

Jonathan Monk (*1969, Leicester, United Kingdom; lives and works in Berlin) creates works rooted in a playful engagement with the history of postwar and contemporary art, mainly with the so-called “art +” movements of the 1960s and 1970s, such as Conceptual Art, Minimal Art, and Arte Povera. In his continuous appropriation, research, rediscovery, and reinterpretation of works by John Baldessari, Sol LeWitt, Alighiero Boetti, and others Monk induces us to reflect on pieces that may seem familiar and yet, in their present metamorphosis, appear completely strange. This ambivalent feeling seems to derive from our deep conviction that we know what we are looking at, but not quite, not really: it could very well be either identical to the thing itself, or something else. Versatile and ironic, Monk has worked in various media, and his engagement with and references to various historical and contemporary actors and factors in the art field – artworks, artists, spectators, curators, gallerists, and collectors – seems to be constant. Furthermore, he invites spectators to activate their prior knowledge, memory, and connoisseurship of this field, by referencing iconic works by artists from previous generations – which can get as close to his own generation as Jeff Koons and Martin Kippenberger, such as in Monk’s series based on Koons’s iconic sculpture Rabbit (1986) or on Kippenberger’s legendary series “Dear Painter, Paint for Me” (1981).

On the occasion of his solo exhibition at CCA Tel Aviv, the artist will present the latest, sixth, iteration of a project called “Exhibit Model” that he has been showing in modified forms since 2016 in Kunsthaus Baselland (2016), Galleri Nicolai Wallner, Copenhagen (2016), VOX, Montreal (2017), Kindl Centre for Contemporary Art, Berlin (2019), and the bathroom at Casey Kaplan Gallery, New York (2019). The idea for “Exhibit Model” was born of the artist’s desire to offer a new take on the conventional framework of realizing an art exhibition as well as budgetary constraints. Thus, the artist decided to replace a straightforward exhibition of objects with a 2D photo installation made up of a wallpaper presenting images of some of his previous exhibitions. Covering all the walls of the exhibition space, the wallpaper does resemble a model of a planned exhibition. However, based literally and metaphorically, as it is, on the notion of reflection, rather than model of a future exhibition, “Exhibit Model” only looks like one. Thus, it generates a somewhat disorienting encounter with the images. Such a proposition brings into the physical exhibition space a similar experience to that provided nowadays by the “metaphysical” cyberspace of the Internet, where a growing number of people search for installation views of exhibitions they are unable to visit in person.

In the Berlin iteration, “Exhibit Model Four – plus invited guests” at Kindl Centre for Contemporary Art, Monk had presented works from his personal collection along with the wallpaper. Likewise, “Exhibit Model Six – the Tel Aviv version” will also be complemented by artworks by Lina Bertucci, Benni Efrat, Robert Filliou, Piero Gilardi, Lisa Großkopf, Liora Kaplan,

Louise Lawler, Allan McCollum, Michelangelo Pistoletto, Salvo, Haim Steinbach and Nahum Tevet and a toy inspired by Ogata Korin's Bamboo and Tiger, all 'sourced' in Tel Aviv, selected in tandem with the exhibition curator and inspired by the polysemic notion of "model." With this new iteration, the artist not only continues what he has done before; he also intertwines past and future projects, as well as different positions in the field of art, creating a complex fabric that triggers a discourse on issues connected to authorship and authenticity.

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