

Freunde von Freunden: 'Alicja Kwade & Gregor Hildebrandt', Artists, Apartment, Berlin-Mitte, by Lisa Bosse, 27th January 2012

Anyone who's out and about on the Berlin art scene can't fail to notice Alicja Kwade and Gregor Hildebrandt. Both successful artists, the two have been together for a long time.

Born and raised in a family of gallery owners, Alicja came into contact with art from an early age in her childhood in Kattowitz. Although she was awarded with the Piepenbrock Prize in 2008 and the Robert Jacobson Prize in 2011 for her sculptural work, she decided to branch out and work with several forms of expression, such as film and photography, in order to communicate her ideas. Gregor's artistic work represents an exciting combination of formal abstraction with references to pop culture, which have been awarded by prizes such as the Vattenfall Art Prize in 2008, amongst others.

We pay them a visit at their apartment which is furnished with individual pieces that Alicja has gathered from Ebay. It is early afternoon on a Sunday- by this time Alicja is usually already in the Atelier. We drink tea and eat real Swiss pralines that Gregor has recently brought back from Zurich with him.





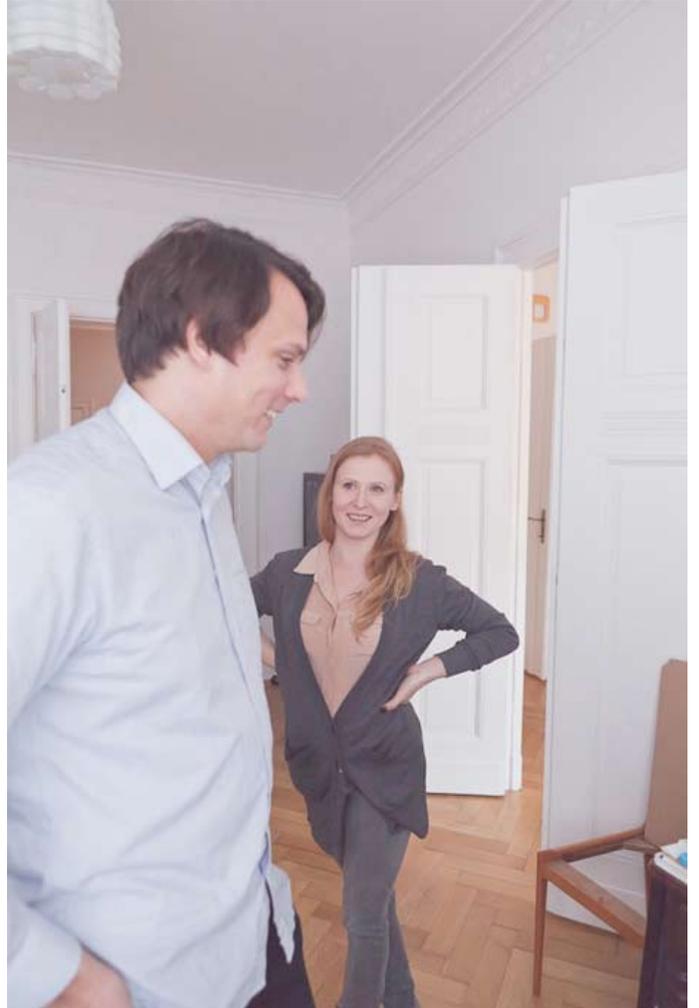




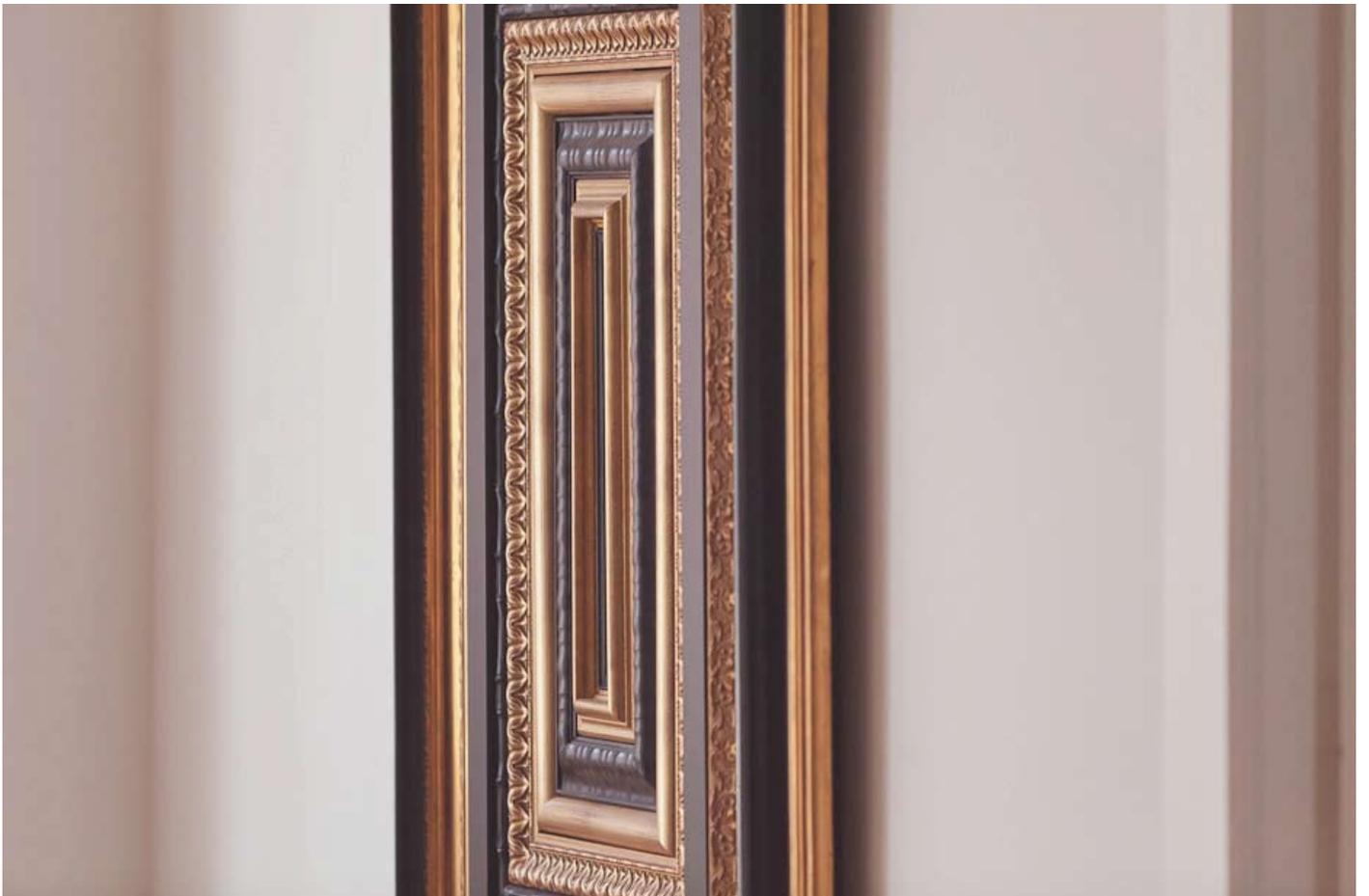




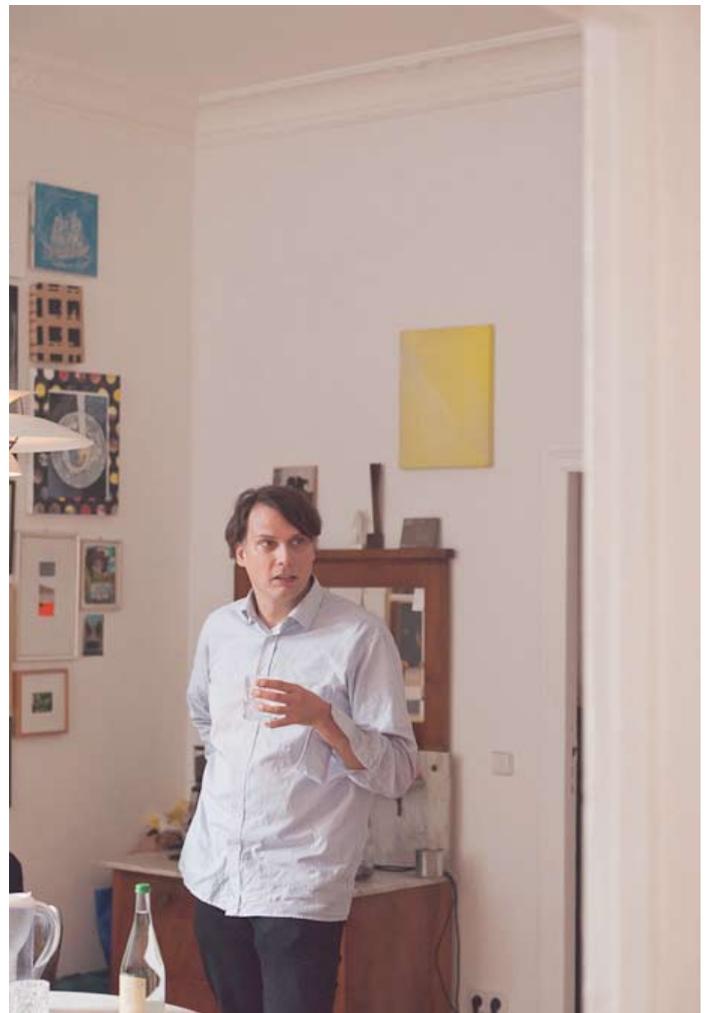
















So when did you come to Berlin?

Gregor Hildebrandt: I came to Berlin in 1998. *Alicja Kwade:* 1999.

And what brought both of you here?

Gregor Hildebrandt: I studied in Mainz. For me, it was due to personal reasons. My daughter was born here so I moved here to be with her. But before that I had already travelled back and forth a lot.

Alicja Kwade: I didn't actually want to move to Berlin at all – I would have much rather gone to New York or London. But after weighing up the finances I realised that those were not an option. So Berlin was the next best.

How did you meet?

Alicja Kwade: Pretty classic. We met at uni in Cafe Mittelachse, wasn't it?

Gregor Hildebrandt: I'd already noticed her around. But we didn't get to know each other until we were in the same class. I was working as a tutor.

Is it ever difficult being in a relationship with another artist? Don't you ever feel in competition?
Alicja Kwade: You have to avoid it at times, but mostly it works out.

Do you talk a lot together about your work?

Alicja Kwade: A reasonable amount... not an awful lot.

Gregor Hildebrandt: It's ok. But on the other hand, that's what both of us do on a daily basis, even permanently. We go to openings together because that's what we both like to do. We have a lot of friends whose girlfriends we have never seen, because exhibition openings are not something that everyone is into.

What makes Berlin so special for you?

Gregor Hildebrandt: I can't speak English.

Alicja Kwade: But you really have to be able to speak English here! Otherwise, if you're out in Kreuzberg it can get pretty difficult.

Can either of you imagine living elsewhere?

Alicja Kwade: Maybe for a year at some point, but not forever.

Gregor Hildebrandt: I like to travel, but am always happy to come back to Berlin. We've just been in Paris for a week, where it's amazingly beautiful, much more so than Berlin. But I'm not allowed to smoke there and have to spend a crazy amount of money to get by... but the food is way better, absolutely!

Do you only travel in connection with your work? Or do you pack your bags and jet off just for a holiday now and again?

Alicja Kwade: Every 2 years we tend to go away for a week, not for long...

Gregor Hildebrandt: But even then you're taking pictures.

Alicja Kwade: We mostly travel for our work and then sometimes stay a few days longer.

Gregor Hildebrandt: We went to Lanzarote once, but then ended up calling it a work trip.

Alicja Kwade: ... because of the photos I took there.

Gregor Hildebrandt: I heard Thomas Scheibitz quote Isa Genzken recently: "What am I meant to take a holi-day from?"

You're friends with a lot of other artists. How important to you is the exchange between each other?

Gregor Hildebrandt: I don't think we have any friends who aren't artists in fact.

Alicja Kwade: Somehow we're always on the topic. But we don't just constantly talk about art, but also the general gossip and joking around.

Gregor Hildebrandt: I sometimes get the feeling that artists nowadays withdraw themselves more and more, for example, hardly any articles in the art world are actually written by artists themselves.

Alicja Kwade: I think it's because the roles of authors and curators have taken on a greater significance than in the past. So these roles have separated.

Gregor Hildebrandt: It's turned into such a huge field. The study of art was not even an option in the past.

You have a lot of art by other artists in your apartment. Do you swap or buy from each other too?

Alicja Kwade: We swap, buy and get birthday presents- that's what we always have such great birthday par-ties!

The way you decorate in general is very unique- you have some great furniture.

Gregor Hildebrandt: Alicja does all of that.

Where are all the pieces from?

Alicja Kwade: I'd find it a shame to buy new furniture. I get most of it from Ebay at a great price because I know what to look for. I really enjoy it. It's not important to me which designer it's by, I just have to like it.

Do you also restore the furniture yourself?

Alicja Kwade: Yes, together with my father. I often get tips from him or send him things I'm looking at on Ebay to get his opinion.

So although you don't go on holiday, which 3 things would you take to a desert island?

Gregor Hildebrandt: Wow that's hard...Friends?

Alicja Kwade: Sun cream. Good food. A computer with Wi-fi,

Gregor Hildebrandt: We'd have to take swimming shorts or I'd feel naked. We can leave the friends, but take a towel!

Alicja Kwade: A camera. Then we could leave it there.

Who would you invite to dinner, living or dead?

Gregor Hildebrandt: I probably wouldn't want to invite the people who I think are great.

Alicja Kwade: Those major personalities that you're so in awe of, you can't really just invite to your house very easily.

Gregor Hildebrandt: I'd rather meet them in a bar.

So who would you want to go for a drink with?

Gregor Hildebrandt: There are many...Nico.

Alicja Kwade: Lou Reed in his best years.

Gregor Hildebrandt: Jacques Brel.

Alicja Kwade: From the dead, Houdnini and Nicola Tesla.

Who is Nicoal Tesla?

Alicja Kwade: A scientist who later unfortunately went mad. He was the real person who invented the light bulb along with the alternating current.

Where are your favourite places in Berlin?

Alicja Kwade: I think we agree on that one: Themroc and Bar 3.

Gregor Hildebrandt: A friend of ours runs Schlessisch Blau, a type of brasserie. Amazingly good!

How does a typical Sunday look for you?

Alicja Kwade: Gregor sleeps in while I'm already working in the Atelier, then we meet in the evening at the latest around 21:30. One of us brings food- me or him, then we choose something to watch.

Gregor Hildebrandt: Mostly Columbo.

Alicja Kwade is represented by Johann Koenig and Gregor Hildebrandt by Galerie Wentrup.

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