



MSCHF

Women's Wear Daily,

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The creative collective behind the viral Big Red Boots opens an art show at Perrotin in Los Angeles.



A rendering of Perrotin in Los Angeles, where Mschf is showing "Art 2" until June 1. RENDERING BY JOHNSTON MARKLEE, COURTESY OF PERROTIN.

"It's because of the Bible verse," explained Mschf co-chief creative officer Lukas Bentel of the price tag. "Matthew 14:25 is where Jesus walked on water."

The pair, customized Nike Air Max 97s (produced independently from the footwear giant), reportedly sold out within a minute and others were quickly found on resale sites for double or triple the original price.

Then came the Satan Shoes. "You can't have one without the other," added co-creative chief Kevin Wiesner with a smile.

Bentel and Wiesner are founding members of Mschf, pronounced "mischief," which began as a group of five before growing to about 30.

Mschf made 666 pairs of the Satan Shoes, which contained a drop of blood (provided by Mschf members) and were promoted by rapper Lil Nas X. Each cost \$1,018, referencing another Bible passage, before Nike put a stop to the sales with a lawsuit. The two ultimately settled.

“Depending on who you talk to within this group, you’ll get different perspectives on the type of work that we’re doing and even the narrative that got us here,” said Wiesner.

The plan early on, he went on, was to “make only things we wanted to make, hopefully in a structure that would let us make any of the things we wanted to make. And we were going to release something every two weeks, no matter what...and try to construct as much deliberate confusion about what Mschf was as we could, so that we could not fall into the trap of being easily categorized as the X company.”

It’s worked. Mschf’s creations have ranged widely, from footwear (they’re also behind the cartoon-like “Big Red Boots”) to various experimental projects for both the web and IRL, as they continue to release work twice a month. Everything has a touch of humor, in the name of artistic expression.

They’ve been limitless — and yet have looked to contain the work in gallery shows and museums. The interest is partly because they hadn’t received “real recognition or thought from the art space,” said Bentel.



Installation view of Mschf: Art 2 at Perrotin Los Angeles, 2024. GUILLAUME ZICCARELLI/COURTESY OF MSCHF AND PERROTIN

Mschf has its first museum retrospective, titled “Nothing Is Sacred,” in Seoul. And after staging “No More Tears, I’m Lovin’ It” at Perrotin’s New York gallery in 2022, the group is presenting their first exhibit in Los Angeles: “Art 2.” It’s another collaboration with Perrotin, which recently took over the historic Del Mar Theatre at 5036 W Pico Boulevard.

“When you’re positioning things in the gallery it immediately tells people there’s a bit more narrative and a bit more concept behind some of the projects, and I think there are a lot of people that have seen work that we’ve made and may not even know that we made it or may not even know that there are many layers to the onion of the projects, that you can kind of dig down,” Bentel continued. “I think it was just helpful in terms of positioning Mschf.”

“Art 2,” open until June 1, is a series of installations surrounding the theme of a second act. “In Tinseltown, where sequels seem inevitable, Mschf takes on the role of superhero and villain,” notes the collective.

Among the displays is a series of replicas of Pablo Picasso’s carved wooden sculpture “Le Poisson,” which fits in the palm of a hand. Mschf acquired it and has made 249 copies. The pieces are lined up in rows on the gallery wall as a school of fish. (It’s their second iteration of the idea; first came “Fairies” by Andy Warhol, an ink-on-paper drawing that Mschf acquired then reproduced 999 times. All, including the original, were priced at \$250 each and sold out.)

“This is one of the fish,” said Bentel, holding up one of the wooden pieces — either the Picasso or a dupe. “This could possibly be a Picasso sculpture that we have purchased — and forged. This is another one.” He held up another. “Who knows? You’ll never guess which one.”



Possibly Real Copy of 'Poisson' By Pablo Picasso, 2024 Wood, graphite 3.4 x 10 x 1.6 cm | 1 3/16 x 3 15/16 x 0 5/8 inch.
GUILLAUME ZICCARELLI/COURTESY OF MSCHF AND PERROTIN

“The bait is twofold: a collector may purchase the entire installation, guaranteeing their ‘catch’ of an original Picasso,” notes Mschf. “Or 250 frenzied fans vote with their dollars to democratize accessibility over art pedigree.”

For Mschf, humor is used to spark uncomfortable conversations, Bentel said. “I think humor can be a really powerful tool to get people to engage with subjects that oftentimes they don’t really want to talk about.”

Money, for instance, as when they installed an ATM that displayed a leaderboard listing visitors’ account balances during Art Basel, with the highest on top. Or the absurdity and complexity of art and value, in all its forms as a medium and business.

“We’ve done a lot of work that is playing with the ideas of destroying something to create something and especially in art because objects are so sacrosanct, like, you never want to touch them,” said Wiesner.

When it comes to the Warhol or Picasso, “the degree to which anyone should now think ‘Oh, I have the real one of this drawing’ has been essentially destroyed,” he continued.

“It’s destroyed by multiplication,” added Bentel.