

TOBIAS KASPAR

托比亚斯·卡斯帕
时代的终结
Tobias Kaspar
End of an Era
2024.10.24 – 12.31

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The exhibition End of an Era is divided into three parts:

Hall 5: Textile Photographs: The Caravaggios

Hall 4: Installation: My Dreams and Nightmares

Hall 3: Clothing Collection: “Shanghai Portrait”, presented as a performance during the opening



The MadIn Art Museum is located a 2h drive North of Shanghai on an Island

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The Caravaggios

Tobias Kaspar new photography depicts a series of sweaters and garments featuring paintings by the Italian Baroque artist Caravaggio (1571–1610), drawn from Virgil Abloh's Off-White. Kaspar has embedded himself into the Caravaggio-Abloh narrative by photographing these brand-new, unworn garments. The folds visible in his images stem not from wear but from the packing process, emphasizing the absence of the body. These photographs, alongside the Caravaggio artworks printed on the clothing, focus on elements like necklines, armholes, shoulder seams, and details such as the front pocket of a hoodie.

At first glance, these photographs may seem like mere reproductions, devoid of artistic individuality. However, the question of how much an artist should imprint onto their work is central to Kaspar's practice. He often explores themes of absence, counterbalanced by an excess of imagery. This dual approach prompts viewers to reflect on the relationship between presence and absence, raising questions about how much of oneself an artist should inject into their creations. By playing with these concepts, Kaspar challenges traditional ideas of originality and authorship.

The Caravaggio series is punctuated by photographs of various garments: a gray sweater with holes, a piece of knitwear in a black-and-white checkered pattern, and a raincoat with a half-moon detail. These images serve as interludes or contemporary annexes to the Caravaggio works, offering a layered, modern juxtaposition. A prominent piece in the exhibition is another "Not-Caravaggio": a close-up photograph of a garment by Off-White featuring a detail of the Mona Lisa painting.

The photographs are arranged to harmonize with the architecture — a former chicken farm — with its gray, moss-covered walls and plants that encroach into the museum space, blurring the line between nature and the art inside, layers of different textures.

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Exhibition view End of an Era

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Mona Lisa (Red), 2024 / C-print in artists frame / 200 x 140 cm

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Gray Wool Sweater with Holes, 2011 / C-print in artists frame / 30.5 x 40.6 cm

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The Crowning with Thorns, 2024 / C-print in artists frame / 30.5 x 40.6 cm

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Half Moon Raincoat, 2024 / C-print in artists frame / 30.5 x 40.6 cm

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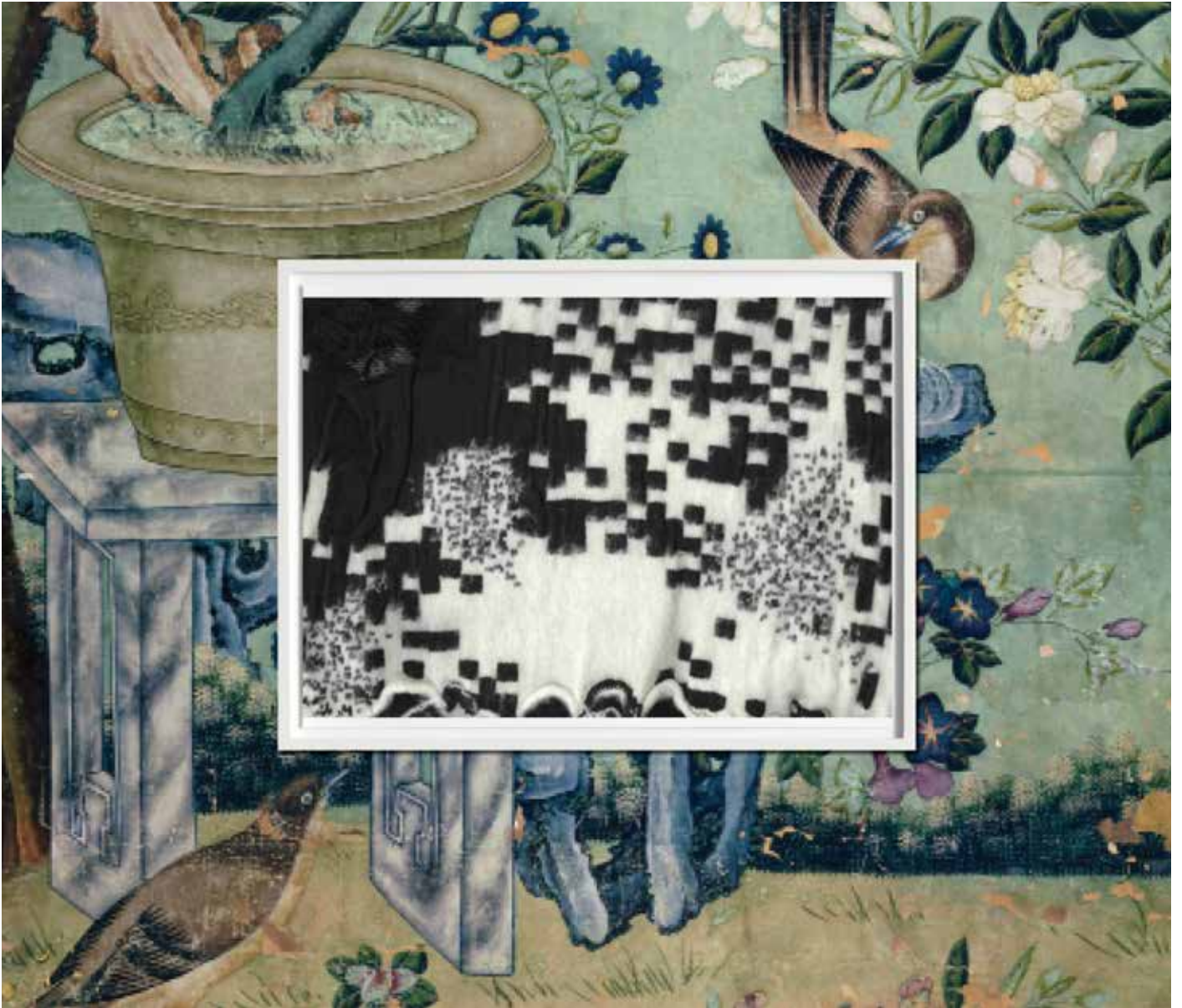


The Inspiration of Saint Matthew, 2024 / C-print in artists frame / 40.6 x 30.5 cm

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Distressed QR Code Sweater, 2024 / C-print in artists frame / 30.5 x 40.6 cm

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Boy Bitten by a Lizard, 2024 / C-print in artists frame / 30.5 x 40.6 cm

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Half Moon Raincoat, 2024 / C-print in artists frame / 30.5 x 40.6 cm

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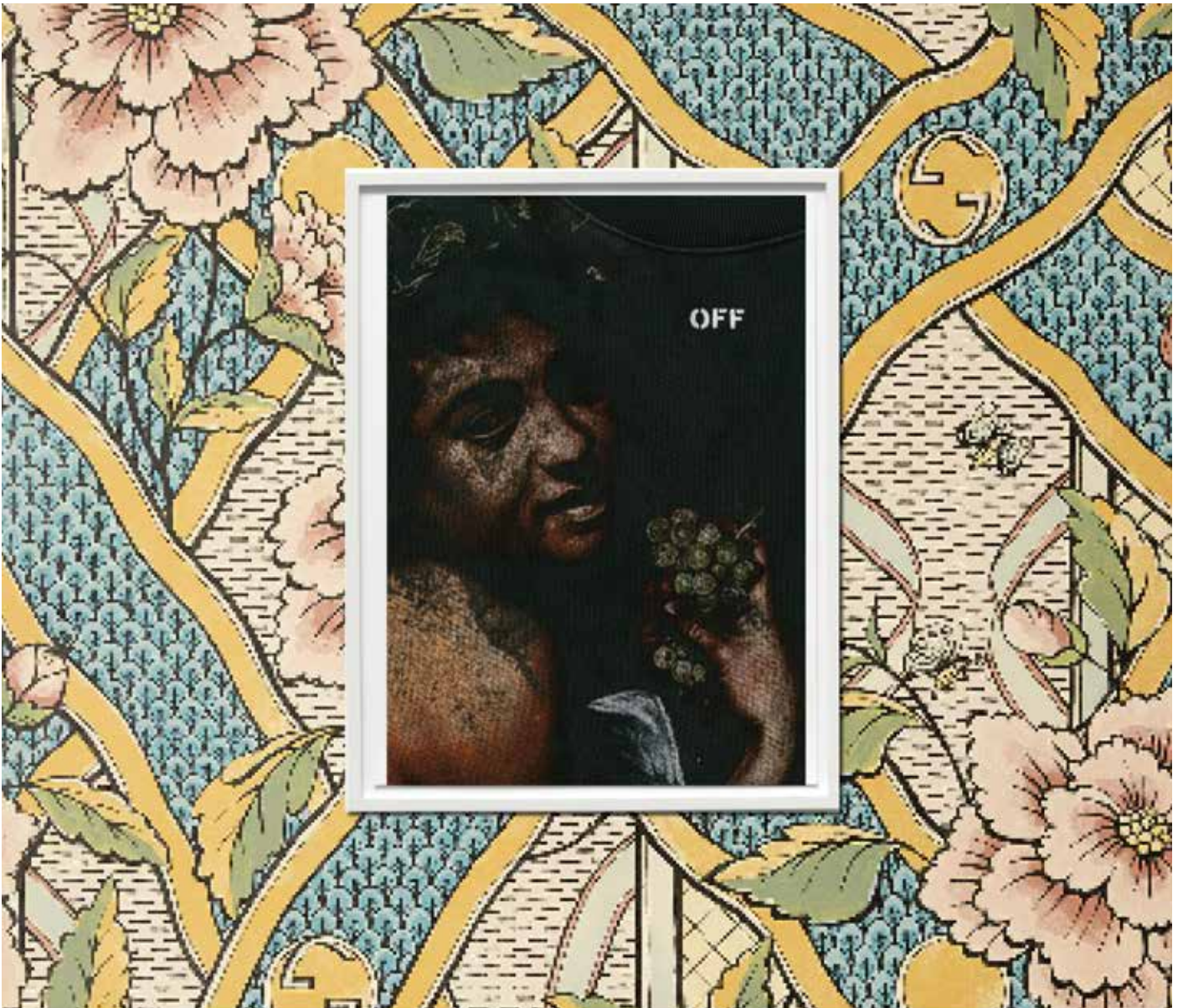
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The Madonna of the Rosary, 2024 / C-print in artists frame / 140 x 200 cm

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The Young Sick Bacchus, 2024 / C-print in artists frame / 40.6 x 30.5 cm

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Beidge Cashmere Turtleneck, 2024 / C-print in artists frame / 40.6 x 30.5 cm

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The Inside, 2024 / C-print in artists frame / 40.6 x 30.5 cm

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Kids Flower Bomber, 2024 / C-print in artists frame / 40.6 x 30.5 cm

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My Dreams and Nightmares

Mass-produced with the expertise of a professional snow globe manufacturer, Tobias Kaspar closely oversaw the entire production process from his own studio. Starting with a clay model, Kaspar had it scanned and 3D printed, preparing it for large-scale production. The process was inspired by a snow globe from a high-end fashion brand, which served as a reference point for his approach.

In this expansive narrative of time and space, 365 Bartleby-inspired snow globes—one for each day of the year—glitter like distant stars, mass-produced to comment on global consumerism and art's place within it. The snow globes depict miniature worlds that, like art itself, invite us to look in but not enter. Inside each globe is a somewhat grim-looking teddy bear, leaning against a highway billboard while sipping from a disposable cup. Next to the teddy is a paintbrush, resting on the ground, with paint dripping but leaving the billboard above it blank. The snow globe is filled with too much snow, obscuring the scene. The teddy wears a sweater adorned with a flower, and another picked flower lies on the ground. On the reverse side of the billboard, a camouflage pattern is interwoven with a pied-de-poule design.

This symbolic narrative draws inspiration from Herman Melville's novella *Bartleby, the Scrivener: A Story of Wall Street*, in which the character Bartleby famously declares, "I would prefer not to." The phrase, emblematic of passive resistance, is discussed in depth by philosopher Giorgio Agamben in *The Coming Community*, where Bartleby's quiet refusal is explored as a response to societal demands.

Snow globes themselves are intriguing objects, balancing nostalgia with commercial appeal. They are familiar as souvenirs yet often used by luxury brands, embodying both kitsch and collectibility. For Kaspar, creating a snow globe was a natural extension of his ongoing exploration of consumer culture and art as merchandise. By choosing the snow globe as a medium, he critiques the commodification of art while reclaiming it as a valid form of artistic expression. In doing so, he elevates this everyday item into a thought-provoking statement piece, challenging the boundaries between art, commerce, and cultural production.

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My Dreams and Nightmares (365 Days), 2024 / 365 snow globes / Dim. variable (here 700 x 15 cm)

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My Dreams and Nightmares (1 Day), 2024 / One snow globes / 15 x 15 x 12 cm)

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My Dreams and Nightmares (1 Days), 2024 / 1 snow globe / 15 x 15 x 12 cm)

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Shanghai Portrait

The third segment of the exhibition is titled “Shanghai Portrait” which is part of Tobias Kaspar’s ongoing “Biography Collection.” For this project, Kaspar has invited a diverse group of participants—including museum visitors, staff, friends, and collectors—to donate garments. These pieces have had their original labels removed and are rebranded with Kaspar’s own label, which is sewn in by a local tailor.

As Natalia Sielewicz from the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw put it;
Drawing upon hybrid forms of dress, cruise fashion, and self-design, Kaspar reconfigured clothes donated by the museum’s audience and staff into new, hybrid looks. He invited teenagers from local high schools to pick and model their favorite pieces on the catwalk at the museum’s exhibition space.. The original labels were cut out and replaced (goodbye Prada and H&M!) by new tags designed by the artist. Thanks to their newly found “anonymity,” the clothes finally became just clothes. In turn, the local teenagers, thanks to their teenage bravado, fantasies, sexual innuendo, and existential angst, furnished them with a soul. At a time when brands exploit identity politics as a marketing tool, Kaspar exceeds the limits of such violent appropriation and articulates a new type of brand association: one that produces ambiguous hybrids rather than frozen objects — an inclusive community where a stranger is just a friend you haven’t yet met.

Art is of course by no means free of branding, and artists communicate them- selves as brands, too. In his multifaceted practice, Tobias Kaspar strives to nuance the concept of “the artist as a brand,” as well as to comment on the symbolic capital attached to this idea. The “Shanghai Portrait” is presented at the opening night of the exhibition—after its presentation each visitors is invited to select and keep a piece of garment from the collection, guaranteeing its immediate dispersion.while reclaiming it as a valid form of artistic expression. In doing so, he elevates this everyday item into a thought-provoking statement piece, challenging the boundaries between art, commerce, and cultural production.

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Performance Shanghai Portrait, 2024

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Installation view Shanghai Portrait, 2024