



VISUAL DIARY - The Kandor Project by Mike Kelley

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by Pat Rogers

The “Mike Kelley: 1954 – 2012” tribute exhibition was like no other presented at Watermill Center. Exhibited last summer on the heels of Kelley’s suicide, the exhibition included works from his long-term Kandor Project, two floors of his videos made solo or with various collaborators (1978 – 1986) and selected soundtracks from “The Poetics” (1977 – 1983), the art punk band featuring Kelley and video artist Tony Oursler.

The final piece in the exhibition was the video Kelley was working on at the time of his death. The intense (and violent) video looped continually in a darkened room and cast the final impression of the exhibition and of a life of art that was now over.

It was the first time the entire South Wing of Watermill Center had been turned over to present a single exhibition.

One of the lighter moments in the intense exhibition was The Kandor Project (2000/2007-2011).

Selections from The Kandor Project were installed in a single room on the ground floor. The diverse selection of works allowed viewers to compare and contemplate their relationship to each other as Kelley creatively explored different aspects of the lore and fate of the fictitious city that was Superman’s birthplace.

The installation, as well as the videos and papered walls in the adjacent room that first welcomed visitors, revealed Kelley’s intense interest in the Kandor, its escape from the planet’s explosion and its encapsulation in a jar by the villain Brainiac, and its ultimate rescue from his clutches by Superman.

The Watermill installation included models and banners from the initial *Kandor-Con 2000* installation, seven large-scale projections (2007), one of the sculptures with video projection of *Kandors* (2007).

Kandor-Con 2000 was conceived as a work in progress that was designed to continue developing. Throughout the exhibitions, architecture students built cardboard models of Kandor inspired by the original comics. These models were sent to Los Angeles where Kelley made scaled down casts. The cardboard models exhibited at Watermill Center were produced during the show at the Pompidou Center, Paris.

“Kandor-Con 2000” was first presented in the millennium show at Kunstmuseum Bonn and then at the Technical University Berlin (2007), the Deichtorhallen Hamburg/Sammlung Falckenberg (2007),

ZKM Karlsruhe (2008), the Shanghai Biennial (2008) and the Pompidou Center, Paris (2010).

“Mike Kelley 1965 – 2012” was presented at Watermill Center from July 28 to Sept. 16, 2012. The show was presented in collaboration with LUMA Foundation. It was curated by art collector and author Harald Falckenberg.

Following is a look at a view of pieces exhibited in The Kandor Project installation at Watermill Center.



One of the rooms of the exhibition that includes video projections, models, posters and Kandor 17. Photo: Lovis Dengler.



Projected on the wall: “Kandor 13” by Mike Kelley, 2007. On the pedestal: “Kandor 17” by Mike Kelley, 2007. Mixed media. Reflected behind the pedestal: “Kandor 17” by Mike Kelley, 2007. Photo: Lovis Dengler.



Partial installation view of the Kandor Project by Mike Kelley at Watermill Center. Photo by Lucie Jansch.



One of the architecture models in The Kandor Project.



A video inspired by the Kandor legend screened adjacent to The Kandor Project installation.

BASIC FACTS: “Mike Kelley 1965 – 2012” was presented at Watermill Center from July 28 to Sept. 16, 2012. watermillcenter.org/mikekelley.

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