



**Keith Haring**  
(see *Love Is Colder Than Capital*)  
*Untitled*, 1983, acrylic on  
canvas, 230 x 600 cm. © Keith  
Haring Foundation. Courtesy Lia  
Rumma Archive, Naples & Milan



**Kendell Geers**  
*Obelisk*, 2008, concrete and  
glass. Courtesy the artist;  
Galleria Continua, San  
Gimignano, Beijing & Le Moulin;  
Goodman Gallery, Johannesburg;  
and Stephen Friedman Gallery,  
London

# Love Is Colder Than Capital

**Love Is Colder Than Capital**  
Kunsthau Bregenz  
2 February – 14 April

**Exhibitions that** organise themselves around sociological issues are tricky propositions. Within them, works often function as props for a curator who wants to use socially relevant themes to increase his or her chances of appearing ready to oversee a biennale, especially when the title sounds as clever as *Love Is Colder Than Capital*. However, one is taught otherwise at the Kunsthau Bregenz. The museum's director, Yilmaz Dziewior, has transformed his house into a well-stocked freezer out of which one wants immediately to grab all the appetising packages (in the process inadvertently burning one's fingers from the cold).

The title harks back to the play by René Pollesch, derived in turn from Rainer Werner Fassbinder's well-known film *Love Is Colder Than Death* (1969). The subject: the aspect of calculation in personal relationships. Once the model for this was the marriage of convenience; now the modern person is simply in love with himself or herself. This all began during the early twentieth century, when goods were turned into objects of desire via advertising, and love rituals were increasingly surrounded by consumerism – a phenomenon that has reached a grotesque level in the Facebook era and, therefore, offers the cultural industry a welcome object of projection. Exhibitions like *Privacy* at the Schirn Kunsthalle, Frankfurt, or *The New Public* at Museion in Bozen/Bolzano (both 2012) have dedicated themselves to the dissolution of the boundary between private and public. Carmen Losmann's documentary *Work Hard – Play Hard* (2012) tells of companies that force their employees into total identification through yoga and colourfully upholstered furniture. Work and free time become one – and with this, capital and affection, love and money. One thing is clear: while art during the 1970s still sought the streets in order to let the stench of the postwar era out of the living room, today it creeps under the bedsheets in order to air the last secrets of an exhibitionist human capital.

In Bregenz, the cold breeze flows through three carefully composed floors. On the first floor, Cathy Wilkes's Turner Prize installation *I Give You All My Money* (2008) is like a frozen nightmare – two supermarket checkout counters become a place for food remains, and two mannequins

become desolate ice princesses. Before it, Isa Genzken's hysterical assemblages *Wind (C)* and *(D)* (2009) tower three metres high like cheaply draped fetishes. And in Julika Rudelius's film *One of Us* (2010), art-collector couples from Miami dramatically declare their love for each other as if David Lynch had personally directed them. Further up, the gigantic colourful, shimmering ball from Pascale Marthine Tayou's *Empty Gift* (2013) hangs from the ceiling, surrounded by Cindy Sherman's morbid portraits of rich ladies. Under the roof, Keith Haring crowns everything with a bright yellow six-metre-long canvas from which a red heart shines down like a false promise – directly onto a crude video installation by Neil Beloufa in which patriotic residents of Vancouver become puppets for the city's marketing.

Despite some weak points – one could have done without Ken Okiishi's rotating euro coin as well as Minerva Cuevas's kitten pictures – the show aims at pointing out a clear sensibility: the variable and rich combination of clanking cold and a darkness hovering in the wings. The line between love and calculation is thin but miles deep. The temperatures end up – à la Bret Easton Ellis – at less than zero on the ground floor, where a circle of monitors shows *Andy Warhol's 15 Minutes* (1985–7), in which promises of beauty, fame and romance cover for icy consumerism. If this is love, we'd rather take the money. *Translated from the German by Emily Luski*

**GESINE BORCHERDT**

# Kendell Geers

**Kendell Geers: 1988–2012**  
Haus der Kunst, Munich  
1 February – 12 May

**Kendell Geers's** midcareer retrospective, a show that lays it on thick with a heady mix of politics, violence, identity and materiality, is conceptually and physically divided into two 12-year-spinning parts. The first, 'Politics', spans 1988–2000, when Geers, a white Afrikaner from Johannesburg, first gained a reputation as a provocateur for his anti-apartheid art. The second, 'Poetry', dates from his relocation to Belgium in 2000 until the present. The oldest inclusions are highly provocative and often activist: in the stairwell leading to three large halls in the northwestern upper storey is, among other works, *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1993), depicting Geers wearing a rubber Nelson Mandela mask. Once upstairs, viewers are confronted with barricades:

first a fence in one of Geers's signature materials, razor wire; then *Hanging Piece* (1993), a multitude of bricks suspended from the ceiling. (Under apartheid, townshippers hung bricks from highway overpasses to ruin cars passing below.) Wreaths, like *TW Batons (Spiral)* (1994), are made of police clubs. Everything in the first section of the exhibition – conceived by Geers and Haus der Kunst's newish director, Okwui Enwezor, curated by Clive Kellner and spanning diverse media – is confrontational.

Yet the simplest works are the most powerful: Geers's *Self Portrait* (1995), for example, a statement on his struggles with identity in the form of a Heineken bottle's broken-off neck, its label reading 'imported from Holland'; or *Brick* (1988), a simple red brick on the floor, a heartbreaking newspaper story affixed to its side. In the next hall, *PostPunkPaganPop* (2008), a full-room installation whose cathedrallike construction is essentially a labyrinth in razor wire on a mirrored Plexiglas floor, conceptually connects the first part of the show to the second. It's as if Kellner is intentionally walking us through Geers's process – the artist still struggling with danger and restrictions, yet yearning for a spiritual clarity and purity.

In 2000, Geers took a year off from making art and developed a new creative direction that he calls 'EuroAnimism'. The subsequent spaces are filled with works offering far more abstraction, higher production values (even if treacherously sharp green-glass shards and nails often stick out of plaster sculptures) and an increased focus on language. Oversize words printed in mirror-image, like 'believe', become graphic wall pieces; a photograph of Geers's face painted black and white shows the word 'fuck' in bold letters, reading forward and backward (*Fuckface (Kendell Geers)*, 2007). In the installation *Terrorealismus* (2003), flickering neon lights read 'Terror-Error', 'Border-Order' and 'Danger-Anger'.

A prominent South African curator and old friend of Geers's and Enwezor's, Kellner has managed to make the complexities of Geers's passionate energies and often disparate ideas remarkably accessible. Yet one gets the feeling in the show's later phases that, without a direct *thing* to fight against, Geers loses something. His old struggles were against apartheid; the newer struggles appear to be against broad-sweeping issues like capitalism and its soullessness. While many of the later works indeed possess a poetry (*Country of My Skull*, 2010, a painted skull, is particularly haunting, as are the handcuffed, praying hands of *PrayPlayPreyPay*, 2011), the elements that are meant to be provocative – like the word 'fuck', which Geers uses often – have become so omnipresent in modern culture that their artistic impact is alas diffused. Long ago Geers said that 'the struggle should be a weapon of art'. These days, it seems like everybody's carrying a weapon.

**KIMBERLY BRADLEY**