



Martín Mele
«Mele Mobil»
April 22 - 3 June 2017

Martín Mele arrived in Zurich a bare week before the opening, in his station wagon, loaded with rubbish bags, boxes, a sky-blue suitcase and other containers full of things. Once a couple of bags of gypsum were fetched and the exhibition space covered with protective foil, the artist started to work in this temporary studio space. The contents of the car's trunk are a small part of a giant material collection that Mele gathered over the years of being en route, going back and forth between Argentina and Germany, Mele's biographical pivots. The collection consists of discarded, thrown away everyday objects, an eclectic and seemingly arbitrary mix like flotsam and jetsam. A piece of rope, legs of a chair, cables, a net full of sport balls, balloons, a painting, a leather hide...

Mele picks these objects up from the street, finds them in thrift shops, cellars or at the local dump. Their value lies in the stories they bear and in their aesthetics, in the sense of being abstract forms, like something round, or of featuring a surface quality, that speaks to the artist.

To this second-hand-collection, Mele adds personal items which are re-occurring in his works, like the stuffed tubes made out of fabric or the golden tea- or coffee-cups. Also parts of his own wardrobe, from his tailor-made suits, to shirts and underwear. Everything together comprises the construction kit the artist uses to assemble his works in situ.

Although Mele had some clues of what he was going to create for «Mele Mobil», he gave let himself fall freely into an open working process for the most part. In a fascinating manner of impartiality and determination, he stapled, glued and plastered his elements together, shoved them around, took something off, tried something else, whilst constantly checking what was happening within the assembly and in between them. The conjunctions need to be stable, Mele stated, screwing together two wooden battens, but they mustn't be too solid, otherwise the piece loses its liveliness. Accordingly, Mele's working process is one of constant weighing and requires his highest concentration and awareness. Only within the balancing act between deliberate construction and precarious material- and static experiments, potentially, the momentum appears, in which the individual item can not only leave its former function and identity behind, but can also transform itself, as a part of a new composition, into a whole new, autonomous existence, something never seen before. It seems to be this magical threshold when things come to live that Mele knows to provoke and captivate in his work, so that each piece emits a kind of personality.

This is particularly evident in Martín Mele's 'alter ego', the character with wooden legs, who shares its name with the exhibition title and the artist himself; «Mele Mobil» is standing in the middle of the room, his sky-blue suitcase next to him, looking out of the window. His 'hand luggage' is more of a symbol, a Talisman, hanging from his narrow, lopsided shoulders. You cannot help but quietly smile to yourself at Mele's self-staging as a traveler, who is wearing nothing but oversized underwear and socks, just having arrived in some place and already gazing outside at the road once more.