

Michel François

Pièces à conviction

X
H

29 November 2012 – 12 January 2013

Xavier Hufkens is pleased to announce the third solo exhibition at the gallery by Belgian artist Michel François (b.1956, Saint-Trond).

Michel François defines himself as a sculptor. He manipulates matter and gives objects a place in space. But since the meaning of sculpture depends upon its confrontation with other sculptures, and according to the space in which it is shown, he constantly creates new associations and ever-changing relationships within his oeuvre. Every exhibition, therefore, is a provisional lecture on the nature of art: "a permanent work in progress, wherein each work that is produced has the potential to conceal several other works of art within it. Although... nothing is given to us on a plate, an initial scenario is always present, free for everyone to untie the knots and imagine possible connections between elements. With this approach as a whole, the artist expresses no opportunism or will to seduce, but rather simply the will to recycle, and always experiment, to no end." (Antoine Marchand, 2010).

For this exhibition, François started out from a series of photos that he took in the cellar of the Palace of Justice in Brussels, where a huge number of *pièces à conviction* (literally 'pieces of evidence') are brought together, identified, labelled and exhibited. The French title of the exhibition thus describes a document or object that is produced in court as evidence, objects that are often called an 'exhibit' in English. The simple act of naming these prosaic objects 'conviction pieces' confers a new meaning upon them, and alters the way in which they might be perceived. The exhibition is thus an exploration of cause and effect, and the ways in which simple gestures can change the status of an object and have important consequences.

Next to these photographs he shows a number of sculptures that are, without immediately revealing their origins or the way they were made, undoubtedly the result of something that happened outside the exhibition space.

45/65-45 (2012) consists of an enormous tractor tyre with a diameter of 258 cm. The title refers to the type of tyre. As a material object, it is not the result of the artist's intervention. Nevertheless, the meaning it acquires in the exhibition, and in the corpus of the artist's oeuvre, is entirely his responsibility.

The bronze wall sculptures *Instant Gratifications* (2012) are the result of a thermic shock, provoked by the confrontation of burning hot liquid bronze being poured onto a cold floor. By diverting centuries-old techniques, Michel François obtains new forms and new meanings.

Wax Revenge (2012) is the result of reassembling recovered fragments of bronze sculptures that have been coated with red wax. The wax that normally disappears in the classical lost wax technique is here used as the skin of the sculpture – imbuing it with an aesthetic function, rather than a purely utilitarian one.

Michel François lives and works in Brussels. Past solo exhibitions include CRAC Languedoc-Roussillon, Sète, France (2012); Ecole nationale supérieure des Beaux-Arts, Paris, France (2012); IAC, Villeurbanne, France (2010); Musée des Beaux-Arts, Lausanne, Switzerland (2009); SMAK, Ghent, Belgium for which he also proposed the curatorial project *Faux Jumeaux* (2009) and Macba, Barcelona, Spain (2009); Kunsthalle Bern, Switzerland (2000) and Haus der Kunst, Munich, Germany (2000). Together with Ann Veronica Janssens he contributed to *The Song* by Anne Teresa De Keersmaecker for Théâtre de la Ville, Paris, France. His work has also been included in numerous group exhibitions such as Documenta IX (1992), the São Paulo Biennial XXII (1994), the 48th Venice Biennial (1999) and Sonsbeek 2008.

Xavier Hufkens

Sint-Jorisstraat 6–8 rue Saint-Georges
Bruxelles 1050
T 32 (0)2 639 67 30
F 32 (0)2 639 67 38
info@xavierhufkens.com
www.xavierhufkens.com