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Images can tell stories in different ways. But what images does history leave behind, and how much history do they contain? Peter Friedl's recent works deal with the political historicity of images, exploring and conjuring up their narrative potential in a paradoxical form that takes the shape of a documentary allegory.

Bilbao Song (2010) was filmed on the empty stage of the Serantes Theatre in Santurtzi, near Bilbao. In static tableaux vivants staged specially for the camera, Friedl's film captures the process of a phantasmagorical picture production, in this case inspired by Basque history. Those involved in these tableaux included professional actors and special guests, like Julen Madariaga (lawyer, politician, former co-founder of ETA) or the popular clown duo Pirritx and Porrotx.

The starting point was the painting *Henry IV and the Spanish Ambassador* (1817) by Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres. Other references to Basque history are *El Paria Castellano* by Juan de Echevarria (1917), *El Orden* by Gustavo de Maeztu (1918–19), the *Tríptico de la Guerra* by Aurelio Arteta (1937), and *Soldado y Mulata* by Víctor Patricio Landaluze, who was born in Bilbao and migrated to Cuba in 1850. The only action that takes place on the stage is the live interpretation of the "Bilbao Song" from *Happy End*, an unsuccessful musical comedy by Bertolt Brecht and Kurt Weill—a performance with no text, just a pianist and a woman accordion player.

The video *The Children* (2009) is based on the painting *Fëmijët* (1966) by Albanian painter Spiro Kristo. His street scene with children, painted in the propaganda style of Socialist Realism, was recreated and then filmed in Tirana, in a room at the Hotel Dajti, which was designed by an Italian architect during the Fascist occupation. In the voice-over, one of the girls says in Albanian: "The picture has to step out from the frame." Francisco Pacheco, official censor of Seville's Inquisition and author of *Arte de la pintura*, gave this advice to his pupil Diego Velázquez. Foucault quoted it in his famous "Las Meninas" essay, which was to become the first chapter of *Les mots et les choses* (1966).

In the older work *Tiger oder Löwe* (2000) the realism problem gives rise to a small drama loop. In a room in the Hamburg Kunsthalle, Friedl staged the struggle between a real tiger and a cloth snake, freely adapted from the small painting by Eugène Delacroix, which is part of the Kunsthalle's permanent collection. The painted fiction is translated into reality and then into another picture.