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Kalup Linzy Is Performing Live as His Art-Making Alter Ego 'Katonya' at Art Basel Miami Beach

Here's the story behind the daily performance at David Castillo Gallery's booth.

Sarah Cascone, December 7, 2017



Kalup Linzy, *Conversations Wit De Churen IX XI XII: Dayz of Our Ego* (2015), video still. Courtesy David Castillo Gallery.

Before this year, Kalup Linzy had never set foot inside the convention center for Art Basel in Miami Beach. Now, he's one of the main attractions, performing one hour a day in drag at the booth of his Miami Beach dealer, David Castillo Gallery.

The performance stars Katonya, one of about 30 characters, all part of an extended family, that Linzy has been developing and featuring in his performances since 2005. Also an artist, Katonya doesn't quite share her creator's success. Videos featuring the character document her struggles to break into the art world.

"She's involved in the drama of the art world," Castillo, who has been working with the artist for about a year, told artnet News. For the fictional artist, showing at Art Basel would surely be a major coup.



Kalup Linzy performs a Katonya, painting live at Art Basel in Miami Beach. Courtesy David Castillo Gallery.

On site at the fair, Kantonya, barefoot and clad in pink flowered halter dress, is hard at work, creating her mixed-media collages, some of which hang behind her. Each one, priced at \$2,500, features photographs of Linzy in costume as the other characters. He's done live performances as Katonya before, but she was singing, not making art.

"I thought about the performance as if I was filming her making the work," said the artist to artnet News. "It's just about her studio practice."



Kalup Linzy performs a Katonya, painting live at Art Basel in Miami Beach. Courtesy David Castillo Gallery.

For the first performance, Linzy remained quiet, working diligently for the full hour. He's toying with the idea, however, of having Katonya receive a phone call during the fair, allowing fairgoers to guess at what the imaginary caller might be saying on the other end.

"I had several collectors and patrons come up and try to talk to me," said Linzy, "but I couldn't acknowledge them."

Kalup Linzy will perform each day, 3 p.m.–4 p.m., at David Castillo Gallery, during the run of Art Basel Miami Beach.