



Franz West, To Build a House You Start with the Roof: Work 1972-2008

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There is no easy way to define Franz West's art: it is fundamentally sculptural in its construction, veers frequently toward the biomorphic and prosthetic, mines the intellectualism of Freud and Wittgenstein, and possesses an awkward beauty that speaks with equal fluency to the tradition of painterly abstraction and the aesthetics of trash art. West's distinctive vision has resulted in one of the most remarkable bodies of work produced since the 1960s. This book, with more than 160 color images, offers a comprehensive look at West's work from the 1970s to the present. A unique blend of illustration, essays, interviews, and artist's pages, it accompanies a major retrospective organized by The Baltimore Museum of Art, and includes a new piece created specifically for the exhibition.

Emerging from Vienna's confrontational performance art scene led by the Actionists during the 1960s, West believed from the beginning that physical engagement is an essential function of the art experience. This is clear both in his Adaptives (Paßstück) series (begun in 1974), human-scaled sculptures made of plaster to be held and worn by museum visitors, and in his later installations incorporating cabinets, tables, and chairs. Interaction is no less a premise in West's more recent large-scale outdoor sculptures: a series of brightly painted aluminum works adorning public plazas throughout Europe and the United States.

The book mixes intense visual content with critical commentary, an interview with the artist, a concentrated section on West's working methods, an artist's response to the work through words and images, and an extensive chronology and bibliography.

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