

Press Release

Peter Fend

BIRDS
REIGN

November 21 – January 23, 2021
Opening Saturday, November 21, 11am–8pm
Gallery hours: Tue–Sat, 11am – 6pm

Galerie Barbara Weiss is pleased to present „BIRDS REIGN“, the second solo exhibition at the gallery by Peter Fend.

At the center of the exhibition is the installation *Urban Extrusion*, which was first shown in the context of „Wonderful: Visions of the Near Future“ at the Arnolfini, Bristol, UK in 2004. In an experimental approach, *Urban Extrusion* pursues the practical and ecological potential of transforming urban waste into artificial feathers, which can rehabilitate ecosystems when they are scattered back into nature. Fend hypothesizes that feathers can be generated out of waste via the help of yeasts and other organisms, creating keratin, the main component of any feather. The newly derived keratin can then be further processed to form artificial feathers. And in turn, these could be dispersed into lakes, rivers and wetlands, where they would be taken up by ducks, swans and migrating birds. The importance of waterways in sustaining life is one of Fend’s longest standing areas of research. These regions are elemental to ecosystems that stretch far beyond the banks of rivers or shores of oceans, and Fend treats these sites as a possible origin point for targeted rejuvenation. Searching for ways out of our ecological impasse, Fend’s proposal aims to solve two environmental issues at once — taking an excess from one environment and transforming it into something useful for one that is lacking.

The show’s title: „BIRDS REIGN“ refers not only to the capacity for birds (and their feathers) to positively effect large and complex networks of life, but also their disregard for human-derived hierarchies and dominions. Accompanying the installation *Urban Extrusion* are new drawings by Fend that depict the flyways of migratory birds. Like a global circulatory system, these trajectories cross vast bodies of water, borders and hemispheres. In depicting such large swaths of the world, Fend implicitly includes sites of international conflict and areas where ecosystems have been ruined by human activity. In ever-widening space, notions of nationality and ideology collapse under the effort of the journey. Fend asks how things might improve for the world at large if humanity began taking its cues from the birds.

For more than 40 years, Peter Fend has expanded the boundaries of how an artistic practice can relate to society and, moreover, to the world that society inhabits. His unique methodology incorporates architecture, art history, activism, and business acumen to propose ecologically responsible solutions to real world problems. Through his work across mediums, Fend aims to spark discussion amongst policy-makers, corporations and individuals in a manner that transgresses the context of art. His efforts as founder of OCEAN EARTH pioneered new methods of engaging the public through artistic action. The group employed aesthetic and art-derived strategies for analyzing civilian satellite data, uncovering geopolitical events with global ramifications, making its findings accessible to an audience of millions via major news outlets.

Peter Fend (b. 1950) has been featured in notable survey exhibitions around the world, including: Documenta IX, 1992, Kassel; the 45th Venice Biennial, 1999 and the 47th Venice Biennial, 2003; the Liverpool Biennial, 2003; and the 8th Sharjah Biennial, 2007. He has had solo exhibitions at Kunsthalle Dusseldorf; The Kitchen, New York; Kunstraum Daxer, Munich; American Fine Art, New York; Arnolfini, Bristol; Roger Pailhas, Paris; Georg Kargl, Vienna; and Essex Street, New York.

A newly commissioned project by Fend is included in Manifesta 13, Marseille, which is on view until the end of November. A series of works that were recently acquired by the Migros Museum, Zurich are currently featured in a survey exhibition there on the topic of ‘potential worlds’.