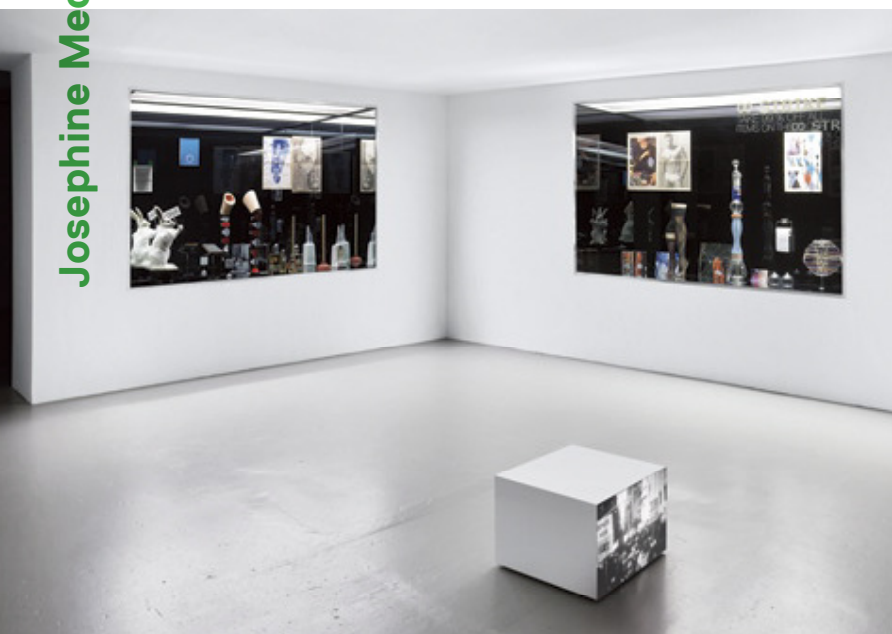


Josephine Meckseper is known internationally for her sculptures and mixed-media installations, photographs and videos exploring the glamour of consumer fashion and advertising from a radical point of view located inside the world that she is displaying. Both art history and the very galleries in which she exhibits have been subjected to the same straight-faced treatment. In the ironically titled *The Complete History of Postcontemporary Art* (2005) objects displayed at incestuous proximity (toilet cleaners and perfume, fashion ads alongside a plunger) are reflected in Meckseper's signature mirrored showcases. At once standing to attention (like Jeff Koons' vacuum cleaners) and reversing themselves (reflected in the mirror the 'OUI' sign for the European referendum turns into a 'NON'), they keep alluding to the magic of the commodity brilliantly described in Karl Marx's *Das Capital*. In Meckseper's installations, objects stand for exchangeable human relations, but simultaneously they take on the attributes of fetishes (the furry rabbit and mannequin legs are classics). Similarly, conflicting ideologies and opposing political parties are reduced to empty tags and merely consumed as ideas.



01



02

Occasionally the exhibition space itself is turned into a boutique in order to emphasize the continuum of art and commerce. In her mirrored shelves and chromed glass shop-windows, Meckseper subtly (or blatantly) introduces disruptive elements that upset the seductive display surfaces. Her *Talk to Cindy* (2005), for example, not only mirrors consumerist culture with a vengeance, but multiplies the same images ad infinitum. Instead of criticizing the consumer society, Meckseper keeps upping the ante on the principle of equivalence that regulates the capitalist system, sending it spinning into a kind of giddy delirium. In an art world which uses critique as some kind of disclaimer, Meckseper is the first contemporary artist to dare break what could be considered the ultimate taboo: not sex, but politics. Presenting imagery of protest culture and revolutionary myths side by side with art installations, she exposes consumerist and counter-cultural discourses as if they belonged together. In the process, she bewildered many well-meaning social critics, such as Okwui Enwezor and Christian Höller, who were otherwise ready to welcome her into the fold.

As early as 1968, in his *System of Objects*, Jean Baudrillard boldly anticipated that, in a consumer society, critique would become complementary and complicit to what it opposes: 'The revolutionary imperative is alive, but unable to realize itself in practice; it is consumed in the idea of Revolution. [...] All ideas, even the most contradictory, can coexist as signs within the idealist logic of consumption.' Like Emil Cioran or Jean Baudrillard, Meckseper doesn't project any ideological critique or advocate any cause but, taking its signs at face value, perversely allows the consumer system to hang itself.

Stylishly redolent of Constructivism and Minimalism, Meckseper's work sits uneasily between the cool irony of Andy Warhol and the interpolative slogans of Barbara Kruger. Her detachment may only be apparent, but what counts is the strategy she uses to register the ambivalent nature of contemporary reality. Instead of dismissing it, her strategy is to strip it bare in order to perform some kind of archaeology of the present. *Quelle International* (2008), a group of pictures reproduced on reflective Mylar culling fashion photographs from a mail-order catalogue popular in Germany in the 1970s, may go even further to suggest that showing contemporary reality for what it is would be enough. Time itself will eventually provide the necessary critical distance, turning her own work into an unsettling document. [Sylvère Lotringer]

03 *Shelf No. 31*, 2005
Shelf with mixed media
59 × 152 × 35 cm

04 *Untitled (End Democracy)*, 2005
Inkjet print, Plexiglas,
plastic mannequin torso, metal
stand, mirror on wood
144 × 121 × 121 cm

01, 02 *The Complete History of
Postcontemporary Art*, 2005
Mixed media in display window
160 × 250 × 60 cm

05 *USA*, 2007
Mixed-media sculpture
on Plexiglas cube
74 × 21 × 21 cm



03

195

Josephine Meckseper

04



05



06 *Ten High*, 2008
 Plexiglas platform, 3 mannequins,
 collapsible walker, cane, bottle of
 whiskey, Bible, ashtray with cigarettes,
 broken mirror on wooden panel,
 poster mounted to aluminium, mixed media
 on canvas, aluminium sign, T-Shirt,
 tie, fake vomit on Plexiglas
 350 × 350 × 350 cm



