

## Summary of artistic career

My name is Luis Maly. I was born in Wiltz (Luxembourg) and raised in Athens (Greece), I have a Spanish first name and a Czech last name. As I spent most of my life in Greece and Greek is my mother tongue I identify myself as Greek. Some years ago I had to give away my Greek citizenship as I would otherwise be forced to subscribe to the compulsory military service. As a socially committed artist, I aim at revealing contemporary societal paradoxes and inequalities by means of installation, photography, sculpture and video. Within my work, global, political, and social topics get mixed with my personal experiences.

Upon finishing high school I went to Groningen to study Psychology at RUG university. Though after 2.5 years I realized that my interest to art, which at the time was only a hobby, was what I want to occupy my professional life with. I switched studies, and went to the Royal Academy of Arts The Hague where I studied sculpture in the Fine Art department. In 2016, the summer before my graduation year, for 24h I was falsely diagnosed with a deadly disease. Due to this event, my artistic practice started evolving around the death and decomposition. From that point on, for the next two years, I created artwork exploring the uncertainty of life and the inevitability of my own death. In 2017, I graduated (cum laude) with the architectural installation *Thanatophobia* (=fear of death) which won the Royal Academy of Arts Fine Arts Award and received attention from the magazines Metropolis M, Mister Motley as well as the local newspaper Den Haag Centraal. In 2018 I was invited by Benno Tempels, director of Kunst museum, to participate in the exhibition Now Or Never #4 hosted in Gem Museum for contemporary Art. For this exhibition, I created the monumental installation *The Last Residency*.

At the same period I was interested in other presentation forms other than the “traditional” white cube, therefore I initiated a collaboration with the cultural center Cooperations in Luxembourg. Cooperations gave me the opportunity to co-curate and direct for two years the annual light festival Nuit de Lampions which was visited by about 20.000 people. Due to the success of Nuit Des Lampions I was approached by the development team of the future Children Museum Wiltz in order to create a public sculpture, which was presented during the Ginzefest parade 2019. These projects were particularly intriguing for me, as public

space was directly involved and there were very different interactions compared to an gallery or museum exhibition.

As mentioned above, some years ago(2018), I had to give up my Greek passport in order to avoid going to the military. I declare myself a pacifist and object to being trained in terminating other people's lives. At this moment I hold an Austrian passport, though I barely speak the language. At times, not knowing German, makes my life difficult with authorities; this makes me wonder: if I, a white European with an EU passport is encountering problems how does an immigrant of color with no EU passport manage to get along in this prejudice system we leave in. All the above inspired me to work with the notions of national and cultural identity and physical and psychological violence. Within this theme I created the trilogy, *Entschuldigung, Ich Spreche nicht so Viel Deutsch* which was showcased at the Goethe Institute.

In 2021, I was honored by receiving the Stipendium for young talent from Mondriaan Fonds. This grant enabled me to initiate the project *Kids with Guns*. Refusing military service led to the focus, of my back then artistic research, on the representation and usage of weapons in the Netherlands. For this project, I did extensive research on war zones where children participate in combat. I talked with specialists on the field such as N. Panagis (associate legal officer at the International Court of Justice in The Hague), K. Balci (former member of the Dutch Special Forces and currently security of Eindhoven military airport) and D. Skali (professor children psychology at Athens Medical University). This research was materialized in a series of photos where children, of European background, hold replicas of toy guns casted in aluminium.

The focus of my artistic practice shifted again in the summer of 2021. While being on vacation in Greece, I had to flee my campsite in the middle of the night as wild fires were burning at close proximity. This night driving next to massive wildfires was a truly apocalyptic experience. It made me philosophize and shift my focus on the topic of our planet's destruction. How can it be that technology is exponentially advancing and at the same time the global divide between rich and poor increases and global warming is becoming worse each year? By trying to answer these questions I created two installations at my solo show *Fast Lane*, one

representing the suffocating effects of fires, and the other showing the rapid growth of technology. The show was awarded the Haagse Media Award in the category Media Art. Furthermore, the local newspaper ,Den Haag Centraal reviewed the exhibition in very positive light. Due the success of this exhibition, I was approached and eventually signed by Barbara Seiler Gallery, based in Zurich. Barbara Seiler exhibited a new version of Fast Lane at Art Rotterdam, which was acquired by the Heden Collection.

Since the beginning of my practice, material choice has played a big role in my work. It is not only the physical properties of the material, which matter, but also its conceptual connotations. For example, for my object based series *Entschuldigung, ich spreche nicht so viel Deutsch* include a defunctionalized everyday object, casted in metal or plastic, my Austrian passport. These cast objects serve as representations to initiate a discussion on how the state and society deal with the notion of identity. Their monumentalization through a material transformation aims at revealing the opposite: interpretations of identity as something that is always in the process of becoming and never static, something that is intrinsically in flux. The material characteristics of metal play a key role in this work. On one hand metal represents the social illusion that identity is well-defined and fixed. But on the other hand, and metaphorically speaking, the casting process stands for the possibility of future identity transformations. The same material can be melted and recast into various forms over one lifetime.