

Editorial



fig. 2

Exhibition view: *Saw It, Loved It # 5: It Is about Time: Kasper König's Private Property*, Museum Ludwig, Cologne, October 11 – November 7, 2010

The visit to Kasper König and his wife Heidi Specker in their Berlin apartment on February 23, 2024 will remain unforgettable (fig.1). The door is open, and as soon as we enter, Kasper König welcomes us with numerous explanations and illustrious anecdotes about his works of American and German Pop and Conceptual Art. He also makes special mention of the many photographs and works by older masters such as Caspar David Friedrich. We admire the Petersburg hanging in his spacious study and see behind it the intense life's work and the curator's aesthetic interest in the unconventional. Over a period of more than sixty years, Kasper König collected—through purchases and gifts—more than 600 paintings, drawings, photographs, and sculptures by 180 artists.

Collage, König's defining working principle, is also the guiding principle for *The Kasper König Collection – His Private Choice* at VAN HAM. The exhibition, the catalogue, and the auctions reflect König's associative cosmos of thought. They also shed light on his network from decades of international exhibitions and publications. König never shied away from the art market; after all, his career began in

fig. 1

Markus Eisenbeis, Kasper König, and Renate Goldmann, Berlin, February 2024

1962 at Galerie Rudolf Zwirner. He organized benefit auctions of donations at Sotheby's for the Portikus in 1994 and for the Museum Ludwig in 2012. These can also be understood as an expression of the friendships and loyalty to artists that accompanied König throughout his life.

Kasper König's collection was presented publicly for the first time in *Saw It, Loved It # 5: It Is about Time: Kasper König's Private Property* at the Museum Ludwig in 2010 (fig. 2). With this exhibition, the Gesellschaft für Moderne Kunst, the patrons' circle of the Museum Ludwig in Cologne, celebrated its twenty-fifth anniversary. Its awarding of the Wolfgang Hahn Prize also corresponds to Kasper König's collection profile, as can be seen, for example, in positions such as Isa Genzken (2002), Rosemarie Trockel (2004), Niele Toroni (2003), Peter Fischli & David Weiss (2010), and John Miller (2011). In this context, Renate Goldmann got to know the museum director even better as a member of the board. After all, she had already worked with him on the "ars viva 98/99" artist prize of the Kulturkreis der deutschen Wirtschaft im Bundesverband der Deutschen Industrie (Association of Arts and Culture of the German Economy at the Federation of German Industries) under the chairmanship of Arend Oetker at the Portikus (fig. 3).



fig. 3

Renate Goldmann and Kasper König during the set-up of the exhibition *ars viva 1998/99 Kai Althoff, Lothar Hempel, Manfred Pernice, Torsten Slama, Sean Snyder, Portikus, Frankfurt am Main, March 13 – April 5, 1999*
Filmstill: Helke Bayerle, Portikus under Construction, 1999

This was followed by numerous meetings and postcards in the context of various private and professional stations, including a congratulation from Kasper König on ten years of VAN HAM Art Estate in 2021 (fig. 4). In this respect, it seems only logical that Kasper König's estate should be honored in Cologne, where his written archive has been kept at the ZADIK since 2012.



fig. 4

Postcard from Kasper König to Renate Goldmann on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of Van Ham Art Estate, 2021

Acknowledgements

We would like to express our sincere thanks to the many people involved in the realization of the live and online auctions, the exhibition, and the catalogue—also on behalf of Robert van den Valentyn, Head of the Modern and Contemporary Art Department.

First and foremost, we dedicate this project to the memory of Kasper König. His many years of experience were the main impulse for this project. We would also like to thank Heidi Specker for her trust in us. We thank the curator of the collection, Annabell Burger, for her excellent cooperation. She was supported by Andreas Prinzing, also of Kasper König's office in Berlin. We are also grateful to thank Walther König and the König family for their helpful advice and constructive exchanges. The close relationship between Walther and Kasper König, who founded the publishing house "Verlag Gebrüder König Köln – New York" together in 1968, is reflected not least in the façade of the Cologne headquarters on Ehrenstrasse in 1981 and in the curator's collection, as can be seen in the frieze by Tom Otterness. In memory of his brother, Walther König personally designed an impressive "showcase" with catalogues and publications from his stations in New York, Halifax, Frankfurt am Main, Münster, Cologne, and Berlin (fig. 5).

Special thanks go to Günter Herzog for his excellent essay, which describes Kasper König's life's work in great detail. As former director of the ZADIK, his wealth of knowledge is based on his close exchange with Kasper König. We would also like to thank Nadine Oberste-Hetbleck for her research at the ZADIK. Akiko Bernhöft's essay on On Kawara is published at the request of Kasper König. Both Bernhöft and König are listed as members of the board of directors of On Kawara's One Million Years Foundation in New York. Annegret Niermann has kindly provided us with her texts as quotations from the catalogue that accompanied Kasper König's donation to the Museum Ludwig, *1000 ... miles to the edge* (2023).

Graphic designer Ben Wozniak designed the catalogue and was kindly supported by Carmen Strzelecki, Cologne, at Kasper König's suggestion. Anica Beil and Lennart Milatz conscientiously carried out the editorial work and the extensive organization of the project in cooperation with the press office, in particular Anne Rinckens, and the logistics department. Sophie Ballermann, Alexandra Bresges-Jung, Elisa Dorin, Chiara Dröge, Kira Lang, Laura Masi, Daria Pinkert, and Kathrin Steiner were responsible for cataloging and texts. We would also like to thank Philipp Lines Lange for his scholarly research. We were able to win Gérard Goodrow for the translation of all contributions, which can be accessed online.

In this spirit, we are delighted to be able to pay tribute to Kasper König's (1943–2024) intellectual and private passion for collecting with this catalogue and the exhibition accompanying the auctions, and to allow the public to share in his legendary legacy to this extent for the first time.

Markus Eisenbeis

Renate Goldmann



fig. 5

Display window in honor of Kasper König at Buchhandlung Walther König, Cologne

