

‘Kaiki’

I remember sitting in a café in New York late last year when Kai agreed to a show at Focal Point Gallery, which would accompany the play he and Yair were already developing. It wasn't long after this meeting that he asked me to select all the pieces for the exhibition, ‘as if he did not exist.’ He said this would be the only time he'd ever do this, and that what must be made explicit was that it was being organised without his influence. Whilst this was a nerve-racking proposition, it was also an overwhelmingly generous offer. It deliberately made visible what is usually concealed when planning a solo presentation of an artist's work and turned any normal procedure inside out; the artist was asking the organiser of the exhibition to select work based solely on their own subjective configuration.

Although Kai told me that I should feel free to choose work from his entire practice and had pointed me in the direction of various sources, he already had the idea for me to approach gallerist Alexander Schroeder in Berlin to see his collection of work made between 1990 and 2004. Alexander had collected pieces from various series, collaborations with other artists and installations. I was interested in works he'd acquired that were originally part of other exhibitions, and which had subsequently become dispersed. He had, for instance, several works from ‘IMMO’, an exhibition from 2004 that I didn't see. This exhibition remained crucial to what I came to understand as the transposition of a cluttered domestic private space into a gallery space that I felt epitomised Kai's later exhibitions.

While I was unfamiliar with the work in his collection, the sculpture *Stigmata aus Grossmannsucht* made such a powerful first impression, even through seeing the figures resting in their storage crates, like bodies in a coffin. It simply had to be in the show. However when Kai revealed his opinion about this work before I had mentioned to him that I wanted to include it, I was presented with a dilemma: do I deliberately omit it from the final selection based on his feelings, or keep to Kai's initial proposal?

Kai had also mentioned several times that his father, Dieter, had a personal archive of his work at his home in Cologne, and suggested I visit him. Dieter collected me at the train station, where we drove to his home. We subsequently walked through each room and he pointed out Kai's work. When I came across the piece *Norma and Hether (Geschenk an Ingrid)* – a present given to the artist's mother in the early 1980s – it struck me how similar it was to a recent drawing Kai had made that I was considering. In many ways, after choosing the work from Alexander's collection, the trip to Cologne crystallised what would become the exhibition. It helped me understand how Kai

became the artist he is and how important the commitment of people to his work were for him.

Kai had arranged it so that I could stay at his former apartment in Cologne, which he'd kept since he relocated to New York City. Even though I'd been there once before, when we met for the first time in 2007, it was nevertheless a strange experience, as if I was invading someone's privacy yet with their full consent. While there, I came across the film *The Stranger the Better*, which Kai had made with his friend Stephan Abry in and around his childhood home when he was seventeen years old. It seemed natural that a work such as this, which contained so much of Kai's spirit in it, must be valued as much as anything within a spectrum of work on display, dating back to adolescence. When I told Kai I wanted to include these pieces, he said he would never had considered putting them into a show himself, and it was in this instance that perhaps we realised that such a choice represented one of the fulfilments of the original intents for 'Kaiki'.

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