DAVID WOJNAROWICZ & FRANK WAGNER

KRIST GRUIJTHUIJSEN BY NORA HAGDAL

What I first noticed walking into KW Institute Director Krist Gruijthuijsen's office was a pair of armchairs. "Porn, right?" he says and laughs. In general the room looks more or less like the office of any director at a contemporary art institution; a bookshelf packed with literature and carefully furnished with sophisticated mid-century design resonating the idea of a "contemporary curator." In the otherwise composed milieu, a pair of armchairs breaks the general impression with its postmodern ironic aesthetic. The silhouette resembles some kind of generic Danish-design Emma stool with a bold leopard faux fur cover. As we get along talking I realise how the chairs together with the room somehow illustrate my impression of Krist, being both bold and serious. Raw and, at the same time, thoughtful.



PHOTOGRAPHS OF DAVID WOJNAROWICZ BY ANDREAS STERZING





God, that makes me have to go back. I have a background working as an artist, but [I] always also organised exhibitions. Part of my practice as an artist was to create frameworks. I think my interest in curating stems from an interest in theatre that I had with me since a very young age. I was fascinated by what theatre could bring, which at its core is basically about framing things.

Your curatorial style has by others been described as minimalist and academic. How would you describe yourself as a curator?

(Laughs) Not an academic, not a minimalist. I believe my role as a curator is to challenge and work with artists. To give them voices and platforms. Even though the frames I create are quite curatorial, how one operates within those frames is very much based on what the artist wants, or a collaborative process between artist and curator. In terms of how I profile myself, I would say I've always worked and chosen artists that have been pure. I've chosen a very clear position, whether it's spectacular or unspectacular. I fight for artists that are not immediately considered to be urgent. Urgency is so very tied to what is happening around us today and I don't think contemporary art centres need to show only artists that deal with 'topics of today', so to speak.

For this issue you have curated a piece with images of the artist David Wojnarowicz and the curator Frank Wagner. Tell us about it!

I decided to use the pages that I was offered to give space to two people I think have been important and crucial in the emancipation of the sick body, the rejected body, the queer body and the gay body. David Wojnarowicz was an important artist who died in 1992 of AIDS related disease. Frank himself was also HIV-positive and died of cancer in 2016. They both fought for the rights of HIV-positive people in the late 80s and early 90s, and were both central figures in the AIDS-activist movement during that time. I wanted to show portraits of these two men that worked together and both put their asses on the line to fight for emancipation.

The spread in the magazine is linked to the two upcoming exhibitions at Kunstwerke about Frank, David and the AIDS-activism around the late 80s and the 90s. Berlin is known for its big queer and gay scene, what does it mean to show the work of early queer and gay activists here?

I want to make it very clear to a younger generation that this is not over. This is not to be boxed in as history. HIV and AIDS is not over - it has just Twant to make it very creat of a younger generation taken on a different position in society. I was born with fear as a gay man due to AIDS and HIV growing up in the 80s and 90s. Today I find there is a whole different mental state among young people largely because HIV is not anymore considered a deadly disease. I think it is of importance for a younger audience to understand another time, where you had fear of your own and other bodies. [It was] a time that followed from a sexual revolution. that I feel resembles a new sort of revolution rising today with the development PrEP. It is wonderful for a young generation but unfortunately also

Do you feel that young people in Berlin are naive when it comes to sex?
I'm not here to be preachy at all. But condoms don't exist in this city. KW has a very young audience and I want to show them these two characters that were extremely brilliant and fought with artistic expression for a cause that made us where we are today. And we should never take that shift for granted. By ignorance, coming from the luxury of not having fear, people stop fighting. I think that is counterproductive. On top of that, we are speaking from a very privileged Western context here. In the Middle East, Eastern Europe and Russia, HIV is expanding massively because people are afraid to express the fact that they are positive and they therefore often don't go and get tested.

And the stigma around HIV is still very visible in all parts of the world today, including the West.

You are considered to be a sick body and, still today, therefore face extreme discrimination. I mean, if you fly to the US and mark yourself as being positive you have the chance of being rejected. Everybody fought hard to get where we are and there is a lot of improvement but I still think it is not just a subject of the past.



I'm very interested in the time surrounding David and Frank in the late 80s and 90s. It's not often seen as I'm very interested in the time surrounding wave and crane in the late 200 and 300. It's not often seen as the most political time in art history, a bit shaded by the "70s with all its social revolutions and very straight

forward political early.

The 80s was the most political time in my opinion. It represents the implosion of decadence and capitalism. The 80s was the most political time in my opinion, it represents the imposition of decadence and capitalism. The 50s, 60s and 70s are basically a celebration of modernisation. The 80s is a result of and, let's say, the The 50s, 00s and 70s are basically a celebration of industribution, the 80s is a result of and, lets say, the backlash of those decades meaning capitalism and greed at their fullest form, it resulted in many different backlash of those decades meaning capitation and green at their times form; it resulted in many unferent forms of war and terrorism, AIDS being one of the carriers throughout the 8os but politically completely forms of war and terrorism, also being one or the carrier direquipment me sor but pointcaily completely ignored. If you look at Reagan and Thatcher they build models for the rich to get richer and basically

Do you think there is similarities between this time and today? I think so, and that's also why I find it

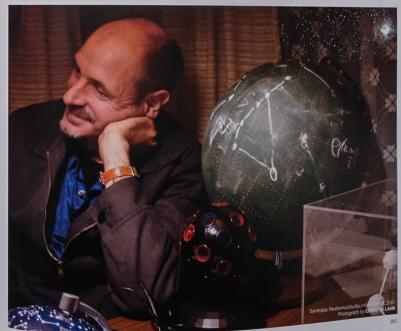
There are enormous amounts of similarities. And you can see all that political art coming from that time There are commons amounts on summand the policy of the policy of the disintegrated bodies, the rejection, the politics, the nobody gives a shit about ma^n is all about this use or the distinguished some specific the population are possible to the population of attitude. You see this feeling of loss or not being acknowledged. And also there is a lot of anger in these works. The anger of not being a part of a society and being rejected because of that. The 80s and early these works, in canages or not being a part or a society and being rejected because or that. The sos and early 90s [as al] period is very important in terms of what is happening to us today because gaps are growing as big 90s (as a) person sovery important our earns occurate a mappening to use or occurate gaps are growing as ng. as they were in that time. We live in a time where politics has taken this most narcissistic egocentric form. It's a very similar thing with Reagan and Thatcher. I don't really see huge differences between Reagan and

Both then and now are very defined by hyper-capitalism, permeating society in all its parts.

We live in a hyper individualised system. People today are at a very young age specialising themselves, which results in the lack of understanding of the basics of general knowledge. That's why we have all these new startups, something that again resemble the 80s a lot. On top of that we also have Internet today, meaning that everything that was considered to be far away from you is as close as it can be. I think the Internet, aside all its greatness, made us highly aware of our own position in the world; whether it's through Facebook-ing, making selfies of yourself all day long, or commodifying this or that part of yourself. This enormous amount of self-interest is what leads us to where we are today. A very intensely superficial society that believes it needs to go to a yoga retreat to go to find its inner self. I fear that today it's all about testing the morals of humanity over and over again. Because you know, the 80s is about collapse. And today it's also basically about tearing down everything.

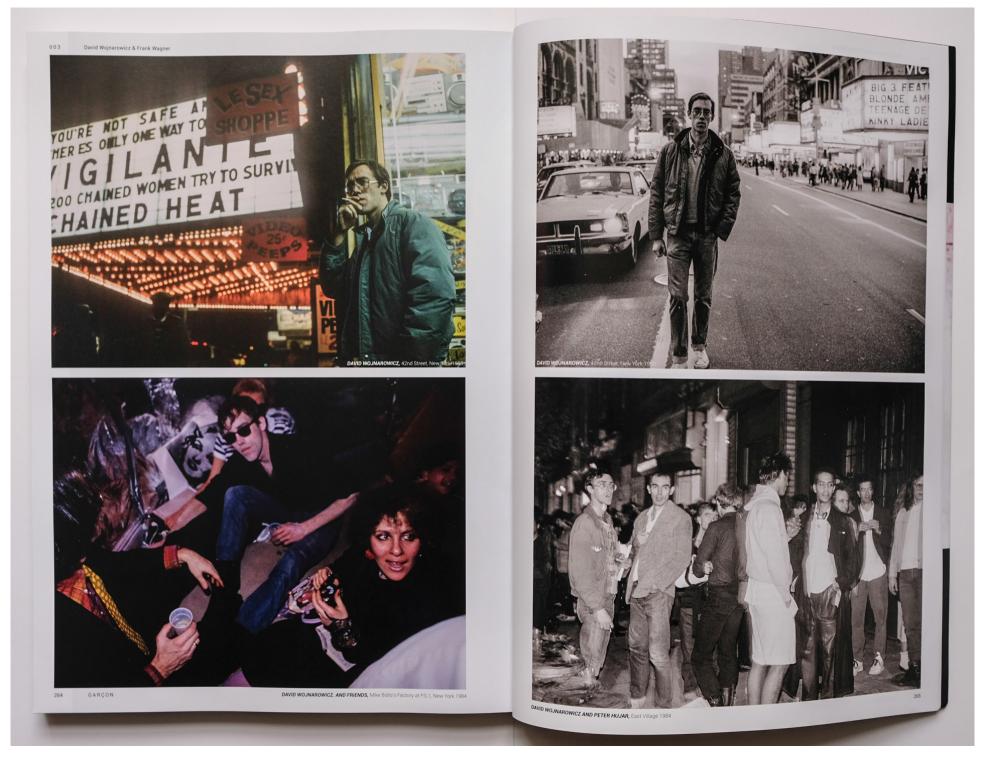
1 know it's sad. Let's say you fight for 50 fucking years for gay rights and then you have 12 idiots standing up being voted to lead the country and those rights are out in a year.





King Kong - Garçon 2018 - David Wojnarowicz & Frank Wagner







I'm very pleased to be able to welcome you this evening.

With the help of the BAH and the Kultursenat, I've installed a memorial room for [the New York-base artist] David Wojnarowicz in the Kuntswerke's rooms. He was good friend and colleague of mine. And after I heard of his death, I wanted to commemorate him [here in Berlin] somehow.

David Wojnarowicz died on the 22nd July 1992 at the age of 37 as a result of AIDS related complications. He was one of the most frequently exhibited artists in the struggle against AIDS in the USA. At the beginning of the eighties, he was closely associated with the art of the East Village in New York. He was someone who never made much effort to make his work sellable. This is what allowed him to be so radical, so intense. His work constantly revolved around sexuality, discrimination, isolation, and ecstasy. After the death of his boyfriend and mentor, Peter Hujar, in 1987, the illness increasingly became a theme in his work as well as a metaphor for the inadequacy of human life and social injustice. He was one of the earliest [militant] AIDS activists and one of the founding members of ACT UP! Alongside paintings, drawings, cartoons, films, and videos, he also made photographic works, developed performances and composed many texts in his

In the exhibition this evening, I'd like to lay the focus on David's literary abilities. He was always narrative, in all of his photographic works and the large-format paintings.

In his texts, which have remained largely under-appreciated until now, he worked with forms of montage and uninterrupted narrative flow, while abstaining from punctuation and composing the texts in large blocks without paragraphs. This in turn accelerated the speed of reading, not allowing for any pause or interruption, [achieving] an incredible intensity.

fusion of sexuality, desire, and ecstasy with moments of isolation, feelings of exclusion and discrimination in relation to AIDS into feelings of anxiety and rage about the state's inaction

[and politics] and the behavior of his fellow humans, which despite its dense and emotionally charged form, never once seems bloated or pity-seeking. Despite an occasional scattering of surrealism, David always stays real and close to life. [He is always autobiographical or fictively autobiographical, waking/ dreaming, mixing desires and fears with the reality of life.]

Since the exhibition "Kunst und Schwule Kultur im AIDS-Zeitalter - Vier Künstler aus New York" [Art and Gay Culture in the Era of AIDS - Four Artists from New York] (1990) at the NGBK at the latest, he has ceased to be unknown in Berlin. That exhibition was, by the way, organized by the Schwules Museum in collaboration with magnus, the BAH, the DAH, and Positiv Leben. Before that, he participated in the exhibition VOLLBILD AIDS [FULLSCREEN AIDS] at the Kulturbahnhof Westend in 1988/89. In 1990, he then designed a poster for the Stop Aids Project, roughly 5000 copies of which were plastered on advertising columns and subway stations throughout Berlin.

[David often copied his own texts, mailed them out, exhibited them, or pasted them as posters on the street. One of these copy posters hangs in the back of the space to the right. Thus, the decision to hang the photocopies on thin paper.] It will occur to you that many of the texts installed here are in english. This is because none of his books and only a few of his texts have been translated into German until now. The translation of his texts into German would be an art in its own right. But due to the shortness of time and lack of financial means, I have had to forgo this. Nonetheless, I would plead for a publisher brave enough to at least make his most important book, "Close to the Knives," available to

Today is World AIDS Day 1992, and this room is not only one of mourning and commemoration for a dead artist, but it is also a room about life. Life, love, passion, desire, and sexuality are parts of our person[alities] and our relationships to others. We cannot allow our hard-won, diverse ways of living to be taken away again, be they gay, lesbian, or heterosexual. We must find a way to live with this disease [in the world] and to make our lives worth living. This is why we have to keep on fighting, like David Wojnarowicz did. [And we have to learn how to keep our memories alive. (Too many are dving.)

As a reader, I have never experienced anything quite like his I would like to thank everyone who has helped me to realise the exhibition.

The Kunstwerke and its advisory board, who endorsed the project without hesitation and immediately made the space available.

IVING CLOSE TO THE KNIVES | A Chapter From : SELF - PORTRAIT IN 23 ROUNDS: A Psychic walkabout | | (c) copyright 1988 New York City David Mojnarowicz

I'm sitting in his hospital room so high in the upper reaches of the building that when I walk the halls or sit in the room or wander to the whiten the control of the cont

Whales can descend to a depth of five thousand feet where they can and must sustain a pressure of 140 tonson every square foot of their bodes.

sustain a pressure of 140 tons on every square foot of their bodgs on and must like scened to wake for a moment; criticle soundlessly for a while, then asked be in sounds that took five minutes to translate to help his into the menty bathroom so he could shit or something. I manipulated the machinery in the structure of the bed so that his upper body rose towards me and his loss sank and the second of the bed so that his upper body rose towards me and his loss sank into a sitting position, then took one it was not and sweaty and I pulled his into a sitting position, then took one it was not and sweaty and I pulled his limp and his eyes were closed and his mouth easinst my arm breathing we sound them over the side of the bed. Then I realized log after the sound of success contracting and the sounds of aging and of disintegration the sound of success contracting and the sounds of aging and of disintegration the sound of scenething made ridiculous with language; the sense of loving and the sounds of sense of loving and the sounds of sense of loving and the sound of secrething made ridiculous with language; the sense of loving and the sounds of self-sense of loving and the sounds of sense of loving and the sound of sense of loving the sense sense of loving and like the sense of loving and like the sense of loving the loving the sense of loving the sense of loving the lov

After giving birth a female whale produces more than two hundred gallons of milk a day.

And in the yellowing dusk the red bricks of the buildings go to sleen: fade into the shadows of streets and only the uppersont windows show the slow night coming on and I can place eyeelf out there in the sky: the texture and drown of years and years of sleep and sleep when of change and of rest and of peace for this positions in the shifting state of the slow and the state of the slow and the state of the slow and the slow of the s

David Wojnarowicz & Frank Wagner

One night I asked Kiki to come back with me to Peters house and dance. It was the end of the third day of his death and according to seem tibetan papers with the end of the third day of his death and according to seem tibetan papers with the peter with the peter would end the body and stop wandering around trying to communicate to freewall the world with the some wandering around trying to communicate to freewall the some in his place; each day T with the peter wandering around trying to communicate to freewall the some in his place; each day T with the first a first less of his in the sout on I took like the day the south of his life from a shelf and sproud of the was still strong enough to continue his cleaning was easier or eight; a time easile protographs starting from chapped brass frame and one of his life. They're easile protographs starting from chapped brass frame and one of his life free assains protographs and the with the life than whether of a lake with the bottom and the second of the person of the person of the person he was to the surface of a lake with the bottom and he segment the person holding the camera and his late hand is on an oar and he's maked the person holding the camera and his late hand is on an oar and he's maked the person holding the camera and his late hand is on an oar and he's maked body pression to love this boy. I'd received a small type with the bottom and the service of the late hand the service of the body pression of the world with the bottom of the mail a few days after the funeral saying. The bus as far away from the other passengers as possibly because he didn't want them to have to suffer looking begreated his history across the surface of the bed the candle in his the service of the bed the candle in his stops one to the surface of the bed the candle in his atoms of the person of the late of the person of the bed the candle in his atoms of the person of the late of the person of the late

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I so into these rages periodically that can find no real form where I end up hitling the backs of my hands against the tolevision set: instead of giving into my real urge which is to rip the thing out of the wall and toss it blaring out the window into traffic. Or I wake up rore to the set of seasons and independent of the control of the wall and toss it blaring out the window into traffic. Or I wake up rore of control of the wall in independent or occurred to the exposed necklines of certain in blooders in infection of the control of the c

memory of Peter eating alone one sorning a couple months before he died at Bruno's Restaurant on Second Avenue and TYD, street and Bruno hisself in the siddle of the packed restaurant consist up to the couple of the packed restaurant consists up to the couple of the packed restaurant consists up to the couple of the second of the couple of the couple

At one time it was where in the just week before I left the city to go sudeplace elso for a long period of time the city suddenly changed; it was suddenly revealed for a long period of time the city suddenly changed; it was suddenly revealed for the city to go suddenly revealed for the city to go the control of the world of the city in the city to go the city of t

