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Arts & Entertainment

New York City artist unveils new blue exhibit to the Lower East Side

By Bob Krasner



Alois Kronschaeger with his site-specific installation "Kind of Blue"
Photo by Bob Krasner

Alois Kronschaeger is an explorer – of possibility. An artist who earned his Master's at SVA in 2002, he has spent the years since creating sculpture on

CRISTIN TIERNEY

small and large scale – from wall pieces to site-specific installations that can fill up to 10,000 square feet.

His latest piece, 'Kind of Blue', occupies a 1500 square foot storefront with 575 yards of blue ultra suede at 219 Bowery, the former home of a Vans shoe store that is conveniently located beneath his gallerist, Cristin Tierney.

"I found out the space was becoming available, so I rented it out and told Alois he could do whatever he wanted there," explains Tierney. After representing him for 10 years, she had no doubt that the results would be wonderful.

Kronschlaeger began work before the retail shop was gone, scouting the location and building a scale model of the proposed project. Once inside, he worked out the parameters of the project with the landlord. "I couldn't mess with the tin ceiling or the brick walls," said Kronschlaeger. And, not surprisingly, his initial idea to take out the front of the shop and open it up as a public space was not going to happen. "First, you shoot for the impossible!" he states.

The simplicity of the concept – yards of fabric flowing over an infrastructure of 2x2's that form a structural grid – doesn't immediately relay all the thought that has gone into it. The Austrian-born Kronschlaeger is an artist whose influences run as deep as his ambition. Architecture is at the top of his list, alongside history, philosophy, fashion, geometry and jazz. Speaking of which, the piece's title is a definite nod to the Miles Davis masterpiece, which we agree is a perfect jazz album. Not only is it his favorite morning music, but it is an aural equivalent to his installation.

"The lattice underneath is like the frame of jazz," he explains. "The blue material is the improvisation. The big unknown, the X factor, is how it will work out." The timing of the show is perfect for him, as "we begin to exhale, to relax after the four horrible years of the presidency and the pandemic year. There are various blues that come out in different light, and they can relate to various feelings." Musing further on the color, he notes that "blue is a very unusual color. The Greeks didn't recognize blue. It doesn't appear in literature until the 16th century."

The artist does not, however, want to guide observers in their experience of the piece or ascribe deeper meaning to its purpose. "When people enter the space they can navigate freely," he says. "They can contemplate color, space, light and time, but what they perceive is up to them."

CRISTIN TIERNEY

Kronschlaeger has remained true to his methods and his work ethics, which he developed years ago. “When I first came to NY, I worked in a gallery and set up a daily schedule for myself: 7 hours of work to make money, 7 hours of work in my studio and 7 hours to sleep. The remaining 3 hours was travel time.”

Having met him 10 years ago, Tierney’s Gallery Director Candace Moeller notes that “he’s remained interested in the same ideas but the ways that he’s found to express them have evolved. The cube is the basis of many of his works, but he pushes himself to use new materials and forms.”

“He’s a relentless experimenter,” agrees Tierney, who has seen his palette expand over the years as he has tried working with plexiglass, aluminum, rubber, India ink, resins, steel and yarn. “You never know what you are going to find in his studio.”

And it depends which studio you are in, as he divides his time between a home in the Lower East Side and another in Mexico City, a city he loves as much as NY. “The work I do is different there, ” he notes. “More of my kinetic sculpture comes out of that environment.”

His work has landed in many different places, with installations in the Czech Republic, Buenos Aires, Peru, Austria, Japan, France, China and Michigan, among others. Grand Rapids was the site of a piece that combined three abandoned buildings with a wheelchair-accessible ramp. His first, unrealized, concept was a piece that would have connected 4 valleys of the Danube with a construction of granite and fabric.

Kronschlaeger has become part of his own work this time around, wearing a blue velvet jumpsuit designed and made by his wife, clothing designer and producer Florencia Minniti, who also acts as his studio manager. Blending into the scenery, he contemplates his creation with the knowledge that the piece is part of an ongoing process. “It will take a while to figure out what I’ve created,” he muses. “There is still something that is a little unknown to me. I’m still trying to decipher and articulate what it is that I did.”

“Kind of Blue” runs through June 30 at 219 Bowery, ground floor. More info at: cristintierney.com

The artist’s website is: aloiskronschlaeger.com