

The MMK Museum für Moderne Kunst Frankfurt am Main hosts the final leg of the traveling retrospective, “Felix Gonzalez-Torres. Specific Objects without Specific Form”, previously shown at WIELS Contemporary Art Centre in Brussels and the Fondation Beyeler in Basel.

Including both rarely seen and more known paintings, sculptures, photographic works, and public projects, this major exhibition reflects the full scope of the Gonzalez-Torres’s short but prolific career. Born in Cuba, Gonzalez-Torres settled in New York in the late 1970s, where he studied art and began his practice as an artist before his untimely death of AIDS related complications in 1996, at the age of thirty-eight. He participated in the art collective Group Material in the 1980s, was an engaged social activist, and in a relatively short time developed a profoundly influential body of work that can be seen in critical relationship to Conceptual Art and Minimalism, mixing political critique, emotional affect, and deep formal concerns in a wide range of media, including drawings, sculpture, and public billboards, often using ordinary objects as a starting point—clocks, mirrors, or light fixtures. Amongst his most famous artworks are his piles of candy and paper stacks from which viewers are allowed to take away a piece. Those artworks are premised, like so much of what he did, on an instability and potential for change. The result is his profoundly human body of work, intimate and fragile even as it destabilizes so many seemingly unshakable certainties (the artwork as fixed, the author as the ultimate form-giver, the exhibition as a place of a look but not touch).

This exhibition proposes an experimental form that is indebted to Gonzalez-Torres’s own radical conception of the artwork. At each of the stages of the exhibition tour, namely at WIELS, the Fondation Beyeler and, now, at the MMK in Frankfurt, the show is initially installed by the exhibition’s curator Elena Filipovic and, halfway through its duration, is completely reinstalled by a different selected artist whose own practice has been influenced by Gonzalez-Torres. At the MMK, Tino Sehgal will reinstall the exhibition as of March 18. Sehgal, who is also an artist with work in the MMK collection, sees a great affinity with the work of Gonzalez-Torres and his own artistic approach. As a result, Sehgal will, for this version of the exhibition, not only reinstall the exhibition with a partially new checklist, but will also devise a special choreography so that daily changes can be enacted to the presentation of Gonzalez-Torres’s artworks. Both versions of the exhibition are installed in close dialogue with the MMK architecture and continue this traveling project’s attempt to refute the notion that an exhibition has to be something immutable or that a retrospective should offer a single, authoritative narrative. The entire project’s experimental curatorial concept thus attempts to respond and pay homage to the Gonzalez-Torres’s own thinking and practice.

The exhibition concept was devised by Elena Filipovic and initiated by WIELS Contemporary Art

Centre, Brussels in collaboration with the Foundation Beyeler, Riehen/Basel, the MMK Museum für Moderne Kunst Frankfurt, and the Felix Gonzalez-Torres Foundation, New York.

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