

**Josef Strau**

“The Mephisto Hours”

19 March  
- 24 April 2021

As in his previous exhibition at Galerie Buchholz Berlin, Josef Strau has installed two exhibitions connecting in the same space, 13 sculptures in the same rooms with 13 paintings. The 13 “Angels” and “New Angels” paintings were produced with the preconceived intent of following a rather impossible, maybe even questionable attempt to depict the celestial beings as if they were a real object entirely defined by space. They were burnt and cut with a hot soldering stick out of natural tin and cover the fragmentarily painted and colored canvases. But as Giorgio Agamben described and more recently revived, angels are rather defined within modes of time and appear to repair what’s left from the past.

The sculptural objects in the exhibition were consequently produced by withdrawing any intention as long as possible, except trying to repair the many leftover metal pieces found and collected during long searches on the few still existing huge old metal scrapyards of the Rhineland as they had to be monotonously cleaned, derusted, descaled and then finally repainted, mostly with layers of lacquer and enamel. During restoration some of the pieces redeveloped their ability to produce cymbal like sounds, and if connected became each a set of bells for measuring personal duration, to help improving attention to time, both during production and after.

During one of his earlier stays in Mexico, the artist already produced jewelry in collaboration with House of Gaga and named after the last Aztec emperor Moctezuma. But the new works here instead are developed as hybrid objects both avoiding and mocking definitions of sculpture or jewelry. They actually do appear as if not to be fitting the human body’s dimensions alone, sometimes too huge or too heavy. Dedicated to Henri Bergson’s idea that the traditional modes of thinking and discerning in forms of categories and judgments is somehow now an obsolete function in the human evolution resulting from the necessity of survival in space, and could be replaced by a more real and more adaptive consciousness of time. Although sometimes involving some difficulty, they are all wearable. They are oversized, but wearable instruments of experiences of duration, within the exhibition holding onto the pedestals like a presence of organic monuments and sonic measures of recovered or even redeemed time.