

# Michael Sailstorfer

Written by Katrina Kufer

Michael Sailstorfer (b. 1979, Germany) is the kind of artist that might make environmentalists angry and disaster fetishists feel loved. Depending on where within his diverse body of work you stand (from collage to near-monumental installation), Sailstorfer could be considered either the enfant-terrible or the new voice of a long-line of German contemporary art. Or both. Because that is what Sailstorfer's art does: it plays with your perceptions.

Sailstorfer builds off of a contemporary German aesthetic, displaying his art historical knowledge, whimsical mischief, and restraint in his aptitude for tying contrasting elements together with a hit of visual poetry. His works are as terrifying as Richard Serra's perilously balanced steel slabs and as urban as Reinhard Mucha's use of industrial materials, with a dose of Joseph Beuys' ability to decontextualize the mundane into the symbolic. Or maybe not. This is just following an academic line of German aesthetics, an outsider's eye looking in. Sailstorfer won't necessarily pinpoint his inspirations (aside from Serra), but they can be seen: his Bavarian countryside upbringing in his choice of outdoor exhibition, his father's minimalist limestone, marble and granite sculptural creations in Sailstorfer's omission of. Yet even then, his inspirations are secondary because with Sailstorfer, you don't just see the art, you feel it.

Felt art is old news. Sailstorfer's art takes that extra step: it smacks you in the face... gently. His manipulation of juxtaposition plays with you as much as he plays with his materials. Sailstorfer begins by deconstructing the familiar: separating tires from cars (*Time is not a motorway*, 2005) and floating them delicately in the air as they turn against a wall, creating a literal mess, and distinct sound and odor as the burning rubber spins in vain, an allusion to making "donuts" in parking lot misbehaviour; or turning his yellow Mercedes into a street-lamp catapult (*Shooting Star*, 2002), a cumbrously sweet ode to a new girlfriend for whom he wished to capture a shooting star. The redistributed context he gives to objects stems from his desire to understand the forms, the materiality, their limitations... and then obliterate them. Sometimes literally, sometimes figuratively, by placing things in the air that should come crashing down on you (*Clouds*, 2010), or sometimes, really do (*Rocket Tree*, 2008). The charm of the simplicity of his works oscillates between the beauty of the forms and palette, and the realization that the materials display physical qualities they should not possess, simultaneously absurd and threatening. However, perhaps the best way to epitomize the "Sailstorfer-ness" of Sailstorfer, is to consider his Pulheim Grant.

Upon receiving a 10,000€ grant, he exchanged it for the equivalent in gold coins and bars and buried them in a field in Pulheim, Germany in August 2009. Whether encouraging "relational art", stirring up cultural interest, or just instigating a frenzy... Sailstorfer then invited the public to go and "dig for gold." Just a little troublesome fun.

But, just when you think you've figured it out, an artist masterfully playing with the perceptions of physics, the boundaries of materials, emotional polarity by inciting a dichotomy of fear and delight... Sailstorfer reminds you, that story, of how he created *Shooting Star* for a girlfriend? Just a story. And you bought it.

Oh, Michael Sailstorfer, you naughty boy, you.



Artwork credits

Left:  
*Zeit ist keine Autobahn Friedrichshafen*  
Tyre, iron, electric motor  
95 x 65 x 80cm  
Unique, 2010, by Michael  
Sailstorfer - photo courtesy of  
Paul Silberberg and Carbon 12

Right: *Raketenbaum 1\_2*(filmstill)  
C-print on dibond  
200 x 150 cm  
Edition of 3 + 1 - 2008, by Michael  
Sailstorfer - photo courtesy of  
Achim Kukulies and Carbon 12





Michael Sailstorfer will be having his first exhibition in the Middle East at Dubai's Carbon 12 gallery.

Want to see what Sailstorfer has gotten up to this time?

Visit Carbon 12 from the 18 November 2013 – 7 January 2014.