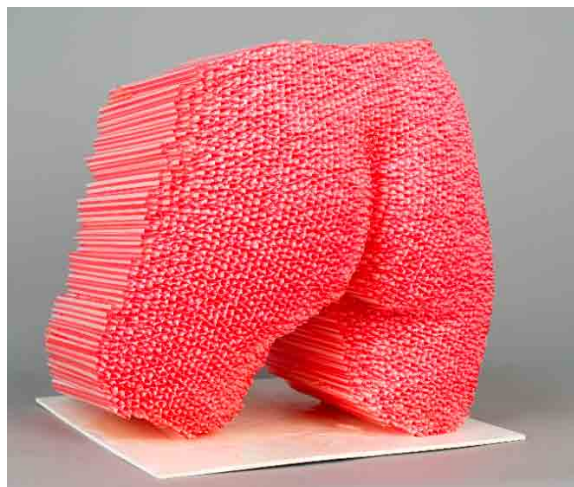


FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Katarina Schmidl, *A Beautiful Piece of Austria* (2002),
Sculpture made of straws, 13.7 x 14.5 x 14.5 inches

The Austrian Cultural Forum New York
and
MUSA Vienna
present

BEAUTY CONTEST

An International Group Exhibition

SEP 21, 2011 - JAN 3, 2012

Opening Reception: Tuesday Sep 20, 6 – 8 PM

Artists: Clarina **BEZZOLA**, Petra **BUCHEGGER**, Mehmet **EMIR**, Leslie **DE MELO**, Sissi **FARASSAT**, Matthias **HERRMANN**, Anna **JERMOLAEWA**, Birgit **JÜRGENSSEN**, Jakob Lena **KNEBL** / Hans **SCHEIRL**, Evangelia **KRANIOTI**, Maria **LASSNIG**, Kalup **LINZY**, **MUNTEAN/ROSENBLUM**, Rashaad **NEWSOME**, Maria **PETSCHNIG**, Lisl **PONGER**, Katarina **SCHMIDL**, Cindy **SHERMAN**

New York, September 2011 - The **Austrian Cultural Forum New York** and **MUSA Vienna** are proud to present *Beauty Contest*, an exhibition featuring works by 20 internationally acclaimed and emerging artists who critically reflect on contemporary global society's obsession and fascination with physical appearance. *Beauty Contest* opens on **September 20, 2011** and will be on view until **January 3, 2012** at the **Austrian Cultural Forum New York**. The exhibition will then travel to Vienna in **February 2012** where it will be shown in the galleries of MUSA Vienna.

Beauty Contest presents artists exploring what is probably one of the most trivial everyday experiences: our daily encounter with human beauty and its social construction. A perennial subject for artists and writers, the creation of beauty has always been linked to power and gender, to distinction and competition, to rejection and desire, and to linearity and diversity.

Visual arts, fashion and media have strongly contributed to the transformation of the notion of beauty over the last few generations. Widely perceived to be an extension of femininity until the

late 20th century, feminism and the gay, lesbian and queer movements have eroded clear definitions of who and what is beautiful – and who and what is not. This sea change took place in an age where the notion of gender itself has been challenged and transformed.

Emancipatory artistic reflection and practice has fought to reveal the hidden structures of repression toward gender, race, and age and to shake off antiquated visual preconceptions. Yet we still seem to be caught in a vicious cycle of competition for social status, visual representation and an industrially managed and mainstreamed aesthetical canon.

Beauty Contest is curated by **Berthold Ecker**, **Claude Grunitzky**, and **Andreas Stadler**, with assistance from **Natascha Boojar** and **Roland Fink**.

A fully illustrated catalogue will be published by **Passagen** in February 2012.
Press images are available at acfny.org/press-room/press-images-texts/beauty-contest

A series of talks will be organized as part of the **Walls and Bridges Season 3**
(www.wallsandbridges.net)

A performance by artist **Maria Petschnig** is being organized in conjunction with **Performa 11**
(www.performa-arts.org)

A performance by artist **Clarina Bezzola** will take place on September 21st, at 6:30PM, in collaboration with **Times Square Alliance**. Please see acfny.org/event/clarina-bezzola-when-i-walk-alone-on-the-streets for details.

About the Austrian Cultural Forum New York

With its architectural landmark building in Midtown Manhattan the **Austrian Cultural Forum New York** is the cultural embassy of Austria in the United States. It hosts more than 200 free events annually and showcases cutting-edge Austrian contemporary art, music, literature, and academic thought in New York. The Austrian Cultural Forum houses around 10,000 volumes in its state-of-the-art library, and enjoys long-standing and flourishing partnerships with many venerable cultural and academic institutions throughout New York and the United States.

The Austrian Cultural Forum is located at **11 East 52 Street, New York, NY 10022 (between Madison Avenue and Fifth Avenue)**. Gallery open **daily 10am to 6pm**. Admission to exhibitions, concerts, and other events at ACFNY is free.

Visit acfny.org for more information.

MUSA (German acronym for **Museum - Start Gallery - Artothek**) hosts the collection of the Cultural Department of the City of Vienna, and presents contemporary Austrian art in its 6,500 square foot exhibition space. MUSA also has a fully equipped state-of-the-art artwork storage and conservation facility on its premises. Visit www.musa.at for more information.

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Austrian Cultural Forum New York
11 East 52nd St. (betw. Madison & 5th)

**New York, NY 10022
(212) 319 5300
www.acfny.org**

**Open Daily 10 AM – 6 PM
Admission to exhibitions, concerts, and other events is free.
Reserve tickets online at www.acfny.org or call (212) 319 5300 ext 222.**

Directions

Subway:

E, M Train to Fifth Avenue/53rd Street

B, D, F, M Train to 47-50 Street/Rockefeller Center

E, M, 6 Train to 51st Street/Lexington Avenue

Bus:

M 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 to 53rd Street