

Leif Randt

Acquisition Letter (Almost Invisible Opposition)

Dear _____,

My name is Leif Randt. I'm a novelist by profession, but am also interested in visual art. That loose interest is based, among other things, on the fact that artists are always getting in touch with me, asking if I might like to write something inspired by their art for them. Some of these artists get a hold of my cell number and then call without warning, which feels slightly invasive. Others write friendly emails or DMs, which is completely fine. Anyway, my prose, which typically revolves around contentious states between pragmatic joy and matte alienation, seems to have a special way of moving people who spend a lot of time with their art. And that makes me happy, because it's not unusual for friendly contacts to arise.

One of those artists who wrote me one such email one day is Tobias Kaspar, whose work comprises installations, images, performances, and clothing. After stopovers in amongst other Hamburg, Frankfurt, Berlin, Riga, and Rome, he now lives with his daughter on the 17th floor of a high-rise in Zurich, with an unobstructed view of the Swiss alpenglow. Tobias Kaspar has already won the Swiss Art Awards twice, exhibited in cities including Beijing, Los Angeles, Vienna, Talinn, and Lüneburg, and founded in 2009 the magazine and art collective PROVENCE. I am writing you this letter, because I would absolutely welcome it if Tobias Kaspar would be able to realize his next exhibition in your institution.

“Questions of authorship, the role of the artist, occupy me. How can I carve out a space for myself, keep myself above water financially, without bankrupting myself artistically?”*

Personally, I met Tobias on Lake Zurich in fall 2020. It was a sunny Saturday afternoon; for November, the weather was astoundingly mild. The second COVID wave was mounting, and the longest lockdown of our lives loomed on the horizon, but spirits were high. I remember our conversation as extremely relaxed and open, sometimes it felt like we’d already talked several times before, not in this chill way where you’re so similar it’s almost boring, but just as if you could launch into a mutual brainstorming session at any moment where no idea is left unspoken. When I feel comfortable, I kind of talk a lot, like I want to explain the whole world to myself, and people can definitely find that annoying, but Tobias seemed totally OK with it. He also talked quite a bit. I got the impression he navigates the art world with a healthy basic skepticism toward its various mechanisms, without getting in a bad mood over it or growing cynical. He talked about being a parent, his distaste for Zurich, various projects. I imagine Being Tobias Kaspar as a state of soft, nearly invisible opposition. Honest reflection, open questioning, and a great respect for the beautiful things in life.

As we parted ways, he gave me his comprehensive catalogue Independence 2009–2019, a retrospective of the first decade of his work, which gave me the impression I had not heard the end of Tobias Kaspar. The thing is, the one key Tobias Kaspar work that defines his image and would

precede him as a quasi cliché doesn't even exist yet. Seen that way, Tobias Kaspar's charismatic work might only be just beginning.

"I plan my exhibitions as radical presentations. The attributes are softness, elegance, and precision."*

When Tobias is invited to give a talk at an art school, he usually sends an actor to represent him. Some schools think that's exciting and interesting, others think it's totally ridiculous. As transparent and open-hearted as the person I met is, his work seems to be on an equally enigmatic and surprising trajectory, feeling its way in equal measures conceptually and intuitively. What will be on show at the next Tobias Kaspar exhibition is absolutely unpredictable. For that reason, too, I'm more than excited for his exhibition at your institution!

I'm happy to make this letter available to you for use as a press text. And I would be overjoyed at an invitation to the opening!

*** Quotes from Tobias Kaspar**