HARALD SZEEMANN

Museum of Obsessions
October 13th, 2018 – January 20th, 2019
KUNSTHALLE DÜSSELDORF
HARALD SZEEMANN

Museum of Obsessions
One of the most distinguished advocates of conceptual art and postminimalism, and a figure who became synonymous with the advent of globalism in contemporary art, Harald Szeemann (Swiss, 1933–2005) developed a new form of exhibition-making that centered on close collaborations with artists and a sweeping international vision of contemporary culture. Szeemann’s exhibitions covered vast areas of research, challenging traditional narratives of art history and often embracing creative fields outside the visual arts. For each of his more than 150 installations and exhibitions, Szeemann added materials to his vast library and research archive, which he referred to as the “Museum of Obsessions”. His museum comprised not only the physical place of the archive but also a mental landscape that encompassed all moments of genius and artistic intensity treated in Szeemann’s exhibitions, both realized and unrealized, past and future.

This exhibition is divided into thematic sections. “Avant-Gardes” (2nd floor) addresses Szeemann’s early exhibitions and his engagement with the artistic vanguards of the 1960s and early 1970s. “Utopias and Visionaries” (the light blue Room on the 1st floor) explores a trilogy of exhibitions Szeemann organized in the 1970s and 1980s that rewrote the narrative of early twentieth-century modernism as a story of alternative political movements, mystical worldviews, and utopian ideologies. In the Foyer, “Geographies” examines Szeemann’s own Swiss identity, his penchant for travel, and his focus on broad international exhibitions and regional presentations later in his career. A reconstruction of Szeemann’s 1974 exhibition Grandfather: A Pioneer Like Us is on view in the so-called “Seitenlichtsaal” on the 1st floor.

The exhibitions have been organized by the Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles, in cooperation with the Kunsthalle Düsseldorf. Curated by Glenn Phillips and Philipp Kaiser together with Doris Chon and Pietro Rigolo.
Avant-Gardes

8 ½ Years

In 1961, at age twenty-eight, Szeemann was appointed director of the Kunsthalle Bern in Switzerland, becoming one of the youngest museum directors in the world. During his 8½-year tenure, Szeemann transformed the Kunsthalle into an international showcase, focusing on the most current developments in contemporary art while developing innovative historical and thematic exhibitions. Among these projects were surveys of kinetic art, art of the mentally ill, religious folk art, and science fiction as visual culture. Szeemann looked at historical modernism through exhibitions of surrealism, Francis Picabia, Wassily Kandinsky, Kazimir Malevich, and Marcel Duchamp. He frequently exhibited American artists during this time, including projects by Robert Rauschenberg, Andy Warhol, and Roy Lichtenstein. He was the first curator to commission artists Christo and Jeanne-Claude to wrap a building. Wrapped Kunsthalle, Bern, Switzerland, 1967–68 (1968) was a project developed for the Kunsthalle’s fiftieth anniversary. Szeemann built close relationships with artists, and his archive is rich with artists’ letters, proposals, and drawings from this period. The entrance wall in this room reproduces a selection of posters from the more than fifty exhibitions that were held at the Kunsthalle Bern during Szeemann’s tenure.

1. Exhibition posters Kunsthalle Bern from 1961–1969

2. Drawings for Christo and Jeanne-Claude’s Wrapped Kunsthalle, Bern, Switzerland, 1967–68

   Christo
   (Bulgarian-born American, b. 1935)
   Pencil on paper

3. Drawing of Electric Nail, Proposal for the Exhibition 12 Environments (1968)

   Günther Uecker
   (German, b. 1930)
   Ink and felt marker on paper

4. Letter of Invitation to Szeemann with a Hand-Drawn Map of Several Places in Switzerland

   Jean Tinguely
   (Swiss, 1925–1991)
   Manuscript letter with ink, felt marker, and colored pencil sketches

5. This Way Brouwn, Proposals for the Exhibition Plans and Projects as Art (1969)

   April 15, 1969
   Stanley Brouwn
   (Suriname-born Dutch, 1935–2017)
   Manuscript letter with ink sketches

6. Unsolicited Proposal to NASA

   Sent to Szeemann for the Exhibition Plans and Projects as Art (1969)

   April 2, 1969
   Stephen Kaltenbach
   (American, b. 1940)
   Typescript letter and gelatin silver print

7. Harald Szeemann’s Letter of Resignation from the Kunsthalle Bern

   May 10, 1969
   Harald Szeemann
   Manuscript letter

8.–12. Agentur für geistige Gastarbeit

Szeemann founded his Agentur für geistige Gastarbeit (Agency for Spiritual Guest Labor) in 1969 in the wake of his resignation from the Kunsthalle Bern. Emancipated from any official museum institution, he established himself as one of the first independent curators. “Guest Labor” refers to Szeemann’s identity as the grandson of a Hungarian immigrant as well as to the political plight of migrant laborers in Switzerland, who had suffered increased discrimination in recent years. This touted outsider status acknowledges Szeemann’s new-found identity as an independent agent doing the geistige (spiritual or intellectual) work of curating for institutions on a temporary basis. Szeemann had a series of stamps made bearing the agency’s name and its various mottoes, including Besitz durch freie Aktionen ersetzen (Replace Property with Free Actions) and SELBST (SELF). These designs and mottoes made their way onto his fax letterhead and packing tape, which were used in the daily operation of his business. In this way, Szeemann realized his own utopic vision of a freelance curatorial agency as a “one-man team,” unburdened by the bureaucracy of an official institution.

Wall, from left to right

8. List of Possible Names and Mottoes for Szeemann’s Agency

   1970
   Harald Szeemann
   Typescript
   Among the names and mottoes that Szeemann considered for his agency were “Agency that Profits from the Generation Gap,” “Agency for Temporary Show Business,” “Accomplishments,” and “Maybe.”
Michael Heizer used a wrecking ball at the end of the exhibition; and oil-soaked materials to be burned created a pile of flammable and permanent wall; Robert Morris removed a section of wall with margarine; Joseph Beuys smeared his finger with molten lead against the walls and Robert Serra splashed 460 pounds of mud against the wall in the Kunsthalle Bern in the process: directly on site, nearly destroying the Kunsthalle – ultimately led to Szeemann’s resignation from the Kunsthalle and propelled his career to new heights of fame.

Many artists made their works and process-based practices. Europe, focusing on conceptual art movements related tendencies in art movements. Szeemann embarked on a whirlwind of travel in search of new talent. The resulting exhibition, *Live in Your Head. When Attitudes Become Form* (1969), became perhaps the most infamous exhibition of the 1960s – a sprawling, incredible, infuriating display of mostly younger artists on the verge of fame. The project surveyed related tendencies in art movements across the United States and Europe, focusing on conceptual and process-based practices. Many artists made their works directly on site, nearly destroying the Kunsthalle Bern in the process: Richard Serra splashed 460 pounds of molten lead against the walls and tiled floor; Joseph Beuys smeared the corners with margarine; Lawrence Weiner removed a section of permanent wall; Robert Morris created a pile of flammable and oil-soaked materials to be burned at the end of the exhibition; and Michael Heizer used a wrecking ball to smash up the plaza outside the museum. The exhibition sparked an international controversy that ultimately led to Szeemann’s resignation from the Kunsthalle – and propelled his career to new heights of fame.
c. Installation View of Reeds with an Arc Lamp and Related Sketch
1969; February 22, 1969
Gilberto Zorio
(Italian, b. 1944)
Photographers: Harry Shunk and János Kender
Exhibition print
Manuscript letter with ink sketches

b. Installation View of Torsion and Related Letter
1969; February 18, 1969
Giovanni Anselmo
(Italian, b. 1934)
Photographers: Harry Shunk and János Kender
Exhibition print
Typescript letter with pencil sketches
Anselmo’s letter proposed several sculptures, including Torsion.

10. Remembering When Attitudes Become Form, 2017
Documentary video, 9 min
Produced by IMAGE and CONTENT / Reto Caduff for the Getty Research Institute

* blps
1967–2015
Richard Artschwager
(American, 1923–2013)
Mixed media

seen in various locations throughout the galleries, Richard Artschwager's playful blps are designed to fill spaces that are normally considered "bad" for traditional art: high and low spots on walls, tight corners, doors: anywhere there is space. Blps are usually black and are made of materials ranging from wood and polyester to spray paint and vinyl. Artschwager exhibited several dozen blps in When Attitudes Become Form, including on the radiators, in the bathrooms, on the roof, on top of posters, and on the exterior of the building.

Lent by the Estate of Richard Artschwager, Courtesy of Gagosian Gallery

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documenta 5
A key commission for Szeemann came in 1970, when he was appointed secretary general of documenta 5 (1972), the fifth iteration of documenta, the major international art exposition held every five years in Kassel, Germany. Setting the overall artistic direction for the project and overseeing a team of prominent curators, Szeemann set out to revitalize and radicalize documenta's program. Questioning Reality – Image Worlds Today is widely regarded as the most significant and ambitious exhibition of the 1970s. Featuring more than 200 artists, the massive exhibition encompassed a remarkable range of subjects, including conceptual art, postminimalism, light and space art, performance art, video art, pop art, and photorealism, alongside galleries devoted to political propaganda, advertising imagery, architectural utopias, science fiction, artist's museums, and art of the mentally ill. Planned surveys of socialist realism from Russia and China were canceled due to political concerns. The largest section, personally organized by Szeemann, was called “Individual Mythologies”, his term denoting the visual worlds created by artists beyond the confines of style or movements.
documenta 5, which featured 100 days of events, performances, actions, screenings, protests, and Happenings, set a new standard for international survey exhibitions.

Projected
1. Slideshow of Images from documenta 5 (1972)
Wall from left to right
2. Calling German Names
1972
James Lee Byars
(American, 1932–1997)
Photographer: Balthasar Burkhard
3. Astral Projections: Adam and Eve in the Castle Gardens
1972
Paul Cotton
(American, b. 1939)
Photographer: Balthasar Burkhard
4. Ed Ruscha with his poster for documenta 5
1972
Photographer: Balthasar Burkhard
5. Gino De Dominicis Standing Next to His Video Gino De Dominicis Is Watching You: Third Solution of Immortality
1972
Photographer: Balthasar Burkhard
6. Accelerazione = sogno, numeri di Fibonacci al neon e motocicletta fantasma
1972
Mario Merz
(Italy, 1925–2003)
Photographer: Balthasar Burkhard
7. Michael Asher
1972
Edward Kienholz
(American, 1957–1994)
Photographer: Balthasar Burkhard
8. Five Car Stud
1972
Edward Kienholz
(American, 1957–1994)
Photographer: Balthasar Burkhard
9. David Medalla and John Dugger Sitting on the People’s Participation Pavilion
1972
Photographer: Balthasar Burkhard
10. Da inventare sul posto
1972
Jannis Kounellis
(Italy / Greece, 1936–2017)
Photographer: Balthasar Burkhard
11. Thinking Room
1972
Ben Vautier
(French, b. 1935)
Photographer: Balthasar Burkhard
12. Cross-Fronts
1972
Vito Acconci
(American, 1940–2017)
Photographer: Balthasar Burkhard
1972
Photographer: Balthasar Burkhard
14. Gilbert and George
1972
Photographer: Balthasar Burkhard
15. Joseph Beuys in His Information Office of the Organization for Direct Democracy Referendum
1972
Photographer: Balthasar Burkhard
16. Boîte-en-valise
1972
Marcel Duchamp
(France, 1887–1968)
Photographer: Balthasar Burkhard
1972
Chuck Close
(American, b. 1940)
Photographer: Balthasar Burkhard

18. Biokinetic Landscape
1972
HA Schult
(German, b. 1939)

19. Oasis No. 7
1972
Haus-Rucker-Co.
(Austria)

20. Kassel Corridor: Elliptical Space
1972
Bruce Nauman
(American, b. 1941)
Photographer: Balthasar Burkhard

21. Circuit
1972
Richard Serra
(American, b. 1938)
Photographer: Balthasar Burkhard

22. Primary Demonstration
1972
Klaus Rinke
(German, b. 1939)

23. Mouse Museum (1965–77)
1972
Claes Oldenburg
(Swedish-born American, b. 1929)
Photographer: Balthasar Burkhard

24. Ark Pyramide
1972
Paul Thek
(American, 1933–1988)

25. The Aeromodeller
1972
Panamarenko
(Belgian, b. 1940)
Photographer: Leonardo Bezzola

26. Harald Szeemann und Ingeborg Lüscher
1972
Photographer: Balthasar Burkhard

27. Harald Szeemann on the Last Night of documenta 5
1972
Photographer: Balthasar Burkhard

28. In case

a. Catalog for the Exhibition
documenta 5: Questioning Reality – Image Worlds Today
Harald Szeemann, editor;
Ed Ruscha, cover design
(American, b. 1937)
Kassel: Documenta GmbH / C. Bertelsmann Verlag, 1972

b. Exhibition of an Exhibition
1972
Daniel Buren
(French, b. 1938)
From Harald Szeemann, ed., documenta 5: Questioning Reality – Image Worlds Today
(Kassel: Documenta GmbH / C. Bertelsmann Verlag, 1972), p. 17.29
Some of the artists featured in documenta 5, including Daniel Buren and
Robert Smithson, complained that
Szeemann’s grand themes subsumed
their works into the curator’s personal
vision. Buren went so far as to claim
that the artists had become brushes-
strokes in Szeemann’s painting.
Szeemann nonetheless welcomed
such criticism, even publishing their
complaints in the catalog.

Exhibition of an exhibition
More and more, the subject of an
exhibition tends to no longer be the
exhibition of works of art but the
exhibition of the exhibition as a work
of art. Here, it is the documenta
team, headed by Harald Szeemann,
that exposes (works) and exposes
itself (to critiques). The works
presented are carefully chosen
strokes of color in the painting
composed by each section (room)
as a whole. There is even an order
to these colors, these being defined
and composed according to the
design (drawing) of the section
(selection) in which they spread
out / present themselves. These
sections (castrations) are themselves
carefully chosen “strokes of color”
in the painting that compose the
exhibition as a whole, and in its
very principle, which appear only
by placing themselves under the
protection of the organizer, who
reunifies the art by rendering it equal
in the showcase/screen he prepares
for it. It is the organizer who assumes
the contradictions; it is he who
protects them. It is true, then, that
the exhibition asserts itself as its
own subject and its own subject as
work of art.

The exhibition is indeed the
“valorizing receptacle” wherein
art is not only played out but also
damaged, because, if the work was
revealed just yesterday thanks to
the Museum, it now serves only as
deorative gimmick in the survival of
the Museum as painting – a painting
whose author is none other than the
organizer of the exhibition. And the
artist throws himself and his work into
this trap, because the artist and his
work, as usual powerless to art, can
only exhibit another: the organizer.
Hence, the exhibition as work of art,
as the limit of the exhibition of art.
Thus, the limits that art itself created
to serve as its own refuge turn against
it by imitating it, and the refuge of art,
constituted by these limits, reveals
itself to be the justification, the reality,
and the tomb.

Daniel Buren, February 1972

c. Letter from Ed Ruscha with
Reference Photos for the Work
Spread
May 3, 1972
Ed Ruscha
(American, b. 1937)
Typescript letter with ink sketches
Gelatin silver prints

d. Telegrams Inviting Richard Nixon,
Chairman Mao, and the Queen of
England to Attend documenta 5
1972
James Lee Byars
(USA, 1932–1997)

29. In case
Happening & Fluxus

After resigning from the Kunsthalle Bern, Szeemann became the practitioner of a new profession: the independent curator, proposing projects to museums on a freelance basis. His first major commission came from the Kölnischer Kunstverein in Cologne, Germany, for the exhibition Happening & Fluxus (1970), co-organized with the artist Wolf Vostell. Happening & Fluxus aimed to historicize the 1960s, outlining the networks of performance artists who had laid the foundations for the present scene. Artists were each given a small space to display their work, but the core of the exhibition was the Dokumentationsstrasse (Documentation Street), a line of bulletin board–style displays through the middle of the exhibition. More than 600 photographs and documents charted an international development of performance art spanning not only the U.S. and Western Europe but also Scandinavia, Eastern Europe, and Japan. Yet most of this careful research was overshadowed by the chaotic opening performances, many of which offended the public and consumed the press. Particularly scandalous were the artists associated with Vienna Actionism, whose sexually suggestive and violent performances were seen to cross a moral line. Vostell’s project – a pregnant cow that would have given birth in the galleries – was seized by police, leading to protests by the artists.

Projection
Fluxus was an international movement of loosely affiliated artists whose practice defies easy classification. Working with art, poetry, music, and performance, Fluxus artists were as likely to present their work in the form of concerts as exhibitions, and most published innovative scores and editions that provide instructions for performances, games, and interactive activities. For Happening & Fluxus, George Maciunas used his exhibition space to present a survey of multiples from dozens of Fluxus artists from the United States, Europe, and Japan. The multiples arranged here, drawn from various archives at the Getty Research Institute, are from editions exhibited in Happening & Fluxus.

3. In case

a. Advertisement for Perpetual Fluxusfest in Fluxus Vacuum TRapEzoid (Fluxus Newspaper no. 5) März 1965
George Maciunas (Lithuanian-born American, 1931-1978) Offset lithograph on paper

b. A Flux Suicide Kit 1967
Ben Vautier (French, b. 1935) Mixed media

c. Flux Dreams 1969
Milan Knížák (Czech, b. 1940) Mixed media

d. Fluxholes 1964
Ben Vautier (French, b. 1935) Mixed media
Utopias and Visionaries

In the decade following *documenta 5*, Szeemann reduced his involvement with contemporary art and moved to Ticino, the Italian-speaking southern part of Switzerland. After *Grandfather: a Pioneer Like Us* (1974), a reconstruction of which is on view on the 1st floor, he focused on a complex trilogy of exhibitions, *The Bachelor Machines* (1975), *Monte Verità* (1976), and *Tendency toward the Gesamtkunstwerk: European Utopias since 1800* (1983), Szeemann presented a new reading of modernity. These projects can be seen as an attempt to re-radicalize early twentieth-century avant-gardes as a series of shifting moments of artistic engagement and revolutionary ideas rather than a chronological series of aesthetic developments.

Documents and artworks from these three exhibitions are complemented by material from Szeemann’s research collections related to ideas that he saw as utopian models: 'pataphysics, anarchism, and life reform movements, as well as his own personal utopia, the Agency for Spiritual Guest Labor. Sections on the "visionary" artists include those to whom Szeemann returned again and again throughout his career. These figures – mystics, auto-da-fé, artists deemed mentally ill, and other imaginative geniuses – substantially shaped Szeemann’s understanding of the creative process and of the role art can play in society.

The Bachelor Machines

This 1975 exhibition analyzed the increasing prevalence of a machine aesthetic in European visual art and literature between roughly 1875 and 1925. A complex and difficult exhibition – with sections devoted to Jainism, Greek mythology, anthropomorphism, robots and androids, femmes fatales, and art and lovemaking machines – it had at its core the notion of the machine célébataire (bachelor machine). The starting point was Michel Carrouges’s 1954 book of the same title, which had first proposed similarities between Marcel Duchamp’s *The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even (The Large Glass)* (1915–1923) and machines described in the works of writers Alfred Jarry, Franz Kafka, Raymond Roussel, and others. Szeemann created physical manifestations of some of these literary machines, commissioning large-scale visual interpretations of impossible mechanical apparatuses. While grounded in surrealist and Dada art, the survey featured models of Leonardo da Vinci’s inventions, objects from popular culture, and recent works of kinetic art. As the first large-scale project of his Agency for Spiritual Guest Labor, the exhibition presented many logistical challenges for Szeemann. It toured to seven venues over a period of more than two years.

1. 291, no. 5–6 Juli–August 1915
   Francis Picabia
   (French, 1879–1953)
   Color lithograph

2. 391, nos. 6, 7, 5 1919
   Francis Picabia
   (French, 1879–1953)
   Color lithograph and stamped ink
   These works were exhibited in *The Bachelor Machines*.

3. Poster for the Exhibition *The Bachelor Machines*
   ca. 1975
   Harald Szeemann
   Screenprint

Emma Kunz

Emma Kunz (1892–1963) was a Swiss healer and a psychic. As an aid to her spiritual quest and guided by a pendulum, she produced hundreds of colored drawings on graph paper, which she considered diagrams of mystical knowledge rather than artworks. Never exhibited during Kunz’s lifetime, these drawings illustrate relations between physical phenomena, such as the movements of her pendulum, and forces that oversee life in the universe. The cross and, more generally, a convergence of horizontal and vertical planes are recurrent themes in her compositions, representing suffering on earth and the overcoming of evil through spiritual evolution. At the end of her life, Kunz devoted herself to experiments with magnetism, making flowers generate new blooms and influencing the weather.

In the early 1970s, Szeemann extensively researched Kunz and featured her works in *The Bachelor Machines* and in many later shows. In Szeemann’s reading, Kunz’s drawings transcended the bachelors’ narcissistic creative process. They represent an art form stemming from humility, generosity, and a will to understand and heal humanity.
This drawing was purchased in 1974 by artist Meret Oppenheim following the first public display of Kunz's work. Kunz and Oppenheim were among the very few women artists featured in The Bachelor Machines.

5. The Pendulum Kunz Used to Make Drawings
cia. 1950s
Photographer unknown
Exhibition print

6. Emma Kunz in her work space
cia. 1950s
Photographer unknown
Exhibition print

7. Emma Kunz’s Marigold Experiment, in which Twelve Blooms Grew from the Flower after Applying Magnetic Force
1953
Photographer unknown
Exhibition print

8. Sketch for a Sculptural Visualization of the “Torture Machine” from Franz Kafka’s In the Penal Colony
ca. 1975
Harald Szeemann
Ink on paper

9. Sculptural Visualization of the “Torture Machine” from Franz Kafka’s In the Penal Colony
1975
Werner Ruck and Paul Gysin, model makers

In Franz Kafka’s short story In the Penal Colony (In der Strafkolonie, written 1914, published 1919), set on an unnamed island, the officer in charge subjects himself to an old execution machine in disrepair. The machine is designed to inscribe a death sentence upon its victim’s body before subjecting him to twelve hours of torture followed by death. When the machine malfunctions, the officer is stabbed to death and dies immediately.

The sculptural visualization of this machine that only existed in literature was designed by Szeemann based on a preliminary sketch published by Michel Carrouges and realized in the workshop of the Loeb department store in Bern.

4. Untitled
cia. 1940s–1950s
Emma Kunz
(Swiss, 1892–1963)
Lead or colored pencil, and crayon on graph paper
Lent by a private collection, Switzerland

10. Three Literary Visualizations in the Style of Plans for a Machine
ca. 1975
Jean-Louis Couturier (A. Jihel)
(French, b. 1947)

11. Illustrations Relating to The Machine for Reading Roussel
cia. 1964
Juan Esteban-Fassio
(Argentinian, 1924–1980)

12. In case

a. Title Designs for The Bachelor Machines
cia. 1975
(Swiss, b. 1941)
Ink on paper

b. Sculptural Visualization of “The Diamond” from Raymond Roussel's Locus Solus
1975
Model maker: Jacques Carelman
Photographer: Albert Winkler
Gelatin silver print

c. Sketch for a Sculptural Visualization of “The Diamond” from Raymond Roussel’s Locus Solus
cia. 1975
Harald Szeemann

d. Notes
cia. 1975
Harald Szeemann

e. Cards Used in The Machine for Reading Roussel
cia. 1960s
Juan Esteban Fassio
(Argentinian, 1924–1980)

f. Photograph of The Machine for Reading Roussel
cia. 1960s
Juan Esteban Fassio
(Argentinian, 1924–1980)

13. Etching after Marcel Duchamp’s Coffee Grinder (1911)
cia. 1912
Jacques Villon
(French, 1875–1963)

After Marcel Duchamp
(French, 1887–1968)

Etching

This work was exhibited in The Bachelor Machines.

Alfred Jarry
Alfred Jarry (1873–1907) was a playwright, theater impresario, novelist, and visual artist. His work anticipated many of the developments of twentieth-century culture, such as the theater of the absurd, Dada, and surrealism. In the magazines he edited, as well as in his novels and artworks, Jarry reappropriated disparate visual and literary elements from the past and offered them a radical new context, providing Szeemann with a model for his own curatorial practice.

Jarry’s play Ubu Roi (King Ubu, 1896) marked the beginning of a new era in modern theater. Developed from a farce Jarry wrote with schoolmates about one of their high school teachers, the childish, evil, greedy, and, above all, stupid character of Ubu challenged all of the literary conventions of the time, while its author, with his highly artificial persona and eccentric behaviors, inspired a whole generation of artists. The novel The Supermale (1902), central in Szeemann’s exhibition The Bachelor Machines, offers a frightening view of the future, in which bicyclists are fed alcohol and strychnine-based “perpetual-mo tion food,” and a “love-inspiring machine” ends up electrocuting the protagonist.

The rare photographs of Jarry, his publications, and the artworks on view here are from Szeemann’s extensive collection.

14. L’Oeuvre, no. 5

15. Profile of Mère Ubu and “Merdre”
December 15, 1895
Alfred Jarry
(French, 1873–1907)

Ink on the back of a mourning card

"Merdre" is a distortion of the French merde (shit). It is the opening line of Jarry’s Ubu Roi (King Ubu), and greatly contributed to the scandal the play provoked when it was first performed on December 10, 1896, at the Théâtre de l’Oeuvre in Paris.

16. Ubu Roi (King Ubu)
cia. 1896
Alfred Jarry
(French, 1873–1907)

Linocut

17. The Three “Palotins”
Alfred Jarry
(French, 1873–1907)

18. In case

a.–i. Nine Photographs Related to Alfred Jarry
Gelatin silver prints

a. Alfred Jarry and André Terrasse-Bonnard Giving Butcher’s Leftovers to Two Cats
ca. 1900
Attributed to Claude Terrasse (French, 1867–1923)
b. Le Tripode, a Building Alfred Jarry Designed in Le Coudray as His Residence and for Storage for His Bicycle and Canoe
1907
Attributed to Gabrielle Vallette (French, 1898–1984)
c. Alfred Jarry and Charles and Jean Terrasse, Noisy-le-Grand, France
ca. 1900
Attributed to Claude Terrasse (French, 1867–1923)
d. Pierre Bonnard’s Wife Marthe, a Friend, and Pierre Bonnard in the Artist’s Studio, with the Ubu Puppet Hanging on the Wall behind Them
ca. 1900
Photographer unknown
e. Alfred Jarry and Alfred Vallette 1998
Photographer unknown
f. Pierre Bonnard’s Studio ca. 1900
Photographer unknown
g. The Three Graces 1898
Photographer unknown

Alfred Jarry, André-Ferdinand Hérold (background), Rachiilde (Marguerite Vallette Eymery), and Marie-Thérèse Collière, shown in Corbeil. The title may derive from the fact that Jarry is wearing Rachiilde’s shoes.

h. Alfred Jarry and Fencing Master Blaviel at Blaviel’s Studio in Laval 1906
Photographer unknown

i. Puppet of King Ubu for the Production at the Théâtre des Phynances in 1888
ca. 1900
Photographer unknown

j. César-Antechrist
Alfred Jarry
(French, 1873–1907)
Paris: Éditions du Mercure de France, 1894

k. Booklet of Postage Stamps Featuring Pataphysical Symbols and Figures
Paris: Collège de ‘Pataphysique, ca. 1960s

l. Black Minutes of Memorial Sand
Alfred Jarry
(French, 1873–1907)
Paris: Éditions du Mercure de France, 1894

m. Tatane
Alfred Jarry
(French, 1873–1907)

n. Unknown Jarry
Jean Mollet
(French, 1877–1964)

o. Spring Sun
Alfred Jarry
(French, 1873–1907), author
Pierre Bonnard
(French, 1867–1947), illustrator
Paris: Collège de ‘Pataphysique, 1957

‘Pataphysik
As prophesied by writer and visual artist Alfred Jarry in his writings, ‘pataphysics has been variously described as the science of details and of the individual, as well as the science of imaginary solutions. ‘Pataphysics is based on the principles of universal equivalence (everything is the same) and of the inversion of contraries. ‘Pataphysics is therefore not describable, as all possible descriptions are valid and all are the same.

The main objectives of this science-without-objectives include ridiculing every form of power and authority, and embracing and celebrating absurdity and contradictions. ‘Pataphysics constitutes a strenuous form of resistance toward any kind of systematization or attempt to make sense of the universe.

By the time Szeemann moved to Paris in 1956, Jarry had become a cult figure among intellectuals gathered around the Collège de ‘Pataphysique, founded in 1948 and still active. The Collège plays a fundamental role in the understanding of ‘pataphysics as a delirious structure in which the cult of hierarchy and titles is manifested in an organizational chart with no end and, ultimately, no meaning. Its poignant parody of institutional bureaucracy played a role in Szeemann’s elaboration of his own Agency for Spiritual Guest Labor.

Paris: Collège de ‘Pataphysique, ca. 1950s

20. Rrose Séaly and I Escape from the Bruises of the Eskimos in Exquisite Words
1924
Marcel Duchamp
(French, 1887–1968)
Ink and colored pencil on paper

21. Spiral Jetty
1970
Robert Smithson
(American, 1928–1973)
Gelatin silver print

22. Floor Plan for the Museum of Obsessions
c. 1975
Harald Szeemann

The spiral is one of the quintessential pataphysical symbols, representing the belly of King Ubu, the overweight hero of Jarry’s plays; it can be found everywhere in twentieth-century culture. Presented here are examples from the work of Marcel Duchamp, a member of the Collège de ‘Pataphysique, and Robert Smithson, who made notes about Jarry while working on his major earthwork Spiral Jetty. Szeemann, who was also a member of the Collège, used a spiral as the central motif for this sketch of his Museum of Obsessions, which featured four sections dedicated to the natural elements.

On wall, left to right
23. Postcards Telling the Story of Alfred Jarry’s Life
ca. 1980
P. J. Dunbar Printed paper

24. In case

a. Planisphere of the Pataphysical World
c. 1950er–1960er Jahre
Juan Esteban Fassio
(Argentine, 1924–1980)
Ink and colored pencil on paper, mounted on paper

b. Letter to the Transcendant Satrap
Raymond Queneau,
Chief Conservator O. G. G., by the T. S. Latis
Emmanuel Peillet
(French, 1914–1973)
Paris: Collège de ‘Pataphysique, 1969

c. Subsidia Pataphysica, nos. 0–10
Monte Verità

The exhibition Monte Verità (1978) focused on the history of the creative communities formed on and near a hill of the same name in Ascona, Switzerland, close to where Szeemann relocated in the 1970s. Since the 1980s, when anarchist ideologue Mikhail Bakunin lived in the region, it had been a center where many utopian experiments and other attempts to transform society were tested. At the beginning of the twentieth century, a group led by Ida Hofmann, a music teacher, and Henri Oedenkoven, the son of a wealthy Dutch industrialist, established a vegetarian and nudist sanatorium on the hill. After World War I, the success of Ascona as a lakeside resort attracted many artists, and Monte Verità became an important center for the development of modern dance. In his exhibition, Szeemann sought to offer a holistic and transhistoric vision of the mountain, highlighting the symbolism and potential for change in the events that occurred there. History was organized into four main topics, which Szeemann saw as the breasts of a goddess of Truth, a deity of his own invention. Szeemann conducted extensive research on the history of Monte Verità and, for the rest of his life, continued to champion and defend the site’s fragile heritage. The exhibition was later developed into a permanent museum installed in Casa Anatta, one of the main buildings of the sanatorium.

1. In case

a. Five Photographs of Monte Verità Residents
   ca. 1900–1920
   Photographers unknown
   Gelatin silver prints

b. Henri Oedenkoven
   ca. 1900–1920
   Photographer unknown
   Gelatin silver print

c. Monte Verità: Truth without Poetry
   Ida Hofmann
   Lorch: Röhm, 1906

d. Ascona: A Brochure
   Erich Mühsam
   Locarno: Verlag von Birger Carlson, 1905

e. “Ascona, the German Artists’ Paradise on Lake Maggiore”
   Hans Ludvig
   In Stuttgarter Illustrierte, no. 6 (1932), p. 125

1. Tours in Ticino: Walks around Ascona; Monte Verità as a Center for Excursions
   Ascona: Kurhotel Monte Verità, 1929
   Nos. c, d, and f were exhibited in Monte Verità.

On wall, top

2. Plan of the Settlement above Ascona, January 1914
   1914
   Alexander Wilhelm de Beauclair
   Ink and colored pencil on paper
   De Beauclair was an artist and the secretary of the Monte Verità Vegetarian Society. This map was exhibited in Monte Verità.

On wall, bottom

3. Photograph of Monte Verità
   ca. 1920er Jahre
   Photographer unknown
   Exhibition print

On wall, top

4. Poster for the Exhibition Monte Verità
   1975
   Paul Brühwiler
   (Swiss, b. 1939)
   Offset lithograph

In case

5. Monte Verità Tureen
   ca. 1920s
   Porcelain

Life Reform

Following the heavy industrialization of Europe at the start of the twentieth century, communities promoting a healthy lifestyle and humankind’s reintegration into nature began to flourish. Monte Verità played a prominent role in this movement, which was particularly potent in German-speaking countries and is usually referred to as Lebensreform (life reform).

In 1900, a small group of vegetarians relocated to the hill. Gusto Gräser, the most radical among the original settlers, immediately distanced himself from the ambitions of Henri Oedenkoven and Ida Hofmann and went to live in a nearby cave. With funds provided by Oedenkoven’s family, the two main buildings on the property were completed in 1904, and Monte Verità became a sanatorium that operated until 1920. Remedies at the health resort included a strict vegetarian diet, nude sunbathing, and outdoor physical activity. In 1926, the compound was acquired by banker and art collector Eduard von der Heydt, who built a modernist hotel on the hill.
Between 1913 and 1918, Rudolf von Laban, one of the pioneers of modern dance in Europe, established a Schule für Kunst (School for Art) on Monte Verità. Besides dance and rhythm classes, the curriculum included cooking, gardening, and sewing.

These works were exhibited in Monte Verità.

Lent by a private collection

In frame
Charlotte Bara

Charlotte Bara was one of the many dancers who gravitated to Monte Verità. Her work was highly influenced by Eastern imagery and was always suffused with religious meanings. In the 1920s, she founded her own theater in Ascona and operated a school for dance, theater, and singing.

a. Two Programs for Dance Performances by Charlotte Bara ca. 1920s

b. Poster of the Dancer Charlotte Bara ca. 1920s

An early version of Charlotte Bara’s poster of herself was exhibited in Monte Verità.

c. Three Photographs of Charlotte Bara ca. 1920er Jahre Photographers unknown Gelatin silver prints


Ulfred Herrmanns
In Familien-Wochenblatt, no. 15 (July 1926–July 1927), p. 346

Alternative politische Bewegungen

The history of anarchism and other alternative political movements played an important role for Szeemann as both an area of scholarly research and a utopian ideal that symbolized his admiration for individual and artistic freedoms and the subversion of oppressive societal rules. Szeemann found that same spirit in many of the artworks he admired.

The selection of left-wing, anarchist, and pacifist journals and documents on view are from Szeemann’s personal collection; some were featured in exhibitions such as Monte Verità. The antifascist magazine Fontana Martina (1931–1932) by the communist typographer Fritz Jordi was published by an artist colony founded in 1928 in the village of Fontana Martina, near Ascona. In the remarkable expressionist woodcuts featured on the magazine’s covers, scenes of police brutality and social unrest are interspersed with depictions of the quiet farm life of the commune.

On wall, left to right
12. Facsimile of the print Stammbau des modernen Sozialismus (Family Tree of Modern Socialism) from Tages Anzeiger Magazin, n. 49 (1972)

13. Fontana Martina, Nr. 7, 11, 14, 16 Fritz Jordi and Heinrich Vogeler, editors Ronco s. Ascona: Bergpresse, 1932

These works were exhibited in Monte Verità.

14. In case

a. Revolution, Nr. 1 October 15, 1913 Hans Leybold, editor Munich: H. F. S. Bachmair, 1913

b. Michael Bakunin: The Revolutionary Anarchism Hans Müller Zurich: Sozialistische Verlagsgenossenschaft, 1919

c. Kain, no. 4 July 1912 Erich Mühism Munich: Kain-Verlag, 1912

d. Anarchist Program Ericco Malatesta Brussels: Les Arts Graphiques, 1920

e. An-Archie, a Poem on Anarchism 1919 Author unknown Ink on paper

An-Archie
Wanting no governance does not mean wanting to be without law. It means the opposite: knowing the highest and most deeply inhering law and respecting this alone; recognizing all governance only as a pathetic and ruinous surrogate of this law, and therefore condemning it. The chaos that pencil-pushers today like to call “anarchy,” thoughtlessly or in slander, is nothing other than the stunned and shattered priorarchy that war created, in which it manifestly was smashed – the priorarchy, which today will be patched together again, as always after the explosions it engenders.

Elisàr von Kupffer

Writer, artist, and early gay-rights advocate Elisàr von Kupffer (1872–1942), also known as Elisarion, moved permanently to Ticino in 1915 together with his partner, the philosopher Eduard von Mayer. In Switzerland, the two were able to accomplish their dream of building the Sanctuarium Artis Elisarion, a temple for Clarism, the religion they founded. Its doctrine foresees a path of spiritual elevation through reincarnation, leading to an afterlife in which all dualities – above all, male and female – are transcended in a new world characterized by peace and harmonic beauty.

In the late 1970s, Szeemann played a crucial role in preserving Elizarion’s estate, especially The Clear World of the Blessed, a series of canvases forming an immersive, almost 360-degree visual representation of heaven, originally installed in a custom-made octagonal space in the Sanctuarium. Szeemann saw Elisarion’s quest for beauty and love as part of a wider attempt to reformulate life and society in the region, and as a key element of the history of intentions and failures he was exploring in Monte Verità.

On wall
15. Two Studies for Sections of the Panoramic Painting The Clear World of the Blessed ca. 1923–1939 Elisàr von Kupffer (Estonian-born Swiss, 1872–1942) Tempera on canvas Lent by the City of Minusio, Donation Elisàr von Kupffer and Eduard von Mayer

16. In case

Von Kupffer was also a photographer. The figures in his paintings are often self-portraits, modeled after his staged photographs. These photos were exhibited in *Monte Verità*.

**b. Reproduction of the painting*On the Way to the Sacred***

ca. 1919

Elisàr von Kupffer
(Estonian-born Swiss, 1872–1942)
Gelatin silver print on board

**c. Interior View of the Sanctuarium*Artis Elisarion in Minusio, Switzerland***

c. late 1930s–1940s
Photographer unknown
Gelatin silver print

**d. Letter to Emil Zetzsche with a Lock of von Kupffer’s Hair***

1914

Elisàr von Kupffer
(Estonian-born Swiss, 1872–1942)
Mixed media

**e. Sanctuarium Artis Elisarion, Locarno-Minusio: a Selection of Press Reviews through January 1930***

1930

Elisàr von Kupffer
(Estonian-born Swiss, 1872–1942)
Ink on paper

**f. Hand-Drawn Floor Plan for the Elisarion***

ca. 1937

Elisàr von Kupffer
(Estonian-born Swiss, 1872–1942)
Ink on paper

**g. Same-Sex Courtly Love and Love between Friends in World Literature***

Elisàr von Kupffer, editor
Berlin: Adolf Brand Verlag, 1900

This book, edited by von Kupffer in 1900, is the first modern anthology of homoerotic literature. The author compiled passages covering centuries of literature, from the Bible to his own poetry, and included sources from Europe, the Mediterranean basin, and Japan.

**h. Postcard for the Sanctuarium*Artis Elisarion***

c. 1920s–1930s

**i. Harald Szeemann Installing*The Clear World of the Blessed***

ca. 1978
Photographer unknown
Gelatin silver print

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### Tendency toward the Gesamtkunstwerk: European Utopias since 1800

Szeemann’s 1983 exhibition *Tendency toward the Gesamtkunstwerk: European Utopias since 1800* was among his most ambitious. The term Gesamtkunstwerk (total work of art) originated with the German opera composer and theater director Richard Wagner, who sought to bring together all of the arts—poetry, music, dance, and the visual—to achieve a heightened sensory awareness. This increased attentiveness would free audience members from the doldrums of life in a technological age, allowing them to return to nature. Szeemann’s exhibition took Wagner’s concept of the Gesamtkunstwerk as his point of departure, expanding across media to include visual, cinematic, dance, performance, and audio works by some four dozen visionaries. He included an installation by Joseph Beuys, musical scores by John Cage, paintings by Wassily Kandinsky, architectural models of Rudolf Steiner’s *Goetheanum* (1910–1913) and French postman Ferdinand Cheval’s *Ideal Palace* (1879–1912), and a full-scale reconstruction of Kurt Schwitters’s immersive environment *Merzbau* (1920–1936).

### Facteur Cheval

French artist Ferdinand Cheval (1836–1924) was born into a peasant family in the rural village of Châmes sur l’Herbasse near Hauterives. He was identified by his profession as Facteur (Postman) Cheval; his postal route was an almost thirty-kilometer journey each day by foot. Cheval began building an idealized palace following a vision, with no prior sculptural or architectural training. He collected rocks that he found on his daily postal route—first in his pockets, then in a bucket, and finally in a wheelbarrow. Over the course of 33 years, he gradually realized the *Palais Idéal* that he saw in his dream, completing it in 1912. The palace still stands today as an historical monument. Cheval was a key figure in Szeemann’s pantheon of visionary artists and he went so far as to commission a model of the postman’s idealized palace so that he could feature it in exhibitions including *Tendency toward the Gesamtkunstwerk* (1983), Biennale d’art contemporain de Lyon *L’Autre* (1997), and *Money and value*:*The last taboo* (2002).

### Pedestal

1. *Model of Ferdinand Cheval’s Le Palais Idéal***

ca. 1983
Alain Duperron, model maker
Lent by Ingeborg Lüscher

**Screen**

2. *From Vision to Nail***

2017
Documentary video, 8 min
Produced by IMAGE and CONTENT / Reto Caduff for the Getty Research Institute

**Screen**

3. *Installation shots of Bachelor Machines, Monte Verità and Tendency toward the Gesamtkunstwerk***

Armand Schulthess

Armand Schulthess (1901–1972) retired and moved to Auressio, near Monte Verità, in 1952. He retreated from society and began recording his thoughts and knowledge in handmade books. He inscribed data such as chemical formulas, horoscopes, and historic dates and names onto tin-can lids, bundles of paper, and pieces of wood. Schulthess arranged thousands of these objects around his hillside property, accumulating an encyclopedia of knowledge in the forest. Ingeborg Lüscher met Schulthess in the last years of his life and began documenting his activity, which she presented at *documenta 5*. Lüscher and Szeemann, by then a couple, saved some of Schulthess’s work from destruction. Schulthess continued to feature in Szeemann’s exhibitions. In *The Bachelor Machines*, his work embodied the hermit awaiting the arrival of his bride. In *Monte Verità*, his forest retreat comprised the last utopia in a century-long history of the region. And in *Tendency toward the Gesamtkunstwerk*, Schulthess represented the futile endeavor to reconcile nature and human knowledge. In significant ways, Schulthess’s and Szeemann’s lives mirror one another. Szeemann, the globetrotting curator, took refuge in the environs of Monte Verità and created his personal *Museum of Obsessions* in the Fabbrica Rosa, his office and archive.

### 4. Encyclopedia in the Forest

**Screen**

1952–1972
Armand Schulthess
(Swiss, 1901–1972)
Photography and installation:
Documentation about A. S., 1972
Photo panels with b/w photographs, taken in the forest of A. S., 10 units. These works were shown at documenta 5.
Ingeborg Lüscher
(German-born Swiss, b. 1936)
Mixed media and photographic prints
Lent by Ingeborg Lüscher

5. In case

a. Lithograph in
   The Dissolution of Cities
   1920
   Bruno Taut
   (German, 1880–1938)
   In Bruno Taut, Die Auflösung der Städte; or, Die Erde eine gute Wohnung; as well as in: Der Weg zur Alpinen Architektur; in 30 Zeichnungen (Hagen in West: Folkwang-Verlag, 1920), p. 11

b. The Balls! The Circles!
   The Wheels!, Lithograph in
   Alpine Architecture
   Bruno Taut
   (German, 1880–1938)
   In Bruno Taut, Alpine Architektur
   (Hagen in West: Folkwang-Verlag, 1919), pl. 28
   On wall

6. Untitled
   Oskar Schlemmer
   (German, 1888–1943)
   Photolithographs
   From 10 Zeichnungen (Stuttgart: Eidos-Presse, 1947), a suite of ten prints
   These publications by key modernist artists of the early twentieth century were exhibited by Szeemann in Tendency toward the Gesamtkunstwerk.

7. Poster for the Exhibition Tendency toward the Gesamtkunstwerk: European Utopias since 1800
   1983
   Markus Raetz
   (Swiss, b. 1941)
   Albin Uldry
   (Swiss, b. 1932)
   Offset lithograph

8. In case

9. In case

a. Views of the Goetheanum
   in Dornach
   Rudolf Steiner
   (Austrian, 1861–1925), Architect
   Photographer unknown
   In Nachrichten für Mitglieder/was in der Anthroposophischen Gesellschaft vorgeht (Dornach: Allgemeine Anthroposophische Gesellschaft, 1929), special no. 8, n.p.

b. Color Lithograph in
   Festivals of Life and Art
   Peter Behrens
   (German, 1868–1940)
   In Peter Behrens, Feste des Lebens und der Kunst: Eine Betrachtung des Theaters als höchsten Kultursymbols (Leipzig: Eugen Diederichs, 1900), p. 4–5

10. Bridal Ring
    1905
    Adolf Wölfli
    (Swiss, 1864–1930)
    Pencil on paper
    Sammlung Prinzhorn

11. Model of Richard Wagner’s Bayreuth Festival Theater
    ca. 1983
    Alain Duperron, model maker
    Lent by Una Szeemann and Ingeborg Lüscher
    This intricate cutaway-view model reproduces Richard Wagner’s Bayreuth Festival Theater. Constructed between 1872 and 1876, the historic structure was based on Wagner’s designs, which he adapted from architect Gottfried Semper’s unrealized plans for an opera house in Munich. This was one of several architectural models that Szeemann specially commissioned for Tendency toward the Gesamtkunstwerk.

12. Day
    1805
    Philipp Otto Runge
    (German, 1777–1810)

13. Morning
    1805
    Philipp Otto Runge
    (German, 1777–1810)

14. Evening
    1805
    Philipp Otto Runge
    (German, 1777–1810)

15. Night
    1805
    Philipp Otto Runge
    (German, 1777–1810)
    Printmakers: Johann Adolph Darnstedt (German, 1769–1844) and Ephraim Gottlieb Krüger (German, 1756–1834)
    Facsimiles
    Runge’s Times of Day series are considered monuments of German Romanticism. They represent the arrival and departure of light and, by extension, the organic process of birth, growth, decay, and death. Runge developed a highly personal iconography across this series that was celebrated by his contemporaries, including Johann Wolfgang von Goethe.
Szeemann’s interest in distant countries and cultures was evident from an early age: a series of bound notebooks dating back to his high school years compose an exquisitely executed geography assignment. In his most elegant calligraphy, the future curator describes nations and cultures around the globe and illustrates them with hand-drawn maps, flags, costumes, topographic features, and charts of demographic statistics. His fascination with foreign places and customs evolved into a passion for travel, which dove-tailed seamlessly with his chosen profession. Szeemann’s monumental accumulation of airline-issued luggage tags attests to the extent and frequency of his global travels. This lifestyle upset Szeemann’s mother. In a letter dated April 29, 1968, she expressed concern about not only her son’s continued cigarette smoking and proclivity for whiskey but also his preference for using his British passport over his Swiss one (Szeemann held dual citizenship through his British-born father). His mother questioned, in particular, the legality of his 1967 trip to Cuba to attend, at the invitation of artist Wifredo Lam, the Salón de Mayo, where he collected political tracts and books about the Cuban Revolution.

2. In case
   a. Drawing of Australia, in Szeemann’s High School Geography Notebook ca. 1948–1952 Harald Szeemann
   b. Szeemann’s High School Geography Notebook ca. 1948–1952 Harald Szeemann
   c. Szeemann’s High School Topography Notebook ca. 1948–1952 Harald Szeemann
   d. Szeemann’s High School Project on Mexico ca. 1952 Harald Szeemann and Hans Frank Scheurer
3. Je Pense Donc Je Suisse 1992
   Ben Vautier (French, b. 1935) Screenprint
4. In case

- Szeemann's Train Passes 1967–1983
- Szeemann's British Passport Issued 1968
- Szeemann's Swiss Passport Issued 1952
- Letter to Szeemann from His Mother April 29, 1968
  Julie Szeemann-Kambly Typescript letter

By 1967, the once-prestigious Salon de Mai (May Salon), an annual contemporary art exhibition held in Paris, had lost much of its European audience to documenta. The organizers decided to move that year's exhibition to Havana, Cuba, which, following the Cuban Revolution, had taken on mythic proportions as a center of intellectual life. Many of the artists and curators who attended the Salón de Mayo saw it as a gesture of solidarity with the Cuban people, countering the "cultural blockade" by the United States. Over the course of one long July night, more than eighty artists worked together on a collective mural that manifested the revolutionary spirit of both the country and the exhibition.

5. In case

- Portrait of Harald Szeemann with Cuban Hat and Cigar 1967
  Photographer: Balthasar Burkhard Gelatin silver print

- Photograph and Commemorative Stamp of the Collaborative Mural Painted by the Artists Attending the Salón de Mayo 1967
  Photographer: Alberto Korda Gelatin silver print


6. Suiza no existe 1992
Ben Vautier (French, b. 1935) Screenprint

These are the two posters that artist Ben Vautier designed for the Swiss Pavilion curated by Harald Szeemann for EXPO '92 in Seville, Spain. Szeemann's pavilion presented a heterogeneous country lacking a common language, culture, or artistic style, a point referenced by the poster, "Suiza no existe" (Switzerland does not exist). "Je pense donc je suisse nods" to the philosopher Descartes's "I think, therefore I am" and the Swiss ethos of neutrality.

7. In case

- Catalog for the Exhibition Visionary Switzerland
  Harald Szeemann, editor Aarau: Sauerländer, 1991
- Floor Plan Sketch for the Exhibition Visionary Switzerland ca. 1991
  Harald Szeemann Ink on paper
- Brochure for the Swiss Pavilion at EXPO '92 in Seville, Spain 1992
  Harald Szeemann Basel: Messe Basel, Task Force Sevilla, 1992
- Sketch for the Wallpaper Design Used in the Swiss Pavilion at EXPO '92 ca. 1992
  Harald Szeemann Ink on paper
- Catalog for the Exhibition Austria in a Net of Roses
  Harald Szeemann, editor Vienna: Springer, 1996

8. In case

- Catalog for the Exhibition Epicenter Ljubljana
  Mika Briški, editor Ljubljana: Modena Galerija Ljubljana, 1997

  Harald Szeemann Typescript

Szeemann first saw the work of Jason Rhoades in Zurich, visited him in Los Angeles, and then included his work in exhibitions in Ljubljana, Lyon, Appenzell, Venice, and Zurich. Rhoades visited Monte Verità with Szeemann in 1998. The "spiral in your belly" mentioned in this letter references 'pataphysics and the spiral belly of Alfred Jarry's Ubu Roi (King Ubu).

- Artists' Names Drawn in the Shape of a Fountain for Blood & Honey: The Future Lies in the Balkans ca. 2003
  Harald Szeemann Ink on paper

- Catalog for the Exhibition Visionary Belgium: It Happened Near Us
  Harald Szeemann, editor Brussels: Fonds Mercator, 2005
- Floor Plan Sketch for the Exhibition Visionary Belgium: It Happened Near Us 27. Juli 2004
  Harald Szeemann Ink on paper

Visionary Belgium was Szeemann's final exhibition. He fell ill a few months before it opened and passed away during its installation. A note at the bottom of this floor plan reads "But there is still so much to do! Goodbye Harald."

- Catalog for the Exhibition Visionary Belgium: It Happened Near Us
  Harald Szeemann, editor Brussels: Fonds Mercator, 2005
9. Travel Sculpture, Luggage Tags from Szeemann’s Travels ca. late 1960s–2004
Harald Szeemann
Mixed media

10. Poster for 22 Young Swiss
1969
Offset lithograph
One of the final projects during Szeemann’s tenure at the Kunsthalle Bern, 22 Young Swiss was curated by Edy de Wilde, from Amsterdam’s Stedelijk Museum, with input from Szeemann, who introduced de Wilde to a number of local artists. Szeemann included this poster from the project in several of his later shows, including the Swiss Pavilion at EXPO ’92 in Seville, Spain.

11. Poster in English and Albanian for the Tirana Biennale 2
2003
Harald Szeemann
Chromolithograph
Szeemann was invited to participate as an artist (rather than as a curator) by the organizers of the Tirana Biennale in Albania. In response, he produced this poster, featuring artist Jean Dubuffet’s musings on the essential characteristics of Switzerland.

Screen
12. Remembering Harry, 2017
Documentary video, 8 min 9 sec
Produced by IMAGE and CONTENT / Reto Caduff for the Getty Research Institute

A. Letters from artists to Harald Szeemann

B. Photographs and video documenting the installation of the Grandfather exhibition

Fabbrica Rosa
Interior Panning Shots of the Fabbrica Rosa, Szeemann’s Archive and Library
2011
12 Min
Produced by the Getty Research Institute

Over the course of his long career, Harald Szeemann built unparalleled archival collections that were astonishing in breadth and depth. He described them as part of a Museum of Obsessions. Szeemann amassed files on more than 22,000 artists, including ephemera, correspondence, artworks, and other materials. More than 50,000 photographs document his projects, exhibitions, and the artists with whom he was associated. His library contained more than 25,000 volumes. This footage documents Szeemann’s archive and library in Maggia, Switzerland, in 2011, prior to its transport to the Getty Research Institute.

Grandfather:
A Pioneer Like Us

Following the conclusion of his exhibition documenta 5 in 1972, Szeemann found himself with no commission and no immediate prospects. Undaunted, he began to curate an exhibition in his apartment. Grandfather: a Pioneer Like Us (1974) examined the fascinating life of Szeemann’s grandfather, Étienne Szeemann, an inventive hairdresser and wigmaker who had developed his own permanent wave machine. Part artist’s museum and part surrealist experiment, the exhibition used the possessions of Szeemann’s grandfather – more than one thousand objects – to produce a series of dynamic and surprising juxtapositions that simultaneously explored the contours of his grandfather’s biography, the migrations of people across Europe and the course of wars in the twentieth century, the development of hairdressing as a parallel modernism with its own visionaries and avant-gardes, and the essence of curating itself as a creative and meaningful activity.

Szeemann retained most of the objects from the exhibition within his archive. The Getty Research Institute, in collaboration with Kunsthalle Düsseldorf, has produced a full-scale reconstruction of this exhibition as part of Harald Szeemann: Museum of Obsessions.