

BERLIN – When it comes to art, the studio has always been the centre of production, but also a site of contention, commentary and power. From pictorial representations of the artist in the studio to artworks and practices that denounce the studio, the art world has seen it all. Or has it? Curator Geir Haraldseth talks to Tobias Kaspar, a young artist working in Berlin, about the possibilities and limitations of the artist’s studio, seen from his perspective. Kaspar’s recent exhibition at Silberkuppe in Berlin, featured seven large letters, mounted on the wall, spelling out the word “Jogging”, cut from photographs of joggers and their shoes running around Kreuzberg and Charlottenburg. For an artist working with ideas of leisure and free time, how does he view his job as an artist, and where does he do it?

TOBIAS KASPAR

By Geir Haraldseth

Geir Haraldseth: The artist’s studio is a very real space, but also an imaginary one. It’s one of the few mainstays of the academic notion of the artist, a space where the artist creates and comes up with works of art, a private space you enter by invitation only. The studio has also been a source of reference for artists, like Courbet’s painting *The Artist’s Studio* (L’Atelier du peintre): A Real Allegory of a Seven Year Phase in my Artistic and Moral Life. What is your current studio situation and how do you view the artist’s studio? **Tobias Kaspar:** Now and then it’s probably a good idea to get out of the house and go somewhere, maybe even to a place called a studio or a department store, a newspaper shop, a traffic intersection, the banks of a canal, a workshop, a gallery, a photo lab, a framers, a printers, but it can be equally as good to just stay home all day and work from there. For me, a studio is not framed by a physical border or architecture. Ideally it is an open, transitory, social space where conversations and discourse can take centre stage. It is also where art meets labour relations. In the Courbet painting you mention, very fancy, the studio is already a setting or a stage – it’s not about working methods, it is a place where the artist places his circle of male friends on one side, and society on the other, but also positions the artist at a distance from both. **GH:** The Courbet painting might be a very fancy example, but it just shows that the artist’s studio is an integral part of how an artist is seen, represented and talked about, while also pointing to issues outside the four walls of the studio. But what about your own studio situation? **TK:** To tell you the truth, I wanted to talk about something else really, the idea of a beach as one of many alternative sites of production, productive non-production or a fluctuating mix of both. **GH:** Ok, you had me at the beach. But what about the beach? **TK:** I’m thinking of the American couple

Sara and Gerald Murphy, who moved to Paris in the 1920s and then to the French Riviera. Supposedly, it was the two of them who brought beach life, the way they knew it from the East Hamptons, across the Atlantic to the Riviera. They opened a hotel, turned a little house into their Villa America and threw dinner parties and hosted their writer and artist friends such as Scott F Fitzgerald, Ernest Hemingway, Fernand Léger, Pablo Picasso, Coco Chanel and Igor Stravinsky. It was Gerald Murphy who also supposedly introduced the horizontal striped T-shirt as a fashion item, and inspired Pablo Picasso, as well as Chanel’s costumes for the Ballets Russes’ *Le train bleu* (1924). I like the idea that the fancy dress and a sexualised beach was sometimes their “studio” – the place where they met, discussed and developed projects. I paid homage to them in a publication accompanying my recent exhibition *Living Well* is the *Best Revenge* at the art space Silberkuppe in Berlin. Of course, this is a totally romantic idea of being drenched in sun, alcohol and gossip, but I think it’s elegant and relevant to have such modi of production or non-production in mind now, even though today the elevation of lifestyle and the need for flexibility regarding workplaces, or the absence of one, are forced upon most people – artists aren’t exempt. Going back to a classical studio scenario also won’t work – and it is not the main question and definitely not the answer or it shouldn’t even be regarded as a possibility. **GH:** I guess that is what a lot of artists are working on, trying to find alternative sites of production, or, as you said, productive non-production. That might be a very romantic notion, to find a place of one’s own, and maybe the publication could be one such site. You’ve edited a book called Jonathan Monk: *Studio Visit* that enters into the studio of an artist that might be perceived as working

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