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Jonathan Monk
Restaurant Drawings
June 21 - July 26, 2019

Casey Kaplan is pleased to announce Jonathan Monk: *Restaurant Drawings*, the artist's ninth exhibition with the gallery. This show brings together over 120 drawings on restaurant receipts, produced over the last year. Each receipt portrays a hand rendered artwork, and is priced at the cost of the meal.

The series began in 2015 when Monk and his family relocated temporarily from Berlin to Rome. Communal meals became habitual as the family sought to familiarize themselves with the new city. Attracted to the elegant, hand-written paper receipts commonly used in restaurants in Italy, Monk began to collect the bills received at the end of his family meals. Once home, he would draw directly onto the receipts, a recurring practice that has continued to this day.

Monk's imagery is culled from both a personal and canonicalized engagement with more recent Western art history. Appropriations of seminal artworks, often immediately recognizable, by artists such as Donald Judd, On Kawara, David Hammons, Sol LeWitt, Christopher Wool, Barbara Kruger and Alighiero Boetti, are rendered in graphite, watercolor and pastel, directly onto the thermal or paper receipts. Once completed, Monk photographs the drawing with his iPhone and posts the image on his Instagram account @monkpictures, where his followers have the opportunity to purchase the artwork for the price of the meal recorded on the receipt (typically ranging between €2 - €250). From Instagram, the works sell rapidly, with Monk's most attentive followers staking claim on their desired drawing within seconds. The artworks are generally allocated on a first-come-first-serve basis; a gesture of inclusivity in an otherwise exclusionary art market.

The drawings offer a diaristic glimpse inside the daily life of the artist through the logging of his meals. While the meals themselves are a public and often communal act, their visibility and distribution has remained mostly digital. Rather than a critique of social media, Monk manipulates Instagram as a platform through which he can engage directly with his patrons, reminiscent of the democratic utopia once promised by the internet as a potential space for unregulated exchange. The speed and accessibility of the interaction are fundamental to the conceptual underpinnings of the work. Radically affordable in comparison to Monk's primary market value, the pricing structure of the drawings parodies the frivolity of the art market at large, where secondary prices for artworks can soar to the precipice of absurdity.

This exhibition will provide most viewers their first opportunity to see the restaurant drawings in person, rather than mediated through the screen of a phone; a chance for the pace of viewing to more closely mirror the leisure of dining out. Seen up-close, the drawings reveal the gestural intimacy of the artist's hand. Many contain slight creases, torn corners, or curling edges that expose their vulnerability and the ephemeral nature of receipt paper. The framed works line the gallery walls at a shared horizontal axis, in an installation reminiscent of a minimalist template; a uniform repetition which calls to mind the formal strategies of artists such as Walter de Maria, Bernd and Hilla Becher, or Ellsworth Kelly. The reiterations of particular artworks - Boetti grids, Judd stacks and Lewitt cubes - suggests the pervasiveness of certain art historical influences, many of whom Monk grew up absorbing through reproductions in books. This contrast between the digital and manually-reproduced image is fundamental to the artist's oeuvre, in which multiple references from art history are continually consumed, manipulated, and re-contextualized. The series marks a significant continuation of Monk's reverent provocation of authorship, ownership and originality.

Jonathan Monk (b.1969, Leicester, UK) lives and works in Berlin. His work has been the subject of solo-exhibitions at institutions including: KINDL, Berlin (2019); Vox, Montreal, Canada (2017); The Gallery at De Montfort University, Leicester, UK (2017); Kunsthauas Baselland, Muttentz, Switzerland (2016); Museo d'Arte Contemporanea di Roma, Italy (2015); Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin (2014); Centro De Arte Contemporáneo, Málaga, Spain (2013); Kunstraum Dornbirn, Austria (2013); Palais de Tokyo, Paris and Musée d'Art Moderne, Paris (2008); Artspace, San Antonio, TX (2009); Kunstverein Hannover (2006); Institute of Contemporary Art, London (2005); and Museum Kunst Palest, Dusseldorf (2003). Monk has participated in numerous Biennales, including the Whitney Biennial (2006), the 50th and 53rd Venice Biennales, Berlin Biennale (2001) and Taipei Biennial (2000).

A new book dedicated to the Restaurant Drawings, published by Karma and including an essay by Pedro Alonzo, will be available this summer.