

Sprüth Magers London is pleased to present 'Los Angeles' featuring new work by the German-born, Greek artist Michail Pirgelis in his first solo exhibition in the U.K. A graduate of the prestigious Düsseldorf Academy and former Master student of Rosemarie Trockel, Pirgelis' artistic practice explores the sculptural possibilities of decommissioned airplane parts.

Since 2003, Pirgelis has made frequent visits to the 'boneyards' of Arizona and California, the now legendary resting places and holding facilities of scores of obsolete aircraft and flight-related paraphernalia. The planes either await re-deployment or are stripped piece-by-piece of their highly valuable parts which are incorporated back into other still viable vessels, with some craft remaining little more than carcasses. Pirgelis' sculptures are often carefully hybridised amalgams of these incongruous aircraft remnants. In *Bateleur* (2011) seatbelts and fuselage are united in an attempt to explore the precariousness of flight: 'bateleur' being the French term for 'tight-rope walker' but also the name of a colourful species of eagle. Indeed, the sculptural composition is reminiscent of a single feather. Similarly, *Untitled (From the Air Saddles #7)* (2011) is one of a series of pieces that fuse thick rubber straps with slices of the highly polished fuselage with the window frames still visible; the latter a small yet significant indication of a now disavowed functionality. However, by utilising sought-after materials that continue to have a use-value in the multi-billion dollar aviation industry, the sculptures, regardless of modification, have the potential to resume their previous 'life' once again as functioning parts of an aircraft. It is all the more significant that Pirgelis' works have on occasion been reintegrated back into functioning aircraft.

For Pirgelis, 'Los Angeles' has been the hub of his travels to the U.S.A. and is emblematic of the bygone era of exclusivity and luxury once associated with aviation. The highly polished aluminium surfaces of *Mainframe* (2011) and *GOL* (2011) recall the golden days of flight and signal an attempt to revivify the long lost aura associated with aviation, if not the glamour that has been eroded by a proliferation of budget airlines. Whilst elements of burnished fuselage are often a feature of Pirgelis' sculptural works, his fascination with the possibilities of encasement provided by airplanes persists inside the plane and extends to all of the flight cabin facilities. In *C63* (2011) he uses black speaker cloth and matt black paint to cocoon a central section of overhead compartments from an Airbus 300. The resulting effect of near total opacity provides a striking contrast with the light reflective qualities of the polished fuselage seen in other works and witnesses a shift towards a more formalist interpretation of disused aircraft components.

Despite the connotations of disembodied airplane parts, Pirgelis does not aim to raise the spectre of the plane crash; on principle, Pirgelis never uses parts that have come from plane wreckage. Through his artistic practice, what he seeks to explore is the notion of 'fragility' as he calls it, as an

aspect of 'psychological experience.' Man's dream of flying, if not the hubris associated with it, embodies this fragility by drawing the finest of lines between complete success and total failure. Flight will always be an unnatural phenomenon for human beings and the ability to comprehend the science of flight, that which makes it technologically possible, remains for many the very thing we attempt - perhaps out of fear - to psychologically defer if not repress.

Michail Pirgelis was born in 1976 in Essen, Germany and raised in Xanthi, Greece. He lives and works in Cologne. In 2010 Pirgelis was the recipient of the Audi Art Award for 'New Positions' at Art Cologne and was also awarded the Schloss Ringenberg Stipendium. In 2008 he was the first artist to be presented with the Adolf Loos-Preis by the Van den Valentyn Foundation, Cologne. Solo shows include: 'Aerotopie' at Förderverein Aktuelle Kunst, Münster (2006); 'Akropolis' at Sprüth Magers, Berlin (2010) and 'Aeromaritime' Artothek Cologne (2011). Group exhibitions include: 'Play' at the Stadtmuseum Düsseldorf (2005); 'Schneeweiss', a joint show with Rosemarie Trockel, at the Rohrmeisterei, Schwerte (2006); 'Mondi Possibili' at Sprüth Magers, Cologne (2006); 'Quattro Stelle' at the Villa Romana, Florence (2007); 'Great Expectations' at ArtLab21, Los Angeles (2008); 'Saar Förderpreis Junge Kunst 2008' at Kunstverein Ludwigshafen (2009); 'Der Westen leuchtet' at Kunstmuseum Bonn (2010); and 'Neues Rheinland' at Museum Morsbroich, Leverkusen (2010).

In conjunction with the Audi Art Award, Artothek Cologne is hosting 'Aeromaritime', a solo show of Pirgelis' work, from 17 March to 21 April 2011, to coincide with Art Cologne. Please visit the following link for further information: <http://www.museenkoeln.de/artothek>

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