

Warning: Undefined variable \$forJSON in
/home/kunsth3/www/web2021/controllers/element_main.inc.php on line 232

Reading Rämistrasse #124: Aoife Rosenmeyer on Tobias Kaspar at The Lighthouse

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Geht der Raum
für Kunstkritik
verloren,

A few false starts – with apologies to [Janet Malcolm](#)

I meant to write about an exhibition opening at which I stood outside because the curators didn't notice the door was closed, and where the contributing artists had each put a few stickers on the walls. The visitor doesn't deserve attention, but that presentation does? I cannot do it without getting angry.

With only moderate enthusiasm I went to see Tobias Kaspar's presentation *The Lighthouse* at Lighthouse. Kaspar's work usually tap-dances along a tightrope of references to the fashion industry in terms of trends and cachet, the mechanisms of consumption, and materials and the technicalities of clothes making. It's often arch and I am generally immune to it. An air of edginess seems to require a great effort to maintain.

I'd not been into the attic or to the very top of the building at Lighthouse before. I was distracted by the view and my first pictures are out the window.

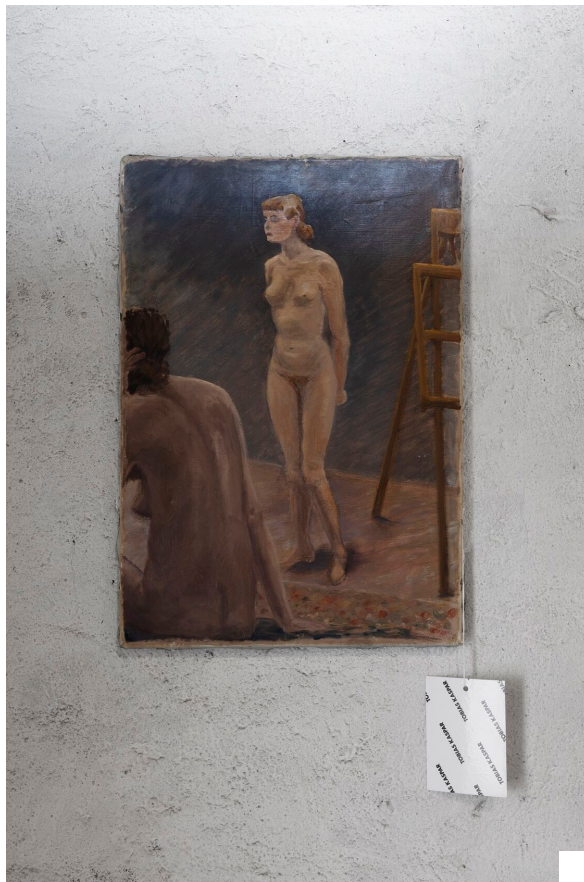
That was somewhat rude. Inside the turret of the space hang two 2022 ink drawings, which were commissioned by A24 films as part of a collectors' edition blu-ray issue of Robert Eggers' 2019 film *The Lighthouse* with Willem Dafoe and Robert Pattinson. The drawings appear to pursue the film's aesthetic: noirish, with patches of pitch black. Why did Kaspar get this commission? It's unclear. Like a design label's perfume, it presumably functions as diversification for the production company and the artist.

That said: I've not seen *The Lighthouse*.

müssen wir handeln.
Deswegen schaffen wir diesen Ort für Kritik – [Reading Rämistrasse](#) – auf der Webseite der Kunsthalle Zürich und veröffentlichen Rezensionen zu aktuellen Ausstellungen in Zürich. Diese geben nicht die Meinung der Kunsthalle Zürich wieder, denn Kritik muss unabhängig sein.

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When it's talked about, it is generally accompanied by a sharp intake of breath.



Tobias Kaspar, *The Lighthouse*,
Lighthouse, 2023
Foto: Simon Baumberger

Below that hexagonal turret, five more works are installed in the dusty attic, employing the props Kaspar came across there. And the arrangement is bewitching and unsettling. One work may be a found small oil painting of two female life models in a studio, though the artist has in any case added a Kaspar-brand clothes tag pinned to one side of the canvas. A wardrobe has become *Are you trying to ruin me*, (all further works referenced 2023). Peer through an artfully placed gap between the front doors – bending over, abased by the act – and you can make out a key scene in the film when Pattison masturbates; the clip loops silently. The title – a Lighthouse line – is repeated on another attached label; inside the folded paper, one of the ink drawings is reproduced as a black print on gold paper. Nearby is *Mermaid*, hanging on a wooden upright. It's a small charm you could hold in your palm which looks like scrimshaw, but given that it so closely resembles the mermaid figurine with a turned up tail that features in Eggers' film, presumably it has been fabricated. A gym handle screwed into the ceiling might have been there already; the label and title, *Now, there's a good boy*, this time most likely quoting the 2000 Coen brothers' film *Oh Brother, Where Art Thou?* seeds threat and manipulation in the object and underlines its not-so-accidental placement. But it's not that the context is creating all the drama, because it too see-saws from gothic to absurd: under the beams of the A-frame roof glows the digital display of the skinny modern lift. This isn't period drama.

Tobias Kaspar, *The Lighthouse*,
Lighthouse, 2023
Foto: Simon Baumberger

I'm told Kaspar's installation should be read as a response to the film, but I don't need that crutch to get an idea of ruined masculinity, craftily commodified. And even though the packaging inserts a distance between the object, its origins and the viewer, my gaze nonetheless ricochets off the female bodies and then back to skewer a kind of corseted, trammelled manhood. What exactly do you want to buy into: emotional constipation? Maybe being ripped but self-destructive? The smudged, hanging cloth, *Daniel Buren Pattern, washed at 30 degrees*, not only links back to Kaspar's established practice, but suggests lingering, mucky fingerprints – an inescapably toxic environment, no matter how artfully it's presented. It got me in the stomach.

I didn't make it to any other exhibitions on Saturday.

Tobias Kaspar, *The Lighthouse*,
[Lighthouse](#), Rämistrasse 3, 8001 Zürich, 10
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Kunsthalle Zürich
Limmatstrasse 270
CH-8005 Zürich
T +41 44 272 15 15
[@info \[at\]](#)
[kunsthallezurich.ch](#)
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