

SEPTEMBER 21, 2016

T. KELLY MASON

BY FLAUNT



Installation view of *T. Kelly Mason* at Cherry and Martin in Los Angeles, CA, June 20 — August 1, 2015.

T. Kelly Mason

Part of our artist portfolio from the Oh La La Land issue

Filmmaker, DJ, and contemporary artist T. Kelly Mason has an MFA from the Art Center College of Design, Pasadena—where he now teaches—and lives and works in Los Angeles. His work spans multiple disciplines, often instilling with a particular luminescence through the incorporation of moving images, sound, and electronic components. He was featured in a solo show—*Nocturne*— at the Hammer Museum in L.A. in 2011, and in 2013 his temporary art project, *re: Members, tc:* showed at the Bass Museum of Art, Miami Beach. With work that ranges over a wide aesthetic field, an essential component of Mason's exhibitions is thematic and visual congruence. "Visually, artworks have much in common with design objects." Mason says on the organization of his shows, "They have style. They occupy a room. I tell my students, 'don't pretend to be above that, or someone else with style will arrange the work for you. If you want agency, then you make those decisions.' I map out where the works ought to go." We took a stroll around the grounds of the Norton Simon Museum with Mason, sipping Perrier, and enquired after his state.

CRISTIN TIERNEY

What does beauty mean to you?

Beauty (with a capital B) is the free play between imagination and understanding. Kant said that. That works for me. It opens up the possibility of Beauty in things that are beautiful (small b) and handsome, monumentally ugly, funny, political, smart, and sick. As Ad Reinhardt wrote, "The unfathomable in art is not unfathomable." All art has a purpose, but some purposes are more respectable than others.

What do you think the art market will look like in five years?

I imagine a beautiful person and her friends will be looking at expensive objects. In other words, the symbolic power of cultural capital will continue to be cashed in and the inverse relationship of the amount cashed in to the symbolic power of cultural capital will remain unchanged.

Do you always act on your first impulse, or do you plan your pieces meticulously?

Ideas are impulsive, but it's a long trip to make the things real. It's how, not if, the improvisations and problem solving are expressed, that's in the work I admire. I've done design and public work that's fabricated end to end, but you still have to show up and make adjustments. I get weirded out when people try too hard to make thinking disappear.

Does some of the energy of the artist transfer through to the viewer?

I get joy, sometimes frustration and the occasional madness when I experience the best work. Energy transfer is real but channeling it is a fraud. Energy has shapes and the edges of those shapes might even resemble an inner life, but it's composition that makes it go. It's possible to play a happy song when you are feeling blue. Composition works.