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Our consumer society gives Tobias Kaspar a lot of material for his conceptual take on art. Born and raised in Kleinbasel, Kaspar presents sections of historical fabrics as oversized photo prints and canvases printed with screenshots from the online stores of well-known luxury brands with floral patterns. The artist deconstructs the mechanisms of global markets and highlights social stereotypes by placing them in a new context and showing his works in stringently enacted exhibition formats. His work is characterized by its tenderness, elegance, and precision and is often set around fabrics and textiles. The artist closely scrutinizes the fashion



industry, showing how it engenders the desire for its ostensibly valuable products. Like a hacker, he accesses these systems of consumerism, appropriates their instruments, and adapts them to his own artistic production. Kaspar utilizes the production methods of the luxury goods industry (or even these goods themselves), imitates the corporate identities of exclusive fashion companies, and plays with copies and repetition. His projects can be understood as systemic compositions that he orchestrates like an art director. He has made an authorial brand of his own name, and in his exhibitions he deploys all-over prints of his own logo, adds this to discarded items of clothing as part of a swap-meet project, and also produces his own jeans collection. In all of this, Kaspar's art undermines our understanding of authorship and the role of the creative artist.

In his most recent work, the artist goes a step further by bringing to market one year of his own living costs in daily units, using a cryptocurrency. Working together with Ugo Pecoraio, who is responsible for communication at HEK House of Electronic Arts in Basel, and the art strategist

Andrea Lucia Brun, over the past year Kaspar developed the blockchain currency *Day*. This money originates in the project *Rented Life*, which Kaspar used to cover some of his own living costs during the pandemic. A group of art collectors paid for the artist's vegetable basket, cleaning materials, and Pilates classes, and in return the artist produced a contractually agreed upon number of artworks. These were exhibited in 2021 at MAMCO in Geneva, and the Migros Museum of Contemporary Art thereafter acquired the contracts for its own collection and supported the further development of the project. *Day* now gives Kaspar his own system that can serve as a building block for elaborating his future artistic compositions. One of the first steps is the minting of an edition of 366 physical coins—one for each day of the current leap year. Each coin costs CHF 210, which corresponds to the artist's living costs for one day. *Day* is launched at Art Basel:

The exhibition *Day Flowers*, which runs for the duration of Art Basel, sees Kaspar adding his personal artistic touch to the traditional florist Blumenhaus Mäglin on Clarastrasse. Although this

show is very close to the fair premises, there will be no works on display or for sale. Instead, the typical range of flowers will be available, but the bouquets will be presented for a limited period in packing paper designed by Kaspar. When asked if a few of his *Day* coins might be traded under the counter, the artist smiles and remains silent.

Text: Rik Bovens

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