



Installation view *Josef Bauer. Demonstration*, Photo: Johannes Stoll, © Belvedere, Vienna

September 4, 2019

Belvedere 21

Arsenalstrasse 1
1030 Vienna

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Wed to Sun 11 a.m. to 6 p.m.
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JOSEF BAUER Demonstration

September 5, 2019 to January 12, 2020

In his art Josef Bauer has developed a unique sculptural language that establishes a connection between bodies, objects, and text. From September 5 the Belvedere 21 will be paying tribute to this visionary Upper Austrian Conceptual artist with a long-overdue solo exhibition.

*"Josef Bauer's works always revolve around the question of what can be articulated with art and how. Above all, the exhibition *Demonstration* explores political and social issues. On an abstract level Bauer reflects the politically charged movements of his time, from his experiences of National Socialism to modern-day developments in right-wing populism,"* says Stella Rollig, CEO of the Belvedere.

Since the 1950s Josef Bauer has been interested in the diverging perception of image and text, as well as in their specific relationship to reality. The reference to Wittgenstein's language criticism is something that Bauer shares with the Neo-Avant-Garde of the 1950s and 1960s, the Wiener Gruppe (Vienna Group), and Concrete poets in Germany. Yet no one has transferred linguistic signs into the spatial dimension and involved them in physical interactions as he has. And unlike Concept Art from the Anglosphere, Bauer does not just develop ideas but also works that can be experienced with the senses.

Born in Wels in 1934, the artist himself refers to his works as "tactile poetry." Combining linguistic signs with objects, he establishes a connection between the individual elements in the space. The idea to interact with his sculptures points to Bauer's poetic approach to sculpture. Bauer treats his objects in the same way that letters react to language. Concentrations emerge when the metal letters ROT ("red") on the floor become legible or when the all-connecting UND ("and") bears an altar stone and thereby opens up new layers of meaning. Language and object are combined by the artist—in the landscape, with the human body, or as an installation.

The dual meaning of the exhibition title *Demonstration* refers on the one hand to the gesture of presenting and on the other to the expression of political protest—two topics that play an important role in Bauer's oeuvre. In the photo series *Die Sprache des Herzeigens*, hands hold up objects in the air like a statement: a letter, a pair of scissors, or a flower—everything is presented in the same way. The gesture of presenting is a recurring theme in the artist's photographic work, which he also addresses in other media.

Bauer regularly changes style and media. He not only writes, paints, or prints words, but also makes collages, overpaints pages of books or sales slips, and builds word sculptures. His photographic work ranges from documenting his performative works to stand-alone series. His references are taken from art theory, as well as fields such as perceptual psychology, linguistics, natural science, religion, or poetry.

By creating apparent paradoxes, Bauer sends language into a tailspin. For example, the title *Zwei Farben Bilder* ("two color pictures") actually describes pictures with three colors, but only two of them are shown: the third is verbally signified by a word painted in another color. Viewers who read the word "Blau" ("blue") but see the color red, are confused and thrown back to the question: what do pictures say, what do words show?

An exhibition space frequently effects a realignment of existing elements that together make a new spatial reading possible. In the exhibition at the Belvedere 21, the massive *Ecken-A* thus encounters the *BuchSTABEN*: three-meter-long Lettristic rods that Bauer carried through the landscape as temporary sculptures for a series of photographs in 1968.

"Josef Bauer's oeuvre is characterized by an attempt to organize the world through the confrontation and composition of individual parts. A world that was devastated by the Second World War. As in language, Bauer establishes a connection between objects and words and allows meanings to emerge. Bauer's stories poetically tell of the desire for a combination, poetic concentration, and reconciliation of text and object," according to the curator Harald Krejci.

BIOGRAPHY

1934

Josef Bauer is born on January 12th in Wels (Upper Austria) and grows up in Gunskirchen.

He develops an interest in painting early on. Even as a teenager, he sets up a small painting studio in his parents' house. Bauer recalls experiments with canvases outdoors, in nature. Until the age of 19 he attends several specialty courses in agriculture.

1953 to 1955

Attends the vocational school in Wels. He wins the national pole-vaulting championship several times. Meets the experimental filmmaker and artist Peter Kubelka, with whom he has his first inspiring discussions about modern art. Kubelka also acquaints him with works by such artists as Arnulf Rainer. He always combines sports competitions in other European countries with visits to museums and galleries. In Paris – outside the museums – he makes the acquaintance of American pop artists.

1956 to 1964

Studies at the Art School of the City of Linz (today University of Art and Design Linz) with Hans-Peter Feldmann and Friedrich Panzer under Prof. Herbert Dimmel. Attends the Salzburg International Summer Academy of Fine Arts.

1968

Participates in the exhibition *Ergebnisse '68 [Results '68]* along with Richard Kriesche, Cornelius Kolig and others at the Galerie im Griechenbeisl in Vienna. He exhibits there regularly until 1971.

1970

First solo exhibition at the Galerie MAERZ in Linz.

1971

Solo exhibition at the Galerie im Griechenbeisl in Vienna. Also participates in the exhibition *neue texte* at the Neue Galerie der Stadt Linz, Wolfgang-Gurlitt-Museum, at the invitation of the writer Fritz Lichtenauer. Makes the acquaintance of the writer Heimrad Bäcker.

1971/72

Participates in the exhibition *Zeitgenössische österreichische Kunst. 18 Künstler der Galerie im Griechenbeisl [Contemporary Austrian Art: 18 Artists from the Galerie im Griechenbeisl]* in Prague, Maribor (Slovenia) and Zagreb. International exhibitions in Jerusalem, Montevideo and Valencia follow.

1974

Solo exhibition *taktile poesie [tactile poetry]* at the Neue Galerie at the Landesmuseum Joanneum, Graz.

1975

Participates in the exhibition *Kunst aus Sprache [Art from Language]* in the Wiener Museum des 20. Jahrhunderts. The exhibition then travels to Linz, Innsbruck and Graz.

1977

Participates in the *Trigon 77*, the three-country biennale in Graz.

1978

Through Gerhard Rühm, Bauer comes into contact with the *Bielefelder Colloquium Neue Poesie* – an important place for the concrete poets of Vienna and Linz to connect, including the Wiener Gruppe [Vienna Group], Heimrad Bäcker and Reinhard Priessnitz. He regularly participates in the colloquium, gets to know Eugen Gomringer, and has a solo exhibition at the Galerie nächst St. Stephan in Vienna.

1979

Solo exhibition at the Kunstmuseum Hannover.

1985

Solo exhibition at the Stadtgalerie Bielefeld.

1986

Bauer curates the exhibition *Neue Wege des Plastischen in Österreich* [New Sculptural Paths in Austria] at the Galerie MAERZ in Linz with works by progressive artists—some of them very young—such as Michael Kienzer, Hans Kupelwieser, Heimo Zobernig and Franz West.

1993

Participates in the exhibition *Das offene Bild – Aspekte der Moderne in Europa nach '45* [The Open Image—Aspects of the Modern in Europe after 1945] at the Westfälisches Landesmuseum, Münster, and the Museum der bildenden Künste in Leipzig.

1994

Solo exhibition at the Bielefelder Kunstverein. Awarded the Kulturpreis der Stadt Linz.

1994 onward

Numerous exhibitions in Austria and abroad. The National Portrait Gallery in London and the Museum Ludwig in Budapest show his works, as does the MUSA in Vienna, the LENTOS Kunstmuseum Linz and the Belvedere in Vienna.

1995

Awarded the Kulturpreis des Landes Oberösterreich for fine art.

2012

Participates in the show *Utopie Gesamtkunstwerk*, curated by Bettina Steinbrügge and Harald Krejci, at the 21er Haus (now Belvedere 21) with an installation work he had realized in the Galerie im Griechenbeisl.

2013/14

Solo exhibition at the Grazer Kunstverein at the invitation of Krist Gruijthuijsen.

2019/20

Solo exhibition at Belvedere 21 and LENTOS Kunstmuseum Linz.

CATALOGUE



Josef Bauer. Demonstration

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GENERAL INFORMATION

Exhibition title	<i>Josef Bauer: Demonstration</i>
Curator	Harald Krejci
Duration	September 5, 2019 to January 12, 2020
Works	Approx. 100
Venue	Belvedere 21 Arsenalstrasse 1, 1030 Vienna
Opening hours	Wednesday to Sunday 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Long evenings: Wednesday and Friday to 9 p.m. Also on public holidays
Tickets	Regular €8 Belvedere 21 Annual Ticket €21 Reduced €6 Children and teenagers under 18 free
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