

Tobias Kaspar

(Viele, die eine Ahnung haben von ihren Möglichkeiten und Bedürfnissen und dennoch das herrschende System in ihrem Kopf akzeptieren durch ihre Taten und es somit festigen und durchaus bestätigen.)

(Many who have a notion of their potential and needs, and who nevertheless in their heads accept the ruling system and thereby consolidate and downright confirm it.)

September 13th – November 9th, 2013

Tobias Kaspar's solo exhibition at Midway Contemporary Art features a new body of work developed in close concert with Midway and the immediate neighborhood surrounding the gallery. The exhibition is comprised of two installations: one that has at its core a limited edition denim jean line by the artist and another that presents a series of formally composed silk-screens on lacquered wood panels encased in acrylic protective boxes. Throughout the entire exhibition run currents attentive to the meaning of art production in a society that is producing and consuming in ever more sophisticated cycles.

On the night of September 8th, Kaspar choreographed an event at Midway. Models (friends and board members of Midway) wearing *Holiday*, his new jean line, were photographed individually in a formulaic fashion inside the gallery: headshot, frontal body shot, profile body shot, crotch shot, and cuff shot. At dusk, the entire group migrated across the street in front of the Holiday gas station adjacent to Midway for a series of casual group shots. As a performance the activities created a texture of marketing, branding, luxury, and spectacle with a certain generosity of spirit.

Traces from that night are on display, along with changing rooms at the entrance to the gallery, serving both as an announcement for the exhibition and an installation. Within the gallery itself, a series of modernist silk-screen panels, a jib-door, and an arrangement including a boxwood hedge, an acrylic sculpture, and a pedestal misting humid air form a constellation. Similar to the jeans, these works have a pleasant formality to them. Good manners perhaps, although broken mimicry.

Ostensibly adopting a modernist vein, the origin of the abstract panels is much less pure. They are appropriated by the artist from the pages of the contemporary lifestyle magazine *The Gentlewoman*. Inside this highly designed publication, these patterns introduce the various "chapters" of the spring/summer 2013 issue - strangely embedding both the structure of a novel and modernist visual aesthetics within a magazine format. Kaspar's parroting of this watered-down aesthetics forms a delicate critique, with titles such as *Stripped Bare – Chapter I (Modernism, Modern Manners and Nice Things)* co-opting the unsettling breezy nature of the magazine (the issue from which these patterns are drawn from is itself titled 'abstract naiveties'). It is this slippage within the production, reproduction circulation, and consumption production cycle found in advertising and fashion that Kaspar is more than willing to embrace in his practice.

While institutional critique typically relies on distance, Kaspar's relative close proximity to his subject matter creates a delicate conceptual position.

For the past four years, Kaspar has also co-published *PROVENCE*, a magazine that is self-described as devoted to hobbies (on view in Midway's library). Indebted to Stéphane Mallarmé's 19th century journal *La Dernière Mode*, essentially a satirical fashion magazine produced by the poet from outside of Paris, *PROVENCE* relies on the mechanisms of aspirational publishing to highlight the rapidly accelerating cycle of distribution and reception of goods and thought. This network of personal information, gossip, desirability, and distance and foregrounding of taste and tastemakers converge in a system that turns the apparatus of the magazine genre in on itself.

While the exhibition remains untitled, Kaspar provides a hefty alternative title: *Many who have a notion of their potential and needs, and who nevertheless in their heads accept the ruling system and thereby consolidate and downright confirm it*. The title is taken from the Rainer Fassbinder film based on Theodor Fontane's novel *Effie Briest*. Often considered alongside *Madame Bovary* and *Anna Karenina*, the protagonists in these three novels are all products of their social settings – located at provincial margins, whereby information is mediated by the transmission and translation of the latest in culture from major cultural centers.

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Later in run of the exhibition, Midway will host a screening of Rainer Werner Fassbinder's *Effie Briest* (1974), *Anna Karenina* (2012), and Claude Chabrol's *Madame Bovary* (1991). Date and times TBA.

Tobias Kaspar's *Holiday* jeans (edition size of 100) are available for \$250 at the gallery, online and at select stores. Please contact Midway for more information.

In addition to the performance, exhibition, and screening, a fourth component of the project will be a forthcoming publication based on the 1996 publication by Frankfurt's Insel publisher of *Frauenleben. Effie Briest / Madame Bovary / Anna Karenina* that brought together these three novels in a slip-cased edition.

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Tobias Kaspar (b. Basel, Switzerland) has had recent solo exhibitions at Galerie Peter Kilchmann, Zurich; Halle Für Kunst, Lüneburg; Alex Zachary, New York; and Silberkuppe, Berlin. He has participated in group exhibitions such as *Frozen Lakes* at Artist Space, New York; *How to Work (More for) Less* at Kunsthalle Basel; *Strange Interlude* at Palais de Tokyo, Paris; *Techniques and Aesthetics of Appropriation* at Kunshaus Bregenz; *Freaks and Geeks* at Galerie Air de Paris; and *Bloodflames III* at Alex Zachary in New York.

His editorial projects and editions include "Lumpy Blue Sweater," Artists Space, New York; 2012TK1JEANS edition, Little and Large Editions/Andreas Murkudis Store Berlin; *The Provence Cityguide*, publication with Hannes Lochinger, Paraguay Press; *PROVENCE*, Editorial project with Hannes Lochinger, Nice and *Bodies in the Backdrop*, Verlag Walter König, Cologne.

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