

Tobias Kaspar

Stereotypical Artist

Exhibition 09.03. – 13.04.2024

Tobias Kaspar has long been interested, visually and perhaps also strategically, in the simplifying and formulaic power of stereotypes.

The central teddy bear motif on view here was last seen in Tobias Kaspar's work at his 2019 exhibition *Independence* at Kunsthalle Bern, where the red-and-blue plushie harlequins that flooded the exhibition space were a multiple also available as a singular, in the form of an edition.

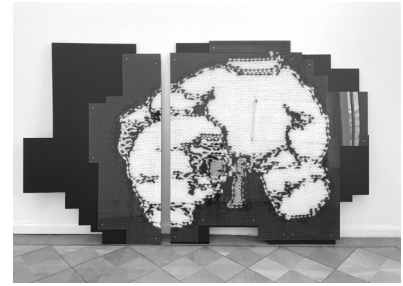
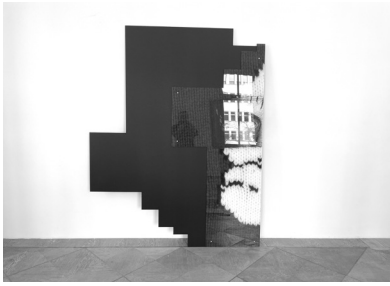
The teddy bear appears once again in his exhibition *Stereotypical Artist*, this time as the motif on a sweater. While Kaspar has designed fashion in the past and makes fashion and its brands the subjects of his work in various ways, this sweater's appliqué-based design stems from the Italian fashion house Palm Angels. It has here been photographed, enlarged, and cut into a large-scale, pixelated form. The UV print on acrylic glass is displayed in various fragments in the gallery space; a close-up view of a piece of clothing itself becomes a body within the space. Further, honeycombed panel paper manifests a reference to the materials used in mail-order commerce—something that played no insignificant part in the success of Palm Angels.

The teddy bear on Palm Angels pullovers always appears as it does here: with its head ripped off. What happened? There is here no real narrative link to the personal day-to-day life of the artist Tobias Kaspar—a life he has for several years logged in his Insta stories as the “daily timeline” of a “classic” Monday to Sunday. Not even the first iteration was really about Tobias Kaspar's teddy. It was, rather, about a sentimental prototype, a mass-produced thing that feelings might attach to with the passage of time; it was about what it means to give teddy bears to other people, as a gesture of romance or of care. As an affection that may be superficial, but might not remain so.

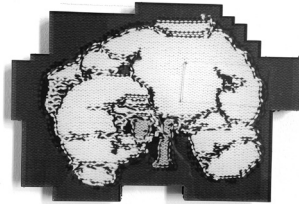
The installation also shows the inside of the sweater—a literal look behind the scenes. And it is this aspect of the teddy bear that again comes to the fore: its ambivalent relationship to intimacy and mechanical manufacturing, production conditions, and the emotions associated with them. This too echoes other aspects of the stereotypical artist—“making-of” books with photos of friends and events, lists of the “hard facts” of artist life.

Palm Angels is an Italian brand that works hard to come across as an American one. The motif of the killed teddy bear has here become something of a brand identity; it is a motif that the in-house marketing copy frames as the “provocative” act of someone who has left teddy bears behind, who prefers hanging out at an LA skate park than in their childhood bedroom. Nonetheless, as a powerful image of something or other, the teddy bear remains.

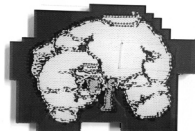
Anke Dyes, translated by Matthew Scown



The Uncanny Sweater, 2024
UV-Print on acrylic glass, honeycomb cardboard
220 x 500 cm / 220 x 410 cm



The Uncanny Sweater, 2024
UV-Print on acrylic glass, honeycomb cardboard
51 x 80 cm / 51 x 80 cm



The Uncanny Sweater, 2024
UV-Print on acrylic glass, honeycomb cardboard
13 x 20 cm / 13 x 20 cm

Tobias Kaspar was born in 1984 and lives in Latvia and Switzerland. He studied in Hamburg and Frankfurt. Tobias Kaspar got known in the early 2010s with the works *Lumpy Blue Sweater*, 2010 and *Bodies in the Backdrop*, 2012: text and photographic installations in which questions of appropriation and distribution strategies, as well as authorship, are wrapped up with a touch of melodrama. *The Uncanny Sweater* connects to that.

Tobias Kaspar recently had solo exhibitions at FOUNDRY Seoul, in Seoul, South Korea, and at MAMCO, Musée d'art moderne et contemporain, Geneva, Switzerland. He is the co-founder of PROVENCE magazine, founded in 2009. The second volume in Tobias' *New Address*-series, a book of black and white photographs in the style of a making-of, accompanied by a short text by the artist Mikael Brkic, a letter by the writer Leif Randt and an essay by the art critic Kari Rittenbach, will be published in early April.