

Peder

Mike Kelley

Kandors

Peder Lund

2022

Lund

MIKE KELLEY - KANDORS

PEDER LUND NOVEMBER 19, 2022 - FEBRUARY 4, 2023

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KUNSTAVISEN

HJEM › ANMELDELSE

På sporet av den tapte by



Fra Mike Kelley: *Kandors*, Peder Lund, 2022. Mike Kelley Foundation for the Arts og Peder Lund © Peder Lund. Foto: Uli Holz.

Mike Kelley ville framstille Supermanns univers som tredimensjonale Matisse-malerier. Utstillingen *Kandors* reflekterer minnenes flyktighet og science fiction-visjonenes tapte utopia, gjennom farget glass.

Annonse:

Arve Rød, "IN SEARCH OF THE LOST CITY", KUNSTAVISEN, NOVEMBER 23, 2022

Peder Lund
Tjuvholmen allé 27, 0252 Oslo
November 19, 2022 - February 4, 2023

Mike Kelley sought to depict Superman's universe as three-dimensional Matisse paintings. By means of stained glass, the Kandors exhibition reflects the ephemerality of memories and the lost utopia of visionary science fiction.

Showcasing works by the American artist Mike Kelley, the *Kandors* exhibition at Peder Lund affords a sleek and adroitly organized glimpse into an artistic career that otherwise was anything but sleek and adroitly organized. On the contrary, the Los Angeles-based Kelley, who took his own life in 2012 at the age of 57, refrained from taking any polished detours as he explored the undercurrents of pop culture and consumerism. The art he created is both confrontational and chaotic, charming and confusing, purely American and decidedly universal, sometimes repulsive and often self-parodic.

Kelley achieved his breakthrough as a major artist in the second half of the 1980s with a series of works consisting of used stuffed animals—assemblages of found objects and ragged textile creatures transformed into abstract-expressionist explosions of shapes and colors. Also fairly unforgettable for anyone who has seen it is his mangling of the Heidi movie and its young protagonist's adventures in the Alps, a work he carried out in collaboration with his colleague Paul McCarthy. In their version, Johanna Spyri's innocent, nineteenth-century Alpine romance devolves into an hour-long excess of bodily functions and incestual horror, which, on top of everything, was made for an exhibition held in 1992 in Vienna, the capital city of the Alpine country of Austria.

The planet Krypton

By contrast, *Kandors* seems both more cryptic and more aesthetically intricate and industrially perfected on the surface. The exhibition consists of eight works. The focal point is two elaborately sculptured bell jars, one of which is standing on a tall and coarsely fashioned plinth, and both of which feature synthetically illuminated landscape formations, or miniature cities, on the inside. The bell jar motif is repeated in all of the other works as well, consisting of a video projected above the wall and five graphic pictures in light boxes. The latter are so-called lenticular prints, that is, two pictures merged into one so that the imagery changes according to the viewer's angle.

Dedicated comic book readers will likely recognize both the pictures and the sculptures more or less at once, as well as the connection between them. The title and the imagery have been culled from the world of Superman: Kandor was the city where Superman was born on the planet of Krypton, only for the supervillain Brainiac to later shrink it and place it under a bell jar.

Kandor skyline

Kelley's *Kandors* series is thus his interpretation of this fictional drama. The shapes and the skyline drawings in the bell jars are different versions of the shrinking city of Kandor. The variants we are now able to see at Peder Lund are merely a small part of an extensive series of works Kelley made between 2005 and 2011, and the nascent

beginnings of this aesthetics can be found in drawings and prints as far back as 1999.

We are therefore talking about a significant part of Kelley's artistic output here. What prompted his work on the *Kandors* series was an invitation in 1998 to take part in an exhibition held to mark the turn of the millennium, where the theme was the "new media" art of days gone by. Kelley met this challenge by constructing an outmoded vision of the future, taking the Superman universe as his model, where his aim, according to Kelley himself, was to create "three-dimensional Henri Matisse paintings with sci-fi overtones."

The ephemerality of memories

In a wider sense *Kandors* is about both the ephemerality of memories and notions of utopia. In the original comic book stories, the depictions of Kandor were ever changing, and Kelley himself created a great many variants, from the architecturally detailed to shapeless masses, as demonstrated by the one version shown beneath the glass at Peder Lund. With such information in mind, the otherwise so enigmatic lenticular prints become so much more than just a dazzling effect, as they highlight the actual and deeply existential point of the series with surefire precision.

Kandors evinces both a quiet monumentality and a spectacular visuality that, despite the limited format at Peder Lund, allows the viewers to immerse themselves in the works and think new thoughts. Not least for a Norwegian public, the exhibition prompts visitors to view Kelley's vast and varied output as something far more than agitative and aesthetically transgressive whims and experiments.