

PEER KRIESEL – Skeptical Grimaces and Miniature Artists

They laugh, chatter, grimace, romp, scurry about, and accumulate to form an almost incomprehensible mass. In Peer Kriesel's images, the motto is: more is more. Like an all-over painting, his elaborate figures spread out across the surface of the image. They are residents of an absurd and enigmatic world in which there are always new grimaces to discover, a seemingly endless number of new figures emerging from the bustle. When we come into contact with this world as viewers, we suddenly and immediately find ourselves reflecting upon our own sense of perception in the digital age. How objective is our perception, when fake news and algorithms determine what information reaches the user, garnished with personally targeted advertising on top? Whether we are on Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, or YouTube – flatteringly staged and selectively filtered images are ubiquitous, not just surrounding us in real life every day, but they also make up a large portion of our data consumption, which is so immensely high that our consciousness only registers a fraction of the information in this data stream. But what happens to the rest?

Nowadays, every two minutes, more photos are taken than the sum of all the photographs produced in the entire 19th century

combined.¹ Just on Instagram, since it was introduced in 2010, over 40 billion images have been shared.² As soon as the platform added video functionality, more than 5 million videos were uploaded within 24 hours.³ On YouTube, 400 hours of video content is shared each minute.⁴ Both mischievously and critically, ironically and affectionately, humorously and seriously, Peer Kriesel's grimaces visualize the chain of causality that is linked to those kinds of statistics. They visually represent the moment in which the "waste data" that has been cast aside then begins to bubble up from the subconsciousness, reaching towards the surface in a semiconscious state. The absurdly eccentric grimaces, finely drawn, originate in the omnipresent faces that surround us – from Big Brother to Instagram, Facebook to reality TV. They are the fun-house mirror reflection of the growing masquerade of "we are all young, beautiful, happy, and always on." What effect do these images have on the human psyche? How much pressure do they generate? The grimaces prove to be just as variable and temperamental as the social media and broadcasting channels that inspired them. Some are gloomy and apocalyptic, wearing surgical masks, others are bizarre and humorous, with medieval knight helmets, yet each of them in its own way reflects the conditions of our digitized society, in which the youngest members don't know what life is like without the internet.

There are also fascinating parallels that can be found in completely different pictures. The swarm of figures portrayed by Peer Kriesel evoke associations with the bustling paintings of Hieronymus Bosch. The Dutch Renaissance painter lived in a period of economic upheaval, royal power politics, and the demand for religious and moral reform. All of these critiques of society were then integrated into his paintings, which were bursting at the seams, surreal and surprisingly modern.⁵ It appears that these kinds of images of swarming masses – both for Bosch and for Kriesel – are the most suitable way to reveal societal ills. In particular, the abundance of small details in the image is what allows the viewer to playfully dive into the fantastic world that is not only aesthetically appealing, but at the same moment also expresses a skeptical view of reality.

Our inner narrative of images is also put under their spell. Analogous to the continuously increasing number of series in the digital world, Peer Kriesel divides his images into “episodes.” Like a comic book, a story is told over the course of several individual images. In more recent series, Peer Kriesel increasingly attempts to tame this seething mass. Geometric forms can be found that structure the composition, bringing order to it. In the series called “Essences,” which he began in 2018, individual figures, each with a small amount of space

between them, cover the entire picture plane in densely packed rows and columns, forming orderly horizontal and vertical lines converging in the center of the image. Even the grimages themselves occasionally transform in the process. Due to the exponentially increasing speed of digital communication, realistic forms lose out in favor of calligraphic, abstractly drawn figures whose presence can only be surmised.

Finally, analogue reality is also a subject in Kriesel's work. He addresses it in an overpainting series where he emphatically expresses its value. Subway tickets, entrance tickets, invitations to exhibition openings – in the digital era, these printed products seem somewhat anachronistic. Especially since their value evaporates as quickly as the moment in which they are used. Nevertheless, each of these pieces of paper tells a story that is underpinned by subjective memories. Inspired by these elements, Peer Kriesel enables the stories that were experienced or imagined with these found objects to be transformed into images. When observing this entanglement of reality and fiction, the world becomes real to the viewer in two ways. First, the viewers see themselves confronted with an everyday object, and second, our own memories of trips to the cinema or on the train begin to emerge from the depths of our memories. Diametrically opposed to the ephemerality of the

digital data, Peer Kriesel examines art's veracity in terms of lived experience.

However, aside from all the skepticism and thoughtful reflection, which can also be seen in the titles, above all, it is the joy of drawing, of imagination, and of the figure that characterize the work of this artist, born in Berlin in 1979. The absolute fury with which he draws, and how he combines experimentation with tradition, yet consistently stays bound to figuration and the way he diligently places those figures in arrangements – those qualities are reminiscent of Horst Janssen, one of the greatest draftsmen of the previous century, whose work was put in dialogue with Kriesel's in a 2019 exhibition in Hamburg. Indeed, Peer Kriesel gives shape to his intricate grimaces and caricatures using structures and color formations. Furthermore, using a healthy dose of humor, he does not shy away from putting himself in the picture, or rather, in the installation. Every so often he creates works in which a 3-D printed miniature figure of Peer Kriesel hangs from a rope on a wall, appearing to make graffiti while another figure is sitting under a glass jar, drawing the first figure. However, the viewer can surmise that the view to the outside will soon be blocked... by grimaces of course. The risks and side-effects of the social media bubble can hardly be put more aptly.

Text: Anne Simone Krüger

Translation: Ted Kuttner

Stations

Peer Kriesel is 1979 born in Berlin. Today he lives and works as a freelancer Artist and designer in Berlin-Schöneberg.



- 2000–2016 Work as an artist and
Communication designer
- 2003–2009 Studied communication design
University of Applied Sciences Potsdam
- 2000–2003 Training as a media designer for
Digital and print media in Berlin
- 1999 Abitur in Berlin
- 1979 Born in Berlin

Exhibitions (selection)

- 2020 *PAPERPOSITIONS, Galerie Martin Mertens, Berlin*
Kunst/Mitte, dieHO Galerie, Magdeburg
Art Innsbruck, BLNAC GALLERY, Innsbruck (AT)
- 2019 *Discovery Art Fair, Frankfurt*

- 2019 In dialogue with Horst Janssen – upstairs project
by Galerie und Verlag St. Gertrude &
Galerie Lippmann, Hamburg
Contemporary Basel, Basel (CH)
Art MUC, Munich
Discovery Art Fair, Cologne
Art Innsbruck, BLNAC GALLERY, Innsbruck (AT)
Schlieder Contemporary, Frankfurt
- 2018 Discovery Art Fair Frankfurt
ArtMUC, Munich
Kölner Liste, Cologne
Maia Zinc Projectroom Gallery, Berlin
- 2017 Greskewitz | Kleinitz | Galerie, Hamburg
erliner Liste 2017, Berlin
Okazi Gallery, Berlin
Asia Art Contemporary, Hongkong
- 2016 Affordable Art Fair Hamburg
Galerie am Amalienpark, Berlin
Haute Presents Gallery, Berlin

Since 1999 various solo / group exhibitions and collaborations
in Berlin and abroad.

Collections

Scharf-Gerstenberg Collection, Berlin

Various private collections

Contact

<http://www.peerkriesel.com>

<http://frtzn.com> (Catalogues online/Download-PDF)

[instagram.com/peerkriesel](https://www.instagram.com/peerkriesel)

twitter.com/kriesel

[facebook.com/peerkriesel](https://www.facebook.com/peerkriesel)

Newsletter: [peerkriesel.com/newsletter](https://www.peerkriesel.com/newsletter)

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1 Vgl. <https://fstoppers.com/other/stats-how-many-photos-have-ever-been-taken-5173> (1.8.2019)

2 Vgl. <https://www.brandwatch.com/de/blog/instagram-statistiken/> (1.8.2019)

3 Vgl. <https://www.adweek.com/digital/video-on-instagram-5m-uploads/?red=af> (1.8.2019)

4 Vgl. <https://www.tubefilter.com/2015/07/26/youtube-400-hours-content-every-minute/>(1.8.2019)

5 Vgl. Benedikt Erenz: Hieronymus Bosch. Lustgärtner, Höllenforscher. In: DIE ZEIT Nr. 9/2016, 18. Februar 2016, Online abrufbar: <https://www.zeit.de/2016/09/hieronymus-bosch-bilder-niederlande-gemaelde-s-hertogenbosch> (1.8.2019)