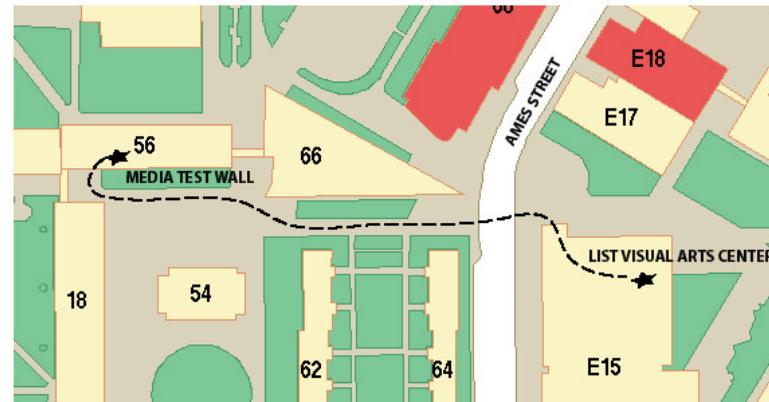


## About the Artist

Maria Friberg was born in 1966 in Malmö, Sweden, and lives and works in Stockholm. She attended Royal University College of Fine Arts in Stockholm and has been showing internationally since the late 1990s. Her solo museum exhibitions include the Kulturhuset (2008) and Moderna Museet (2003), both in Stockholm. Outside of Sweden she has enjoyed monographic exhibitions at The Porin Taidemuseo in Finland; The Herbert F. Johnson Museum at Cornell University, Ithaca NY (each 2005); The Santa Barbara Contemporary Arts Forum, Santa Barbara, California; and Plains Art Museum, Fargo, North Dakota (each 2002.) She is represented by Galleri Charlotte Lund in Stockholm, Conner Contemporary in Washington, DC, Galica in Milano, and Galerie Voss in Düsseldorf.

The Media Test Wall, an ongoing series of contemporary video, is located on the ground floor of the Whitaker Building (21 Ames St., Bldg. 56) on the MIT campus.

Viewing Hours: Daily 24 hrs.



# Maria Friberg

This presentation of the Media Test Wall is generously supported by the Massachusetts Cultural Council, the Council for the Arts at MIT, and the Robert and Maurine Rothschild Fund.



May 19–July 18, 2008

**Media Test Wall**  
**MIT LIST VISUAL ARTS CENTER**

## Maria Friberg

### ***Embedded*, 2006**

**(Detail-center channel of three)**

**10'14"**

Courtesy of the artist, Galleri Charlotte Lund, Stockholm, and Conner Contemporary Art, Washington, D.C.

### ***Commoncause*, 2008**

**7'30"**

Courtesy of the artist, Galleri Charlotte Lund, Stockholm, and Conner Contemporary Art, Washington, D.C.

Since the late 1990s, Maria Friberg has been looking long and hard at men in her video and photographic art works. She approaches them with the eye of a cultural anthropologist. In her artistic choices she depicts males as if they were a strange and alien species with bizarre habits, movements, and ways of dressing. She aims her critical lens at the ways in which they seize space from each other and gather in packs.

Friberg visually dislocates men from their natural environments, sometimes throwing them against monochrome backgrounds or isolating them against, or inside of, repeated objects such as hundreds of books or a stack of tires. She does this to better exoticize their movements and postures and to reveal the strange, yet globally comprehensible, meanings of their highly choreographed motions. The artist employs men's suits—those dark fabric coverings that convey power while erasing difference and inscribing group identity—as artificial conspicuous costumes for the performance of daily life.

The MIT List Visual Arts Center is presenting two recent works from Friberg's ongoing series of men in motion. The earlier work, *Embedded* (2006), was originally presented as a three-screen installation. The artist is allowing the List Visual Arts Center to excerpt the central panel as a stand-alone work for the specific context of the Media Test Wall. Each

video segment is centered on an oversized bed, rendered as feminine in its luscious white satin drapery, from which clone-like gentlemen emerge swathed in identical suits.

In its original installation format, each of the three segments was a different duration so that the overall image was in constant flux, never repeating the same combination of bodies and postures. The three screens together made an overwhelming large-scale choreography, partially obscuring the effects of the performers' gestures. This single-channel version more clearly emphasizes the performers' curious mode of locomotion. Friberg employed a mix of dancers and advanced yoga practitioners to perform these difficult postures. The men emerge as vulnerable, prone creatures, wriggling off the bed in a stylized birth-ritual, and slithering to the floor. Their motions are like larva hatching from a nest. Like many animals, the men, once birthed, do not linger at the nest or interact with their littermates or symbolic mother, but move as quickly away and out of frame as their unformed awkward motions can transport them.

The basic body language that men use to assert dominance is unavailable to these supine creatures. In one of her best-known early works, *Somewhere Else* (1998) Friberg filmed what appeared to be men's suited legs under a board table. Starting subtly, but getting more aggressive over time, the men competitively knock knees against one another trying to claim more symbolic, useless space. Perhaps one reason these full-grown neonates in *Embedded* need to exit the frame quickly is that until they can stand upright, sharing space with their equally prone littermates is dangerous for them.



Maria Friberg, *Somewhere Else* (1998) 3' Courtesy of the artist, Galleri Charlotte Lund, Stockholm, and Conner Contemporary Art, Washington, D.C.

In *Commoncause* (2008) Friberg looks at the social problems and promise presented by masses of humans without any obvious bodies depicted. She wrapped 300 half-deflated basketballs in black velvet and rolled them down the steps of the Nationalmuseum in Stockholm. Their covering—like her similar costuming device of dressing her performers in dark suits—turns the balls into an undifferentiated mass of quasi-unique units, much like a hoard of people riding the subway or exiting a theater. The mysterious motion is accompanied by the sound of the actual event, which is reminiscent of distant thunder or a stampede, both of which are apt metaphors for the types of group-thought and activities that the artist intends this avalanche to conjure. In her words they are possibly “heads falling in a catastrophe.” She qualifies that while this work began as a consideration of male group behavior it equally describes women's all-too-human inability to resist peer-pressure. Occasionally a ball gets stuck on a step, leaving the flow, opting out, but only briefly before another ball nudges it back in.

The balls move in a constant downward and mysteriously anthropomorphic motion like spirits descending from the heavens. Resembling heads rolling mysteriously from an unseen guillotine, the “heads” might be understood as an image of irresistible epochal changes within the tradition-bound space of the historic, encyclopedic museum. Yet such changes can equally be fraught with the danger of the masses trampling on the rights of the individual or moving toward war and destruction. Friberg wants to remind us of the many social ills with which we are complicit but feel powerless to stop, such as war or environmental destruction, while also reminding us of the potential to redirect such a force of the masses toward better ends.

Bill Arning, List Visual Arts Center