

KW

***TIES, TALES AND
TRACES***

**Dedicated to
Frank Wagner,
Independent Curator
(1958–2016)**

9 February – 5 May 19

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Opening: 8 February 19, 7 pm

The exhibition *TIES, TALES AND TRACES* is dedicated to Berlin curator Frank Wagner, who died in 2016 at the age of 57. Over the course of a thirty-year career, Wagner became very well-known for his seminal and internationally acclaimed exhibitions on critical art practices, AIDS, and gender and LGBTQI*-related themes—long before these topics were part of common social discourse. An independent curator, from the early 1980s onward he played a definitive role in shaping the neue Gesellschaft für bildende Kunst (nGbK), a Kunstverein with one of the largest memberships in Germany, as well as the nGbK curatorial collective RealismusStudio, which served as a springboard and discursive community for Wagner. He also cooperated with numerous institutions within Berlin and beyond. With the exhibition *David Wojnarowicz – Ein Gedenkraum / A Memorial Exhibition* at KW in 1992/93, Wagner commemorated the oeuvre of David Wojnarowicz, who had died of AIDS in 1992.

Frank Wagner, who considered himself an *Independent Curator*, not only brought artists with a strong sociopolitical agenda to Berlin, in some cases before they became internationally well-known. He also supported them with unusual intensity in the realization of their projects. Over the course of his career he exhibited over 900 artists, including Monica Bonvicini, Hanne Darboven, Rineke Dijkstra, Stan Douglas, Marlene Dumas, VALIE EXPORT, Nan Goldin, General Idea, Robert Gober, Félix González-Torres, Vera Frenkel, Gran Fury, Group Material, Hans Haacke, Jenny Holzer, Sanja Iveković, Alfredo Jaar, Barbara Kruger, Marlene McCarty, Mark Morrisroe, Michaela Melián, Cady Noland, Katharina Sieverding, Wolfgang Tillmans, Yoko Ono, Jeff Wall, and Hannah Wilke.

As an important and extremely active protagonist of the Berlin art and culture scene, someone who understood how to use a great deal of humor to advocate for and support the arts, Wagner also helped young artists gain visibility, and he served as a mentor to many artists throughout their lives. Having a close connection with art schools was important to him, as was his role in curating the annual exhibition of the recipients of the Berlin Senate's yearlong fellowships for emerging visual artists (2008–2016). Through projects that spanned different institutions and his personal negotiating skills, he managed to support individuals with different interests and perspectives and bring them together. His independent and project-based work enabled him to remain flexible and open as a curator but brought a life of financial insecurity. Nevertheless or perhaps for this very reason, Wagner was able to unwaveringly pursue his consistently political concerns

about the state of society, everyday violence, racism, colonialism, fascism, homophobia, and marginalized sexuality. By means of art and his own experimental curatorial approach he inspired uncomfortable discussions and tried to address people beyond the art world. Creating early exhibitions on the politics of the body, gender, sexuality, and AIDS, Wagner took on the role of a pathfinder and gave the politicization of the private and entirely new dimension. In 1988, when people infected with AIDS were much more stigmatized and mandatory quarantine was even being considered, he dared mount the first comprehensive exhibition in Europe about HIV and its deadly effects with *Vollbild AIDS. Eine Kunstausstellung über Leben und Sterben*—a topic that has proven to be a touchstone for democracy, equality, and tolerance. Also worthy of mention are the comprehensive retrospectives *Marlene Dumas – Models – Rejects* (nGbK, Berlin 1996), *Unterbrochene Karrieren: Hannah Wilke 1940–1993* (nGbK, Berlin 2000), *VALIE EXPORT – Mediale Anagramme* (Akademie der Künste, Berlin 2003), *Félix González-Torres* (Hamburger Bahnhof – Museum für Gegenwart, Berlin 2006), *Alfredo Jaar – The way it is. Eine Ästhetik des Widerstands* (nGbK, Berlinische Galerie, Alte Nationalgalerie, Berlin 2012) and thematic exhibitions such as *Inszenierung der Macht – Ästhetische Faszination im Faschismus* (nGbK, Berlin 1987), *Das achte Feld – Geschlechter, Leben und Begehren in der Kunst seit 1960* (Museum Ludwig, Cologne 2006), *Just Different* (Cobra Museum voor Moderne Kunst, Amstelveen, NL, 2008), *LOVE AIDS RIOT SEX – Kunst AIDS Aktivismus 1987–2014* (nGbK, Berlin 2013/14), and *Memory Lab: The Sentimental Turn. Photography Challenges History – 6th European Month of Photography* (Gropius Bau, Berlin 2014). More recently, Wagner curated the German pavilion of the *DUBAI Photo Exhibition – A Global Perspective* (Dubai 2016).

The exhibition at KW, which is primarily based on art works and documents from the estate of Frank Wagner, commemorates his curatorial work as part of a larger context and gives insights into the complexity of his work. His library was given to the Academy of Fine Arts Leipzig, where some 4,500 books have been archived and integrated into the academy library as *Frank Wagner's LIB*. The RealismusStudio began going through his extensive papers and set up an archiving system for *TIES, TALES AND TRACES*, a process that has by no means been completed. In addition to preparatory and accompanying documents for various projects, exhibition ephemera, correspondence, texts, portfolios, photographs, newspaper articles, they also found over 300 physical works of art and 400 media-based works, some with personal dedications or comments. These include works by Lucky DeBellevue, Rinaldo Hopf, Doug Ischar, John Lindell, Lovett / Codagnone, Donald Moffett, Piotr Nathan, Adrian Piper, Susi Pop, Steven Reinke, Hunter Reynolds, Aura Rosenberg,

Chrysanne Stathacos, Martin von Ostrowski, Anthony Viti, Lois Weinberger, Sue Williams, and David Wojnarowicz, in addition to artists already mentioned.

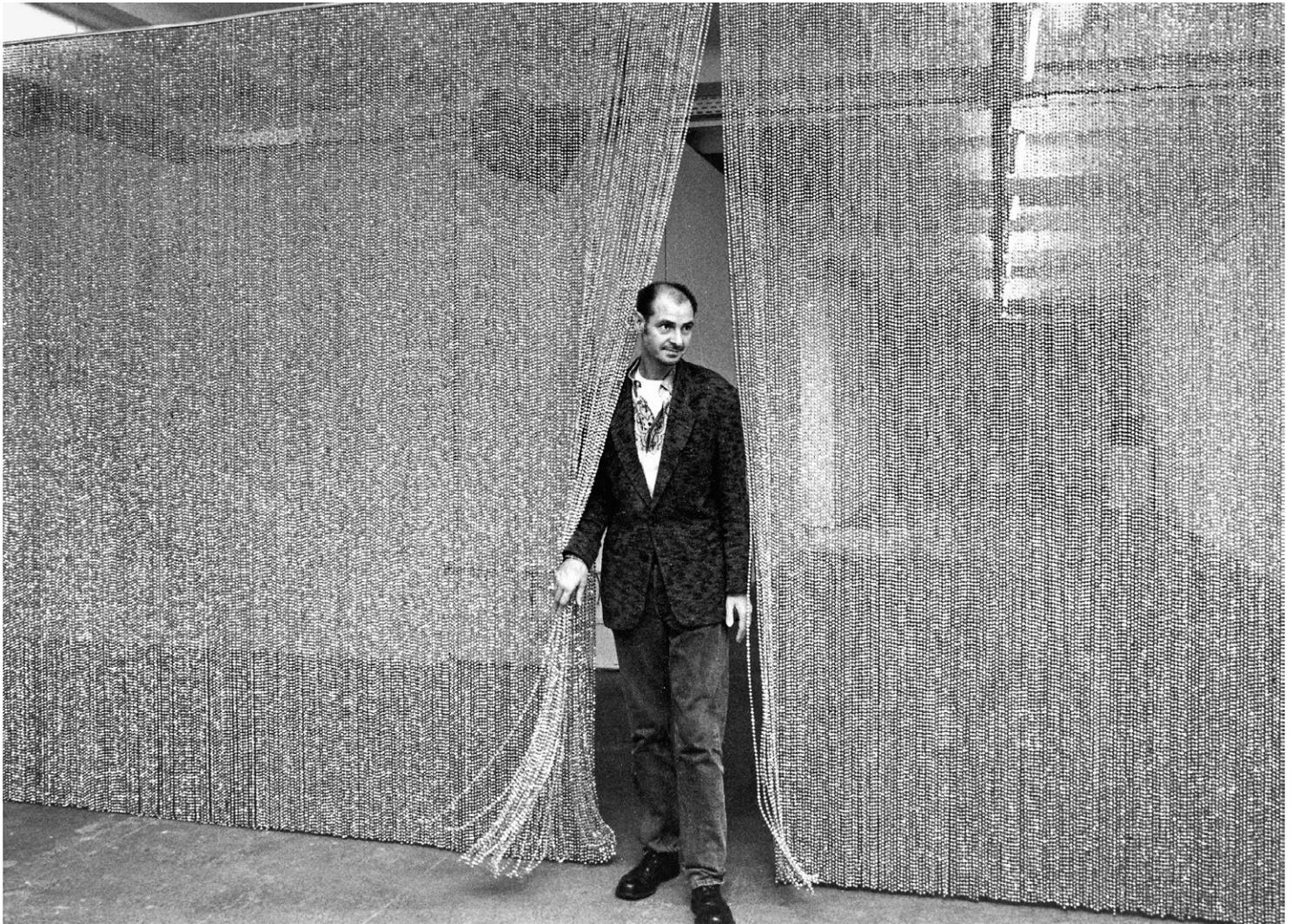
The ongoing archiving process as well as questions of negotiating what is private and what is public, what should be shown or withheld are as much a part of the exhibition as artistic references to the curator's important exhibitions and themes—it is a "portrait" in the broadest sense of the word and reflects the process of its own making.

With the help of a range of different media formats, including advertising surfaces, posters, and stickers, the exhibition extends into public space, in order to share and distribute information and demonstrate the explosive, current nature of Wagner's projects. For this purpose printed matter and visual motifs from earlier exhibitions are being reissued or reproduced.

Conversations with individuals who closely accompanied Frank Wagner and his work form the basic thread running through the accompanying program, which includes symposia and regular tours,

while leaving room for spontaneous happenings, apparently marginal activities, and situative encounters. Working from a number of initial questions that have kept resurfacing the public program offers a space for multiple voices and perspectives on the curator's life work; it documents various clues, makes tracks, illustrates relationships, and connects people and institutions from Wagner's network through common memories. With these individual narratives embedded in historical contexts, relationships to current social issues are drawn, and the issues that concerned Frank Wagner can be collectively considered and taken a step further. The video program within the exhibition changes every week.

The complementary exhibition at the project space *Between Bridges* takes place from 1 February – 16 March 19 and will be curated by Wolfgang Tillmans and Eugen Ivan Bergmann.



Frank Wagner in the exhibition *Félix González-Torres (1957–1996)*, nGbK, curator: Frank Wagner / RealismusStudio / nGbK, Berlin 1996, photo: Jürgen Henschel, Courtesy Jürgen Henschel

Public program

Curators' tour with Christin Lahr and Vincent Schier
17 February 19, 3 pm
5 May 19, 3 pm

Guided tours with companions
28 February 19, 7 pm
3, 17 and 31 March 19, 3 pm
14 and 28 March 19, 7 pm
11 and 25 April 19, 7 pm
14 and 28 April 19, 3 pm
5 May 19, 4 pm

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Opening hours

Wednesday–Monday 11 am–7 pm
Thursday 11 am–9 pm
Closed on Tuesday
Modified opening hours during Gallery Weekend
on Friday, 16 April 19, 11 am–9 pm

Admission

8 € / reduced 6 €
Combined Day Ticket KW / me Collectors Room Berlin
10 € / reduced 8 €
berlinpass holder 4 €
Free admission to people up to the age of 18,
KW Lover*, on Thursday evenings between 6–9 pm,
and during Gallery Weekend (26–28 April)

Guided Tours

KW offers free guided tours through the exhibition during regular opening hours. For further information on tours for large groups (over 10 people), please contact Duygu Örs at do@kw-berlin.de or +49 30 243459-132.

KONTEXT(E) BERLIN

Symposium with Leonie Baumann, Monica Bonvicini, Pola Sieverding, Wolfgang Tillmans, Dr. Ingrid Wagner, Claudia Wahjudi, and others
23 February 19, 1–7 pm
Venue: KW Studio

WAS BLEIBT / WHAT REMAINS...?

How to approach a curatorial legacy and estate?
Symposium with Dr. Beatrice von Bismarck, Claire Grace, Dr. Martin Heller and others
13 April 19, 2–7 pm
Venue: KW Studio

REVIEWS AND PREVIEWS

Symposium with Julie Ault, Dr. Julia Friedrich and others
Saturday, 4 May 19, 2–7 pm
Venue: KW Studio

Colophon

Curators: RealismusStudio of the neue Gesellschaft für bildende Kunst (Christin Lahr, Isabelle Meiffert, Ulrike Riebel, Vincent Schier, Susanne Weiß)
Curatorial Fellow: Léon Kruijswijk
Head of Production: Claire Spilker
Technical Management: Wilken Schade
Head of Installation, Media Technology: Markus Krieger
Installation team: KW Installation Team
Registrar: Monika Grzymislawska
Head of Press and Communication: Karoline Köber
Interns: Leonie Kennedy, Isabell Kolditz
Text: Christin Lahr, Vincent Schier
Editing: Friederike Klapp, Karoline Köber, Christin Lahr, Vincent Schier

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Media partner: SIEGESSÄULE

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