

DARIO ESCOBAR SIDE AND BACK

5 january - 6 february 2010

Galerie Kamel Mennour is pleased to present the Guatemalan artist Dario Escobar's first solo exhibition in France.

Centred on a playful but equally a cynical critique of middle-class consumerism and the elitist logic that governs our contemporary world, the three-dimensional work of Dario Escobar seeks to redefine and influence the notion of "sculpture as monument" (in the traditional sense of the term) by carrying out a thorough reconfiguration of everyday objects and street culture (Nike trainers, footballs, skateboards, McDonald's paper cups), objects we might easily describe as "insignificant" considering the subject in question.

Juxtaposing handmade products with industrial ready-mades, the artist seeks to invent new connections between past and present, between cheap consumer goods and luxury items, between sacred objects and works of art.

Driven by a hunger for rebellion and disobedience in the face of widely accepted rules, Dario Escobar attempts, in essence, to show us alternative paths, to set out alternative ideologies, alternative ways of interacting with other people and with our environment.

To achieve this he carries out a series of disturbances on objects belonging to the world of sport - an activity subject to numerous rules, a competitive thirst, as well as a constant desire for results - disrupting and reorganising their meaning and function. Rebellious objects, chameleon-like objects, mutant objects, they have turned against the grain of their original function. Uprooted, they have access to new fields of experience. Furthermore, and not accidentally, the artist sources some of the materials for his sculptures from equipment relating to "ball games", from *pelote* - a ritual sport played since pre-Columbian times - to baseball, volleyball, or football sports where it is possible for the ball to leave the pitch. For him, it is a question of conceiving of his exhibitions as of sports pitches where the balls already appear to have taken flight towards other neighbouring lands stripped of values, towards other worlds where the rules seem to have been changed, removed, in which it no longer seems possible to play and by extension to win, other worlds that will no longer be subject to the law of the jungle or of the elite, and where there would no longer be any challenges, competition - or conversely, other worlds in which we would all be winners already.

A world where skateboards can no longer move, so completely have they been broken apart, then pieced back together (*Untitled*, 2008). A world where baseball bats are no longer used for hitting but to map out the relief of an imaginary landscape (*Dawn II*, 2003-2009). A world where balls can no longer be thrown, so affected are they by strange molecular mutations (*Observe & Reverse*, 2009). A world where chrome-plated bumpers, although brand-new, are already bent and damaged (*Crash*, 2009).

On show in the first space at galerie kamel mennour, and this summer at the Venetian Arsenal as part of the 53rd Venice Biennale, the installation *Kulkulkan* (2009) uses and displays a substantial collection of bicycle tyres. Sliced up and joined together, far removed from pounding the tarmac, they hang in bunches from the gallery ceiling like serpents and/or creeper, presenting us with the image a new kind of flora and fauna, industrial in nature, quixotic and fecund.

Born in Guatemala in 1971, Dario Escobar lives and works in Guatemala City. He began his career at the end of the 1990s.

His work has featured in numerous group and solo exhibitions in Latin America, North America and Europe: at the Miami Art Museum (2009), at the Des Moines Art Center (IA, 2008), at the Museo Diego Rivera in Mexico City (Mexico, 2008), at the Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art (CA, 2007), at the Centro Cultural Metropolitano in Guatemala City (Guatemala, 2007), at the Dublin Museum (Ireland, 2005) and at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Sydney (Australia, 2007); as well as at various Biennales such as the 10th Havana Biennale (2009), and the 53rd Venice Biennale in 2009, as the artist invited to represent Latin America.

His work also features in numerous collections such as the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles (MOCA), the Daros Collection in Zurich (Switzerland), the Cisneros Fontanals Art Foundation and the Colección JUMEX in Mexico; the Blanton Museum of Art in Austin (Texas) and the Nasher Museum of Art at Duke University (North Carolina).

Dario Escobar «Side and Back» is on show at galerie kamel mennour Tuesdays to Saturdays, 9am to 7pm.

For further information, please contact Marie-Sophie Eiché, Jessy Mansuy-Leydier and Emma-Charlotte Gobry-Laurencin.