

TOBIAS KASPAR
Personal Shopper

or

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.¹

February 2 - March 26, 2022

Reception in the presence of Tobias Kaspar: Saturday, February 5, 2 - 5 pm

Galerie Peter Kilchmann is pleased to present *Personal Shopper*, the fifth solo exhibition by Tobias Kaspar (*1984; lives and works in Riga and Zurich) at the gallery in the Zahnradstrasse. The exhibition shows works from the new series *Personal Shopper* as well as the installation *The Cherry Orchard*.

Personal Shopper

A personal shopper is someone who shops for others for a living. And that is precisely what Tobias Kaspar's works are repeatedly about - our consumer behavior: what are we prepared to spend or even give up something for? And what are the consequences of our actions?

High-end luxury fashion online retail platforms

Like many of us, Tobias Kaspar has increasingly moved his shopping to the online realm and since, as Kaspar's last year's project and exhibition *Rented Life* at the MAMCO Musée d'art moderne et contemporain in Geneva showed, art and life are closely intertwined; so it is only logical that the new series *Personal Shopper* explores the various "high-end luxury fashion online retail platforms". How are clothes presented and sold online, what kind of language is used? What kind of models are visible? How is the selecting and structuring done? Which images are meant to seduce us, encourage us to buy, and at the same time suggest a closeness so that we recognise ourselves in the photographs?

Changing Cabin

The motifs that Tobias Kaspar adopts replace, to a certain extent, the mirror of a physical changing cabin and are meant to convince the viewer to take the last step and click on the BUY button. In the process, most models still conform to an allegedly prevailing beauty norm and only partially fulfil the claim of diversity or body positivity.

Textile production as artist's studio

For the *Personal Shopper* series, Kaspar collaborated with a textile printing company in eastern Switzerland known for its haute couture fabrics. After the series *Reflector Paintings* (2015-2018) and the *Japan Collection* (2018-2020), this is the third and for now last series in which Tobias Kaspar uses fashion production sites as a place for art production.

Shopping List

The starting point for the new works, are screenshots of various online fashion stores such as *Farfetch*, *Moda Operandi*, *My Theresa* or *MR PORTER*.

Screenshots vs Silkscreen

The low-resolution screenshots were enlarged and printed on canvas, and then, in a further step, screen-printed and painted by hand. For the silkscreen motifs, it was drawn on the manufacturer's existing textile pattern archive and tied in with their running production, as well as newly experimented.

From the artist's studio to the runway and back again into the gallery

In the work *The Balenciaga Revenge (Artist Pants)*, the fashion trend of the so-called "studio pants", with authentic colour splashes, is cited, which has now found its way from the catwalk into the exhibition space.

¹ This quote is the alternative title of Rainer Werner Fassbinder's 1974 film "Effi Briest", which Tobias Kaspar used once before in 2013, for his institutional US debut at Midway Contemporary Art in Minneapolis.

As you already know, your cherry orchard is to be sold to pay your debts, and the sale is fixed for August 22.²

The Cherry Orchard

The installation is based on Chekhov's eponymous play from 1903 and retells it in an imaginary scene. The original play, which centers on the country estate and its beautiful cherry orchard of the impoverished landowner Ranevskaya and her grown-up children, paints a socially critical portrait of the Russian aristocracy at the beginning of the 20th century. Society is undergoing changes. To pay off the family's debts, the cherry orchard has to be auctioned off.

Apocalypse

In a quiet reference to Martin Kippenberger's installation *The Happy End of Franz Kafka's Amerika* (1994), Tobias Kaspar's imaginary scene picks up where Chekhov's original play ends: after a failed building project, the estate and garden are left neglected. Apocalypse. The windows of the unfinished holiday bungalows are left open, a curtain is blowing back and forth. Almost as a counterpoint to the brightly coloured patterns and aesthetically appealing motifs from the online shopping world, an accumulation of scattered scraps of take-away food and their reproduction in bronze can be found on the floor. Despite the Cyrillic lettering, the partially crumpled cardboard boxes and beverage cups are associated with fast food products such as pizza, burgers and the like through globally familiar shapes and logos. The last blossoms of the deforested cherry orchard are scattered between and over the waste products. Like a mantra, a voice³ from the installation can be heard reading text elements from the play, which address the sale of the estate and the cherry orchard.

À rebours (Backwards)

The use of theatre, film sets and props is nothing new: in 2016, Tobias Kaspar staged *The Street* - a 24h happening in the film set ruins of Scorsese's *Gangs of New York* at the Cinecittà Film Studios in Rome. In 2018, he took over the set design of *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* from an amateur theatre for his survey exhibition *Independence* at the Kunsthalle Bern, and the *Bonnie and Clyde* car shot to pieces, also from an amateur theatre, served as the main piece for his *Why Love Hurts* exhibition in Berlin in 2019.

La Vie d'artiste (The Life of the artist)

Tobias Kaspar's works have been exhibited internationally since 2007. Currently, works from the *Personal Shopper* series are on display at the Astrup Fearnley Museet in Oslo. In mid-2022, the MAMCO Musée d'art moderne et contemporain in Geneva will show the second part of Tobias Kaspar's double exhibition and in autumn 2022, Tobias Kaspar's first institutional exhibition in Korea will open at the Foundery, Seoul. Further solo exhibitions (selection): Kim? Contemporary Art Center, Riga (2019); Kunsthalle Bern (2018); Cinecittà Studios, Istituto Svizzero di Roma, Rome (2015); Kunsthalle São Paulo (2014); Kunst Halle St. Gallen (2014); Midway Contemporary Art, Minneapolis (2013); Halle für Kunst Lüneburg (2012). Group exhibitions (selection): Kunsthaus Glarus (2020); Fondazione MAST, Bologna (2020); Kunsthaus Zürich (2018); Museum of Modern Art, Warsaw (2016); Wattis Institute for Contemporary Art, San Francisco (2015); CAFAM Biennale, Beijing (2014); Palais de Tokyo, Paris (2012); Kunsthalle Zürich (2011); Hamburger Bahnhof, Berlin (2011); Kunsthaus Bregenz (2011). Tobias Kaspar is editor of the publication and magazine series PROVENCE and part of the collectively run label of the same name.

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² Quote from *The Cherry Orchard*, Anton Pavlovich Chekhov, 1904

³ Thanks to Olamiju Fajemisin