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Press Release

Isa Genzken. Inside and Out

9 December 2022 – 4 February 2023
Hauser & Wirth St. Moritz



On view at Hauser & Wirth St. Moritz this winter is a curated presentation of works by the celebrated German conceptual artist Isa Genzken, titled 'Inside and Out'. Bringing together the artist's early exposed concrete sculptures, social facades and later wall works, the exhibition highlights Genzken's career-long interest in modernist architecture, in particular, its structural characteristics and social relevance. The works on display give visual form to central questions in the artist's oeuvre that deal with the relationship between sculpture and space, location and perception and examining the window or wall as a social and architectural connection between interior and exterior. Since the 1970s, Genzken's diverse practice has encompassed sculpture, photography, installation, film, drawing and painting. Her work borrows from the aesthetics of minimalism, punk culture and assemblage art to confront the conditions of human experience in contemporary society and the uneasy social climate of capitalism.

Between 1986 and 1991, Genzken produced multiple series of free-standing concrete sculptures on high steel pedestals, resembling architectural maquettes, that are named after the kinds of buildings or structures they represent. Genzken's early exposed concrete sculptures, such as 'Saal (Room)' (1989) evidence how she laid bare the core elements of modern architecture. Oscillating between construction and destruction, these works seem less like casts of existing building parts but, rather, fragments of autonomous structures created using architectural techniques. Emphasizing the rawness that characterizes concrete, Genzken revealed the inherent rough beauty of the material, thus contradicting the machine aesthetics of minimalism. In a later work, 'Untitled' (2017), the artist presents two eye-level concrete sculptures resembling loudspeakers on furniture dollies, removing the material's sense of weight.

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With Genzken's 'Social Facades' (Soziale Fassaden), the artist examines the relationship between inside and out. Creating impressions of high-rise facades by means of metal foil and adhesive tape, Genzken brings the skyline down to our level, enabling direct interaction with the aesthetics of a fluctuating urban fabric. The 'Social Facades' are once again referencing modernist architecture, where windows – particularly, glass facades – were introduced as central design elements in skyscrapers to connect the interior with the exterior view. Incorporating various mirroring foils in 'Untitled' (2017), Genzken not only highlights the formal qualities of the facades but also the reflective properties of the material they were made of.

Additional wall-works on view demonstrate how Genzken has, in recent years, allowed more and more traces of her own life into her works. Inserting autobiographical encodings, such as her self-portrait, into her works has nothing to do with expressionist notions of authorship; instead, it underlines the continued social and personal element of Genzken's work. In 'Untitled' (2017), her visage is captured in an informal snapshot, placed in the middle of what looks like her studio, and collaged into a grid of tape and foil. Combining autobiographical archival material with various reflective mirror foils, 'Untitled' (2015) revisits the idea of the facade as a social construct in relation to her identity and presence as an artist. Collaged and inserted among the materials and sculptural vocabulary that have typically defined her practice in recent years, these autobiographical images and their inclusion seem to mark an accelerated interest, on Genzken's part, in positioning, quite literally, her body, image and, indeed, herself into her work. 'Yes, I'm also a social person, after all,' Genzken notes. 'You see that in my work, too, in which the viewer can, again and again, see his mirror image.' The works in 'Inside and Out' alter our own perception of what and how we see, allowing us to reflect on the space surrounding both the artwork and ourselves.

About the Artist

Born in Bad Oldesloe, Germany, Isa Genzken studied at the renowned Kunstakademie Düsseldorf whose faculty at the time included Joseph Beuys, Bernd and Hilla Becher, Benjamin H.D. Buchloh and Gerhard Richter. Genzken is best known for her sculptures, gaining acclaim for her minimalist oriented Hyperboloids and Ellipsoids in the late '70s and architecturally-inflected works such as her epoxy resin windows and skyscraper Columns from the '90s. While Genzken's practice is highly diverse, she has continually challenged the viewer's self-awareness by means of physically altering their perceptions, bringing bodies together in space and integrating elements of mixed media into sculpture.

Genzken's work has been exhibited in international institutional shows. She was awarded the Nasher Prize for sculpture in September 2018 and the prestigious Goslarer Kaiserring (or Emperor's Ring) by

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the city of Goslar, Germany in 2017. Genzken was selected for Documenta in 1982, 1992 and 2002 and for Skulptur Projekte Münster 1987, 1997 and 2007. In 2007, Genzken was chosen to represent her country in the 52nd Venice Biennale and had her first major retrospective in 2009, 'Isa Genzken: Open Sesame!,' which opened at the Whitechapel Art Gallery, London, England (2009) and travelled to Museum Ludwig, Cologne, Germany (2009). Major solo exhibitions include: 'Isa Genzken. Mach dich hübsch!' at The Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, Netherlands (2015) and Martin-Gropius-Bau, Berlin, Germany (2016); and the travelling exhibition 'Isa Genzken: Retrospective' at MoMA Museum of Modern Art, New York NY (2013), The Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, Chicago IL (2014); The Dallas Museum of Art, Dallas TX (2014) and the exhibition 'Isa Genzken. Werke 1973–1983' at Kunstmuseum Basel (2020), which traveled to K21 Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen in 2021.

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Gallery hours:
Tuesday – Saturday
11 am – 7 pm

www.hauserwirth.com

Caption and courtesy information:

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Untitled
2018
Adhesive tape on aluminium panel
115 x 80 cm / 45 1/4 x 31 1/2 in
Photo: Jens Ziehe

Untitled
2017
Concrete, furniture dollies
2 parts, each 193.5 x 60.5 x 35.5 cm / 76 1/8 x
23 7/8 x 14 in
Photo: Jon Etter

Saal (Room)
1989
Square steel tube table, 11 concrete parts
219 x 99.5 x 50 cm / 86 1/4 x 39 1/8 x 19 5/8 in
Photo: Alex Delfanne

Untitled
2017
Adhesive tape, adhesive foil, photograph and
spray paint on aluminium panel
70 x 80 cm / 27 1/2 x 31 1/2 in
Photo: Roman März