

Wolf VOSTELL

Biography

Wolf Vostell was born in Leverkusen in 1932. He initially trained (1950-53) as a photo-lithographer, but in 1954 started studying Painting and Experimental Typography at the Werkkunstschule, Wuppertal. In 1955-56 he attended the École des Beaux-Arts, Paris and in 1957 the Kunstakademie, Düsseldorf. Vostell lives in Berlin and Malpartida de Càceres.

Vostell was one of the founding fathers, and remained one of the best known exponents, of the Fluxus movement. After he had discovered the concept of «décollage» - scratching, dividing, loosening - on a visit to Paris in 1954, he made it the concept of his art. In his over-painted photographs and object pictures, he combined the tatters of poster-covered walls with traces and fragments of events.

Vostell staged his first happenings in 1958, invariably involving onlookers, and sometimes the entire city setting, in these events. 1962 Vostell, Nam June Paik, George Maciunas and others staged the first «Fluxus International Festival for new Music» in Wiesbaden.

Vostell had already started using car parts and television sets in his «décollages» of the 1950s: these allowed him to make the omnipresence of these objects in the everyday life of an industrialized society one of his major subjects. Many of Vostell's performance pieces and happenings were prepared series of drawings, collages and sketches or in fragments of text and notes.

Vostell has worked with video since the early 1960s. His «décollage» performance art, meanwhile, has not been limited to deforming, isolation and over-painting objects, but has extended into electronic space: he integrates television sets into his work, sometimes adjusting their receivers so that the images shown on their screens are subject to interference, often enclosing them in concrete. Such a use of concrete has come to be recognized as a characteristic of his work, above all in projects for public spaces.

During the last few years, Vostell has produced many large sculptural works and projects for urban environment.

Wolf Vostell took part in documenta 6, 1977; San Paulo Biennale, 1983; Venice Biennale, 1990; 3. Biennale de Lyon. Museums and institutions around the world have widely exhibited his work. Amongst them are Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, San Francisco; Institute of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; Eli & Edythe Broad Art Museum, East Lansing; Nam June Paik Art Center, Gyeongju;

Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris; Musée National d'Art Moderne Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris; Les Abattoirs, Toulouse; Neue Nationalgalerie, Hamburger Bahnhof, Museum of Contemporary Art and Martin-Gropius-Bau, Berlin; ZKM I Center for Art & Media, Karlsruhe; Moderna Museet, Stockholm; Museum Tinguely, Basel; Museion, Museo d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea, Bolzano; Ludwig Museum of Contemporary Art, Budapest; MOCAP, Krakow; MUMOK, Museum Moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig, Vienna; Museo de Arte Contemporaneo de Madrid; Fundació Joan Miró, Barcelona; Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, Lisbon.

Works by Wolf Vostell are included in significant museum collections, especially across the United States and Europe, such as MOMA, New York; SFMOMA, San Francisco; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; Art Institute, Chicago; Nationalgalerie, Berlin; Centre Pompidou, Paris; Museo Reina Sofia, Madrid; MACBA, Barcelona; Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney.