

Michael Kleine *Espai 13* *Sala 14 Cripta*

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Espai 13 presents *Espai 13 Sala 14 Cripta*, a solo exhibition by Michael Kleine.

Through the use of presences and absences, Michael Kleine's installation brings together various spatial dimensions: architectural, psychological and historical. By rearranging a series of objects from the collections of the Museu Frederic Marés, the exhibition looks at how already existing conditions such as the intensity of light, the movement across the building, the volumes of emptiness or the space's acoustics determine presence. There is a friction between those conditions and the borrowed objects in which energy appears as a historical flow. The edges between objects, bodies and temporalities dissolve in a greater enveloping environment. This atmospheric condition emerges from a kind of invisible tunnel that connects the radical dependency and porousness across institutions, spaces, objects and bodies, stretching the transitional into a dramaturgy that destabilises the very notion of individuality.

Michael Kleine lives and works in Berlin. His practice moves between formats, across architecture, displays, performances, music and sculptural work in dialogue with site and context. Objects are often uprooted from their original realities and used through a series of framing devices. In their new containers, they are still part of their former lives 'out there' as theatre props, organic matter, and found objects, whilst also being integral elements of one total work.

He has shown work at the Baltic Triennial Vilnius, Bonner Kunstverein, KV Kunstverein Leipzig, Volksbühne Berlin, Schinkel Pavillon Berlin, Staatsoper Hamburg, Sammlung Klosterfelde Hamburg, Ruhr Triennale Bochum, Theater Basel, Museion Bozen, and the Biennale d'Arte di Venezia, among others.

Alejandro Alonso Díaz,
curator of the exhibition programme

CONVERSATION:

Alejandro Alonso Díaz:

The decision-making process behind this exhibition follows a sort of twin logic that connects various spaces. It also operates as a kind of undercurrent choreography that I view as a tunnel: a hollowness, a channelling corridor where emptied-out density is negotiated. It is defined not so much for what it contains, but for what it lacks. Could you tell us a little more about this immaterial dependency and the kind of presence it both demands and generates?

Michael Kleine:

The image of the 'tunnel' captures the path between the two places (Fundació Joan Miró and Museu Frederic Marés) and the time it takes to get from one to the other – the way down the hill through the city. Even in the two museums where the project unfolds, you have to walk across several corridors and rooms before you reach my work. The building and the adjacent spaces become part of it, consciously yet involuntarily. The 'immateriality' within my work is ambivalent: there is a lot of material involved in the process, and mostly there is a lot of labour. Most of it ends in gestures or details that are not very visible or that blend greatly into the existing conditions of the space, its infrastructures, its light and sound, and they are easy to miss.

However, in my understanding, assembling these seemingly immaterial gestures is crucial for a specific energy to emerge that matters to me. You need a great deal of labour to create this kind of emptiness in order to make space for the visitor – for their experience, to allow intimacy.

It is almost as if this emptiness carries a certain form of care, something that can hold you.

AAD:

The question of immateriality here is compelled to take into consideration its existence both in and through time. The exhibition is not only a time assembly of sorts, where different memories and projections overlap, but also a mechanism of energetic reconfiguration because of the object's position in different historical-ideological-symbolic-material-spiritual times. The changes in meaning and resonance of these objects – through their birth, successive transformations, restaging and decay – trigger a series of questions. From fundamental issues around the extraction of resources, shifts in the value of things, topics of care and maintenance to spiritual, inner extractivism. Immateriality specifically arises because of its entanglement with life, because it is rooted in the sacred dimensions of matter...

MK:

I love your expression 'entanglement with life'. It speaks to me with its inherent playfulness and the acknowledgment that a certain liveliness has to be protected at all costs. And placing the liveliness of visitors and their presence at the centre through this staged emptiness – a kind of choreographed void – in order to provide space in an expanded sense is fundamental for me.

AAD:

Much of the exhibition is based on holding objects with various temporalities together, letting their transient spirits bloom. As Anne Boyer puts it: 'Beauty is as serious as the hardness of everything else. Flowers, fragrances, winged things, these are not sentimental little inconsequences, or mystified curly cues on dead history's coffin, but this kind of beauty: the slight and the fading is notorious for how it is also tautological. A flower that does not wilt has missed its own point. Fragrance is because it is volatile.' I feel as if some elements in the space expand this sense of volatility, while others seem to stretch time...

MK:

Coming from a background in music and opera, the experience of time, duration and ephemerality is a very central aspect of my practice... or actually in my experience of anything. Dealing with historical distance is an important part of my practice, one that contributes to this awareness – to being conscious of time and change.

I think my perception is also shaped by the many hours I spent in concerts, or sitting through operas, waiting for something to happen, expecting to feel or to experience something. Also sitting in churches, in services, in museums. Duration and the passage of time are precious components in my perception of things. To sit, to wait and to observe your own thoughts and feelings is something I enjoy. So yes, I totally agree with what you perceive: sometimes my work feels like throwing something in the air, hoping that somebody will catch it or observe how it drifts away...

I think this is one main reason why I conceive and create spaces in so many different fields and genres, because the spatial dimension is a fundamental part in the handling of time.

AAD:

Exactly, and it is as if the exhibition has a particular musicality. It is almost as if this 'waiting for something to happen' could be translated into a prelude or an overture. Some kind of introduction to a music composition in which the staging of time produces an intrigue where things tend to either disintegrate or become more of themselves. This friction between what things tend towards and what they are forced to be creates a very particular drama. This is very present in how objects are organised in a historical collection such as the one at Museu Frederic Marés and how, in contrast, this new container allows them a different presence. Even if they weigh and measure the same, they exhale differently.

How is this hapticality produced? Are there any specific decisions or gestures that you keep recurring to in the reframing of objects?

MK:

A recurring element in the work is the contradiction between upstaging and downstaging. On the one hand, mundane, everyday profane things are given a lot of space and attention: all the means of staging are applied to them, while on the other hand, valuable things or large artistic gestures seem almost neglected. This is perhaps an attempt to bring art and the everyday closer together. I believe interesting energies can emerge from this interplay, from shifting attention.

In my observation, these are also techniques often used in religious contexts, which in many ways feel close to our perception of art: small, materially worthless things are treated with enormous significance, while other monumental, grandiose or very valuable gestures and materials are used almost casually, as if they were self-evident.

AAD:

The way in which the body is invoked through its absence speaks of a vanished energy. The worn-out clothes and delicate tactility of fabrics serve as a reminder of the brevity of life and how the body transitions into nothingness, how it becomes dust. But transition is not purely seen as a bodily phenomenon. From empty fridges to minerals, a body is never just a body...

MK:

It is true that the human body is absent in these things, but in my perception it becomes very present precisely because of that. It could be the absence of a visitor who just left a room, the absence of the original owner of a skirt, the absence of a 14th-century stonemason, the absence of a conservator who just placed a sculpture in a vitrine... It mirrors your own physicality. This is also connected to how I perceive the traces of labour. The body of an artist, but also the body of everyone involved in the production of a work, acquires a kind of presence through all the gestures and labour that become tangible and perceptible. At the same time, an audience's body is also given space. I spend a lot of time thinking about what precise positions visitors can take, where they might tend to move, where they might linger, where they cannot access. This layer of movement, this choreography through the exhibition is very central, and it is a visitor's presence that completes the work.

Michael Kleine's *Espai 13 Sala 14 Cripta* is co-produced by the Fundació Joan Miró, the Museu Frederic Marés and the Fundació Joan Brossa – Centre de les Arts Lliures. The exhibition at Fundació Joan Miró's Espai 13 is part of the *from 6:12 pm to 5:48 pm*, a program curated by Alejandro Alonso Díaz. The interventions in Room 14 and the crypt of the Museu Frederic Marés have been produced as part of the exhibition series *Digues, cosa. Joan Brossa i els poemes objecte* (Say, Thing: Joan Brossa and Object Poems), curated by Marc Navarro at the Fundació Joan Brossa – Centre de les Arts Lliures.

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