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**new york**



'rak'rüm (noun);  
the back room of an art gallery  
where artists and art lovers hang

**Tillman Kaiser**



Tillman Kaiser, *Butter My Heart*,  
2008, Egg tempura on canvas  
© Courtesy of Honor Fraser, LA

Born in Graz and living in Vienna, Austria, Tillman Kaiser pulls from Dada, Surrealism and Constructivism in the development of his work. Kaiser moves with ease between 2D and 3D, using a purposefully understated palette, architectonic structuring, as well as found and ready-made objects, to create work that is both formalist and conceptually surprising.  
EDUCATION 1998 Academy of Fine Arts, Vienna SOLO EXHIBITIONS 2009 Wilkinson, ...[\[more\]](#)



**Interview with Tillman Kaiser**

Los Angeles - Tillman Kaiser's first exhibition in the US opened on May 24, 2008 at Honor Fraser Gallery located in the Culver City arts district in Los Angeles. Artslant writer, Nancy Lupo, visited with Tillman during installation and talked about his working process, cheese graters and inspiration. The following Q&A took place as a result of that meeting.

Tillman Kaiser is represented by **Honor Fraser** in Los Angeles, and **Layr Wuestenhagen Contemporary** in Vienna.



**Nancy Lupo:** I would like to start by asking you about the nature of your studio practice and the way in which your works evolve and flow from one to the next?

**Tillman Kaiser:** My studio is a place where I create my own world. It is like a laboratory for psychoanalysis. While I am working I get the most ideas. I shift between doing sculptures and paintings so when I don't have any ideas for a painting I just do a sculpture and the other way around. It is the kind of work that feels like playing.

**NML:** When we spoke, you said that you feel like your work reflects the fact that you have developed a way of working rather than a specific style. Can you describe how you understand the difference between the two?

**TK:** I think there is a danger to copy yourself and get lost if you've got a "style". It is necessary to surprise yourself sometimes and not make art like you are following a recipe out of a cookbook.



photo from Thailand depicting some kind of religious ceremony. (*Poor people must work*) I used actors from Nigerian soap operas...So you see it is all quite chaotic, like images popping up in a dream, probably with hidden meanings, or perhaps it is just brain digestion.

**NML:** *Could you talk about your use of color and the restrained pallet in your drawings and the lack of color in your sculptures?*

**TK:** I use few and rather cold colors in the paintings because of the edgy and strong forms I make. If there was more color it would be too much. It is the same with sculptures.

**NML:** *There is a clumsy sense of humor in some of your pieces in part because they seem to be, from up close, undermining all of the things that they assert from a distance. For example, from far away some of your sculptures look like lost relics of some kind of obscure voodoo mysticism or vestiges of space age optimism. But when you get close you recognize such mundane things like cheese graters and cookie cutters. How do you work with that balance of humor and melancholy inherent in recontextualizing the found objects and referents in your work?*

**TK:** think many things in life are quite absurd. That evokes a kind of funny fatalism and melancholy.

**NML:** *Can you talk about the title for your current show at Honor Fraser, Don't Worry About the Motion in the Ocean, and about some of the titles for your pieces which range from proper nouns like Grace Jones to common nouns like Jewels and Brown Rice to musings and proclamations like, I Will Make You Rich, Sometimes understanding, sometimes overstanding and Free for all, all for free?*

**TK:** *Don't worry about the motion on the ocean* is from a Bob Marley song and is both funny and fatalistic, because there will be motion on the ocean forever, no matter what you do. I like my titles to be like a suggestion for the viewer. They should be like a welcome comet. I like them to be a little bit surprising in order to stimulate the imagination of the viewer.

**NML:** *Where have you traveled and how has it influenced your work especially pieces in like About Hidden Smiles?*

**TK:** Traveling is important because you not only get to know other cultures but also you learn something about yourself, because you are exposed to new situations. In *About hidden smiles* I showed private photographs from Indian families. Each one is a single, visible moment in a stranger's life...very romantic.

- Nancy Lupo

(\*Image: Tillman Kaiser, *Coat*, 2008, Cardboard and black ink, 35 3/4 x 51 1/6 x 8 1/4 inches; Tillman Kaiser, *This*, 2008, Cardboard and wall paint, 31 1/2 x 59 x 23 1/2 inches; Tillman Kaiser, *Tapeworm*, 2008, Egg tempura on canvas, 78 3/4 x 118 inches. All images courtesy of Honor Fraser, LA)

**NML:** *You cite surrealism as an art historic moment with which you feel close. Meanwhile, your work often formally reflects your interests in Bauhaus and postmodern architecture. How are these two movements, often understood as opposite both in theory and practice, resolved for you in the work?*

**TK:** Maybe you are right that Surrealism and Bauhaus architecture don't have much in common or are opposed to one another. I think for me both are relevant. I am interested in combining contradictions, not like in religions where something is right and something is wrong.

**NML:** *Where do you find the ready-made images and objects that are incorporated into your sculptures? I am thinking specifically about pieces like, When Trouble Sleeps, Lyra, City of the weak heart, and Upsetter?*

**TK:** I find my ready-mades rather by accident. I don't go out and say to myself, "now I need a cheese grater for my next sculpture". I will see something, and if it attracts me, maybe I'll get an idea for a new piece. For *When Trouble Sleeps*, I used a black glass a friend gave to me and an old in *Lyra* I incorporated colored pencils from Italy. In *City of the weak heart*

