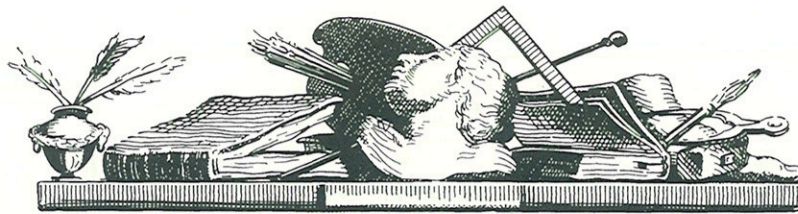


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WHAT'S ON



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New collections

Revealed: Royal family of Qatar is buyer of world's most expensive Hirst

The ruling Al-Thani family bought the artist's *Lullaby Spring* at Sotheby's last year for £9.7m and are also believed to have purchased the *Rockefeller* Rothko for \$72.8m

LONDON. Qatar's ruling Al-Thani family bought Damien Hirst's *Lullaby Spring* for £9.7m at Sotheby's London in June 2007, the highest price ever paid for a work by a living European artist at auction. The 2002 sculpture, which consists of painted and cast pills displayed in a steel and glass cabinet, is now installed in Doha amid a growing collection of modern and contemporary art. While the Al-Thani family has been a major collector of Islamic art, it has not previously been known to buy European and American work at this level.

The Emir of Qatar, Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani, and his wife, Sheikha Mozah bint Nasser Al-Missned, are also believed to be the buyers of the so-called *Rockefeller* Rothko which sold at Sotheby's New York last May for \$72.8m—setting a new auction record for a post-war work of art.

A highly placed source in Qatar says the Hirst sculpture is in Doha and forms part of a growing collection of Western works characterised by bright, abstract pieces. The Hirst purchase has been independently confirmed by *The Art Newspaper*. The same source says the *Rockefeller* Rothko is



The Emir of Qatar and his wife paid £9.7m for Hirst's *Lullaby Spring* (detail right) at Sotheby's London last June. They are also believed to have paid \$72.8m for Mark Rothko's *White Center (Yellow, Pink and Lavender on Rose)*, 1950 (left), at the same auction house in New York last year. The work was consigned by David Rockefeller

also in the Al-Thani collection. This was not independently confirmed.

The entry of the Al-Thanis

into the modern and contemporary market is part of a global movement of high-end works of art from West to East as

American and European collectors—encouraged by the resilience of the top end of the market in the face of uncertainty in the financial sectors—consign works to auction which are increasingly going to new collectors in the Gulf region, the ex-Soviet republics and China.

A spokesman for Sotheby's, Matthew Weigman, says: "Five years ago buyers who spent more than \$500,000 at our auctions came from 36 countries. Last year they came from 58."

Another factor is the construction in Abu Dhabi of an outpost of the Guggenheim—scheduled to open in 2012 and which Zaki Nusseibeh, culture advisor to the Emirate, says has a "potentially unlimited" budget for acquisitions. A branch of the Louvre is also under construction in the city.

As part of an investigation into record auction prices for living artists, we also reveal in this issue that Jeff Koons's *Hanging Heart (Magental Gold)*, 1994-2006, which currently holds the record for the most expensive work by a living artist to sell at auction, was purchased for \$23.6m by Ukrainian collector Victor Pinchuk. It was sold by New York collector Adam Lindemann. The Peter Doig painting, *White Canoe*, 1990-91, sold by British collector Charles Saatchi in February 2007, went to Georgian mining magnate, Boris Ivanishvili.

Sarah Thornton

and **Cristina Ruiz**

With additional reporting by **Georgina Adam**

□ The recipe for a record price, pp 43-44

□ Abu Dhabi Guggenheim will have

"potentially unlimited" budget, p11

New York MoMA exhibit dies five weeks into show

NEW YORK. One of the central works in the exhibition "Design and the Elastic Mind" at the Museum of Modern Art, *Victimless Leather*, a small jacket made up of embryonic stem cells taken from mice, has died. The artists, Oron Catts and Ionat Zurr, say the work (below) which was fed nutrients by tube, expanded too quickly and clogged its own incubation system just five weeks after the show opened.

Catts and Zurr run a laboratory at the University of Western Australia in Perth; this combines artistic practice with scientific research. The jacket is one of several works created as part of their *Tissue Culture & Art Project*. Speaking to *The Art Newspaper*, Paola Antonelli, head of MoMA's architecture and design department and curator of the show, says she had to make the decision to turn off the life-support system for the work, basically "killing" it. Ms Antonelli says the jacket "started growing, growing, growing until it became too big. And [the artists] were back in Australia, so I had to make the decision to kill it. And you know what? I felt I could not make that decision. I've always been pro-choice and all of a sudden I'm here not sleeping at night about killing a coat... That thing was never alive before it was grown."

Catts says his intention is "to raise questions about our exploitation of other living beings". **Helen Stoilas**



Prime ministerial loan

Gordon Brown has approved the first major loan of pictures from *Chequers*, the British prime minister's country retreat in Buckinghamshire. This will include a pair of recently-attributed Van Dycks. The portraits of Charles I and his wife Henrietta Maria (shown left with the Admiralty Chest, which belonged to James II) were until recently assumed to be "after Van

Dyck". The late Sir Oliver Millar, formerly Surveyor of the Queen's Pictures, pronounced them authentic and included them in the 2004 Van Dyck catalogue raisonné. Dating from 1636, their original owner was Prince Rupert, nephew of Charles I. In 1917 they were bought by Lord Lee of Fareham, who donated *Chequers* to the nation. **Martin Bailey**
□ For report, see p4



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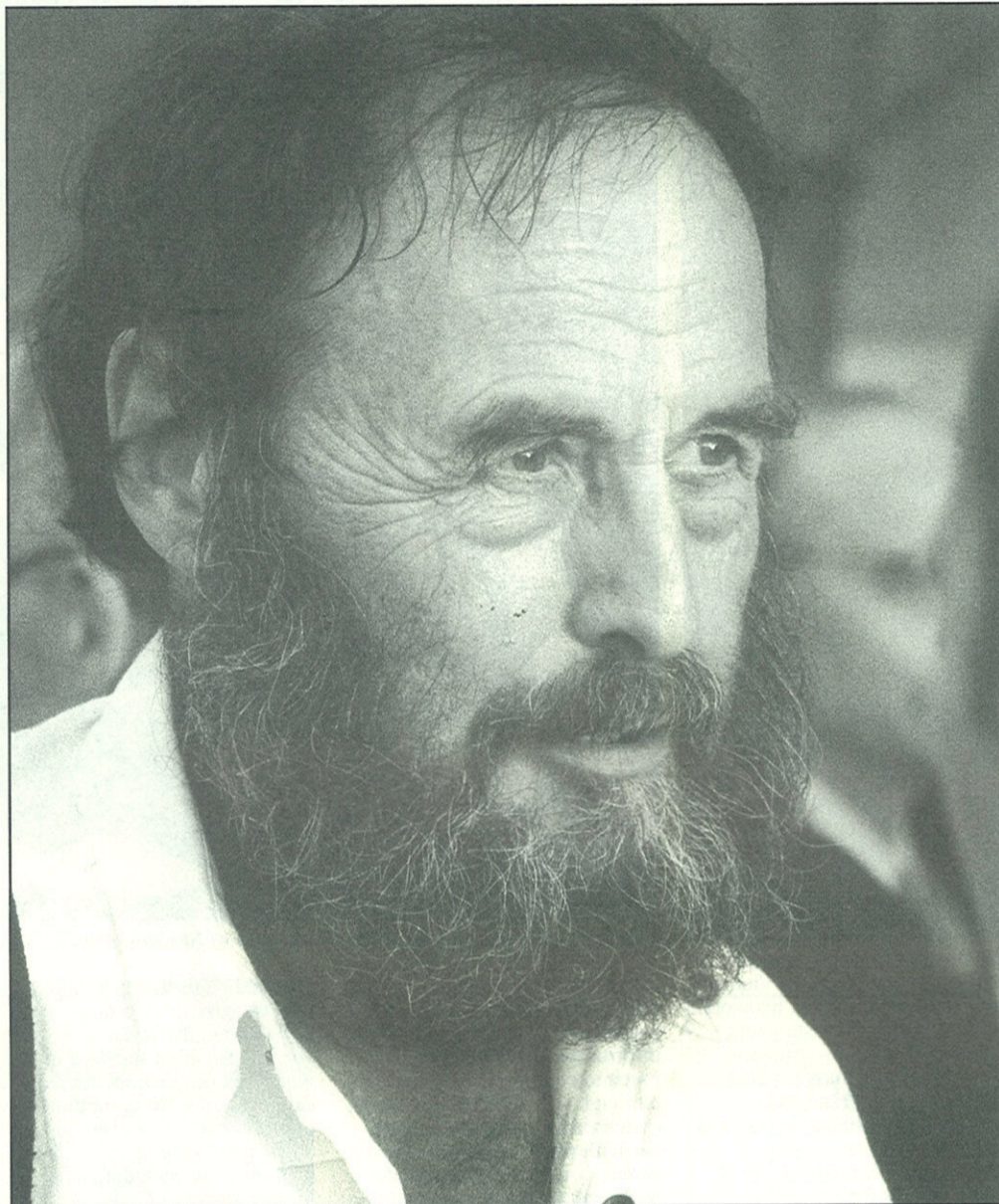
Books

The man who turned everything into art

Did Harald Szeemann single-handedly invent the idea of the contemporary curator? Three new books make the case

It is now widely accepted that the art history of the second half of the 20th century is no longer a history of artworks, but a history of exhibitions," states—rather provocatively—the introduction to *Harald Szeemann: Individual Methodology*. A concomitant phenomenon is the emergence of a new profession, namely that of the curator, and Harald Szeemann (1933-2005) is often credited with inventing the job.

Between 1957 and 2005, the Bern-born Szeemann organised a staggering number and variety of exhibitions, working in close collaboration with artists, exploring new forms of displaying art, redefining the role of the museum and ultimately expanding the notion of art. In 1961, he was appointed director of the Kunsthalle, Bern, where he staged monographic and thematic shows of contemporaries as well as displaying the art of the mentally ill and science fiction paraphernalia. His activity there culminated with the groundbreaking and controversial "When Attitudes Become Form" (1969), which saw Michael Heizer smash up the pavement outside the museum, while inside Richard Serra flung hot lead against the wall. The show eventually triggered Szeemann's resignation. He went freelance, founding the deliciously named one-man band Agency for Intellectual Guest Labour, which applied to the museum the system of guest performances familiar to him from an early spell as a one-man theatre. He was appointed general secretary of Documenta 5 (1972), displayed his hairdresser grandfather's belongings in his own flat (1974) and embarked on a series of highly original and ambitious thematic shows including "The Bachelor Machines" (1975), "Monte Verità" (1978) and "The Penchant for the Gesamtkunstwerk" (1983). From 1981 until 2000, he also held the position of permanent independent collaborator at the Kunsthhaus, Zurich. In the 1980s, he staged a series of "auratic" sculpture exhibitions as "poems in space". The 1990s saw him in great demand as an organiser of large-scale international surveys (including the 1999 and 2001 Venice Biennials) and striking out further afield, for example to



The late Swiss curator photographed in 1989

Eastern Europe's emerging contemporary art scenes. His last exhibition, "Visionary Belgium" (2005), was the third in a trilogy of "mental-spiritual" country portraits after "Visionary Switzerland" (1991) and "Austria in a Net of Roses" (1996).

Next to works of art, object categories that found their way into Szeemann's thematic shows included puppets, robots, machines, magazine covers, banknotes, propaganda, advertising, comics, personal memorabilia, utopian project documentation and architectural models—a real "Wunderkammer" which triggered free association and flash-like insights, making his exhibitions journeys through

one's own head as much as physical walks through space.

Despite this approach—more reminiscent of cultural anthropology than art history—Szeemann always held on to art's position as an irreducible other, something different and apart. Not for him the equation of art and life or art's immediate social and collective relevance, sought for and conjured by so many of his contemporaries. Accused by some of reverting to "art for art's sake", he countered with the primacy of the non-collective utopias he termed individual mythologies and his view of art as "a sum of narrations in the first person singular": a reflection of his fascination both with those at the margins and resisting

socialisation (outsiders, freaks and monomaniacs as much as artists) and with the notion of intensity, which served as the main criterion of his "tirelessly working art metabolism" (to a traditional art history of great masterpieces, he thus preferred an "art history of intensive intentions").

Beginning in 1973, he put his Agency at the service of a Museum of Obsessions—his own as much as those of artists and creators. Indeed, so strongly did he extol the exhibition as a medium of expression rather than a merely mediatory activity that some accused him of turning it into a work of art, using the individual works on display as so many "touches of colour". While

Szeemann refuted this status as an artist, he did claim that of an author, staging deeply subjective shows.

Indeed, with its subtitle *Catalogue of all Exhibitions 1957-2005, Harald Szeemann—with by through because towards despite* flirts with the format of the catalogue raisonné, with over 150 entries which list information about catalogues, admission figures, tour venues and related events as well as reproducing selected press articles and exhibition reviews, interviews, exhibition floor plans, installation views, catalogue covers and exhibition posters, catalogue texts, Szeemann's correspondence (including an irate letter from feminist art critic and curator Lucy Lippard), photographs with family and friends, and Szeemann's own contemporary and retrospective notes and commentaries (the publication was originally conceived and produced in cooperation with Szeemann, and in view of his annotations' lively, insightful and richly anecdotal character, one wishes they were even more numerous). An extensive bibliography completes the volume. Maybe the most telling document is Szeemann's original address-list of artists in preparation for "When Attitudes Become Form" which, coupled with his travel diary, brings to life his frantic pace of studio and gallery visits. Editors Tobia Bezzola and Roman Kurzmeyer, who both knew and collaborated with him on numerous projects, have compiled a dazzling panorama of planet Szeemann.

While the *Catalogue* relies mainly on primary source material, *Harald Szeemann: Exhibition Maker* provides a more interpretive and discursive account of the curator's career, organised along a general chronology but zooming in on major exhibitions, elegantly leaping from milestone to milestone and laying bare with fascinating clarity the internal logic driving the progression of Szeemann's body of exhibitions. Art critic Hans-Joachim Müller also knew and worked with Szeemann, and this is a tender and incisive portrait by someone who candidly admits falling under the spell of "the maelstrom of Szeemann's exhibitions, the fatal attraction of his fantasies, discoveries, assertions, these panoramas that he unfolded like paper scenes". Interwoven with well-chosen photographs, this is

a dense, beautifully composed text, which makes it the more a pity that the English translation should be so strangely inconsistent, at times elegant, at others all but incomprehensible.

Finally, *Harald Szeemann: Individual Methodology*, the result of a research project of the International Curatorial Training Programme of Le Magasin, Grenoble, is the first in a series of curatorial notebooks developed jointly with the Department of Curating Contemporary Art at London's Royal College of Art and was conceived as a companion to the *Catalogue*. The programme's eight participants were granted access to Szeemann's archive, located since 1986 at the Fabbrica Rosa near Locarno in Switzerland, which also functioned as the Agency for Intellectual Guest Labour's headquarters: 300 sq. metres of structured chaos consisting of books, press clippings, correspondence, project documentation and objects assembled relentlessly since the early 1960s and kept in part in empty wine cases of Szeemann's favourite Merlot. Based on partly unpublished documents and interviews with close collaborators, the publication analyses the archive and the Agency as twin tools of Szeemann's curatorial practice and examines in detail two of his projects, Documenta 5 (1972) and the Lyon Biennial (1997). The photographs of the archive are particularly engrossing.

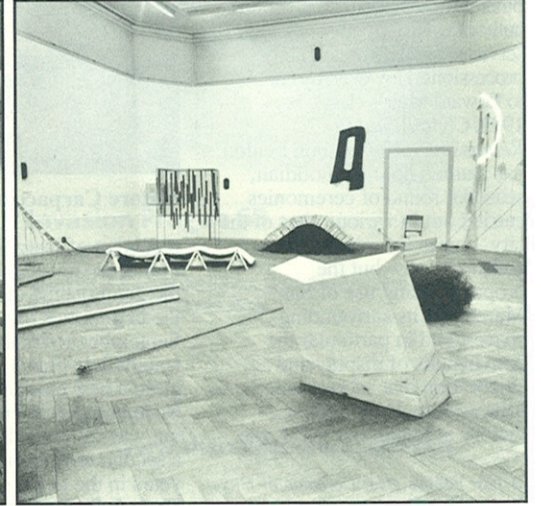
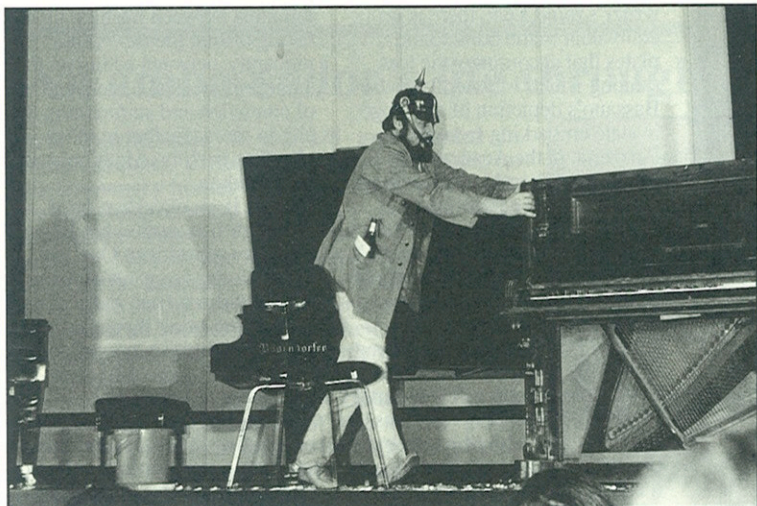
Together and on their own, these three felicitously complementary publications function as fascinating insights into the universe of a man for whom each exhibition was an opportunity to create a temporary world and who still towers over the profession he pioneered.

Maud Capelle

□ Tobia Bezzola and Roman Kurzmeyer (eds), *Harald Szeemann—with by through because towards despite: Catalogue of all Exhibitions 1957-2005* (Edition Voldemeer/Springer), 759 pp, SFr139.50 (hb) ISBN 9783211836323

□ Hans-Joachim Müller, *Harald Szeemann: Exhibition Maker* (Hatje Cantz), 168 pp, €24.80, SFr45 (pb) in English: ISBN 97837751702; in German: ISBN 978377517045

□ Florence Derieux (ed.), *Harald Szeemann: Individual Methodology* (JRP/Ringier Kunstverlag), 248 pp, £14, \$25, €19 SFr32 (pb) in English: ISBN 9783905829099; in French: ISBN 9783905829082



Harald Szeemann performing at Documenta 5, 1972, which he curated, in a piece by an unidentified artist; Balthasar Burkhard's *Fabbrica Harald Szeemann*, 2005, a portrait of his archive, and a view of the exhibition "When Attitudes Become Form" at the Bern Kunsthalle, 1969