for the central exhibition at the 57th *Venice Biennale*, curated by Christine Macel.

2017–2018

Participates in the group exhibition *A Tale of Two Worlds: A Dialogue between the MMK Collection and the History of Experimental Latin American Art, 1940s – 1980s* at the Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt am Main, and at the Museo de Arte Moderno de Buenos Aires, Buenos Aires, Argentina. Solo exhibition in the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte, Reina Sofía, Madrid, and at Ludwig Forum Aachen in collaboration with The Franz Erhard Walther Foundation.

2018

Solo exhibitions at the Fundacion Jumex Arte Contemporaneo and Casa Luis Barragan, Mexico City (cooperations with The Franz Erhard Walther Foundation).

2020

Solo exhibition at Haus der Kunst, Munich (a cooperation with The Franz Erhard Walther Foundation).

2022

Founding of VILLA Franz Erhard Walther in Fulda run by The Franz Erhard Walther Foundation under the direction of Susanne Walther, in which Walther's early work forms the starting point for exhibitions reaching out in both contemporary and historical directions.



2023

Participates in the Performa Biennale in New York, where a new generation of exhibition copies of the *First Work Sets* and the *Action Paths* are activated at the Judd Foundation in New York.

2024

Solo exhibition „Images in mind, bodies in space“ at Bundeskunsthalle, Bonn (a cooperation with The Franz Erhard Walther Foundation).