

PRESS RELEASE

HAIM STEINBACH

Curated by: Ida Gianelli, Giorgio Verzotti

Opening: Thursday 26 October 1995. Open to the public: 27 October - 31 December 1995

Catalogue: Charta. Contributions by: Mario Perniola, Lynn Tillmann, Giorgio Verzotti.

Steinbach was born in Israel in 1944 and now lives and works in Brooklyn, New York. He first began to paint in the Seventies, working in a minimalist vein. Later, he developed a kind of abstract painting based on the decorative patterns found on mass-produced linoleum: his explicit comment on the models of mass consumption. At the beginning of the Eighties, he began to centre his work on commonplace objects such as a shelf, which he uses as a basic structure to work around. He built these shelves by constructing an assemblage of different materials from everyday objects: a kettle, a plastic toy, a box of washing powder. The exhibition organised at the Castello di Rivoli includes a selection of the artist's works from the end of the Seventies to the present day and concludes with a large installation specially designed for a room on the second floor of the Museum. Steinbach has contributed to major international exhibitions such as "El arte y el su Doble" at the Caja de Pensiones in Madrid (1986), "Metropolis" at the Martin Gropius-Bau in Berlin (1991) and the Venice "Biennale" (1993). His work received attention and several one-man shows in museums such as the Capc Musée d'Art Contemporain in Bordeaux (1988), the Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art in Rotterdam and the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York.

MAX NEUHAUS. Evoking the aural. Drawings from "Sound Works".

Curated by: Ida Gianelli, Antonella Russo

Opening: Thursday 26 October 1995. Open to the public: 27 October-31 December 1995

Catalogue: Charta. Contributions by: Gregory des Jardins, Stuart Morgan, Max Neuhaus,
Yehuda Safran.

Max Neuhaus is known and respected as one of the most significant experimenters who combines sound and contemporary art. He was born in Beaumont, Texas in 1939. In 1949, he began to study percussion. In 1954, he embarked on a career as a musician in jazz and rock&roll bands and dance orchestras. After studying music at the Manhattan School of Music under Paul Price, he developed a passion for experimental music. He was to meet John Cage and later Karlheinz Stockhausen during this period. He began to give a series of concerts in Europe, the United States and Canada with Chamber orchestras and as a soloist. "Listen", his first work as an artist, dates back to 1966. In 1968, he gave up working as a musician. He began his aural experiments using electronic effects and underwater acoustics. In 1977, he took part in "Documenta 6". In 1979, the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago bought his first sound-based work and his works also found their way into European museum collections during subsequent years. He took part in "Documenta 9" in 1992. The third floor of the Castello di Rivoli will house a retrospective exhibition of about eighty works. An installation conceived for the Castello di Rivoli will be presented at the end of the exhibition and subsequently form part of the permanent collection.

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EXHIBITION

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CURATORS

IDA GIANELLI, GIORGIO VERZOTTI

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EXHIBITION SITE

CASTELLO DI RIVOLI
MUSEO D'ARTE CONTEMPORANEA
PIAZZA DEL CASTELLO
10098 RIVOLI (TO)

CATALOGUE

CHARTA; CONTRIBUTIONS BY:
MARIO PERNIOLA, LYNN TILLMANN,
GIORGIO VERZOTTI

THE ARTIST

Haim Steinbach was born in Rechovot, Israel, in 1944. After becoming an American citizen in 1962, he completed his studies in Brooklyn, Marseilles, and Yale University. He lives and works in Brooklyn, New York.

He began his work as an artist in the early sixties, when he turned his attention to abstract painting with minimalist tendencies, intent on pure visualization of structural relations between the monochrome background and the content, reduced to the barest terms, a straight strip of paint set at the edge of the canvas, invariably a perfect square.

However there soon appeared in his work an interest in the world of everyday life, seen as the dimension in which the extreme intellectual refinement achieved by minimalist and conceptual research was to be verified. He used the patterns of mass-produced linoleum for floor-covering to create a sort of ready-made abstract painting with specific reference to the life-styles of the masses. Then, from the mid seventies on, he started a more systematic analysis of those styles. Among the first of his works to attract attention in the art world were his wall designs, with pieces of wall-paper used as a background to and framework for shelves on which he placed a great variety of objects, all connected with our humdrum, everyday lives.

A little later, in the early eighties, the shelf became the dominating structure in Steinbach's work. He built it by assembling various materials, arranged with great freedom of form, supporting objects of common use such as a globe, a kettle, a plastic toy, a packet of washing powder.

Later still, he gave the shelf a standard form, a triangular structure recalling the essential nature of minimal sculpture. What Steinbach was constructing at this point no longer derived from the realm of pure form. He was not advancing a theory concerning the nature of construction and its perceptibility, but making something to do with the world of household utensils, in short, with our lives.

Moreover, in this work the shelf is not used as a support for a single object, but for groups of different objects, placed in relation to one another, which can also be interpreted as emblems closely connected with social relations. They remind us, in different ways, of the function we associate with them, and the scale of values they form part of. They range from ordinary earthenware jugs to balls used for keep-fit exercises, from latex masks for teen-agers to aluminium trash-cans, from kitsch beer-mugs to decorative lamps. But they also include

samples and precious ceramics, African sculpture and utensils, and other artifacts of the sort found in ethnological museums.

Steinbach's work brings out the social dynamic by which the objects around us are produced, which we ourselves interact with, and which condition our behaviour. These compositions and the intentions behind them have made Haim Steinbach one of the most interesting of all the artists, particularly from the United States, who have changed the nature of the visual arts in the course of the last ten years. Unlike the neo-expressionist groups of the eighties, the research of artists such as Haim Steinbach has focused attention on social reality, and their works can be interpreted as allegories of contemporary life. That the value of Steinbach's work is recognized internationally is borne out by the fact that it is to be found in some of the most important United States and European galleries, and that Steinbach has been invited to take part in great collective exhibitions such as "El Arte y el su Doble" in the Caja de Pensiones in Madrid, in 1986, the "Avant-garde in the Eighties" in the Los Angeles County Museum, "Metropolis" in the Martin Gropius-Bau in Berlin in 1991, the "Biennale di Sydney" in 1992 and the "Biennale di Venezia", in 1993, besides the exhibitions devoted exclusively to his own work by such important museums as the Capc Musée d'art Contemporain of Bordeaux in 1988, the Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art of Rotterdam in 1992, and the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum of New York (with Ettore Spalletti) in 1993.

In his most recent work the artist has focused his attention on features of interior decoration based on wooden structures which often take the form of large containers, with drawers, a raised platform or a small building, while the objects placed in them produce an alienating effect by means of intentionally incongruous juxtaposition.

Besides working on these projects, from 1973 to the early eighties Steinbach spent time teaching art (at the Goddard College and the Middlebury College, in Vermont, and at the Cornell University of New York), with special attention to the history and methods of Conceptual Art.

Haim Steinbach also organizes art exhibitions, and has done much to promote the work of his contemporaries and artists especially near to his kind of poetic vision.

THE EXHIBITION

The exhibition organized by the Rivoli Castle Museum of Contemporary Art is the first large-scale anthological exhibition devoted to this American artist by any museum.

It comprises a choice of works illustrating the whole range of his artistic development, from the late seventies to the present day, concluding with an installation especially conceived to be set in the great hall on the second floor of the castle. Some account of his early work is to be found in the reconstruction of the wall-project designed in 1979 for Artist's Space in New York, using wall-paper and shelves with objects of various kinds, though always taken from the sphere of everyday life.

Steinbach drew world-wide attention to his work in the eighties, with his series of objects placed on shelves which he made himself. A wide choice of these compositions is included in the exhibition. The very first, which date from 1981, consist of single objects placed on strangely-shaped shelves made of such commonly-used materials as pieces of wood and wall-paper; more typical are those in which the objects are placed on shelves of laminated plastic with geometrical forms suggestive of minimalist sculpture. Here the objects chosen may be extremely diverse - from the carnival masks of latex and the digital alarm clocks of *lead part nr. 1* of 1986, to the kettles and garbage-cans of *beep, honk, toot*, of 1989, the precious artefacts such as the necklaces in *Untitled (Art Décor bust, display mounts, necklaces)* of the same year. Some of the works, such as the cycle entitled *Capri Suite*, of 1987, were executed in Italy.

Steinbach's most recent research is exemplified in the wooden structures containing large objects, such as the wardrobes of *Untitled (French walnut armoire, Cuban mahogany armoire)*, of 1988, or the boxes of wood and laminated plastic, with drawers containing the most unexpected things, from coins to toys for dogs, and plain handkerchiefs.

The exhibition culminates in the great work projected for Rivoli, which links up with Steinbach's new interiors in white wood, like structures to be lived in, but paradoxically excluding any form of habitation, and yet full of mysterious objects which the visitor can only glimpse through cracks in the walls.

"Exhibition Rituals"

by Mario Perniola (an extract from the catalogue)

Natural love versus pure relation

Ritual, exhibition, availability and addiction: these are the four keywords we have used to describe the form of sensibility within which the work of Steinbach operates. We have set these against others, such as myth, intimacy, rarity and pleasure. To provide a summary of the overall sense of the two perspectives, it is worth referring once again to the work of Giddens, not this time in order to follow up his arguments but rather to take them as a target for polemic. Giddens entire discourse focuses in fact on outwardness, addictions and ritualised relationships. His end point consists in the elaboration of a notion of *pure relation*, which he defines as a situation whereby a social relation comes into being by virtue of the advantages that each party can derive from a sustained relationship with the other. Of the three forms of love known to the Western world - courtly love, Baroque passion and romantic love - Giddens favours the third on the basis that it is self-reflective and inspired by transcendence. His solution can therefore be regarded as advocating a relationship based on a combination of emotional intimacy and common interest.

This is indeed a far cry from the world of feeling and emotion that we have been delineating here. If we wished to define it with a single expression, we might refer to it as the realm of *neutral love*, as described by the Brazilian writer Clarice Lispector in her novel *A paixão segundo G.H.* In this short book, Lispector recounts the entry into an "other" sensibility, quite different from that which is customary, and which she in fact defines as "neutral love". Such love entails abandoning subjectivist sentimentalism and entering into a depersonalised dimension: "I desire the inexpressive ... to want to be human sounds to me over-beautiful". "I do not wish for beautiful love", but for neutral love. The latter is based not on transcendence but on the experience of the *thing*, on the vision of the world as "an opaque piece of thing": this is "the enigma", "the secret of the Pharaohs" and "the joyous matter". Yet however neutral and inert, "the thing has a sensitisation of itself like a face". Depersonalisation is "the great objectivisation of oneself", it is "the highest exteriorisation that can occur". For those who have attained this state, ritual is no longer a "mask of falsehood", but the "essential mask of solemnity". "Ritual is the fulfilment no less of the life of the nucleus, ritual is not external to it: ritual is inherent ... The only destiny with which we are born is that of ritual".

Haim Steinbach

by Giorgio Verzotti (an extract from the catalogue)

(...) The artistic trends within which Steinbach has assumed the role of protagonist readily lend themselves to this definition not only by virtue of their chosen discursive strategies but also because of their referents and objectives. The aesthetic theories that have emerged in the United States since the mid 1980s and that have been attributed in that country to post-modernism in the shape of a specific system of values appear to narrow the gap between artistic work and the critique of ideology where the latter term is taken to mean a system for the legitimation of the existing order. This has been an issue for such philosophers as Ernst Bloch, Theodor W. Adorno and Herbert Marcuse, who have theorised the need for such a critique. Each of these theoretical standpoints in fact takes it for granted that only avant-garde art, in so far as it pronounces a negative verdict on the existing order and goes to work on its contradictions, is capable of performing a redemptive function on the world by transforming itself into a truth discourse.

Interpreted in this way, post-modernism envisages a form of art that speaks critically of the socio-cultural environment that surrounds it. Art responds to mass standardised society and to the information system that turns it into spectacle by elaborating analyses designed to deconstruct their values and the means with which those values are conveyed, working from within the system and operating in such a way as to scramble its codes.

Far from distancing itself from "popular and entertainment" show biz, such art thus appropriates its logic, dragging it out to its own uttermost consequences, overthrowing its meaning and laying bare its ideological underpinnings.

This is the direction taken by Steinbach's interest in the real world which, in his case, is identified with the objects used to fit and furnish it. Indeed it was precisely within this dimension of furnishings and fittings that Steinbach had his first, opportunities to place this aspect of his work on display (...).

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**CHARTA; CONTRIBUTIONS BY:
GREGORY DES JARDINS, STUART MORGAN,
MAX NEUHAUS, YEHUDA SAFRAN**

THE ARTIST

Born in 1939 Beaumont, Texas, USA.

A renowned interpreter of contemporary music while still in his twenties, Neuhaus went on to become the first to extend sound as a medium into the plastic arts as well as several other forms public art (1967) and networks (1966). Max Neuhaus studied percussion with Paul Price at the Manhattan School of Music graduating with a master of music degree in 1962. He performed as a percussion soloist on concert tours throughout the United States with Pierre Boulez (1962-63) and Karlheinz Stockhausen (1963-64). In 1964 and 1965 he presented solo recitals in Carnegie Hall in New York City and in fifteen major European cities. His work as a percussionist culminated in an album of contemporary solo percussion works which he recorded for Columbia Masterworks in 1968.

At this point he began to develop art forms of his own. He coined the term "sound installation" to describe his sound works which were not events, but long-term sounds (months or even years) which he built for specific locations. Based on the premise that our sense of place depends on what we hear, as well as what we see, he utilizes a given social and aural context as a foundation to build a new perception of place with sound.

His broadcast works combine radio and telephone networks to form large two-way "aural spaces" within which the public interacts with sound. Another series of works, "Time Pieces", utilize the cessation of sound to create a periodic sense of silence throughout a community.

Over the last thirty years he has created a large number of works for various environments including permanent works in the United States (Times Square in New York and the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago) and Europe (Domaine de Kerguehenec, Locmine, France, CAPC Musée d'Art Contemporain, Bordeaux, France, the AOK Building, Kassel, Germany, and the Kunsthalle Bern, Switzerland) along with numerous short-term works in museums and exhibitions (The Museum of Modern Art, the Whitney Museum of American Art, and the Clocktower in New York City; ARC, Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, the Centre National d'Art Contemporain, Grenoble, France, Documenta 6 and 9, Kassel, Germany, and the Kunsthalle Basel, Switzerland).

His interests are eclectic. He designs the sound generation and projection systems which realize his work, himself. He has originated new concepts of aural urban design, and utilized his knowledge of sound technology and the psychology of sound to design a more humane, and safer set of sounds for emergency vehicles. Recently he began a series of retrospective books on his oeuvre with the publication of "Max Neuhaus, Sound Works, Volumes I-III. (Ostfildern-Stuttgart: Cantz 1994).

In support of his work, Max Neuhaus has been awarded fellowships by the Rockefeller Foundation, the University of Chicago, the Deutsche Akademische Austauschdienst, and both the music and plastic arts sections of the National Endowment for the Arts.

THE EXHIBITION

Max Neuhaus one man show is installed on the third floor of the Castello di Rivoli and shows a selection of works which allow to survey his artistic production.

Neuhaus research is based on the relationship between sound and space, and on the impact of new sound technologies on the public. The exhibition comprises about eighty drawings. From December 1995, at the end of the exhibition, will be available to the audience a sound installation that the artist has created for the Castello di Rivoli Museo d'Arte Contemporanea. The work will be included in the Permanent Collection of the Museum.

"Drawings are ways of speaking form me - statements, indicators and tracings of these invisible sound works. They circumscribe them as drawings by other sculptors circumscribe their visible works.

Speaking in a different language, outside the medium of sound, they cannot be mistaken for reductions or imitations. Restrained by their medium, neither can they disclose what happens when sound actually engages mind, in place. That journey of experience can only be made by each individual perceiver in the sound work itself. These drawings are neither guides to this experience nor descriptions of it.

They are, however, manifestations of the ideas: forming catalysts for individual trains of thought, active memories , viewpoints into process, and projections of what a thought might become".

Max Neuhaus, 1993

Drawing in retrospect

by Stuart Morgan (an extract from the catalogue)

For many years, Max Neuhaus has been refining an art of his own: the "building" - the word is his - of sound works. In the early nineties, he began to make statements of those he calls place works. The statements were diptychs - two panels, a drawn image beside a written text. This exhibition presents this retrospective statement about this part of his art, together with his studies for these drawings. The drawings, Neuhaus point out, are drawings "from" place works rather than "of them", the works themselves being invisible.

Neuhaus employs a variety of ways to solve problems. Each drawing has its own way of solving its problem. The drawing studies in the exhibition reveal the way he has arrived at a particular drawing, tracing the visual idea to its end. The surprise is in the degree to which Neuhaus, by isolating details of architecture, is able to suggest the place he has made with sound.

One way these drawings function for the viewer is an evocation. Yet there is also another result. The drawings serve as models for an examination of sound itself, ways of thinking about how a space can be transformed by it.

The quietness of Neuhaus's sound and drawing methods is crucial; the encounter with the artwork by individual visitors is essential. That so many of the drawings take the form of plans, although never coming to resemble technical drawings, is an important guideline for visitors. Yet they are never proper plans. Rather, they supply the necessary cues for an auditory experience. The works that are made are there to be discovered.