

Contemporary art transgresses the very notion of the artwork as it is commonly accepted and understood. The artistic act no longer resides in the manufacture of the object but in its conception, in the discourses that accompany it, the reactions to which it gives rise, and so on. The work may be ephemeral, changing, biodegradable, blasphemous, or indecent. This is what is at issue in the work of Bouchet and McCarthy, who work on ephemeral installations that challenge the status and the very architecture of the building that welcomes their show. Sometimes they go to extremes, mocking popular icons and the Walt Disney industry while touching on religion and other topics. Their works are situated, therefore, at the junction of sensationalism and popular culture. The two artists are known for removing familiar objects from their usual contexts and transforming them into something unexpected. In their works, they explore the subversive universe of consumerism, of idolatry, through an effort aimed at disorienting the viewer.

Bouchet and McCarthy have known each other for 25 years, and a particular project came about through a series of similar observations involving the Guggenheim museum, which initially started as a joke and led to a serious body of work presented recently at the Portikus Museum of Frankfurt, in a site-specific project within an exhibition structure situated at several levels including not only the space of the main exhibition but also various outside locations. Entitled “Powered A-Hole Spanish Donkey Sport Dick Drink Donkey Dong Dongs Sunscreen Model,” this exhibition proposed a number of installations and works whose point of departure was a satirical view of the Guggenheim Museum of Bilbao.

The “Double Deck” exhibition now being welcomed by Marlborough Monaco is the extension of the Frankfurt exhibition. Its title makes reference, within this new context, to various notions and to double-deck analogies, the gallery being situated on two levels, and to its proximity to the port. “Bilboa” sunscreen is an accidental misspelling of “Bilbao”, as well as what comes up under a Google search of the word “Bilbao”. The word is suggested by Google which provides images of the particular Italian sunscreen and oil. Bouchet and McCarthy have produced a series of paintings based on these “Bilboa” sunscreen images.

The exhibition unveils an astounding conversion to the gallery. The artists take over and transform the whole gallery space. The visit turns into a sensory and emotional experience where the public lose their bearings and discover an original portrait display of renowned architects such as Santiago Calatrava, Mario Botta, Ming Pei, Le Corbusier, Mies Van der Rohe, Sir Norman Foster ... and actors like Liam Neeson or Sylvester Stallone. The show will also feature a series of paintings illustrating advertisements for sunscreen “Bilboa” and the Guggenheim Bilbao transformed to resemble a battleship.

Bouchet and McCarthy are making work that is critical of art spaces, art institutions, themselves, their own role in art, and by this very virtue also are opening up methods of creative gestures, emphasizing the artists role as an important court jester, and creating implications that touch on important points in our time through the use of humor and ultimately their artistic observations.

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