

# KW

**Videoart at Midnight Festival:  
Christian Friedrich**

***Are You Warm? Did You Have  
Trouble Getting Here?***

***Have They Treated You Well?***

**8–16 December 18**

**Christian Friedrich**  
***Are You Warm? Did You Have Trouble Getting Here? Have They Treated You Well?***

Opening: 7 December 18, 7 pm



*Untitled*, 2010–11, Production still

A few seconds into Christian Friedrich's video *Untitled* (2010–11), a viewer may think they have the measure of it. Namely, that alternating shots of a billowing American flag and a man in a cage being repeatedly electro-shocked with a cattle prod constitute some kind of commentary on the United States and the violence underpinning it. That reading, though, is quickly twisted by subsequent imagery of a jetting fountain and the related recognition that the cage clip samples online fetish porn, the images modulating each other. And it twists again with the rhythmic insertion, as the film's fifteen minutes accumulate and the editing accelerates, of all kinds of other imagery: a Macy's Day Parade, jellyfish, birds, undersea plants, toes and foot fetishism, a gimp in a full bodysuit, New York architecture, BMX riders, helicopters, much more.

This imagistic cornucopia is unified by an anachronistic sepia tint—adding a *when* to the question of what we're seeing—and by intercutting so prodigiously fast that sometimes two images feel to superimpose, creating unlikely correspondences that have their own cryptic logic. What has seemed at first a statement may be revealed as a formal structure, a machine that generates meanings only to reveal them as subjective and contingent. The more time passes, the more is revealed, the more is suggested, the more you seek to make sense of it and, finally, the less you know.

In this exhibition, Friedrich's combinatorial approach extends to the interplay between works, each a darkly playful prism for the other. A second film, *Are You Warm? Did You Have Trouble Getting Here? Have They Treated You Well?* (2017) bears a title that ambiguously suggests the beginning of something:

an interrogation, one might particularly think in the winking light of *Untitled*. The structure is minimalist but ramifying. We see a central circle in an off-white ground with a vertical line on it—it's a constructed corner—into which a drop of water periodically falls, though after a while there are more sounds of water dropping than we see; Friedrich begins subdividing the audio so that a water drop falls between the water drops, out of strict tempo but with a feel of acceleration, ratcheting tension.

The sounds, meanwhile, are bouncing around an array of speakers, creating the illusion of a space, a room. The white corner is gradually darkening, dirtying, as if a body had rubbed against it. One may think of Chinese water torture or, again thinking of *Untitled*, of some kind of extreme kinkiness—Friedrich, after all, is the artist who made *The Stone That The Builder Rejected* (2008), a video in which he invited a beautiful young man to his studio, where the latter found the artist having apparently hung himself, and began to play with Friedrich's feet. Another voice may say that that's all in your head.

More largely, the overtones of interrogation here might be read as meta. Interpreting art is an intellectual interrogation—certainly we use that word—yet a cozy one compared to those that go on in the real world. The violence and sexual extremism that glimmer at the edge of Friedrich's practice bespeak an impatience with the artworld as a supposedly radical space that is generally underwritten by conservatism. He also recognizes that if you point directly at something within art, it often just becomes more art. Here, whatever may be construed as his central material hovers on the margins or outright denies its own existence. The mind doesn't know. But maybe the body does.



*Are You Warm? Did You Have Trouble Getting Here? Have They Treated You Well?, 2017, Production still*

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### Opening hours

Wednesday 7–9 pm  
Thursday 11 am–9 pm  
Friday–Sunday 11 am–7 pm

### Admission

8 € / 6 € reduced  
Free admission on Thursday evenings between 6–9 pm  
Free admission to people up to the age of 18  
Free admission with VAM festival ticket to  
Christian Friedrich's exhibition

### Colophon

Director: Krist Gruijthuijsen  
Curator: Olaf Stüber  
Head of Production: Claire Spilker  
Technical Management: Wilken Schade  
Registrar: Monika Grzymislawska  
Head of Installation and Media Technology:  
Markus Krieger  
Installation team: KW Installation Team  
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**VAM**  
*festival '18*

The exhibition by Christian Friedrich at KW takes place in the framework of Videoart at Midnight Festival '18.