



Peter Friedl: Work 1964–2006

Press preview: Wednesday, 24 May 2006, 12 noon.

Opening: Thursday, 25 May 2006, 7:30 p.m.

Exhibition dates: 26 May to 3 September 2006

Curator: Bartomeu Marí

Production: Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona (MACBA)

Peter Friedl's large and diverse body of work defies and yet still lies within the conventions of traditional categorization. The artist, born in Austria in 1960, addresses politics, history, and aesthetics by dissecting and magnifying contradictions and tautologies camouflaged within the pleats of consciousness and current ideologies. Friedl eschews stylistic and material criteria; instead, his works follow strict, methodologically ordered rules. Conceived as a retrospective, the exhibition functions as a "medium," emphasizing the museum display as an instrument.

An acute and critical observer of our political and cultural environment, Friedl reacts to institutionalized and mediated visuality. By introducing narration and the fragility of appearance and disappearance, he creates instruments of perception and thought that insist on a complex, yet diffuse evolution of ideology and forms of artistic expression. Friedl's work materializes in paintings, texts, photographs, video and film, sculpture, installations, and book projects. For the first time, the exhibition will present a large selection of his drawings on paper—including drawings from his childhood—in strictly chronological order from 1964 to the present.

The artist's excursion into the area of design critique pushes his interventions to the periphery of the visual in a way that is both refined and perverse. Friedl investigates transfers and failures between supposedly adjacent systems, in which we can read the struggles and survival of both modernist architectural and political ideologies. As Friedl states: "Consciousness is not necessarily decisive to how something is received. It creates a liberated zone, and that is much more important. The decision not

to allow the primacy of visibility or discourse to strike is a programmatic position.”

Friedl emphasizes and contradicts the “genres” through which artistic production is received. He frequently “corrects” facts or suppositions regarding visual renderings of political content and its consequences. As aesthetic acts of political engagement and individual intervention, his works —like the video installation *King Kong* (2001)— aim to reinterpret collective symbols and to exorcise oppositions between high culture and popular culture in the context of post-colonial modernity. “Is Peter Friedl a modern artist?” asks Roger M. Buergel in the exhibition catalogue: “Yes, he is. But not because he belongs to modernity as a period in time, but because the destiny of modernity has become, for him, a formal artistic problem.”

Peter Friedl has taken part in documenta X, the 48th Venice Biennale, and the 3rd Berlin Biennial. He has held solo exhibitions at the Academy of Fine Arts in Prague (1995); the Palais des Beaux-Arts in Brussels (1998); Neuer Berliner Kunstverein in Berlin (1999); Neue Galerie am Landesmuseum Joanneum in Graz (1999); Living Art Museum in Reykjavík (1999); Casino Luxembourg (2002); Chisenhale Gallery, London (2001); Institut d’art contemporain in Villeurbanne-Lyon (2002); Institute for Contemporary Art, Cape Town (2002); and Gesellschaft für Aktuelle Kunst in Bremen (2002). His most recent solo projects took place at Witte de With, center for contemporary art, in Rotterdam (2004) and Galerie Erna Hécey in Brussels (2005).

On the occasion of this retrospective exhibition at MACBA, a catalogue book will be published featuring a large selection of the artist’s writings, along with essays by Mieke Bal, Roger M. Buergel, Norman M. Klein, and Bartomeu Mari, and a conversation with Jean-Pierre Rehm. An ongoing project by the artist, *Theory of Justice*, includes the publication of an artist’s book, *Theory of Justice: 1992-2006* (co-published with Galerie Erna Hécey, Brussels).

The exhibition will travel to Miami Art Central, Miami (Florida), in January 2007 and to MAC, Marseille from October 2007 to January 2008.

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