

KAYA
'UNDER_URSUS'

OCT. 1, 2020 - JAN. 3, 2021

KAYA is a shape-shifting collaboration between New York-based artists and studio colleagues Kerstin Brätsch and Debo Eilers that has unfolded over the past 10 years. The name KAYA acts as an allegorical other that points to the collective nature of the artists' practice, a stand-in for the many individuals who have come to participate in the shared creative exchange. Within this hybrid force, Brätsch and Eilers have enlisted a bear, a witch-nurse, and a graffiti artist, as well as family, friends, and art students — all part of an unbound and ever-expanding body that oscillates around the artistic process.

The artists' transgressive practice cannot be pinned down to a single form. The creators and the works themselves embrace a liminal state of being, eschewing the boundaries of painting and sculpture, author and participant. The artists tend to re-use and re-contextualize existing artworks, invoking the energy of each new setting in the works they create. In this latest iteration of their performative practice, KAYA chose a body of work titled *OraKle Paintings (Catacomb Mirrors)*, 2018, as a point of departure. The series originated over the course of an artist residency and the resultant exhibition, *_KOVO*, which took place at the Fondazione Memmo in Rome. Since their inception, these works have been transformed via the actions of myriad bodies and collective interventions, including being propelled into a four-dimensional experience via an auricular component initiated by musician Nicolas An Xedro.

In this installation commissioned by the SCAD Museum of Art, the *OraKle Paintings* continue their evolution, erasing traces of former iterations while the concept of painting becomes further destabilized. The mirrored panels are adorned with atavistic red and green lines, a reference to geometric patterns rendered on the walls of Roman catacombs. In an animalistic gesture, these lines are then scratched away by the artists in an act of undoing. Neon bodies extrude from the *OraKle Paintings*, simulating the role of brushes, painting the mirrors in baths of light and counteracting the erasure of the linear patterns. These neon forces hold a suspended potential as they signal the capacity for creative action; they are instruments for a spectral artist to intervene and add to the work.

In this new phase of transformation for the *OraKle Paintings*, the works are situated within the public-facing ruins of the Savannah grey brick edifice that houses the SCAD Museum of Art. There is a rhythmic duality between the subterranean Etruscan catacombs that first inspired these works and the exterior Antebellum archways in which the mirrors now reside. Tracing a lineage from a cavernous ruin to the cascading remains of a prewar edifice, KAYA engages in the slippage between medium, site-specificity, and authorship: neither the artist, the location, nor the nature of this work is singular. At the heart of this KAYAscape is the notion of an ever-expanding artwork, endlessly changing with unbound potentiality and cultivating new modes of being in each shifting context and conceptual manifestation.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

KAYA is a collaboration between New York-based artists Kerstin Brätsch (b. 1979, Hamburg, Germany) and Debo Eilers (b. 1974, Texas) that began in 2010. Together — and with others — the artists produce installations that treat medium as subject matter, sublimating approaches to painting, sculpture, music, and performance. KAYA's work has been exhibited at the Deborah Schamoni Galerie in Munich (2019, 2015), Fondazione Memmo in Rome (2018), The Whitney Museum of American Art (Whitney Biennial 2017), Museum Brandhorst in Munich (2017), MWoods in Beijing (2015), KUB Kunsthaus Bregenz in Bregenz, Austria (2015), Galerie Meyer Kainer in Vienna (2015), 47 Canal in New York (2013), and Fridericianum in Kassel (2013).

CREDITS

Under_Ursus is curated by Ariella Wolens, assistant curator of SCAD exhibitions.