

STUDY

In front of you is a pair of shoes on a white pedestal. On the right shoe is a lump of wax resembling meat. Between the shoes is a picture frame containing two photographs – they show the artist's feet, wearing the same shoes. Above it, on a narrow wooden strip, is a contact sheet of small black-and-white photographs: a performance captured during the first presentation of this work.

At the very top is a stuffed buzzard, upside down with its wings spread wide, from which strings dangle. The overall composition forms a cross.

This is an untitled work by Paul Thek, created in 1968. The American artist created this and other objects in his studio in Rome for an exhibition titled *A Procession in Honor of Aesthetic Progress: Objects to Theoretically Wear, Carry, Pull, or Wave*.

When the works arrived at the gallery in Essen, they were in a severely damaged condition. Thek didn't cancel the opening. Instead, he set about repairing the damage, even though the exhibition was already underway. This is how his first "work in progress" came into being. It posed a question: When exactly is a work of art "finished"? The work, *Untitled*, which you see here, was part of that exhibition in Essen and now belongs to the mumok collection.

This was the first time Thek incorporated photographs directly into a work – to document its transformation during the exhibition. For him, the space became both an exhibition and a studio. Production and presentation, which are usually separate, were merged together. Thek himself described it this way: "The exhibition I made in Germany in 1968 inevitably changed from day to day because all the works arrived damaged. That taught me how important the working process is. There was no point at which one could logically say, 'Now it's finished!'"

Now walk a little further, onto the wooden floorboards. Here you'll enter the church.