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Matthew Lutz-Kinoy is an interdisciplinary artist, who really deserves the title. This interview took place after his solo show titled *To Satisfy The Rose* at Friedman Fitzpatrick Gallery in 2016. -Nicolas Bermeo

Matthew Lutz-Kinoy: How long have you lived in LA for?

Nicolas Bermeo : I moved here in august, I was in chicago before. How about you?

MLK: Not long, I have been visiting a few times because of Friedman Fitzpatrick and I was living in Berlin. It's like getting back here after being away for a while and now I am feeling a little unsure of what I am doing here. Especially when I am in traffic.

N: Where do you live in relation to the studio?

MLK: Ten minutes away from here, it is really close.

N: Do you feel like where you live really affects your work?

MLK: I don't think so. When I moved to Germany it was about having space and time to work.

N: Where did you grow up?

MLK: I grew up in Flatbush in Brooklyn, my family still lives there.

N: Where did you go to highschool?

MLK: This school called the Professional Performing Arts High School, it's in midtown Manhattan and it is a theater school.

N: As a kid, were you more interested in theater?

MLK: Yes I was interested in theater. It was my main creative output, but in my childhood I was interested in all types of expression. I was really interested in fashion and designing clothing. I thought I wanted to do fashion design, especially when I was really young and then I was studying acting but it became clear that I did not want to pursue it as a professional form and then I started doing a bunch of printmaking.

N: When was this?

MLK: In Highschool and then I pursued all these kinds of art practices. I was doing night school printmaking classes. I was really interested in printmaking and I was spending all of my free time making artwork that was really like outsider style, lots of collage and sewing. Then I thought maybe I would go to school at the Rhode Island School of Design but I was really happy to stay in New York. I really love New York. New York really sucks you in, it is a labyrinth and I really enjoy that.

N: I feel like your show at Friedman Fitzpatrick really had that labyrinth feeling. When entering the show, I did not know the context and I just walked into the show and I was like ohh wow it is going down in here. You walk into so many spaces and there is this fetish of the really big and the iconic and but your show is more intimate.

MLK: That show was very influenced by my experience of being in LA but then it was also somehow related to surfing and ocean life. I did not see it exactly, at the time, about navigating through a city but in a way it is an interesting compar-

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ison because it was sort of about how to create a way to navigate through a space that has no form, like swimming. I always imagined it as something more mental. Something that exists not more within a social structure but something more relating to nature. Similar to how you would navigate through something in the natural world.

N: Speaking kind of about that, your work utilizes so many different mediums. Has your practice always been a mix between video, performance, poetry, painting etc.?

MLK: In the beginning, I thought I was going to funnel all of these forms into video work and that the video would be the host for everything but that became more limited. Then I started to combine videos with live performance. After that, live performance just started to take over and I stopped focusing a lot of energy on making video works and then that morphed into the excitement of a exhibition making. I started to think in a more idealistic way that maybe there could be exhibition making that could also be a bridge between a sort of ideological or ideal space for viewing or for works to exist within. The space within the exhibition started to transform for me into a space that a performance would occupy. And so that opens up all of these problems because it has to do so much more deeply with how you collaborate with people. Making exhibitions opened up that space for me in a way. It opened up a dialogue between a space where a performance bleeds into exhibition making. Before, I had been focusing so closely on performing live that this idea of making exhibitions was devalued and I wanted to bring more importance to this really heightened moment of when a relationship to a physical space and to artworks in the space becomes totally about systems of values and the question of those objects and everything is heightened. That type of theatricality was really interesting and still is really interesting to me. But the opportunity to focus more on making exhibitions in a way, it also helped me think more deeply about what the implications are of putting things into the world. Then you have a more durational responsibility than what live works occupy.

N: You really have a knack for finding talented people and working with them to create something bigger than yourself. Have you always worked in that way?

MLK: Yes. I think collaborating with people is something that I did from pretty early on. I always thought that collaborating with people gives you the opportunity to grow with people and to learn and to expand your own possibilities. What I really love about collaborating with people is not the possibility to reframe their work, but really to merge practices and grow from that. In a way it was always a way of thinking that to collaborate with people was really to learn something from them and to figure out how you can apply their ideas into your work and how you can develop further together. So I think that was always kind of my incentive to work with other people. I believe it is pretty common for a lot of artists.

N: That it really nice because it combats the myth of the iconic genius or like the loner. When really it is about a community. How do you begin to collaborate with someone? Is it first a personal relationship that then develops into something artistic or do you seek someone who you believe in artistically and then you get to know them?

MLK: For the most part, it has always been people that were first friends of mine. Then something happens within that friendship where you decide that it is a good idea to work together, but it is really difficult to work with people. In those kind of situations you have to be on the same page with the other artist. It is much harder in a way when there is not that friendship bond because you have to get rid of this idea of the ego and thinking that one person's ideas are more valuable than the others. It is really important to have a much more sensible kind of intimate respect for the person beyond what they do creatively. It is so wonderful to see how ideas can transform so deeply and poetically through various mediums. That is why it is so valuable to have people in your life beyond collaborators. Like people in your life who work in really different mediums such as music or dance. Those forms can really transform and create so much more perspective about the type of work that you make. I have really been wanting to continue this collaboration I have had over these years with this musician SOPHIE and we have done some performances together in the past but he is so focused on touring and on writing for other pop artists. It has been really important to follow up with ideas and to continue a dialogue with him. Being able to have those kind of relationships over periods of time and having those parallel dialogues between different mediums and people who work in different forms is really rewarding.

N: That is interesting that you talk about SOPHIE because I feel like your aesthetics are so different.

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MLK: (Laughs) We talk a lot about form. We are both interested in material based investigations of things. Where he is really invested in opening up sound in a way where it is also a type of theatricality to sound, dealing a lot with affect and form. And that is something that we talk a lot about, when we talk about the music he is making. It has a lot to do with performed affected space. We discuss things like the investigation of certain shapes and forms in sound or to have art bridge form and affect.

N: I believe there is some sort of thread between ceramics, painting and dance. Do you feel like all of those things are on an level playing field for you?

MLK: In terms of a studio practice, yes. A summer ago, I had this idea of these ceramic basins, like box basins, that would be like different stations for a dance performance. That idea transformed a bit into the show that you saw at Friedman Fitzpatrick. The original idea was to have this really open space that would just be defined by a series of ceramic pieces that would each represent a different scene or station.

When I started producing ceramics, I had been doing printmaking, painting and live performances. Then moving into a direction of ceramics sort of framed a way of bringing together those forms because of histories of the way people in dance always turn an indexical object making through drawing. The thing that I find interesting about ceramics and painting is that there is no way to separate those mediums from a subjective body and that they are intertwined within a subjective gesture making and body. I don't come to ceramics or painting from a historically critical perspective. It is more finding a wider array of reference material. I think that in terms of dance and those other mediums, you have have a certain relationship to what you are looking at, but there is no way to separate this subjective body. That is really interesting to me.

N: When arriving at a work, do you start with writing and then it transfers into something else or does the initial idea always stay in the initial medium.

MLK: It is not often, but sometimes the ideas are forced on all of these mediums or the idea can be so strong that it starts sprouting up in all of the work. Like the idea of a vessel was something that that show was about and how the human body is a vessel. All of these materials are hosts for water and liquids.

I was thinking about cutting up the wave tunnel and continuing to figure out ways to manipulate an existing architecture of a space and changing the way that you look at the space and how cool it would be to have that object perform in that way in different situations. But that is, in a way, a much larger idea of what painting can do and I think that led me to another space where I thought about making these kind of square shaped works that do not have a certain direction and so they can rotate and be on the ceiling or the wall. Then have a series of those works that are presented in different types of spaces. Like an outdoor space, in a garden, in a garage or in an exhibition gallery. The work then becomes, in a way, a portal into these different places, like a time traveling portal. Giving all of these options and avenues to the work allows for it to gain experience and not have this authoritative end. It's about taking on all of these spaces and opportunities. All of these modes of presentation allow for the work to be more powerful because the work then has a bigger personality like someone who travels a lot.

N: Speaking of traveling, I see some East Asian threads in your work.

MLK: I think it all started when I was doing very small scale collages and then I started working with a gallery in Paris and the woman who was running it is Japanese. I was interested in Japanese textiles and also the relationship to narrative and Islamic art. In Islamic art, you also have very narrative types of painting and storytelling through painting. I was also interested in repetition of bodies in scroll painting and how, in scrolls, you have this sort of animation of things and

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type of narrative. I always thought it interesting how a type of performative narration is done through very tangible techniques. Especially in scroll painting. I think the relationship to Japan in the US is much stronger or at least my own relationship to that art history is much stronger than other countries. The Met has a really amazing Japanese department. It just kept popping up and Yukio Kawasaki, the gallery owner, guided me a lot in my work and I did my first solo show at her gallery in Paris. Every other month she would send me novels to read and was really generous and very excited about the work I was making. I guess through that friendship, it brought on a lot of references that were very intertwined into Japanese art history. The most recent project, the thing around Suji Teriyama came about because my collaborator, Toby Madison, was interested in Teriyama's work. That project opened up a different dialogue because I had been so formally interested in Japanese art and I didn't consider avant garde Japan at all. All of those interests I had were also so deeply present in Teriyama's work. His work deals heavily with the folklore and the spirituality of rural northern Japan. The folklore has all of these fantastic narratives around it and all of those things are like images and fantasy characters and types of symbolic imagery that are also coming through very historical images within painting. In Teriyama's work, he uses so many of those types of symbols. There were those interests I had before being introduced to that whole world of his avant garde theater group. His work helped me understand a historical position of how you can liberate yourself from narrative by incorporating all of these histories into your work.

N: It is so crazy to hear you talk about your interest in narrative because now I am re-analyzing the show that I saw at Friedman Fitzpatrick. Are there any projects that are in the back of your head that are baking that are kind of like crazy ambitious? Do you have a fantasy project that you are dreaming of?

MLK: There is a lot of things that I would like to do. The system of galleries is totally in crisis and nobody knows how to sustain that project. Museum structures are based around systems of audience and entertainment because they still value themselves on this relationship as a place that preserves objects so then what is actually missing is a different system of value towards a more fragmented one.

Everyone hoped that Performa Biennial was going to be something that would really redefine people's relationship but I think that that failed for so many people because the program was scattered and it did not really take a position on to how to support people's practices. It gave this star structure and had all of these celebrity artists do projects that didn't work. I think there are some projects on the horizon that give a lot of value and space to more fragmented relationship to presenting work. They have roots in ideas of performance, but it is not about presenting performances, but instead, about having a much more expanded relationship to what presenting work means. And having that be something that is pushed more publicly. That is why the model of more experimental artists run galleries have been so dynamic. Those models have to be applied to people that actually have more resources and I would like to see that happen with my work in a much larger scale and see value placed on more complex presentations of work. It is difficult, because it is a different value system of resources where you have to ask people to meet you in a place where systems of value are put into question.

This summer I am planning this show that takes place almost entirely on this landscape where you stand on the edge of this balcony looking into the ocean and the house is in the ocean, like on the rock. It is a castle that is built on a stone that protrudes into the ocean. So it is right on the coast and it sits inside of the sea. And the exhibition takes place on the surface of the ocean. It is all these ceramic buoys holding up these painted tarps that are on the water and then you have these series of paintings that are on the surface of the ocean and then all of these ceramics come to the house by boat and people, that are in the show, go down and bring up the ceramics into the house. You just need to figure out a way to support those kind of dynamic presentations and you have to work with people who also understand the value of creating these kind of situations. I think that having a style of making exhibitions and producing work that pushes it into this very alternative space of presenting work is maybe something that is the larger project for me. In the future, to do shows that would also be about developing framing devices for showing your work that are really dynamic and

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expanded. The idea of how something enters the world or enters a social consciousness or a social space has everything to do with how the meaning around that work is formed. It has to then change the structure of how value is pushed onto those things because the alternative is doing all of those fucking art fairs that are so boring. It is totally integrated into young artists practices to hide inside the object. Everything has to be inside of the work and so autonomous. The interesting thing about bridging this idea of the body in relationship to objects is that you have this opportunity to see how this object enters into the world. Like the fetish of an extremely autonomous object. I think that that is this false presentation and that that gets paralleled around discussions of marketable objects and that is really uninteresting. I take pleasure in producing objects that you want to make and then the really exciting thing is to understand how they enter into the world and that changes people's perspectives about what art is and what art can do and how art can reshape the way people think about their relationship to space and one another people. You have to really push for these alternative presentation modes.