



KKW

Peter Friedl

Report 1964–2022

19 February – 1 May 22

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Report 1964–2022 is Peter Friedl's (b. 1960) most extensive institutional survey in Germany to date. Adopting a variety of genres, media, and forms of display, Friedl's works explore the construction of history and concepts within our political and aesthetical consciousness. His artistic practice is aimed at creating new modes of narration in which time, permanent displacement, and critical intimacy play a pivotal role. Friedl often refers to and employs theatrical representation and poetics in his work (e.g., scale models, tableaux vivants, props, puppet theatre, and restaging) to highlight hidden or overlooked mechanisms that are intrinsic to historiography, language, and cultural identities. Archival rigor is the key organisational strategy behind some of his long-term projects in which strict chronology or other ordering principles calls into question notions of visibility and context. Equally important in Friedl's oeuvre is the drawing as a lyrical voice, one that documents and comments on both personal and socio-political histories.

As a monographic exhibition, *Report 1964–2022* brings together works from more than five decades. Its title cites Friedl's eponymous video installation, created for documenta 14, which explores the permeability of language and the boundaries of identity, while the dates underline Friedl's interest in *real time*. Many of his aesthetic concepts originate in the context of theatre in which reality is distilled, framed, exposed, and transformed. The organisational strategy behind some of Friedl's works is both methodological as well as aesthetic. Longterm projects such as *Playgrounds* (1995–2021), *Theory of Justice* (1992–2010), *The Diaries* (1981–2022), but also his drawings, dating back to his childhood (1964–2022), exemplify an artistic commitment that represents and exhibits time in its purest form—time lived and lost. The way he often employs the perspective of children—as truly subaltern—can be taken as an opportunity to understand the so-called real time, not just intellectually but also formally—from innocence to manipulation. The exhibition at KW Institute for Contemporary Art combines earlier with more recent works in order to highlight thematic as well as formal continuities within Friedl's artistic practice.

Ground Floor

Upon entering the exhibition, visitors are facing three custom-made showcases filled with stacks of diaries. *The Diaries* (1981–2022) contains thousands upon thousands of densely filled hand-written pages covering each day over a period of forty years and testifying the futility of capturing a life in words. By denying access to the contents of his enshrined, closed diaries, Friedl invites the viewer to contemplate how aesthetic experience and imagination work. Early photographic collages from 1971 can be seen as Friedl's first attempt at photography, in which he juxtaposes found imagery and text, in this case from the fantasy world of Native American people. The video *Untouched* (1995–1997) features Friedl's first son popping balloons that have the slogan "Nobody knows science" printed on them. The footage was taken in Berlin and Italy over a period of two years. In close proximity one finds a pink monochrome painting (1991), as an example of Friedl's exploration of colour as language and medium. *New Kurdish Flag* (1994–2001) uses colour as a means to reflect on a concrete object—the flag (and logo) of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK)—and its political history as a symbol of resistance. The flag's original red colour has been brightened to pink; the programmatic star in the center is cut out and missing.

Playgrounds (1995–2021) is one of Friedl's longterm projects showing documentary-style photos of play areas taken by the artist around the globe. The pictures play with the genre of conceptual photography and research underscoring urban typologies of modernist planning, which can be interpreted as a remnant of twentieth-century utopias. While place and time are stated, the distanced view (always through the same analogue camera), which favours aesthetics over functionality, emphasizes their apparent similarities and diversity. The work contains over 1,200 digitized color slides arranged alphabetically according to the location names.

For his first retrospective in 1998, Peter Friedl asked the entire staff of the Palais des Beaux-Arts in Brussels what animal they had once in their life wanted to be. Then the costumes of all named animals were produced and laid out on the floor for visitors to be used. As a child, transformation and disguise are still the same. The wish of becoming an animal is one full of ferocity and excitement that is pervasive in a child's imagination. *Peter Friedl* (1998) is a retrospective in the most literal sense with its reference to early beginnings. This piece is put into dialogue with *King Kong* (2001), a multi-layered video installation contemplating the *King Kong* narrative. Staged as a music video of sorts, the work is situated in Sophiatown in Johannesburg, an important place within South Africa's Apartheid history, and also the location for the jazz musical *King Kong* (1959) based on the story of heavyweight boxing icon, Ezekiel

“*King Kong*” Dhlamini. It is in Sophiatown where singer-songwriter Daniel Johnston recites his own *King Kong* song, a retelling of the legendary *King Kong* film, while children around him play and listen. Adjacent to this installation is *Index on Censorship I–V* (1998), enlarged doodles and ‘fan’ letters—photographed on differently coloured backgrounds—that the artist received from two Turkish girls in Berlin, who lived in the same building at the time.

The notion of scale and model play a pivotal role in Friedl’s artistic practice. *Rehousing* (2012–2019) is presented in two rooms and consists of 12 true-to-scale models that reproduce historical, sometimes destroyed, or never realised housing structures. They are “case studies for the mental geography of an alternative modernity” (Friedl). The first model (*Gründbergstraße 22*, 2012) is the artist’s childhood home in Austria; following models comprise of Ho Chi Minh’s private residence, a traditional stilt house structure in Hanoi (*Uncle Ho*, 2012); a slave hut on the Evergreen plantation established in Louisiana in the eighteenth century (*Evergreen*, 2013); a never realized residential building in the *razionalismo* style designed by Luigi Piccinato for East Africa during the Fascist era (*Villa tropicale*, 2012–13); a replica of philosopher Martin Heidegger’s cabin in the Black Forest (*Heidegger*, 2014); a reconstruction of a shack built by African refugees in Berlin and taken down by the police in 2014 (*Oranienplatz*, 2014); a so-called “nail house” or *dingzihu*—representing one of many local structures resisting the Chinese building boom (*Holdout*, 2016); and one of the few derelict buildings left from Van Molyvann’s *100 Houses* project completed in 1967 for employees of National Bank of Cambodia in Phnom Penh (*101*, 2016). The dome construction is from *Drop City*, the short-lived hippie commune founded in Southern Colorado in 1965 and abandoned in the mid-1970s, which implemented Buckminster Fuller’s

geodesic design principles into DIY buildings (*Dome*, 2016); a container home comes from a refugee camp in Jordan (*Azraq*, 2016). The two most recent models show Winnie and Nelson Mandela’s former home in Soweto, now transformed into a museum (*8115 Vilakazi Street*, 2018–2019) and one of the prefabricated container houses that made up Amona—the Israeli outpost in the Palestinian territories on the West Bank, which was cleared in 2017 (*Amona*, 2018–2019).

Rehousing is installed close to two videos: *Dummy* (1997) and *Liberty City* (2007), each of them offering a different perspective on socio-political realities. *Dummy* (produced for documenta X) portrays a scene in which the protagonist – the artist himself –, frustratedly and fruitlessly, kicks a cigarette machine in a pedestrian underpass in Kassel. When leaving he is stopped by a begger asking him for money. As he refuses the person kicks the protagonist. In *Liberty City* (2007), Friedl addresses a historical scene from 1979 when black motorcyclist Arthur McDuffie was stopped by white police officers and beaten to death. When the accused policemen were acquitted five months later, riots broke out in Liberty City. Friedl inverts the dramatic structure by restaging the scene, filmed on site, in which the white cop is being beaten up. The uncut sequence is shot from the perspective of a possible eyewitness in the streets of the *Liberty Square Housing Project*, a residential complex built during the Roosevelt era in the 1930s for African American residents. To keep the black and white communities separated, a wall was erected on the eastern boundary of Liberty Square, the remains of which can still be seen today.

Main Hall

Walking down into KW’s main hall, the visitor encounters four delicately handcrafted marionettes standing on the ground and hanging on their strings from the gallery ceiling. *The Dramatist (Black Hamlet, Crazy Henry, Giulia, Toussaint)* (2013) embodies the figures of Toussaint Louverture, the multi-faceted leader of the Haitian Revolution in 1791, who helped shape the first independent nation in the Caribbean; Henry Ford, the automobile magnate from Detroit, who perfected mass production; Giulia Schucht, the wife of Antonio Gramsci; and John Chavafambira, a Manyika *nganga* who moved from his home in Zimbabwe to Johannesburg in the late 1920s and became the subject of the novelistic narrative *Black Hamlet* (1937) by South African psychoanalyst Wulf Sachs. By bringing these four characters together, Friedl opens new possibilities for reflection on how historiography is being constructed. On the opposite walls, there is a selection of more than 150 drawings created by the artist between 1964 (when Friedl was four years old) and late 2021. The long timeline that binds them together doesn’t feign any chronology.



Peter Friedl, *Oranienplatz*, 2014. From the series *Rehousing*, 2012–2019. MDF, wood, polypropylene, PVC, acrylic paint, 19 x 22 x 30 cm. Collection Marco Rossi, Turin. Courtesy Guido Costa Projects, Turin. Photo: Jorit Aust.



Peter Friedl, *No prey, no pay*, 2018–2019. Mixed media, dimensions variable. Installation view, Sharjah Biennial 14. Performance by Johnathan Lee Iverson. Courtesy the artists and Sharjah Art Foundation. Commissioned by Sharjah Art Foundation. Photo: Sharjah Art Foundation.

The central space of the main hall hosts two of Friedl's most prominent works: *Theory of Justice* (1992–2010) and *Report* (2016). The title *Theory of Justice* refers to the attempt at renewing social contract theory undertaken in the early 1970s by US philosopher John Rawls (1921–2002). Friedl adheres to a rigid system of newspaper and magazine clippings collected over the course of roughly two decades and displayed in specifically designed showcases following solely the chronology of the documented, depicted events. By omitting any further information on context and time, Friedl creates a new narrative—of protest and resistance—that is based purely on imagery and selection. Cinematographically, *Report* (2016) is perhaps the most complex of Friedl's film installations. The source text is *A Report to an Academy* (1917), Franz Kafka's short story about *Red Peter*, an ape who reports on his experience of becoming human. Set in the National Theatre in Athens, twenty-four performers—mostly amateur actors—appear on stage and recite extracts from Kafka's monological text, either in their own first languages or in languages of their choice, including Arabic, Dari, English, French, Greek, Kurdish, Russian, and Kiswahili. German, the text's original language, and subtitles are deliberately left out. What unites the people on stage are their physical presence, gestures, speech, and the fact that many of them came to Greece in the wake of recent immigration movements.

No prey, no pay (2018–19) is a continuation of Friedl's long-standing interest in looking at outcast and marginalised positions differently and within. As a starting point, the theatrical installation refers to the heyday of piracy between the 1650s and the 1730s. *No prey, no pay* consists of a cast of distinctive fringe characters whose fascinating biographies are situated

somewhere between reality, fiction, and legend. To each of these characters, Friedl dedicates a colourful plinth or pedestal like those used in a circus, beneath an apocryphal Jolly Roger (entitled *King Death*), with pirate costumes lying around. The pedestals are both sculptures and tiny stages, reminiscent of *Speakers' Corners*, waiting to be activated.

Pogo Bar

For *Study for Social Dreaming* (2014–2017), Friedl arranged two public *Social Dreaming* sessions—loosely based on W. Gordon Lawrence's method—in a small theatre in Rome as part of his workshop on *Exercises in Imagination*. Struck by Charlotte Beradt's anthology *The Third Reich of Dreams* (a record, first published in 1966, of dreams dreamed between 1933 and 1939), which highlighted the social dimension of dreams and the role they can play as documents within political and historical anthropology, Lawrence started hosting weekly *Social Dreaming Sessions* together with a psychoanalyst in London in 1982. Following Friedl's invitation, the participants were supervised and guided by two psychologists, sharing and telling each other their dreams without any prior instructions. *Study for Social Dreaming* uses the original footage filmed by several cameras during the two sessions. The fragmented montage blurs the actual chronology and creates a mockumentary of sorts.

Public Program

Lecture by Dr. Mischa Twitchin
Sprechen Sie Löwe? Addressing imitations of the foreign by the familiar
23 February 22, 7 pm
In English

Walk-through with Ana Teixeira Pinto:
The Reliable Narrator
27 February 22, 2 pm
In English

Walk-through with Raimar Stange
History Revisited
24 March 22, 7 pm
In German

Lecture by Mieke Bal
To Be or Not to Be: No Con-Cept
28 March 22, 7 pm
In English

Focus tour with Raoul Zoellner
I wish they'd never told me that my playground was just a parking lot
6 April 22, 5 pm
In English

Lecture by Hilde Van Gelder
Radical Neutrality
13 April 22, 7 pm
In English

Focus tour with Barbara Campaner
Mit Wörtern gehen. Offener Schreibworkshop
27 April 22, 5 pm
In German

Walk-through with Krist Gruijthuisen
28 April 22, 7 pm
In English

To join the public events, please register in advance via reservation@kw-berlin.de.

The exhibition is accompanied by the publication *On Peter Friedl*, published by KW and Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther & Franz König, Cologne. The publication contains existing as well as newly commissioned essays on the artist's work written over the past twenty years, with contributions by Mieke Bal, Roger M. Buergel, Jean-François Chevrier, Adrienne Edwards, Renee Gladman, Krist Gruijthuisen, Norman M. Klein, Bartomeu Marí, Philippe-Alain Michaud, Maria Muhle, Eva Schmidt, Marco Scotini, Mischa Twitchin, Hilde Van Gelder und Leire Vergara.



Peter Friedl, *The Dramatist (Black Hamlet, Crazy Henry, Giulia, Toussaint)*, 2013. Wood, metal, fabric, leather, glass, hair, straw, oil paint, nylon strings, dimensions variable. Courtesy Carré d'Art, Musée d'art contemporain de Nîmes. Photo: Maria Bruni.

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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, 29 April 22, 11 am–9 pm

Admission

8 € / reduced 6 €
berlinpass holders 4 €
Free admission to visitors up to and including 18,
Friends of KW and Berlin Biennale, and KW Lover*.
Free admission to all visitors on Thursday evenings
6–9 pm, during Museum Sunday Berlin and during
Gallery Weekend, 29 April 22, 6–9 pm.

Tours with KW Guides

During regular opening hours, visitors of KW can
participate in short introductions to the exhibitions by
the KW Guides. Please reach out to our staff at the
ticket counter. Participation is free of charge.

Public guided tours

Saturday, in English: 19 February, 12 March,
2 + 23 April, at 4 pm
Sunday, in German: 20 February, 13 March,
3 April (Museum Sunday Berlin), 24 April, at 4 pm
Sunday, in English: 6 March, at 4 pm (Museum Sunday
Berlin)
Admission: included in exhibition ticket. Participation
only after prior registration with Museumsdienst Berlin.
Limited capacity.

Museumsdienst Berlin

Tel.: +49 (0)30 247 49 888 (Mon–Fri: 9 am–4 pm,
Sat–Sun: 9 am–1 pm)
museumsdienst@kulturprojekte.berlin

Hygiene measures

In accordance with the applicable standards of the
State of Berlin, comprehensive hygiene measures have
been taken to protect visitors and staff. Updated
information will be available on our website. Wearing a
FFP2 mask is obligatory during your stay at KW.

Please only visit KW if you feel healthy. We look
forward to your stay!

Colophon

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