

galerie laurent godin



HAIM STEINBACH

Press review

GALERIE LAURENT GODIN - 36 bis rue Eugène Oudiné, 75013 Paris
+33 1 42 71 10 66 www.laurentgodin.com info@laurentgodin.com

MOMA to present six new long-term, site-specific contemporary artworks for their reopening.



Installation view of *Fossil Psychics for Christa* (2019) by Kerstin Bra?tsch, The Museum of Modern Art, New York. © 2019 The Museum of Modern Art. Photo: Heidi Bohnenkamp

The Museum of Modern Art have announced six long-term, site-specific contemporary artworks, on view in public spaces to celebrate MoMA's opening on October 21, 2019. Featured in the Samuel and Ronnie Heyman Lobby, Cafe? 2, the Louise Reinhardt Smith Gallery, the Carroll and Milton Petrie Terrace Cafe?, and the Lewis B. and Dorothy Cullman Education and Research Building, visitors will see new commissions by Kerstin Bra?tsch (German, born 1979), Experimental Jetset (Danny van den Dungen, Marieke Stolk, and Erwin Brinkers, founded in 1997), Goshka Macuga (Polish, born 1967), Yoko Ono (Japanese, born 1933), and Philippe Parreno (French, born 1964). Additionally, a large-scale work by Haim Steinbach (Israeli and American, born 1944), acquired on the occasion of The Museum of Modern Art's 2019 reopening, will also be on view for the first time at MoMA. This suite of contemporary displays is organized by Yasmin Raymond, former Associate Curator, Department of Painting and Sculpture, with Tara Keny, Curatorial Assistant, Modern Women's Fund, Department of Drawings and Prints.

Kerstin Bra?tsch (<https://fadmagazine.com/2015/01/03/the-15-artists-to-watch-in-2015/>) For her site-specific commission in the Petrie Terrace Cafe?, *Fossil Psychics for Christa* (2019). Bra?tsch created a multipart installation in a range of mediums evoking fragmented brushstrokes. After researching pigments used in Italian Renaissance paintings, the artist developed the colours for the hand-painted tempera walls and channels of the restaurant interior in collaboration with Italian decorative painters Valter Cipriani and Carolina D'Ayala. Bra?tsch also worked with Cipriani to make the 35 reliefs on the walls, using the 17th-century Italian technique stucco-marmo, in which pigments are mixed with wet plaster and glue, then polished, to create the effect of marble. These vibrant works evoke not only brushstrokes but also fossil-like fragments and fantastical creatures. A custom wallpaper integrates recurring elements in work—dinosaurs, coloured marbled stone, and cutouts—into MoMA's signature black marble motif.

Experimental Jetset (<https://fadmagazine.com/2013/02/08/preview-nyc-1993-experimental-jet-set-trash-and-no-star/>) For their commission in Cafe? 2, Full-Scale False Scale (2019), graphic design collective Experimental Jetset referred to two historic architectural sites. The first is the interior of Cafe? L'Aubette, in Strasbourg, a collaboration between artists Theo van Doesburg, Sophie Taeuber-Arp, and Jean Arp, completed in 1928. The second is Philip Johnson's 1964 extension of MoMA, in which Cafe? 2 is located. Experimental Jetset incorporated the colours and use of relief seen in the early modern restaurant into metal panels that echo the curved edges of Johnson's windows. Texts and terms relating to modernist theories of color and space are quoted on the walls and placemats.



Installation view of *Exhibition M* (2019) by Goshka Macuga, The Museum of Modern Art, New York. © 2019 The Museum of Modern Art. Photo: Heidi Bohnenkamp

Goshka Macuga (<https://fadmagazine.com/tag/goshka-macuga/>) In Macuga's commission, a monumental Jacquard tapestry installed in the Cullman Education and Research Building, the artist surrounds herself with images of over 100 works of art from MoMA's collection and Archives, and her own work. This image evokes a photograph taken in 1954 of the French politician, publisher, and novelist Andre? Malraux observing the layout of *Le Muse?e imaginaire de la sculpture mondiale* (The Imaginary Museum of World Sculpture). Malraux observed



Installation view of *PEACE is POWER* (2019) by Yoko Ono. The Museum of Modern Art, New York. © 2019 The Museum of Modern Art. Photo: Heidi Bohnenkamp

Yoko Ono (<https://fadmagazine.com/tag/yoko-ono/>) Yoko Ono’s commission in the third-floor Louise Reinhardt Smith Gallery, *PEACE is POWER* (2019), is the latest in the artist’s long history of social engagement and of collaborating with the Museum. In response to the Vietnam War, Yoko Ono and John Lennon established the concept “WAR IS OVER! (if you want it)” in 1969, hoping to rouse a generation to conceive of a world without war. Similarly, her invitation to “Imagine Peace” has been expressed since the early 2000s through billboards, advertisements, posters, and, more recently, tweets. In this installation, Ono covered the walls and ceiling of the space with blue sky, a recurring motif in her practice. The title of the work appears across the windows in 24 languages, and woven into the furniture’s upholstery is the affirmation “yes, yes, yes,” in Ono’s handwriting.

Philippe Parreno (<https://fadmagazine.com/tag/philippe-parreno/>) “A sensible and sentient automaton that perceives and reflects” is how Parreno describes this site-specific environment. Consisting of a series of interconnected objects, *Echo* (Danny the Street) “lives” in the Museum’s lobby and moves in response to data culled from its surroundings in real time. Like the fictional DC Comics character Danny the Street—an omnipresent superhero who communicates with others by morphing into buildings, street signs, and lights—Parreno’s work is a living piece of urban geography that takes different forms throughout the day. His automaton manifests itself through motorized sculptures, light, video animation, and sound, creating “a space as a being.”



Installation view of *hello again* (2013) by Haim Steinbach. The Museum of Modern Art, New York. © 2019 The Museum of Modern Art. Photo: Heidi Bohnenkamp

Haim Steinbach (<https://fadmagazine.com/2018/01/03/haim-steinbach-it-was-a-concept-that-generated-a-new-historical-movement-in-contemporary-art/>) Steinbach’s *hello again* (2013), acquired on the occasion of MoMA’s reopening, will also be installed in the Museum’s main lobby as part of this suite of contemporary art in public spaces. Over the past four decades, Steinbach has amassed a collection of carefully chosen phrases and slogans from newspapers, magazines, books, and other everyday sources. *hello again* is part of this ongoing series of “found statements,” which are humorously infused with philosophical undertones as they are removed from their original contexts. He reproduced *hello again* in its original font, altering only its scale, which is adjusted to the dimensions of the wall where it is installed. In this way, the language itself becomes an image, and vice versa.

Art Radar

Contemporary art trends and news from Asia and beyond

Magasin III Museum & Foundation for Contemporary Art opens new space in Jaffa, Israel

Posted on 15/05/2018



Like

Share

G+

Tweet

2 Votes

Magasin III Museum & Foundation for Contemporary Art has opened its long-awaited satellite space in Jaffa, a historical port town in the south of Tel Aviv, Israel.

Magasin III Jaffa opened on 20 January 2018 with a show by Israeli-born American artist Haim Steinbach, his first solo exhibition in Israel. Art Radar looks at the history of Magasin III and its launch show in Jaffa.



Installation view, Magasin III Jaffa. Image courtesy Magasin III Jaffa. Photo: Youval Hai.

Founded in 1987, **Magasin III** is a Stockholm-based private institution devoted to bringing international contemporary art to Sweden. In addition to its ambitious exhibitions, the foundation has a growing collection of works by internationally established artists.

Since it was founded by curator David Neuman over three decades ago, the institution has been an innovative platform for contemporary art as well as supporting its production, by collaborating with artists on commissions of new work. In

its history, it has staged presentations by artists such as **Lars Nilsson**, **Ernesto Neto**, **Alfredo Jaar**, **Tamara Henderson**, **Katharina Grosse**, **Christian Boltanski**, and **Jake** and **Dinos Chapman**.



Installation view, Magasin III Jaffa. Image courtesy Magasin III Jaffa. Photo: Youval Hai.

A new art space for Tel Aviv

The expansion to Tel Aviv comes during a two-year hiatus of Magasin III's Stockholm space. The converted warehouse in the Frihamnen (old port) neighbourhood closed with an exhibition of works by **Tony Oursler** in June 2017. The so-called "intermission" will see a strategic rethink of the institution, as well as a collaboration with Stockholm University on a new exhibition space opening in 2019.

As the Director of Magasin III Museum & Foundation for Contemporary Art, Tessa Praun, says:

The public program at Magasin III in Stockholm is currently closed. Over the next two years, the Museum will examine alternative ways to engage with visitors and take the opportunity to fully evaluate how it can best continue to support art and artists both nationally and internationally. Further details of future programming in Stockholm will be announced in 2018. The Stockholm team is of course also engaged in supporting the satellite space.



Installation view, Magasin III Jaffa. Image courtesy Magasin III Jaffa. Photo: Youval Hai.

Working with a team of Tel Aviv natives, including curator and General Manager Karmit Galili, Magasin III Jaffa aims to fill a gap in the rapidly-expanding international art scene of Israel's cultural capital, while responding to the eclectic mix of Christian, Jewish and Muslim populations and commercial hubbub of Jaffa. Galili says:

This is a truly exciting addition to our city. The satellite defines Magasin III's longstanding involvement with the cultural scene in Israel. The area where Magasin III Jaffa is located has a rich and mixed history and we are very much looking forward to contributing to it and engaging with new audiences.



Haim Steinbach, "hallelujah" (2017). Image courtesy Magasin III Jaffa. Photo: Youval Hai.

After extensive renovations, Magasin III opened in the ground floor of an Ottoman stone house, between a hairdresser and a houseware shop on 34 Olei Zion, a residential neighbourhood that borders with Jaffa's famous flea market. The exhibition site was carefully selected to be easily accessible to all residents. Indeed, the space itself has been designed to enable the exhibitions to be seen from the outside at all times – seven days a week. Situated between two small parallel streets, the museum's dual glass frontage creates an open tunnel-like space between them.

Selecting Israeli-American artist **Haim Steinbach** for its inaugural exhibition, Magasin III Jaffa extends founder David Neuman's particular consideration of site-specificity and social contexts. The exhibition of Steinbach's work, entitled "**zerubbabel**", marks the launch of a diverse programme at Magasin III Jaffa that will feature both international and local artists.

As Neuman notes,

Haim Steinbach belongs to the most quintessential group of Contemporary artists—those that so importantly have pushed the boundaries of visual expression. The upcoming exhibition will clearly establish a benchmark for future presentations at Magasin III Jaffa. It is our utmost pleasure to present Haim Steinbach's art to local and international audiences.



Installation view, Magasin III Jaffa. Image courtesy Magasin III Jaffa. Photo: Youval Hai.

Framing Devices: Haim Steinbach

Haim Steinbach was born in 1944 in Rehovot, Palestine, and has lived in the United States since 1957. He received a BFA from Pratt Institute in 1968, followed by an MFA from Yale University in Connecticut in 1973 and currently has a studio in Ridgewood, Queens, New York. Throughout his career, Steinbach has exhibited his work at major museums worldwide. In 2013, the Hessel Museum of Art at Bard College in New York presented a solo exhibition of the artist's work since the early 1970s, entitled "once again the world is flat", which travelled to Kunsthalle Zurich and Serpentine Gallery, London. His work has been included in many major international group exhibitions, such as **the Paris Triennale in 2012**, the 47th **Venice Biennale** in 1997, the 9th **Biennale of Sydney** in 1992, and **Documenta IX**, Kassel, in 1992.

In his artistic practice, Steinbach selects and arranges objects in ways that give emphasis to their aesthetic presence and physical arbitrariness. These objects come from a spectrum of social and cultural contexts and are put together in a way that is analogous to the arrangement of words in a poem, or to the musical notes in a score. Steinbach's work sets forth new contexts for a wide range of objects that are handmade and mass-produced, ordinary as well as extraordinary, new and old.

Steinbach often refers to the structures he builds for the objects he presents as "framing devices". Shelves by any other name, these devices function to display the objects and to give equal weighting to each, regardless of their position in cultural hierarchies.

In this way, Steinbach sets up an antagonism within his work between high and low culture, the unique and the multiple, the personal and the universal. Steinbach considers both the objects themselves, and the language that forms the titles of his works as 'found objects'. His titles come from a range of vernacular sources, such as texts, headings in magazines or adverts. They are often statements and sayings that may be idiomatic, allegorical or proverbial.



Installation view, Magasin III Jaffa. Image courtesy Magasin III Jaffa. Photo: Youval Hai.

“zerubabbel” presents ten works by Steinbach from the last five years that focus on the essence of text, imagery and colour. The show consists of a striking yellow wall painting, *thelionking* (2016), as well as the large-scale *pantonecoolgray10* (2016) and smaller *tuttifrutti* (2016), both wall paintings designed in vinyl decal and acrylic paint.



Installation view, Magasin III Jaffa. Courtesy Magasin III Jaffa, Photo Youval Hai

Four handcrafted wood and glass boxes are shown mounted along one wall of the gallery, each displaying a different metal storage container produced by Pantone, a company best known for its innovative system for identifying, matching and communicating colours.

In these works, Steinbach explores our understanding of colours, through the structures and framing devices of their presentation. On an adjacent wall, a fifth wooden vitrine, Untitled (bocce ball) (2013), contains a wooden bocce ball. The context of a work is important to Steinbach, and in his wall paintings he uses the architecture to duplicate the space, heightening the viewer's perception of it spatially.



Installation view, Magasin III Jaffa. Image courtesy Magasin III Jaffa. Photo: Youval Hai.



Installation view, Magasin III Jaffa. Image courtesy Magasin III Jaffa. Photo: Youval Hai.

In his transformation of quotidian objects through the conditions of their display, Steinbach is engaging with the historical legacy of the readymade, and further, in these recent works, that of hard-edge abstraction à la Frank Stella.

Rather than considering his contextual manipulations as an act of appropriation, Steinbach looks at the work in relation to the role of chance and contingency, and how the artist can facilitate these extra-human forces by giving up creative control. In **an interview** with frieze magazine on the occasion of the show, he discussed the exhibition's title, stating:

The show's 'title' 'zerubabbel' is another found object. It means 'coincidence': accepting what happens to you. Accepting a chain reaction [...]. I was going to do a project in Israel, and it happened to be Hanukkah and I was lighting the candles with my 13-year-old son and we were singing Ma'oz Tzur, in which the name Zerubabbel appears. I found the word to be an interesting object because of its sound and rhythm, like a ruby, a precious stone. Why not throw this stone in the bucket of stones that I have here? It's a found object, that's why it is written in lower case letters. This is what I do with all my found objects. Somebody may not like 'zerubabbel', due to the fact that the word is limping: Ze Ru Ba Bel.

In "zerubabbel", Steinbach uses colour as both subject and object, creating works that playfully interrogate the figure/ground relationship of his chosen medium and the architectonic construction of Magasin III Jaffa.

Jessica Clifford

2072

"zerubabbel" by Haim Steinbach is on view from 20 January to 13 July 2018 at Magasin III Jaffa, 34 Olei Zion, 6813131 Tel Aviv – Yafo.



The Art Newspaper: Subscribe today



NEWS

New York to get its own Fourth Plinth competition on the High Line

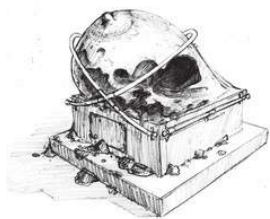
Twelve artists have been shortlisted for the first two commissions for large-scale public art on the elevated park

by VICTORIA STAPLEY-BROWN | 10 January 2017



Sam Durant's proposal for the High Line Plinth, Untitled (drone) (2016) (Image: rendering by James Corner Field Operations and Diller Scofidio + Renfro, courtesy of the City of New York; artwork courtesy the artist)

London's Fourth Plinth Commission, a series of large-scale public contemporary art commissions in the city's Trafalgar Square, has inspired a new venue for public art across the pond: the High Line Plinth on New York's elevated art park. The platform will be at the centre of the Spur, a new stretch of the park above 30th Street and Tenth Avenue due to open next year. "The High Line Plinth will provide artists with an opportunity to work on a larger scale than ever before possible on the High Line, and to engage with the breathtaking vistas that open up around this new site," Cecilia Alemani, the chief curator and director of High Line Art, says in a statement.



Lena Henke's proposal
Ascent of a Woman (2016).
(Image: rendering by James
Corner Field Operations
and Diller Scofidio +
Renfro, courtesy of the City
of New York; artwork
courtesy the artist)

Twelve artists, who come from eight countries and range in age from 32 to 72, have been shortlisted for the first two High Line Plinth commissions: Jonathan Berger, Minerva Cuevas, Jeremy Deller, Sam Durant, Charles Gaines, Lena Henke, Matthew Day Jackson, Simone Leigh, Roman Ondak, Paola Pivi, Haim Steinbach and Cosima von Bonin. Sculptural models of their proposals—which include a rotating wind vane shaped like a Predator military drone by Durant, and a breast with an outer layer in sand, soil and clay, designed to erode, by Henke—will be shown on the High Line at West 14th Street from 9 February until 30 April.

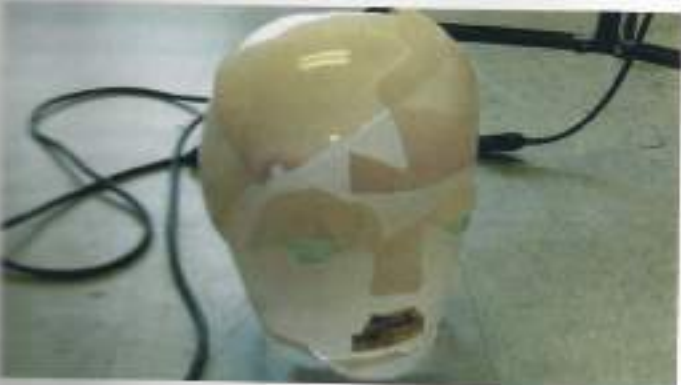
"The public will be able to submit their commentary onsite and also online, which will be taken into account when Friends of the High Line chooses the final two proposals which will be commissioned as the inaugural works," a spokeswoman for High Line Art tells The Art Newspaper over email. The

proposed works are due to be selected in spring of this year, and will be shown in successive 18-month periods, launching with the opening of the Spur next year.

sculptures in a smaller room off the main gallery, and discovering them felt like running unexpectedly into a celebrity.)

The videos are two distinct works and are not synched, so that each time they loop, the dialogues line up differently. Still, at times the heads in the different videos seem to converse with one another, and at others they seem to be trying to drown one another out. In *More Heads, Belgrade*, the characters cycle through topics in a disconnected way, babbling something about dying frogs ("What's a frog?" asks one), and something else about violence. They rehearse lines, coaching and criticizing one another as if auditioning for the video in which we're now seeing them. They seem to be aware of being part of a work—of being mouthpieces for lines written by someone else.

The characters in *More Heads* are in less forgiving territory. One—made of clay, with sensitively molded features and cardboard sunglasses—is positively simmering; each of its lines, even the everyday ones, is laced with rage. The serene hippie tries to placate it, drawing, "Peace, water, peace," to which it replies, "No fucking peace," and the viewer can't help but agree. A guttural voice that doesn't seem to belong to any head begins suddenly—alarmingly—to whisper threats. The hippie asks for peace; a pink head with a delicate profile asks, "What a peace?" and then says, "I forgot the laundry, dammit."



Explorations of the interiorized multiplicity of the self have a long history as feminist practice, from Joan Jonas's *Organic Honey's Visual Telequality*, 1972, to the many personae of Cindy Sherman; here, Greenwood makes the condition of the self divided against itself particularly vivid and intense. At any given moment, we might find ourselves inhabiting any one of Greenwood's characters. Or we might be all of them at once, subjected to our own polyphonic interior commentary. This effect is reinforced by the rambling, disjointed nature of the dialogue, similar to a series of status updates: occasionally honest, often self-conscious, tending to bail out right when things are about to get deep. Sometimes the heads talk past one another, and sometimes they achieve a marvelous lucidity, a combination that makes these videos, for all their staginess and projection, feel like being inside a real person's head.

—Emily Hall

ANNANDALE-ON-HUDSON, NY

Haim Steinbach

HELSEL MUSEUM OF ART AND
OCS GALLERIES AT BARD COLLEGE

Like most artists, Haim Steinbach has been subject to the tyranny of the label, the easily identifiable category—a boon for critics, curators, and collectors (and for students cramming for art-history exams), but


a practice that risks reducing our understanding of the artist to a few salient characteristics and a slot in a movement or historical period. For Steinbach, this has resulted in his being defined primarily through his signature shelf works of the 1980s, groupings of objects that helped position him alongside neo-geo artists such as Ashley Bickerton and Jeff Koons, whose work was driven by a fascination with the sheen and allure of the commodity. With its inclusion of a wide range of eighty-odd works by Steinbach, some dating back to the early 1970s, this show, curated by Tom Eccles and Johanna Burton, offered a broader and more nuanced view of the artist, making evident the affective and even outré dimensions of his practice.

The museum's exhibition spaces were built out and partitioned by walls of partially finished sheetrock and metal framing, set at diagonals through existing doorways and galleries to form a mazelike compendium. Throughout, Steinbach's own objects and installations were interspersed with works by other artists chosen by him from the museum's collection. In Steinbach's case, this gesture, which the museum has afforded to featured artists in the past, dovetailed with his long-standing practice of selecting and arranging objects in meaningful configurations. The exhibition helped illuminate how those techniques found their roots in earlier, lesser-known works in which he embraced similar strategies but presented them in more traditional, picturelike forms, as in paintings from the early '70s that feature post-Minimalist arrangements of multicolored bars, for example, or, in a slightly later series, panels constructed out of shapes of inset linoleum.

Far from supporting the image of him as a cool, cerebral manipulator of shiny consumer goods, the consistent appearance in the exhibition of such materials as linoleum and other decorative surfacings like patterned wallpaper underscored how many of his works look like the products of an overeager interior decorator with questionable taste, let alone in a succession of thrift stores and down-market home-goods emporiums—hence the proliferation of knickknacks, gewgaws, tchotchkes, and trinkets of all sorts, perched on often crudely assembled shelves. The resulting configurations and jarring clashes of patterning, which extend through to the artist's later work, began to align him in my mind less with the '80s drive to appropriation and simulation and more with a queer, camp, or kitsch sensibility, whether the cultivated bad taste of John Waters or the lowbrow scavengings of Jim Shaw's thrift-store paintings. In this light, among the memorable pieces was an early shelf work featuring a woman's pump, covered in elbow macaroni and spray-painted gold. While some might see in it allusions to Yayoi Kusama, it made me think of a hastily assembled trophy for a drag contest at a neighborhood gay bar, at once shady and celebratory, ironic and poignant.



View of "Haim Steinbach," 2013



REVIEWS

The affective dimension of Steinbach's work was most strongly evoked by a room in the exhibition given over to a series of small black-and-white photographs of shelf pieces installed, in the early '80s, in people's homes. In these images, the artist's constructions come off as awkward interlopers, never quite jibing with the furnishings around them. They represent intrusions of difference into spaces whose decorating schemes are meant to express the putatively closed systems of self or family. As much as they speak to taste and accumulation, then, they also serve as models for the vagaries of human relatedness. These pictures, like so much of Steinbach's work, reflect on our desire to find meaning from and through the objects that surround us as we go about the messy business of living.

—*Michael Lobel*

SUISSE

Le monde plat de Haim Steinbach

La Kunsthalle de Zürich présente une exposition consacrée à Haim Steinbach. « once again the world is flat » se déroule du 24 mai au 17 août.

L'exposition s'attarde sur la production de l'artiste du début des années 1970 à nos jours. Bien qu'elle commence avec ses peintures, de format carré des années 1970, elle s'oriente principalement sur la suite de son parcours, à travers des réalisations qui évoluent et incorporent des éléments architecturaux, et met en lumière sa création contextuelle avec les objets. Haim Steinbach se concentre sur la sélection et l'arrangement des objets. C'est autour de 1975 qu'il forge l'idée d'une étagère, comme espace pour le jeu d'objets. Cela l'a mené au concept d'« étalage », qui inclut à la fois l'objet, mais aussi son contexte.

Haim Steinbach, né à Rehovot en Israël en 1944, vit et travaille à New York. Son œuvre explore le rite social qui consiste à collectionner, arranger et présenter des matériaux de la vie de tous les jours. Il a été exposé dans des institutions telles que l'Artist's Institute de New York (2012), le Museum Modemer Kunst Stiftung Ludwig de Vienne (1997) et le Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum de New York (1993).



Collections

Haim Steinbach
Installation view Lia Rumma, 2013
Photo: © Agostino Di Leo

WORLD U.S. N.Y. / REGION BUSINESS TECHNOLOGY SCIENCE HEALTH SPORTS OPINION

ART & DESIGN BOOKS DANCE MOVIES MUSIC TELEVISION THEATRE

ART REVIEW

Assembled in Planned Jumbles of Found Creation

Haim Steinbach's and Helen Marten's Solos at Bard College



Suzanne DeChillo/The New York Times

Shelves of items that Haim Steinbach picked from the Hessel collection to mingle with his solo show at Bard College. [More Photos »](#)

By ROBERTA SMITH

Published: August 1, 2013

ANNANDALE-ON-HUDSON, N.Y. — Exactly 100 years ago, Marcel Duchamp inverted a bicycle wheel, mounted it on a kitchen stool and anointed it as art. It was the first of his revolutionary ready-mades, so it is perhaps with that centenary in mind that the Center for Curatorial Studies at Bard College has come up with two substantial solo shows devoted to artists from different generations whose ties to the ready-made are complex and deep. Together their displays combust into a more than suitable celebration.

“Haim Steinbach: Once Again the World Is Flat” is a retrospective organized by Tom Eccles, the center’s executive director, and Johanna Burton, director and curator at the New Museum in Manhattan. It surveys the career of this 69-year-old artist, known since the mid-1980s for arranging store-bought domestic items and toys, along with the odd artifact, on jutting Formica-clad shelves. Mr. Steinbach’s Pop Art-meets-Minimalism combinations were briefly grouped with work of artists like Jeff Koons and Ashley Bickerton under the rubrics of Neo Geo and Commodity Art. But within any one piece, the differences and similarities in color, form, function and social purpose have a more resonant effect. At Bard, Mr. Steinbach’s exhibition offers a lithe account of his development before and since these works, including many little-seen early pieces.

The other show is “Helen Marten: No Border in a Wok That Can’t Be Crossed,” which originated at the Kunsthalle Zürich, organized by its director, Beatrix Ruf. The title’s playful promise of a stir-fry of meanings and mediums — wok also sounds like (art)work — is fulfilled by Ms. Marten, who is 27. This precocious British artist works in a light, frothy mode that might be called postmodern rococo. Against all odds, since the ready-made is one of the clichés of our time, she is extending its tradition in original ways. Her hybrid pieces include welcome mats made of cast

Corian and little tables (the kind at hospital bedsides) in welded radial-bent, powder-coated steel, as well as food, liquor, clothing, trash and small hand-held objects (pens, matches). They merge two and three dimensions as well as mediums; make suave use of digital design and fabrication; and include wryly narrated digital animations.

Although she is well regarded in Europe — blue-chip dealers are lending (and supposedly selling) many of these pieces — this is her first exhibition in the United States. Especially where the fusion of digital and analog is concerned, Ms. Marten's talent blazes, like Cindy Sherman's at the start of her career and also Cady Noland's, which sadly never got beyond beginning.

These shows face each other across the center's big entrance foyer. Ms. Marten's exhibition is in the spacious galleries of Bard's Center for Curatorial Studies; Mr. Steinbach's is in the center's Hessel Museum of Art, an equally spacious wing inaugurated in 2006. Both exhibitions are strong individually, but what they form in tandem is a delirious, perhaps volatile exegesis on objects both real and digital; found, made and remade; art and nonart. The complex way objects stimulate memory and desire, drawing us into the past and pushing us forward, is also part of the mix.

Of course, it only adds to the free-for-all that artists who have solo shows at the Hessel are invited to select works from the Marieluise Hessel Collection to be displayed within their exhibitions. This stipulation has been embraced with gusto by Mr. Steinbach, who is in many ways as much a collector and curator as an artist. Like most of his predecessors, he has selected works sympathetic to his, including those by artists he has learned from (Joseph Kosuth, Barry Le Va); his contemporaries (Sherrie Levine, Louise Lawler); and younger artists he may have influenced (Rachel Harrison, Mona Hatoum). The standout here is Sigmar Polke's, a large pale drawing from 1970 festooned with potatoes: It looks like something Ms. Marten might have made.

Mr. Steinbach's 80-work retrospective wends its way through art by others, revealing rarely seen Minimalist drawings and paintings from the first half of the 1970s. Most interesting are small paintings on particle board dotted with small black shapes that evoke the scattered geometric forms of Mr. Le Va's sculptures.

But Mr. Steinbach seems to have an inborn attraction to existing stuff, to taking more than making. This led to paintings made from pieces of linoleum and, by 1979, installations consisting of objects arranged on several small shelves hung on walls covered with lengths

of patterned wallpaper. The three examples here form intricate conversations, running vertically and laterally, about high and low, the trickle-down of exotic cultures (toward kitsch) and the sacraments of interior decorating.

By 1980, the combination started mutating, minus the wallpaper, into single, more substantial objects displayed on sconcelike shelves. One piece here is a largish ceramic figurine of Lil' Orphan Annie and her dog, Sandy, on a shelf sheathed in overlapping Spider-Man masks. The combination's connectable dots include comic-book spinoffs, blank eyes, the color red, heroes male and female and our childish attraction to them (and, these days, Broadway shows).

These works look relatively nostalgic and Americana-prone compared with the sharper, shinier pieces that he has made since the mid-1980s, examples of which dot the exhibition. Two large pieces push the shelf concept to its limits. The 2005 "Influx" consists of two great lengths of industrial metal shelving sensitively arrayed with small artworks from the Hessel collection, as well as antiques-shop finds, junkyard outtakes and perhaps odd-lot remnants.

The other display, as Mr. Steinbach likes to call all his pieces, is double-story scaffolding laden with art from the Hessel's collection. Above is a Minimalist Mount Rushmore of works by Donald Judd, Dan Flavin, Sol LeWitt and Robert Morris. Down below is a more crowded, varied mix focusing on the efforts of subsequent generations of artists, including Mr. Steinbach, who learned from Minimalism but refused to let it hold them back.

The kind of diversity of objects that Mr. Steinbach has orchestrated around his art at the Hessel is effortlessly encompassed within Ms. Marten's strange, evocative installations. Like him, she is interested in beauty, in always giving the viewer plenty to look at while pondering her possible meanings. She also works with forms and materials that evoke domestic life, dipping in and out of different narratives and histories while never looking less than strikingly contemporary.

One of the first galleries of her show features four large works that resemble enormous watercolors but that the label identifies as screen-printed leather and ostrich fabric. Each depicts a pink-lipped, bewigged, unquestionably 18th-century fellow and has five bottles of apertifs hanging by string from its lower edge. Their shared title, "Geologic Amounts of Sober Time (Mozart Drunks)," reminds us that Mozart — who was said to have composed while drunk and who died young, at 35 — exemplifies the modern myth of creative types who burn their candle at both ends.

Like many younger artists of the moment, including Uri Aran, Cathy Wilkes and Carol Bove, Ms. Marten is in many ways an arranger of things, practicing unattached assemblage that is indebted to Mr. Steinbach. But while her objects can look as if they stepped out of a high-end shelter magazine or some wealthy residence, many of them are actually artist-made. The clearly digital precision with which they are produced only adds to the air of untouched domesticity.

Against this tasteful sterility, Ms. Marten pits less-than-perfect signs of life. Several sculptures — all titled “Falling Very Down (Low pH Chemist)” — consist of thick planks with slanting edges whose different sections are each made of contrasting woods or laminate. Kitchen counters, floors and dining room tables come to mind. Banal items like a silk sock, a Swiss army knife and a cast latex hand are nonchalantly placed on their surfaces.

Similarly, Ms. Marten fabricates two baskets from woven aluminum (one for a cat, one for laundry) that are so perfect they look like digital renderings; but she fills them with things like hand puppets and rolled gym socks. Sometimes these juxtapositions can seem a little obvious or Surrealist. But Ms. Marten is pulling a lot together, moving with impressive confidence along a continuum between the made and the ready-made, puncturing her perfect forms with unsettling bits of life.

“Helen Marten: No Borders in a Wok That Can’t Be Crossed” is at the Center for Curatorial Studies through Sept. 22, and “Haim Steinbach: Once Again the World Is Flat” is at the Hessel Museum of Art at the Center for Curatorial Studies through Dec. 20, both at Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson, N.Y., (845) 758-7598.

La scène, une zone délimitée ou un podium sont les espaces de la performance. Débarrassés d'un événement interprété, d'une action humaine, ces lieux actent la présence d'objets - pour en faire des portraits, des vanités. Ces espaces ne sont pas la relique d'une performance, ils sont l'indice d'un récit qui a lieu, qui aura lieu, ici même: un territoire fixe, l'avoir-lieu de l'événement.

Hans Stenback
"COPD-7", 2003
70,1 x 172,7 x 25,4 cm
Étagère en bois stratifié, rivets en plastique, figurine COPD en plastique
Téléthon pour le Centre de Recherche sur le Cancer de l'Université de Toronto



Le socle est à la fois un cadre et le feu de l'occupation au sol. Cette base permet une séparation spatiale, une mise à distance, un seul - en étant un indicateur de gravité. De plus, notait qu'une toile non tendue posée au sol (celle de Pollock voulait dire "convertir l'horizon en sol"), formant un "espace optique pur".¹ Un podium est à la fois un plan, une forme primaire, minimale, et un dispositif d'accueil. Cet espace dirige vers lui les enjeux de la mise en exposition. Il permet à des objets d'être performés en affirmant leur présence, leur intensité: par un geste de déposition, ils sont placés et articulés en une zone de visibilité augmentée. Cette extension de la présence, ce supplément à l'apparition, vient préciser la préciosité de l'objet mis en élévation/évaluation.

Le podium est un module qui devient le véhicule de signes, proposant un récit qui s'appuie sur la spécificité de chaque objet. L'agencement est un code qui utilise un système de signes/formes s'articulant sur une ligne de présentation où chaque signe/forme devient un moment du récit en jeu sur cette plateforme. L'agencement n'est pas une neutralisation sur un plan unique, ni une mise au même niveau, c'est une réalisation spectaculaire. Utiliser les données du display, c'est porter attention à l'atlas, à l'échantillonnage et à la valorisation de l'objet par son mode de diffusion. C'est une situation géo-esthétique qui permet d'aménager et de dégager une aire de réception pour rassembler, y assembler: une plateforme est tel un plateau de jeu multipliant les combinaisons entre éléments physiques et symboliques: Barthes disait que "quel qu'en soit le sens, ce ne sont pas les choses, c'est la place des choses qui compte"², à cela, Olivier Mosset répond qu'il lui semble que "les choses elles-mêmes sont également un peu la place des choses."³

Un podium permet à un objet de faire lien avec notre corps, pour le centraliser vis-à-vis d'une proportion physique idéale. En fixant le regard, le podium est le chemin le plus court pour présenter et apprécier un objet, en se redoublant stratégiquement d'un recentrement en gros plan: l'objet induit le dispositif de présentation, le gros plan le produit. Claude Lévêque note qu'en présentant des objets "à hauteur des yeux, la lecture de ces objets va pouvoir se rapprocher de l'humain. Le socle a comme fonction de faire des portraits d'objets, non pas simplement pour les sacrifier, mais plutôt pour les mettre en suspens. Que les objets parlent en direct." Mettre dans une telle situation des objets revient à utiliser un mode intime, une aisance du regard

APPARAÎTRE ICI

Josephine Mecklinger
"The Complete History of Contemporary Art 2000",
Mixed Media in Display Window
180 x 250,2 x 60 cm
The Gallery Gallery, London
Source: www.the-gallery.com
N°102 / 197, 20/2011



et une fixation de l'attention pour renvoyer le spectateur à sa propre activité perceptuelle : exposer pour souligner l'importance et la valeur de ce qui est exposé, l'acte même de l'exposition⁵. Ainsi, pour exemple, Michel Verjux qui délimite des zones par des projections de lumières sur des murs, sols, socles. Pour lui "la matière lumière nous permet d'exposer au regard de l'autre, l'objet de notre choix, il nous met aussi visuellement en relation avec notre environnement. (...) Et poursuit : On ne peut pas réduire les éclairages que je propose à leur fonction de description de l'espace. Ils remplissent une fonction supérieure, celle non plus seulement de décrire l'espace, mais de définir l'acte d'exposer, le fait même de l'exposition, fonction qui n'annule pas la précédente, mais l'inclut."⁶

L'apparition de la commodity sculpture s'envisage à partir d'une réflexion de Brian O'Doherty : "Le matérialisme en Amérique est une aspiration spirituelle profondément ancrée dans la psyché : on gagne ses objets à la force du poignet, on ne les lâche pas. Le self-made man et l'objet manufacturé (man-made object) sont cousins, ce que vérifie le Pop Art. Son mélange équivoque de complaisance et de critique procure à la fois les jouissances toutes matérielles de la bourgeoisie et leur supplément d'âme."⁷

L'envie de possession et le faire valoir soulignent que l'on puisse être intoxiqué visuellement par un objet de désir, par un fétiche : une forme d'angoisse.⁸ Mais "est-ce qu'il existe vraiment un objet de consommation, un objet fétiche, un objet d'art ou bien est-ce notre relation à cet objet qui nous importe?"⁹ Comment des forces aliénantes s'engagent-elles dans les objets ? La réification du désir engendre une humanisation de l'objet - et inversement. La croyance et la projection viennent animer l'objet, le définir dans notre ordre symbolique. Nous communiquons à travers celui-ci, en reflétant nos systèmes de valeurs et le pouvoir de nos désirs. Steven Gontarski souligne que "les displays peuvent passer inaperçus, mais leur influence est énorme. Puisque la plupart des gens passent plus de temps dans les magasins que dans les musées, cela semble approprié que des artistes s'intéressent aux manières qu'à notre culture de présenter des objets en leur donnant de la valeur ou de la préciosité." Pour Haim Steinbach le podium "est comme un marqueur qui permet de souligner l'organisation d'objets. C'est un dispositif qui produit sa propre définition, en permettant aux objets d'apparaître d'une manière beaucoup plus précise." En utilisant "des assemblages ou des configurations d'objets qui sont déjà pré-conçus pour le grand public", il s'intéresse "à la question du lieu du désir, à entendre comme le plaisir que provoquent les objets et les marchandises, y compris ce que nous appelons les œuvres d'art. Nous avons davantage le sentiment d'être complices de la production du désir, ce que nous appelons traditionnellement les beaux objets séducteurs, que de nous trouver quelque part à l'extérieur de ce champ."¹⁰

À la question "Qu'est-ce qui vous amène visuellement quand vous vous promenez ?" Warhol répondait "un bon arrangement dans une vitrine." Les podiums et les vitrines de Joséphine Meckseper sont des "focus artificiels", des attaques envers les espaces de présentation des magasins, "Je suis moins intéressée par un discours esthétique que par l'exploration des contradictions et des absurdités qui relient les objets exposés"¹¹, dit-elle. En agaçant des objets (souvent grotesques) avec des images de magazines ou des structures de présentation d'objets pour magasin, elle souhaite pointer les aberrations qui font apparaître, dans notre quotidien, par exemple, des images de guerre aux côtés de publicités outrancières. Elle propose une critique de l'absurdité des manifestations du matérialisme capitaliste en assemblant ses oppositions, ses incongruités, mêlant des données issues de la contre culture et de la culture consumériste pour marquer un peu plus leurs échanges, leurs territoires communs, leurs espaces de collisions/collusions.

Pour Boris Achour, les agencements de magasins semblent "eux-mêmes souvent s'inspirer, de manière assez directe et évidente, de la sculpture minimale, tant dans leurs formes que dans les matériaux utilisés." L'objet minimal joue des différences et similitudes entre socle et cube. Dans le travail de Didier Vermeiren, il n'y a pas de socle à proprement parler, mais incorporation du socle à la sculpture, alors que cette sculpture elle-même ressemble à un socle - un doute subsiste. Par la suite, et dans cette lignée, Steven Gontarski vient orner ses socles vides de graffitis (Blocks I, 2000). Tom Friedman présente un mauvais sort acheté à une sorcière (A Curse, 2009), tandis qu'*Invisible Sculpture* (1985) d'Andy Warhol est simplement ce que son titre indique. *Nothing* (1999) de Ray Johnson ou *A Work That Will Be Shown Somewhere Else, In Some Time, Not Know To Me At This Moment* (2007) de Mario Garcia-Tomas sont, quant à eux, des socles couronnés par une vitrine de plexiglas cubique et vide. Carl André en proposant des plaques de métaux posées à même le sol, souhaite saisir l'espace, comprendre sa nature par ses limites, ses passages et accès. Il note que ses œuvres sont conçues "pour qu'un spectateur en fasse le tour ou marche le long d'elles. (...) C'est vraiment une question d'échelle - c'est aux antipodes des objets - bijoux sculptés que l'on expose sur une table basse. Pour les admirer, on ne doit pas se déplacer autour. Pour moi, une sculpture est semblable à une route; elle n'est pas faite pour être vue d'un endroit particulier."¹² Justement, pour Olivier Mosset, éviter le jeu du fétichisme tout en utilisant un podium est possible "en y mettant rien dessus". Il lui semble que "quand le socle devient 'sculpture', cet espace de pouvoir est en quelque sorte neutralisé. (...) Un podium sur lequel il n'y a rien dessus permet de questionner cette mise en valeur." Le socle perd alors son statut a-signifiant, neutre, mais continue d'établir une séparation avec l'espace que parcourt le spectateur : "le socle vide indique la place d'un volume potentiel, appelé un complément"¹³, note Christian Besson. Quand Olivier Mosset réplique le socle d'une sculpture de Maïlo, *Hommage à Cézanne se trouvant aux Tuileries*, il nous dit : "le socle du Maïlo était aux Tuileries. Ce socle que j'ai utilisé, évoque l'art minimal. Même si on l'a refait, je l'ai utilisé comme un ready-made. A cause de ses qualités, je suppose." D'une certaine façon c'est renverser le *Socle du Monde* (1961) de Manzoni pour pouvoir poser le paysage dessus, doubler l'horizon.

Créer une zone de discussion, un espace protégé et vide, ne nécessite pas d'être délimité à partir du sol ou par des murs. Un plafonnier, un auvent, une tonnelle, un pavillon sont des espaces dont les limites sont en suspension. Ann Veronica Janssens, proposé avec *Tropical Moonlight* (2008) une plaque ondulante dorée, qui est à la fois une forme céleste et un abri. *Big Conference Centre Middle Management Platform* (1998) de Liam Gillick est une plateforme, un plafonnier translucide et coloré. Cette structure suspendue permet de créer une zone d'échanges sociaux. Depuis 2006, Philippe Parreno produit plusieurs *Marques*, qui sont directement inspirées des marques de cinémas et théâtres américains. Placées au dessus d'une entrée d'un lieu ou d'une salle, elles sont des préludes à l'exposition - indiquant un accès - pour amplifier l'idée de durée de celle-ci : elles sont telles les annonces d'une séance, d'un événement qui se rejoue à chaque entrée. Ces zones fabriquent de la circulation, un espace temporel différent, des moments de partage.

Et, finalement, le podium absolu ne serait-il pas, le 433" (1952) de John Cage ? Cette partition qui permet pendant un laps de temps aux bruits environnants - donc à toutes formes d'activités - d'être révélés par cette zone d'écoute.

Timothée Chailou

Critique d'art et historien de l'art et du cinéma.



Philippe Parreno
Marques, Guggenheim, NY, 2006.
"Feenayppanweewer", Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, from Oct. 24, 2006, through Jan. 7, 2009
Courtesy Art & Park, Paris

Toutes les citations qui se trouvent (pas à des notes de bas de page) sont issues de conversations effectuées par l'auteur avec les artistes en janvier 2010.

1 Gilles Deleuze, *La peinture et la question des concepts*, cours du 5 mai 1981, Université Paris 8.

2 Roland Barthes, *Le Théâtre du cinéma. Petite anthropologie des cinémas*, 2005, p. 47.

3 Présenter l'objet, le faire valoir, est une tautologie - objet (un) : pour de voir.

4 Michel Verjux, *Le Art Press* 147, mai 2000, p. 40.

5 Brian O'Doherty, *White Cube. L'espace de la galerie et son idéalisme*, JRP|Ragot, 2008, p. 137.

6 Jeff Koons dit que "les gens à la recherche du lien sont comme des alcooliques insatiables qui perdent tout contrôle jusqu'à la dépression."

7 Haim Steinbach, "De la critique à la complexité", *Le Art en Théorie*, Hazan, 1997, p. 1170.

8 Haim Steinbach, "De la critique à la complexité", *Le Art en Théorie*, Hazan, 1997, p. 1173.

9 Joséphine Meckseper, *Page One*, 2008, p. 27.

10 Carl André, *Le Manuel à CAPC*, 1987, p. 34.

11 Christian Besson, in *Dieter Immert*, *Vite Viva*, 1987, p. 12.

BY ANTHONY HUBERMAN

NOT A READYMADE

Just like all of us, Haim Steinbach has been choosing and arranging objects for his entire life. Just like the rest of us, he places the sugar jar next to the coffee machine. However, he also makes sculptures that interfere with the order of things. Here, he talks about why his objects are not “readymades” with Anthony Huberman, from The Artist’s Institute, which is dedicating its current season to Steinbach.



canonical status, 2012. Courtesy: Galerie Laurent Godin, Paris. Photo: Grégory Copitet

HS: Haim Steinbach
 AH: Anthony Huberman

HS: What is a “readymade”?

AH: I suppose the historical definition of the readymade is an object that an artist did not make, that an artist picks, finds, or chooses, and inserts into a context that frames it as art, without doing anything to it. And then that notion has become much more complicated and layered over the years.

HS: Must the artist present it as art?

AH: Well, no. I think it is mostly the act of placement into an art context that plays the role of framing something as art. I don’t think the artist names it anything. It’s the context that does the naming, not the artist.

HS: Duchamp, with his “readymades,” was engaging with, prodding, the museum system. The way he is usually discussed is misleading. He said he was “indifferent,” but his indifference had to do with distancing—with his ability to step outside the usual structures of aesthetics and say that anything could be aesthetic. If anything can be aesthetic, then you can go to the department store and buy a bottle rack or a urinal, sign it “R. Mutt,” and present it to a museum as a work of art by Mutt.

AH: So with that in mind, I’d like to try and apply those ideas to your own work. I think one way people understand your work is as a Duchampian gesture, or that the objects on your shelves operate like readymades. I want to try and talk about that, and perhaps challenge it a bit. For example, tying into this idea of indifference, I wanted to ask you about the relationship your objects have to the idea of the home. As opposed to the Duchampian conceptual gesture of going into a shop and buying something, the objects in your work have spent time in someone’s home, in someone’s life. Is this something you think distances your work from the lineage of the readymade?

HS: Well, Duchamp’s objects also spent time in his life and home.

AH: Right, but he didn’t buy the bicycle because he wanted to use it *as* that. He put it in his studio to figure out what the hell to do with this shape, this form.

HS: I don’t know, did he not ride a bicycle? Duchamp stated that he made *Bicycle Wheel* to entertain himself. He said that whenever he was bored, he would just turn the wheel. That he would do this for his amusement contradicts the idea of his total indifference, and again points to how much it has to do with pleasure and amusement. By bringing the bicycle and/or a bicycle wheel inside the house to play with, he domesticated it, which then brings in a social dynamic. I would say that my practice is directly connected to the social. It embraces the idea that art is always with us, a function of the everyday. Singing a song while ironing a shirt, or speaking theatrically, which we all do now and then—all of these activities are an extension of our social lives, our civilized existence. With my work, the bottom line is that any time you set an object next to another object you’re involved in a communicative, social activity.

AH: Because your works have more than one object? Or are you referring to the act of displaying them?

HS: There’s always more than one object at hand. Being here means you and here. Anything is always nearby or next to something else. It is always part of the collectivity, part of the fluidity of existence and communication within a socialized, cultural society.

My practice is to try to point to things that we ignore out of habit. One of the realities of the everyday is that we ignore everything that is part of the everyday. As long as something is in the right place, we are comfortable, and we can ignore it. Now the question is why is it in the right place, why are we comfortable with it, and why do we ignore it? If the order of

di Anthony Huberman

Proprio come tutti noi, Haim Steinbach ha scelto e disposto oggetti intorno a sé per tutta la vita. Proprio come noi, Steinbach è solito mettere la zuccheriera accanto alla macchina per il caffè. Tuttavia, l’artista crea anche sculture che interferiscono con l’ordine delle cose. In questa intervista, l’artista spiega a Anthony Huberman dell’Artist’s Institute di New York – istituzione che dedica la sua attuale stagione a Steinbach – perché i suoi oggetti non sono dei “readymade”.

Haim Steinbach: Cosa è un “readymade”?

Anthony Huberman: Immagino che la definizione storica di readymade sia un oggetto che un artista non ha creato, ma che prende, trova o sceglie e inserisce in un contesto che lo inquadra come arte, senza farci niente. E poi questo concetto è diventato molto più complesso e stratificato nel corso degli anni.

HS: L’artista lo deve presentare come arte?

AH: Beh, no. Credo che sia soprattutto l’atto della collocazione in un contesto artistico che porta a inquadrare qualcosa come un’opera d’arte. Non credo che l’artista nomini un oggetto come artistico. È il contesto che glielo impone, non l’artista.

HS: Duchamp, con i suoi “readymade” lottava contro, pungolava, il sistema dei musei. Il modo in cui di solito si parla di lui, è fuorviante. Lui sosteneva di essere “indifferente”, ma la sua indifferenza aveva a che fare con il distanziamento... con la sua capacità di uscire fuori dalle strutture consuete dell’estetica e dire che qualsiasi cosa poteva essere estetica. Se qualsiasi cosa può essere estetica, allora si può andare in un grande magazzino e comprare uno scolabottiglie o un orinatoio, firmarlo “R.Mutt” e presentarlo in un museo come un’opera d’arte di Mutt.

AH: Allora tenendo presente questo, vorrei cercare di applicare queste idee al tuo lavoro. Secondo me capita che la gente interpreti il tuo lavoro come un gesto duchampiano o come se gli oggetti sui tuoi scaffali funzionassero da readymade. Vorrei provare a parlare di questo e magari metterlo un po’ in discussione. Per esempio, approfondendo quest’idea dell’indifferenza, vorrei chiederti del rapporto che i tuoi oggetti hanno con l’idea della casa. Al contrario del gesto concettuale duchampiano di andare in un negozio a comprare qualcosa, gli oggetti delle tue opere hanno passato del tempo in casa di qualcuno, nella vita di qualcuno. È qualcosa che secondo te distanzia il tuo lavoro dalla genealogia del readymade?

HS: Beh, anche gli oggetti di Duchamp avevano passato del tempo nella sua vita e nella sua casa.

AH: Giusto, ma non aveva comprato la bicicletta per usarla *in quantotale*. La mise nel suo studio per capire cosa diavolo fare di quella sagoma, di quella forma.

HS: Non lo so, non andava in bicicletta? Duchamp sosteneva di aver creato *Ruota di bicicletta* per divertirsi. Ha detto che tutte le volte che era annoiato, girava la ruota. Che lo abbia fatto per divertirsi, contraddice l’idea della sua totale indifferenza, e ancora una volta indica quanto invece la creazione abbia a che fare con il piacere e il divertimento. Portando la ruota della bicicletta in casa per giocarci, l’ha addomesticata, introducendo così una dinamica sociale. Direi che la mia prassi artistica è direttamente collegata al sociale. Abbraccia l’idea che l’arte è sempre con noi, è una funzione della quotidianità. Cantare una canzone mentre stiri una camicia, o parlare in modo teatrale, cosa che di tanto in tanto facciamo tutti – tutte queste attività sono un’estensione della nostra vita sociale, della nostra esistenza civilizzata. Nel mio lavoro, il nocciolo è che ogni volta che metti un oggetto accanto a un altro, sei coinvolto in un’attività comunicativa, sociale.

AH: Per il fatto che nelle tue opere c’è più di un oggetto? O ti stai riferendo all’atto di mostrarle?

HS: C’è sempre più di un oggetto a portata di mano. Essere qui significa tu e qui. Tutto è sempre vicino o vicino a qualcos’altro. È sempre parte della collettività, parte della fluidità dell’esistenza e della



From top-left:

Untitled (daybed, coffin) (front) 1989. Courtesy: FRAC, Bretagne. Photo: David Lubarsky

Untitled (daybed, coffin) (back) 1989. Courtesy: FRAC, Bretagne. Photo: David Lubarsky

it is III-1, 2008. Courtesy: Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York

exuberant relative #2, 1986. Courtesy: Whitney Museum, New York. Photo: David Lubarsky

tongkong rubbermaid II-1, 2007. Courtesy: Sonnabend Gallery, New York. Photo: Lawrence Beck

Untitled (emergency sign, shot glasses, dog chews), 2009. Courtesy: Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York

Untitled (rock, fruit bowl, duck, root, pumpkins, horseman), 2006. Courtesy: Akira Ikeda Gallery, Tokyo/New York/Berlin

Capri suite #1, 1987. Courtesy: Galleria Lia Rumma, Milan/Naples. Photo: David Lubarsky

oz, 2009. Courtesy: Almine Rech Gallery, Brussels/Paris

Untitled (playing cards, tombola game, tomato cans), 1996. Courtesy: Galleria Lia Rumma, Milan/Naples. Photo: Peppe Avallone

Neapolitan Tableau, 1987. Courtesy: Galleria Lia Rumma, Milan/Naples

Untitled (dancer, candle holder, dog chew), 2011. Courtesy: Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York. Photo: Jean Vong

avocado 1, 2012. Courtesy: Galerie Laurent Godin, Paris. Photo: Grégory Copitet

Opposite, top – “navy legacy”, installation views, Galerie Laurent Godin, Paris, 2012. Courtesy: Galerie Laurent Godin, Paris

Opposite, bottom-left – *Gate Valve*, 2011. Courtesy: Galerie Laurent Godin, Paris

Opposite, bottom-right – *Prototype for a Gate Valve*, 2011. Courtesy: Galerie Laurent Godin, Paris



things gets disturbed, it gets our attention. I like to say that I aim to interfere with the order of things. My goal is to find other ways of ordering things.

AH: We tend to think of a readymade as a single object, and therefore your idea of an object being in a community of objects falls slightly outside of the Duchampian tradition.

HS: I've been criticized for exactly that. I've been accused of betraying Duchamp.

AH: Betraying him? Is that what you think you are doing?

HS: At this point the "readymade" is an ideological term. When Duchamp called his work a "readymade," he meant that it was something that was already made, something of function that was industrially mass produced that he didn't make himself. It already existed in the world, an object among objects. There was nothing more remarkable about it than that. If anything, he reminded us that the bottle rack was as remarkable as the *Mona Lisa*. He was breaking hierarchies of aesthetic judgment. It was an assault on the establishment, all the values of Art. He was opening the gates of vision by saying that vision is selective, a politically structured hierarchy.

Even by the time Duchamp died in 1968, the urinal was still considered kind of a joke.

But then, once Duchamp was canonized, he became a God like Marx, Einstein, and Freud, or any radical visionary. His work was studied, and he was taken very seriously. The "readymade" had to be defined and validated within the historical hierarchy.

AH: And so it lost its punch as an attack on aesthetic judgments.

HS: It was assimilated, and yet in the museum it still causes friction. Unless it's put in the design department. My work returns to questions of hierarchies, but in a completely different way. Whereas Duchamp selected objects from the hardware store, I am accused of embracing all the objects in the world.

AH: Let's talk about that. "Choice" is the operative word in thinking about both your work and the readymade. One does not *make* something, but rather *chooses* something.

HS: Objects are part of language, just as words are. The question is what do you construct with them. Objects are more than words because they are more specific and completely embodied, with structures of representation, style, form and culture. An object is really the embodiment of a world. If each object is a world in itself, then can you construct a meaningful message or story with a group of objects.

AH: And the idea of placing objects in a row on shelves came out of that line of thought?

HS: Yes, on a very basic level, this is what I set out to do in the mid-1970s. By the end of the 1970s I was doing display installations in which I was arranging objects in a normative way. I was not gluing them together. I was not adding paint. I placed them on shelves, like words in a sentence or notes in a musical score. The language of placement, the language of arrangement. Once you question what you do with objects, you are of course looking once again at the social structures of putting objects to use in the home, in the bathroom and the kitchen, and so on.

AH: It also brings in performance, the idea that these objects are being "put into play," as you have said. In the same way that Roland Barthes, at this same time, was talking about a sentence as words being put into play. This is distinct from the notion of the readymade, which is about an object inhabiting a context, rather than an object or objects being asked to enact, or perform a series of actions next to each other.

HS: Duchamp put the bottle rack or coat hanger into play. He took a coat hanger and put it on the floor, and called it *Trap*. There's

comunicazione all'interno di una società integrata e culturale.

La mia prassi artistica cerca di indicare le cose che ignoriamo per abitudine. Una delle realtà della quotidianità è che ignoriamo tutto quello che ne fa parte. Finché una cosa è al posto giusto, siamo tranquilli, e possiamo ignorarla. Ora, la domanda è perché una cosa è al posto giusto, perché siamo tranquilli al riguardo e perché la ignoriamo? Se l'ordine delle cose viene disturbato, cattura la nostra attenzione. Mi piace dire che il mio intento è interferire con l'ordine delle cose. Il mio obiettivo è trovare altri modi di ordinare le cose.

AH: Tendiamo a pensare a un readymade come a un singolo oggetto, e perciò la tua idea di un oggetto che si trova in una comunità di oggetti cade leggermente al di fuori della tradizione duchampiana.

HS: Sono stato criticato proprio per questo. Sono stato accusato di aver tradito Duchamp.

AH: Di averlo tradito? È questo che pensi di fare?

HS: A questo punto "readymade" è un'espressione ideologica. Quando Duchamp chiamò la sua opera un "readymade", voleva dire che era qualcosa che era già stato fatto, una sorta di funzione prodotta in massa a livello industriale che non aveva creato in prima persona. Esisteva già nel mondo, era un oggetto fra gli oggetti. Non c'era niente di straordinario in questo. Se mai, ci ricordava che lo scolabottiglie era straordinario quanto la Gioconda. Stava infrangendo le gerarchie di giudizio estetico. Era un attacco all'establishment, a tutti i valori dell'arte. Stava aprendo le porte della visione dicendo che la visione è selettiva, una gerarchia strutturata politicamente.

Anche quando Duchamp morì nel 1968, l'orinatoio veniva ancora considerato una specie di scherzo. Ma d'altra parte, quando Duchamp è stato innalzato all'onore degli altari è diventato un dio come Marx, Einstein e Freud, o un qualsiasi visionario radicale. La sua opera è stata studiata e lui è stato preso molto sul serio. Il "readymade" doveva essere definito e convalidato all'interno della gerarchia storica.

AH: E così ha perso la propria forza come attacco ai giudizi estetici.

HS: È stato assimilato, eppure nei musei provoca tuttora resistenza. A meno che non venga inserito nel settore dedicato al design. Il mio lavoro ritorna sulle questioni delle gerarchie, ma in modo completamente diverso. Mentre Duchamp selezionava oggetti dai negozi di ferramenta, io vengo accusato di includere tutti gli oggetti del mondo.

AH: Parliamo di questo. "Scelta" è il termine operativo per pensare sia alla tua opera che al readymade. Non si *crea* qualcosa, ma piuttosto si *sceglie* qualcosa.

HS: Gli oggetti fanno parte del linguaggio, proprio come le parole. La domanda è cosa ci costruisce. Gli oggetti vanno oltre le parole perché sono più specifici e completamente incarnati, hanno strutture di rappresentazione, stile, forma e cultura. Un oggetto è realmente l'incarnazione di un mondo. Se ogni oggetto è un mondo in se stesso, allora si può costruire un messaggio o una storia significativi con un gruppo di oggetti?

AH: E l'idea di collocare gli oggetti in fila sugli scaffali deriva da questa linea di pensiero?

HS: Sì, a un livello molto basilare sì, è quello che ho cominciato a fare a metà degli anni '70. Alla fine degli anni '70, facevo installazioni in cui disponevo gli oggetti in modo normativo: non li attaccavo insieme. Non aggiungevo vernice. Li mettevo sugli scaffali come parole in una frase o note su una partitura musicale. Il linguaggio della collocazione, il linguaggio della disposizione. Una volta che ti domandi cosa fai con gli oggetti, ancora una volta esamini ovviamente le strutture sociali sottese all'uso degli oggetti in casa, in bagno, in cucina eccetera.

AH: Ciò introduce anche l'esecuzione, l'idea che questi oggetti siano "messi in gioco" come dicevi tu. Nello stesso modo in cui Roland Barthes, nello stesso periodo, parlava di una frase come di parole messe in gioco. È un concetto diverso da quello del readymade, che si riferisce a un oggetto che abita

a poetic language game happening, a pun, and it's meaningful because he is asserting his idea over the object by turning it into something other than its intended function. He was the author of that object in a new way. The argument for the "readymade" as a distinctive, meaningful artistic gesture has to do with the notion that it's not about the object per se, but the concept. What is often being said about my work is that if anything can go with anything, and all objects are equal, then the work lacks an idea, however my ideas are not the same as Duchamp's. While I order the objects in repetition and singularity, I basically present them and their meanings remain open ended. And that's unsettling to many, but there's friction, sound, and resonance in play below the surface.

AH: You're asking an object to have authority on its neighbor, and vice versa.

HS: It's giving the object its own voice. When you take a urinal, sign it "R. Mutt," and call it *Fountain*, you are putting the aura of your authority, and the aura of art, on it. This is also true for the bottle rack, which no longer is as such, as it is now a "readymade." Whereas when I present something, it is placed in common manner, implying to be interacted with by the receiver.

AH: You seem to be talking about the difference between representation and presentation. One way to think about the readymade in the Duchampian tradition is that it's a representational act, it means more than what's in front of you. In your case, the objects are not representing the authoritative, artistic genius of an artist, but they are objects presenting themselves to us.

HS: The term "readymade" to me is now a hierarchical term, giving everyone who participates in the discussion the idea that they are a part of something very special. It has entered the realm of elitism. I'm saying, my work is not a "readymade." I am not involved in "readymades," my work is not about the "readymade." I am playing and exploring with objects.

AH: So, if there was an object lying around the studio that you had actually made yourself, it would not be in any way more significant, and you might choose it in the same way that you would choose an industrial object?

HS: It is a question of what does it mean that you make an object or don't make an object. Who makes the object, who deserves the credit for making the object? And what is making anyway? Isn't thinking, imagining, and conceiving a way of making? When a musician composes a score, who makes the music, the composer or the orchestra? I have an intimate relationship with all the objects I work with, just as any creative person has an intimate relationship with their material, whether they are a musician, a poet, or a writer. Most of the objects that end up in my work have been with me at least half a year if not longer. I've had objects that have been sitting around for decades that ended up in a piece many years later. Sometimes they have personal histories, and sometimes they don't, it's not necessarily something that somebody gave me; I could have gotten it for myself, but they've become part of my personal history, because they have been part of my space, part of my domestic reality.

AH: Going back to having authority or agency over objects, you already brought up how Duchamp would title his works as one way he exerted agency or control over them. Could you talk a bit about the way you think about titling?

HS: Theoretically, titling is a very important aspect of my thinking. I would say that Duchamp's convention of titling was very different. It's an important distinction that you're bringing up. There are several ways in which I title. One basic way is that the work is *Untitled* with the "U" capitalized. Then in parentheses I list the names of the objects, for instance *Untitled (elephant, toilet brush, kong)*. The elephant is not really an elephant; it is a small, ceramic elephant. The toilet brush is made of plastic and doesn't look like a toilet brush because it was designed to look like a Brancusi sculpture. For many years MoMA used to sell it in

un contesto, piuttosto che a uno o più oggetti a cui viene chiesto di rappresentare o eseguire una serie di azioni l'uno accanto all'altro.

HS: Duchamp ha messo in gioco lo scolabottiglie o l'attaccapanni. Ha preso un attaccapanni, lo ha collocato sul pavimento e l'ha chiamato *Trappola*. C'è un gioco linguistico poetico in azione, un gioco di parole, ed è significativo perché Duchamp afferma la propria idea sull'oggetto trasformandolo in un qualcosa di diverso rispetto alla sua funzione originale. È diventato l'autore dell'oggetto in un modo nuovo. L'argomento a favore del "readymade" come un gesto artistico peculiare e significativo ha a che fare con l'idea che non si tratta dell'oggetto di per sé, ma del concetto. Quello che si dice spesso sulla mia opera è che se tutto può andare con tutto, se tutti gli oggetti sono uguali, allora l'opera è priva di un'idea, anche se le mie idee non sono le stesse di Duchamp. Mentre ordino gli oggetti per ripetizione e singolarità, io fondamentalmente li mostro e il loro significato rimane aperto. E questo per molti è inquietante, ma sotto la superficie c'è in gioco l'attrito, il rumore, la risonanza.

AH: Chiedi a un oggetto di avere autorità su ciò che gli sta accanto, e viceversa.

HS: È dare all'oggetto la sua voce. Quando prendi un orinatoio, lo firmi "R. Mutt", lo collochi su una base e lo chiami *Fontana*, stai inserendo l'aura della tua autorità, l'aura dell'arte sull'oggetto. Ciò accade anche con lo scolabottiglie, che non è più tale, dato che adesso è un "readymade". Invece quando io presento una cosa, è collocata in modo normale, e deve interagire con il fruitore.

AH: Mi pare che tu stia parlando della differenza che c'è fra rappresentazione e presentazione. Un modo di pensare al readymade di tradizione duchampiana è che si tratta di un atto rappresentativo, significa di più di quello che ti ritrovi davanti. Nel tuo caso, gli oggetti non stanno rappresentando il genio e l'autorità di un artista, ma sono oggetti che si presentano a noi.

HS: Il termine "readymade" per me adesso è un termine gerarchico che dà a chiunque partecipa alla discussione l'idea di far parte di qualcosa di molto speciale. È entrato nel regno dell'elitarismo. Quello che sto dicendo è che le mie opere non sono "readymade". Non mi occupo di "readymade", il mio lavoro non è sui "readymade". Io gioco con gli oggetti e li esploro.

AH: Per cui, se ci fosse un oggetto in giro per lo studio creato da te, non sarebbe in alcun modo più significativo e potresti sceglierlo nello stesso modo in cui sceglieresti un oggetto industriale?

HS: La questione riguarda cosa significhi creare un oggetto o non creare un oggetto. Chi crea l'oggetto, chi si merita l'onore di aver creato l'oggetto? E cosa vuol dire comunque creare? Pensare, immaginare e ideare non sono un modo di creare? Quando un musicista compone una partitura, chi crea la musica, il compositore o l'orchestra? Ho un rapporto intimo con tutti gli oggetti con cui lavoro, proprio come qualsiasi persona creativa ha un rapporto intimo con i materiali che usa, sia che si tratti di un musicista, un poeta o uno scrittore. Gran parte degli oggetti che finiscono nelle mie opere sono rimasti insieme a me per lo meno un anno, se non di più. Ci sono oggetti che sono stati in giro per decenni e che sono finiti in un'opera molti anni dopo. A volte, hanno una storia personale, a volte no, non si tratta per forza di qualcosa che mi ha dato qualcuno; magari è un oggetto che avrei potuto tenere per me, ma è diventato parte della mia storia personale, perché ha fatto parte del mio spazio, della mia realtà domestica.

AH: Tornando al tema dell'autorità o forza esercitata sugli oggetti, hai già detto che il modo in cui Duchamp intitolava le sue opere era un modo per esercitare la forza o il controllo sugli oggetti. Potresti accennare a come tu pensi ai titoli delle opere?

HS: A livello teorico, creare i titoli è un aspetto molto importante del mio pensiero. Direi che l'atteggiamento di Duchamp verso i titoli era molto diverso. È una distinzione importante quella che hai chiamato in causa. Ci sono diversi sistemi che uso per dare i titoli alle mie opere. Uno fondamentale

their bookstore. And the Kong is actually a rubber dog chew, but it's also the name given by the individual who designed it. So, I'm pointing out that the names by which we identify objects are bound in language. A ceramic elephant is not an elephant, and the word elephant is not an elephant. When my son, River, was a year and a half old, he called the elephant he saw on TV, "Omni."

AH: But some of the titles are much more abstract or poetic.

HS: Another way I title works is to give them a found word, or a found statement. I keep a list of ones I run across, so I'll remember them later.

AH: So if there are three objects on a shelf, this "found phrase" of the title becomes a fourth object?

HS: Exactly. The title itself is a found object like the other objects. The question is then how to take those parts and arrange them.

AH: Like making a song? With repetition, and rhythm. Here enters the idea of composition.

HS: Well, "composition" is OK but I prefer the word "arrangement."

AH: There is something more "democratic" about an act of arrangement over one of composition. Perhaps this goes back once again to our discussion of the notion of authority? It's interesting that although the readymade is often considered to be connected to indifference, that it's actually imbued with huge amounts of authority, whereas the way you relate to objects tries to attack that notion of authority.

HS: Yes, because it takes it out of the realm of absolute specificity and total power of the originator, and throws it more to the world of the relativity of objects and contexts. I think the ideology of the "readymade" at this point transcends any notion of arrangement. It has become a symbol, almost a religious symbol.

AH: You talk about turning power over to objects, but at the same time, you do place them in very specific order or a very specific arrangement. What if someone decided to switch their order? What if a collector who owned one of your works decided to change the placement?

HS: My work is indeed vulnerable in that way. It always is vulnerable to that joke: "You can move it, it doesn't matter." Of course it matters to me, but of course it also *doesn't* matter. Once somebody owns my work, they might decide to play with it. They may also have to dust it, or they may choose to dust one object but leave the others alone for the next year, and see what that looks like. Somebody might take the ashtray off the shelf and put a cigarette in it, and the owner may become incensed or may simply put it back on the shelf and offer another ashtray to the guest.

AH: But all that matters to you, right? It changes the song, so to speak.

HS: Right, and it extends the discourse from something that Duchamp started. It is coming out of that history. With all due respect, Duchamp did something very radical that affected many of us. He opened doors to discussion, and vast areas to develop, in terms of how we relate to objects and what we prioritize, and give special attention to, and see. It really opened the doors of seeing. In art, ultimately, who has the control on what we see and how we see?

è chiamarle *Untitled*, con la U maiuscola. Poi fra parentesi elenco i nomi degli oggetti, per esempio, *Untitled* (elefante, scopino da bagno, kong). L'elefante non è in realtà un elefante; è un piccolo elefante di ceramica. Lo scopino da bagno è di plastica e non sembra affatto uno scopino perché è stato disegnato in modo tale da assomigliare a una scultura di Brancusi. Per molti anni, lo vendevano al bookshop del MoMA. E il kong è in realtà un gioco per cani in caucciù, ma è anche il nome che gli ha dato la persona che lo ha disegnato. Con ciò, voglio sottolineare come i nomi con cui identifichiamo gli oggetti siano vincolati dalla lingua. Un elefante di ceramica non è un elefante, e la parola elefante non è un elefante. Quando mio figlio, River, aveva un anno e mezzo, chiamava l'elefante che vedeva in tv "Omni".

AH: Ma alcuni dei titoli sono molto più astratti o poetici.

HS: Un altro modo per dare il titolo alle mie opere è usare una parola o una frase che ho trovato. Tengo un elenco di quelle in cui m'imbatto per poterle ricordare dopo.

AH: Per cui se ci sono tre oggetti su uno scaffale, la frase trovata del titolo diventa il quarto oggetto?

HS: Esatto. Il titolo stesso è un *objet trouvé* come gli altri oggetti. La domanda allora diventa come prendere queste parti e disporle.

AH: Come creare una canzone? Con la ripetizione e il ritmo. Qui entra in gioco l'idea della composizione.

HS: Beh, "composizione" va bene, ma io preferisco la parola "arrangiamento".

AH: C'è qualcosa di più democratico nell'atto dell'arrangiamento che in quello della composizione. Forse questo ci riporta, ancora una volta, alla nostra discussione sul concetto di autorità? È interessante notare che, per quanto il readymade sia spesso considerato in relazione all'indifferenza, in realtà è intriso di autorità, mentre il modo in cui tu ti rapporti agli oggetti è un tentativo di attaccare il concetto di autorità.

HS: Sì, perché porta quest'ultima fuori dal regno della specificità assoluta e del potere totale dell'autore e la getta nel mondo della relatività degli oggetti e dei contesti. Penso che l'ideologia del "readymade", a questo punto, trascenda qualsiasi concetto di arrangiamento. È diventata un simbolo, quasi un simbolo religioso.

AH: Parli di trasferire il potere agli oggetti, ma allo stesso tempo li metti in un ordine o in un arrangiamento molto precisi. E se qualcuno decidesse di spostare il loro ordine? E se un collezionista che ha una delle tue opere decidesse di cambiare la loro collocazione?

HS: La mia opera è davvero molto vulnerabile in questo senso. È sempre vulnerabile a questa battuta: "Puoi spostarlo, non importa". Ovviamente a me importa, ma ovviamente allo stesso tempo *non* importa. Quando qualcuno possiede una mia opera, può decidere di giocarci. Magari deve anche spolverarla, o magari può scegliere di spolverare solo un oggetto e lasciare stare gli altri per un anno, e vedere che aspetto ha. Qualcuno può prendere dallo scaffale il posacenere e metterci sopra una sigaretta, il proprietario si può infuriare o magari può semplicemente rimetterlo sullo scaffale e offrire un altro posacenere al proprio ospite.

AH: Ma tutto questo per te è importante, giusto? Cambia la musica, per così dire.

HS: Esatto, ed estende il discorso a partire da qualcosa che ha cominciato Duchamp. Viene fuori da quella storia. Con tutto il rispetto, Duchamp ha fatto qualcosa di molto radicale che ha influenzato molti di noi. Ha aperto la porta alla discussione, e ci sono vaste aree da sviluppare, in termini di come ci rapportiamo agli oggetti e a cosa diamo la priorità, a cosa diamo particolare attenzione e cosa vediamo. Ha davvero spalancato le porte della visione. Nell'arte, in definitiva, chi ha il controllo su ciò che vediamo e su come lo vediamo?



"navy legacy", installation view, Galerie Laurent Godin, Paris, 2012. Courtesy: Galerie Laurent Godin, Paris. Photo: Gregory Copitet



Haim Steinbach

Avocado, 2012, plastic laminated wood shelf, metal and glass vitrine, 22 papier mâché fruit models, wood headrest, 112 x 105 x 58 cm. Courtesy the artist and Galerie Laurent Godin, Paris



Mona Hatoum

Grater Divide, 2002, mild steel, 204 x 4 cm. Photo: Iain Dickens. Courtesy White Cube, London

HAIM STEINBACH

Haim Steinbach: *Navy Legacy*
Galerie Laurent Godin, Paris
13 April – 26 May

Back in the nineteenth century, the still life may have been to the discipline of the fine arts what a Chinese headrest was to smoking in an opium den. Both carried the promise of wider visions: stylistic masterplans in the case of artists who tested their capabilities on a bowl of fruit, and dreams for those intoxicated sleepers who laid their heads on those hard pillows. Such, at least, is one analogy that suggests itself in the vestibule of Laurent Godin, where the journey through *Navy Legacy*, Haim Steinbach's second solo show here, begins with *Avocado 1* (all works but one, 2012): two dozen papier mâché fruits in a glass vitrine and an antique wooden headrest, arranged on a green shelf.

Next to this incongruous display is a massive, angled white rampart, *Untitled (Leaning Wall)*, which obstructs the narrow lobby, leaving just enough room on its right side for visitors to pass clumsily through. Still standing at the doorway, if you bend your head slightly over the Chinese pillow, you'll notice on the left of the obstacle the final part of an enlarged wall text, which reads 'ants' in emboldened black. The rest of it is concealed, the sightline blocked by the architectural intervention.

So you have to lower your body and playfully make your way under the leaning wall to access the main space of the gallery's first floor, and the bigger picture. When the complete phrase – 'no elephants' – is fully apprehensible on the other side, the idiom 'an elephant in the room' comes to mind. That said, the unsuspected transition from the miniature (ants) to the mammoth informs not only the transition from the foyer to the white cube but also the overall concept of the show. Indeed, according to the artist, the navy is metonymic for the broader ocean, and Steinbach's entire exhibition is structured via extreme and whimsical scalar leaps, whether created by the formal correspondences between the artworks or by your imagination. *Untitled (Ball)*, an enormous and coarse papier-mâché sphere that almost fills the main room from floor to ceiling, engages in dialogue with seven bocce balls and the round fists of a Hulk figurine arrayed on a yellow shelf, *Untitled (7 Bocci Balls, Hulk)*, as well as a Lego toy,

Cole's Tread Assault, a midget ninja vehicle locked inside a glass box.

While these three last compositions are a collection of items any child would fancy for a game of make-believe, Steinbach has been known since the late 1970s for gleaning – from markets, from relatives – diverse curiosities that he later precisely, yet puzzlingly, redistributes within display devices of his own design. His cabinets of wonders, if you will, are constellations of heterogeneous finds: each and every one of them, whether familiar or odd, having the power to trigger your memory like Proust's evocative madeleine.

As the exhibition continues in the basement with *Canonical Status*, another shelf supporting an eighth bocce ball with two watering cans, and *Prototype for a Gate Valve* (2011), a plastic miniaturised replica of a mastodon vertebra in a glass bell jar, a final phrase on a framed sheet wonderfully resumes the artist's poetics: *tant qu'il y aura des petits creux*. The expression, literally 'as long as there will be little hollows', stands for the small cravings of a peckish child who is always up for one more treat. In other words, memory and imagination, since they're constantly being sparked, are never nearly close to being replete.

VIOLAINE BOUTET DE MONVEL

MONA HATOUM

Mona Hatoum: *You Are Still Here*
Arter, Istanbul
17 March – 27 May

Rather than fixing our position on a map with a steadying 'you are here', Mona Hatoum etches those words into a mirror, with the discomfiting temporal addition of the word 'still': 'you are still here'. You haven't disappeared yet? Haven't died? But if we are supposed to be locating ourselves 'here', where are we? Given the artist's Palestinian parentage and upbringing in Beirut, which have made diaspora, exile and conceptions of home the leitmotifs of her practice, it's worth asking what kind of place Hatoum's work, seen here in a midsize survey, creates for itself.

As one might expect, several maps are on show, but they don't offer topographical security; rather the opposite. Maps of Beirut, Baghdad and Kabul are perforated with fine sets of latticelike circular cuts, recessed or raised, suggesting new structures or large craters in the land. *Shift* (2012),

a carpet featuring an image of the world map, has been divided into sections that are then misaligned, as though tectonic plates have slipped in a particularly neat earthquake. In *Present Tense* (1996), red beads suspended in a grid of small soap cubes are arranged in the shape of the territories meant to be returned to Palestine under the 1993 Oslo Accords. Their portionlike nature indicates that slices can simply be removed from this picture at any time. The world and its borders are flickering, roiling, slippery as soap.

And then there are Hatoum's domestically rooted nightmares, into which we might fall, lulled to sleep by *Misbah* (2006–7), a light whose slowly spinning metal shade features cutouts of armed soldiers parading around the room among the shade's stars. Part glitterball, part traditional lamp, part baby's nightlight, it economically conveys the encroachment of violent figures into the real and imagined spaces of childhood: the cot, the nightlight, the fairytale, bedtime dreams. And where else but a nightmare (or an undiscovered Kafka novel) might we find a human-size cheese grater (2002's *Grater Divide*), and who would operate such a thing? Moving on, we can sit at a table for dinner, only to find that on the plate in front of us is a video screen displaying a horrendously visceral endoscopic trip down the throat into the artist's intestines (*Deep Throat*, 1996).

For all these gestures towards fear and unsettlement, however, the best and strangest work here is still Hatoum's video *Measures of Distance* (1988), images of her mother naked in the shower superimposed with lines from correspondence her mother has written; the Arabic script as sharp as barbed wire. As Hatoum reads out, in English, these letters from Beirut (which she fled during the civil war; her mother stayed), the family drama between mother, father and daughter, including the struggle for ownership of these very images, is revealed, the translation and jump between languages accentuating their estrangement from one another.

Recent works, such as *Bunker* (2011), milled steel tubes arranged so that they look like ravaged housing blocks, or *Kapan* (2012), metal, body-size cage structures accompanied by blown red glass shapes resembling lungs and stomachs that sit at the bottom of their cages, frequently look smart and communicate their messages cleanly. But perhaps too cleanly. They settle easily into the genre of political/minimal that has lately been marked out – in Klaus Biesenbach's *Political/Minimal* at Berlin's KW Institute for Contemporary Art in 2009, or in Jens Hoffmann and Adriano Pedrosa's 12th Istanbul Biennial – as a distinctive art-historical territory. But curatorial trends come and go. The problem with Hatoum's latest work is that, for all its emphasis on discomfort and the *unheimlich*, it looks as though it was always destined for a bright white gallery space such as this. In fact, here it looks quite at home.

LAURA MCLEAN-FERRIS



ANNANDALE-ON-HUDSON, NY

HAIM STEINBACH

HESSEL MUSEUM OF ART AND
CCS GALLERIES AT BARD COLLEGE •

June 22–December 20 • Curated
by Tom Eccles and Johanna Burton

Conspicuous in his absence from the generation-defining 1986 exhibition that catapulted Ashley Bickerton, Peter Halley, Jeff Koons, and Meyer Vaisman (forever after known as the Sonnabend Four) into the blue-chip empyrean, fifth wheel Haim Steinbach went from white-hot to “underrecognized” in the hiccup of a SoHo season. Twenty-seven years on, this bolt-from-the-blue survey, tracking the artist’s career from his grid-based paintings of the 1970s to today’s large-scale installations, means to lay that epithet to rest. Surely the artist’s signature Formica shelves displaying tidy rows of period-perfect product rank among the indelible tokens of their time. I, for one, cannot think of another artist whose output I would be greedier to assess with fresh eyes. *Travels to Kunsthalle Zürich, spring 2014.*

—Jack Bankowsky

Artforum
May 2013

LE QUOTIDIEN THE ART DAILY NEWS DE L'ART

Le quotidien de la **fiac!**



NUMÉRO 471 / JEUDI 24 OCTOBRE 2013 / WWW.LEQUOTIDIENDELART.COM / 2 euros

DES COLLECTIONNEURS ÉTRANGERS PLUS NOMBREUX À LA FIAC

PAR ROXANA AZIMI

« Il y a une tension avant la FIAC qui rappelle la cueillette des cépes en Corrèze », Jean-Jacques Allagon, conseiller de François Pinault, a de l'humour. Et il n'a pas totalement tort. Les truffiers étaient sur les rangs dès 9 heures hier matin. Suzanne Pagé et Béatrice Parent, de la Fondation Louis-Vuitton pour la création, ont sillonné les allées pendant au moins cinq heures. Retenu à l'étranger, François Pinault n'était pas au vernissage, mais ses conseillers, eux, veillaient au grain. La vitalité de la FIAC ne se limite pas au choc des titans. La galerie Clearing (New York, Bruxelles), qui consacrait ses murs à l'artiste d'origine thaïlandaise Korakrit Arunanondchal, offrait aussi un bon baromètre de l'électricité ambiante. Fraîchement diplômée de l'université de Columbia, cette jeune pousse a connu une razzia lors des deux expositions organisées par Clearing cette année à Bruxelles et New York. En un an, ses prix ont



Haim Steinbach, Solo show sur le stand de Laurent Godin.
© Marc Damage. Courtesy Galerie Laurent Godin, Paris.

A.R. PENCK

Les années 80

22 Oct. - 1 Déc. 2013

SUZANNE TARASIEVE PARIS

2, rue Pastourelle, F-75003 Paris • T : +33 (0)1 42 71 76 54 • M : +33 (0)6 79 15 47 85 • www.suzanne-tarasieve.com

LIBÉRATION JEUDI 24 OCTOBRE 2013

Jourde ramasse la «Pierre»

L'écrivain conspué par les habitants de son village pour avoir écrit «Pays perdu» analyse ce différend

LIBÉRATION JEUDI 24 OCTOBRE 2013

«UNTITLED» (HULK) HAIM STEINBACH, 2009

L'œuvre de Haim Steinbach évoque ce qui est au centre de la Première Pierre: la furie. Comme l'écrivain relate l'éclatement de la brutalité dans un espace a priori paisible, l'artiste confronte sur une étagère des objets anecdotiques, voire inapides, à Hulk, l'incarnation de la rage non maîtrisée. Les deux artistes révèlent ce qu'il en coûte à ceux qui défontent leurs attachements les plus symboliques.

SAMUEL GROSS

SPÉCIAL FIAC 2013



HAIM STEINBACH

IN THE STUDIO WITH STEEL STILLMAN

HAIM STEINBACH GAINED PROMINENCE in the 1980s, along with Robert Gober and Jeff Koons, for work that pushed the Duchampian assisted readymade into new territory. But unlike Gober (who had been Steinbach's student) or Koons, Steinbach has never fabricated his objects. He uses the real thing. Working with a diverse assortment of found items—from basketball sneakers, cereal boxes and lava lamps to antique toys, elephant-hoof stools and ancient pottery—Steinbach typically arranges his finds on wall-mounted, wedge-shaped plywood shelves, sheathed in plastic laminate, whose precise facture and refined color relationships recall works by Donald Judd. (Like Judd, Steinbach began his career as a painter.) But Steinbach also presents objects in wood boxes and in elaborate, room-filling installations that often include wall texts appropriated from magazine ads and other sources. To appreciate his work is to become an etymologist of things, reading the objects as if they were words, in order to uncover sources and resonances. A lava lamp, for example, is not just a '60s novelty object but a sleek modernist form and an invention with roots in Aladdin's lamp. In Steinbach's world, looking is a game of deciphering relationships: what are four lava lamps, six blinking digital clocks and a stack of nine red-enamel cooking pots doing together? There are no explicit narratives or easy answers. But there are always connections—associations of form, color, memory and meaning—that emerge from his surprising juxtapositions.

Steinbach was born in Rehovot, Israel, in 1944, and moved to the U.S. in 1957, when his family settled in New York. He received a BFA from the Pratt Institute in 1968 and an MFA from Yale in 1973. Since the 1980s his work has been both remarkably consistent and surprisingly multifarious. He is still producing wedge-shelf and box pieces, but, unbeknownst to many in this country, he has also created dozens of tremendously varied large-scale installations. Steinbach's work has

been featured in over 80 solo shows and hundreds of group exhibitions worldwide—including Documenta 9, in Kassel, in 1992, and the 47th Venice Biennale, in 1997—but for the past two decades has been more visible in Europe than in the U.S. Yet that may be changing. As of last year, he has a second New York gallery; having been on Sonnabend's roster since 1986, he is now also being represented by Tanya Bonakdar. Steinbach has taught for much of his career, most recently at the University of California, San Diego, from which he retired last year. In addition, his work with found objects has inspired legions of younger artists, including Carol Bove, Rachel Harrison and Matt Keegan.

Steinbach has lived and worked in Brooklyn since 1982, in a large, airy loft that he shares with his partner, the photographer Gwen Smith, and their seven-year-old son. We talked in his studio at the end of October about the development of his work and about his just-closed solo exhibition, "creature," at Bonakdar. This year, his work will be featured in the traveling museum show "This Will Have Been: Art, Love & Politics in the 1980s," and in solo shows at Galerie Laurent Godin in Paris (April) and Galleria Lia Rumma in Milan (September).

STEEL STILLMAN What was it like to come to the U.S. as a teenager?

HAIM STEINBACH I'd had a happy childhood in Israel, surrounded by a large, close-knit family, so coming here meant losing my community, and I felt that absence very much. But, at the same time, coming to America was an eye-opening adventure. Having grown up in the '40s and '50s on the outskirts of Tel Aviv, I suddenly found myself living in a 17-story apartment building in the Bronx and taking subways to get around. Space and time opened up, and I developed a new sense of my own identity.

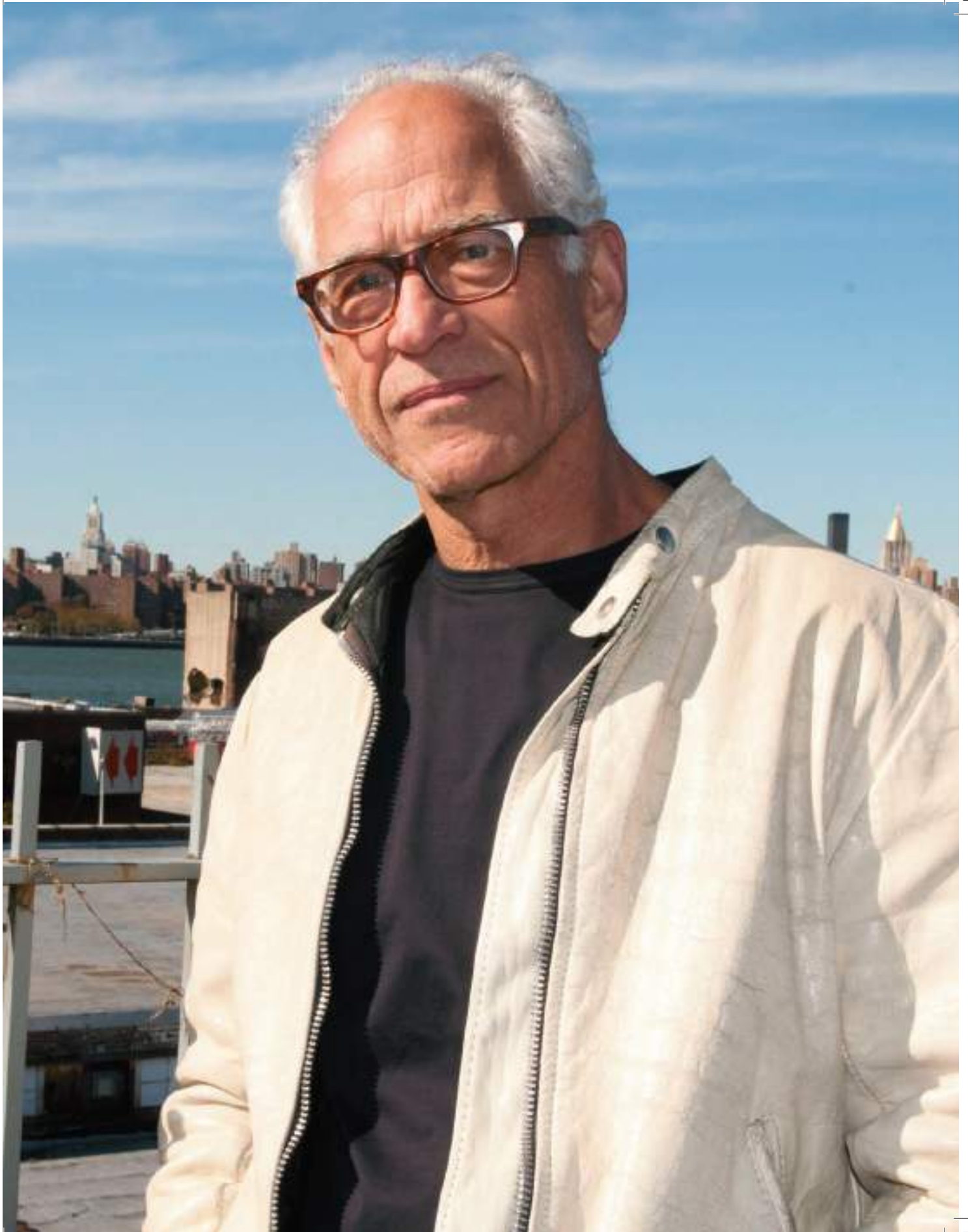
STILLMAN Were you already interested in art?

STEINBACH I'd wanted to be an artist since childhood, but in New York my learning curve accelerated. I attended the School of Industrial Art [now called the High School of Art and Design], which was then located a few blocks from the Museum of Modern Art, and I spent hours standing in front of the Picassos, Matisses and Mondrians, absorbing

Opposite, Haim Steinbach on the roof of his studio building in Brooklyn, 2011. Photo Paola Ferrario.

COMING SOON

Steinbach will be included in "This Will Have Been: Art, Love & Politics in the 1980s" at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, Feb. 11-June 3, traveling to the Walker Art Center, June 30-Sept. 30, and the Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston, Oct. 26, 2012-Jan. 27, 2013.





“WHAT DIFFERENCE IS THERE BETWEEN AN ART SETTING AND A DOMESTIC ONE? DON'T THEY BOTH INVOLVE EXHIBITION?”

everything I could. Then I had a great first year at Pratt, with excellent teachers, including Robert Slutsky, a former student of Albers, who taught a color class. But my second year at Pratt was less interesting. So, in the summer of 1965, I took a year off and flew to Europe, and eventually wound up in Aix-en-Provence. There, I took courses in existentialism and the nouveau roman and worked on my painting. Cézanne was one of the reasons I'd gone to Aix; I even painted a few studies of Mont Sainte-Victoire. In those early years, I was teaching myself about the modernist masters, not so much by reading but by analyzing them on my own.

STILLMAN Back in the U.S., you then spent the late '60s and early '70s, including two years at Yale, finding your way into Minimal and Conceptual art.

STEINBACH I was moving from the picture plane to the object. I began to think of my paintings as chessboards on which visual elements could be distributed to construct a game. By 1976, I was working on unpainted square particleboards, arranging black geometric shapes along the perimeters almost as though they were pieces on a Monopoly board.

STILLMAN What prompted you to introduce found objects into your work?

STEINBACH Challenged by Conceptual art, Minimalism and, of course, Duchamp, I'd been trying since the late '60s to understand art's relationship to its context. Then, during the early '70s, when I was living with my then wife, the artist Nancy Shaver, her remarkable sensitivity to objects affected me deeply. She was always going to flea markets and yard sales and coming back with the most surprising things. Often I didn't much



like what she found, but my reactions made me question my esthetic inclinations. After a while, I began to arrange some of the things she brought in. Among the first were three small plastic toys—a Snoopy, a baseball player and a locomotive. I made a narrow shelf out of two foot-long lengths of one-by-two-inch lumber and put these objects on it. The result, I realized, was a relief sculpture.

STILLMAN In 1979 you did an installation at Artists Space, in New York, using everyday objects borrowed from friends. You seemed to be testing the border between art and domestic life.

STEINBACH Exactly. I was investigating how context influences the meaning of objects. What difference is there between an art setting and a domestic one? Don't they both involve exhibition? And aren't the objects being presented, in either case, loaded with significance? For *Display #7*, I staged a room, incorporating features of Artists Space's architecture and adding wallpaper, furniture, plants, shelves and even music. The shelves held functional objects, and nothing was screwed in

place—as in everyday life, items could be removed and replaced by others.

STILLMAN You created a series of handmade shelves in the early '80s. How did they come about?

STEINBACH The shelves at Artists Space were generic wood plank and metal bracket ones, and yet they still had their own identity, a specific and familiar presence. I wanted to see what would happen if my shelves took on other identities. I tried to imitate various styles—modern or Baroque, say—by cobbling together scraps of material in a bricolage manner. In one instance, *Shelf with Coach* [1983], I took a toy-size metal replica of an 18th-century carriage and built a shelf for it. Using a jigsaw, I cut up some used two-by-fours and an ornate, gold-painted wooden sconce that I'd found in a Dumpster, and rearranged the pieces to support a platform, aware that the carriage's design would echo the rococo motifs of the cut-up wall sconce.

STILLMAN The bricolage shelves still feel very contemporary. Why did you move on?

STEINBACH I wanted to use more objects; there was only room for one on each of the bricolage shelves. I wanted

Opposite, Steinbach: *Shelf with Coach*, 1983, wood, paint and ornamental fragments with metal coach model, 33 by 20 by 15 inches. Courtesy the artist.

Above, view of Steinbach's studio. Photo Paola Ferrario.

“WE ARE ALL COLLECTORS; IT’S PART OF OUR NATURE. AND WE LIVE IN A SOCIETY IN WHICH SHOPPING IS A FORM OF COLLECTING.”

to make a shelf that functioned like the staves of a musical score—a device, in other words, that would enable several objects to be seen, measured and reflected on in relation to one another. Experimenting with plywood and a table saw, I quickly came up with the triangular shape and the proportions I still use—of 90-, 50- and 40-degree angles. I made the first one out of raw plywood and put a pair of stainless steel teakettles on top, but I soon began covering the wood with plastic laminate skins. I tend to think of the wedge-shelf works in relation to language: each object is like a word, complete with its own history and meanings; and when you put four or five objects together you make a sentence, a kind of interdisciplinary space, in which things from many contexts flow into one another and develop new relationships. Objects have meaning and memory embedded in them. That is what Proust’s madeleine was all about; for him it wasn’t just a pastry, but a means to connect the ordinary to the extraordinary.

STILLMAN When your work emerged in the mid- to late ’80s, some critics dismissed it as commodity art.

STEINBACH My work always refers to a human presence. The objects I employ all have specific identities, derived as much from the needs and desires that produced them as from the uses and meanings they’ve accumulated over time. There was considerable debate in the ’80s art world about the mass production of objects and images—and my work was part of that debate—but I never thought of myself as making art about commodities. My interests were broader than that: I was responding to people like Smithson, Kosuth and Sherrie Levine.

STILLMAN What is your work process like? Do you think of yourself as a collector?

STEINBACH We are all collectors; it’s part of our nature. And we live in a society in which shopping is a form of collecting. But I don’t specialize

in particular categories of objects. My process is all about looking and about maintaining a certain detachment. Being almost indifferent gives me the freedom to consider anything worthy of attention. At times, my sensibility even operates in reverse: I’ll stop and wonder why I chose *not* to look at something. What if I looked at it? Who would want it? Much of what I do in the studio involves moving objects around and taking note of the relationships between them. At best, my approach is a bit like child’s play, and embraces incongruity and chance. I place objects on the floor and try to capture the moments of unanticipated meaning that arise in the play between sense and nonsense.

STILLMAN Since your 1979 Artists Space show, you’ve done many installations using other people’s objects. I’d like you to describe “North East South West,” which opened in Berlin in 2000.

STEINBACH A decade after the fall of the Berlin Wall, I was invited to do an exhibition at the Neuer Berliner Kunstverein. In preparation, I arranged to meet a number of people, of different ages and social backgrounds, from what had been East and West Berlin, to talk about their objects. I went to their apartments with a video camera and, with their help, selected an arrangement of items to discuss, with the idea that I would borrow the objects for the show. I focused the camera on an arrangement, and, while it recorded, I asked my hosts about the objects’ histories, and why they were displayed where they were, and in that configuration. The resulting videotapes—each a still life with its owner’s voice, my questions edited out—were displayed on separate monitors around the periphery of a gallery at the Kunstverein. I filled the main part of the gallery with construction scaffolding, configuring it to guide viewers through the space and to support glass panels, used as shelves, which were placed at various heights. The borrowed arrangements were each given a shelf, and viewers encountered them from multiple perspectives. The scaffolding became an architectural habitat, and the instal-



View of *Display #55A—North East South West*, 2000, steel scaffolding, glass panels, objects from Berlin residents’ homes, video monitors with interviews of the objects’ owners; at the Neuer Berliner Kunstverein. Courtesy the artist.



Right, *the roots*, 2011, plastic laminated wood shelf, plastic pipe fittings, plastic Darth Vader figure, wood figurine, wood root, rubber dog chew, 43 by 134 $\frac{3}{4}$ by 20 inches.

Below, *dancer with raised right foot*, 2011, wood, plastic laminate and glass box, wood stool, painted bonded bronze Degas statuette, 52 by 56 by 25 $\frac{5}{8}$ inches.

All photos this article, unless otherwise noted, courtesy Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York.

lation a kind of gridded X-ray of the city; walls became transparent and groups of objects interacted with one another.

STILLMAN Though you've been making the wedge-shelf sculptures for more than 25 years, your choice of objects has lately taken a pronounced figurative turn. Let's talk about that shift in relation to your show "creature" at Tanya Bonakdar Gallery.

STEINBACH A good deal of my earlier work employed objects related to still life, but in the past decade I've become interested in figurative objects because they are more animate. They represent us and encourage our projections. The piece that convinced me to make an entire exhibition about figures was *mr. peanut* [2008], which I made a few years ago, incorporating a folk art representation of the Planters mascot that I'd bought from the antiques store that



Nancy owns, in Hudson, N.Y. As I assembled the work for "creature," I wanted *mr. peanut* near the entrance, standing there with his cane like a circus barker, inviting viewers in.

STILLMAN Of the new shelf sculptures, one of my favorites is *the roots* [2011].

STEINBACH *The roots* consists of objects that came together over a period of months, laid out on a three-part red, green and black shelf. Moving left to right, it begins with two black plastic pipe fittings—like giant Lego connectors—which I stumbled upon at Home Depot. The next three objects—Darth Vader, a hand-carved wooden man with a backpack, and a bulbous growth from a tree—all came from dif-



“A GOOD DEAL OF MY EARLIER WORK EMPLOYED OBJECTS RELATED TO STILL LIFE, BUT IN THE PAST DECADE I’VE BECOME INTERESTED IN FIGURATIVE OBJECTS BECAUSE THEY ARE MORE ANIMATE.”

ferent vendors at the San Diego flea market and were found on the same day in the order in which they appear, almost as though one thing led to the next. The final object is a small black rubber dog chew, an item I discovered about five years ago that has since become a recurring motif, and perhaps a kind of punctuation.

STILLMAN How did you decide on its title?

STEINBACH The title came afterward, culled from a list I keep of words or phrases that I’ve found in the newspaper or overheard. *The roots* is named after a band that Gwen is fond of, but the suggestion of origins is what made the title fit. I usu-

ally think of a title as another object added to the shelf, and I’ve made it a practice to put found ones in lower case, to avoid their being read as grand signifying gestures.

STILLMAN In addition to shelves, “creature” included boxes and wall texts. In two instances you displayed Degas figurines on antique stools inside glass-fronted wall boxes. What does a box offer as a mode of presentation that a shelf doesn’t?

STEINBACH Objects on a shelf can be moved, while placing them behind glass encases and protects them. And with a box, the viewer becomes part of the piece because the glass is naturally reflective. The Degas figures are copies

of bronze sculptures. We were using the stools in our living space when I decided to put them together with the figures. I’d often stood on one of the stools to open a window, and I eventually made the link between the dancers and my own body. Placed on glass shelves, a few inches from the bottom of each box, the arrangements appear to defy gravity, with their shadows adding further dimension.

STILLMAN Upstairs at Bonakdar, you created a mazelike installation that incorporated at least one dramatic surprise: perched on a chest-high, white horizontal beam in the larger exhibition space was a bright green, 2-foot-tall replica of the amphibi-



Left, view of the exhibition "creature," 2011, at Tanya Bonakdar Gallery.

Opposite, detail of the installation *creature*, 2011, vinyl "Creature from the Black Lagoon" figurine, wallboard beam, triangular wallboard incline, oblique wall and painted metal gate valve. Photos this spread Jean Vong.

ous monster from the 1954 movie *Creature from the Black Lagoon*.

STEINBACH To get upstairs you climb a narrow staircase that takes three right-angle turns. I continued that twisting movement and reconfigured the second-floor spaces to be a bit like a walk-through triangular shelf, with viewers becoming part of the arrangement. So I constructed a set of angled walls—two were covered in wallpaper—that became obstacles and partly obscured the entrances to the upstairs rooms. The larger room required a special solution because of its big, cagelike skylight—something that could stand up to the architectural play between inside and outside. As I thought of outdoor figures, I recalled the creature, whom I'd first spotted last year at the Manhattan store Forbidden Planet. Once I'd settled on the creature, images of its mysterious black lagoon became mixed in my mind with the clean white gallery space. I kept thinking about water. Then one day I noticed the gate valve under the sink in the bathroom here—it controls the flow of water into our loft—and I decided to replicate it on the wall facing the creature. I wanted to bring the

creature's element into the exhibition space—and to connect it with the air and sky brought in by the skylight. Hardly anyone noticed the gate valve, nestled in its circular cut in the gallery wall at ankle height, but that made it all the more interesting to me, as though it were a secret, or something repressed.

STILLMAN In the smaller room upstairs, you installed an appropriated wall text that you've used in other exhibitions, which reads: "You don't see it, do you?" What don't we see?

STEINBACH We don't see the connections—between objects, pattern, space, hardware, architecture and language. We don't see the gate valve or the cultural surface that the white walls represent. In the hallway upstairs was a framed print, on pale green wallpaper, whose text says: "I went looking for peaches and came back with a pair." My work is about the all-too-frequent disconnect between looking and seeing, between being aware that something is there and knowing what it means.

STILLMAN Speaking of connections, the creature reminds me of Yoda, another alien you've used in your work

and whose mask you've donned in photographs. Is the creature a self-portrait?

STEINBACH I wasn't consciously thinking about Yoda, but their characters are distantly related. And I, like them, am an outsider. Though English is now my primary language, it is not my original one. When we make art we tap into unconscious experiences that have powerfully affected us, which we reconstruct in stories, images or spaces. In the end, my work is not just about objects; it's about the remaking of a space. When I was three or four my mother would occasionally let my younger brother and me play with a beautiful doll, kept from her childhood, that had a ceramic head, blond braids and big glass eyes that opened and closed. One day we were playing with the doll on the edge of a table when she fell and smashed her head. I remember my mother being very upset. But there wasn't any discussion about it, and we never saw the doll again. It now occurs to me that the creature might be a

stand-in for the doll—he is about the same size. And there he was in the gallery, balancing on that ledge, ready to fall off or jump. ○

STEEL SILLMAN is an artist and writer based in New York.





Haim Steinbach

Courtesy Galerie Laurent Godin

Haim Steinbach Navy legacy

Dans 2 jours : 14 avril → 26 mai 2012

Navy legacy évoque les images du vaste plan bleu de l'océan et de vaisseaux carénés traversant ces surfaces. On entend par héritage ce qui est légué par un prédécesseur, ce qui continue à prévaloir, qu'il s'agisse d'objet, d'idée originale ou de vision. Cela peut concerner aussi bien l'immatériel que le matériel devenu obsolète mais difficile à remplacer parce que d'un usage répandu. Steinbach fait aussi référence à l'histoire de l'art et attribue de nouveaux rôles à une série d'objets.

Dès son entrée dans l'exposition, le spectateur est confronté à une intervention architecturale : une cloison inclinée fend le long couloir de la galerie. Cette œuvre in-situ

marque l'entrée en scène d'une suite d'effets et de thèmes, tels que la métonymie, le corps, le récit, qui interagissent dans une réaction en chaîne tout au long de navy legacy.

La cloison inclinée crée un espace triangulaire sous lequel le visiteur doit passer pour accéder à l'exposition. Cette entrée triangulaire fait écho à la section des sculptures-étagères caractéristiques de Steinbach. Ces œuvres iconiques sont un élément central de sa pratique : l'étagère structurante sert à la fois de support et de scène pour les objets quotidiens choisis par l'artiste. Les compositions de Steinbach, à la fois en accord et en tension l'une avec l'autre, révèlent la nature performative inhérente aux objets. Subtilement, le spectateur est amené à devenir un acteur, de même que les objets dans les sculptures de Steinbach.

A côté de la cloison inclinée, une étagère présente deux objets : un cube de verre abritant plusieurs fruits en papier mâché et un vieil appuie-tête chinois en bois. Les thèmes de l'exotique et de l'organique commencent ainsi à prendre forme. En face, un texte mural agrandi, en fait un objet trouvé, "No Elephants" (interdit aux éléphants) saute aux yeux. Cette œuvre textuelle est placée à proximité d'une énorme sphère grossièrement taillée qui occupe la presque totalité de la salle. En relation avec le texte mural, cette monumentale sphère organique pourrait matérialiser l'expression "An elephant in the room".

La sphère est également riche d'autres possibles allusions. Le mythe de Sisyphe et la forme des planètes viennent à l'esprit. Face à la sphère, une étagère jaune forsythia particulièrement allongée, présente des objets qui rappellent formellement la sphère : sept boules de bocce et une figurine de Hulk dont les poings ronds sont prêts à l'action. Les boules de bocce ainsi que Hulk renvoient à des jeux aussi bien d'adultes que d'enfants : l'identification à Hulk, le désir de devenir plus grand, et la pérennité des jeux d'enfants à travers les loisirs des adultes. De même que les plus jeunes se projettent dans les jouets miniatures, l'important changement d'échelle réaffirme l'intérêt qu'a Steinbach pour l'inconscient, la mémoire, et l'imagination contenus dans les objets du quotidien.

Au bout du couloir, une des boîtes en verre de Steinbach abrite un seul objet : un jouet en lego. Ce jouet "hyper design", à l'évidence un véhicule guerrier, mais dont on ne peut déterminer la fonction exacte, invite peut-être à lire la sphère comme une force, voire un boulet de canon. Reste que le mouvement potentiel de la sphère est bloqué par les murs de galerie. L'incertitude qui continue de la sorte à flotter accentue l'interprétation première d'une constellation ludique d'objets.

Dans le bureau de la galerie, un papier peint photo-réaliste de jungle fait face à la banque d'accueil. Encastré à la base du mur se trouve une œuvre intitulée "Gate Valve" (vanne à opercule). Cet appareil sert à contrôler un écoulement, il rappelle que l'eau est un volume et révèle des espaces cachés à l'intérieur d'une architecture souvent inaperçue. Dialoguant avec cette œuvre, son alter ego se trouve en face sur le bureau de la galerie : "Prototype for a Gate Valve". Le prototype en question est une maquette miniature de vertèbres de mastodonte posée sous une cloche de verre. Contredisant les fonctions du bureau, la cloche de verre évoque des modalités d'exposition ancienne comme on en trouvait dans les cabinets du curiosité. La taille des interventions in situ et les œuvres autonomes de cette exposition suggèrent un ensemble de connections au temps, à l'artifice, au comportement humain et aux espaces innombrables du corporel.

Vernissage Vendredi 13 avril 18:00 → 21:00

The New York Times Reprints

This copy is for your personal, noncommercial use only. You can order presentation-ready copies for distribution to your colleagues, clients or customers [here](#) or use the "Reprints" tool that appears next to any article. Visit www.nytreprints.com for samples and additional information. [Order a reprint of this article now.](#)



September 22, 2011

Haim Steinbach: 'creature'

By **ROBERTA SMITH**

Tanya Bonakdar Gallery

521 West 21st Street, Chelsea

Through Oct. 22

The creature in the title of Haim Steinbach's latest solo show in a New York gallery is a large, scaly green vinyl toy based on "The Creature From the Black Lagoon." It sits on a boxy white column running at eye level across a gallery in which one corner is truncated by a large triangular plane, also white. The combination is definitely striking: a Haim Steinbach ready-made set in a ghostly rendition of Robert Morris's gray Minimalist sculptures from the mid-1960s.

Ready-mades, Minimalism, modes of display and the putative aura of art objects have preoccupied Mr. Steinbach since sometime in the late 1970s, before Neo-Geo, the late 1980s art trend with which he was associated, came and went. Elsewhere in the show, two works each present a bronze museum-shop copy of a Degas bronze of a bather in a plywood box reminiscent of Donald Judd. Judd's art also inspired the wedge-like shelves, laminated with monochrome plastic, that have been Mr. Steinbach's signature element for more than two decades.

Here, his latest shelf pieces remind us that Mr. Steinbach was an early practitioner of the unattached assemblage and art by arrangement that is something of a rage these days. But he is and always has been just as much a formalist, as interested in elevating the overlooked as in deflating art's special status, and always with utmost precision. In a recent shelf piece, "western hills," Mr. Steinbach devises an intricate exchange about color, patriotism, machismo and violence among three chunky forms: a ceramic cookie jar in the shape of a red-bearded sheriff, an aluminum garbage can made in the United States (and gleamingly proud of it) and a child's stacking toy involving colored rings. On a bright blue shelf, "Robot Poetry" contrasts several small black rubber toys, including an elegantly bulbous dog chew, with two larger store-bought objects in white plastic: a Shogun Stormtrooper from "Star Wars" and a bonsai tree possibly inspired by the cartoonish simplifications of the Japanese artist Yoshitomo Nara.

The show also includes several installation works involving wallpaper and language that hark back to Mr. Steinbach's installations from the late 1970s. But his most forceful efforts involve objects and reflect finely honed skills that combine aspects of curator, window-dresser and eagle-eyed shopper. This is especially apparent in the folk art sculptures of Mr. Peanut and a mermaid featured in two other shelf pieces. Mr. Steinbach's objects made of objects have always given us more to look at and think about than his ostensible cultural critiques would lead you to expect.

Creature: An Interview With Haim Steinbach

by Paddy Johnson on November 3, 2011



Haim Steinbach, Creature

What do you say to a guy who's most frequently described as the artist who "radically redefined the status of the object in art"? I don't usually get nervous about biography points like this, but I made an exception for Haim Steinbach. Unlike a lot of art, there's no answer key to his angular shelves and arrangement of objects – and that can make a viewer nervous. Certainly, it affected me; it took two anxiety-filled weeks just to produce a 700-word review on his show at Tanya Bonakdar Gallery last month, and I still worry about whether I got it right.

Steinbach himself, though, isn't quite so intimidating. Now 67, the New York-based artist seems just as interested in the door hinge next to him as he might be about any given conversation. He's obsessed with objects in the world around him. Recently, we talked about how that intense focus informs his work and thinking.

STEINBACH ON HIERARCHICAL PERCEPTION:

All objects are mysteries. They have things to reveal that we do not tap into because we usually decide what they are beforehand. This is the way we feel confident and in control of the world. But the idea of non-hierarchy basically allows me to take in anything I want to and ask myself, "What are my possibilities here for some remarkable experiences and enjoyments and appreciation and ideas?" It doesn't matter then if it's a Brancusi at MoMA or a Titian at the Met or a plug in the wall.



Haim Steinbach, "Gate Valve", 2011

I did make a prototype for a gate valve – a very important fixture that is essential to life and survival but, as with all objects that are designed, it also has an aesthetic value. All objects are beautiful to look at, and if you fix your attention, you may discover that they're as fascinating as any artwork. Like, this is a sculpture [gestures at a door hinge]. It's a relief sculpture that comes out of the wall. We ignore it because we know it's a hinge on the door, and that's all it is, but it's such a remarkable object. It casts a beautiful shadow, this beautiful parallelogram. It's as beautiful as this guy over there, *The Creature* (points to artwork.). It's just another creature.

STEINBACH ON SHELVES

There was an evolution with [my earlier prefabricated] shelves, because if you're buying a pair of brackets in the department or hardware store, attach them to the wall and place a board on top, well, you have a shelf and it has a presence. It has an identity. So the shelf itself is a frame. What happened is that at a certain point, I began to make my own hand made shelves for the objects, and was saying to myself, "Even the shelf with the brackets on the wall is like a new sculpture."

I began by making a bricolage shelf, because I didn't want to make something fancy or over work it. I would just try to find different scraps of materials; pieces of wood, even branches. It became really a relief sculpture of sorts, but it also had its horizontal platform on top.

Some of the shelves I made were imitating a Minimal Judd kind of thing. But they were all kind of semi rough and fast. They used to be like sketches....[Later], I came up with the triangular wedge shelf. I tried to construct something using a table saw and that may be built by anyone having the skill. I wanted to make something that functions like a device, as for instance a musical instrument, and that structures the way that objects are placed as a means of measuring, ordering, seeing and reflecting on the relation of objects.



Haim Steinbach, "Robot Poetry", 2011, Plastic laminated wood shelf; large black rubber dog chew; small black rubber dog chew; small green and white rubber dog chew; vinyl "Nemo Haremungous" figure; plastic "Super Shogun Stormtrooper"; plastic bonsai 46 x 99 1/4 x 19 inches

STEINBACH ON EBAY

HS: eBay is this collective of non-hierarchy where you can access anything you want at any time. You're not going to be more prejudiced and say, "I'm not going to look for this because that's low. It's low art. It's not important, it's not worth my time. I'm going to go to the Artnet, and look at great art. I'm going to look at this, because I have values and standards. Why waste an hour looking for all kinds of stupid stuff on eBay?" But what if you let yourself just go for a few hours and look at the stupid stuff that shows up there? What do you make out of that? What do you find? What do you learn?

HS: I know artists who are constantly on eBay collecting images for their work. I do very little of that. I'm on eBay all the time: I'm on it when I walk down the street and bump into a rock on the ground. I look at it and I say, "What is it? Why is it here? What kind of rock is it?" There's this instant awareness when you hit something, you realize that you're living in a picture world – eBay and the computer is already in your mind, and you're ahead.

PJ: You know, a while back I asked an artist friend how he looks when he's searching for material on the web. And he said [paraphrasing], "When you read a newspaper, you're looking at the column of the text. If you're browsing in a context, in an art context, you're looking at everything. You're not just looking at the object. You're looking at how everything is placed in the browser. You're looking at everything in the screen." And I wonder whether there's some similarity between that process and the process of walking down the street and looking at everything and looking at it without hierarchical concerns. They sound sort of similar to me.

HS: Well, here's the difference. To preserve ourselves, it's our nature to look at things with hierarchical concerns, whether those are based on belief and religion, or on language that we brought, or on whether we are literate or illiterate. The tools that we have control the way that we engage the world. We all have internal

restrictions that are already part of us, and they make us focus on certain things in a world where you can see everything.



Haim Steinbach, "Western Hills", 2011 Plastic laminated wood shelf; ceramic cookie jar; aluminum garbage can; wooden stacking toy 41 x 21 1/2 x 62 1/4 inches

STEINBACH ON THE INTERNET

The Internet of course is a venue that we didn't have back in the 60s. We now live in a world where we are seeing much more and having many more open doors than in the past. We have access to all of this information and it really has our minds going at a much greater speed. There are many more things taken in and spat out. It's a kind of democratization, you could say. This is a great liberation, it allows people to have unexpected opportunities to communicate.. But it also brings problems with it. For me, there's something important about encountering an object or an event in real time, in real space.

STEINBACH ON BEING CONDITIONED

A child's toy is not just a toy – it's a device. It's not just a cylindrical kind of pyramid with beautiful colors and sections. It is a device through which the child is internalizing a system that we invented. The toy talks about geometry and measurements before it's explained in a geometry class. We are not growing in the jungle, under banana leaves. We are growing in geometrical homes, and relating to those kinds of spaces, which are reflecting themselves in those toys.

This page: Haim Steinbach, *matter grey*, 2005, metal ducts, rocks, and rubber dog chews on plastic-laminated wooden shelf, 32 x 98 1/2 x 10". Opposite page, clockwise from top left: Haim Steinbach, *the refuge people*, 2007, rubber dog chews, plastic and metal toolboxes, hair toys, and concrete bricks on plastic-laminated wooden shelf, 29 1/2 x 74 x 20"; Haim Steinbach, *inter pekt*, 2007, rubber dog chews, electronic foam and rubber "Hulk" bars, and plastic purple balls on plastic-laminated wooden shelf, 54 1/2 x 71 x 19"; Haim Steinbach, *avalanche long I-L*, 1990-2005, leather medicine ball and rubber dog chews on plastic-laminated wooden shelf, 29 1/2 x 47 x 10"; Haim Steinbach, *feed loop*, 2007, rubber dog chews and Froot Loops cereal, boom on plastic-laminated wooden shelf, 28 1/2 x 62 x 13 1/2".



BEST OF 2007

Haim Steinbach

Sonnabend Gallery, New York

BRUCE HAINLEY

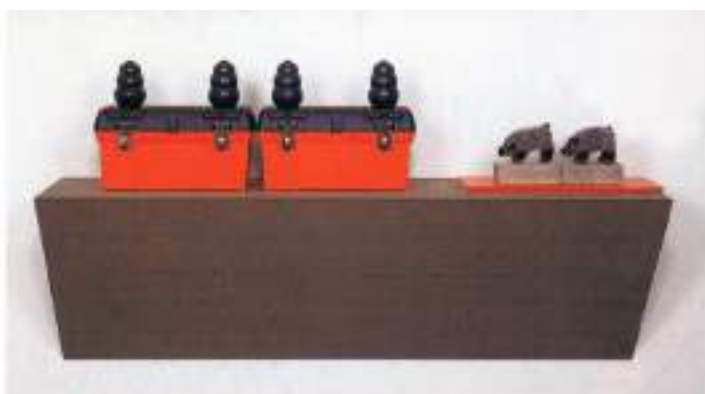
A BLACK RUBBER DOG TOY is a key component of all but one piece on view in Haim Steinbach's most recent show, held at Sonnabend Gallery, his first New York solo exhibition in a decade. Brand-named Kong, the bulbous, three-tiered chew operates as a sign of punctuation marking the syntactical phrasing of objects, all the while looking like a sinus-clearing butt plug. Steinbach has said that the thing's shape evokes a Brancusi. With the matte sheen of plastique, the toy also evokes a grenade.

According to the Kong website, Joe Markham founded the company in 1976, after finding a way to keep his German shepherd, Fritz, from gnawing on rocks, which were destroying the dog's teeth. One day, or so the story goes, Markham was repairing a Volkswagen van, throwing the parts near Fritz "to see if he could be coaxed away from his destructive dinner. Radiator hoses didn't work—neither did anything else until [Markham] pulled off a suspension part." The historical and social, not to mention fictive (given the oddity of the promotional tale), context of objects—their specificity and erotic valence, the

resonance of their names as well as what they are and how they appear—is never irrelevant in considering Steinbach's work. Perhaps it's our blithely ongoing militarized state in combination with the creeping Germanicity of the gewgaw's corporate fundamentals, or the knowledge that the artist deploys the Kong model known as "Extreme," which the company advertises as "now being used worldwide by police K-9, drug enforcement, and military K-9 teams," that lycanthropizes the innocuous into the ominous: Steinbach's sculptures provide an opportunity to consider what might be called the unconscious of objects.

In *matter grey*, 2005, two Kongs center—as if double colons—an analogical situation contrasting two metal ducts and two rocks on an ash gray shelf, which looks buffed by sand and surf. While comparing the designed with the natural and connecting the metallic to the mineral through structural ore, the silvery shimmer of the hardware and the mottling of the stones transform the rubber into basalt or elegant Japanese ceramic. The effect is Malibu minimalism, *wasabi-sabi* and chic. Connoting a contemplative garden through material acuity, affect, and arrangement, it reaches satori in scare quotes. But even when scariness is offered in a Halloween mode (orange and black toolboxes on a black and orange shelf; pumpkin doormats next to alert yellow warning signs; Hulk fists and a ceramic jack-o'-lantern), the stuff displayed, as if obeying a martial law of playthings, compasses foreboding. The one piece without any Kongs at all pirs—on an astringent white shelf—two nasty toy rats gnawing on bloody surgical bandages against bricks stacked and ready to be hurled.

In one of the most attuned engagements with Steinbach's gray matter, artist Lisa Lapinski has written, "The logic of the shelves is clear. . . . The interior angles of Steinbach's shelves are constant, always 90, 50, and 40 degrees. The measure-



ments of the three sides of the triangular piece change to accommodate the objects. The formula never changes. The shelf works are fractions: the things in the world divided by the minimalist object.²⁶ No more but certainly no less important than the things he puts on them, Steinbach's shelves, with acerbic variations of surface, color, and partition, can summon the brash vulgarity of Wal-Mart just as easily as the solemnity of grave markers and reliquaries. The sexy leather affect of *everlast kong I-I* and its counterpart *everlast kong III-I*—each sculpture juxtaposing a black Everlast medicine ball with, respectively, a lone Kong or a trio of Kongs, on slick black shelves—sours into a meditation on health and life everlasting after the mesh wears off; seen in proximity to a piece titled *the village people*, 2007, when their dates of production, 1990–2006, are considered, they turn elegiac.

Steinbach documents our *Jetztzeit's* solace and vicious truths in things caught on the virgule of art. His greatest artistic predecessor is Joseph Cornell, who collected culture's penny-arcade castoffs to document the violence and perfumed drift of America's so-called postwar dream life. Certain Cornell arrangements—aviaries, shooting galleries—sometimes appear behind glass shattered as if by bullets, interiors splattered with sinister verisimilitude; one was dedicated to Dien Bien Phu. In his lepidopterological quest to net the exquisite moment, Cornell understood that fun was just a flutter away from the funereal; he was a scholar of still life who yearned to escape its death drive. Lapinski suggests that Steinbach's practice also relates to still life, but when he collects, his *natura morte* executes a brand-new *vanitas*.

Earlier this year, curator Bob Nickas delivered a bracing talk about artists who leave the art world or stop making art. After reading from Lee Lozano's writings and showing slides of work by Laurie Parsons, among others, he

concluded by saying that "the wrong artists stop making work" (i.e., the good ones—rather than the countless duds you sometimes wish would not just stop making things but disappear altogether). An unlikely corollary of that situation would be those artists shelved by the way their work has been received and dismissed—which has certainly been the case for Steinbach, historically speaking, most notably Benjamin H. D. Buchloh's attempts at reducing the work to "commodity sculpture" that undoes "not a single discursive frame" (a mealy-mouthed reiteration of which appears in *Art Since 1900*, that narrow history of art that fancies itself a responsible textbook). This is almost incomprehensible in a context where, say, Isa Genzken—no frenemy of shopping—is regularly championed. (A rowdy debate about the two artists could start with Genzken's statement that "with any sculpture you have to be able to say, although this is not a ready-made, it could be one. . . . It must have a certain relation to reality.") And it is tedious as a new generation of dutiful academics embrace artists, from Tom Barr to Rachel Harrison, indebted to Steinbach's usually overlooked (in the United States) critical model—but then, I grow sadly more convinced that it is in fact unchallenged modes of art history and critique that have lately petrified into sheer commodity, not undoing but rather bejeweling discursive frames of their own institutional aggrandizement. For such intellectual constipation, Steinbach now generously provides what I'm not sure if I should call the volatile supposition or suppository of a Kong.

Wittgenstein begins *Philosophical Investigations* by quoting Augustine's *Confessions* on the naming of objects. Steinbach pulls his quotations directly from the world; his confessions deranged in glorious 3-D approach the unnameable. □

BRUCE HANLEY IS A CONTRIBUTING EDITOR OF ARTFORUM.

horizontally, leaf through a book and stop at a few words that together make up a phrase that summarizes it, its "key". But the visual perfection they achieve, combined with the use of sound, makes these pieces as seductive as they are rigorous. Also worth noting is Michel Verjux's magnificent 2005 piece *Découpe sur socle et sol no. 1* (Profile on base and floor no. 1). In general, it's interesting to see recent work by certain artists already represented in the collection by older work. You can sense the collectors' attention and loyalty towards these artists, and the intelligent understanding of their work. This is the case with Daniel Buren and Carl Andre, whose work is thus recontextualized in relation to their oeuvre and to that of other artists as well. A delicate 1963 painting by Günter Rambow placed next to an Andre thus becomes a new discovery. The same thing happens with Claude Rutault's 1995 reworking of paintings from 1959-65, almost entirely covered over except for a small sample shown separately in a workbook, next to another piece showing a wall label covered with the same paint as the wall, entitled *Légendes* (Captions). Facing that, a first-class Bertrand Lavier, *Bleu ciel par Tollens et Ducolac* (Sky Blue by Tollens and Ducolac, 1988). It's a real pleasure to see Fred Sandback, Alan Charlton, Lawrence Weiner, John McCracken, Stanley Brouwn, Robert Barry and Ceal Floyer presented with such discernment, quite different from what you sometimes see in other venues. Word is that the Billarants would like to install their collection in an old industrial building not far from Paris.

Régis Durand
Translation, L-S Torgoff

(1) 6 Rue Bouvier, 75011 Paris. By appointment.

paris

Haim Steinbach

Galerie Laurent Godin
10 novembre 2007 - 5 janvier 2008

Haim Steinbach (1944, États-Unis) a été un des artistes majeurs des années 1960. Il se fait connaître en 1979 par une installation singulière à l'Artists Space de New York : il y présente, sur des étagères, des effets personnels appartenant à ses amis. Le recours à l'étagère comme élément d'exposition va devenir sa marque de fabrique. Celle-ci, simplement fichée au mur, est appelée à supporter divers objets de consommation que Steinbach place tels quels, comme autant

de ready-mades promus au rang d'objets-signes de qualité muséale, offrant matière à perplexité et méditation : qu'est-ce qu'un «objet» ? à quoi sert-il, et à qui ?, l'accentuation de la part esthétique de l'objet, que suscite inévitablement ce mode d'exposition de type display, a-t-elle le pouvoir d'évacuer le fonctionnalisme de ce dernier ? Haim Steinbach, de manière à la fois abrupte et raffinée, joue sur plusieurs tableaux. Il exploite la grammaire minimaliste (pureté des agencements), la nostalgie du pop art (préférence à l'objet roi et à la culture populaire), la ferveur de la critique sociologique de la société consumériste, encore, dont Jean Baudrillard est alors le gourou divinisé outre-Atlantique – l'objet comme signe, comme condensation du désir de possession et comme agent devenu majeur et déterminant de notre économie libidinale, dans une société désormais vouée à l'adoration des apparences, du simulateur et du shopping. Cette exposition parisienne restera comme une bonne surprise. Par l'exercice de mémoire à laquelle elle convie, d'abord – le travail d'Haim Steinbach, depuis plusieurs années, a connu une incontestable éclipse médiatique – effet de la mutation des préoccupations esthétiques et d'un recul sensible de l'intérêt pour l'art sociologique pur et dur. Ensuite, parce que l'artiste aurait pu, fidèle à sa «manière», reconduire celle-ci ne variant, ce à quoi il semble avoir, pour l'occasion, répugné. Deux étagères, de nouveau, étaient présentées là à l'attention du public, parfaitement dans la ligne des travaux antérieurs de l'artiste, ornées de plusieurs objets renvoyant à la culture de masse : une

citrouille d'Halloween, du matériel funéraire, des flasques décorées d'un masque hurlant connotant l'univers du Heavy Metal... Bien plus intéressante, cependant, s'est révélée cette autre proposition de l'artiste, à l'initié quelque peu énigmatique. Sans titre (*les treize cochons*), réellement spectaculaire et autrement suggestive, de type, cette fois, installation. Du plafond pendent, suspendus à des ficelles, treize jambons d'Auvergne. Leur ensemble fait l'effet d'un curieux pénétrable, évoquant à la fois Jesus Rafael Soto, Ernesto Neto et l'arte povera, Soto, parce que l'on peut se mouvoir sous et entre ces pièces de charcuterie qui évoquent tout à la fois la consommation alimentaire, la conservation, le stockage des denrées, le punching ball et le sac d'entraînement des boxeurs. Neto, parce que l'œuvre, outre par sa notoire charge plastique, se distingue encore par son odeur forte et ses vertus olfactives. Et l'arte povera, du fait de sa qualité organique – de la graisse, goutte à goutte, s'extrait de la viande, venant souiller le parterre de la galerie. Si l'on ajoute que cette pièce est coiffée, formant un crêpe de deuil, de peinture noire disposée à même les murs qui l'entourent, on sera tenté d'y déceler dans la foulée quelque inclination funèbre et morbide. Un paradoxe, assurément. D'un côté, on semble y exalter la bonne bouffe (l'idée de l'œuvre, soit dit en passant, est venue à l'artiste en déjeunant non loin de la galerie Laurent Godin, au restaurant l'Ambassade d'Auvergne). De l'autre, c'est la nausée qu'inspire bel et bien cette citation sibylline à l'aliment. Le tout à parts égales, sans qu'abstraction puisse être faite de

l'une ou l'autre des sollicitations mentales que suggère cette proposition décidément trop plastique pour n'être que conceptuelle, et à l'évidence trop organique pour n'être qu'une figure de style ou l'exposition d'une idée.

Voir les choses autrement. Les travers ce territoire d'indécision où la forme même de l'objet convoque tout un monde connexe, tapi derrière sa charge d'usage ou de fantasme. La force de l'art d'Haim Steinbach réside dans cette capacité à élargir jusqu'à la béance notre confrontation à ce que le réel recèle de plus ordinaire.

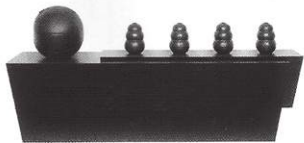
Paul Ardenna

As readers may not need to be reminded, the American Haim Steinbach (born 1944) was one of the major artists of the 1960s. His breakthrough moment came with an unusual installation at Artists Space, New York, in 1979. It consisted of shelves lined with the personal belongings of his friends. This use of shelving as an exhibition device would become his signature trope. Fixed to the wall, the shelving would support various consumer items laid out like readymades, like museum-quality semiological objects prompting perplexity and meditation on such questions as, "What is an object?" or "What is it used for and by whom?" and, "Can the emphasis on the object's aesthetic quality, inevitable when it is exhibited in this way, evacuate its functionality?" In a manner both abrupt and refined, Steinbach exploited several distinct registers.



Haim Steinbach, «Untitled (Thirteen Pigs)». 2007. Jambons d'Auvergne, peinture murale, corde. Pièce unique. Dimensions variables. *Auvergne ham, wall painting, rope. Dimensions variable*

À GAUCHE, HAIM STEINBACH
AU MILIEU DE SON INSTALLATION
« UNTITLED (THIRTEEN PIGS) »,
À LA GALERIE LAURENT GODIN,
À PARIS EN NOVEMBRE 2007.
CI-CONTRE, « EVERLAST
KONG IV-1 », 1990-2007.
EN BAS, « FRESH », 1989.



NÉ EN ISRAËL ET VIVANT À NEW YORK, HAIM STEINBACH A CHOISI PARIS POUR RÉALISER UNE INSTALLATION À PARTIR DE JAMBONS D'Auvergne. UNE PREMIÈRE « COMESTIBLE » POUR L'ARTISTE QUI MET L'OBJET AU CŒUR DE SON ŒUVRE.

TOTEMS & TABOUS

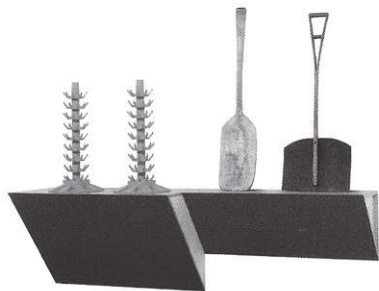
REPORTAGE DE THIBAUT MONTAMAT
PHOTOGRAPHE : KARINE PORRET

Novembre 2007, à la galerie Laurent Godin, à Paris. Dans la dernière salle, peinte en vert sombre pour l'occasion, sont accrochés au plafond treize jambons d'Auvergne. Chacun est suspendu au-dessus d'un petit tas de sable destiné à recueillir la graisse de la viande. C'est la toute première fois qu'Haim Steinbach utilise des objets comestibles pour ses travaux. Ces jambons sont restés deux mois dans ce lieu, à suivre leur évolution naturelle. Ce matin de novembre, quelques jours après l'ouverture de l'exposition au public, l'artiste d'origine israélienne ne se lasse pas de les scruter : « Quand on regarde ces jambons de tout près, on pense à de la géologie. Leur couleur est incroyable, comme s'ils avaient été peints. À la surface se forment comme des canyons, des rochers, des ravins. » Pourtant, s'ils sont considérés comme des objets de gourmandise (interdits pour cause de casherout), ces jambons sont aussi des corps morts. C'est surtout

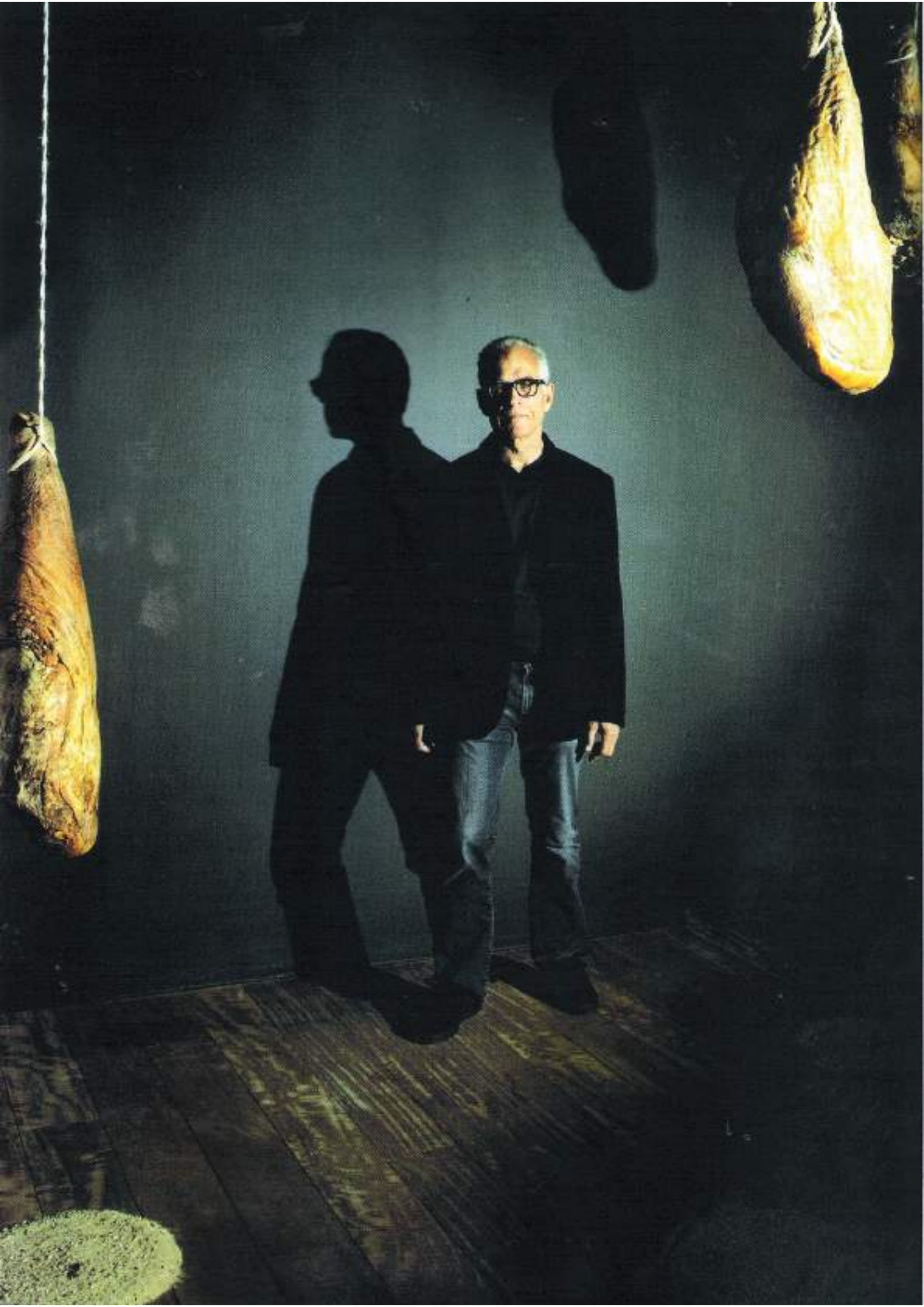
leur odeur qui surprend, à la fois alléchante et repoussante. Le soir du vernissage, l'artiste a fait venir spécialement de l'Ambassade d'Auvergne un éleveur de porcs, pour couper des tranches de jambon aux invités. L'événement a été vécu par tous comme une véritable performance : « Découper ainsi des tranches de jambon sert à nourrir les gens, mais cela inspire aussi l'imagination. C'est un rituel, comme l'est le vernissage d'une exposition. »

En présentant une œuvre périssable, consommable, Haim Steinbach questionne l'idée même de l'éternité dans l'art. Ce n'est qu'après avoir suspendu les jambons dans la galerie, qu'il s'est rappelé une loi religieuse permettant d'élever des porcs en Israël, à condition qu'ils ne soient pas en contact avec le sol, au moyen de plateformes sur pilotis par exemple. C'est l'un des sujets de prédilection de l'artiste : notre relation aux objets, la place que nous leur accordons dans notre société. « Chaque situation de vie présente une nouvelle opportunité. Ainsi, j'étais hier dans la maison d'une survivante de la Seconde Guerre mondiale, collectionneuse de reliques juives des XVII^e et XVIII^e siècles qui ressemblent à des petites tours en argent. Cette femme m'a commandé une œuvre. En parlant avec elle, j'ai appris que son père possédait autrefois une usine de jouets en plastique, cela m'a donné l'idée de réaliser des tours avec des Lego de toutes les couleurs, de jouer ainsi avec des nombres, avec des cubes, pour faire des séries, des répétitions, différentes configurations, à la façon de Sol LeWitt. »

Né en Israël en 1944, à Rehovot, Haim Steinbach s'est installé à New York avec sa famille alors qu'il n'avait que treize ans. Il y vit et y travaille toujours aujourd'hui. Il est également professeur d'art à l'Université de San Diego, en Californie. Quels conseils a-t-il l'habitude de donner à ses jeunes étudiants en art ? « Dites adieu à votre période rose et bleue, passez au cubisme. Si vous faites de la peinture, passez à la performance. Il faut se remettre en question continuellement. Lorsque l'on choisit d'être artiste, c'est comme si l'on choisissait de donner sa vie à Dieu. C'est un appel. On n'accepte pas les responsabilités données par la société. » Les prochaines œuvres d'Haim Steinbach seront exposées à Waddington Galleries, à Londres, en mai prochain. Il travaille également sur un livre, autour des objets, à paraître cette année aux éditions Onestar Press.



© Courtesy Galerie Laurent Godin Paris



Haim au pays des objets

par Nicolas Trembley, portrait Martha Camarillo

Depuis les années 80, Haim Steinbach explore, au moyen d'étagères jonchées de biens de consommation banals, le statut de l'objet dans l'art.

Les pièces de cet Américain d'origine israélienne prennent la plupart du temps la forme d'étagères minimales (qu'il réalise), sur lesquelles il dispose des objets de consommation, souvent banals et hétéroclites, achetés dans les supermarchés ou aux puces. En les ordonnant selon leur forme ou leurs couleurs et en les exposant comme des œuvres dans l'espace muséal, il analyse comment ces artefacts sont codés dans notre société. Haim Steinbach, aujourd'hui âgé de plus de 60 ans, nous a reçus dans son atelier à New York pour nous parler de sa pratique, quelques semaines avant son exposition personnelle prévue à la galerie Laurent Godin, à Paris.

Numéro : Vous disiez au début de votre carrière que vous vouliez fuir les règles trop rigoristes de l'art minimal. Où vous situez-vous en 2007 ?

Haim Steinbach : Au contraire, j'utilise les règles de l'art minimal.

Il apparaît de plus en plus évident que l'art prétendument "minimal" a été le mouvement artistique le plus radical et le plus fertile des cinquante dernières années. Aussi radical, selon moi, que le cubisme en 1911 et les ready-made de Duchamp. Il a établi un modèle définitif, tant conceptuel que physique, de la participation du spectateur dans l'achèvement de l'œuvre, ou de l'expérience artistique. Vous marchiez sur un Carl Andre, vous deveniez conscient que votre mouvement était limité par les paramètres de l'institution en appréhendant une structure de Robert Morris. En face d'une œuvre de Donald Judd, vous deviez affronter le fait qu'un objet occupe l'espace en premier lieu. Vous étiez obligé de vous demander ce qu'est un objet, ce qu'est la sculpture, ce qu'est l'art. Aujourd'hui, je me situe dans le monde des objets. **Vous sentez-vous proche de certains mouvements ou artistes ?** Peut-être de ce que Nicolas Bourriaud appelle "l'esthétique relationnelle". Mais ce n'était pas un mouvement lorsque j'ai réalisé mon installation *Display #7* à l'Artists Space, à New York, en 1979. Cependant, en pratique, on se demande quelle est la proportion de théâtralité qui entre en jeu, la part de divertissement. Les premières installations minimalistes des années 60 étaient choquantes, perturbatrices, absurdes et étranges. La critique Michael Fried affirmait que tout cela était du théâtre et non pas de l'art. En fait, ce n'était ni l'un ni l'autre ! C'était comme si l'on vous forçait à percevoir à nouveau l'espace avec le regard d'un enfant de



2 ans. C'était troublant, cela mettait les gens mal à l'aise. A l'inverse, depuis les années 90, l'art est souvent confortable et accueillant. Sans doute parce que les musées, contraints de satisfaire un public plus large, se plient à ces nécessités. La plus grande partie de l'art aujourd'hui fonctionne comme une interprétation des pratiques radicales des années 60 et 80. Mais il se passe à présent quelque chose d'intéressant, qui touche tout spécialement à l'objet et au moi. Je pense à une vidéo récente de Shelly Silver intitulée *What I'm Looking For*, ou aux travaux d'artistes comme Mika Rotenberg, Rachel Harrison, Josephine Meckseper et Carol Bove. Je voudrais aller plus loin en ajoutant que si l'on devait nommer une marraine pour toutes ces artistes, ce pourrait être Sherrie Levine. **Dans les années 80, on a commenté votre utilisation des signes de la culture "populaire". Aujourd'hui, beaucoup d'artistes font de même. Est-ce toujours pertinent ?**

C'est plus pertinent que jamais, parce que nous sommes devenus conscients que ce que nous voyons est ce que nous choisissons de voir. Cela touche à la volonté de se distancier d'une vision élitiste de l'art. Ce constat nous fait d'autant plus désirer d'ouvrir les yeux sur ce que nous ne regardons pas.

Vous avez été visionnaire en liant l'art au design, très présent depuis peu dans les foires d'art, les galeries, sur le marché...

A quoi ce succès est-il dû, d'après vous ?

Ce concept s'est développé au début des années 70 avec les

chaises de Scott Burton, et à la fin de cette décennie avec les lampes de Ronnie Fisher. Ces artistes mettaient en avant des objets qui fonctionnaient mais ils ne prétendaient être ni designers industriels ni architectes. Si l'objet était un artefact créé par l'homme, il pouvait être reconstruit par l'homme. Ces premières œuvres n'avaient rien à voir avec le design, elles se rapprochaient plutôt des gadgets. Du moins, c'est l'impression qu'elles donnaient sur le moment, quand elles ne ressemblaient à rien de ce qui se faisait. Ce n'étaient pas des objets-jeux, des objets-calembours et des objets-performances comme les objets de Fluxus : c'étaient des objets fonctionnels et conventionnels, mais étranges. Dans les années 90, l'art est utilisé comme un véhicule pour diffuser le design. Cependant, ce serait un contresens d'interpréter mon travail dans cette perspective. Quand je dessine une étagère, je dessine un dispositif destiné à présenter des objets. La combinaison de ces objets n'aboutit pas à une représentation qui relève du design, mais à des "phrases" composées d'éléments disparates qui peuvent être plus ou moins, voire totalement incompatibles. Les éléments eux-mêmes véhiculent des contenus qui dépassent les frontières du bon et du mauvais goût.

Nombre de boutiques imitent dans leurs vitrines des procédés d'accrochage d'œuvres, comme la série. Ces "displays" ressemblent aux vôtres, comment vous en distancez-vous ?
De toute évidence, l'art, dans sa complexité, possède un méca-



41

nisme de distanciation interne. Ainsi, *Olympia*, de Manet, ou la femme dévêtue du *Déjeuner sur l'herbe* sont plus que de simples représentations de la nudité. Les structures modulaires de Sol LeWitt et les définitions du dictionnaire des idées de Joseph Kosuth, *Art as Idea as idea*, représentent davantage que ce que l'on pourrait penser à première vue. Il y a environ dix ans, le critique français Michel Gauthier a écrit à propos de mon travail : *"Deux ou trois types d'objets différents, chaque type étant représenté par un ou deux spécimens, disposés sur une ou plusieurs étagères triangulaires en contreplaqué recouvertes de toile cirée - voici le vocabulaire utilisé par Haim Steinbach, depuis 1984, pour produire une série prolifique constituée de plusieurs dizaines de pièces..."*

Vous avez choisi de préparer votre exposition parisienne dans un restaurant français traditionnel, L'Ambassade d'Auvergne. Pouvez-vous nous expliquer ce choix ?

Début juillet, je suis venu à Paris pour voir la galerie de Laurent Godin. Puis il m'a emmené déjeuner à L'Ambassade d'Auvergne, juste en face. C'était un restaurant français traditionnel avec un mobilier certes un peu démodé, mais qui évoquait une taverne de l'ancien temps. Ce qui soulignait le plus fortement cette qualité, c'étaient les énormes jambons pendus un peu partout au plafond : conception, extinction, naturel, surnaturel... Pour cerner au mieux ma première impression de ce lieu, je dois me référer à un phénomène olfactif. Mais, chose curieuse, ce qui m'a vraiment saisi dans cet endroit, ce n'est pas tant l'odorat que la vue, et je me rappelle y avoir été frappé par une sensation d'horreur mêlée d'admiration, comme devant un mélange parfait de bon et de mauvais goût. Comment se fait-il qu'on puisse retirer une sensation des plus délicieuses de la présence d'un quartier de cochon mort ? À l'évidence, la culture a la capacité de transformer n'importe quel

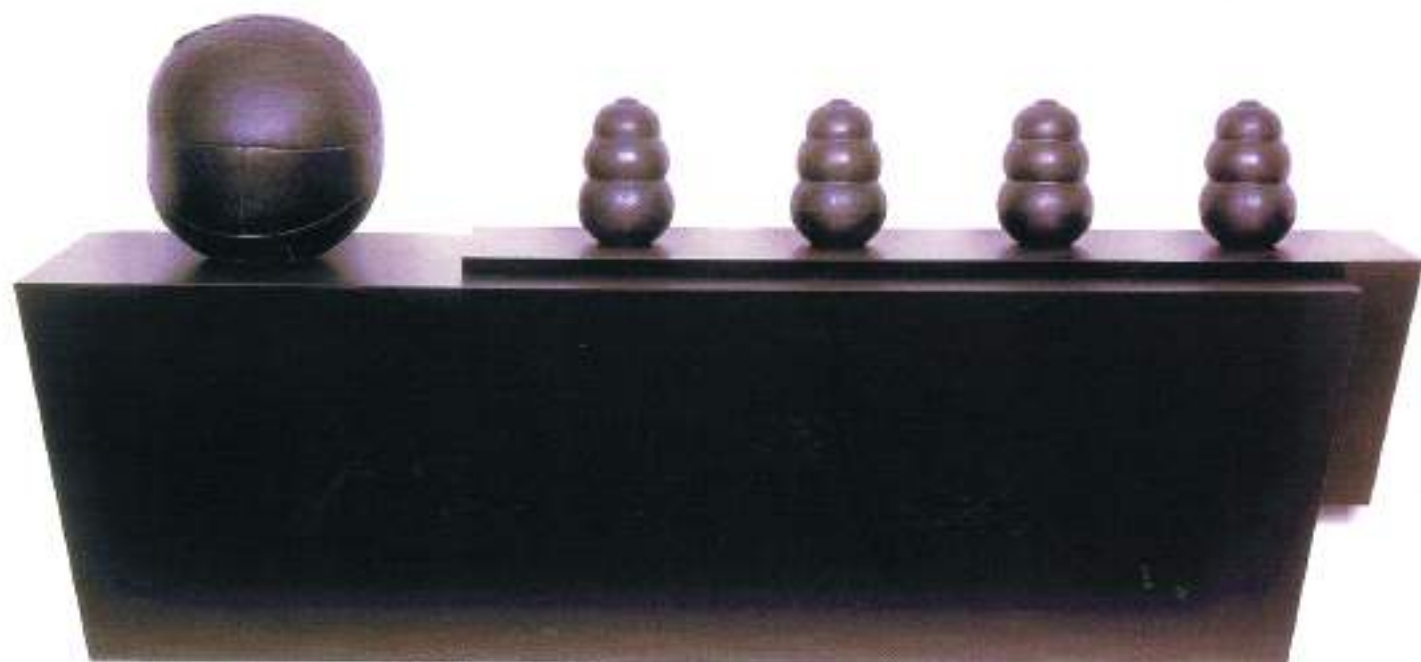
élément hideux, étrange ou choquant en beauté... On pourrait dire que l'exposition que je prépare traitera de la capacité qu'a la gastronomie à sublimer l'horreur de la dégradation que provoque la mort.

Comment sélectionnez-vous vos objets ?

La sélection s'effectue principalement par des rencontres de fortune. Cependant, j'opère également un choix. Nous choisissons les choses qui nous entourent, nous choisissons nos amis, nous choisissons notre façon de nous habiller, et ainsi de suite. Cela relève en partie de la culture et de l'habitus, en partie de notre relation critique aux autres, aux choses et à nous-mêmes. En 1968, j'ai rencontré Nancy Shaver lorsque nous étions étudiants au Pratt Institute, une école d'art à Brooklyn, et nous avons tissé des liens d'amitié durables. Nancy avait une relation unique, quasi proustienne, aux lieux et aux objets. Elle adorait les marchés aux puces et les vide-greniers, et ses choix étaient toujours imprévisibles. Aujourd'hui, elle expose ses œuvres à la Feature Gallery à New York et enseigne au Bard College. En même temps, elle dirige une boutique qui s'appelle Henry, à Hudson, dans l'Etat de New York. Par la nature des articles qu'elle y présente, ce lieu est à lui seul un ensemble poétique, une installation permanente, une œuvre d'art. Une des œuvres que je montrerai chez Laurent Godin, *Painted Screen*, est une juxtaposition d'objets qui viennent de chez elle.

Comment les classez-vous ? Par associations libres, par couleurs, par formes ?

Cela varie d'une œuvre à l'autre. Classifier implique de mettre les choses en commun, les rapprocher, les grouper dans une finalité quelconque. Lorsque les photographes Hilla et Bernd Becher réunissent une collection d'images de châteaux d'eau, cela nous permet d'apprécier les différences et les similitudes de ces remarquables structures industrielles. Si mon travail relève en partie



Everlast kong M-1 (1990-2007). Pièce unique. 141 x 40,8 x 72,4 cm. Plastique laminé, étagère en bois, ballon lesté en cuir, jouets en plastique pour chien.

"Pour cerner au mieux ma première impression de L'Ambassade d'Auvergne, je dois me référer à un phénomène olfactif. Mais, chose curieuse, ce qui m'a vraiment saisi dans cet endroit, ce n'est pas tant l'odorat que la vue, et je me rappelle y avoir été frappé par une sensation d'horreur mêlée d'admiration".

de cette approche, l'utilisation d'un code de couleur dans un sens métonymique l'élargit à un jeu d'associations libres, comme dans la juxtaposition d'un pichet d'eau noir avec le mot "bold" (gras) en lettres noires et en gras, sur une boîte rouge. Au début des années 70, j'ai été fortement influencé par le processus de conceptualisation à l'œuvre dans les travaux des Becher, et j'ai été très heureux, récemment, de voir mon exposition à la Sonnabend Gallery à New York disposée dans un espace qui jouxtait une installation de la leur. L'œuvre des Becher a inauguré une pensée visuelle théorique qui était typologique. Cette approche a eu une grande influence sur de nombreux artistes de ma génération. Leur travail implique une réflexion sur la petite histoire de l'architecture vernaculaire, et une distanciation vis-à-vis du modernisme classique qui a dominé le xx^e siècle. Mon travail suit une ligne semblable par bien des aspects, mais je me concentre principalement sur des objets quotidiens. J'ai été triste d'apprendre le décès de Bernd Becher l'été dernier.

Je regardais récemment l'image de l'un de vos travaux produit en 1985, intitulé *Charm of Tradition*. Il contient une paire de baskets Nike de l'époque, dont le design est à nouveau à la mode. Pourtant, vos œuvres qui utilisent des objets typiques de leur époque ne sont pas traversées par ces notions de vintage et semblent toujours très actuelles, comment l'expliquez-vous ? Mon travail ne traite ni du style, ni du goût, ni de la mode. Il part dans différentes directions et implique des contradictions du point

de vue des valeurs, des classes et des identités. Alors oui, il est logique qu'il ne soit pas facile de relier mes combinaisons d'objets à une époque spécifique. Dans *Charm of Tradition*, il y a en fait deux paires des mêmes baskets Nike. L'étagère est recouverte de couches de plastique gris pierre du côté gauche et vert d'eau du côté droit. Le côté gris pierre supporte la première paire de baskets Nike, et le côté vert d'eau l'autre, avec une lampe rustique dont le pied est une patte de cerf naturalisé. L'association des objets et de l'étagère soulève la question du nombre : on se demande combien il y a de pieds là-dedans. Elle évoque aussi la question de la culture et du contexte. Les références croisées déroutent le regard du spectateur, soulevant ainsi davantage de questions qu'elles ne proposent de réponses sur les relations entre les objets. Cet effet a confondu de nombreux critiques qui, en l'absence d'une compréhension plus profonde, ont eu tendance à se raccrocher aux clichés du consumérisme.

Quel est votre prochain projet ?

Je travaille actuellement sur un livre de la collection "Two Star" pour les éditions Onestar Press à Paris. Ensuite, je vais enseigner l'art à l'université de Californie à San Diego pendant cinq mois. Au printemps, j'ai une exposition aux Waddington Galleries à Londres.

Exposition Haim Steinbach, jusqu'au 5 janvier 2008, galerie Laurent Godin, 5, rue du Grenier-Saint-Lazare, Paris 19^e. Tél. 01 42 71 10 68. www.laurentgodin.com. Publication chez l'éditeur parisien Onestar Press. www.onestarpres.com.

43





Contact

Laurent Godin

laurent@laurentgodin.com

Lara Blanchy

lara@laurentgodin.com