

Thomas Grünfeld

Je ne sais quoi

07.03.2023

11.03.2023

MASSIMODECARLO Pièce Unique is pleased to present “Je ne sais quoi” German artist Thomas Grünfeld’s seventh exhibition with the gallery, and first solo show at Pièce Unique.

“Je ne sais quoi” – which is French for “an ungraspable quality or elegance, an attitude”, presents works from two of Grünfeld’s most iconic series: “the misfits”, and “the polsters” (Upholstery Objects).

The world of Thomas Grünfeld expresses itself through mixed media, including sculpture, taxidermy, photography, felt collages and installations. The artist aims to generate mixed feelings in the viewer by playing with the subtle boundary between what appears recognisable at first glance, and the artificial.

Over the course of the week, two of his misfits and one Polster will appear in the space, one at the time, emerging progressively in the gallery window, transforming the space with their uncanny presence.

Grünfeld’s misfits are intricately sewn together taxidermy animal hybrids. These strange chimera-like creatures originate in part from Thomas Grünfeld’s interest in German folkloristic tradition *wolpertinger*—fables about strange mixtures of animals—reminiscent of proverbial battles between real and imaginary, good and evil.

Thomas Grünfeld’s signature mustard colour series of polsters (Upholstery Objects) – that he first made for a show at Massimo De Carlo in Milan in 1988 are hybrids of a different kind: half design objects, half cushions, these works trick the viewer into thinking they are functional, shifting between familiar and unfamiliar, usable and unusable.

The artist’s practice, although it appears rational at first glance, is deeply rooted in the irrational and in the exploration of absurdity.

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Misfit (Whippet / deer), 2021

Taxidermy

27 × 36 × 43 cm / 10.6 × 14 × 17 in

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Jene 5, 2019

Wood, steel, foam, upholstery fabric, horse hair, ball, lamp, hemp rope

138 × 138 × 40 cm / 54 × 54 × 15 3/4 in

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Misfit (Pekingese / boar piglet), 2018

Taxidermy

20 × 35 × 25 cm / 7 7/8 × 13 4/5 × 9 6/7 in

Thomas Grünfeld was born in 1956 in Leverkusen, Germany. He currently lives and works in Cologne, Germany. Thomas Grünfeld solo exhibitions include: 1&5, Kunstmuseum, Stuttgart, Germany (2015); Homey, Opere 1986 - 2013, Museo d'Arte Contemporanea - Villa Croce, Genova, Italy (2014); Thomas Grünfeld- Homey: works from 1981 to 2013, Museum Morsbroich, Leverkusen, Germany (2013). Group exhibitions include, among others: Dead Animals, Brown University, Providence, RI, USA (2016); Still Life Remix, curated by Ilaria Bonacossa, Antinori Art Project, San Casciano Val di Pesa, Florence, Italy (2015); Curiosity: Art & The Pleasures of Knowing, Royal Hibernian Academy, Dublin, Ireland/ de Appel, Amsterdam, The Netherlands (2013); Two Collectors: Thomas Olbricht and Harald Falckenberg, Deichtorhallen, Hamburg, Germany (2013); Tier-Perspektiven, Georg Kolbe Museum, Berlin (2009). OUTLOOK, curated by Christos Joachimides, Benaki Museum, Athens, Greece (2003) The Big Bang, Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art, North Adams, MA, USA (2000).

Since 2004 Thomas Grünfeld holds a professorship for sculpture at the Kunstakademie in Düsseldorf.