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Life in Berlin

Installation Artist Mark Jenkins Begins New Collaboration In Berlin

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By Monika Mueller-Kroll

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A cast installation piece Mark Jenkins executed in Seoul, South Korea.

Courtesy of Mark Jenkins

American artist Mark Jenkins' medium is packing tape.

He uses tape to cast everyday objects, including his own body.

"I was just kind of messing around with tape, and I figured out that you can make these casts with tape. I started experimenting some more and that's when I realized that you can make body casts," Jenkins says.

Some of his sculptures are transparent and fragile looking; others are more deceptive like his life-size dummies dressed in everyday clothing.

Jenkins says his stage is often the urban street.

"I think the idea to do sculptures on the streets was triggered by the vibrant street culture in Brazil. I actually traveled around South America for a year. It felt natural to express my work on the streets because it's the place where people expressed themselves, versus a place like Washington, D.C. it's very sterile. You don't find so much street culture there, so much litter, so much anything," he says.

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In 2005, Washington, D.C., Jenkins' home town, became the stage for his street art. He placed small clear tape babies all over the city that hung in trees, on billboards, or sitting on monuments.

Jenkins wanted to create an iconic image, a tag for himself.

"Each baby was always interacting in a different way, and it became a mental exercise to use this one object to affect the space around it. And it helped to develop a lot of mental skills to do the other work later on."



This scene is from a performance of "Is Maybe" by Jared Gradinger and Angela Schubot. "Is Maybe" runs until June 19th.

Dorothea Tuch

Jenkins has placed his tape sculptures all over the globe. Life-size dummies sit on roof tops, are stuffed into trash cans, or sleep on curbs.

The 41 year-old says that after he installs his sculptures, he only stays around for a few minutes. He doesn't want to contaminate his work.

"Maybe the police will come, or a few times fire trucks have come and you see this installation, this stage become more interesting with this sort of climax. And it makes the whole scene really real."

In Berlin, Jenkins collaborated for the first time with two dancers, Jared Gradinger and Angela Schubot. Their piece "Is Maybe" asks questions about the borders between bodies. Mark Jenkins made transparent body casts to visually support their choreography.

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To make the casts, the dancers were wrapped in tape, chest to chest, for over an hour.

Jared Gradinger says he found the experience influential.

"It's been quite influential [...] how we found these places of stillness that are completely alive."

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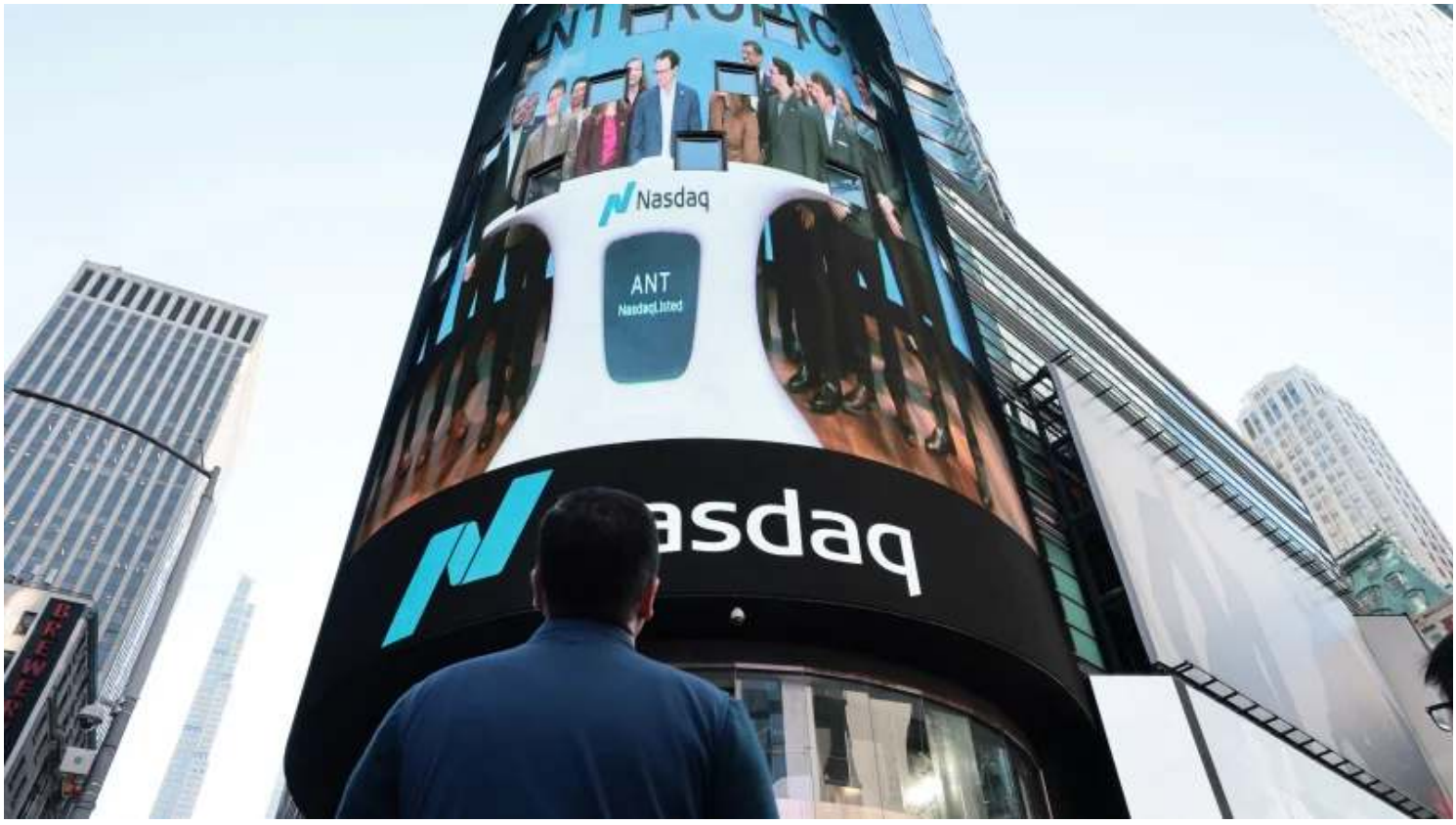

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