

# ALL STARS

I've known Cassidy for about six years, since she was a student at the Art Institute in Basel\*, and what always attracted me in her practice is the relentless sense of failure I get when looking at her works. Don't get me wrong, I don't mean this pejoratively. Quite the contrary. What Cassidy achieves with great talent is to create pieces that successfully encapsulate the very idea of failure itself. Hers are artworks that consistently and meticulously stage their own failure at meeting expectations, that skilfully toy with defeating their own self-realising purpose, be it formally or conceptually. And, though sometimes it literally fails – like when a sculpture she made that was meant to fall to the ground each time a viewer came nearer didn't work and remained desperately upright throughout the show –, it's never just about failure for the masochistic sake of it. Her works succeed, precisely because they unapologetically accommodate the possibility of (their own) failure, thereby making it – failure – a constitutive element of Cassidy's artistic discourse. Her practice could thus be characterised as a dedicated yet sarcastic exploration of the mechanics of failure and, somewhere at the crossroads between desire and shame, of failure's overall cultural significance.

When one of her drawings spontaneously combusts on her birthday, a sculpture collapses to the ground or lights switch off in the room when the viewer approaches a work, it seems like Cassidy transcends herself through a personal form of self-sabotage. Many of her creations place her, or an allegory of her own persona, at the centre stage of mildly embarrassing situations, the depiction of existential struggles and manifestations of social anxiety, as if she were trying to express her own feeling of inadequacy. What mostly strikes me, then, in Cassidy's works, is the way she manages to give an artistic account of imposter syndrome and, what's more, to do so with a great dose of self-mockery.

Humour is scarce in the arts, but with Cassidy, it almost becomes its own medium as well as a weapon. Through her work, she explores comic tropes and genres as a strategy to reflect back on the art world, its absurdities and her own professional itinerary as an artist. Staging herself or an alter-ego in her works, she turns art into a wannabe comedy show where she's her own character trying to make it as an artist. And, like in good sitcoms, failure becomes the essential trigger for cathartic laughter. Cassidy's works are often quite self-explanatory and this should come as no surprise. Indeed, it is common knowledge that the more you try to make sense of a joke the less funny it becomes. Here, laughter simply appears as the best response to an art world that often takes itself way too seriously, but it is also a powerful tool, as corrosive as it is unifying, to alleviate the numbing anxiety fuelled by the success imperative of a highly competitive milieu that made a specialty of disguising its arbitrariness and bias under the pretence of merit. What Cassidy seems to do with her art is to anticipate her own fails and to preventively laugh about it, with us. It is as generous as it is sometimes hermetic, and you're all welcome to join us for a good laugh.

When visiting her studio to prepare this show, Cassidy reminded me of probably the biggest laugh we ever had together. Back when I was an assistant in Basel, we had to summon her one day, because a presence sheet from the school featured a misspell in her name. I remember standing there, biting my tongue not to laugh, while my colleague confronted her. Without showing her the paper brazenly claiming 'CASSEDY TONER' had been there, she kept asking her whether she had indeed taken the class, to which an impassive Cassidy kept assenting, unaware of the reason why we were asking her this question in the first place. It was so obvious that someone had signed in her stead without even caring to double check her name's spelling that Cassidy's ingenuous bad faith was simply getting the better of me. So, by the time my colleague eventually showed her the sheet and Cassidy found nothing better to answer than 'sometimes, when I'm hungover, I forget how to spell my name', I just cracked. When my speechless colleague turned toward me for support, I was nowhere to be found, having had to leave the room, unable to contain myself any longer.

Thank you, Cassidy, for reminding me of this momentous laugh. May this exhibition be a rightful celebration of it and an anticipation for the many more to come.

*\* Now that I'm writing this, I remember that Cassidy and I recently realised that we had in fact known each other for even longer than that. Around 2014 both of us were interns, she in New York, assisting the artist David Horvitz and I in Berlin, working for his gallery. Without knowing it, we spent weeks collaborating from both ends of the Atlantic to produce a brilliant edition that I know was, and remains, influential to both of us. David particularly loves coincidences, so I'd like to thank him for allowing us to meet in the first place without us even suspecting what would one day come out of it.*

Simon Würsten Marin