

His everyday life looks well organised: there's a large black car in front of the house. The house itself is white but otherwise unremarkable. The furniture inside is arranged in a conventional way: lounge suite, dining corner, office, kitchen—yet Meuser, the man without a forename, doesn't seem to know his way around. Making tea becomes a game of hide and seek, although he always knows where the cigarettes are.

Meuser points to a lamp and says: "This is a lamp, I know this and I would do well not to continually doubt this reality. But it's enough to make you go crazy. Normal people don't do that, they have a natural system of perception, and so it never happens. However, where I'm concerned there's a kind of augmented perception at work in an additional space. I prefer to be surrounded by standardised things in everyday life." He laughs and quickly rotates his lighter with both hands.

Meuser finds the things that arrest his immediate interest—the things that seem so much more real than the precise world of given, normed forms would suggest—at the scrap yard. He pays the "stuff"—as he so casually and lovingly calls it—a visit in the very place where conventions of use and functionality have ceased to be relevant, initiating a conversation duly conducted via a series of activities, such as searching, bending down, touching, picking up, inspecting and discarding once more. Occasionally he will cut something off or add something somewhere else, but mostly the things remain just as they are: iron fragments, steel girders, sheet metal, pipes.

As is his wont, Meuser speaks objectively and soberly, almost disdainfully about the advantages of the material: "I started to work with scrap because I wanted to speed up the working process. If I go to an ironmonger I can never get the right weight, size and thickness that I want. The scrap yard is much quicker by comparison, even if you end up going there seven times and coming back empty-handed."

Searching and finding beyond the scope fixed contexts and normed patterns of use, beyond conceptualities and classifications, has the effect of handing things back to the sphere of perception, opening them up thus to new possibilities—a method, which Meuser calls "eclectic" without the slightest trepidation. His semantic recontextualisations arise in a seemingly playful manner within a sculptural process. In this way things can come into being by simply turning a piece of metal around, giving rise to *Afrika verkehrtrum* (Africa the wrong way around) with an immediately verifiable form, which only seems to permit this title and no other, or *Denkmal für den 24. November* (Monument for 24th November), which is instantly understood by all to be the antithesis of Christmas.

However, as Meuser points out, his found objects are never ready-mades: "The ready-made has at some point been industrially manufactured as a finished entity; I never use objects that have another function. I would never use a fridge, it would be too real. I am only interested in formal language inasmuch as I can translate it into something else. When I discover forms that I am not familiar with but which have something specific quality peculiar to them, then I'm interested. These forms would never have crossed my mind if I'd had to think them up myself. There's always something completely different within an object that someone else has thought up."





On occasions—such as in *Ohne Titel* (Untitled) or the untitled steel construction exhibited at the 1992 *documenta*—nothing much else has taken place other than the painting of the fragment. And yet the entity that “someone else has thought up” has been transformed in its essence.

The fragmented, “the warped and the wonky” interest him more than the finished, homogenous item. Meuser subjects his foundlings and chance acquaintances to poetic transmutation: “I come up with an association, which is in itself completely volatile. I am bored when I encounter a finished picture”, he comments.

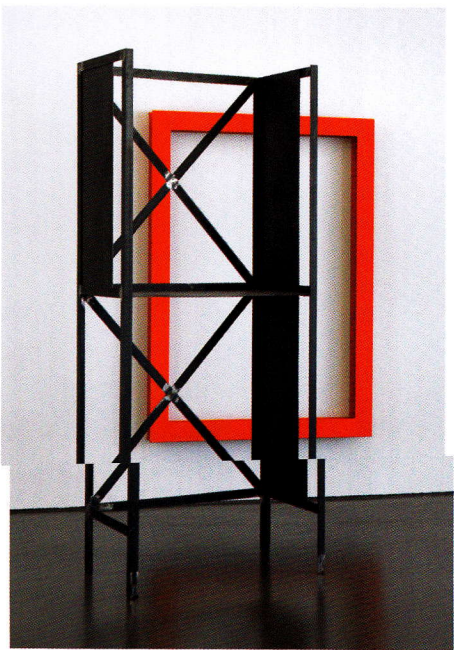
And thus the entity suspended in the interstitial realm between old and new, familiar and alien, balanced between sober composition and ironic refraction, suddenly becomes substantially light—and open for its artistic re-investiture. It is Meuser’s talent as a searcher to be able to occupy this zone between the everyday world and art in such a precise way, either by conjoining things or separating them, by welding things together or by altering their colour.

Everything is possible in this interstitial vacuum. It often seems as though the things come together for a fleeting moment as in *Stilleben* (Still Life); as if they could go their separate ways again at the drop of a hat, a brief flirtation between a tattered black and white ground and a red fork resting on a small ledge—as though someone had just put it there for a short while. Meuser adds his pictorial “recontextualisations” (as he calls them) with a light hand, nevertheless encountering the gravity of the metal protagonists with all due respect. This is where his orchestration is located, the player and the clown, a punctilious observer and narrator, his voices: light-dark, large-small, plane and structure, coloured surface and rusty ground.

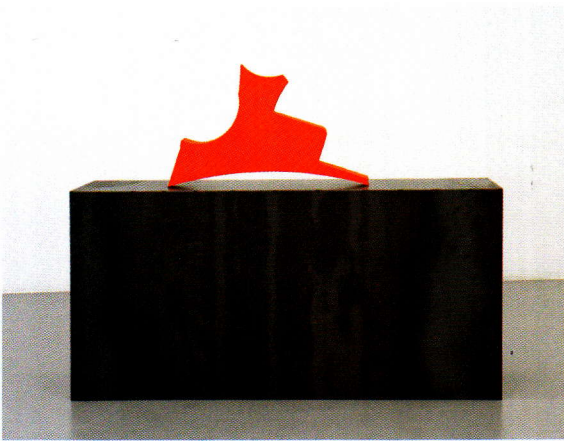
The very materiality of the paint is unequivocally autonomous: “The sensory nature of the paint plays a central role”, explains Meuser. “I choose it according to professional principles, apply the correct rustproof paint or red lead, which I use at my discretion. There are moments however where I use a classical grey for an express purpose as it is used in industrial contexts. I am more interested in the colours, which engender liminal, interstitial senses.” Implicit here are diverse references to his engagement with abstract painting.

Meuser says: “I play with things that don’t exist as such.” These things give rise to compositional arrangements, such as *Stilleben mit Apfel* (Still Life with Apple). They provide iconic pointed reference, Dadaist displacements and wordplays, as in *AEG (Aufhängen, Einschalten, Geht nicht)*<sup>1</sup>. “I give short shrift to anybody perpetually on the lookout for content”, says he.

Meuser entitles the things we like to look at and imbues them with irony at the same time. The titles of his works open up an unforeseeable field of possible meanings, which are as much fun to him as they are to the people looking at them. The game of attribution serves to wrong-foot each and every expectation we may have: “I mix and match forms—be they conceptual, historical, literary and the ironic. I point to an inherent literalness without necessarily referring to reality”, says Meuser. Works such as *Siegespodest* (Victory Rostrum) or *Kraftkästchen* (Power Pack) are the proud vehicles of a persuasive and at the same time absurd literality. Contempt counters pathos, but utilises irony, which is in turn always aware of the flight from an all too weighty burden of meaning.



Meuser, AEG (*Aufhängen, Einschalten, Geht nicht*); *Angefangenes Kellerregal*, 2006 (siehe S./see pp. 146/147)



Meuser, *Attraktiv und Preiswert*, 2006 (siehe S./see p. 145)

"I avoid concrete referentiality of language, thinking and function", explains Meuser "only occasionally do I permit a little directness when something that amuses me comes from it, but I am always unsure whether it is not too flowery. Sometimes I don't even fancy having a title." The medium is always language itself. Sometimes his language is very concrete, as in the case of *Attraktiv und Preiswert* (Attractive and Reasonably Priced)—as a homage to Hans Arp, at the same time corresponding to the banal supermarket slogan, ultimately applicable to the artwork itself. Very much in the vein of: "One has to be wary of homages. You don't just want to sidle up to somebody in that way."

And yet concealed behind the flippant gestures and the linguistic onslaughts is an intensive engagement with the object and the visualisation of the interstices between sculpture and image—effortless desultoriness as it would seem, though never to be confused with randomness.

Indefatigable trial and rejection as well as occasional restlessness and failure are his trusty everyday companions. Sobriety and intuition help the inventive form-finder Meuser when at work. They earth him in the same way as the burden of his found objects, even when everything that he conjoins seems so light, as if it were not bearing the weight of (art) history, meaning and function.

1 An ironic reworking of the meaning behind the AEG corporation's initials, which translates as "Hang up, Switch on, Doesn't work". Translator's note.