

Friedrich Kunath

Coming Home Was As Beautiful As Going Away

26.3.23 – 30.7.23

Curator:
Magdalena Mai

Friedrich Kunath's artistic work is a melancholic, humorous remix of elements of German Romanticism and contemporary pop culture. In his conceptual paintings and drawings, installations, objects, as well as works in photography and film, he combines classic subjects such as interiors and landscapes with East German television, Hollywood clichés, poetry, and pop music to create shrewd reflections.

The exhibition *Coming Home Was As Beautiful As Going Away* revolves around questions about distant wanderings and arrival, revealing moments of longing and reorientation, while continually reflecting on the possibility of failure.

According to Jean-Paul Sartre, the keyhole, as a connection between two separate spaces, is "both instrument and obstacle": it breaks through a boundary that separates inside and outside. While the view through a keyhole in art history is usually voyeuristically directed into a private interior, in the work *In My Room* it turns out to be a view into the distance. One side of the (pictorial) space is black and is thus completely negated. With the sunset, however, the theme of longing and transience shines through.

LA Trainer (Permanent Reminder Of A Temporary Feeling) (2009), an installation featuring Adidas's L.A. Trainer sneakers, which were originally designed for the 1984 Olympics in Los Angeles, suggests a desire for departure and adventure. The element of freedom reveals itself in the autonomy of the shoelaces, which multiply and fly as a flock of birds towards the sky, while the open shoes remain on the ground.

The work *Untitled* (2007) evokes the motif of the flaneur in the figure with a top hat who wanders through the modern cityscape in the spirit of Walter Benjamin. Fragmentarily collaged materials and motifs such as rainbows, a black poodle, and a crying eye suggest associative openness, referring to the process of searching in a space of possibilities.

In If We Had Known What It Would Take To Get Here, Would We Have Chosen To? (2006), an object and a wall-hanging work are combined to form an installation. The birdhouse in the cage offers a paradoxical image of confinement and interacts with the (photo)graphic works behind it. The collected material connects different contexts like a thought bubble: Kunath links images of loneliness and melancholy with tragicomic scenes as well as pictures of animals and plants, and thus marks relations between boundaries, paths, and thresholds whose crossing and exceeding appears to be a universal principle of existence. If we had known what it would take to get here, would we have chosen to?

Re: Vuillard (LAX) (2013) symbolises Friedrich Kunath's personal history of emigration to the United States. This textile work reminiscent of a wall tapestry is a reference to Édouard Vuillard's painting *Les Premiers Fruits* (1899). Kunath depicts the subject in a modified form and combines traditional painting techniques with airbrush. For the artist, life in Los Angeles meant a new beginning, yet the legacy of

European art history remains present. This is also alluded to in the title: The abbreviation “Re” can be read as a reply, as “back”, “to a previous state”, as well as “against, contrary”. This is juxtaposed with “LAX”, the code for Los Angeles International Airport. An interplay of references to the past and new beginnings unfolds, culminating in a punchline: Relax!

A central work is the installation *All Your Fears Trapped Inside* (2019–2023), which was updated for the exhibition at the KINDL. The hermetically sealed space turns out to be a diorama of a private room, which, as a time capsule, cabinet of curiosities, and compendium of things, withstands the voyeuristic gaze and raises questions about presence and absence, individual and collective experiences. All sorts of (personal) items and strange objects trace the diffuse biography of a person. As if looking back on a past life, the bronze figure observes the empty room from the other side, its head stuck in a birdcage. Lonely lovebird.

Discursive Programme

10.5.23, 19:00

Tour of the exhibition with Magdalena Mai and Friedrich Kunath

In German

Free admission

Please register: kindl-berlin.com/kunath

Friedrich Kunath (*1974 in Chemnitz / Karl-Marx-Stadt, lives in Los Angeles and Munich) was awarded the Sprengel Prize for Fine Arts by the Niedersächsische Sparkassenstiftung in 2012.

Selected solo exhibitions: CAC Málaga (2023); Kunstsammlung Jena (2021); Sammlung Philara, Düsseldorf (2016); Kunsthalle Bremerhaven (2014); Centre d'art contemporain d'Ivry – le Crédac, Ivry-Sur-Seine (2014); White Cube, Hong Kong (2014); Sprengel Museum, Hannover (2012); Schinkel Pavillon, Berlin (2011); Hammer Museum, Los Angeles (2010); Kunsthalle Baden-Baden (2009).

Selected group exhibitions: Tel Aviv Museum of Art (2019); Gana Art Center, Seoul (2019); CFHILL, Stockholm (2017); Vancouver Art Gallery (2016); Los Angeles County Museum of Art (2015); Centre des Monuments Nationaux, La Conciergerie, Paris (2013); Tate Britain, London (2011); Walker Art Center, Minneapolis (2011); Palazzo Grassi, Venice (2011); Seattle Art Museum (2010); Museum Ludwig, Cologne (2010).



KINDL