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Ian Kiaer
Press

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Le Cycle De "Pink Cloth" - Galerie Marcelle Alix

« Ian Kiaer nous a dit de ne pas parler de chaque œuvre, car il considère l'exposition ["Pink Cloth"] comme un tout. » C'est la première chose qu'on nous dit lorsqu'on arrive. « Il faut laisser le public libre d'interpréter, de sentir ce qu'il veut sentir. »

Voici comment est introduit "Pink Cloth" d'Ian Kiaer, exposition visible du 9 septembre au 23 octobre 2021 à la galerie Marcelle Alix à Paris, entre fascination et interrogation devant ces murs immaculés, ce silence religieux et ces tableaux pastel que la simplicité interroge.

Ian Kiaer, artiste peintre anglais, vit et travaille actuellement à Oxford, au Royaume-Uni. Son travail arpente les vestiges de la peinture et ses installations explorent comment le sali, l'inutile, l'accidentel, le rafistolé et le prélevé peuvent faire œuvre. Dans une dimension aux allures utopiques, la réalité du monde revient pour nous amener à réfléchir sur la matérialité de la vie. Ses installations fragiles sont des récits fragmentés, que le spectateur recolle à sa guise pour reconstituer le témoignage. Ian Kiaer puise son inspiration dans les idées de penseurs, architectes et artistes utopistes ayant marqué l'histoire d'une manière ou d'une autre, de par leur préoccupation commune à la résistance et la critique des idéologies dominantes de leur temps. Ses œuvres, qui vacillent entre objet de récupération et véritable objet d'art, entre présence et absence, entre hasard et volontaire, amènent à remettre en question l'art en tant que signifiant et signifié.



“*Pink Cloth*” fait référence à l’écrivain allemand Paul Shierbagt et son livre, intitulé “*The Great Love*”. L’histoire raconte celle d’un architecte suisse utopiste qui érige des palais en verre vivant dans une montgolfière avec sa femme, qui l’oblige à se vêtir en nuances de gris, du gris pâle au noir ébène. Cette obsession de la couleur est semblable à celle d’Ian Kiaer avec le rose et le blanc. Considérant son projet “*Pink Cloth*” comme un tout, il affirme cependant qu’« il [existe] des particularités dans chaque œuvre qui, selon le choix de l’artiste, l’utilisation du Plexiglas ou du tissu [de montgolfière], nous fait réfléchir différemment... » tout cela bien évidemment avec des objets du quotidien qu’il récupère çà et là. Deux paramètres personnels rentrent en compte lors de la création artistique : la couleur, que ce soit des nuances de gris ou de rose, ainsi que le matériau, que ce soit du Plexiglas ou du tissu de montgolfière. Le travail de récupération qu’il opère amène alors à la réflexion sur la couleur, la relation entre peinture et objet.

Comme on peut le remarquer à travers l’exposition, certains tissus constituant telle ou telle œuvre ne sont plus là. Ils ont été volontairement retirés, et cela fait partie intégrante de l’œuvre que l’on contemple. Ce paradoxe présence / absence est omniprésent. Ce tissu, ôté de son œuvre originelle, se retrouve alors dans une autre des œuvres, comme une greffe. Ian Kiaer reste attaché à ce qui est accidentel, ce qui relève de l’erreur : ses œuvres sont le résultat de l’accumulation de questionnements, de déambulations, d’hésitations, d’accidents, d’erreurs de parcours et de ce qu’il en reste : les résidus. Ian Kiaer offre alors une rencontre fantomatique de la chronologie de ses œuvres, de leur naissance à leur résurrection ailleurs, quelques mètres plus loin. On observe ce mélange entre la volonté artistique, l’intentionnel et le hasard.

Pour “*Pink Cloth*”, Ian Kiaer puise en outre son inspiration dans la peinture confucéenne du 16^e siècle, entre idéal et réel. Son approche méditative nous invite à la réflexion quant au processus artistique et au lien entre peinture orientale et occidentale. En effet, il observe alors que « les artistes en exil peignaient quand on leur ôtait la possibilité de faire de la politique ». Leur peinture devenait ainsi acte de résistance et symbole d’un engagement alternatif. Pour Ian Kiaer, l’art est donc tant la peinture comme « application de pigments sur une toile », c’est-à-dire comme objet, que comme « surface de signification », c’est-à-dire porteur de symboles à interpréter. Sous le spectre de l’histoire de l’art, il nous propose ainsi une réflexion sur l’art contemporain de ce siècle : dans ce « monde en chantier », est-il encore possible de trouver matière à faire de l’art ? Que ce soit avec un objet destiné à la poubelle, du Plexiglas abandonné dans la rue, du tissu délaissé, créé par l’homme...



Ian Kiaer at Kunsthalle Lingen

November 15, 2019



Artist: Ian Kiaer

Exhibition title: Endnote, ping

Venue: Kunsthalle Lingen, Lingen, Germany

Date: September 21 – December 22, 2019

Photography: images copyright and courtesy of the artist and Kunsthalle Lingen

Art Viewer

15.11.2019

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Ian Kiaer (born 1971 in London) studied art at the Royal College of Art and the Slade School of Art in London and now works there and in Oxford. His work has been presented in solo exhibitions at the Aspen Art Museum, the Kunstverein Munich, the Galleria d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea, Turin and the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris. In addition, the artist has participated in group exhibitions at the Mudam Luxembourg, the Tate Modern and Tate Britain in London, the Hammer Museum in Los Angeles, the Hayward Gallery in London, the Manifesta 3 in Ljubljana, the Biennale d'Art contemporain, Rennes, the Biennale de Lyon, the Istanbul Biennale and the Venice and Berlin Biennale.

The exhibition at the Kunsthalle Lingen is entitled "Endnote, ping". These two words present two figures on which Ian Kiaer has been working for some time. The term "Endnote" indicates something outside the body of the text, something additional and marginal. The final note is inherently fragmentary, each referring autonomously to a particular aspect of the main script. Each final note, although different, is placed in the same relationship to the preceding and following.

"Ping" is the title of a text by Samuel Beckett. The word itself is a sound, suggesting the transition of one form into another, something written into something heard. It is a short word that suggests a single note, that may last for a short time. The text describes a body and a space, but the distinction between the two is not so clear and becomes less clear as the experience of being in a white cube almost dissolves the body through intense light. This dissolution of figure and ground, of space and body requires a different attention.

The exhibition entitled "Endnote, ping" brings together three projects to which Ian Kiaer has regularly returned: *Tooth House*; *Endnote, Tooth*; and *Endnote, Ping (Marder)*. The Tooth House refers to a fictitious building that appeared in Friedrich Kiesler's Magic Architecture. It proposed a biomorphic shelter as a concrete cave, which the architect regarded as a critique of rationalist manifestations of international modernism. The various inflated elements in the exhibition, including a concrete construction created especially for them, can be understood as taking up and further developing Kiesler's motif in different ways. *Endnote, ping (Marder)* is an examination of the work of the philosopher Michael Marder, a proponent of "environmental thinking", who regards plants as living beings that possess their own forms of subjectivity. Marder's work develops a critique of anthropocentric empathy towards plants and has influenced the recent work of Ian Kiaer.





THE FLORENTINE

CULTURE

Ping! Who's there?

Ian Kiaer at BASE Progetti per l'Arte

Martin Holman

SEPTEMBER 19, 2019 - 11:36

Ian Kiaer is a British artist who has exhibited throughout Europe and North America. In 2009, he was accorded a one-man show at Turin's prestigious GAM, Galleria Civica d'Arte Moderna, and last year one leading public venue in Paris invited him to show. His next stop will be Germany, but until late September he has two intense and challenging installations in the pocket spaces of BASE in San Niccolò. In some ways, Kiaer's work is uncompromisingly conceptual; in others, it is visually playful and exploratory. Having spent time in this show, the visitor alone decides which route to follow to reach an interpretation, then leaves with a head brimming with propositions.

The street door leads into the first of two narrow rooms. Lying on the grey concrete floor of the first chamber of BASE's compact interior are two objects that immediately dispel the aura of art, its style and finish, associated with galleries in Florence. The first is an inflated plastic bag, ultra-light and oversized even for a bin liner. Its sherbet-yellow surface stands out against the cold hard ground, while its shape, bloated and distended, makes a slight ruffling sound as it quivers like a quietly



anxious creature. Out of it trails a cable to a wall plug from which electricity flows back inside to power a fan you cannot see and a small, illuminated screen that is just visible through the translucent shell.

Kiaer's unexpectedly spare room lives more in the mind than in the real space, as if it is grounded in the lives of everyone who looks at it.

As
thoughts
stir about
the bag's
purpose,
the eye
moves to
the second
object

placed nearby. This small construction, by contrast, is rigid and box-like. Quite crudely made in what looks like balsa wood, clear plastic, card and tape, it has two blocks connected by a shallow rectangular base that raises it slightly above floor level. There is colour here, too, but it is dull and industrial, and although there are transparent sides, the visitor would have to bend down low to see inside.



*Kiaer, Ping, murmur, 2019, at BASE, Florence, 2019. Copyright: Ian Kiaer.
Photo: Leonardo Morfini*

Gone are the usual apparatus of galleries. There are no plinths and barriers. This could be a meeting on the street, among the materials found everyday around the home or workplace. The objects are a little shoddy and may have been retrieved from a bin or have been used elsewhere already, maybe in other exhibitions as different objects. The plastic, card and wood are scuffed with wear that is too ingrained to have occurred during the life of this installation alone. And they could take on another function at any moment. On the next visit, this assembly might have changed. At least, that suspicion exists because the gallery has the feel of a workshop or laboratory, a place where experiments take place in aid of scientific enquiry. Or this space could be backstage at the theatre where props are prepared for an absurd play or as minimal scenery.



A sensation of time, even of secret history, exists in parallel with the new uses that Kiaer has introduced. With time, and the random impressions it leaves, comes the space in which unexpected thoughts surface. They connect with personal experiences of the world that no other visitor can share. In a sense, Kiaer's unexpectedly spare room lives more in the mind than in the real space, as if it is grounded in the lives of everyone who looks at it.

Describing the two objects as sculpture seems insufficient. They suggest other things as well: architecture, for instance. The blocky piece is made up of levels that are probably floors separated by little Perspex windows. Even the strips of cream-coloured tape resemble blinds, as if the miniature interior of uprights and beams needed protecting from strong light.

The ballooning bag is more radical, being both organic and habitable (there is a screen inside). It recalls a type of building increasingly seen in cities, able to go anywhere to solve housing emergencies, host public gatherings or provide sports events with a covered setting. Watching the shape billow with air brings thoughts about the potential space inside if it was full-sized. Both appear temporary, lightweight and subject to alteration. Kiaer offers a bird's-eye view for comparing the structures. No question arises of stepping inside either except with the imagination, the way dolls' houses are travelled. Or paintings. If we stretch our imaginations, this installation might be a three-dimensional painting or, at least, the model for one. Models by architects, planners or hobbyists project the mind forward into another space and time; it might be the future or pure fantasy. That is when ideas either lift off the plan into reality or remain as unfulfilled visions, still thrilling but only in an abstract way.

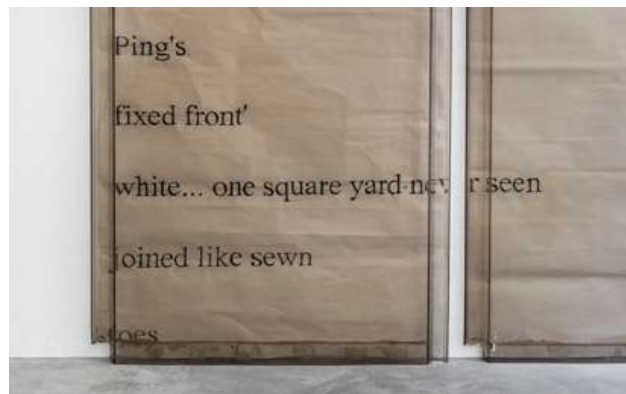
A similar process helps Kiaer create new work. During his 20-year career a recurrent stimulus for Kiaer has been the visionary ideas in modernist architecture. He frequently quotes them. We think of quotation in terms of speech and writing but Kiaer expands that reach into the arts, perhaps because they also have "languages". Kiaer often refers to architects who took great steps forward in how people make and inhabit buildings. **As a result, Florence is an ideal setting for his work.** The city's streets still harbour quantum leaps in architecture from the past by Brunelleschi, Alberti and Michelangelo. These artists were the cutting edge of the avant-garde of their time—and clashed with contemporaries puzzled by their ideas.

Close to our time, Giovanni Michelucci and his team broke new ground with their interwar train station at Santa Maria Novella, which confirmed a place for modernity in historic Florence. Their ideas helped set in motion attitudes that led to the far-sighted concepts developed co-operatively in the 1960s and '70s. Florence's own highly theoretical *architettura radicale* of Archizoom or Super Studio, although little was built, included blow-up buildings and megastructures that outpaced



technology. Although their extraordinary vision fed into the recent extraordinary transformation of city centres, their idealist plans for new ways to live and work collaboratively never left the drawing board.

So, is Kiaer's installation about new art, missed arcadias, dream buildings or recent design? Like the yellow inflatable, these categories seem to want to blow away. Kiaer is interested in how we arrive at the meanings for what we see or hear. Those meanings are not always fixed. Tactile objects might suit the thought process better than words; some ideas, even beliefs, go too deep to articulate. If they could be described, then they might resemble the writing of Samuel Beckett.



The tense, minimal prose of the Irish playwright and author was simultaneously zany and sober, witty and profound. At first his writing could strike readers and audiences as gibberish. We speak, write and hear the same words but seldom in the way Beckett uses them. As a result, his work does not initially communicate with us. Then a pathway opens to piecing together an interpretation; it might take shape through the sound of his words rather than their known definitions, or by listening to their rhythm or repetition, or the interval between phrases.

Meaning steps out like a mind waking into consciousness. **In the second room at BASE, Kiaer explores this phenomenon with phrases extracted from Beckett's story, *Ping*.** The lines written in large letters on poster-sized sheets of creased brown packing paper hung on the wall express very little directly: "white... one square yard-never seen" reads one, "joined like sewn" runs another. Ambiguity does not stop there. The words on show resemble type in a book but are visibly handmade; they have been painted to look like print and ranged to the left like poetry so that an immensity of space surrounds them.

Like Kiaer, Beckett crossed barriers and mixed shapes. He was multilingual and wrote in French, translating himself. His "literature

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without style” is **quintessentially modern** and has found its place in popular culture. His story was first published in 1966. The full text is short and sparingly punctuated. Kiaer’s choice of quotes sprinkled onto the sheets make the original shorter still, even terser and more ambiguous. **His paintings have an unusual layout.** The words appear poorly aligned with the paper as if produced from a badly loaded printer. The text drifts off the bottom edge and collides with the frame almost before the eye can read it. Perhaps the lines will eventually scroll upwards in the manner of a newsreader’s autocue prompt? At that time, maybe the empty expanse of unpainted paper will fill with meaning.

Another awkward is the plastic covering to these paintings. At points, it fails to overlap the paper, and elsewhere its edge spills over on to the wall. Cloudy with scuffs, cracks and scratches it is tattooed with its own anonymous past, forlorn with the marks of exposure to careless handling. (The artist reuses Perspex frames from British bus shelters.) Kiaer here overlays one story—Beckett’s—with another written by time. Each has a manuscript of its own, devoid of style, that sets the tone of the onlooker’s response.

Kiaer tests the rules of recognition; that was also Beckett’s way.

Likewise, Kiaer is an artist not afraid of creating encounters that test the onlooker’s ability to put his or her reaction to it into words. How many ideas can an artist fit into a room with dimensions no larger than an *edicola*? The answer is currently filling the space at BASE.

Ian Kiaer: Ping, Murmer

BASE Progetti per l’Arte until 21 September 2019

Via San Niccolò 18r

www.baseitaly.org



Martin Holman

Martin Holman is a British writer and a former Florence resident who often returns to Italy. He is collaborating on the first solo show in the UK by Italian abstract painter Gianfranco Zappettini, which will open at Mazzoleni, London, early in 2020.



THE EXHIBITION AS POEM

I would like to come back to this idea:
the exhibition as poem.

by Jean-Max Colard

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One could view the exhibition-form according to the theory of genres: an exhibition is sometimes presented as a narrative, even as a novel-adaptation; at other times film serves as the paradigm, through its collective aspect, but especially through the association with the montage of the works, and with the lateral tracking that a wander through an art space constitutes. Let us not omit the essay-exhibition genre, that of the "thought exhibition" (per Bruno Latour), which is eminently practiced by philosophers and art theorists, and which often runs the risk of causing a *monstration* to lapse into *demonstration*. To this let us also add the landscape-exhibition, and now one understands that this is not just a matter of applying old literary categories to the exhibition-medium. To tell the truth, what matters is not classification or ordering, but rather the idea that behind these designations, various potential orientations of a medium take shape. In his final course at the Collège de France on *The Preparation of the Novel*, Roland Barthes distinguished the "fantasy of the novel" from "the fantasy of the poem," and in so doing – as Jean-Christophe Bailly explains in his essay *L'élargissement du poème* [The Expansion of the Poem]¹ – Barthes suggested "that genres can be considered in themselves as directions or tendencies, as arenas for developing a specific emotion." In other words: behind each of these genres, a different exhibition wish is being expressed.

But first this hypothesis: I would like to think that choosing the poem-exhibition indicates an organised resistance. Obviously, conceiving of an exhibition as a poetry zone tends to produce a space where rational logic, where the articulation of discourse gives way to a 'dislogical' space, punctuated by areas of emptiness and fullness, and crossed by inner "correspondences." Positing the poem as the perspective of the curatorial gesture therefore means conceiving the exhibition differently than as demonstrative discourse or a grand narrative. I would like to think that the current

poem-exhibition trend is in large part due to this desire to escape the domination of narrative, to 'resist' all of the storytelling that surrounds us. But the exhibition-poem also proves to be resistant to the growing ascendancy of communication. Because an exhibition is what Michel Foucault would call a "pluri-discursive formation," and numerous are the views that intersect in it: from those of host institutions to those of artists, and including those of sponsors, politicians, curators, and visitor services. As such, the poem-exhibition aims to be relatively "intransitive," as Barthes said of literature: in the sense that it cuts short all discourse, that it gives the viewer – particularly through the fragmentation of its landscape, through what is left unsaid by analogies – an air of *perplexity*.

"POETRY ZONE"

As we know, the analogy between poem and exhibition was famously expressed by curator Harald Szeemann, on several occasions. Referring to his group exhibition *Zeitlos* [Timeless], held at Berlin's Hamburger Bahnhof in 1988, *Herr Kurator* has spoken of a "poem in space." What he wanted was to create "a landscape of sculpture in a closed space – a sculptural poem in a room." One immediately notices the correlation between landscape and poem, an echo of German romanticism, for which the landscape provided the ingredients of a "broadened poetry." Szeemann had already made this analogy in the 1983 preface to *Der Hang zum Gesamtwerkswerk* [The Tendency Towards the Total Work of Art]: "An exhibition seeks to create a poetry zone through exclusively artistic projects." This touches on a kind of belief: the idea that poetry is the acme, or rather the excellence, of aesthetic experience.

In his aptly titled essay *La vie esthétique* [Aesthetic Life]² Swiss theorist Laurent Jenny examines those "poetic moments" when life bears a strange resemblance to a painting, a

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In his aptly titled essay *La vie esthétique* [Aesthetic Life],² Swiss theorist Laurent Jenny examines those “poetic moments” when life bears a strange resemblance to a painting, a

film, or a page by Marcel Proust: "I would like to speak not about our relationship with works of art, but rather about the traces of these works that haunt our mental life and affect our vision." In short, it is a matter of seeing how works of art continue in us, and to observe "the shifting of artistic schemes outside of the objects that preconceived them." According to Jenny, the peculiarity of aesthetic experiences is that they "transcend the objects that trigger them."

These words are comparable to those of Harald Szeemann, who draws a link between the "poetry zone" that is the exhibition and the artwork's loss of autonomy. He writes: "In *Zeitlos*, the abandonment of the artwork's autonomy comes with the desire to create at the same time a landscape of sculpture in a closed space – a sculptural poem in space." With its focus on sculptural forms, the exhibition – understood as a medium, as a total work of art – also transcends the works, which are never anything more than "autonomous parts" of a whole. Therefore, the "poetry zone" is this broadened landscape offered to the visitor, it is that transmutation of pieces into an aesthetic moment offered to the wanderer-visitor; it is going beyond singular works for the sake of the exhibition as a whole, understood as a network of relations (including relations with the place Szeemann often speaks of, namely the old Hamburger Bahnhof railway station).

EXHIBITION / DISPOSITION

But the "poetry zone" enters into dialectical relation with another strong orientation. In his essay *Résistance de la poésie* [Resistance of Poetry],³ philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy defines the poem as "the elocutive unity of an exactitude." This phrase points out that the poem-exhibition is a product of demands that are higher and more stringent than elsewhere, in the sense that it stresses the distinctive nature

of the works it links in the space, emphasising their crystal-clear detachment. In the poem-exhibition more than elsewhere, works are shown in something of a naked state, irreducible to one another, in their liveliest singular brilliance. There is precision in the choices, the materials, but also the spacing. Whereas narrative, cinematic, thematic or chronological exhibitions absorb the uniqueness of works into the "cross dissolve" of a collective operation, the poem-exhibition presents itself as an outline, and is unique in that it goes to great lengths to distinguish its constituent works and pieces.

This phrase inspired another idea by writer Jean-Christophe Bailly, whose literary essays infuse this article: "Rather than approaching the poem as a genre, it should be approached as a language situation, particularly as the situation of being in the world with language and nothing else, without those interconnectors narration or argumentation – that is to say in the absolute of language [...]. This language situation, which is that of the poem and is constructed as such, is therefore that of an absolute exhibition of language to itself."⁴ The poem-exhibition fully conforms to this situation: eluding other categories of discourse, it also carries out an *exhibition* of language (that of art) to itself.

This exhibition and disposition dialectic finds its most complete embodiment in a quintessentially modern poem: *Un coup de dés jamais n'abolira le hasard* [A Roll of the Dice Will Never Abolish Chance] by Stéphane Mallarmé, first published in 1897 and republished in 1914. This book-poem is one of modern poetry's points of origin: the words are scattered over the white space of the page, which is visually treated as a musical score at the whim of typographical variations (words in bold or italics, upper-case letters, etc.). With *A Roll of the Dice*, Mallarmé took the poetic distinction operation very far, giving



THE EXHIBITION AS POEM

each “piece” of the poem all of its aural and visual intensity in the book’s plastic space. It is known that many artists have made their own use of this book-poem, including Marcel Broodthaers, who made a plastic remake, presented at *Une exposition littéraire autour de Mallarmé* in 1969 at the Wide White Space gallery in Antwerp. In this way, Broodthaers extended Mallarmé’s plastic-poetic gesture. He intensified and superactivated the conception of the poem as an exhibition, as a display.

STRANGELY, IAN KIAER

Strangely, when writing this article, even when thinking of it, one artist came to mind more than any other, but one in which I had previously taken little interest, having never written a single line about him: Ian Kiaer. It took all of this time, all of this silence, all of this *perplexity* in the face of his creations, for the apparently decomposed landscape of his exhibitions/dispositions – usually composed of ostensibly fragile pieces made of poor materials, even broken or incomplete objects, placed on the ground or hung on the walls in a studio atmosphere, as if everything were still in the state of a plan, a rough outline – in short, for this landscape to very consciously appear to me as a syntax, an extremely contemporary one that might even be typical of a certain kind of contemporary art that is best illustrated by the idea of the poem-exhibition. In addition to the fact that this landscape persistently eludes the ambient discourse and generalizing narratives, I notice these two operations: on the one hand, the extreme distinction between the elements, which are irreducible to one another particularly in their colour and texture, paradoxically all sharing singularity and incompleteness; and on the other hand, that ability to absorb these distinct units into a collection that is too out of tune to form a whole. This is what is called a “poetry zone.”

1. Jean-Christophe Bailly, *L'élargissement du poème* (Paris: Christian Bourgois, 2015), p. 113.
2. Laurent Jenny, *La vie esthétique. Stases et flux* (Paris: Verdier, 2013).
3. Jean-Luc Nancy, *Résistance de la poésie* (Bordeaux: William Blake & Co. Edit., 1997).
4. Jean-Christophe Bailly, *op. cit.*, pp. 82-84.



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Ian Kiaer "Tooth House" at Focal Point Gallery, Southend-on-Sea
September 1~2014



Focal Point Gallery is pleased to present 'Tooth House', an exhibition by the British artist Ian Kiaer. 'Tooth House' was first shown at the Henry Moore Institute, Leeds where a new body of sculptures was developed in relation to the gallery spaces. This work is transposed to the spaces here in Southend, alongside a series of new works specifically responding to the building.

Renowned for his exploration of objects in space, Kiaer's work is situated throughout Focal Point Gallery in both gallery spaces and in the entrance foyer, responding to the building and its context. 'Tooth House' draws attention both to the object and the experience of the encounter.

Throughout his practice Kiaer repurposes abandoned materials, such as foam packaging or sweet wrappers. In the entrance foyer, Kiaer has re-designed the display cabinets using reclaimed plastic from bus shelters in Southend. Conceived from Kiaer's fascination with thirteenth century Chinese painting, the subtle and abstract intervention alters the vitrines' function as a space to display objects to works of art in themselves. Elsewhere in the entrance area, the artist has stripped away the gallery furniture to expose the concrete surfaces integral to the building's structure.

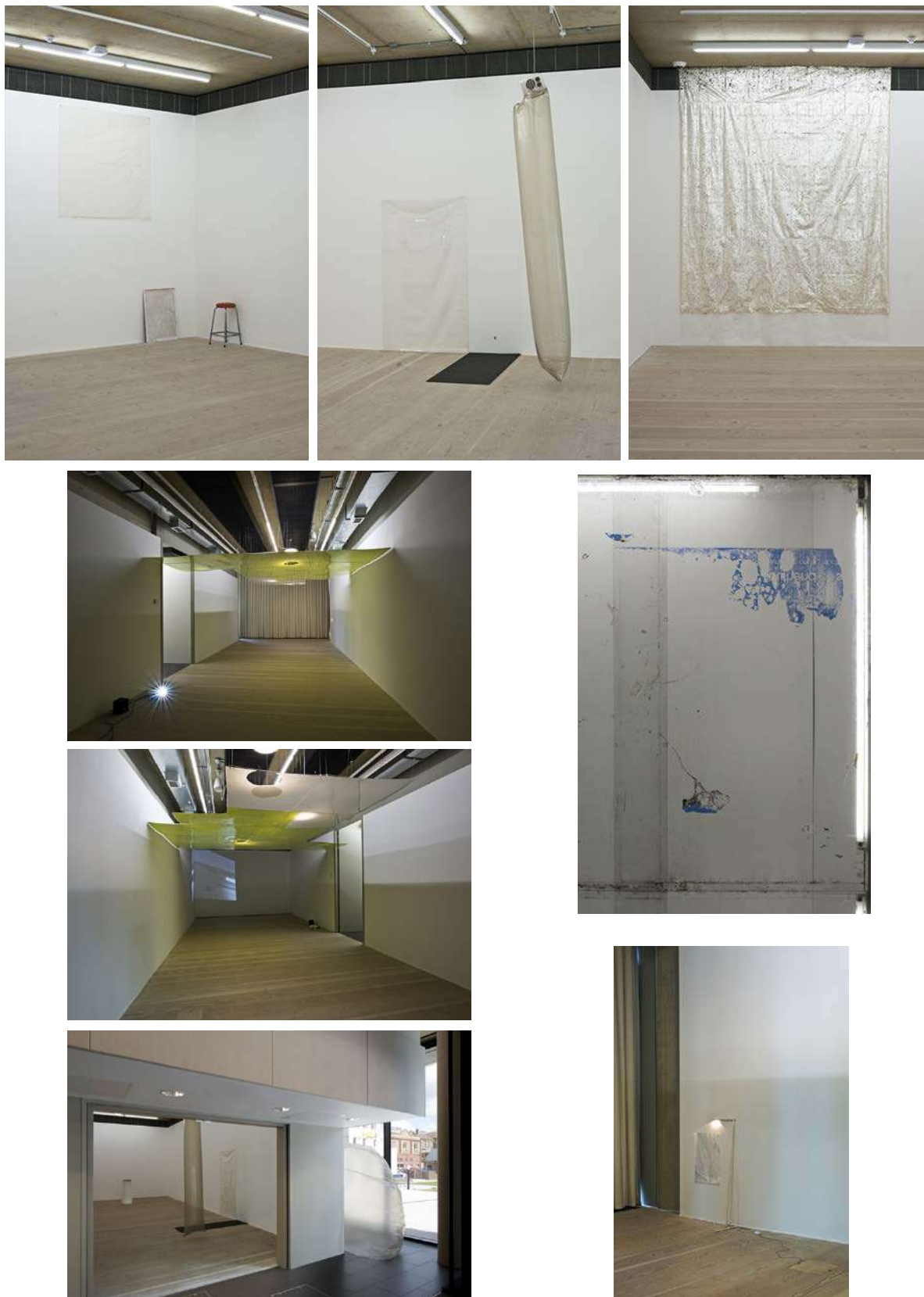
In 'Tooth House', Kiaer's interest in space and display responds to the work of the architect and designer Frederick Kiesler (1890-1965). Amongst his designs for galleries and museums, Kiesler created a series of window displays for Saks Fifth Avenue in 1928, while his 1942 exhibition design for Peggy Guggenheim's The Art of This Century gallery resulted in a continuous space for encountering art. The title 'Tooth House' derives from Kiesler's 1940s design for a residence, modelled on a human tooth.

Kiaer uses the "gesture" in relation to the placement of materials in order to shape the audience's interaction with the environments. The removal of the doors to Gallery 1 allows a clear visual relationship between all four spaces, whilst a new inflatable artwork, *Tooth House, tooth* (2014), has been made specifically to weave between the concrete columns of the building along the Window Gallery. Visible at the end of the corridor to Gallery 2 is a lowered ceiling drawing, *Tooth House, ceiling* (2014), creating an intimate environment in which to experience *Tooth House, film* (2014). In this projected video Kiaer presents a tracking image of the work in relation to his London studio. Slowly moving the camera between the decaying architecture and the artworks, the video proposes an alternative life for these materials and objects, alluding to the shifting, transient nature of Kiaer's work in relation to space and environment.

'Tooth House' is curated by the Henry Moore Institute, Leeds and produced in collaboration with Focal Point Gallery.

at Focal Point Gallery, Southend-on-Sea
until 20 September 2014

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Ian Kiaer "Tooth House" installation views at Focal Point Gallery, Southend-on-Sea, 2014
Courtesy: the artist and Alison Jacques Gallery, London. Photo: Michael Brzezinski.



Ian Kiaer: Tooth House

Henry Moore Institute Leeds 20 March to 22 June

Although Ian Kiaer is associated with combining flat areas of pattern and colour, often supplied ready-made by appropriated fabrics and objects recycled from the debris of his routine existence and that of nameless others, perhaps the most successful works in this exhibition are those that have undergone the most laborious aesthetic transformation.

Tooth House, floor, 2014, is a large rectangle as uniformly black, creased and insubstantial as a particularly capacious opened-out bin bag. The first work a visitor encounters on arrival in the Institute's reception lobby, the piece cast over the show ahead its parallel impressions of a makeshift covering and a deep void. It must have seemed right to the artist to reassign it to the wall where, viewed head on, the material reveals itself as not plastic or integrally coloured but as altogether finer: a large, wafer-thin sheet of tough India paper blackened with ink out of its customary white translucency.

The other work, by contrast, is a shimmering cascade of transparent plastic: *a.r. nef, sol, silver, vertical*, 2013, descends the height of the gallery's tallest room with a surface exfoliating flakes of silver leaf like an eczema of expended grandeur. Given the artist's characteristic reticence at showing his hand in terms of gesture, the work bears unmistakable traces of both handling and place. Parallel indentations of floorboards across its surface also testify to the artist's decision to change its planar orientation from a sculptural horizontal to a pictorial upright.

Both pieces exemplify the quiet spectacle of Kiaer's understated art with their mix of simplicity and absurdity, troubling brazenness and

melancholy, mute profundity and jaw-dropping finesse. Kiaer excels at shifts between scale, idiom, definition and metaphor, and by setting new work amongst a selection of projects spanning almost a decade of activity, this exhibition underlines the consistency, clarity and complexity of his purpose. Multiplying the clusters of obscure references invariably found in each of Kiaer's precisely arranged installations of austere elements, the six projects gathered here seem to reflect on Modernism's lost project: a world based on spiritual ideals rather than efficiency and logic.

Until recently, Kiaer has used the word 'project' to describe bodies of work, in preference, even, to the word 'work'. By its nature, a project is active and the term resonates with thoughts of experimenting, continuity and possibility. Possibility recognises no temporal restriction, putting time on a loop that dissolves past and present into a future moment when the work will still be evolving. This process contradicts the ephemeral nature of the chipped and abraded materials with which Kiaer articulates his compositions; it is emblematic of ideas in perpetual circulation, activated by the maker and viewer in relation to their surroundings.

The reach of Kiaer's references invariably exceeds the grasp of his audience which, in the course of this show, encountered titles citing, often obliquely, Paul Scheerbart, Alexandre Dumas and Aldo Rossi. The earliest piece, *Grey Cloth project: Glashaus*, 2005, was inspired by the thwarted aspiration of the architect Bruno Taut's prismatic glass-domed pavilion of 1914; it comprised a miniature model in cardboard and bilious yellow plastic, placed vulnerably on the gallery floor, and a watercolour of the dome's disc-like plan, mounted low on the wall behind and resembling a rising sun. The most recent installations, collectively called *Tooth House*, 2014, emerged from Kiaer's fascination with Frederick Kiesler's postwar drawings and models. Hopeful conceptual prototypes rather than pragmatic plans, Kiesler's curving biomorphic designs promoted the interaction of space, people, objects and concepts in an architecture that was infinitely adaptable to its occupants' needs. Some elements in Kiaer's projects appear to breathe, among them the big inflated ball of translucent plastic in *Erdinnrindenbau project: inflatable*, 2006. As if to loosen up the Institute's geometrically precise and impersonal exhibition galleries, it is one of the first objects seen on entering the show.

Kiaer's compositions refute any notion of disposability, either physical or conceptual. The ideas gestating within each project float

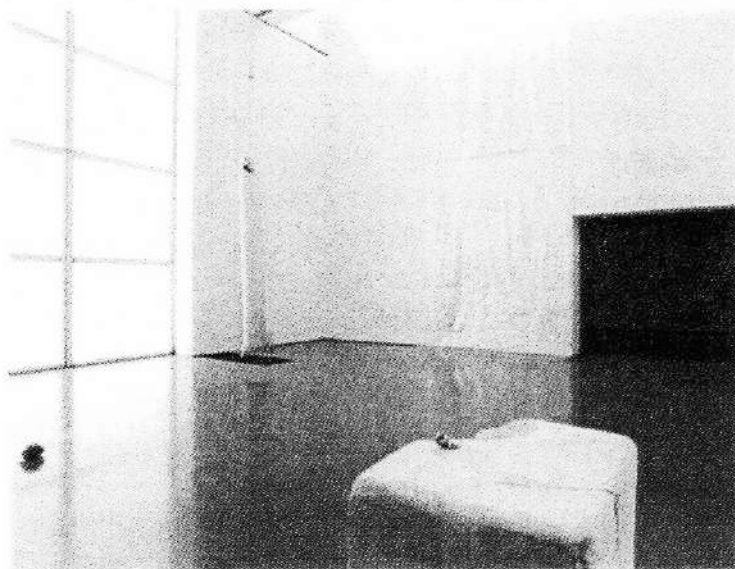


on, subject to subtle mutations like the shaft of discoloured clear plastic in *Black tulip: sleep*, 2012. It resembles both a dreamtime thought-bubble and a troubling incubus from a Gothic novel. Suspended from the cable of the electric fan heater that blows air into its hollow body, this modest form flutters in agitated tumescence as the current whips it, tilting over the black, bed-like mat stretching out from the wall into the floor. Above the mat is a single, vacant brass picture hook, while in the reflective surface of the clear PVC pinned to the wall nearby, distorted reflections dance.

installation view of Ian
Kiaer's 'Tooth House'

Kiaer's evasive, tentative probings are indicative of a course taken between conventional idioms. Instinctively, he may remain a painter, as commentators regularly insist; he projects his concerns about the deficiencies of representation beyond the picture plane to be scrutinised in the round by mobile onlookers. Yet his work seems more comfortably located in hybrid territory shaped as much by sculpture's properties of scale and material as by faith in the imagination, the broad horizon of visionary texts and the capacity of humans to store, process and retrieve their perceptions. ■

MARTIN HOLMAN is writer based in London and Florence.





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The Artist as Curator

Ian Kiaer "Tooth House" at the Henry Moore Institute, Leeds

May 31~2014



Above - *a.r. nef, sol, 2013*

Ian Kiaer (b. 1971) repurposes debris to create props and proposals for perceiving objects in space, asking questions of value and form. He uses discarded and humble materials, such as packing foam, chocolate wrappers, Perspex sheets abandoned in the street and standard-sized paper. These materials he cajoles and seduces into artworks in his studio, using titles as tools to tune his sculptural environments. Each title holds a specific connection to a project by a thinker who made radical proposals for understanding interactions with natural and technological environments.

Tooth House brings together a selection of Kiaer's works made between 2005 and 2014, the most recent created in response to the galleries of the Henry Moore Institute. The exhibition title is taken from the work of the architect and designer Frederick Kiesler (1890-1965), whose exhibition designs and building proposals sought to unify lived experience with structures for organising the world. Kiesler's 1942 landmark exhibition design for Peggy Guggenheim's Art of This Century gallery worked with three-dimensional space as a total environment, creating a continuous space for encountering art. Kiesler's *Tooth House* was a scheme designed in the late 1940s for a residence integrated into its environment, modelled on a tooth – that part of the body that grows twice and is a constant reminder of our primordial past.

Ian Kiaer: Tooth House explores Kiaer's study of the model in a series of fragile fragments that draw on scale, material and encounter – key terms for the study of sculpture. The model is a structure that enables thought to be materialised and tested. 'Erdrindenbau project: inflatable' (2006) is a breathing plastic ball, standing a head taller than a human and filled with air from a domestic electric fan. Its position is staged by a drawing bearing the word *erdrindenbau*, a German compound word that roughly translates as a building formed from the earth's crust. 'Offset/black tulip' (2009) is a frame stretching six metres high, only just capable of holding its own weight. 'a.r. nef, vertical' (2013) is a plastic sheet, the kind that might be used to wrap up a sculpture in the studio, on whose surface Kiaer's studio floor has been transposed in silver leaf. 'Tooth House, shadow' (2014) is a bladder of a ball that suggests a building or model in half light. Whether a reference from the history of ideas or repurposed debris,

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Kiaer's models magnify fragments, lifting them out of their context. His work demands an encounter and refuses to be fixed by the limits of language. Each project is a tentative procedure, executed through a series of connections and encounters.

at the Henry Moore Institute, Leeds
until 22 June 2014



Tooth House, ceiling, 2014



Grey Cloth Project Glashaus, 2005



Offset/black tulip (frame), 2009

Courtesy: the artist; Marcelle Alix Galerie, Paris; Henry Moore Institute, Leeds; Alison Jacques Gallery, London. © Ian Kiaer Photo: Jerry Hardman-Jones; Aurélien Mole.



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Review of Ian Kiaer: Tooth House, Henry Moore Institute

In *Tooth House*, Ian Kiaer responds specifically to the physical context of Galleries 1, 2 and 3 at the [Henry Moore Institute](#). His overall intention is to find alternative purposes for debris. The pieces of debris employed are arranged and titled with the aim of raising questions about the value and form of each. The resulting works act as speculative props or proposals for the perception of objects in the space.

The titles of the works in this exhibition are linked specifically to thinkers. Here, Kiaer draws on the writings of Alexandre Dumas and makes a connection with the architectural theorists Frederick Kiesler, Aldo Rossi, Paul Scheerbaut and Bruno Taut. The title of the exhibition draws specifically on the work of Frederick Kiesler. Kiesler's work – his design work and architectural proposals – aimed at the unification of lived experience. Tooth House was a 1940s residential scheme modelled on a tooth.

Scale, material, encounter – all key to the study of sculpture – are facets drawn on by Kiaer in the making of these models. The model as exemplar is the central focus of Tooth House as a construction aimed at allowing thought to be examined and tested.

On entering the space at the Henry Moore Institute, the visitor is chiefly impressed by *Erdrindenbrau project; inflatable* (2006). This work is a large, transparent plastic ball



that 'breathes' with the use of an attached fan. *Erdrindenbrau* is a German compound word that means a building formed from the earth's crust.

Some other works are given variations on this title, all containing the German word. Of these works, this is the one that makes most literal sense taken with the given title.

Spherical, earth-like form is given an abstracted translation with the employment of the transparent plastic in tandem with its name. The work also has spectacle for its scale.

Another, *Erdrindenbrau project: Scheerbaut picture (pink deer)* (2006) consists of a paper and small plastic image of a silhouetted deer or stag. With ignorance, the suspicion is that this work is likely to have significance for a viewer with knowledge of Scheerbaut. It seems a highly esoteric piece at first glance. Such can be said of all work exhibited in *Tooth House*, given the use of titular references to other thinkers.

Nevertheless, the viewer is given to understand the nature of the disciplines in which the thinkers worked. This context enables an appreciation of the raising of the question of value and form of the works. Discarded debris is given value by the power of the institution and related institutions that allowed for its exhibition. Further value is endowed according to the kudos associated with the inclusion of the stated intellectual context of the thinkers with which the work engages.

Where elsewhere there is a degree of spectacle for the scale of individual works, the viewer is seduced by the value endowed simply by its inclusion in the exhibition. Such can be said of *Offset/black tulip (frame)* (2009), a six-metre high aluminium frame.

Likewise, *Black tulip, sleep* (2012) consists of long, fan-inflated, transparent bag suspended from the ceiling of the gallery.

On their own terms, the works in context impart an esotericism that borders on the solipsistic for the artist. As a comment on value and form, or indeed as an aesthetic collection of works, *Tooth House* is an exhibition requiring a high degree of sensitivity on the part of the viewer.

Ian Kiaer: Tooth House, until 22 June, Henry Moore Institute, 74 The Headrow, Leeds, West Yorkshire LS1 3AH. For more information visit www.henry-moore.org.
Daniel Potts

Credits

1. Ian Kiaer, *a.r. nef, sol* (2013). © Ian Kiaer. Courtesy of Private Collection, Paris, Marcelle Alix Galerie, Paris and Alison Jacques Gallery, London. Photo: Aurélien Mole

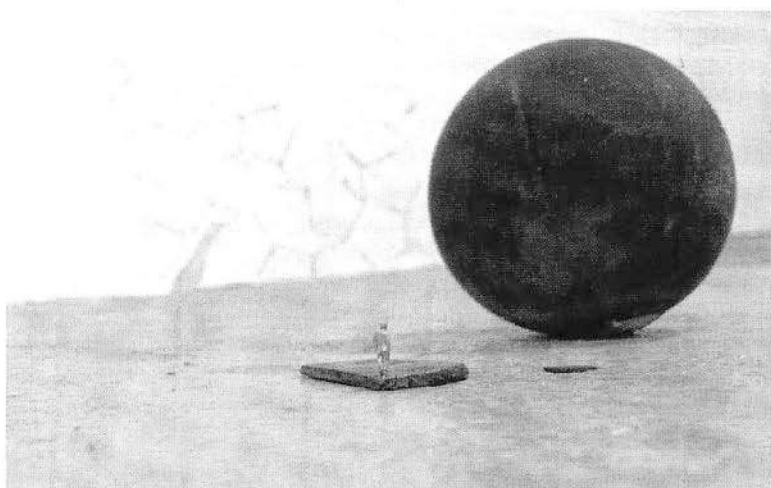


Ian Kiaer

MARCELLE ALIX

Broadly speaking, Ian Kiaer's methodology evokes the intricate process of placing heterogeneous elements in a plane within an accurate perspective (or at least a desired one). In other words, despite its sculptural guise, his work avails itself of a concept historically attached to painting. Not many individual positions so epitomize the expanded nature

Ian Kiaer, *a. r. salle des études* (a. r. study room) (detail), 2013, paper, Plexiglas, rubber, aluminum, video projection (black-and-white, silent, 60 minutes), dimensions variable.



of artistic practice today as Kiaer's, in which voids convey content as much as forms do. Scattered around the exhibition space, his fragmentary objects paradoxically sparked the notion of a whole as he immersed the viewer in scenarios built on clustered arrays of references. Along with painting, these include the history of utopian projects, such as those undertaken by visionary intellectuals and architects, among them Claude-Nicolas Ledoux in eighteenth-century France and Konstantin Melnikov in twentieth-century Russia, with which Kiaer has long been fascinated.

In Kiaer's work, there is a connection between painting and the architectural duality of inside and outside, since the practice of painting so insistently poses the question of what happens when an artwork transcends the solitude of the studio and steps out into the world and toward its public. I wonder if, at the start of Kiaer's career, this was the crux of his turn toward disseminating both found and handmade objects in the exhibition space, therefore emphasizing the idea of a void waiting to be filled by the viewer, who composes a narrative thread out of the scattered elements that would have once been captives of the picture plane.

Kiaer's recent exhibition was a recontextualization of works from his first institutional show in France, held at the Centre international d'art et du paysage de l'île de Vassivière in the spring of 2013. The concept of specificity was equally at stake on both occasions. In Vassivière, the artist sought to avoid confronting massive spaces with equally huge tridimensional works. Instead, he kept a very low formal profile with transparent and weightless inflatable pieces that could



hardly compete with the vastness of the architecture (designed by Aldo Rossi and Xavier Fabre). About half the works from Vassivière were also shown in Paris, where the space was much smaller and the scale of the art became visibly overwhelming. They competed with the gallery space, leaving hardly any room for the viewer. With the change in the ways the work would be perceived in Paris as opposed to Vassivière, Kiaer demonstrated the expanded sense of specificity that derives from reflections on his studio work, with different formal and narrative readings depending on the objects' relation to the space in which they are shown.

In contrast, for *a. r. salle des études* (a. r. study room) (all works 2013), Kiaer installed a number of small objects in an unobtrusive arrangement. Geometrical pieces of various materials lay scattered here and there. Next to a rubber ring resting on the floor stood a Plexiglas screen leaning against a dull-colored wall, creating an utterly unspectacular juxtaposition. An abstract architectural model stood next to a black sphere that evoked Ledoux and the spherical House for the Guards of the Farms that the architect had planned for Mauperthuis, near Paris. A minuscule model figure stood next to the sphere, as if to stress Ledoux's limitless ambition. On a wall at the far end of the room could be seen a small projection of CCTV footage of the same sphere floating on rough water, a trembling and decidedly austere image that successfully encapsulated the formal and narrative potential of the work while enriching the playful game of divergent scales that prevailed in the show.

—Javier Hontoria



Ian Kaer, l'éternel et l'éphémère



Ian Kaer, *a.r. nef, sol*, 2013,
pièce unique, vue de l'exposition
chez Marcelle Alix, Paris, 2013.
Photo : Aurélien Mole.

Dans la froideur et le dépouillement d'une galerie, le travail de Ian Kaer ne se révèle pas toujours au mieux pour qui ne connaît pas son œuvre. Il faut donc se souvenir des expositions récentes auxquelles le jeune britannique de plus en plus prisé a participé, pour saisir la complexité de l'œuvre. Se souvenir de sa façon de dépouiller l'utopie moderniste d'un bâtiment de béton lors de la dernière Biennale de Rennes ; ou de la manière dont il a pris à bras le corps le centre d'art de Vassivière, questionnant sa théâtralité, autant que les utopies qui l'avaient vu naître. Aucune des œuvres de Ian Kaer n'est donc simplement ce qu'elle semble être. Chez Marcelle Alix, ce sont toujours les conditions de leur surgissement qu'il explore, que ce soit à travers une bulle de plastique ou le souvenir d'un dessin quasi effacé. Quant à ce tissu couvert de feuille d'argent élimé ? Il est né du frottement sur le parquet de son atelier, et promet de s'abîmer à chacune de ses apparitions. ■ E. L.

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FRANCE

REVIEWS



rehearsing *The Queen's Shilling* (2013), commissioned play by artist and writer s McLeavey. The theatre play describes sith II chatting with Elizabeth I while g gold coins as a means of pain relief, ing these specific monarchs. McLeavey es to Derry–Londonderry's history slict: the Troubles took place during ith II's reign, while Elizabeth I represented eble period of peace in Ireland before s I came to power. These mentions to the history are further enhanced by the topper and the chocolate marks – allu- to the dirty protests. The artists use ve similarities and acute oppositions as ative materials. For example, the play es the illustrations of the exhibition esenting Elizabeth I, one of which is a e of alchemist John Dee performing eriment before her court, linking the s to the 18th-century Swedish story, ch their use of the exhibition budget to ate on the market and their referenc- the current post-conflict situation at the specific location of the show to nstruct space of international trading, ily, the immateriality of the algorithm nts the city's present aim of becoming e for digital technology. this sense Goldin+Senneby's complex f references produces an insightful, ent on how external dynamics are xported into local specificities. In what rguably their most directly political tion to date, 'VWAP' successfully related ing topics such as alchemy, theatre, nativity, finance and precarious labour, king but also unpacking the functioning temporary neo-liberal markets and nteraction with local realities, here ally focusing on a context marked elonged period of conflict. In doing s formulate a sharp comment on Derry–Londonderry's situation and the er political landscape, making their first ishow a remarkable introduction to work.

LARA

IAN KIAER Centre international d'art et du paysage, Vassivière Island

In the catalogue accompanying Ian Kiaer's exhibition at Vassivière, philosopher Jonathan Lahey Dronsfield suggests that the conditioning power of the architecture of a gallery can be minimized by the art works exhibited within it. This was the objective Kiaer set himself when he installed his show in the iconic art centre, which was designed in the late 1980s by neo-rationalist architect Aldo Rossi in collaboration with François-Xavier Fabre. Kiaer deployed his works in the centre's five spaces, corresponding to Rossi's concept of the different stages in the making of an art work, from genesis to display. Responding to the Italian architect's views not only on architecture but also on art, Kiaer questioned the function of each space.

Take the first of the art centre's two buildings – a tower that Rossi built to promote observation and reflection – in contrast to the long, flat building next to it containing the remaining spaces, a workshop and three rooms for presentation and display. The tower's conical shape testifies to Rossi's interest in the visionary 18th-century architects Claude-Nicolas Ledoux and Étienne-Louis Boullée, both of whom made use of pure geometric forms. Accordingly, Kiaer's response to Rossi's tower, *a.r. tour* (A.R. Tower, all works 2013), featured a tiny makeshift spherical model that drifted aimlessly on Vassivière Lake, underscoring the fragility and absurdity of the works to which it referred – namely Ledoux's unrealized project for a windowless sphere and Rossi's Teatro del Mondo – a brightly coloured floating theatre built for the 1979 Venice Biennale. Meanwhile, a surveillance camera projected the model's image onto the tower's inner wall, materializing the encounter between the two architects through the juxtaposition of the pure

geometric forms of the sphere and the cone. By monitoring the movements of a model, Kiaer undermined the panoptical principle manifested in such buildings as Ledoux's Royal Saltworks and, for that matter, the art centre itself, the high interior windows of which afford the viewer discreet glimpses of the artist labouring below.

In the main exhibition space, Kiaer created an installation that subjected Rossi's architecture to further critique. Countering Rossi's desire to provide maximum visibility, he covered the windows and reduced the electric lighting. He furthermore exhibited only a few mundane objects, as opposed to the monumental works Rossi most likely had in mind when he designed the space. Grouped together under the title *a.r. nef* (A.R. Nave), these items included a sheet of plastic bearing an imprint of the parquet of the artist's London studio – a personalized object that counteracted the impersonal grandeur of the space – and a large, transparent inflatable that had both an artistic and an architectural function: while recalling the short-lived Utopian promise of the 1960s and '70s inflatable architecture trend, it also served as a reminder that art need not be monumental but can be insignificant, light and even immaterial.

Kiaer's approach was not always antithetical to Rossi's. In the basement, originally designated as a workshop, Kiaer showed examples of found works in progress, from incomplete models of the art centre to archival images of its construction, echoing the function of the space. Furthermore, Kiaer's view of architectural models as opening up a crucial space for reflection and experimentation concurred with Rossi's idea for the function of the tower.

More than just a response to Rossi's concepts, the exhibition also highlighted Kiaer's own ideas about art. The installation in the model room upstairs included several accidentally creased sheets of white paper hanging on the wall – an allusion not only to the monochrome and the Ready-made, but also to the jettisoning of virtuosity and know-how in art. For Kiaer, this element of his installation referenced Thierry de Duve's remarks that both aforementioned genres signal the denial of the artist's hand, implying the death of representation.

Kiaer dealt representation a no less deadly blow in *a.r. petit théâtre* (A.R. Small Theatre), an assemblage of mute objects that contravened the function of the small theatre intended for discussions and meetings with artists. Below a tiny window offering a tantalizing glimpse over the lake, Kiaer hung his own painting of the same scene, assigning it an inferior position due to its inability to represent nature. The two blank sheets hung on the back wall also seemed to underline the impossibility of this task: the traces of dust and humidity that had collected in their upper portions evoked hazy outlines and soft shadows, but not a landscape as such. Haunted by debunked architectural visions and the end of representation, Kiaer's compelling showdown between art and architecture left neither discipline unscathed.

RAHMA KHAZAM



06/06/13

CHRONIQUE DE JUIN 2013 - IAN KIAER

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PRESENTATION

JUIN 2013

A l'invitation de Marianne Lanavère, Ian Kiaer a investi les vastes espaces du centre d'art de Vassivière avec de délicates installations qui jouent subtilement avec les contraintes architecturales du lieu, conçu par Xavier Fabre et Aldo Rossi à la fin des années 1980. Nadège Lécuyer nous conduit dans l'exposition salle après salle, et retrace avec minutie l'expérience du visiteur confronté aux oeuvres et à l'architecture.

IAN KIAER

BRIBES D'UTOPIES

Inspiré par les utopies architecturales, le travail plastique de Ian Kiaer se situe dans un temps réflexif, entre projet, idéal, rêve et réalisation. Déployant, entre sols et murs, des installations précaires composées de matériaux du quotidien, l'artiste manie avec précision l'art de la composition et du détail. Pour sa première exposition personnelle en France, Ian Kiaer investit le centre d'art de Vassivière, conçu par Aldo Rossi et Xavier Fabre. Tout en étant déterminées par le modèle architectural existant, ses propositions déjouent les contraintes des espaces tels qu'ils furent conçus par les architectes, en questionnent les échelles et les fonctions.

« Une barre et une tour », tel était le dessein d'Aldo Rossi lors de sa première visite sur le site.

Verticalité : nous pénétrons dans le cône. Sur les parois de pierres est projetée, en gamme de gris, l'image en mouvement d'une maquette flottant en temps réel sur les eaux du lac de Vassivière. Une sphère parfaite : la clé de voûte des grands architectes utopiques du siècle des Lumières. L'espace, plongé dans la pénombre, est éclairé par une lumière zénithale. On monte au sommet de l'escalier hélicoïdal où tout converge, curieux d'élargir notre point de vue. Au XVIIIe siècle, Claude-Nicolas Ledoux situait toujours ses projets de cités idéales dans des paysages harmonieux : une végétation luxuriante structurée au moyen de l'architecture. Nous y sommes.

Changement de plan : horizontalité. Confronté à la stature imposante de « la nef », Ian Kiaer expérimente la réalité du contenant, l'espace d'exposition pour lui-même. Les fenêtres sont obstruées, les néons décrochés et posés au sol. Le vide ou presque.



Dans un angle, au fond de cette vaste pièce, flotte une forme gonflable et transparente, une enveloppe suspendue et mobile. Empruntant sa silhouette en coque de bateau à la charpente, cette poche d'air s'impose tout en légèreté dans l'espace, souligne et déstabilise l'aplomb de la masse architecturale. Structure pneumatique, alternative nomade à l'ossature pesante du bâtiment, la forme signale son autonomie. Capsule close sur elle-même, confinée entre quatre murs, elle marque l'impasse des architectures utopiques des années 70.

Posée sur le sol de granit, une bâche en plastique peinte à la feuille d'argent, rectangle désaxé au regard du parcours imposé par l'architecture, désoriente le pas du spectateur. Une tâche de lumière ponctuant l'espace. On la contourne, on la contemple, on se mire dans ses reflets.

Entre plein et vide, permanent et transitoire, mobilité et stabilité, dessous et dessus, les volumes et les surfaces se dénivelent de manière à souligner le jeu de la combinatoire.

Nous empruntons l'escalier pour descendre dans « l'Atelier ».

Dans cet espace, l'échelle est celle de la maquette mais aussi celle du projet. L'artiste y traduit sa rencontre avec Aldo Rossi à partir de fragments d'images et de constructions. « Ed io anche son pittore » (Moi aussi je suis peintre) est la devise placée en exergue de l'Essai sur l'art d'Etienne-Louis Boullée, une conviction de l'architecte selon laquelle la pensée et l'image du bâtiment sont aussi importantes que sa construction.

Le corps du spectateur doit se plier au dispositif de Ian Kiaer pour appréhender les éléments disséminés sur le sol ; des maquettes miniatures du bâtiment exhumées telles qu'elles des archives du centre d'art, assemblages frustes de matériaux marqués par l'usure du temps, une empreinte partielle du parquet londonien de l'artiste peinte sur une bâche en plastique, une forme en plexiglas, citation du paysage, placée sur un bloc de béton cellulaire, entre autres poussières d'argent. L'architecture vécue que l'on arpente se réduit à des bribes de matière documentaire que l'on survole du regard. Un carrousel fait défiler les diapositives des études préparatoires et du chantier, la réflexion et sa mise en œuvre, avant l'éclosion dans le paysage. C'est dans ce temps intermédiaire entre l'idée et sa réalisation que l'imaginaire prend tout son sens.

Chacun peut, en regardant ces archives de la construction en devenir, y voir la maquette d'une autre architecture possible. Nous pouvons projeter, à partir de fragments, le lieu idéal. Ce sont les formes que l'architecture aurait pu prendre si pour une raison ou pour une autre, elle n'était pas devenue telle que nous la voyons aujourd'hui. Se plaçant en acteur d'une histoire qui se poursuit, Ian Kiaer reconsidère le bâtiment et y dessine sa propre trajectoire, confrontant le projet présumé à sa perception des lieux.

« Un bâtiment n'a jamais autant de sens que quand il change d'usage » - Aldo Rossi.

Les murs latéraux de la « salle des études » sont troués de fenêtres en demi-lune offrant, à hauteur d'yeux, une vue sur les alentours. L'artiste recouvre partiellement un troisième mur de grands lés de papier blanc sous plexiglas. Interrogeant la frontière fragile entre l'intérieur et l'extérieur, des fragments de l'architecture et du paysage viennent s'y refléter, projetés par la lumière du jour. L'œuvre se fond dans le décor référent, qu'elle montre.

Sobriété énigmatique. Une puissance poétique émane de la banalité des matériaux et de l'économie du geste dans l'espace.

Un petit nombre d'éléments sont disposés au sol, agencés minutieusement les uns par rapport aux autres dans un jeu d'équilibre et de tension parfaitement maîtrisé. Un personnage d'à peine quelques centimètres de haut, placé dans l'ombre d'un ballon en caoutchouc sombre et opaque, l'explosion sculpturale de cette sphère en un délicat assemblage de petits polygones filtrant la lumière par transparence, une bâche, un cercle... Des formes élémentaires entrant en résonance avec les utopies lumineuses passées. Des formes simples, empruntées à la nature. Car « tout est cercle dans la nature, écrivait Claude-Nicolas Ledoux, la pierre qui tombe dans l'eau propage des cercles indéfinis (...), les planètes parcourent leur immense orbite » (1). Si l'on ajoutait ne serait-ce qu'un seul objet à la composition de Ian Kiaer, l'harmonie d'ensemble serait brisée. Le presque rien se trouve sublimé dans la plénitude de la composition, chaque détail devenant une composante essentielle du tout. Le juste rapport entre les choses est complexe et fragile. Un simple relief accidentel de l'eau et la pierre qui tombe, ricoche.



On termine notre cheminement par « le petit théâtre », situé à l'extrémité du bâtiment. On y entre par le haut des gradins d'où l'on domine la mise en scène. Dans cette pièce, dédiée aux échanges et aux rencontres, une seule petite fenêtre est placée à hauteur d'homme, ouvrant la perspective sur le barrage du lac de Vassivière. Prenant à contre-pied la fonction de ce lieu, une chaise vide nous fait face, dans un angle opposé de la pièce, invitant à un échange silencieux et réflexif entre regardeur et regardé. Mais si l'on veut saisir l'histoire qui se joue sous nos yeux, il nous faut s'approcher et entrer en scène. L'artiste réinterprète le décor théâtral et déroule, contre un mur, deux larges bandes de papier blanc. Derrière ces rideaux : une autre scène qui se déroule hors-champ. L'intérieur, tranquille, s'oppose aux agitations du dehors que les murs dissimulent. Coup d'œil curieux par le hublot : une étendue bleue bordée par la nature. A quelques centimètres, accroché au mur, on découvre un petit tableau peint par l'artiste : le même paysage, aux couleurs vert d'eau. Emporté dans ce mouvement de va-et-vient entre rêve et réalité, on se surprendrait presque à chercher du regard une sphère flottant à la surface du lac.

Ian Kiaer déprogramme l'architecture du centre d'art de Vassivière. Avec une précise délicatesse du geste et de la matière, l'artiste ajuste les contraintes fonctionnelles à ses recherches plastiques, opte pour la mesure face à la démesure, risque la modestie contre la grandiloquence et insuffle, aux espaces lourds de sens, de nouvelles pratiques habitantes.
« Une barre et une tour » : deux axes perpendiculaires, un repère aux coordonnées variables, ancré dans les courbes de la nature.

Nadège Lécuyer

NOTE

1. Claude-Nicolas Ledoux, *L'Architecture considérée sous le rapport de l'art, des mœurs et de la législation*, 1804.

Ian Kiaer

Centre International d'Art et du Paysage - Ile de Vassivière
14 avril > 23 juin 2013

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CHRONIQUE DE JUIN 2013 - IAN KIAER

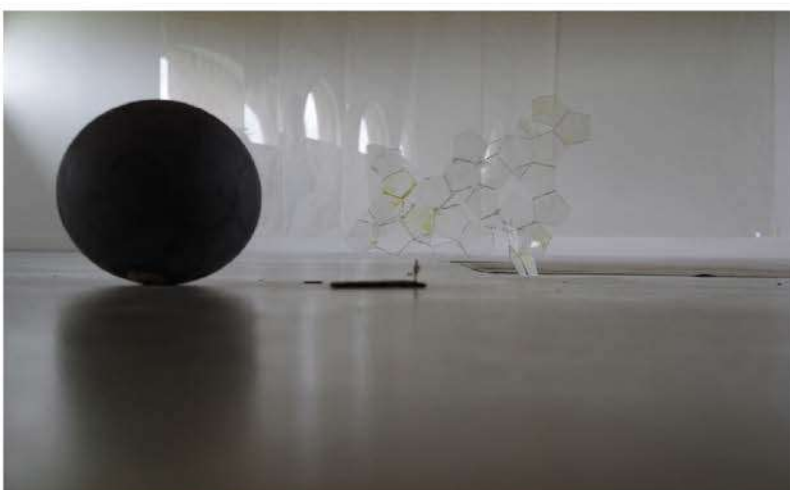


Photo : Aurélien Mole

a.r. atelier, 2013
Projecteurs de diapositi
cellulaire, bâche plasti

Vue de l'exposition : *lar*
et du paysage, Ile de V.
Courtesy Alison Jacquie
Alix, Paris

Photo : Aurélien Mole



a.r. salle des études (d)
Papier et plexiglass, ca

Vue de l'exposition : *lar*
et du paysage, Ile de V.
Courtesy Alison Jacquie
Alix, Paris

Photo : Nadège Lécuyer

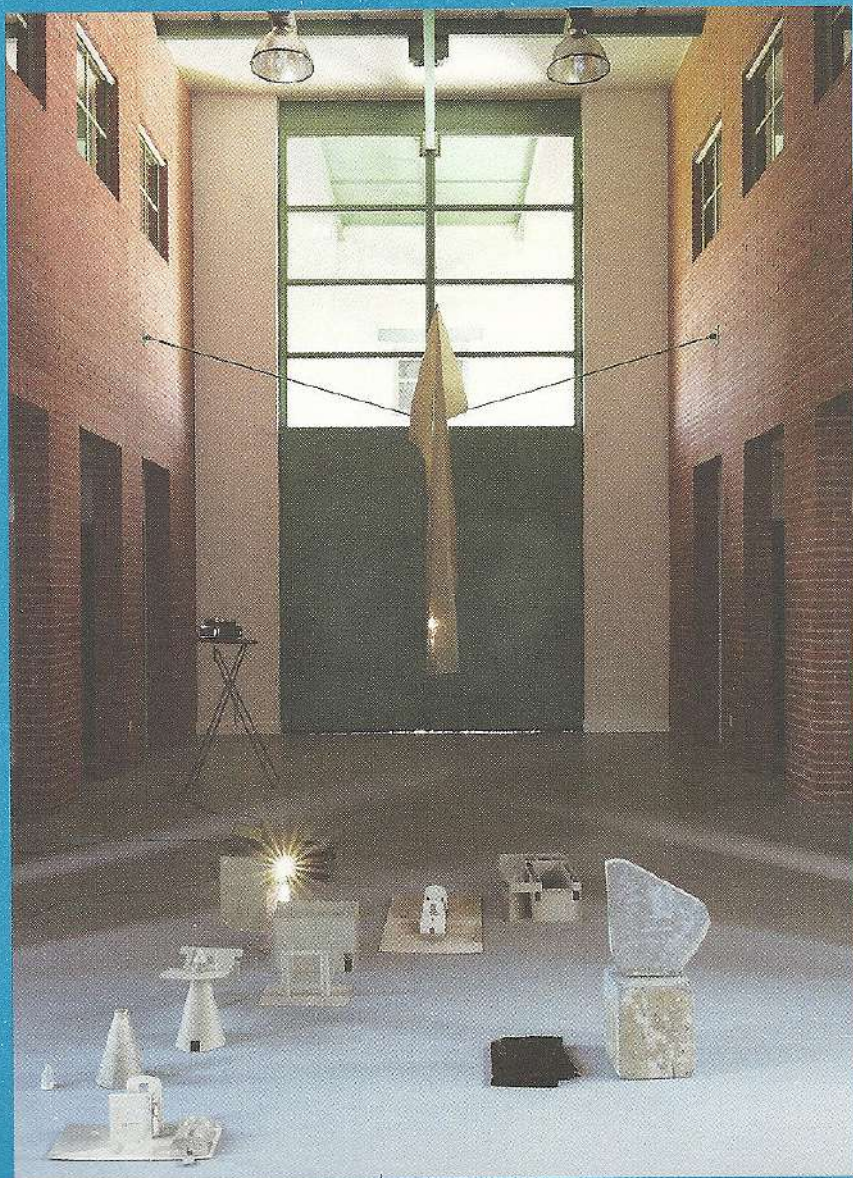


a.r. petit théâtre, 2013
Papier, plexiglass, bétor
taffetas, carton, bois, n

Vue de l'exposition : *lar*
et du paysage, Ile de V.
Courtesy Alison Jacquie
Alix, Paris

Photo : Aurélien Mole

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Ian Kiaer
A.R. Petit Théâtre, 2013
(installation view), paper,
Plexiglas, cellular concrete,
acrylic on taffetas, cardboard,
wood, metal. Photo: Aurélien
Moïe. Courtesy Alison Jacques
Gallery, London, and Marcelle
Alix, Paris



Ian Kiaer

Ian Kiaer
Centre International d'Art et du Paysage,
Île de Vassivière
14 April - 23 June

There are those moments when, half-asleep, you can't tell whether a sound you heard came from your dream or the real world. There is a mutual interjection, the sound inserting itself into the dream, the dream diffusing into the waking world, as you muddle awake uncertainly, trying to tell what's what. A similar sense of sifting hesitantly through things balanced precariously on the edge of existence characterises Ian Kiaer's work. His sparse, humming arrangements of flimsy, worn materials might position him simply as a poetic postreadymade formalist. Huddled around the work like shadows, though, is a host of explicit references and allusions to a set of artists, architects, writers and aspirationalists that I'd prefer not to recount here. Kiaer's work is, for me, at its best in that loose, associative oneiric state, where his inspirations hover over barely constructed objects that can't possibly bear their weight, half-gestures and incomplete ideas that haven't yet been abruptly awoken.

On the island in Lake Vassivière, a manmade lake in the middle of the sparsely populated logging region of Limousin, it's hard to ignore the Centre d'Art. A postmodern building jutting imposingly out from a hill, its focus point is a conical lighthouse, with the adjacent main building conceived of as its 'aqueduct', designed by Xavier Fabre and Italian urban theorist and 'analogical' architect Aldo Rossi, and completed in 1991. Kiaer has, as much as is characteristically possible for his work, dealt with the building directly. The exhibition is a series of five sculptural tableaux, each assemblage simply named after the room it occupies. *A.R. Atelier* (*A.R. Studio*, all works 2013) is the bluntest, scattering the floor with disassembled model versions of the centre itself, some stained with old bird shit. Three slide projectors flick through photos of the building under construction, rough preparatory drawings, shots of the island landscape, one of them refracting onto the model ruins. A plastic sheet covered in frayed silver leaf crumples on the floor like a distant to-scale mountain.

In his spatial propositions, Kiaer is adept at quietly shifting between direct and indirect metaphors for material (silver leaf or plastic sheeting as water, cardboard or more plastic sheeting as brick, adhesive tape or, again, plastic as glass) and scale. (Are we to take on the height of the sole tiny figure on the floor in *A.R. Salle des Etudes* (*A.R. Study Room*), meant to occupy the odd little half-built maybe-buildings strewn about the place? Or are we giants standing outside looking down? Being just the way we are, right where we're standing, suddenly seems awkward: a suspended option.) Here, alongside his usual sly understatement, Kiaer deals with such an overbearing housing for his work through a particular sense of presence. In *A.R. Phare* (*A.R. Lighthouse*), a projector dangling from the ceiling sways slowly back and forth as it shines a black-and-white image on the concrete aggregate of the structure's inner cavern. A black sphere with an adjacent flat box bobs erratically on a water surface, a live CCTV transmission from a model sitting in an inlet from the lake just below at the base of the hill. Just next to a small square window, facing out to the lake from the back of *A.R. Petit Théâtre* (*A.R. Little Theatre*), is a smudged painting attempting to replicate the view. These displacements unsettle the consonance of place asserted in the titles of the work; they're all self-underminingly elsewhere. Kiaer's unsteady, paradoxical indexing of spaces is fragile, and while the precision of, say, an archival photograph can puncture the fugue, they suggest the amniotic state in which most dreams and aspirations remain.

CHRIS FITE-WASSILAK



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“Ian Kiaer”

au Centre international d'art et du paysage, Ile de Vassivière

du 14 avril au 23 juin 2013

www.ciapiledevassiviere.com



© Anne-Frédérique Fer, vernissage, présentation de l'exposition par Marianne Lanavère et Ian Kiaer, le 13 avril 2013.



Légendes de gauche à droite :

- 1/ **Ian Kiaer**, UEA, *Steps*, 2011. Projection lumineuse, plastique, bois, mousse, Dimensions variables. Vue de l'exposition : *Au loin, une île !*, FranceFineArt, Londres et Marcelle Alix, Paris, © Aurélien Mole.
- 2/ **Ian Kiaer**, *Bruegel project: survival balloon*, 2007. Couverture de survie, sachet hermétique de paquet de céréales, Dimensions variables. Coordonnées, Londres, © Ian Kiaer.
- 3/ **Ian Kiaer**, *Erdrindenbau project: building for Scheerbart*, 2006. Feuille de plastique, peinture, maquette : plastique, carton et papier collés, Dimensions variables, Londres, © Ian Kiaer.

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09.05.2013

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Interview de Isabelle Alfonsi, galeriste de Ian Kiaer,

par Anne-Frédérique Fer, à la galerie Marcelle Alix, Paris, le 30 avril 2013, durée 13'12". © FranceF

site de la Galerie Marcelle Alix : <http://www.marcellealix.com/>

extrait du communiqué de presse :

Marianne Lanavère, directrice du Centre international d'art et du paysage.

Pour sa première exposition personnelle en France, l'artiste britannique Ian Kiaer propose une relecture par Aldo Rossi et Xavier Fabre en 1986-1988 et érigé sur l'île de Vassivière en 1989-1991.

À travers un ensemble d'oeuvres nouvelles, toutes conçues pour le lieu, Ian Kiaer revient sur la dimension dressant un parallèle entre la pensée d'Aldo Rossi et les projets utopiques d'architectes tels qu'Étienne-Louis Boullée au XVIII^{ème} siècle.

Questionnant la fonction prédéfinie que chaque salle du centre d'art s'était vue attribuer à l'époque différentes phases de la vie d'une oeuvre, l'artiste rejoue les rapports entre recherche, création et trajectoires d'installations dans lesquelles archives côtoient matériaux trouvés.

Dans la pénombre intérieure du « Phare » se projette en noir et blanc une silhouette expressionniste. surveillance, l'image est celle d'une petite maquette flottant sur le lac, inspirée de la « maison des gnomes » d'Étienne-Louis Boullée.

Dans la « Nef » du Centre d'art, Ian Kiaer met à nu l'architecture en y décrochant les tubes néons – pour les laisser pendre le long du mur. Un immense gonflable transparent reprenant la forme inversée du sol, la matérialité du granite contraste avec l'empreinte du parquet de son atelier londonien, obtenue à partir d'éléments photographiques et picturaux, reprenant tant des architectures visionnaires que des motifs architecturaux. Dans l'« Atelier », l'artiste introduit à nouveau l'univers de son atelier londonien qu'il mêle à des fragments de la construction du lieu, tandis que dans la « Salle des études » il réalise au contraire son oeuvre la plus abstraite, celle de Claude Nicolas Ledoux par le biais d'éléments issus de la vie quotidienne.

L'exposition se finit dans le « Petit théâtre », dont il accentue la dimension théâtrale en y plaçant des éléments défilés tel un rideau de scène et qu'il associe à du mobilier, écrans et autres accessoires.

L'artiste :

Ian Kiaer est né à Londres en 1971 où il vit et travaille.

En France son travail a été présenté à la Biennale de Lyon (2009) et à la Biennale de Rennes (2012) récentes : *Le vicomte pourfendu*, Marcelle Alix, Paris, *Champ d'expériences*, Centre international d'art et d'architecture, Paris et *Au loin une île !*, Fondation d'entreprise Ricard, Paris. Le MUDAM à Luxembourg expose actuellement *Papillon*, une exposition collective proposée par Christophe Gallois.

Catalogue d'exposition :

Conçue en collaboration avec l'artiste, cette édition agit comme un fragment de l'exposition. Un portfolio s'accompagne d'un texte de Jonathan Lahey Dronsfield, philosophe anglais. L'exposition et le catalogue sont soutenus par le British Council, de la galerie Alison Jacques, Londres.

http://www.francefineart.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=927%3A890-vassiviere-ian-kiaer&catid=14&Itemid=2



Catalogue

Contemporary Art Magazine / English / French

Revue d'art contemporain / anglais / français



ENGLISH

PLASTIC GESTURES

Ian Kiaer - Gyan Panchal

Coline Milliard

Coline Milliard ventures a parallel between the understated practices of Ian Kiaer and Gyan Panchal.

Why dream up a conversation between two participants hardly aware of the exercise? Curiosity? Intuition? Ian Kiaer lives in London, Gyan Panchal, in Paris. They were born two years apart (1971 and 1973 respectively) and each has championed from his own side of the Channel an artistic trend favouring understated propositions and precarious assemblages – one that is currently

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taking the art world by quiet storm (see Laura McLean–Ferris’ article in Catalogue 1). From a distance, Kiaer and Panchal’s works appear to investigate similar kinds of problems: their chunks of polystyrene and loosely hanging synthetic sheets share a feel of impermanence, their solo exhibitions – rigorously organised yet eluding formal and conceptual rigidity – seem at once precisely arranged and on the verge of collapse.

Oscillation

But a closer look at these artists’ productions complexifies such a parallel. Since his 1999 installation *Brueghel Project / Casa Malaparte*, Kiaer’s practice has involved extensive research into modernist architecture, painting’s legacy, notions of exile and utopia. While Kiaer excavates little-known history, Panchal sets out to create some from scratch. The French sculptor regularly tackles blocks of plastic foam straight out of the factory, forcing them to disclose their fabrication’s process. Kiaer looks outward, scrutinising the remnants of the past, perhaps to suggest the past’s contemporary relevance. Panchal uncovers what is now. Described by French critic Etienne Bernard as a ‘geologist of the contemporary’, Panchal looks inward, deep inside, stripping bare the nature of his chosen material.

But the pendulum swings back, and in spite of their divergent starting points, both bodies of works chime with each other. The two artists’ discreet plastic gestures suggest comparable musings on the nature of found material, representation, and the possibility – not to say the necessity – of a certain kind of hermeticism.

Talk!

Upfront, Panchal’s pristine plastic foams look mute, remote from their legitimate uses of insulation and protection. Unlike other architectural materials, like stone or wood, they have no link to the sculptural tradition, they are new born – slabs of pure potential as puzzling and impenetrable as the monolith in the opening scene of Kubrick’s *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968). The artist seeks to expand the possibilities of this material, experimenting with other ways for it to exist in the world in a more direct relationship to the human scale. His selecting process might in itself be enough to singularise the mass-produced, but it’s his often-modest interventions that most efficiently allow his material ‘to talk’ (the architect Louis Kahn has a special significance for Panchal, and the artist has used part of Kahn’s most famous quotation – ‘I asked the brick, “What do you like,



brick?” And the brick said, I like an arch’ – as an exhibition title). In eca (2005), one polystyrene block leans on another, the structure’s lower part having been hollowed out as if with an ice-cream scoop. The resulting ovoid fragments, tucked away like a compromising piece of evidence, mirror the thousands of conglomerated balls constituting the block. With a formal stutter, Panchal demystifies polystyrene’s blunt unity; he exposes the constructed nature of its apparent wholeness and uncovers the (or at least a) reality of the object.

If physical intervention is the first step in Panchal’s ‘geological’ excavation, concurrent presentation is often the second. cija (2009), a folded plastic sheet filled with an oyster and pinned to the wall, visually summarises the history of the material it uses: from shells, to seabed sediment, to petrol, to plastic. Things seemingly at odds are shown as parts of the same cycle. This logic governs phol (2008), a wall-hung nude pink sheet of cellulose acetate punctured with a round hole. The shape is repeated on the floor by a tree trunk cross-section, as if the wood had been cut out of the fabric, such highlighting cellulose’s organic provenance (it’s obtained mainly from wood pulp). Instead of the commonly accepted dichotomy between ‘natural’ and ‘synthetic’, Panchal establishes a genealogical filiation. But this reconciliation doesn’t signal an indifference to the issues plastic-based materials bring in their trail. The artist claims not to follow any political agenda, but his work can’t escape current ecological debates. The often non-putrescible nature of his medium echoes the ‘immortality’ of marble sculpture while bearing the worrying threat of earth’s progressive intoxication.

Afterlife

Kiaer’s sparse installations are equally concerned with plastic objects’ afterlife, though they seize the problem from the opposite end of the consumption chain. In Ulchiro project: pond (2007) – part of a series of works initiated in Seoul, South Korea – a soiled slab of foam leans against the wall; Isandong proposal / National Fishing Competition (2001) comprises two polystyrene fish containers; in Endless Theatre project / Ledoux: Besançon (auditorium) (2003), the nylon of an umbrella softly spreads on the floor. This debris grounds Kiaer’s intellectual endeavour in a grotty reality; the duality highlights a paradox that, according to Mark Godfrey, Kiaer’s work ‘has continued to explore: that the tatty object can explode impossible fantasies, and that fantastic dreams can be rooted in the grubby and the everyday.’ As in Brueghel’s Landscape with the Fall of Icarus (c.1555) – a



crucial reference for the artist – great aspirations and down-to-earth existence share the same space.

Despite the intrinsic disparity between the quality of the material Kiaer and Panchal gather, chance plays a crucial role in their respective selecting methods (Panchal describes his as a 'promenade'). No system or programme governs their choices; in both instances, the artists demonstrate a striking availability to unplanned encounters and an openness to their materials' possibilities. This openness can also be found in the 'in process' nature of their production. For Panchal the exhibition is a time for research, when the works and their possible interactions can be tested. Usually including the word 'project', Kiaer's titles announce upfront the in-development nature of the pieces to which they are attached. For Kiaer and Panchal, artworks are not finished, final propositions, but selected moments in ongoing inquiries.

Picture Plane

Panchal's spectacularly titled

HHeliBeBCNOFNeNaMgAlSiPSClArKCaScTiVCrMnFeCoNiCuZnGaGeAsSeBrHHeLi
BeBCNOFNeNaMgAlSiPSClArKCaScTiVCrMnFeCoNiCuZnGaGeAsSeBrKrRbSrYZr
NbMoTcRuRhPdAgCdInSnSbTeIXeCsBaLaCePrNdPmSmEuGdTbDyHoErTmYbLu
HfTaWReOsIrPtAuHgTlPbBiPoAtRnFrRaAcThPaUNpPuAmCmBkCfEsFmMdNoLrR
fDbSgBhHsMtUunUuuUubUutUuqUupUuhUusUuo (2003) is a wall drawing
superimposing the elemental symbols found in Mendeleev's periodic table.
This jungle of lines, tightly intertwined, destroys the established order and
suggests another, perhaps more accurate, depiction of the world: back to the
original chaos. This use of drawn symbols is quite unusual for an artist who
has clearly chosen 'presentation' over 'representation'. Panchal's sculptures
may occasionally allude to recognizable elements – see, for example, the
Stonehenge-esque blue polystyrene arch gaet (2008) – but they usually stand
for what they are, confronting the viewer with their physicality and half-
revealed genesis. Kiaer's installations often more directly 'stand for'
something else, his makeshift architectural models echoing Buckminster
Fuller's domes or Claude-Nicolas Ledoux's theatre design. Yet other
elements consistently blur the relationship between research topic and
plastic outcome, Kiaer taking a tangential route, at once giving in to and
resisting direct representation.

This ambiguity may owe something to Kiaer's training as a painter and his
enduring relationship with the medium. Silhouettes borrowed from



Brueghel's pictures keep cropping up, reaffirming a link to painting the artist had threatened by moving into the tri-dimensional. His ubiquitous wall elements (be they watercolours or plastic sheeting) also preserve this relationship to the picture plane. In an interview with Caoimhín Mac Giolla Léith, Kiaer talks about his problems conveying a narrative on a single surface. His work could be understood as expanded painting, he says, in that 'it moved beyond the frame'. And this crossing between painting and sculpture resonates with Panchal's recent sculptures. In pieces such as the black sheet of polyethylene ptomn (2009), or in ghelis (2009) – a veil of polypropylene half-died with turmeric – the material, too fragile to stand upright, demands a wall exist and remain visible. Such pieces have immediate associations with colour field painting, Barnett Newman, Mark Rothko, but also Pierre Soulages and the pictorial deconstructions of the French movement Supports/Surfaces. Likewise, Panchal's 2003 piece leh, a tiny pool of crude oil, stands like the original stain, raw pictorial material (as well as first incarnation of the artist's plastics). Sculptural painting versus, and, or pictorial sculpture? Kiaer and Panchal's work resists classification and denounces the defining of a practice in terms of medium. The artists come from distinct artistic traditions but reject tradition's ties.

Wide Closed

Looking at Kiaer and Panchal's production one cannot help wondering what kind of experience their work is offering to the unprepared viewer. Is phol telling enough in itself to evoke cellulose's production? How to approach Ulchiro project: pond if one doesn't know anything about contemporary Korea? As an enticing composition? An intriguing assemblage? Is it possible, without any information, to go beyond a purely formal and sensorial enjoyment of the work? And if not, is it a problem? Kiaer and Panchal can't be unaware of these issues. 'There will inevitably be a gap', says Kiaer, 'between my intention and thinking around the work, and the viewer's initial encounter.' Even if one knows a little about Kiaer's all-important back-stories, numerous elements in his works remain willingly obscure. Both artists make space for the incomprehensible. Like seeing a play performed in foreign language, this could be alienating, but it could also be liberating, allowing the beholders to fill the interpretative gaps with their own stories, projections, or fictions. Kiaer and Panchal undermine the belief that an artist's research and production are equivalent to preparation and outcome, suggesting instead a freer approach to knowledge. Rather than a chronological development from research to artwork, here are two individual



paths, the intellectual and the formal, occasionally meeting but essentially divergent. Kiaer and Panchal's pieces may be disconcerting, but it's precisely in this elusiveness that their strength lies. Not only do the artists reject the myth of the 'pure encounter' with an art that must be immediately comprehensible without prior knowledge, but they also undermine the idea that an artwork is a text waiting for exegeses, a code to be cracked.

Coline Milliard is Catalogue's co-editor.

GESTES PLASTIQUES français

Ian Kiaer - Gyan Panchal

Coline Milliard

Tentative d'étude comparée entre les œuvres d'Ian Kiaer et Gyan Panchal.

Pourquoi faire dialoguer le travail de deux artistes à peine au courant de l'affaire? La curiosité? L'intuition? Ian Kiaer habite à Londres, Gyan Panchal à Paris. Nés à deux ans d'intervalle (en 1971 et 1973), ces artistes sont les fers de lance d'une tendance artistique favorisant le geste minimal qui a récemment déferlé des deux côtés de la Manche (voir l'article "Soutenance de thèse" de Laura McLean-Ferris dans le premier numéro de Catalogue). Les œuvres de Kiaer et Panchal révèlent d'ailleurs d'emblée certains points communs : leurs morceaux de polystyrène et matières synthétiques délicatement installés dégagent la même sensation de fragilité. L'accrochage de leurs œuvres est à la fois précis et précaire ; l'extrême minutie de leurs expositions bat en brèche toute rigidité formelle et conceptuelle.

Oscillation

Ce premier postulat se complexifie au fil de la recherche. L'installation Brueghel Project/Casa Malaparte (1999) a marqué pour Kiaer le début d'une recherche approfondie sur l'architecture moderne, l'héritage de la peinture et les notions d'exil et d'utopie. Contrairement à Kiaer en quête des secrets enfouis de l'histoire, Panchal part de zéro pour révéler le processus de fabrication de ses blocs en mousse isolants, tout droit sortis d'usine. Kiaer se positionne à l'extérieur de la matière pour scruter les reliques du passé, et peut-être questionner leur pertinence dans notre monde contemporain.



Décrit par le critique d'art Etienne Bernard comme un "géologue du contemporain", Panchal, lui, conjugue son œuvre au présent. Il regarde l'intérieur, dans les profondeurs les plus lointaines des plastiques qu'il utilise, pour mieux mettre à nu leur véritable nature.

Mais ces divergences se dissipent rapidement, laissant les deux corpus raisonner l'un avec l'autre. Les gestes plastiques de Kiaer et Panchal questionnent la vérité des matériaux, leur représentation et la possibilité (pour ne pas dire la nécessité) d'une certaine dose d'hermétisme. D'où cet article, conçu comme une oscillation, une navigation entre ces deux œuvres.

Matière, parle-moi !

Les blocs de mousse immaculés de Panchal sont, au premier abord, difficiles à cerner. Ils semblent abscons, une fois détachés de leur fonction d'isolation et de protection. Contrairement à d'autres matériaux de construction comme la pierre ou le bois, ils n'ont aucune filiation avec la sculpture traditionnelle. Ces blocs de matière, littéralement "nouveaux-nés", dégagent un potentiel aussi déroutant et impénétrable que le monolithe de 2001, l'Odyssée de l'espace (1968). Les œuvres de Panchal élargissent les possibilités de la matière, elles proposent aux plastiques d'autres moyens d'exister dans le monde, en relation plus directe avec l'échelle humaine. En choisissant ces types de matériaux, l'artiste les arrache à leur production de masse pour les faire "parler" grâce à de discrètes interventions (Panchal admire beaucoup l'architecte Louis Kahn et cite sa fameuse phrase qui a servi de titre d'exposition : "Qu'est-ce que tu veux la brique ? " et la brique répond : "Une arche"). Eca (2005) est un bloc de polystyrène posé contre un autre dont la partie inférieure a été évidée comme avec une cuillère à glace. Les fragments ovoïdes ainsi récupérés (et escamotés comme une preuve trop compromettante) imitent les milliers de billes agglomérées qui constituent le bloc. Ce bégaiement formel démystifie l'unité brute du polystyrène et expose la nature construite de l'ensemble pour dévoiler la (ou une) réalité de l'objet.

Si la première étape de ce processus d'excavation "géologique" consiste à intervenir physiquement sur la matière plastique, la seconde étape est généralement une présentation simultanée des deux états chimiques de la matière (de son origine à son ultime transformation). Cija (2009), une feuille de plastique pliée au mur avec une huître à l'intérieur, résume d'un coup d'œil l'histoire du matériau : du coquillage, aux sédiments marins, au pétrole,



et enfin au plastique. Certains éléments d'apparence contradictoires sont réunis dans un même cycle. On retrouve cette logique dans phol (2008), un tissu d'acétate de cellulose rose accroché au mur et sur lequel Panchal a découpé un rond. Au sol, le disque d'un tronc d'arbre répète le cercle, comme si le bois avait été coupé dans le tissu, une manière de mettre en scène la provenance organique de la cellulose (que l'on obtient principalement à partir de la pulpe de bois). Plutôt que d'articuler l'habituelle dichotomie entre le "naturel" et le "synthétique", Panchal rétablit dans ses œuvres une filiation généalogique entre les matériaux. Cette réconciliation générationnelle ne signifie pas que Panchal soit pour autant indifférent aux questions écologiques sous-jacentes à l'utilisation de matériaux à base de plastique. L'artiste dit ne pas suivre d'agenda politique, mais son travail ne peut échapper aux débats écologiques actuels. La nature souvent imputrescible de son médium renvoie autant à l' "immortelle" sculpture de marbre qu'à l'inquiétante intoxication progressive de la planète.

Une seconde vie

Les installations minimales de Kiaer explorent aussi la seconde vie des objets en plastique, mais l'artiste s'intéresse davantage à la fin de leur chaîne de consommation : dans Ulchiro project: pond (2007) – une série commencée à Séoul – un bloc de mousse sali est appuyé contre un mur. Dans Isandong proposal / National Fishing Competition, (2001), deux bacs à poisson en polystyrène sont installés côte à côte. Dans Endless Theatre project / Ledoux: Besançon (auditorium), (2003), le nylon d'un parapluie est étendu au sol. Ces résidus esquissent une réalité impure et crasseuse dans laquelle Mark Godfrey décèle un paradoxe essentiel à la compréhension du travail de Kiaer, à savoir "qu'une imagination débordante peut se nourrir d'un objet sale et que les rêves les plus extraordinaires peuvent naître dans le quotidien le plus miteux." Comme dans le tableau La Chute d'Icare (1555) de Pieter Bruegel, une référence importante pour lui, dans le travail de Kiaer les grandes aspirations cohabitent avec l'existence terre à terre.

La qualité des matériaux qu'utilisent Kiaer et Panchal sont certes de nature différente mais leur méthode de sélection est la même. Ils les choisissent par hasard sans suivre ni de système ni de programme déterminé (Panchal parle de "promenade"). Les deux artistes sont remarquablement ouverts aux possibilités des matériaux qu'ils rencontrent. La nature évolutive de leur production est d'ailleurs symptomatique de cette ouverture. Panchal considère l'exposition comme un temps de recherche pour tester



l'interaction entre les œuvres. Les pièces de Kiaer portent souvent le mot "projet" dans leur titre pour accentuer leur statut inachevé. Pour Kiaer comme pour Panchal, une œuvre est en transformation permanente, son état n'est jamais définitif.

Surface picturale

Le titre spectaculaire

HHeLiBeBCNOFNeNaMgAlSiPSClArKCaScTiVCrMnFeCoNiCuZnGaGeAsSeBHHeliBeBCNOFNeNaMgAlSiPSClArKCaScTiVCrMnFeCoNiCuZnGaGeAsSeBrKrRbSrYZrNbMoTcRuRhPdAgCdInSnSbTeIXeCsBaLaCePrNdPmSmEuGdTbDyHoErTmYbLuHfTaWReOsIrPtAuHgTlPbBiPoAtRnFrRaAcThPaUNpPuAmCmBkCfEsFmMdNoLrRfDbSgBhHsMtUunUuuUubUutUuqUupUuhUusUuo (2003) correspond à un dessin mural de Panchal réalisé à partir de symboles chimiques trouvés dans le tableau périodique de Mendeleïev. Cet enchevêtrement de signes superposés les uns sur les autres présente un nouvel ordre peut-être plus fidèle à l'organisation du monde : c'est un retour au chaos originel. Cette jungle de symboles est assez surprenante pour un artiste dont la pratique tend à "présenter" plutôt qu'à "représenter". Bien que ses sculptures fassent de temps en temps référence à des éléments reconnaissables (voir par exemple gaet (2008), une sorte de dolmen en polystyrène bleu), elles ont plutôt tendance à se présenter telles quelles afin de confronter le spectateur à leur matérialité et à leur histoire à peine esquissée. Les installations de Kiaer, elles, "représentent" leurs sources de façon plus explicite ; les maquettes d'architecture qu'il invente évoquent les dômes de Buckminster Fuller et les théâtres de Claude-Nicolas Ledoux. D'autres éléments viennent pourtant compromettre ces références : l'artiste s'abandonne puis résiste à la représentation directe.

Cette ambiguïté est sans doute liée à la formation de peintre de Kiaer, et à sa longue relation avec ce médium. Des silhouettes empruntées aux tableaux de Bruegel ne cessent de surgir dans ses œuvres, réaffirmant son affinité avec la peinture qu'il avait pourtant failli abandonner avec l'espace tridimensionnel. Que ce soit des aquarelles ou du plastique, les pièces qu'il accroche au mur sont omniprésentes et conservent ainsi un lien fort avec la surface picturale. Dans un entretien avec Caoimhín Mac Giolla Léith, Kiaer raconte à quel point il est difficile pour lui de mettre en place un récit dans un plan unique. Son travail est une sorte de tableau dans l'espace : "ma pratique s'est déplacée au-delà du cadre". Ce croisement entre peinture et sculpture résonne également dans les récentes sculptures de Panchal. Le drap noir en



polyéthylène de ptomn (2009) et le voile de polypropylène teinté au curcuma de ghelis (2009) sont si fragiles qu'ils ne peuvent tenir tout seuls, comme s'ils demandaient un mur pour les maintenir droits et visibles. On pense immédiatement au colour field painting de Barnett Newman, à Mark Rothko mais aussi à la peinture de Pierre Soulages et aux déconstructions picturales de Supports/Surfaces. De même, l'œuvre leh (2003), une toute petite flaque de pétrole brut, pourrait bien être de la matière picturale. La peinture-sculpture doit-elle s'envisager contre, avec, ou à la place de la sculpture-peinture ? Kiaer et Panchal s'opposent à toute définition de leur pratique en terme de médium. Ils viennent de traditions artistiques distinctes mais rejettent le poids de l'histoire de l'art.

Processus/résultat

Le travail de Kiaer et Panchal suscite de nombreuses interrogations sur la façon dont un visiteur non averti peut faire l'expérience d'une œuvre sans en connaître les références. La simple observation de phol suffit-elle à évoquer la production de cellulose ? Comment approcher Ulchiro project : pond sans connaître le contexte actuel de la Corée ? Comme une séduisante composition ? Un mystérieux assemblage ? Sans aucune information préalable, est-il réellement possible d'aller au-delà du simple plaisir formel ? Et si non, est-ce vraiment gênant ? Kiaer et Panchal sont conscients de cet écart. "C'est inévitable", explique Kiaer, "il y a aura toujours un décalage entre les intentions de mon travail et la première rencontre d'un visiteur avec mes œuvres." Quand bien même on connaîtrait les références nécessaires à la compréhension du travail de Kiaer, de nombreux éléments restent obscurs. Les deux artistes cultivent volontiers l'opacité. Faire l'expérience de leurs œuvres, c'est comme voir une pièce de théâtre dans une langue étrangère : une épreuve à la fois frustrante et libératrice dans le sens où les spectateurs peuvent eux-mêmes combler le déficit interprétatif avec leurs propres histoires, projections et fictions. Pour Kiaer et Panchal, le passage de la recherche à l'œuvre ne suit pas nécessairement un déroulement chronologique ; la cheminement intellectuelle et l'exécution formelle sont deux routes qui ne se croisent qu'occasionnellement. Leurs œuvres sont certes déconcertantes mais c'est précisément cette fragilité qui fait leur force. Elles rejettent aussi bien le soi-disant mythe de "la rencontre pure" avec une œuvre d'art immédiatement accessible sans connaissance préalable que l'idée selon laquelle l'œuvre est un texte esclave de son exégèse, un code à déchiffrer. **Coline Milliard** est corédactrice de Catalogue.



TOP TEN

Ian Kiaer



British installation artist Ian Kiaer is currently participating in the 10th Biennale de Lyon. A solo exhibition of his work will open this month at the Galleria Civica d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea in Turin, Italy.

From top: Andrea Büttner, *Little Works*, 2007, still from a color video, 10 minutes 45 seconds; Pieter Bruegel, *Procession to Calvary*, 1564, oil on canvas, 48 1/2 x 67 1/2.



1 **ARMY AND NAVY STORES/HOUSE OF FRASER VICTORIA (LONDON)** It may be that shopping here is no more distinctive than shopping at any other generic department store, yet I remain as affected by the experience today as I was while growing up in Victoria in the '70s. Housed within the building's gray marble and brown glass interior, the cosmetics section presents its perfumes and colored makeups in branded vitrines. Aging chrome and glass surfaces still draw attention to the grease smudges left by those of us wanting to cover over our lines and smells.

2 **ANDREA BÜTTNER, *LITTLE WORKS*, 2007** In part, Büttner's practice is an inquiry into shame, and when there is a room full of her work, each piece seems to awkwardly undermine the next: Clumsy damp clay, for example, is pressed between wall and carpet and left to crack beneath large woodcuts of donkeys that have been mounted on shit-colored walls. For *Little Works*, Büttner gave her camera to a closed order of Carmelite nuns who were preparing to display their homemade icons and crochet baskets. The disarming doubt the sisters reveal when offering their work for one another's appraisal demonstrates a humanity that, for a few moments, allows us to partake in their otherwise separate life.

3 **BRITISH SCHOOL, *A FAMILY GROUP IN A GARDEN*, CA. 1754 (TATE GALLERY, LONDON)** When I saw this watercolor while still in college and burdened by problems of authenticity in painting, it helped me to consider how ideas of artifice and gesture were perhaps more interesting. It's unclear whether we are looking at nature or an interior, with its poses, props, and painted backdrops: idle moments set before an idyllic, distant folly. As though made by Thomas Gainsborough, who was known for his broccoli models of parks, this work bears a slippage between model, painting, and stage that keeps us transfixed.

4 **PIETER BRUEGEL, *PROCESSION TO CALVARY*, 1564** Bruegel's windmill provides a panoptic view onto the world, yet, precarious and vulnerable to sudden gusts, it has none of the looming implications of Bentham's tower. Instead, Bruegel seems to suggest the position of the painter, perhaps even from the vantage of his studio, observing from a distance the detailed incident progressing toward death's event below.

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TOP TEN

5 KENZO TANGE, SHIZUOKA PRESS AND BROADCASTING CENTRE (TOKYO, 1966–67) Like the Bruegel building, Tange's tower looks onto a continual stream of traffic. But rather than open land, it occupies an improbable, acute-angled site of a kind particular to the high-density demands of Tokyo. To accommodate this, Tange constructed a tall, circular core with rectangular units projecting outward. Though singular in its fragmentary design, the building nonetheless speaks of an openness appropriate to mass communication, suggesting a natural component for a larger urban structure in this city of parts.

6 CHRIS MARKER, *SANS SOLEIL* (1983) There are many moments in Marker's film that stay with me: a metro journey that unfolds into the montaged dreams of dozing passengers, giving glimpses of manipulated images—samurai, sex, and horror films merged with an animated sequence of a train. At another point, archival footage of a dying giraffe, shot in the neck by poachers, is intercut with images of children grieving in Japan. Unsure what has just happened, the animal is shown in a state of confusion, while Tokyo appears, baring its capacity to mourn.

7 THOMAS BERNHARD, *OLD MASTERS: A COMEDY* (1985) Bernhard uses the acerbic wit of his central character—a misanthropic music critic named Reger—to undo some of the major protagonists of Germanic high culture. Sitting in front of a Tintoretto painting, he considers Bach “a deeply embarrassing figure” while undressing Heidegger to his underpants. Yet behind the caricature lies the unease of a contemporary sensibility confronted with the idea of the whole or perfection. What follows is an unanswerable call for fragmentation and failure.

8 KONSTANTIN MELNIKOV, CYLINDRICAL HOUSE STUDIO (MOSCOW, 1929) Melnikov didn't choose his isolation but, subject to the malice of Stalin's purges, was forced into it. No longer able to practice his trade, the architect watched as the building he had designed for living and working became a kind of professional tomb; he spent the rest of his years making paintings and revisiting past projects through ever more ambitious drawings (he died in 1972). Inside the twinned-cylinder structure, three stories of circular floors interlock at different levels, while the many hexagonal windows, rather than revealing a view, appear to turn inward, becoming esoteric sources of light.

9 SARA MACKILLOP, *10 IN 12*, 2002 To describe how MacKillop puts together a work is fairly simple. For *10 in 12* she placed a ten-inch record inside a twelve-inch record sleeve. And, for her recent “Jigsaw” series, she makes stacks of overturned puzzles, layering identical solved copies facedown on the floor. Yet in both instances, the utmost economy produces exquisitely beautiful works that draw out modernism's redundancy without falling into cynical or knowing commentary. It involves saying and showing and passing over in silence.

10 MINOUK LIM, *NEW TOWN GHOST*, 2005 Lim arranged for a rapper to deliver slam poetry, accompanied by a drummer, on the back of a truck as it drove through the New Town Project in Yeongdeungpo, Seoul. The absurdity of this gesture is compounded when it becomes clear that the lyrics are directives from a sighing ghost. Government development collides with ancient geomancy to the bemusement of local residents. □



From top: Konstantin Melnikov, Cylindrical House Studio, 1929, Moscow. Interior. Photo: Igor Palmin. Minouk Lim, *New Town Ghost*, 2005, still from a color video, 10 minutes 19 seconds. Sara MacKillop, *10 in 12*, 2002, mixed media, 12 x 12".





Contemporary Art Daily

A Daily Journal of International Exhibitions

Ian Kiaer at Kunstverein Munich

July 1st, 2010 in **Exhibitions**



Artist: Ian Kiaer

Venue: Kunstverein Munich

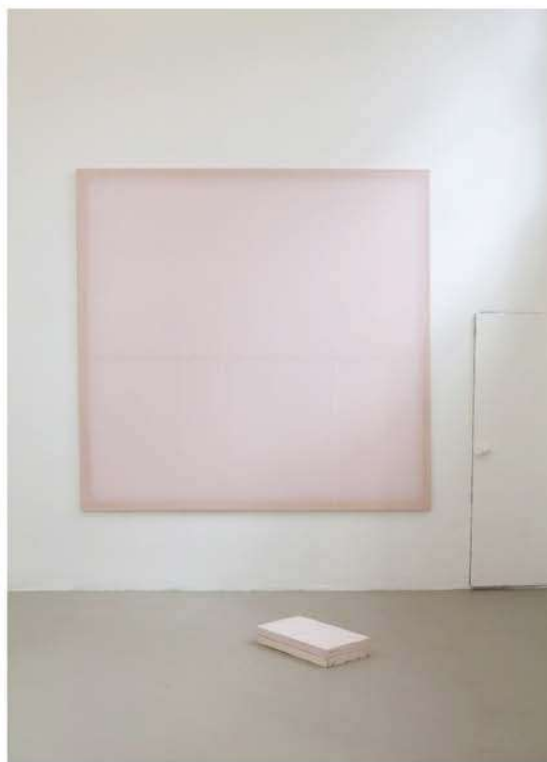
Exhibition Title: Endnote, pink

Date: June 10 – August 29, 2010

Contemporary Art Daily

07.2010

1 | 5



Images courtesy of Kunstverein Munich. Photos by Wilfried Petzi.



Press Release:

With the exhibition *Endnote, pink*, Kunstverein München is introducing a new body of work by London based artist Ian Kiaer (*1971 in London), on show from June 9 through August 29, 2010. Kiaer is known for his spatial installations of found objects and materials that are carefully placed on and around the gallery floors. With *Endnote, pink*, the artist enjoys his first solo-exhibition in a German institution after having actively participated within the international art world over the last years, with signature exhibitions (GAM Turin, 2009) and numerous contributions to international group shows. For this particular occasion Ian Kiaer has developed 6 new installations that are directly inspired by the exhibition spaces of Kunstverein München.

Endnote, pink features used frames and stretchers covered with materials such as found fabrics, silver foil or a sheet of yellow latex. Some of them are painted with abstract lines; others are left without any artistic interference. The frames hang in close proximity to objects that suggest a human dimension or use, such as a chair, a mat, a table or a pink bin. These objects lead to more spatial assemblages on the gallery floors, combining old electrical wires, used sheets of rubber, and a block of polystyrene. These objects outside the gallery walls could easily be overlooked as 'trash', but through careful placement in the spaces of the Kunstverein München they become gestures that resemble the colour strokes of a painter. When displayed on the walls, the assemblages become a phantom of the type of works that have been hanging here since the Kunstverein's beginning in the early 19th century.

These are a few examples in which Ian Kiaer re-visits, for his Munich exhibition, the historic juxtaposition between readymade practises and the syntax of painting, in particular still-life painting. However, the artist does this without privileging one above the other. Kiaer treats the two iconic practises on an equal basis, and moulds them to a practise well known to a younger generation of conceptual artists: a practise of fragmentation and cultural re-presentation. The 'endnote' in the title of the exhibition can therefore be employed in a literal sense: as a qualifying addition to a history that has been written and re-written many times before. However, the exhibition itself offers an additional view. With *Endnote, pink*, Ian Kiaer has constructed a fascinating landscape of pictorial dimensions, avoiding a dominating narrative or hierarchy, while showing us objects of utility and value that are 'consumed' by their aesthetic installation. The 'endnote' in this respect is in line with a wider re-distribution of 'historical end points' in today's cultural production. 'In



contemporary art much has already been given,' says the artist, 'what is left are qualifying additions'.

Endnote, pink features the end stage of two consecutive projects at Kunstverein München that explore the role of painting within a young generation of conceptual artists. Where the previous exhibition at Kunstverein München, by German painter Silke Otto-Knapp, remained loyal to the hanging wall, the work of Ian Kiaer makes a physical step into the gallery spaces and identifies his exhibition as a pictorial landscape.

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Link: Ian Kiaer at Kunstverein Munich



Drawing connections between architectural models, painting and Utopian settlements, the work of **Ian Kiaer** moves from the micro to the macro *by Jonathan Griffin*

From Room to Room

Offset / Black Tulip (Black)
2009
Mixed media
Dimensions variable

142 | frieze | June • July • August 2010

All images courtesy: Alison Jacques Gallery, London, Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York, and the artist • Small White Offset photograph: Jean Yong



Part of Ian Kiaer's installation *Endless House Project: Ulchiro Endnote / Pink* (2008) consists of a paper and matchstick construction small enough to fit in the palm of your hand. It resembles a building of some kind; if not a conventional house then perhaps a shop or a commercial premises, with an upper level that juts out over the ground. Most of its walls are created from rectangular images, each one a cell cut from a Manga comic strip, each one joined to its neighbour by way of scarified globs and hairy tendrils of glue, dispensed, it appears, via a hot-melt glue gun.

Explorations of Ian Kiaer's work often begin most naturally at the level of the micro, despite the fact that the London-based artist has, for over a decade, been making manifestations of the very grandest reaches of ambition. Panoramic vistas, visionary architectural plans and Utopian settlements are established by frail and scuffed scraps of found materials, discarded bric-a-brac and delicate, hand-made maquettes. By attending to worlds in microcosm – studio placeholders for expansive realms from the history of art, architecture and literature – Kiaer tentatively tests the ground in front of him, asking 'what's left' for today's artist to build upon.¹

Kiaer's is an art of entropy and disintegration. Formally and philosophically, he tests the propensity of things to hold together, to prise apart or to float irredeemably away from one another. The conclusion he arrives at, more often than not, is the latter. In the case of the house in *Endless House Project: Ulchiro Endnote / Pink* the glue seems hastily and inconsistently applied. The object remains, however, a cohesive nucleus compared to the constellation of objects beside it. On the floor: a creased quadrilateral of black polythene, over which the tiny building peers as if it were a lake, and another crumpled sheet of translucent polythene, tinted pink. On the wall: a large rectangle of pale pink taffeta, pinned to a wooden stretcher, and another, smaller stretcher bearing the same fabric, adorned with a vertical line of black ink spots.

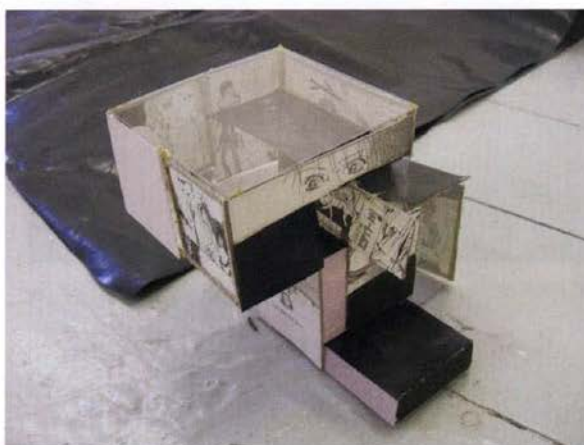
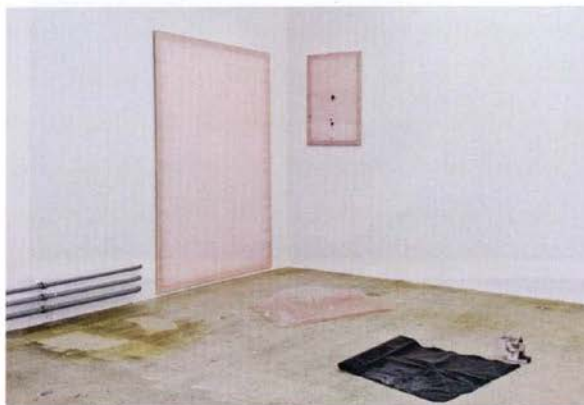
The installation adds up to a series of substitutions, of nods to absent or impossible things. The paper building, for instance, is little more than an idea of a building, a probably unrealizable structure (the wide upper storey makes it precariously top-heavy), animated by disconnected frames of cartoon narrative. While the polythene might gesture to water or a landscape, it might also be discarded rubbish. Although it seems natural to call the rectangles fixed to the wall 'paintings', can the term be applied in any meaningful sense? Materially, they are as much paintings as any Modernist monochrome, but in their flimsiness they seem void of all content and conviction, although the ink blots on the smaller work leave the door slightly ajar for content to gust back in. They refer *sotto voce* to a graphic convention occasionally used in Manga comics whereby characters dissolve into lens flares in the closing frame of the story. Their content – such as it is – is the very departure of content itself.

A recent body of work circles the elusive *tulipa nigra*, the eponymous flower from Alexandre Dumas' 1850 novel *The Black Tulip*. In the book, the unnaturally bred flower is held as symbol of enlightened perfection, relentlessly pursued by the protagonist even despite his incarceration. Kiaer, similarly, is at once confounded and irresistibly attracted by things he believes to be impossible for the artist today. Trained as a painter, he is consumed by what he calls 'the endless death of painting'. How, then, does he manage to haul himself out of bed each morning and make work about a ship that has sailed? He makes models. Those pink rectangles fixed to the wall are models of paintings, in the same way that the gluey paper box is a model of a building. An exhibition that Kiaer is preparing for the Kunstverein Munich, opening on 10 June, consists, at the time of writing, predominantly of such wall-based works, though they will remain, perhaps indefinitely, models of paintings. The status of the model, Kiaer says, is always one of movement: it travels between an idea and the concretization of that idea, whether it has already taken place or is yet to come. It is physically light, transportable and schematic. It need not be finely crafted – in fact, speed is often a prerequisite of its construction. In some instances the model is impossibly optimistic, presenting an idealized image with all imperfections smoothed out. It is always critical in its relation to the thing it represents.

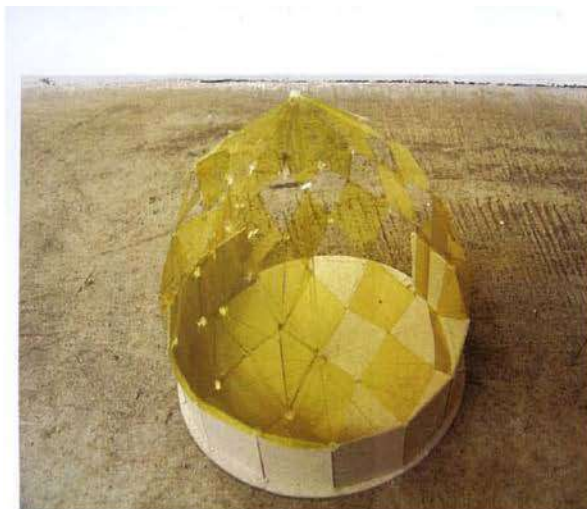
For many of the artists and architects who Kiaer is interested in, the model is not a means to an end but an end in itself – the

Below top and middle:
*Endless House Project:
Ulchiro Endnote / Pink*
2008
Mixed media
Dimensions variable
(below: exhibition view
Alison Jacques Gallery,
London
middle: detail)

Bottom:
Kortrijk Proposal
2009
Cardboard, acetate
sheeting and foam
Dimensions variable



June • July • August 2010 | frieze | 143



Top:
Grey Cloth Project:
Glasbaus
(detail)
2005
Mixed media
Dimensions variable

Middle:
Grey Cloth Project:
Scheerbart / Projector
2005
Mixed media
Dimensions variable
Exhibition view
Tanya Bonakdar Gallery,
New York, 2005

Bottom:
Dumas Project:
Large White Offset
2010
Mixed media
Dimensions variable
Exhibition view
Tanya Bonakdar
Gallery, New York, 2010

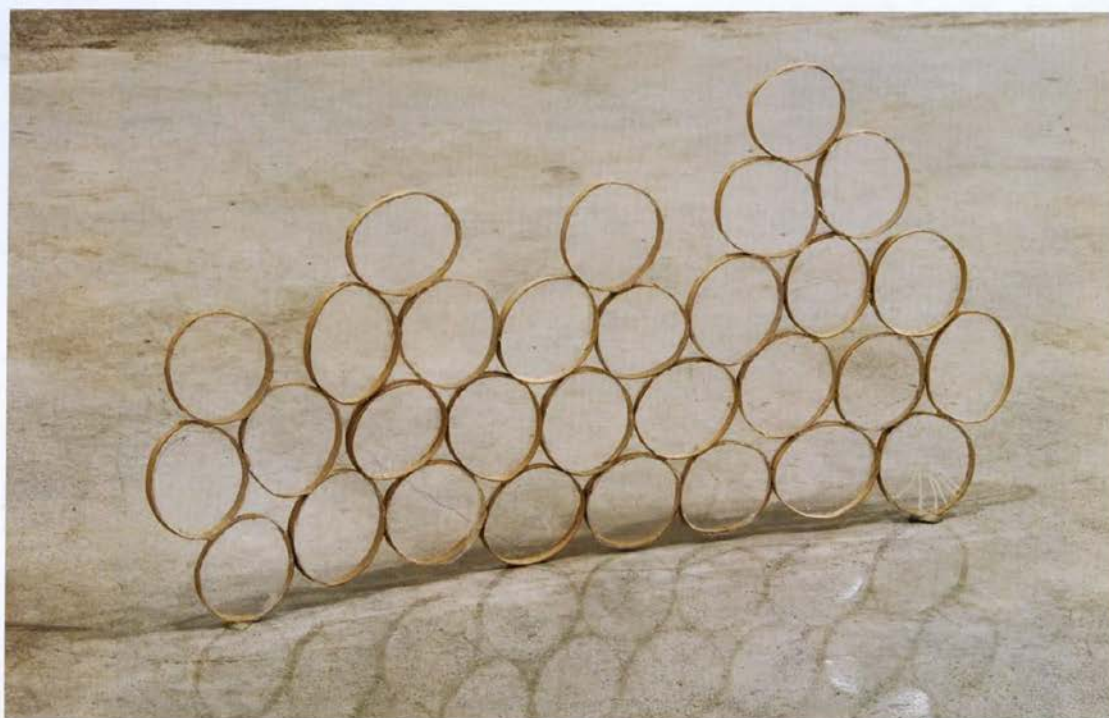
articulation of an idea perpetually preserved in the womb of the imagination, never tested by being born into reality. Frederick Kiesler, a Romanian architect who settled in New York in 1926, spent much of his life evolving plans for what he called his 'Endless House'. The modular structure would be a new kind of home, rejecting the box-like forms of conventional buildings in favour of curving walls that allowed no dark corners or sharp edges. Responding directly to the human body, the 'Endless House' embodied the architect's theory of 'Correalism' – the idea that, in Kiesler's words, 'an object doesn't live until it correlates', and that the space between forms is as real as the objects themselves.² It is easy to see the influence of Kiesler's theory on Kiaer's airy arrangements, and even on the artist's frequent employment of (slightly deflated) inflatables in his work. Just as the model building in *Endless House Project: Ulcebiro Endnote / Pink* transforms a sheet of black plastic into a lake merely through its physical proximity, so fictions are fanned into flame by the conjunction of hitherto inert objects.

What is most important for Kiaer about Kiesler's project, and the reason that he has named an ongoing body of work after the 'Endless House', is that it reveals something vital about the relationship between an individual and his or her environment, and about the ebb and flow between interiority and open space. This relationship is felt all the more acutely by a studio-based artist such as Kiaer, who typically works alone while attempting to make meaningful connections with life outside. In his essay 'Building Dwelling Thinking' (1954), Martin Heidegger traces the etymology of the world building (*Bauen*, in German) to the Old English and High German *Baun*, meaning to dwell, and thence to the verb to be: *ich bin, du bist* and so on.³ Built dwellings, says Heidegger, reflect our very being in the world.

Despite his preoccupation with past failures, Kiaer has his hopeful gaze set on that which remains possible.

With this in mind, Kiaer has often returned to the early history of glass architecture, in particular the proposals made in the early 20th century by the German architect Bruno Taut, and their excited endorsement by Taut's contemporary, the novelist, poet and artist Paul Scheerbart. Taut envisaged glass architecture transforming not just the appearance of the contemporary city, but actually bringing about new social harmony. In Taut's temporary glass pavilion for the 1914 Werkbund Exhibition in Cologne, Scheerbart contributed 14 slogans to the interior of the brightly coloured, prismatic dome, including 'COLOURED GLASS DESTROYS HATRED', and 'WITHOUT A GLASS PALACE LIFE IS A BURDEN'. Heedless of Scheerbart's warning, months later Europe was at war. For *Grey Cloth Project: Glasbaus* (2005) Kiaer remade Taut's pavilion in miniature with card and jaundiced yellow plastic, the structure's incomplete dome rising beseechingly towards its idealized plan view painted in watercolour on the wall above it.

Elsewhere in that body of work, as in the installations *Grey Cloth Project: Scheerbart / Bed* and *Grey Cloth Project: Scheerbart / Projector* (both 2005), Scheerbart's illness and eventual death in 1915 are acknowledged by Kiaer through the inclusion of rudimentary life-sized beds. It is attractive to the artist to imagine Scheerbart vicariously inhabiting these transparent structures filled with light and colour while confined to his sickbed. A more recent work, *Kortrijk Proposal* (2009), carries this image of incapacitation further still through reference to Thomas Mann's 1921 novel *The Magic Mountain*. In the book, the bourgeois patients of a Davos sanatorium survey a disintegrating Europe on the brink of World War I from their reclining chairs, 'piously withdrawn, looking down from a height of 5,000 feet or so upon the earth and all that therein was'.⁴ Kiaer's response, a full-sized cardboard model of a distorted reclining chair, will be produced for public use in a new hospital in the Belgian city of Kortrijk, alongside a high window with panoramic views over the typically flat landscape below. Beside it stands a small structure not unlike a cross between Taut's pavilion and a bedside table, which also refers both to the geometric form in Albrecht Dürer's engraving *Melencolia I* (1514) known as Dürer's Solid – a mysterious allegorical object of intellectual



contemplation – and a rejected proposal from 1924 by the avant-garde Russian architect Konstantin Melnikov for Lenin's sarcophagus.

None of which information is immediately available to the viewer approaching Kiaer's work for the first time. It offers a paradox: thickly matted philosophical, literary, architectural and artistic references bound together in works that, in their physical and aesthetic lightness, threaten to blow away at any moment. Sometimes, as with Kiaer's recurrent use of the silhouette of a magpie copied from Pieter Bruegel's painting *The Hunters in the Snow* (1565), he incorporates a fragment which some observant viewers might recognise. In most instances, however, the references are left deliberately out of reach. Kiaer completed a PhD thesis in 2008 titled 'Endless House: Models of Thought for Dwelling' which comprehensively weaves together many of the themes in his work, but opens it with a firm disclaimer stating that: 'I have resisted asking of my studio work what it must not be compelled to answer.'⁵

Indeed, the fragmentary, incomprehensible and reticent nature of Kiaer's visual language forms the meat and potatoes of his practice. This is part of the work's sickness, but it is also what gives it life. It is pervaded by an ever-present promise of something withheld, of something mysterious, vast and wonderful yet now obscured or forgotten. Kiaer is fascinated by the potential of a fragment to stand in for the whole, and by the contemporary impossibility of representing that same whole from an all-encompassing, universalized overview. It is for this reason that he remains entranced by the paintings of Bruegel, whose training as a cartographer enabled him to picture the world as a receding stage populated by concurrent, mutually oblivious events while somehow managing to cling together as a unified field of vision. Kiaer first paid tribute to the painter in an early, important work titled *Bruegel Project: Casa Malaparte* (1999), in which he isolated and repainted the windmill perched precariously on a spike of rock in Bruegel's *The Procession to Calvary* (1564). He did not consider the quotation a painting so much as a model; similarly, in the same work a stool, a lump of foam

and a tiny card box stood as a model for another building on a rock, the villa built by the writer Curzio Malaparte in 1942 on the island of Capri.

Both the windmill and Casa Malaparte allow their occupants to gaze upon the world from a solitary position of removal; with distance, it is hoped, comes enlightenment. Standing over Kiaer's dismembered and silent installations, it is hard not to be skeptical of that possibility. Instead, the artist clears a space distinguished not by the authority of its privileged vision, but by its openness to the potential of discovery through making, to what is often termed *poesis*. In contrast to its classical partner, *praxis*, which is understood as the direct articulation of the artist's will, *poesis* refers to an exploratory process of making which results in the unveiling of meaning. Theodor Adorno defended the form of the essay over that of the thesis along equivalent lines: 'Instead of achieving something scientifically, or creating something artistically, the effort of the essay reflects a childlike freedom that catches fire, without scruple, on what others have already done.'⁶ This is the mode of creativity that Kiaer subscribes to. By shuffling together existing fragments and by paying close attention to the combustible spaces between them, Kiaer, despite his preoccupation with past failures, frustrated ambitions and exhausted narratives, has his hopeful gaze set firmly on that which remains possible. He is not parading empty vessels, but refilling them one drip at a time.

Jonathan Griffin is a writer who lives in Los Angeles, USA.

1 Unless otherwise stated, all Ian Kiaer quotations are taken from a conversation with the author, April 2010

2 Quoted in Lisa Phillips, *Frederick Kiesler*, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, 1989, p.104

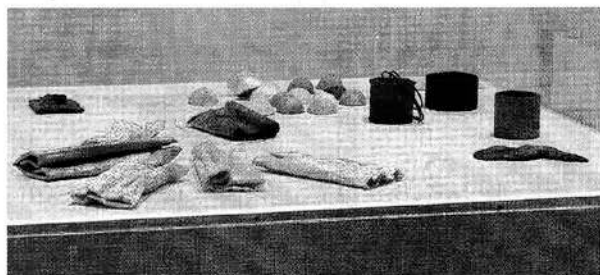
3 Martin Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, Harper Perennial, New York, 1975, first published in German 1954, p.454

4 Thomas Mann, *The Magic Mountain*, Vintage Classics, London, 1999, first published in German 1924, p.389

5 Ian Kiaer, 'The Endless House: Models of Thought for Dwelling', PhD thesis, 2008, p.7

6 Brian O'Connor ed., *The Adorno Reader*, Wiley-Blackwell, Oxford, 2000, p.93

Dumas Project: Small White Offset
(detail)
2010
Mixed media
Dimensions variable



the artist—perhaps the most important single contribution since Lucy Lippard's pioneering monograph of 1976. Yet in the face of the mutely expressive, itchy inert objects themselves, Fer's scrupulously tentative ruminations leave me in doubt. Lippard, as she notes, systematically classified these relics: test pieces, prototypes, studies, and models, each made for distinct purposes. Fer wants to hold back from such categorizing in order to catch hold of what is "raw and provisional" in them, what is makeshift, precarious, nonsignifying, just "fooling around." That desire is, I think, entirely in the spirit of Hesse, an artist who said, "I would like the work to be non-work." The space of unknowing that Fer wants to get to through the studio works—are they something or are they nothing?—is one toward which Hesse's art as a whole was oriented. But I wonder whether the extraordinary perceptual and hermeneutical labor Fer exerts does not end up veiling precisely what she wants to explore.

Maybe her task is itself an impossible undertaking. The very name Eva Hesse, and the pieces' family resemblance to what we know as Hesse's works, makes it impossible to subtract from them the sense of completion and authority they never had for the artist in her studio. Things folded, things piled, things twisted, things wound and unwound; tangled things, blunt things, abject things, things with appendages and appendages lacking things to connect to; materials that have a congealed look, materials that seem lost or discarded or mistreated; shapes that look like they should have been made of flesh and shapes, that look like they might be made of flesh but should not have been—you can look at these things, these materials, these shapes, and feel the shudder of an unnameable nanosensation, or you can let your eye pass by them without reaction; maybe you can do both at once. If it weren't for the effect of the artist's name, they might be just gnarly bits of matter, but in association with it, they are the traces of an intention, one that we cannot escape even as it escapes our impulse to define it.

—Barry Schwabsky

Ian Kiaer

BLOOMBERG SPACE

The first gallery in Bloomberg Space, little more than a lobby, is a singularly unsuitable place for the display of art. With its shiny black floor and track lighting, it is coolly corporate in feel. Its irregular, small area is overwhelmed by a double-height ceiling and a corner of floor-to-ceiling glass. A footpath cuts diagonally through the tiny space, with its one oddly oblique wall, making it uncomfortable to stop and actually look at the artworks forced into its corners.

Into this unwelcoming place, Ian Kiaer has heroically installed his understated art. A painter by training and disposition, Kiaer is noted for his combinations of painting—flat monochromes, abstract patterns, or even flimsy pieces of dyed fabric, such as the lilac rectangle in *Offset/Black Tulip (Yellow)* (all works 2009)—with sculptural forms

and readymade objects: chairs, rubber mats, and so on. Sometimes he includes small architectural models, and so his work has the tentative feel of a mock-up or study, a definitively unfinished response to site, materials at hand, and, perhaps, the entire unresolved history of painting. It is surprising that work so quiet should offer another culmination or end point in this history, yet this is precisely the artist's idea: to suggest a route in painting's continuing intellectual history rather than take a detour, such as "painting in the expanded field," which Kiaer considers a new, hybrid medium rather than an extension of the logic of painting alone.

Baroque architects would respond to an irregularly shaped site—one missing a corner, or with an oblique wall—by inserting architectural features such as niches or curves in order to "correct" any irregularities. One senses that the positioning of objects here—for example, the particular angle of the tall aluminum tower *Offset/Black Tulip (Frame)*—a fragile-looking yet sturdy construction made of three metal frames, one atop the other, leaning against a triangular metal support—is similarly meant to balance the irregularities of the room. In *Offset/Black Tulip (Black)*, a maquette-like, tabletop version of the same tower—looking like an anorexic version of Vladimir Tatlin's Monument to the Third International—reinforces the sense of the work-as-model. Precise alignments suggest a careful attention to architecture notably absent in the disproportionate space where the objects are housed: In *Offset/Black Tulip (Yellow)*, the left side of a monochrome yellow painting lines up with the pedestal before it and the lilac fabric above; this yellow painting's lower edge marks exactly the midpoint between the pedestal below and the bottom of a red rectangle to the left. A small, empty, overturned yogurt container sits next to a block of Styrofoam, as if fully aware that in any other context it would be crushed and tossed in the trash. It strains to carry with it some dignity and be recognized like any work of art in this inhospitable place. Kiaer is often obliquely inspired by texts; this piece relates to Alexandre Dumas's novel *The Black Tulip* (1850), about a quest to achieve a miraculous, impossibly hued flower. Here, an easy analogy for the elusive "black tulip" would be an exhibition that ennoble this space. Kiaer has managed this near impossibility; "Offset/Black Tulip" delicately counters the glaring ungenerosity of its host.

—Gilda Williams

View of "Ian Kiaer," 2009.



ST. IVES, UK

Dexter Dalwood

TATE ST IVES

This midcareer survey of paintings and collages by Dexter Dalwood provides a full picture of his work since 1997 and confirms his reputation as one of the most interesting and engaging painters at work today. The display was curated by Martin Clark (the director of Tate St Ives) and shows the persistence with which Dalwood has pursued the twin themes central to his work: painterly quotation and psychologically charged scenes linked to famous historical figures and events.

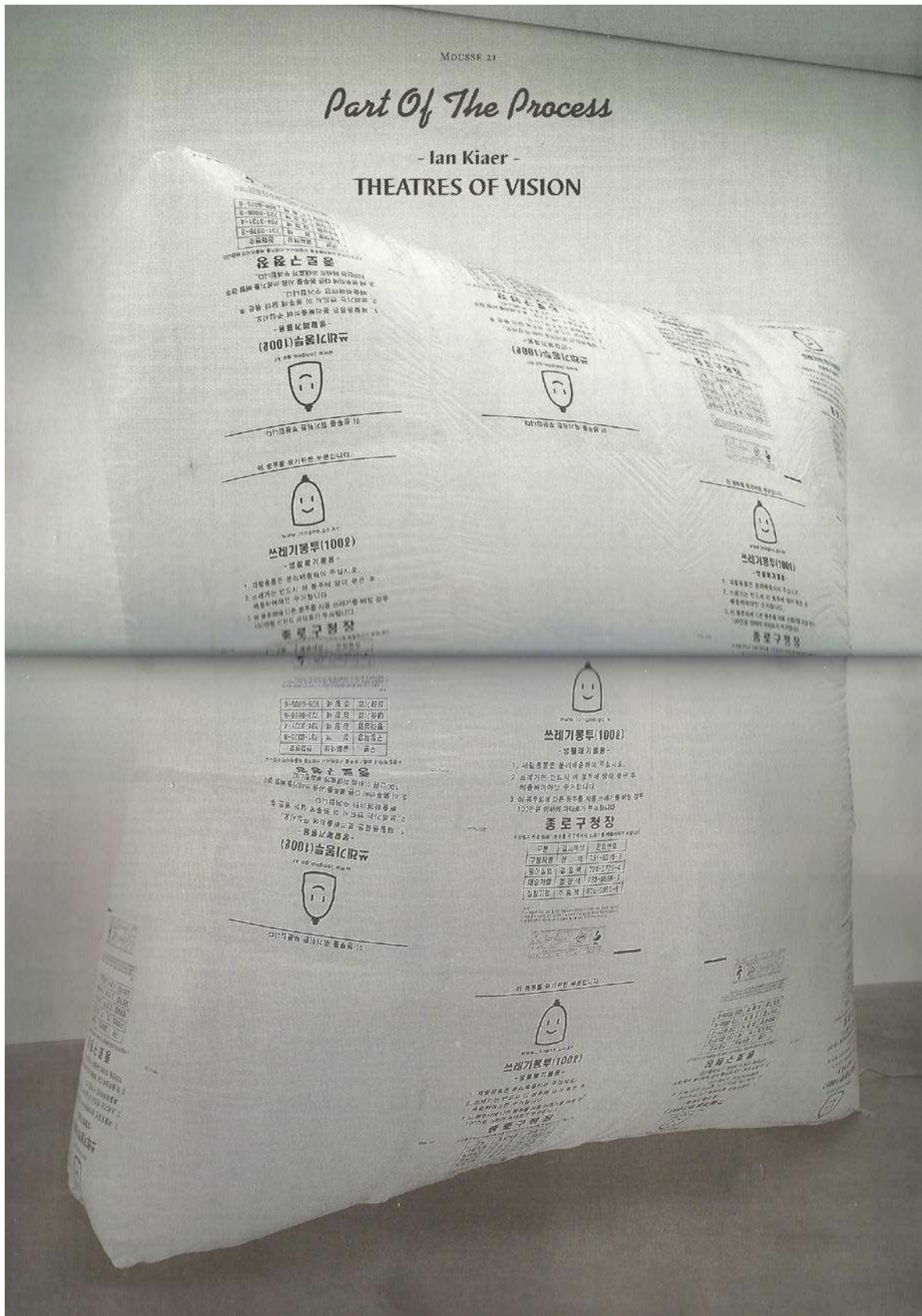


MOUSSE 21

Part Of The Process

- Ian Kiaer -

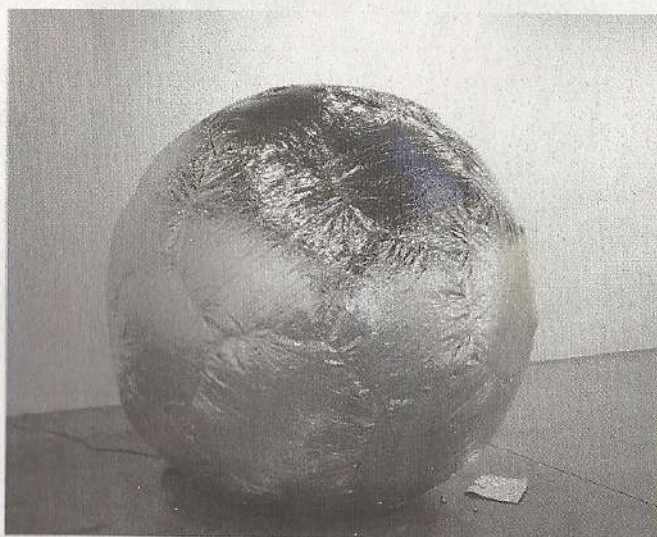
THEATRES OF VISION





BY BARBARA CASAVECCHIA

Landscapes. Sets. Fragments. Stories. Haikus. A single word, implying a whole universe, could perhaps sum up the installations by Ian Kiaer (born in '71 in London, where he still lives) at Turin's GAM through January. But a word is not enough, because his projects are as layered and polysemic as hypertexts, mingling Bosch, Kenzo Tange, Watteau, Archigram, LeDoux, Korean manga and architectural utopias.



(A)

^BBARBARA ^CCASAVECCHIA *First things first. How did you structure your exhibition at GAM in Turin?*

^IAN ^KIAER Around three projects that I began at different stages, and also some side works. It's the first time I've been able to see them work together. They are *Bruegel Project / Casa Malaparte* (1999), first presented at Manifesta 3 in Ljubljana; *Hakp'o Dang (Black)* (2001), based on the life of Yang Paengson, an exiled 16th-century Korean scholar of Confucian paintings, and the experience of living in contemporary Seoul – two seemingly irreconcilable con-

(A) Ian Kiaer, *Bruegel project: survival balloon*, 2007. Courtesy: the artist and Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York. Photo: Fabian Birgfeld, TECTONICS.

(B) Ian Kiaer, *Erdindenbau*, 2006. Installation view Galleria Massimo De Carlo. Courtesy: Galleria Massimo De Carlo, Milan.

(C) Ian Kiaer, *Bruegel project: yellow film (detail)*, 2007. Courtesy: the artist and Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York. Photo: Fabian Birgfeld, TECTONICS.



ditions; and *Scheerbart project* (2005), based on the novelist, architectural critic and science fiction fantasist Paul Scheerbart, whose manifesto on glass architecture influenced many of Bruno Taut's visionary drawings for his volume of *Alpine Architecture*.

BC *Why did you choose Bruegel as a starting point?*

IK Bruegel originally interested me because of his trip through the Alps to Italy, which took him to Rome via Naples. He painted a naval battle set in its



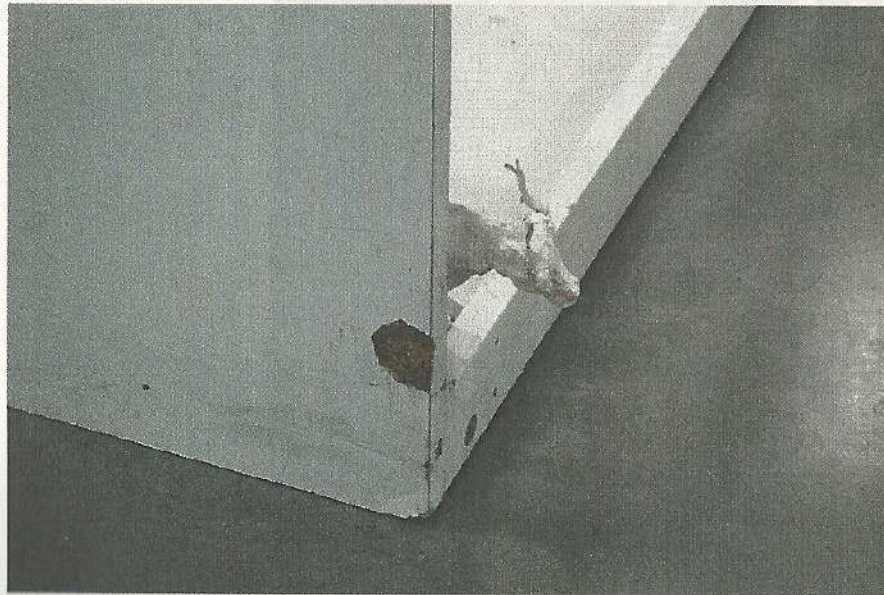
(B)

gulf (1560, Galleria Doria-Pamphilj, Rome), near where Casa Malaparte was built in the '30s. At the time I was reading Malaparte's descriptions of the city and it seemed they both responded to a particular sense of panorama.

BC *An intentional Italian reference? Are there any others?*

IK I've recently made a work involving a curtain and mirrors... I love Mollino, and I visited his house in Turin – a house that has not so much to do with dwelling, but rather is an artifice, a set.

BC *Your installations seem to work as theatres of vision, combining fragments and cross-references. In Japanese, the word "ma" (space) is often used to define the emp-*



(C)

tiness surrounding an object, the visual "interval" around it, like the silence before or after a sound. "Ma" is not created by making a composition of elements, but rather is the thing that takes place in the imagination of the person who experiences them. Does this Eastern concept inform your strategies in any way?

^{IK} Perhaps the Korean equivalent for "ma" is "pung-su" (wind and water), a kind of ancient Chinese geomancy. One can see it in paintings, in the way a roof of a house is placed in relation to a mountain. There's always a tension, both visual and metaphorical, that translates into a philosophical position.

^{BC} *Why Korea?*

^{IK} I had a long residency in Seoul in 2001 and my wife is Korean, so I go back to it all the time.

^{BC} *In her essay "Sculpture in the Expanded Field" (1979), Rosalind Krauss*



claimed that “sculpture itself has become a kind of ontological absence, the combination of exclusions”, a category resulting from the addition of the not-landscape to the not-architecture. Why do you use architectural models?

IK I remember reading that Nikolai Tarabukin dismissed Rodchenko’s *Pure Red Colour*, calling it opaque and stupid and stuck in representation. It was an early attack by an avant-garde writer on the autonomy of painting and more generally the art object. He called for artists to enter the factories and begin a new form of collective production. That was as early as 1922. It seemed so much of what interested me about painting was to do with a kind of redundancy and the notion of the model helped me to play with this. The model involves aspiration and possibility, but also is about representation and return, and works in the space between more defined forms of practice.

BC *Among the subjects of your research, one finds the stories of exiled intellectuals, working out of the mainstream. You often use very fragile and unstable materials. Are you trying to counterbalance the big-ego, muscular rhetoric of architecture?*

IK I am interested in how things are undermined as a possible quality and critique. I just recently began a project based on Thomas Mann’s *The Magic Mountain*, whose characters look down on a European landscape from above, not from the viewpoint of a Hegelian confidence, but while reclining, in a position of sickness and weakness. To me, this makes the aerial view redeemable. I’m interested in how most tragedies occur through an excess of confidence.

BC *By making fairly small models, you often put viewers in the position of dominating the aerial view. How does scale comes into play?*

IK That’s not always so. In Turin, for instance, some works are bigger than the viewers. But I suppose scale is another issue that has to do with the model: you put it on a table, which immediately becomes something else. I think it’s important to have a check between the imaginary and the matter-of-factness of the ready-made.

BC *Do you always use the original materials, or do you re-create the installation with what’s at hand?*

IK I tend to use the original materials, but whenever I bring a work into relation with another, it’s difficult to see beforehand how it will evolve. For instance, this time I am adding a new work to the *Scheerbart project*. All these processes are open, and there’s always a need for improvisation, readjusting, re-hanging things. Very few works of mine are presented as they have been in the past.



DI BARBARA CASAVECCHIA

Paesaggi. Set. Frammenti. Racconti. Haiku. Si potrebbero riassumere così, in una sola parola-mondo, le installazioni di Ian Kiaer (nato nel '71 a Londra, dove vive), fino alla fine di gennaio alla GAM di Torino. Ma una parola non basta, perché i suoi "projects" sono stratificati e polisemici come ipertesti, dove s'incrociano Bosch, Kenzo Tange, Watteau, Archigram, LeDoux, i manga coreani e le utopie dell'architettura.



(11)



^BBARBARA ^CASAVECCHIA *Per prima cosa, come hai strutturato la tua mostra alla GAM di Torino?*

^IAN ^KIAER La mostra è strutturata intorno a tre progetti, iniziati in momenti diversi, e ad alcune opere secondarie. È la prima volta che vedo che effetto fanno, insieme, questi tre lavori. Si tratta di *Bruegel project / Casa Malaparte* (1999), presentato per la prima volta a Manifesta 3, a Ljubljana; *Hakp'o dang (black)* (2001), basato sulla biografia di Yang Paengson (un esiliato coreano del Cinquecento, studioso di dipinti confuciani) e sulle esperienze di vita nella Seul contemporanea – due condizioni apparentemente inconciliabili; e *Scheerbart project* (2005), incentrato sulla figura del romanziere, critico d'architettura e maestro della fantascienza Paul Scheerbart, il cui manifesto sull'architettura di vetro influenzò molti dei disegni visionari di Bruno Taut per il suo volume sull'architettura alpina.

(D) Ian Kiaer, *Stehlin project: Kunsthalle*, 2007.
Courtesy: Alison Jacques Gallery, London and Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York.

^{BC} *Perché hai scelto Bruegel come punto di partenza?*

^{IK} In principio, Bruegel ha suscitato il mio interesse a causa del suo viaggio in Italia, che lo portò ad attraversare le Alpi per poi giungere fino a Roma e a Napoli. Egli dipinse una battaglia navale, ambientata nel Golfo di Napoli (1560, Galleria Doria-Pamphilj, Roma), proprio vicino al luogo in cui, negli anni Trenta, fu costruita Casa Malaparte. All'epoca stavo leggendo le descrizioni della città fatte da Malaparte e mi è sembrato che sia lui sia Bruegel avessero una particolare percezione del panorama.

^{BC} *Il riferimento all'Italia è intenzionale? Ve ne sono altri?*

^{IK} Recentemente ho realizzato un'opera in cui vi erano una tenda e degli specchi... Adoro Mollino e ho visitato la sua casa a Torino – una casa che non sembra tanto un'abitazione, quanto un artificio, una scenografia.



BC *Le tue installazioni sembrano fungere da teatri della visione, che combinano frammenti e riferimenti incrociati. In giapponese la parola "ma" (spazio) è spesso usata per definire il vuoto che circonda un oggetto, un "intervallo" visivo che è simile al silenzio che precede o segue un suono. Il "ma" non è creato attraverso una composizione di elementi, ma piuttosto è ciò che ha luogo nell'immaginazione della persona che fa esperienza di tali elementi. Questo concetto orientale informa in qualche modo le tue strategie?*

IK Forse l'equivalente coreano di "ma" è "pung-su" (vento e acqua), una sorta di antica geomanzia cinese. Si può osservarla nei dipinti, nel modo in cui il tetto di una casa è posizionato rispetto a una montagna. C'è sempre una tensione, tanto visuale quanto metaforica, che si traduce in una posizione filosofica.



(E)

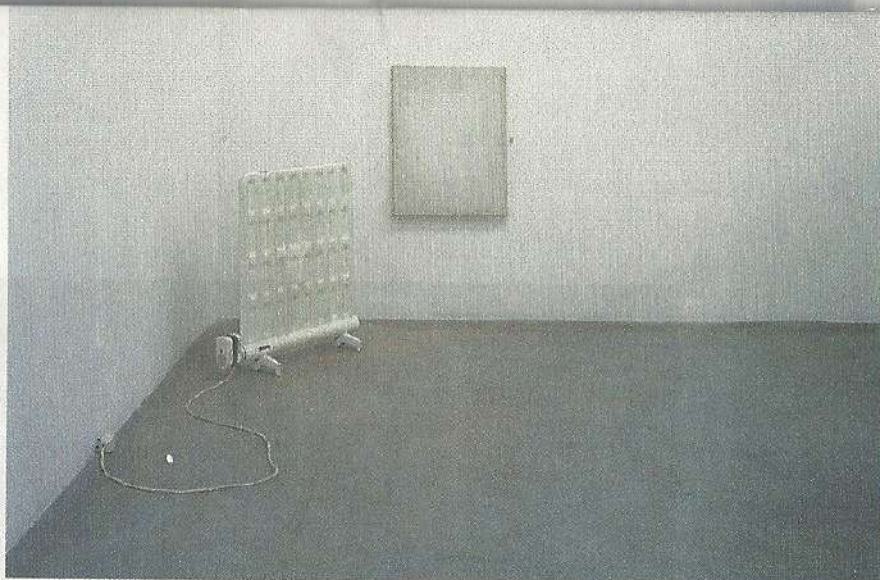
BC *Perché la Corea?*

IK Ho trascorso un lungo periodo a Seul, nel 2001, e mia moglie è coreana, perciò i miei riferimenti a quella terra sono frequentissimi.



^{BC} Nel suo saggio *“La scultura nel campo allargato”* del 1978 (in *L’originalità dell’avanguardia e altri miti modernisti*, Fazi 1985), Rosalind Krauss ha affermato che *“la scultura stessa è diventata una sorta di assenza ontologica, la combinazione delle esclusioni”*, una categoria risultante dall’aggiunta del non-paesaggio alla non-architettura. Perché ti servi di modelli architettonici?

^{IK} Ricordo di aver letto che Nikolaj Tarabukin liquidò *Il puro colore rosso* di Rodčenko definendolo ottuso, insulso e bloccato nella rappresentazione. Era un primo attacco, da parte di uno scrittore dell’avanguardia, all’autonomia della pittura e, in generale, all’oggetto artistico. Tarabukin esortava gli artisti ad entrare nelle fabbriche e a dare inizio a una nuova forma di produzione collettiva.



(F)

Tutto questo accadeva nel 1922. Mi sembrava che gran parte di ciò che m’interessava della pittura avesse a che fare con una sorta di ridondanza. Il concetto di modello mi ha aiutato a giocare con quest’aspetto. Il modello implica un’aspirazione e una possibilità, ma ha anche a che fare con la rappresentazione e il ritorno. Inoltre esso opera nello spazio esistente tra pratiche artistiche meglio definite.



BC *Tra i soggetti della tua ricerca, troviamo spesso storie di intellettuali esiliati che operano al di fuori del mainstream. Ti servi spesso di materiali estremamente fragili e instabili. Stai cercando di controbilanciare la retorica narcisistica e muscolare dell'architettura?*

IK M'interessa il modo in cui le cose possono essere messe in discussione, in quanto qualità e critica. Recentemente ho iniziato un progetto incentrato sulla *Montagna incantata* di Thomas Mann, i cui personaggi osservano un paesaggio europeo dall'alto, non dal punto di vista di una hegeliana fiducia in se stessi, ma da sdraiati, in una posizione di malattia e debolezza. Questo è ciò che rende la visione aerea accettabile ai miei occhi. Sono interessato al fatto che la maggior parte delle tragedie si verificano a causa di un eccesso di fiducia.

BC *Realizzando dei piccoli modelli, metti spesso gli spettatori nella posizione di coloro che dominano la visione aerea. In che modo entra in gioco il concetto di scala?*

IK Non è sempre così. A Torino, per esempio, alcune opere sono più grandi degli spettatori. Ma suppongo che quella della scala sia un'altra questione che ha a che vedere con il concetto di modello: lo metti su un tavolo e questo diventa subito qualcos'altro. Penso che sia importante interporre un ostacolo tra l'immaginario e la materialità del ready-made.

BC *Usi sempre i materiali originali o ricrei l'installazione con ciò che hai a portata di mano?*

IK Tendenzialmente uso i materiali originali, ma ogni volta che metto un'opera in rapporto con un'altra è difficile figurarsi a priori quale sarà il risultato. Per esempio, questa volta aggiungerò una nuova opera allo *Scheerbart project*. Tutti questi processi sono aperti e vi è sempre un'esigenza di improvvisazione, di riadattare e riconfigurare le cose. Pochissime delle mie opere vengono presentate esattamente come lo sono state in passato.

(E) Ian Kiaer, *Endless Theatre Project / St. John at Patmos*, 2003. Courtesy: the artist and Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York. Photo: Fabian Birgfeld, TECTONICS.

(F) Ian Kiaer, *Grey Cloth project: Radiator*, 2005. Courtesy: the artist and Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York. Photo: Fabian Birgfeld, TECTONICS.



Artist of the week 68: Ian Kiaer

Ian Kiaer's miniature landscapes of eclectic objects are like stepping inside the mind of an eccentric scholar

Skye Sherwin

guardian.co.uk, Wednesday 23 December 2009 16.12 GMT

[Article history](#)



Structured flotsam ... installation shots, COMMA 15 Ian Kiaer and COMMA 16 Dorothy Cross, December 2009. Photograph: © Bloomberg Space

Ian Kiaer's arrangements of objects might be scarcely more than ankle-high, but the worlds they evoke are vast. Parachute silk; pillows; a football; rubber matting; a cracked mirror; an old bedstead: these are just a few of the things that the British artist has brought together over the years to evoke a series of miniature landscapes. Often placed in the corners of rooms, spread over the floor or leaning against walls, Kiaer's flotsam looks anything but haphazard.

Given his attention to composition, it's perhaps no surprise that Kiaer, who studied at London's Slade and Royal College of Art in the 1990s, started his career as a painter. It was seeing Rem Koolhaas's architectural models at an ICA show that changed everything; Kiaer has since developed the model as a testing ground for his own experimental,



poetic and often wildly obscure ideas. In the past decade he's been a slowburner of the British art world, quietly following his own elusive path with [solo exhibitions at Tate Britain](#) and big international group shows such as the Venice Biennale or this year's [Lyon Biennial](#), along the way. His humdrum objects might evoke minimalism or scatter art, but Kiaer's principles are closer to an eccentric scholar's.

You could lose yourself for years in the references these installations spring from. Kiaer is drawn to intellectual loners – everyone from [Wittgenstein](#) to the German Jewish modern architect Alexander Beer or the 16th-century Korean artist Yang Paengson – channelling fragments of their biography into the forms his arrangements evoke. While Kiaer suggests open-ended ways of considering his work and that of his subjects, his use of complex allusions also tests what art can and cannot convey.

Why we like him: He might love the esoteric, but there's a clarity of purpose to Kiaer's project that he established early on. His 1999 work [Brueghel Project – Casa Malaparte](#), brings together the [16th-century Flemish painter](#) and the 20th-century Italian writer [Curzio Malaparte](#), persecuted by Mussolini. They're possibly the last people you'd expect to share conceptual space. Yet, through a block of foam, a painting of Brueghel's *The Procession to Calvary*, and an old stool, all in a palette of grubby blue and cream, Kiaer evoked the mountains they both surveyed and the isolated, far-reaching perspectives they created in their life or art. A model suggesting Malaparte's remote abode, provides a place to stop and think. There's an extraordinary finesse to Kiaer's graceful transformation of rough-edged material, where cryptic lore rubs against the everyday.

French Romance: His latest exhibition references *The Black Tulip*, a novel by the 19th-century writer of historical adventure stories, Alexandre Dumas.

Hard to read: Kiaer doesn't much like the idea of easy interpretation. "So often there is a demand to 'read a work,' he says.

Where can I see him? [Bloomberg Space](#), London 15 December – 16 January 2010.



THE INDEPENDENT

Ian Kiaer, Alison Jacques Gallery, London

Kiaer in the community works wonders

By Charles Darwent

Sunday, 18 November 2007

Of all the devils to plague a young artist, the most sulphurous is success. You're 26; you find your voice; you spend 10 years doing what you do: then what? How do you move on?

If you're Ian Kiaer, the answer is very, very gently. Kiaer is 36 but found his voice - precise, clever and quiet - a decade ago. In a world of Big Boy Art - jewelled skulls, epic machines, Matthew Barney - he chose to make work that was small. I don't mean in terms of size (it's hard to know where Kiaer's art starts and stops, though it often takes up a whole room), but of its vocabulary and grammar. Kiaer's palette runs from washed-out blue to watery lemon, his materials from the cheap and disposable to the pre-thrown-away. His handling of these is likewise invisibly slight. Find a piece of Styrofoam on a gallery floor and you're probably looking at a Kiaer.

There's a fragment like this in the back room of his London show, a work (and a setting) that ties the artist to his past. Above it on the wall is a sheet of paper with a splat of yellow on it, next to this a white paper bag of the kind used for hamburgers; in front of these, apparently for the visitor's use, is a stool of silvered cellophane and card. The thought of sitting on this, the disaster that would follow, makes you wince. Kiaer reminds us of our bodily weight and, by extension, of the heaviness of our gaze. In its delicate way, his work demands to be looked at delicately.

It would be easy to use the word Minimalist of all this, although it would also be wrong. Echoes of Robert Ryman's white-



on-white bricolage are distant and misleading. Kiaer is a formalist, his tentative constructions setting up a flutter of mind and eye from colour to pale colour, texture to texture, association to association. That refinement is what his work is about, but that isn't all.

As it happens, this new show is based on time Kiaer spent in the market area of Seoul in South Korea. At the sharp edge of globalisation, the Ulchiro district is in a constant flux of self-destruction and reinvention. Impermanence and detritus are what capitalism is about, the unending pressure of novelty. And you feel that, somewhere in this unpromising mix - the Styrofoam packaging, the paper bags - Kiaer has found a parallel with his own life as an artist, the need to bring new things to market.

And so the things he brings are those of the market, gently manipulated in the manner of Kiaer. (His name, as you'd hope, is pronounced "care".) Some of these feel like the artist we're used to, the one in Tate Britain's Art Now series three years ago. There is a pair of small canvases low on the wall - one coarse-woven and flesh pink, the other smooth, white and grubby - and a piece of pink expanded foam, what may or may not be a city built on it in folded card. This last is printed with Korean text. You have the curious sense of hearing a language that sounds intricate and beguiling, but whose meaning is entirely hidden from you.

So far, so Kiaer, although two other pieces in the show are less expected. One is an inflated cube of white plastic sheeting that seems mildly amiable, like a cartoon ghost; the other is the wilting steel frame of a billboard, its message its own message-less fragility. It's an intensely clever piece this, the carrier of signs reduced to a sign, a frail advertisement for frailness. You might read it as political, although really it is a depiction of Kiaer and his place in the world just now. Brilliant is the only word. It is probably beyond my powers of persuasion to convince you that a small gallery full of nearly nothing adds up to the best show in London, but it does. See it.

Alison Jacques Gallery, London W1 (020 7631 4720) to 22 December

Further reading 'Minimalism' edited by James Meyer, Phaidon 24.99



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Ian Kiaer

Alison Jacques Gallery

Ian Kiaer's work deploys two kinds of scale and asks you to encounter it in two ways at once. The work's complexity derives from the fact that it is not possible to experience these two modes simultaneously. The first kind of scale is literal – the stuff of Minimalism and post-Minimalism. The work is scaled to the size of your body and dramatized by your movement around it. Rectangular cardboard tubes, once used to package fluorescent lights, stretch across the floor, just so far away from your feet. Some distance beyond, a painting hangs on the wall at eye-level. You walk around the show to find small cubes at your toes. A turquoise sheet of synthetic foam bends around at knee height.

Some of the objects aren't just found but cut up and arranged by Kiaer to resemble models, although they are more like memories or suggestions of models. Often these objects invoke architectural structures such as amphitheatres. So a second kind of scale comes into play – that of the imaginative encounter. Looking down on these 'maquettes', you need to picture yourself tiny, sitting on the amphitheatre steps. As you think what it would be to inhabit this work with a Lilliputian body, everything in the room begins to shift. A stain on the floor, an electrical socket – suddenly all these details are part of the scenario. Plenty of artists like to make tiny models, but what sets Kiaer apart is that the space of fiction is deliberately made to collapse. The human scale pulls you back from the miniature one, and there are always specific contradictions. For instance, at 1.6 metres, I can see over a bent strip of foam that forms an element of one work, right over to its other side. But the minuscule viewer that I imagine could not – to him or her the strip would be a massive sheer cliff. In this respect Kiaer's work recalls a moment of sculptural history that seems to have been forgotten – Joel Shapiro's works of the mid-1970s, with their tiny model houses set out in empty gallery spaces.

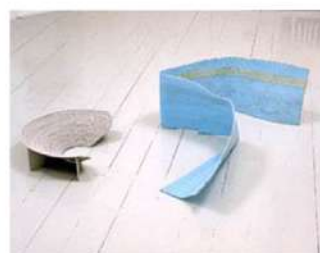
It's because of this double scale that Kiaer can deploy found objects in a different way from an artist such as Gabriel Orozco. In this exhibition they included an empty box and a football bladder, which resembled a Plasticine ball. But there's really no more than an immediate material similarity to Orozco because these objects are always being asked to be seen as something else: the box as a stage, the ball as a piece of a landscape. Yet Kiaer's interest is in the fragility of simile – he may want to tempt us to see these objects as like other things, but he's just as interested in reminding us that they are thrown-away bits of urban rubbish. The dynamic between the literal and imaginative status of the objects is

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About this review

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By Mark Godfrey



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also achieved through colour and dirt. The colour of some of the objects Kiaer uses defamiliarizes them, making them seem appropriate parts of the imagined scene. A cylinder, for example, is such a strange pink that we don't recognize it as a former light cover. Yet their grubbiness pulls them back, reminding us they all came from the street.

On the walls there are stretched pieces of material, sometimes picking up the colours of the things on the floor. Other wall-hung objects are painted on, and these paintings have a double status like the floor objects, but one that concerns itself with materiality and image rather than scale. Kiaer works on tatty pieces of found cloth. Pre-existing stains are accompanied by those he's made with his paintbrushes, which here delicately depict birds. Look closer, and you can see that he has drawn pencil outlines of other figures – a bull, a tree. So why has he only painted in some of the outlined shapes? If the fabrics used to make the paintings on are cast-outs, used up and finished, the images have the opposite status – they are incomplete, potential and promising.

The birds and outlined shapes are fragmentary quotes from Old Masters such as Piero di Cosimo and Pieter Brueghel. This kind of allusion makes the paintings even stranger, as it jars with their scrappy appearance. A very different mode of connection exists between the works as a whole and the subject of Kiaer's wider research. This show comes out of his study of the avant-garde architect and designer Frederick Kiesler, as is signalled in the press release and in the titles – for instance, *Endless House Project/(Pink)* or *Endless Theatre Project/Stadium (Black)* (both 2004). But the works do not resemble Kiesler's models or stage sets. So how do we make sense of the connection? We are more than used to seeing an object whose title asks us to think of it beyond the limitations of its physical status. For this reason Liam Gillick's *Discussion Platforms* (1996–ongoing) provoke great scepticism, but I feel that the mode of connection between Kiaer's work and Kiesler's ideas is less tenuous but more complex.

You can see why Kiesler matters to Kiaer, given his similar resistance to working in any one medium. But do these works create the endless space that Kiesler imagined? Not really – owing to the double scale, space is fragmented more than unified. But because of the way the ensembles of objects and paintings work in gallery space, we are always reminded of the contingency of positions, of the disconnections as much as the links between the various parts, of the propositional and suggestive, rather than resolved, status of the quasi-models. Perhaps it is in this way that Kiesler's thought, if not his works, is rearticulated.

Mark Godfrey

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Art Now

Ian Kiaer

22 November 2003 - 25 January 2004

Admission free

Ian Kiaer, Brueghel
project/studio
© the artist



An inattentive viewer could overlook Ian Kiaer's groupings of architectural models, found objects, paintings and drawings arranged modestly on and around the gallery floor. Yet the rudimentary nature of his materials - a block of polystyrene, an upturned plastic bin - contrasts directly with the epic subjects they evoke - a snow-covered sweep of land, a vertical cliff face - while painted backdrops lend spatial depth and context to the settings. Each component acts as a visual notation to a complex, fragmentary narrative, derived from Kiaer's comprehensive research into the idealistic notions of various eccentric visionaries. Whether architect, philosopher or artist, each is united across history in their search for a retreat from the dominant ideologies of their day or concerned with methods for the physical or social integration of man and environment. Emblematic of unrealised or abandoned utopias, Kiaer's works are inevitably imbued with a wistful romance, whose transience is eloquently articulated through the ephemeral materials used.

For Art Now, Kiaer brings together two ongoing projects inspired by the landscape paintings of the sixteenth-century artist Pieter Brueghel and the working spaces of the philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein. He presents earlier works alongside new pieces that develop previously established themes. Tentative connections weave through the works: the desire to view the world from a remote position, and the importance attributed to the location of the workplace or studio within the landscape, whether imaginary or built. However, rather than illustrate specific narratives, Kiaer evokes a context in which ideas and motifs overlap, encouraging a dialogue between the disparate components.

In *Brueghel project/Casa Malaparte* 1999 Kiaer links Brueghel with the Italian poet Curzio Malaparte, who was exiled by Mussolini in 1933 to the same mountainous and remote part of Italy that the painter had journeyed through several centuries earlier. The work comprises a large, battered chunk of blue foam, positioned next to a stool. On the stool is a smaller square of brown foam supporting a tiny balsa wood house, suggesting an isolated dwelling dwarfed by its surroundings. On the wall hangs a canvas painted with an empty landscape, its only feature a windmill situated precariously on top of a mountain. Kiaer has taken the windmill motif from Brueghel's *The Procession of Calvary* and draws parallels to the retreat Malaparte was inspired to build on a rocky promontory above the Tyrrhenian Sea following his two and a half years of isolation.

The theme of artistic pursuit resulting from voluntary or enforced exile is central to the installation and unites many of Kiaer's earlier works. *Wittgenstein project / palm house* 2002 and *Wittgenstein project / Skjolden* 2003 refer to the remote buildings



where the philosopher worked in Ireland and Norway respectively. The latter takes as its focus the small wooden house of vernacular Norwegian design that the philosopher commissioned to be built in 1913. Overlooking a lake and surrounded by cliffs, it provided Wittgenstein with the almost hermetic conditions he needed to work on *Tractatus Logico Philosophicus*. Kiaer's work consists of an overturned kitchen waste bin, a small pink watercolour and strips of pink Styrofoam lying horizontally on the floor. The colour guides our reading of the objects as part of a unified landscape and, for Kiaer, is indicative of the romantic nature of Wittgenstein himself.

The viewer cannot hope to grasp all the intricate associations that permeate Kiaer's compositions. The links he makes are intuitive rather than academic; by layering references and leaping across centuries Kiaer generates relationships between complex ideas and individuals. Yet while his motives remain multi-faceted, the arrangements retain a visual coherence that captures a sense of the subject. Constituent parts of a composition are often fused through tone and colour. *Brueghel project / studio* refers to Brueghel's painting *Winter*, and an impression of desolate chill is evoked through the use of grey/green tinged props. The cardboard model with acetate window relates to a building designed by contemporary architects Anne Lacaton and Jean-Phillipe Vassal in 1993, a sort of 'archetypal studio', half enclosed and half exposed to the external landscape. The use of the model in Kiaer's compositions has connotations of the 'ideal', yet also suggests a project still to be realised, existing only in the imagination. Furthermore, in *Brueghel project/studio* Kiaer highlights the impracticality of such a design by situating it in an inappropriately hostile climate.

Kiaer gives form to select visions whilst simultaneously emphasising their remoteness from reality. The painted backdrops indicate the projected ideal while the impoverished props represent the transient and unattainable nature of such ambitions. At once merged into and overwhelmed by the cavernous expanse of the gallery, the tableaux operate as miniature theatre, drawing us in yet never allowing us to engage fully with the fantasy. Balanced precariously between imagined and real spaces, Kiaer's works exist on the periphery, encapsulating the disparity between art and life.

Text by Lizzie Carey-Thomas

Biography

Born in London, 1971 1991-95 Slade School of Art, University College London 1998-2000 Royal College of Art, London Lives and works in London

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