

Martín Mele
«Identikit»

Born in Argentina, growing up in the Netherlands and Germany, and now commuting between Düsseldorf and Buenos Aires, Martín Mele's life has been full of travel. His travels write stories that the artist then carries with him like a suitcase full of memories, images, experiences, and encounters. Mele takes inspiration for his work from this constantly regenerating content of a (not just) imaginary suitcase. Found things, forms seen, colors, and spontaneous gestures constitute an oeuvre of outstanding presence.



Pursuing the principle of the ready made, the artist uses objects and things to create "live" sculptures. The material he uses comes from flea markets and thrift stores; he finds it at roadsides, on sidewalks, and in cellars: the excluded remains of our society that, having lost their primary function, now lead a dusty, unspectacular existence, perhaps in the hope that an aficionado with a weakness for nostalgia might have mercy on them. Martín Mele is just such a person; not only does he collect these pieces, he also breathes new life into them by giving them a role in his art. He values not only the special aesthetics of these existences, but also the stories that they bear: stories that he knows how to mix with his own, so that the cups, plates, chests, chairs, and fabrics suddenly say as much about Martín Mele as they do about themselves. Mele's interest in the past is not only manifest in the materiality of his work; another important point of reference are historical artistic positions. The object group placed in a large exhibition space can be read as paying homage to Constantin Brancusi, Henry Moore, or Barbara Hepworth, a playful interpretation of these pioneers of object art who were clearly models for Martín Mele.

"I veritably trip over them," Mele says about his relationship to historical things, and accordingly his approach is a genuinely performative one: intuitively, things and materials are assembled, welded and sewn together, stuffed and rearranged. The objects and wall pieces that emerge in such a way have something fleeting, something accidental about them: an intervention of Martín Mele and the assemblage of plaster molds, vase, and wooden pedestal is changed: a new work, a new state, that nevertheless loses nothing of its precision. This sculptural conceptuality, as we might call it, demands enormous presence on the part of the artist. The figure of Martín Mele is accordingly omnipresent: his unmistakable appearance, his own story, and his personal perception of the world surrounding him are the starting and conclusion of his work. Identikit, the title of the exhibition, alludes to precisely this: the role of the artist in relation to his work. The name, which comes from a computer program used to create facial composites and contains the words "identity" and "kit," allow Mele's found pieces, especially when they are assembled in suitcases, as in the front exhibition space, to be understood as a construction set, in a certain sense as equipment, using the sculptural mix and displacement endless possibilities of repositioning not only of the object, but of the artist himself. The multiplication of the suitcases—here there three sets of three suitcases, each one of the same model and stuffed with apparently unending content—explicates Mele's intention, all the more so when in the performance at the opening Mele as well as two replacement performers go to work on the suitcases .

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