

# VAS VISUAL ART eNEWSLETTER

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## MSCHF, "Art 2"

by Jody Zellen

Perrotin, Los Angeles, California, Continuing through June 1, 2024



MSCHF, "Murakillendorf's Venus," 2024, oil on canvas, 29 x 51"

Quotation. Appropriation. Art about art. Using the works of others as points of departure is hardly new. Throughout history, artists have borrowed from, modified, erased and even copied pieces verbatim as homages or critiques. The list is long and includes a wide range of approaches. Yasumasa Morimura and Cindy Sherman re-staged famous paintings as photographs, while Rachel Lachowicz, Deborah Kass, and Elaine Reichek have replicated works by their more famous male counterparts, often infusing them with a feminist agenda. The Brooklyn, NY collective MSCHF is a somewhat recent addition to this diverse group of artists. While their work is as much about consumerism and consumer culture as it is about art, they play around with the idea of readymades.

Coincidentally, at the same time MSCHF's exhibition is taking place, pieces by Elaine Sturtevant (1924-2014) are on view nearby at Matthew Marks Gallery. Throughout her long career, Sturtevant produced precise copies of works by well-known artists to challenge ideas of originality. In the current exhibition there are exacting recreations of celebrated works by Andy Warhol, Keith Haring, Jasper Johns and Felix Gonzalez-Torres, as well as "The Dark Threat of Absence" (2002) in which Sturtevant reproduces the jarring video "Painter" by Paul McCarthy (1995).

MSCHF's approach is more sardonic and tongue-and-cheek as the group toys with art history and high and low cultures. While many of their projects are also commodities available at their online store, they are quite serious about their gallery presentations. This installation includes 249 reproductions of Pablo Picasso's tiny carved wooden sculpture, "Le Poisson" presented as a large grid on the wall like a choreographed school



MSCHF, "JaguarKourosDavidCowBoyMan," 2024, oil on canvas, 25 1/4 x 59 3/4"

of fish. Titled "Possible Real Copy Of Poisson By Pablo Picasso," this piece does contain one Picasso original. In another series based on the book "Animorphs" by Katherine Applegate and Michael Grant, MSCHF creates oil paintings where a classical sculpture transitions to a contemporary work as illustrated in "JaguarKourosDavidCowBoyMan." Against a blurred landscape, the painting shows various Kouros sculptures that morph into Michelangelo's "David" and finally into Takashi Murakami's "My Lonesome Cowboy." A similar transition occurs in "Murakillendorf's Venus." Outlined in yellow, the painted reproductions morph from the ancient "Venus of Willendorf" to Murakami's absurdly large busted sculpture "Hiropon."

In the "Botched Masters" series, MSCHF starts with found 17th and 18th century religious paintings. They recklessly paint over these (possibly) valuable oils, obscuring faces and turning figures like Mary and Jesus into cartoon blobs, in essence destroying the original while creating new value. In "AirBnB (Botched L'Adoration des Bergers)," they cancel out the haloed Mary and replace her with an incongruous representation. Similarly,



MSCHF, "Flower Boy (Botched Portrait de jeune garçon à la guirlande de fleurs)," 2024, oil on canvas, 34 3/8 x 28 1/4 x 2"

in "Flower Boy (Botched Portrait de jeune garçon à la guirlande de fleurs)," they obscure an 18th Century depiction of a young boy with a crudely painted and modernized rendition. These works are simultaneously horrifying and humorous.

Another art about art reference is "Touch Me Sculpture One More Time," a large free-standing sculpture in which bronze bodies in the style of Michelangelo and Bernini are entangled together on top of a pentagonal shaped white pedestal including an illuminated LED display with an ambiguous numerical readout. "Bullets Fired Into A Wall By A US Veteran" references Chris Burden's "Shoot." "Met's Sink Of Theseus" calls to mind both Duchamp's "Urinal" and Maurizio Cattelan's gold-plated toilet "America" (2016) that was originally installed in a restroom at the Guggenheim Museum and later stolen from the Blenheim Palace, at which time it was reportedly melted down.

Scattered throughout the exhibit are colorful "Bootlegs," cartoony sculptures based on the boots worn by Astro Boy (a 1960s Japanese cartoon). Like disembodied figures situated randomly across the gallery, these oversized resin boots sprout ungainly hairy legs. MSCHF's works are all about camp. They are ironic and seductive while in the know about

contemporary art and popular culture. They also strive to challenge accepted norms about the art marketplace and conventions of art connoisseurship and consumption. The exhibition asks viewers to think about craft and digital culture, as well as expanded boundaries of what is accepted or acceptable for artists and for galleries to exhibit.

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MSCHF, "Touch Me Sculpture One More Time," 2024, bronze concrete, plastic, electronics, 66 15/16 x 43 5/16 x 3 15/16"