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The Art of Getting Drunk

By AiA Staff

It almost goes without saying that art openings and booze go hand in hand, especially during schmoozy events like this month's Art Basel Miami Beach. And Austrian prankster Erwin Wurm is making sure of that with his new exhibition, "Beauty Business," at the Bass Museum of Art, Miami Beach. Known for his humorous works, such as his "One-Minute Sculptures" that have participants strike ridiculous poses with props, Wurm has created a series of "Drinking Sculptures," which he says are completed when the participants are drunk. Bay Area conceptualist Tom Marioni was on to something similar with his 1970 performance piece *The Act of Drinking Beer with Friends is the Highest Form of Art* (ongoing), though he mercifully doesn't require excess.

Wurm's works are essentially upended or altered household furniture, like credenzas and armoires, places where "people hide liquor from their spouses or kids," says exhibition curator Peter Doroshenko, director of the Dallas Contemporary. Each piece will contain a bottle of alcohol, ranging from vodka to liqueurs, and a glass. Six of these sculptures are included in the Bass show, which runs Nov. 30, 2011 - March 4, 2012. At the opening, six paid performers will down their designated liquor (supplied by sponsors, not the curatorial budget) until, Doroshenko explains, "they can't stand up or are losing their senses," at which point they will be given a ride home. Their hangovers are not part of the performance. Over the course of the exhibition, there will be several drinking sessions per week by one performer.

When the show travels to Dallas [Apr. 14 - Aug. 19, 2012]. Doroshenko says there will be eight "Drinking Sculptures" and that "anyone over age 21 is invited to participate." They will impose a two-drink limit, however, and visitors will be monitored, according to Doroshenko, who cited a spring exhibition at the Middelheim Museum in Antwerp, where "things got way out of control." The show was a smash hit (pun intended).