

Michel François

April 3rd – May 13th 2023

Alfonso Artiaco is pleased to announce
Michel François' second solo show.
Opening on April 1st at 7 pm, in the presence of the artist.

The exhibition opens a few days after the huge anthological exhibition, *Contre nature*, dedicated to the artist by the Bozar Museum, Centre for Fine Arts in Brussels.

The show in Belgium presents the first forty years of the artist's research with several works, from the earliest to the present, creating a path of shifting connections that transform the museum into an extension of his studio. The idea of the solo show at the gallery in Naples follows the same concept: to present iconic works of his most recent production, adapted and rethought for the space in Piazzetta Nilo. Michel François focuses his artistic practice on the study of materials, on the results of balances and contamination of plastic forms. Reality is from time to time questioned by the artist with the use of everyday objects extorted from their context and proposed with ever different uses, suspended in a state of perennial balance and fragility. On view a series of sculptures, installations, drawings and lithographs that recreate a modified reality in which opposites seem to float in a precarious equilibrium, always aimed at a possible change.

Among the artworks on view the impressive *Golden Cage*, a cage covered entirely with gold leaf that, with its over four square meters, occupies the entire room. Made of thin metal and large grids, the work opens up to multiple suggestions related to the idea of imprisonment and escape because, despite being made of gold, it is still a cage. An ambiguity of meaning given to the viewer who must decode the work according to his sensitivity.

On a museum scale, the work *Retenue d'eau*, suspended from the ceiling like an ancient chandelier, is composed of the cluster assembly of over two hundred small transparent bags filled with water tied to nylon threads. The work synthesizes many of the themes related to the artist's sculpture made up of physical tensions, voids, solids and a poise of forces. A combination of everyday elements that take on monumental proportions recreating a glass effect but without using that material. Accompanied by drawings and lithographic prints, the exhibition is enriched with chairs assembled with crystallized floral elements in precarious balance, golden aluminum strips that with the use of magnets compose sculptures with sinuous lines and finally a light blue brick that leaves the mark of its sudden passage on the walls of the gallery. And again suspended from the ceiling little less than fifty balloons stacked almost to touch the ground. *A souffle perdu (ligne rouge et noire)*, red and black blown glass balloons of various sizes contain the breath of the artist with different air volume depending on his physical ability at the moment of breathing. With this gesture François enters even more personally into the creation of the work, although in an ephemeral and essentially immaterial way. The site-specific work *Scribble* has been reshaped for the exhibition: a large jumble of thin black aluminum wires aimed at creating an enormous scribble. The elements twist in every direction forming the spatial and three-dimensional wall transposition of a usually drawn form. As in many of François' scenographic works, matter moves freely, apparently uncontrolled, in a fictional loss of control, always as calculated as it is unpredictable. The exhibition closes with a work created by the artist to celebrate Naples and the soccer team in its blaze of light blue.

Michel François was born in Saint-Trond in 1956. He lives and works in Brussels, BE.

Michel François is a conceptual artist who makes sculptures, videos, photographs, printed matter, paintings and installations. He uses an economy of means to transform seemingly uncomplicated objects and materials, or traces of past events, into deeply resonant carriers of meaning. He bases his practise on the tension of materials, on the resulting balances and the contaminations of plastic forms, on a fictitious loss of control always calculated yet unpredictable.

He claims no signature style but creates a web of shifting connections between his works and in each different exhibition. His work can be seen as exploration of cause and effect, and the ways in which simple gestures can change the status of an object or have important consequences.

Often the works have been developed and assembled because of their formal and conceptual affinities. In a way or in many others, sculptures, images and drawings are proposing forms of appearance and disappearance, where the material looks like taken in an expansion or contraction movement. Things are there, but in a sort of fragile status, just before their disappearance or their dispersion. It seems that things are emerging or expanding here and now.

Museum exhibitions include, in addition to the recent retrospective at Bozar, Centre for Fine Arts, Brussels (2023), *Panopticon*, Yarat Contemporary Art Centre, Baku (2022); *Pièce à conviction*, Middelheim Museum, Antwerp (2016); *Nineteen thousand posters. 1994-2016*, Mads Grand Hornu (2011) and Frac île-de-France (2016); *Plans d'évasion*, SMAK, Ghent and lac Vileurbanne (2009-10); *Salon Intermédiaire*, Centre Pompidou, Paris (2002); *La Plante en nous*, Haus der Kunst, Munich (2000); Kunsthalle Bern (2000).