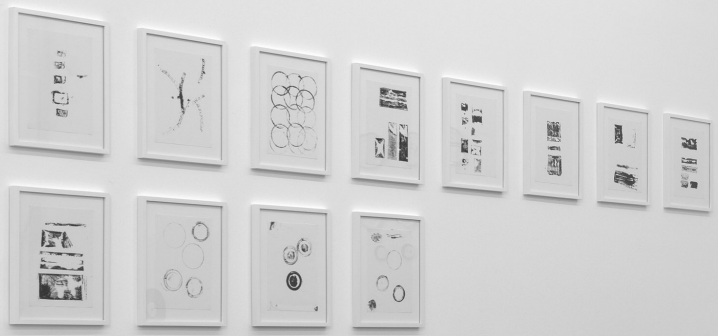


Personal Branding

Julien Fronsacq

In the Spring of 2020, the beginning of the pandemic reflected that some of the world had the means to self-isolate, Tobias Kaspar—confronted by the closure of galleries, fairs, museums and art centers—overcame his economic difficulties and the absence of projects by offering *Rented Life*. Before renting out his life, Tobias Kaspar had already risen to prominence thanks to his eclectic propositions, the founding of the magazine PROVENCE and of a brand of jeans named Tobias Kaspar. When questioning the artist, who generally refuses any form of labeling, what is strikingly noticeable is the breadth of his references ranging from John Knight to Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster. Might we deduce that Tobias Kaspar is extending a postmodern tropism which would consist in questioning the collusion between art and cultural industries?

The context of the arrival of his magazine is enlightening: in 2009, the launch which took place at Art Basel was accompanied by a presentation of ephemera—advertisements taken from magazines—from the collector and agent Ghislain Mollet-Viéville and works by John Knight: 11 issues of the magazine Interiors (1982–83) which resulted from a project entitled Journal Series which began in 1977. Mollet-Viéville, a collector of minimal and conceptual art, is known for having turned his private apartment into a space combining presentation and production. He was one of the first, for example, to have opened up conceptual art by mingling advertising, photoshoots, or the Discussions of Ian Wilson. While Knight's Journal Series was presented in exhibitions (Art Institute, Chicago, 1982), it transcended the context because it alluded to magazines that can be found in kiosks and which are devoted to leisure activities and a more pleasant everyday life. As Anne Rorimer has pointed out, this work in magazines which “represent the dominant set of values promulgated by the mass media and supported by the vast majority [...] depends on the recipient selected by Knight,” according to a play of contrasts between the editorial content and what the recipient represents socio-culturally (John Knight, *The Renaissance Society at the University of Chicago*, 1983). After the founding of PROVENCE, the initiators thus positioned themselves as critics of socio-cultural mechanisms and investigators of the means of distribution.









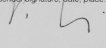







In 2012, Tobias Kaspar conceived an installation at the Halle für Kunst in Lüneburg. The exhibition title, *Bodies in the Backdrop*, alludes to the uses of the human body within the project—in particular a fashion photo shoot—by the artist Philippe Cazal, produced in Mollet-Viéville’s apartment. The exhibition consisted of a series of photos of visitors to the Guggenheim Foundation in Venice associated with quotations from Peggy Guggenheim, taken from her autobiography *Out of this Century, Confessions of an Art Addict* (1946). With its impeccable presentation, its red carpet dividing the architecture and the composition into a close-up of the photos, Tobias Kaspar played on and with the tacit theatricality of the exhibition and of the art world in general. More recently, for the Kunsthalle Bern in 2018, the artist juxtaposed two corpora, including embroideries representing Europe at the turn of the 20th century destined for the Japanese market and blown up to life size. As stereotypes, their disturbed historicity contrasts with stuffed toys worthy of a souvenir shop and laid out in compact numbers, mocking the visitors to the institution.

Today, like yesterday, artists question the relationship between art and the market economy. Yves Klein published a cheque as a “handover of a volume of transferable, immaterial sensitivity” (1959). With the conceptual art of the late 1960s—a movement during which an artwork might or might not be made, by the artist or else delegated—a work relied on contractual modalities. Seth Siegelaub, the art dealer, exhibition curator and publisher, proposed in 1971 the contract “The Artist’s Reserved Rights Transfer and Sale Agreement” elaborated with the lawyer Robert Projansky. This document aimed at remedying the inequalities between the market and resale rights. Since then, artists have diversified their socio-economic statuses, as well as the means of production and transaction. Daniel Buren introduced a resale right, allowing him to benefit from some of the profits of subsequent sales transactions.

Michael Asher set the amount of his fees according to the median of the salary scales of the institution that had invited him. In Switzerland, in 2020, the art world witnessed crises and claims. In April of the same year, the proprietary company of Art Basel announced swingeing layoffs while a Swiss investigation “into the conditions of artists’ work” deplored their precarity. In the summer of 2021, Tobias Kaspar occupied the Apartment of the MAMCO (Geneva), permanent rooms focused on conceptual

TOBIAS KASPAR		RENTED LIFE	2020 / 21
			
Lot 16	Estate Gartenstrasse 11, CH-8050 Zurich	225.00 CHF	Lost-wax cast bronze sculptures
		<p>Twelve-piece installation comprising a whole apple, half apple, and an apple slice—all casted in bronze, accompanied by nine real apples. All apples harvested from the artist's estate in Latvia.</p>	

TOBIAS KASPAR		RENTED LIFE	2020 / 21	SUBSCRIPTION AGREEMENT
Lot 16	Estate Gartenstrasse 11, CH-8050 Zurich	225.00 CHF	Lost-wax cast bronze sculptures	
<p>The artist herewith agrees to fulfill all subscription agreements between the artist and subscriber.</p> <p>Artworks will be shipped to billing addresses on a monthly basis for twelve months, this does not apply to artworks intended for completion over a twelve month period.</p> <p>Production and transport costs are included in subscription fee.</p>		<p>The subscriber herewith agrees to bank transfer the Lot fee in EUR to the account details listed in this agreement on a monthly basis for the duration of the twelve-month subscription.</p> <p>The subscriber agrees to provide the artist high resolution photo documentation of the finished work, and to temporarily loan the work for any future exhibitions related to Rented Life.</p> <p>Please mention in the transaction reference line following info: Rented Life Lot (nr)</p>		
<p>Bank account: Registered to: Tobias Kaspar Address: Genossenschaftsstr. 11, CH-8050 Zurich Bank: Postfinance Suisse Bank address: Nordring 8, CH-3000 Bern Account currency: Eur BIC: POFIGH33XXX IBAN: CH25 0900 0000 1550 8087 1</p>		<p>Billing & shipping address: Peter Kichmann Zahnradstrasse 21 8005 Zurich</p>		
<p>The artist signature, date, place: Zurich, June 29th 2020</p> 		<p>Subscriber signature, date, place:  8. September 2020</p>		

TOBIAS KASPAR	RENTED LIFE	2020 / 21	
			
Lot 16	Estimate \$25,000 - \$35,000 \$205,000 asked (buying)	Loft-wax cast bronze sculptures	
		<p>Twelve-piece installation comprising a whole apple, half apple, and an apple slice—all casted in bronze, accompanied by nine real apples. These apples must be replaced over the course of time.</p> <p>All apples harvested from the artist's estate in Latvia.</p>	
<p>PLEASE NOTE: ALL PRINTS IN U.S. SUBMITTED UNTIL JULY 20th, 2021 AND 3PM EST. EACH LOT WILL BE ONLY PRODUCED ONCE AND IS THEREFORE UNIQUE.</p> <p>PLEASE NOTE: ALL PHOTOGRAPHS USED IN THE RENTED LIFE CATALOGUE ARE FOR REFERENCE ONLY. THEY DO NOT REPRESENT THE DESIGNED ARTWORK.</p>			
TOBIAS KASPAR	RENTED LIFE	2020 / 21	CATALOGUE
TOBIAS KASPAR	RENTED LIFE	2020 / 21	
			
Lot 9	Estimate \$100 - \$150 \$4,000 asked (buying)	12 Sticker tattoos Each c. 5 x 5 cm	
		Suite of unique sticker tattoos based on drawings by the artist.	
TOBIAS KASPAR	RENTED LIFE	2020 / 21	
			
Lot 7	Estimate \$100 - \$150 \$100,000 asked (buying)	12 prints on paper Acryl Each c. 28 x 21 cm	
		Utilizing as a stamp the packaging of different dairy products such as a milk, butter or cheese.	

and minimal art in the museum and the reconstitution of Mollet-Viéville's home. With *Rented Life*, during which Tobias Kaspar suggested hiring out his life, the Apartment became, once more, a site for production in the museum. Thanks to bookkeeping, Kaspar was reduced to having budgets for spending like a series of expenditures or a set of lots to be subscribed to. In the catalog of lots, some expenses were generic— insurance, cigarettes, apartment— while others designated specific social habits: americano, vegetable basket, Pilates, champagne. Finally, some titles misappropriate or reproduce the ideologies of marketing and art: the phone bill is entitled World, salt.ch, (Unlimited Phone Data) or else there is Music Spotify® Premium Family. As for the works, their stylistic and narrative registers are full of humor. The abstract or deduced forms, such as monochrome or the inventory, are characteristic of the reductionist procedures of the minimal and conceptual art of the 1960s. It is said about the series of monochromes that it is a renewed attempt to reproduce the color of champagne. A set of film photographs were taken with a disposable camera whose obsolescence echoes plane trips, a means of transport drastically reduced by the pandemic. The works, offered on subscription to cover the costs of a chauffeur-driven car, consist of a series of small, modeled horses whose finesse and care evoke an amateur practice.

Merchandise lies at the heart of the postmodern debate, which realizes it as a trap (Jameson/Warhol) or a phenomenon to be neutralized (Buchloh/Schwitters). All of the procedures adopted by Tobias Kaspar—subscriptions, enrollments, periodical publications, etc.—are set in the history of the modern economy. Subscriptions are linked to the idea of periodical productions; even as early as the 15th and 16th centuries, publishers of geographic maps sought out subscribers for new and updated editions that were produced after expeditions and discoveries.

In the 17th century, subscriptions provided economic security for the press. Two centuries later, this meant being able to sell photographs on credit. By cutting up his life into expense budgets and lots, Tobias Kaspar has freed himself from any postmodern division and combines a quantity of intersecting tales of emancipation and subjugation, institutional criticism, social distinction, marketing and the “commodification” of culture.



VICIBUS KUSONIA

Lot 12

APARTMENT

EUR 1610.60





Page 4–7, 12–14:
Exhibition view of
Tobias Kaspar *Rented Life*
at MAMCO in 2021
Photo: Annik Wetter

Page 9:
Framed *Rented Life* con-
tract between the artist
and the subscriber of Lot 16

Rented Life, 2020–2021
21 prints on paper
(1 signed letter, 20 original
contracts), each frame
41.5 × 53 cm

Photo: Sebastian Schaub
Courtesy: The Migros
Museum für
Gegenwartskunst

Page 10:
Rented Life subscription
catalogue
Photo: Georgs Avetisjans

Rented Life, Lot 18,
Restaurant, 2020–2021
installed at MAMCO
Geneva in 2021
Courtesy Wand Cui, Beijing

Back cover:
Rented Life, Lot 11 installed
at Julius Baer in Zurich

Rented Life, Lot 11, *Pension
Fund*, 2020 Acrylic on
canvas Artist-made
box and corresponding
newspaper clipping
Canvas: 26.7 × 34.5 cm
Photo: Véronique Hoegger
Courtesy Julius Baer Art
Collection

13 OCT. 2020

