Harald Szeemann and the Road Back to the Museum

Max Rosenberg

The Event Form

Early indications of what the public could expect at documenta 5 were revealed on the cover of the May/June 1970 issue of *Informationen* (fig. 1), a seasonal brochure on local culture in and around the city of Kassel, Germany, where the famed quinquennial contemporary art exhibition was established in 1955. In a brief schematic outline, Harald Szeemann (fig. 2), the newly appointed general secretary of documenta 5, along with a few collaborators whom he had selected to help with the organization of the show, gave a brief explanation of the approach to the next Kassel mega-exhibition. Their documenta, as the brochure makes abundantly clear, would distinguish itself from its predecessors by embracing an "event structure" (*Ereignisstruktur*). More than the proposal itself, a graphic featured above the text illustrated this ambition. In a large black field, "documenta IV" appeared in big white letters, but the "IV" was struck through and a "V" was printed above it. Beneath this, "Museum der 100 Tage" (100-day museum), the traditional length of the exhibition and its de facto tagline, was printed, but only "100 Tage" remained; "Museum der" was struck through and "Ereignis" (event) was added next to and slightly above the previous motto. From "Museum der 100 Tage," the "100 Tage Ereignis" (100-day event) was born.

By depicting the first conceptual proposal for the exhibition in this way, Szeemann and his coorganizers signaled that documenta 5 would constitute an assertive departure from the format and structure of the past exhibitions. Specifically, Szeemann wished to break down the traditional media distinctions and the privileging of painting and sculpture that the previous documentas had maintained. This intention also stemmed from a desire to move away from abstract painting, metonymy for modern art itself in much of the capitalist West (especially West Germany). Documenta had been a primary conduit through which abstraction had achieved broad cultural supremacy. At the first several documentas, the art historian and coorganizer of the shows Werner Haftmann had popularized the idea of abstraction as a "world language" (*Weltsprache*), a concept that the exhibition's founder, the local Kassel artist and curator Arnold Bode, had also embraced.[1] At the same time, as aggressive as the striking through of the motto of the past documentas appeared, Szeemann did not outright discard it; rather, he reformatted it into a new

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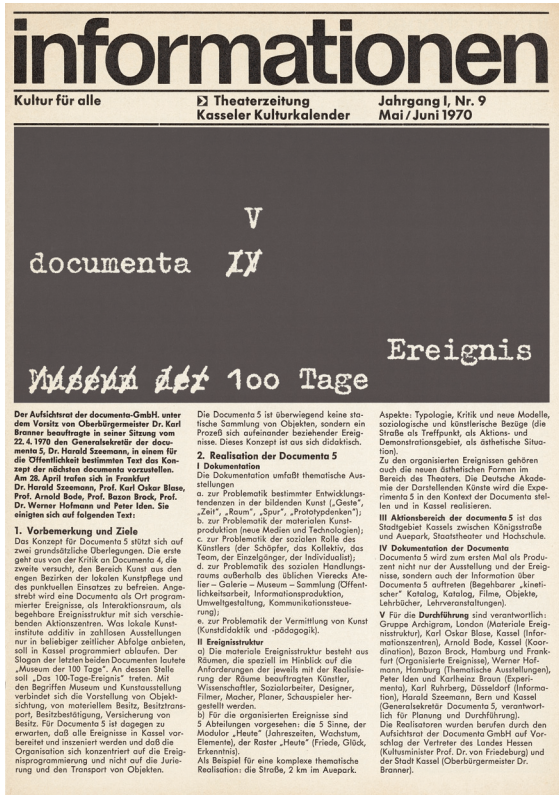

informationen

Kultur für alle | Theaterzeitung Kasseler Kulturkalender | Jahrgang I, Nr. 9 Mai / Juni 1970

documenta V

Ereignis

100 Tage

Der Aufsichtsrat der documenta-GmbH. unter dem Vorsitz von Oberbürgermeister Dr. Karl Branner beauftragte in seiner Sitzung vom 22. 4. 1970 den Generalsekretär der documenta 5, Dr. Harald Szeemann, in einem für die Öffentlichkeit bestimmten Text das Konzept der nächsten documenta vorzustellen. Am 28. April trafen sich in Frankfurt Dr. Harald Szeemann, Prof. Karl Oskar Blase, Prof. Arnold Bode, Prof. Bazon Brock, Prof. Dr. Werner Hofmann und Peter Iden. Sie einigten sich auf folgenden Text:

1. Vorbemerkung und Ziele

Das Konzept für Documenta 5 stützt sich auf zwei grundsätzliche Überlegungen. Die erste geht aus von der Kritik an Documenta 4, die zweite versucht, den Bereich Kunst aus den engen Bezirken der lokalen Kunstpflege und des punktuellen Einsatzes zu befreien. Angestrebt wird eine Documenta als Ort programmierter Ereignisse, als Interaktionsraum, als begehbare Ereignisstruktur mit sich verschiebenden Aktionszentren. Was lokale Kunstinstitute additiv in zahllosen Ausstellungen nur in beliebiger zeitlicher Abfolge anbieten, soll in Kassel programmiert ablaufen. Der Slogan der letzten beiden Documenten lautete „Museum der 100 Tage". An dessen Stelle soll „Das 100-Tage-Ereignis" treten. Mit den Begriffen Museum und Kunstausstellung verbindet sich die Vorstellung von Objektsichtung, von materiellem Besitz, Besitztransport, Besitzbestätigung, Versicherung von Besitz. Für Documenta 5 ist dagegen zu erwarten, daß alle Ereignisse in Kassel vorbereitet und inszeniert werden und daß die Organisation sich konzentriert auf die Ereignisprogrammierung und nicht auf die Jurierung und den Transport von Objekten.

Die Documenta 5 ist überwiegend keine statische Sammlung von Objekten, sondern ein Prozeß sich aufeinander beziehender Ereignisse. Dieses Konzept ist aus sich didaktisch.

2. Realisation der Documenta 5

I Dokumentation

Die Dokumentation umfaßt thematische Ausstellungen

a. zur Problematik bestimmter Entwicklungstendenzen in der bildenden Kunst („Geste", „Zeit", „Raum", „Spur", „Prototypdenken");

b. zur Problematik der materialen Kunstproduktion (neue Medien und Technologien);

c. zur Problematik der sozialen Rolle des Künstlers (der Schöpfer, das Kollektiv, das Team, der Einzelgänger, der Individualist);

d. zur Problematik des sozialen Handlungsraums außerhalb des üblichen Viereckes Atelier – Galerie – Museum – Sammlung (Öffentlichkeitsarbeit, Informationsproduktion, Umweltgestaltung, Kommunikationssteuerung);

e. zur Problematik der Vermittlung von Kunst (Kunstdidaktik und -pädagogik).

II Ereignisstruktur

a) Die materiale Ereignisstruktur besteht aus Räumen, die speziell im Hinblick auf die Anforderungen der jeweils mit der Realisierung der Räume beauftragten Künstler, Wissenschaftler, Sozialarbeiter, Designer, Filmer, Macher, Planer, Schauspieler hergestellt werden.

b) Für die organisierten Ereignisse sind 5 Abteilungen vorgesehen: die 5 Sinne, der Modulor „Heute" (Jahreszeiten, Wachstum, Elemente), der Raster „Heute" (Friede, Glück, Erkenntnis).

Als Beispiel für eine komplexe thematische Realisation: die Straße, 2 km im Auepark.

Aspekte: Typologie, Kritik und neue Modelle, soziologische und künstlerische Bezüge (die Straße als Treffpunkt, als Aktions- und Demonstrationsgebiet, als ästhetische Situation).

Zu den organisierten Ereignissen gehören auch die neuen ästhetischen Formen im Bereich des Theaters. Die Deutsche Akademie der Darstellenden Künste wird die Experimenta 5 in den Kontext der Documenta stellen und in Kassel realisieren.

III Aktionsbereich der documenta 5 ist das Stadtgebiet Kassels zwischen Königstraße und Auepark, Staatstheater und Hochschule.

IV Dokumentation der Documenta

Documenta 5 wird zum ersten Mal als Produzent nicht nur der Ausstellung und der Ereignisse, sondern auch der Information über Documenta 5 auftreten (Begehbarer „kinetischer" Katalog, Katalog, Filme, Objekte, Lehrbücher, Lehrveranstaltungen).

V Für die **Durchführung** sind verantwortlich: Gruppe Archigram, London (Materiale Ereignisstruktur), Karl Oskar Blase, Kassel (Informationszentren), Arnold Bode, Kassel (Koordination), Bazon Brock, Hamburg und Frankfurt (Organisierte Ereignisse), Werner Hofmann, Hamburg (Thematische Ausstellungen), Peter Iden und Karlheinz Braun (Experimenta), Karl Ruhrberg, Düsseldorf (Information), Harald Szeemann, Bern und Kassel (Generalsekretär Documenta 5, verantwortlich für Planung und Durchführung).

Die Realisatoren wurden berufen durch den Aufsichtsrat der Documenta GmbH auf Vorschlag der Vertreter des Landes Hessen (Kultusminister Prof. Dr. von Friedeburg) und der Stadt Kassel (Oberbürgermeister Dr. Branner).

Fig. 1. "Documenta V: 100 Tage Ereignis." Cover of *Informationen* 1, no. 9 (May/June 1970). Los Angeles, Getty Research Institute, 2011.M.30.

Fig. 2. Harald Szeemann standing outside the Kunsthalle Bern during the exhibition *Live in Your Head: When Attitudes Become Form; Works–Concepts–Processes–Situations–Information,* 1969. Photo by Harry Shunk. Los Angeles, Getty Research Institute, Harald Szeemann papers, 2011.M.30, series IV.A.

type of concept, one that emphasized the temporality of the affair. Though always a part of documenta's structure, temporality, in Szeemann's mind, had remained an underdeveloped part of the exhibition. Through this change to its motto, Szeemann shifted documenta's conceptual emphasis from the static and authoritative conditions of the museum—embodied in the Fridericianum (fig. 3), the eighteenth-century museum building that had housed the first four exhibitions—to the dynamic potentiality of the event.

Szeemann's appointment and this decisive shift in the approach to documenta had transpired due to the poor reception of documenta 4 in 1968. While that show attracted 207,000 visitors and concluded with the first budget surplus in documenta's history, the public and critical discontent over the exhibition put documenta's future in question. This prompted Bode, who was displeased with documenta's bloated and bureaucratically run organizing committee, to push for a new organizational structure for the next exhibition: a single curatorial head would be selected as a general secretary to craft the entire concept and program of the show.[2] Recognizing that his own time as the

Fig. 3. The Fridericianum at the first documenta (1955). The newly rebuilt center of Kassel can be seen in the background. Photo by Günther Becker. © documenta archiv / Günther Becker.

face of documenta was coming to a close, Bode advocated the appointment of the young Szeemann, who had gained wide international acclaim for his work as the director of the Kunsthalle Bern.

Szeemann had been appointed director of the Kunsthalle in 1961 at the age of twenty-eight, a year after finishing his doctorate in art history and archaeology at the Universität Bern. His graduate research focused on theater, cabaret, and a diverse range of artists and groups from the French Nabis to Dada.[3] His early exhibitions at the Kunsthalle tended toward the monographic and focused on contemporary movements, like kinetic art, or on individuals, like his inaugural exhibition on the work of the local Bern artist Otto Tschumi. In the late 1960s, Szeemann began pushing broader formal or thematic shows such as the traveling exhibition *Shapes of Color* (1967), which featured numerous postwar color-field painters (Ellsworth Kelly, Barnett Newman, Kenneth Noland, and Frank Stella), and *12 Environments* (1968), a show composed of large-scale installations by a range of contemporary artists such as Andy Warhol and Christo and Jeanne-Claude (who, famously, conducted one of their signature wrappings of the Kunsthalle). The show that gained Szeemann broad critical attention was his landmark 1969 exhibition *Live in Your Head: When Attitudes Become Form;*

Works–Concepts–Processes–Situations–Information, a watershed in the exhibition of postminimalist and poststudio art. Occurring less than a year after documenta 4, *Attitudes* caught Bode's attention.[4] Even more than with the exhibition itself, however, Bode was impressed with how Szeemann had handled the response to the show from the conservative Bern public and the Kunsthalle's own board, made up of local Swiss artists.[5] Szeemann had ardently fought the criticism leveled against the artistic practices displayed in *Attitudes* and further defended his plans for a large Joseph Beuys exhibition that he had been preparing but which the Kunsthalle's board eventually canceled due to the controversial nature of Beuys's practice.[6] As a result, Szeemann came to find the situation untenable in Bern, and shortly after *Attitudes* he resigned from the Kunsthalle.[7]

As an exhibition, *Attitudes* appeared to be everything that documenta 4 was not.[8] While documenta 4 primarily featured a great deal of American postpainterly abstraction and pop and retained traditional media distinctions between painting and sculpture, *Attitudes* presented art that stressed the process of its making or that lacked a discrete object form or easily classifiable medium. This included Richard Serra's *Splash,* in which the artist slung molten lead against the threshold where the floor met the wall in the Kunsthalle's foyer; Michael Heizer's *Bern Depression,* where the artist used a demolition ball to create a crater in the sidewalk outside the Kunsthalle; and Walter De Maria's *Art by Telephone,* in which a solitary rotary telephone was placed with a placard inviting viewers to pick up the phone and speak with the artist whenever it rang. Szeemann also saw works like these as a means of manifesting the artists' presence at the exhibition without them being physically at the Kunsthalle. The arrangement of the artworks—as interventions into the spaces of the museum and beyond it rather than linked relics in a deterministic, historical chain—shed the pretense of traditional generational progression or nationalistic association in favor of synchronic, experiential encounters between the spectator and the artwork.

To Szeemann, the first four documentas had simply been a "war of attrition without a correct concept," a static display of objects that appeared purposeless and dead, a "Christmas exhibition of huge proportions with an all-star cast."[9] For his documenta, Szeemann believed in a different organizing metric based around events: "Documenta 5 should no longer simply want to be the biggest and most comprehensive exhibition, but rather documenta can exemplify, like no other event—for which the outsider position of the city of Kassel is thus the best prerequisite—that an exhibition can be a place of programmed events, a true space of interaction."[10]

While *Attitudes* is the clear precedent for Szeemann's plans for documenta 5, the roots of Szeemann's focus on process art and performativity and his interest in reformatting documenta around events and interactions—around temporality and action instead of objects—go back to his early years as a student in Bern. During this period in his life, Szeemann became personally and academically interested in the theater, and he proceeded to perform in several group productions of Shakespeare, Goethe, and other classic plays at the Bern student theater. Quickly, however, he came to find the "backstage

rivalries"[11] of ensemble theater displeasing, which led him to establish his own one-man cabaret in 1956. Descriptions of these performances are difficult to find, but when Szeemann later makes reference to them, he describes them as a spiritual progression: "It was a strange blend," he writes, "that became a journey of initiation, a purification. From coarse beginnings to a spiritual finale."[12] Reiterating this point, Szeemann also links these performances to his later curatorial practices: "The whole thing was conceived as an imaginary journey from the banal to the highly spiritual," adding that, "In a way [the one-man show] already had the underlying structure of documenta 5."[13] As Szeemann here recounts, this trajectory—from the banal to the higher order of the spiritual, or *geistig* in German, which also denotes the intellectual—would be evident at documenta 5 as well. More broadly, these qualities of the spiritual and banal appear to have been central to Szeemann's curatorial self-identity as he progressed in his career.

Shortly after leaving the Kunsthalle Bern, Szeemann started a new independent organization, the Agentur für geistige Gastarbeit (Agency for Spiritual/Intellectual Guest/Migrant Labor), a freelance curatorial agency that he established in response to the restrictions and bureaucratic limitations of traditional art institutions. The name of his agency evokes the banal and spiritual through contrasting associations. The agency's work is spiritual and intellectual, *geistig*, but it is also migrant labor, *Gastarbeit*. This term would be immediately recognized in the German-speaking world as an unambiguous reference to the foreign-worker programs of many Western European nations, especially Germany, from the late fifties and sixties, for which workers—primarily from Mediterranean nations (Italy, Spain, Greece, Turkey)—were brought in to do industrial and manual labor jobs within the host nation on an ostensibly temporary basis.[14] But the banal and spiritual, as a conceptual leitmotif for Szeemann's curatorial endeavors, was evident even earlier, in Szeemann's first foray into exhibition making: a three-day homage to Hugo Ball.

Szeemann organized the exhibition in 1957, the thirty-year anniversary of Hugo Ball's death, in the Kleintheater Kramgasse 6, the same theater as Szeemann's own one-man show from the previous year. The impulse for the exhibition came from his experiences performing and from his growing fascination with cabaret, which had initially led him to Ball. The exhibition included display cases filled with books, letters, and photographs documenting the Dada figure's life and work. It also featured Szeemann and others performing readings of Ball's poems and his literary and intellectual work.[15] As is evident in the selection of Ball, the exhibition's short duration, its location in a theater, and the recitation of Ball's work, Szeemann had already, from the outset of his curatorial career, sought an alternative exhibition model based around performance and event structures.

Later describing himself as a "bewildered admirer"[16] of Ball's, Szeemann was deeply fascinated by the artist and identified with him. Later in his life, Szeemann explained that Ball was a "model" for him "in the way he achieved a balance between activism and meditation."[17] Ball, one of the founders of Zurich Dada and the Cabaret Voltaire, had also lived in Bern immediately after his time in Zurich, where he wrote for the biweekly

Fig. 4. Hugo Ball as the "magical bishop" performing his *Lautgedicht* (sound poem) *Karawane* at the Cabaret Voltaire in Zurich, 1916. Photo: PVDE / Bridgeman.

newspaper *Die Freie Zeitung*, a publication committed to political emancipation and democratic politics. Szeemann had researched Ball in great depth at university and wrote papers on topics related to the famed Dadaist.[18] Szeemann also likely identified with Ball as a Catholic who, like him, lived in predominantly Protestant regions of Switzerland.[19]

Ball is best known for his sound poems and performances, most notably *Karawane* (1916) (fig. 4). For this performance, Ball appeared at the Cabaret Voltaire in the guise of a "magical bishop," wearing an outfit of immobilizing, rigid cardboard that made him appear both mechanomorphic and ecclesiastical. At the start of the performance, Ball was carried onto the stage, where he then proceeded to recite, sing, and utter a sequence of nonsensical words that he had composed. The performance concluded in a swelling crescendo that left Ball trembling and covered in sweat.[20] The poem and the performance attack and collapse hierarchies and binaries: Ball's costume reads as playful and mundane (made of cardboard and emulating the mechanical forms of the industrial everyday) but also reverential (with a cape resembling a mozzetta), all of which is topped off by a headdress that evokes both a Catholic miter and a dunce cap.[21] His recitation conflates childlike ramblings with spiritual possession, infantilizing immobility with obelisk-like iconicity, and mechanical impotence with phallic reverence.

This performance perhaps illuminates one of the many reasons that Ball appealed to Szeemann: it operated within the registers of the banal and the spiritual that Szeemann would identify as guiding principles in his own performances and curatorial practices. At the same time, there is a notable difference in how the banal and the *geistig* function in *Karawane* and in Szeemann's performances and curatorial pursuits. Ball dissolves the distinctions that separate the banal and the spiritual, resulting in an experience that rebounds back onto the social contradictions of the everyday that were in crisis during World War I. Szeemann, as he himself claims, pursues a "journey" from the banal to the spiritual. So while both qualities are present in Szeemann's practices, this journey serves as a defining structural component and one that implies the transcending of the banality of the everyday. In Szeemann's conceptualization of the event format at documenta, this distinction remained defining.

The Festival Approach

In elaborating how to enhance the event structure of his documenta, Szeemann prepared a preliminary proposal on the concept for documenta 5, most likely from early 1970, in which he and his initial group of collaborators outlined some general considerations regarding their approach to organizing the exhibition.[22] They immediately recognized one of the paradoxes of contemporary art exhibitions: they were required to situate and categorize artistic production of the present and then, due to the demands of planning, predict the situation of art a few years in advance. The speed with which artistic production changed at this time, evidenced by the radical diversity and evolution of practices during the sixties, made predicting the condition of contemporary art, even two years in advance, extremely difficult: "The art developments to 1972 are not foreseeable," the group wrote.

"What is visible are trends. Thus we have merely developed a preliminary draft conception in which today's visible trends are taken into account without imposing the demand of deriving a closed system."[23] On the one hand, this reflects Szeemann's recognition that trends in the arts changed rather quickly and selecting works, even a few years in advance, could conflict with the desire to be contemporary. On the other hand, it underscores a different historical metric, what Caroline A. Jones has highlighted in Szeemann's exhibitions as a "shift from 'objects' with their 'schools' to the spaces of multiplied happenings."[24]

Whereas at documenta 4 the organizers attempted to maintain the same historical scheme that had been developed at the first documenta, by looking to respond to, rather than impose, "trends," Szeemann was clearly wishing to accommodate and elevate the intentions of the artist. At the same time, Szeemann understood that a kind of uncontained pluralism was also not tenable: principles of selection remained key.[25] In negotiating between curatorial traditions of a rigid historicism, which were associated with generational and formal evolutionary models of artistic production and evolution, and the pluralistic impulse, Szeemann proposed that the contemporary art curator had to give voice to the connective impulses of artistic practice: he had to recognize broad tendencies within the registers of often heterogeneous contemporary production.

At this stage, the organizers outlined very generally some of the trends they had begun to take into consideration. "Current art endeavors to move from the isolated object into real, socially engaged contexts," reads the report. "Related to this is the departure from the preserve of the museum to the social space of action, more exactly, to the social space of interaction." Lastly, the report stated that "the concept of time and of currentness [*Aktualität*], and thus also the concept of the currentness of relevant documentation, has changed."[26] As trends, "socially engaged contexts," "the social space of interaction," and "currentness" reflect Szeemann's belief in the centrality of the viewer's engagement with the artwork over institutionally defined histories and also harken back to his foundational interest in theater and performance.

Some months after this preliminary report, once Szeemann had been officially appointed the general secretary of documenta 5, he and his collaborators circulated a concept paper on the broad outlines of the exhibition in which they first declared that "the slogan of the last two Documentas," the "100 Day Museum," would be replaced with the "100 Day Event."[27] This was their answer to the question of how an exhibition can accommodate the artist and the viewer and radically embrace currentness. True to their initial intentions, their reformatted documenta would be a space of "programmed experiences, a space of interaction, an accessible event structure with diverse action centers."[28]

While Szeemann never appears to have explained his views and ideas in explicit Marxist terminology, his new event-based approach stemmed from what he understood as the basic functional drives of the static museum: ownership and property. Szeemann outlined this criticism of the museum and the traditional art exhibition explicitly in his concept papers for documenta 5: "The terms 'museum' and 'art exhibition' combine the

concept of object selection, of material ownership, property transport, the affirmation of ownership, and the insurance of property."[29] Underlying this criticism is a recognition on Szeemann's part that museums and art exhibitions were failing to serve the public interest, and that they had come to merely extend private interests and the structures of the dominant socioeconomic order.

This critique extended back to Szeemann's time as the director of the Kunsthalle Bern. As Szeemann explained it, he felt that over time his primary role had become maintaining the property conditions of art: "My job was to more or less allow for the transportation of valuable objects to Bern and then to stage them according to the means available to me." With *When Attitudes Become Form,* Szeemann attempted to change this dynamic by "building spaces according to artists' demands so that artists could finally come to Bern."[30] That exhibition was intentionally cast as a workshop site for the artists, and the institution itself often served as surface and subject for experimentation and protoforms of institutional critique.[31] In particular, the prevalence of process art at the show reflects Szeemann's attempt to ground the exhibition in experience and engagement rather than traditional media and objects. Moreover, in this approach, there exists an echo of Szeemann's banal-to-spiritual paradigm. He filled the spaces with artworks or the traces of actions that were mundane in material and execution and often grounded or attached to a defined physical site but that facilitated noncommodified encounters between the viewer and the artist. This aspirational sentiment was also reflected in the slogan that Szeemann developed for his freelance curatorial agency: "Besitz durch freie Aktionen ersetzen" (Replace property with free activity).

Frustratingly, Szeemann felt that property relations persisted even at *Attitudes:* "Whether objects or direct actions, the result was the same: confirmation of ownership, and not what I actually sought: participation. The artist departed and I stayed with the remains of the action, already sold in Bern at great cost."[32] This fact is nowhere more apparent than in the corporate sponsor for *Attitudes,* Philip Morris Europe, whose president, John A. Murphy, in his sponsor's statement for the exhibition, made an explicit link between art and business innovation: "We at Philip Morris feel that it is appropriate that we participate in bringing these works to the attention of the public, for there is a key element in this 'new art' which has its counterpart in the business world. That element is innovation—without which it would be impossible for progress to be made in any segment of society."[33] Art as a model of entrepreneurial innovation merely reiterates the social dynamics of property and ownership that Szeemann would later critique. By contrast, Szeemann's intended goal of participation represents a subversive practice for the museum. It implies a specific instrumental role for the art institution that is distinct from the socioeconomic dynamics of everyday life in postwar capitalist society, that of engaging visitors in unique, egalitarian experiences. Szeemann's interest in participation aligns with his interest in cultivating spiritual and intellectual experience and also likely stems from the broader discourses on radical forms of democratic political engagement in the sixties and in the aftermath of 1968.[34]

Szeemann saw the potential at documenta to dispense with the property structures of the art institution, since documenta was, at its core, an event defined by its quinquennial recurrence, not the physical structures that housed it. Yet, in his mind, the persistence of the traditional museum format contradicted and limited the previous documenta and kept the exhibition from reaching its inherent potential. Szeemann believed this was one of the primary reasons for public and critical dissatisfaction with documenta 4. "The informed visitor," wrote Szeemann and his collaborators of the experience of documenta 4, "had the feeling that [they] already knew everything, that the surprising moment [of art] was extinguished."[35] Documenta, devoid of a collection yet adhering to the format of a collecting institution, continued to deny the very element that made it special.

Szeemann therefore believed that to promote participation required springing art from the confines of the "four-cornered" art world: the atelier, the gallery, the collection, and the museum.[36] He viewed these settings as the structures that maintained the conditions of ownership over the artwork and therefore restricted the experience of art. While the initial proposal for documenta 5 that Szeemann published in *Informationen* did not give much in the way of an explanation as to how his event-based exhibition would be accomplished, it provided one concrete claim: it would use a mile-long stretch of Kassel's Karlsaue park for the "thematic realization" of the experience. Szeemann further developed this concept into the idea of a "street" that would function as a "meeting place" and "as a zone for action and demonstrations and as an aesthetic situation."[37]

Feeling disappointed in his attempts to create new kinds of social experiences and encounters within the spaces of the museum with exhibitions such as *Attitudes,* Szeemann now sought to abolish the museum altogether. He embraced the inherently liminal street as an anti-institutional form that could fulfill documenta's potential by reprogramming the exhibition as a social, interactive, and participatory zone devoid of the mausoleum-like display of deadened, static property. The appeal is understandable within Szeemann's curatorial ambitions. The street is familiar, ordinary, banal, and yet it is a shared rather than owned space; it is experiential and unpredictable, a space of genuine potentiality that can transcend the mundane everyday.

As planning continued, Szeemann's ambitions to dissolve the static traditions of documenta and the museum only intensified. Shortly after the initial proposal for documenta 5 had been published in *Informationen,* Szeemann became convinced that even keeping the 100-day format was a mistake. "I saw the error in our concept," he wrote to Jürgen Claus, a collaborator. "I don't think we need to hang on to the 100-day concept, but rather we should actually replace the exhibition-time [*Ausstellungszeit*] with an event-time [*Ereigniszeit*] lasting no more than three weeks."[38] He put it in more comical terms to his colleague Werner Hofmann, who had apparently been critical of the 100-day format all along: "We are not Napoleon, nor are we capable of a hundred-day erection."[39] The latter analogy is perhaps a direct dig at documenta 4 and a reference to Christo and Jeanne-Claude's work *5,600 Cubicmeter Package* (1968), a massive pneumatic cylinder

that repeatedly failed to inflate during numerous attempts to do so in the Karlsaue park during the run of the exhibition.[40]

Further impetus for this truncated *Ereigniszeit* appears to have stemmed from Szeemann's previously elaborated critique of the museum. In an interview, Szeemann had stated, "In the Kunsthalle, I was often convinced that certain exhibitions should only last three or four days, but I was required to let it run for a month so that a part of the cost would be recouped."[41] Though Szeemann was not outright declaring it as such, the 100-day model—even made over to emphasize the event-like qualities of the exhibition—maintained an institutional format that he believed fueled the ownership-affirming qualities of the traditional art institution through the normative framework of the long exhibition run and through standard museum operating hours. The three-week proposal was an attempt to turn documenta into a festival like Woodstock, an experience meant to set itself outside the dynamics of the everyday. This format offered the potential to disrupt the capitalist structures of designated times and spaces of production and consumption, work and leisure. In place of social atomization and the automatization of everyday experience, this festival format offered the possibility of engendering new forms of collective experience and participation revolving around alternative temporalities.[42]

To make this format feasible, Szeemann suggested devoting funds to constructing "barracks" and cheap accommodations for visitors so that they could stay over multiple days at low cost and engage in activities during the daytime and at night rather than during prescribed museum hours. These barracks would be placed south of the Fridericianum in the Karlsaue park along with art sheds and other spaces meant to promote social interaction and engagement between visitors and artists. The Fridericianum itself, as Szeemann envisioned it, would function as a documentation center and a space for seminars and indoor demonstration. He declared that "if we again fill the Fridericianum with pieces, then we are no further along than D1–D4."[43] The Fridericianum would be entirely devoted to educating visitors through audiovisual presentations and slides, printed matter, seminars, and ambiguously titled "group" and "learning" machines (*Gruppenautomaten; Lernmaschinen*), as well as offering spaces where artists could "clarify their intentions."[44]

In his letters regarding the three-week format, Szeemann further hinted at how he envisioned accommodating participatory experiences: "D5 is a place where the mobility of artistic ideas can be demonstrated against the background of an elaborate festival (teach-in, film-in, dance-in, theater-in, art-in, live-in)."[45] Szeemann seems to have believed that the sit-in/teach-in format, which challenged the functioning of traditional institutional structures and hierarchies through horizontal, participatory models and forms of social interaction, could be exported to serve as a model structure for the experience of contemporary art. Student movements had employed these approaches in educational institutions in an effort to subvert administrative control. In Szeemann's plan, this dismantling occurred through eliminating the structures that made for a passive audience—including the temporal constraints of the traditional museum—and thereby

removing the distance between spectator, artist, and artwork. If art had progressed to its postobject phase, Szeemann, armed with this original plan for documenta 5's format, intended to push the exhibition of contemporary art into its postmuseum phase.

Szeemann understood the move outside of the museum to the streets as a means of allowing art and the artist to be the departure point for the exhibition.[46] He wanted the selected artists to stage programmed events, but he also wanted them to have the freedom to do what they wished without the requirement that their contribution be planned too far in advance. While the evolution of this first proposal illustrates the ambitious attempt to use documenta to reformat the experience of art and to promote a broad conception of participation, the limitations of this model would come to light a few months later during a smaller exhibition Szeemann had agreed to organize in Cologne toward the end of 1970, *Happening & Fluxus.*

Happening & Fluxus

Before planning had begun on documenta 5, Szeemann, newly freed of his institutional affiliation, had agreed to do another exhibition in Germany at the Kölnischer Kunstverein called *Happening & Fluxus.* Coming off of the success of *Attitudes,* Szeemann wanted to push the boundaries of acceptable practices within the art institution even further.[47] The performative and interactive qualities utilized by artists associated with happenings and the international Fluxus movement appealed to Szeemann's commitment to participation and engagement between artists and the public.[48] After receiving the commission for documenta, Szeemann also planned to use the Cologne exhibition as a small-scale testing ground for the experiential exhibition that he envisioned on a much larger scale for documenta 5.

To assist in its organization, Szeemann called upon the enigmatic German artist Wolf Vostell, who had been organizing happenings in and around Cologne and throughout Germany since the early sixties. Szeemann had also just included Vostell in a smaller exhibition in Nuremberg that he was organizing for the summer of 1970, *Das Ding als Objekt* (The thing as object).[49] For *Happening & Fluxus,* Vostell was to oversee a large section devoted to artist installations and other aspects of the exhibition. However, Vostell, who was deeply committed to using art as a confrontational medium, quickly proved a difficult collaborator for Szeemann.[50]

Butting heads over the show's structure, the two eventually agreed to three distinct elements for the exhibition: a documentary component composed of materials from Hanns Sohm's large collection of ephemera and documentation related to Fluxus and happenings (Szeemann called this section the "Dokumentationsstrasse" [Documentation street]); a section composed of stalls for artists' individual contributions, which Vostell was largely tasked with organizing; and a three-day festival meant to inaugurate the exhibition. The overall idea suggested in this organization was to create an open framework for artists to display their work with didactic information housed in an entirely separate space. The Kunstverein's building would function like a trade hall

rather than a traditional museum, and artists would present their work or performances in stalls without additional institutional impositions or structures. These three components mimic the general concept Szeemann wanted to explore more thoroughly through his street-festival documenta.

The initial source of conflict between Szeemann and Vostell revolved around Vostell's refusal to give Joseph Beuys a dedicated space within the exhibition. Vostell viewed Beuys's performances as self-aggrandizing and disengaged from broader social concerns. He also vehemently opposed the inclusion of the Vienna actionists, a movement of Austrian artists that had gained attention for violent imagery and sexually explicit performances. Vostell viewed these works as self-indulgent exercises that undermined the confrontational potential of performance and happenings.[51] Szeemann eventually won out, however, and the actionists and Beuys were included.[52]

In Szeemann's account, Vostell responded to the inclusion of the actionists by attempting to sabotage the exhibition with his own installation. For this environment, Vostell planned to have a cow give birth inside the Kunstverein, an event linked to another happening he had staged in Ulm in 1964.[53] The work included mounds of bones procured from a local abattoir and a bed of hay for the animal (fig. 5). Visible during the press conference before the show's opening, the cow was removed from the Kunstverein by local authorities who claimed that "the emotional distress of calving in front of the public is not right to expect of the animal."[54]

Fig. 5. Wolf Vostell overseeing the installation of his environment for *Happening & Fluxus,* 1970. Photo by Balthasar Burkhard. Los Angeles, Getty Research Institute, 2011.M.30.

In response to the confiscation, Vostell and a group of artists allied with him threatened to boycott the exhibition. Several additional artists signed a letter of solidarity with Vostell: "We are protesting against police censorship (the removal of cattle) and are therefore not opening the environment."[55] This led to the initial closing of the first floor of the Kunsthalle, where most of these artists' environments were situated. Szeemann claims he was narrowly able to avoid shutting down the entire exhibition despite these setbacks, which he paints as Vostell's active attempt at sabotage.[56] As a result of the debacle, the Kunstverein sought to claim that Vostell was responsible for the additional costs associated with his failed environment, saying that Vostell never submitted an agreed-to budget, that Szeemann never approved certain elements of the environment, and that the Kunstverein itself never authorized the realization of his "cow demonstration."[57]

Vostell presents a different picture in his exchanges with Szeemann after the exhibition. "I urge you," he wrote to Szeemann, "to share with . . . the Kunstverein that it is entirely false that I had not coordinated with you."[58] In a letter to the Kunstverein, Dick Higgins, a Fluxus artist and composer, additionally claimed that Szeemann and the Kunstverein acted irresponsibly, making the sensible point that it was the Kunstverein's duty to ensure Vostell's performance could be conducted as planned, and that Vostell would have changed it had he been aware of the city regulations and had he been given adequate time.[59]

The exhibition's disruption led to greater media attention directed at the cow's removal, which in turn led to greater scrutiny and controversy surrounding the loud and disruptive Fluxus concert that inaugurated the three-day opening festival, which took place in the streets and inside the Kunstverein's garage. It also led to public outcry over the performances of the actionists: Otto Mühl's two *Manopsychotic Ballets* featured Mühl and three other nude performers simulating sexual acts, and Hermann Nitsch's *6th Action* involved hanging the body of a slaughtered sheep and using its blood for simulated religious acts.[60] Though the audiences for the actionists' performances were small, knowledge of the graphic and violent nature of the events circulated in the press and led to massive public outcry.[61] So vehement was the attack that conservative politicians threatened to withhold annual funding for the Kunstverein, resulting in officials at the institution removing Mühl's and Nitsch's stands from the exhibition.

Whether or not his own role in the controversy was part of some master plan to subvert the exhibition, Vostell capitalized on the situation. After the show had closed, Vostell made several prints and graphic works related to the Cologne controversy that addressed the outcry and public action surrounding the show and the act of censorship by authorities. In one, Vostell quotes the Cologne cultural minister, Dr. Kurt Hackenburg—who had invited Szeemann to organize the exhibition—declaring that "Everything that stinks has to get out!" (Alles was stinkt muss raus!) in reference to the collection of ox bones in the environment, which were subsequently removed.[62] The print also states, "The birth of a cow was broadcast on channel 3–WDR Cologne . . . on 7 November 1970," and then in bold, black letters: "The society of 1970 sits drinking champagne in front of

the TV watching war atrocities but can't tolerate the birth of a cow in a Kunsthalle!" The print thus served to document the exhibition as part of an extensive Vostellian critical happening. This subverted the exhibition's group character and undermined Szeemann's desire to create spaces for open, direct engagement between artists and visitors. Made synonymous in the press and in citizens' minds with the removal of the cow, *Happening & Fluxus* turned into Vostell's own social confrontation with viewers and with the exploitive yet moralizing nature of a late capitalist society.

This chapter in Vostell's career illustrates his mastery of intermixing the registers of medium and the media with emblems of violence as a means of implicating exploitation and the mechanisms of control that are sublimated in acts of passive consumption and leisure.[63] The media relay in which the Cologne piece operated achieved a kind of self-fulfilling feedback loop by which the public's consumption of the news surrounding the controversial exhibition further embroiled the public in the acts of censorship supposedly occurring on its behalf. For Vostell, the fact that the public responded critically to the spectacle of the cow giving birth while ignoring its own complicity in the slaughter of cows and oxen for food and other products (symbolized by the bones included in the environment) highlighted a greater social hypocrisy. The public denounced violence and exploitation while at the same time eagerly consuming the spectacles of, and thereby creating a market for, violence and exploitation.[64]

A similar conflation is apparent in Vostell's *TV-Ochsen II* (1971),[65] a print of a TV screen displaying an image of the cow being removed from the gallery (fig. 6). Superimposed over the image of the cow is a letter from the industrialist Christoph Scheibel to the mayor of Cologne protesting the exhibition and demanding that it be stopped. Vostell thus directly linked the whims of a powerful capitalist elite to political authority. By incorporating the apparatus of passive consumption—the TV—as the frame surrounding Scheibel's letter and the image of the cow, Vostell further alluded to how the media serves as an extension of the power of political authority and capitalist interests. Used to manipulate the public into supporting acts of censorship as the supposed expression of moral and social values, the media, as Vostell saw it, actually maintain the public's ignorance of its own manipulation and its culpability in acts of exploitation and violence. While the cow is thus a tool through which to reveal this system of exploitation, Vostell's own coyness and proclaimed innocence, whether genuine or not, transforms the cow into a stand-in for Vostell himself and the leveraging of his work by these elites in service of their own agendas.

Similar to how these prints can reveal the contours of a broader power structure that shapes social values and perpetuates them as norms through passive consumption and the inherent distance that media establishes with a viewer, Vostell's *Happening & Fluxus* environment must be understood as reaching far beyond the confines of the exhibition, exploding into the politics and drama of the everyday. If Szeemann, committed as ever to the art exhibition as a forum for intellectual and spiritual experience, expected this exhibition to be a kind of interactive space for engagement between artists and the

Fig. 6. Wolf Vostell (German, 1932–98). *TV-Ochsen II,* 1971, screen print on cardboard, 47.9 × 62.5 cm. New York, Museum of Modern Art. © 2018 Estate of Wolf Vostell / Artists Rights Society, New York / VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn. Digital image © The Museum of Modern Art / Licensed by Scala / Art Resource, NY.

public, he was unprepared for the character of chance, subversion, and rupture that the broad, open format enabled. In Vostell's appropriation of the exhibition for his own confrontational agenda, Szeemann came to learn a valuable lesson.

The Return to the Museum

Just under a year after Szeemann had proposed fleeing the Fridericianum on the cover of *Informationen,* the March 1971 issue of the same bulletin featured a large photograph of the previously cast-off building beneath a vertically printed banner announcing the tagline for documenta 5 in German, French, and English: "Befragung der Realität—Bildwelten heute / Enquête sur la réalité—imageries d'aujourd'hui / Inquiry into reality—today's imagery" (fig. 7).[66] In the first documenta 5 proposal, Szeemann and his group of collaborators had read the museum's eulogy and crossed its name out in a loaded and ambitious gesture. Now the museum had been revived. The photograph shows the building in pristine form on a sunny day. The low-hanging tree branches in the composition's foreground give the image a refined, picturesque compositional balance, a matter-of-factness that endows the Fridericianum with a kind of majestic normalcy: the museum was not going anywhere after all.

Fig. 7. "Konzept documenta 5." Cover of *Informationen* 2, no. 3 (March 1971). Los Angeles, Getty Research Institute, 2011.M.30.

In contrast to the widely circulated image of the bullet-hole-riddled surface of the Fridericianum from the first documenta (see fig. 3), the pristine facade of the building in this image emphasizes how the museum stands outside of the drama of the everyday. Modern Kassel is nowhere to be seen. Idyllic and largely devoid of emblems of modernity, the photograph presents a view of the building as it would have appeared at the time it was built in the late eighteenth century, a stunning reversal for Szeemann, who, a few months earlier, had actively attempted to plot the museum's demise. With this new allegiance to the museum, Szeemann seemed to be declaring that instead of dissolving or moving beyond the museum, documenta 5 was returning to its very foundations. Yet the whitewashed and sanitized image, with the Fridericianum seen in three-quarter view, reads like a blank canvas: the building's unblemished surface almost demands to be smudged and dirtied.

In Cologne, Szeemann struggled to understand the point of Vostell's subversion of *Happening & Fluxus:* "Why try and get people from all over the world to Cologne and let them build environments that cannot be seen?"[67] With the controversy around Vostell's work, Szeemann witnessed his exhibition being put in the service of heightening social contradictions, becoming a tool of politics rather than functioning as an environment for a journey of transcendent spiritual and intellectual experiences. "This exhibition," he wrote in a letter to a friend shortly after *Happening & Fluxus* opened, "will be the last one where I give artists the opportunity to do what they like."[68] He seemed doubly disappointed, not only in the actions of Vostell and the artists who protested *Happening & Fluxus* but also with the local situation in Cologne, which struck him as similar to that of Bern and untenable for such an endeavor. "The exhibition and this supposedly open-minded, bullshit liberal Cologne were incompatible," he later declared.[69]

The outcry and criticism surrounding *Happening & Fluxus* led critics to question Szeemann's intentions for documenta 5. "What he achieved and probably didn't want" with *Happening & Fluxus,* wrote Gottfried Sello in *Die Zeit,* "is a belated vindication for the decision of the last documenta council, which had refused to include happenings and Fluxus in the exhibition concept, not because they questioned the artistic relevance of these groups but because of a true technical problem: their ability to be exhibited."[70] Whether or not the critical response to the show influenced him at all, Szeemann clearly came to see the plan for documenta 5 as disconnected from contemporary realities after Cologne: "That draft was written in 1970," he said in an interview, "in the atmosphere of the sixties. But the exhibition is taking place now. The constellation is different. Now it is accepted that social change cannot be made by art acting on its own."[71] In another interview about documenta 5, Szeemann elaborated on art, politics, and social change, saying, "An art exhibition can make neither a contribution to the construction of a socialist nor a capitalist society. . . . Art cannot immediately change something." In what can be interpreted as an admission of the necessity of art institutions for the preservation of art, he goes on to say, "The functional freedom of art offers the single chance of survival for art."[72] The festival format afforded the artist too much control,

which Szeemann felt could rupture the "functional freedom" of the artwork and the experience of the viewer.

For Szeemann, this seems to be the lesson of *Happening & Fluxus* and of Vostell's actions. Whereas Szeemann had viewed the festival format as a semiautonomous and novel social structure, one that was predicated on diverse participatory experiences, Vostell's actions destabilized this dynamic. By rupturing the confines of the exhibition through provocation, Vostell forcibly situated *Happening & Fluxus* within the drama of the everyday through the invasion of media and politics. For Vostell, the artwork was uniquely suited to illustrate relationships of power, dominance, and exploitation. His principle of deconstruction therefore clashed with Szeemann's desire for heterogeneous, personal, artistic encounters.

Szeemann's decision to return to the museum appears to be a response to these concerns, but he did not consider this a retreat from advanced artistic practices and a return to the format of the static museum displaying and maintaining property and ownership. Rather, Szeemann proposed that the museum's isolating function was central to the viability of the art exhibition as a special kind of event. "Exhibitions can only thrive from the prestige of the art context," Szeemann said shortly before the opening of documenta 5. "That is the only possible way to guarantee the event-like character of the exhibition."[73] Emblematizing the institutionalization of the previously anti-institutional, Szeemann began the initial planning for another, future exhibition called *The Street,* but rather than actually taking place in the streets, this show would be a critical reflection on the street within the spaces of the museum.[74] Somewhat contradictorily, the static institution came to ensure the supremacy of the event and the radical potentiality of the street, in Szeemann's thinking.

In the first weeks of 1971, after returning from Cologne, Szeemann began to work more closely with his primary collaborators, Bazon Brock, a media artist and professor of nonnormative aesthetics in Hamburg, and Jean-Christophe Ammann, director of the Kunstmuseum Luzern, to revise documenta 5's format and to reintegrate it back into the museum. Shortly after the drama surrounding the *Happening & Fluxus* opening, the three drafted a progress report on the concept for documenta 5. They again outlined documenta 4's inability to cope with art in its postobject phase, which had led Szeemann and his collaborators to the radical suggestion of having the artist present during the exhibition run and remaking the event as a three-week festival. Here, however, the report admits to the difficulties of this format: "The disadvantages to this recommendation are clear: d5 is overly trusting in the presence of the artist, who can break his contract in the last minutes, to refuse participation because of a slight issue (like recently happened in Cologne on the occasion of the Happening and Fluxus festival, which the general secretary thought of as a test situation for d5)."[75]

At this stage, the organizers had conceded that the initial goal of maintaining unity between the artistic and organizational aspects of the exhibition was a mistake. They continued to stress, however, that art's postobject phase demanded the presence of the

artist during the exhibition, but that the exhibition itself had to function autonomously and at a distance from the artist's demands: "D5 will only be spared from devolving into another fiasco of contemporary exhibition strategies by becoming an autonomous operation." Clearly viewing artists warily, the organizers stated that for the exhibition to function properly the "pampered artist, the exhibition organizer, as well as public authorities" must "change their mentality and not allow art to once again be transformed into a tourist attraction."[76]

Reframing the exhibition as an inquiry into reality, Szeemann and his collaborators used the Fridericianum and another museum space in Kassel, the Neue Galerie, to spatially and visually craft a journey at documenta 5 from the banal to the highly spiritual through a series of "image worlds" (*Bildwelten*). These were visual, spatial, and experiential art installations that served as meditations on the conditions and structures of the image in contemporary life.[77] The second space, the Neue Galerie, began the journey. It contained a section called "Paralleler Bildwelten" (Parallel image worlds), comprising everyday commercial, political, and religious objects and images, from propaganda posters to garden gnomes to religious souvenirs. Filled with the kitsch, advertising, and ephemera of an increasingly global mass culture, this section—the material and visual makeup of daily life—gave way to "Realismus" (Realism),[78] which displayed recent photorealist painting and sculpture. A final section, titled "Museen von Künstlern" (Artist museums), contained artworks and installations emulating the museum form. This section included the first presentation of Claes Oldenburg's *Mouse Museum* (1972), a collection of found objects, maquettes, and trinkets that Oldenburg had begun compiling in the early sixties. Though photorealism and the "artist museums" represent vastly different art practices, both sections address the mediated nature of contemporary experience.

The move from the sections in the Neue Galerie, which frame and comment on the visual and material composition of daily life, to the Fridericianum a half mile away, realizes the journey to the elevated experiential domain that Szeemann desired. The Fridericianum housed the bulk of the section "Individuelle Mythologie" (Individual mythologies), which Szeemann had primarily overseen. It was here that performances and experiences crafted by artists were enacted with visitors present. Joseph Beuys engaged visitors in social and political debate in his *Office for Direct Democracy;* James Lee Byars shouted German names from the top of the Fridericianum and stood in the building's pediment, physically and symbolically confronting institutional authority; and Ben Vautier performed a variety of actions in a space he had adorned with a series of provocative and generic statements such as "Art is the exhaustion of all possibilities" and "Everything is beautiful."

The "Individuelle Mythologie" section in the Fridericianum, later described by Szeemann as "part of a history of intensity in art,"[79] recalls the powerful, personal encounters that Szeemann sought to achieve in his own solo performances and in his Hugo Ball exhibition. While it is beyond the scope of this text to assess the successes and

failures of documenta 5, its final format and Szeemann's return to the physical spaces of the museum, though a seeming retreat from the radically anti-institutional format that he had initially pursued, reflect the continued evolution of his curatorial vision.

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1. Haftmann developed his notion of abstraction as a world language in the introduction to the catalog for documenta 2. Werner Haftmann, "Einleitung," *Documenta II: Kunst Nach 1945,* exh. cat. (Cologne: DuMont Schauberg, 1959), 14.

2. For a general description of these proceedings, see Roland Nachtigäller, Friedhelm Scharf, and Karin Stengel, *Wiedervorlage d5: Eine Befragung des Archivs zur documenta 1972* (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2001), 22–23.

3. Szeemann boasted of being "the world's youngest museum director." Harald Szeemann, "With by through because towards despite," in *Harald Szeemann: With by through because towards despite; Catalogue of All Exhibitions 1957–2005,* ed. Tobbia Bezzola and Roman Kurzmeyer (Vienna: Springer, 2007), 18.

4. *Attitudes* had also intrigued Karl Fritz Heise, documenta GmbH's managing director, and Walter Olbrich, its administrative director, who saw the curator of this show as an effective marketing tool, a symbol of the new that would appeal to younger generations. Harald Szeemann, "Catalogue of All Exhibitions, 1957–2005," in Bezzola and Kurzmeyer, *Harald Szeemann,* 314. After opening in Bern, *Attitudes* traveled to Krefeld, Germany, in May of 1969. It was there that many German artists and even future collaborators of Szeemann's, such as Klaus Honnef, saw the show. See Philipp Kaiser's interview with Klaus Honnef in *Harald Szeemann: Museum of Obsessions,* ed. Glenn Phillips et al. (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2018), 37.

5. See Nachtigäller, Scharf, and Stengel, *Wiedervorlage d5,* 23–24.

6. "There was mockery in cartoons and written vituperation, punctuated by the dumping of manure at the entrance. Despite positive international reviews, the museum cancelled Szeemann's planned Joseph Beuys show." Bruce Altshuler, *Biennials and Beyond: Exhibitions That Made Art History, 1962–2002,* vol. 2 (London: Phaidon, 2013), 95.

7. Additional reasons for Szeemann's resignation are revealed in a candid letter to a friend in which he criticized Heiner Friedrich, the future founder of the Dia Art Foundation, and Franz Dahlem, both of whom were influential collectors and gallery owners in Munich, saying, "They [Friedrich and Dahlem] contribute to this snobbish ghetto attitude, which I am sick of in art circles and was an essential reason for my resignation." All translations from German are my own unless otherwise noted. Harald Szeemann to Frau Miescher [no first name given], 1 August 1969, Harald Szeemann papers, 2011.M.30, box 272, folder 8, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles.

8. In his introduction for the *Attitudes* catalog, Szeemann specifically contrasts his exhibition with documenta 4. Harald Szeemann, "Zur Ausstellung," in *Live in Your Head: When Attitudes Become Form; Works–Concepts–Processes–Situations–Information,* exh. cat. (Bern: Kunsthalle Bern, 1969), n.p. For more on the relationship between *Attitudes* and documenta 4, see Caroline A. Jones, *The Global Work of Art* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016), 171–83.

9. Harald Szeemann, interview by Petra Kipphoff, transcript, 5 February 1970, Szeemann papers, box 302, folder 19.

10. Undated document pertaining to initial documenta 5 concepts, perhaps from early 1970, documenta archiv, documenta 5 (hereafter d5) file 113, documenta und Museum Fridericianum GmbH, Kassel, Germany.

11. Szeemann, "Catalogue of All Exhibitions," 38.

12. Text by Szeemann included in "Catalogue of All Exhibitions," 38.

13. Szeemann, "With by through because towards despite," 14.

14. *Gastarbeiter* primarily worked factory, manufacturing, and construction jobs. They were initially recruited for two years, but the cost of training new laborers every two years led to revisions in the labor laws that allowed workers to remain longer. For more information on the guest-worker program, see Rita Chin, *Guest Worker Question in Postwar Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

15. General details of the exhibition included in "Catalogue of All Exhibitions," 38–43; and in an announcement for Szeemann's appointment to the directorship of the Kunsthalle Bern in *DU* (November 1962), n.p., Szeemann papers, box 278, folder 9.

16. The quote here is taken from a text Szeemann wrote about his exhibition *Grandfather: A Pioneer Like Us* (1974), an homage to Szeemann's paternal grandfather, Etienne Szeemann. See Szeemann, "A Rewarding Retreat into the Private Realm," in *Harald Szeemann: Selected Writings,* ed. Doris Chon, Glenn Phillips, and Pietro Rigolo, trans. Jonathan Blower and Elizabeth Tucker (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2018), 76. In linking this personal exhibition back to the Ball exhibition, Szeemann further displays his identification with Ball as well as the deeply personal nature of his exhibition practices in general.

17. Szeemann, "Catalogue of All Exhibitions," 42.

18. Szeemann wrote an unpublished article in 1955, in which he discusses Ball and the Cabaret Voltaire, titled "Cabaret und Kabarett." The text is part historical account of the cabaret as a theatrical form and part call for the rejuvenation of contemporary theater. He also wrote a seminar paper on *Die Freie Zeitung* focusing heavily on Ball's contributions to the publication. Both documents found in the Szeemann papers, box 278, folder 7.

19. Szeemann identified with other prominent Catholics from the time as well. As the youngest and first Catholic director of the Kunsthalle, Szeemann later wrote of his appointment to the directorship there, which occurred the year after the 1960 U.S. presidential election: "There were some similarities to John F. Kennedy." Quoted in Szeemann, "With by through because towards despite," 18. In another biographical parallel with Ball, Szeemann lived and worked in Ticino at the end of his life, the same canton where Ball moved and retired after his time in Bern. It was Ball who inspired Szeemann to spend time there.

20. In Ball's Dada diary, he describes himself at the conclusion of the poem as though in a religious trance: "I noticed that my voice had no choice but to take on the ancient cadence of priestly lamentation, that style of liturgical singing that wails in all the Catholic churches of East and West." Recounted, with a fuller description of the performance, in Hugo Ball, *Flight Out of Time: A Dada Diary,* ed. John Elderfield, trans. Ann Raimes (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 71. For a good analysis of *Karawane* that situates Ball's performance within the practices and interests of Zurich Dada, see Hal Foster, "Dada Mime," *October* 105 (Summer 2003): 166–76.

21. Ball describes his headgear as a "witch doctor's hat." Ball, *Flight Out of Time,* 70.

22. Harald Szeemann, "Vorentwurf: Einer Konzeption für die documenta 5 in Kassel," n.d., documenta archiv, d5 file 88.

23. Szeemann, "Vorentwurf," documenta archiv.

24. I am indebted to Jones's sophisticated account of Szeemann's early exhibitions in which she convincingly embeds Szeemann's practice within a nuanced understanding of transnationalism. Jones, *Global Work of Art,* 164.

25. Szeemann should not be considered part of the shift toward uncritical pluralism in the seventies and eighties. In his 1982 essay "The Problem with Pluralism," Hal Foster diagnosed how museums and artists embraced pluralism as a kind of postmodern license to freely choose from history, styles, media, and modes of production, recognizing in this position the ideology of the free market. Originally published in *Art in America* (January 1982), republished as "Against Pluralism" in *Recodings: Art, Spectacle, Cultural Politics,* by Hal Foster (Seattle: Bay Press, 1985), 13–32.

26. The quotes are taken from three objectives listed in a four-point conceptual proposal from the early planning stages for the exhibition. The document is undated, but, based on the concepts and language being articulated, it is likely from early 1970. Szeemann, "Vorentwurf," documenta archiv.

27. Harald Szeemann, "Documenta 5," n.d., documenta archiv, d5 file 88.

28. Szeemann, "Documenta 5," documenta archiv. To give focus to the concept, they determined that the events and actions that would occur would be structured loosely around several primary themes: gesture, time, space, trace, prototypical thought, and experiences concentrating on the five senses.

29. Szeemann, "Documenta 5," documenta archiv.

30. Harald Szeemann and Petra Kipphoff, "Ein Gespräch mit dem Generalsekretär der documenta V, Harald Szeemann," *Die Zeit,* 1 May 1970, http://www.zeit.de/1970/18/ueber-kunst-kann-mannicht-abstimmen.

31. Some of the artists who ventured into the domain of institutional critique were Lawrence Weiner, who removed a section of the wall in one of the Kunsthalle's stairwells, and Jan Dibbets, who excavated a corner of the Kunsthalle to reveal its foundations. Also, famously, Daniel Buren, who was not included in the show, was arrested for plastering his signature stripes around the city. James Voorhies identifies the roots of new institutionalism in the 1990s to exhibitions, like documenta 5 and *Attitudes,* where curators welcomed institution-critical works by artists and later adopted these artists' practices as curatorial strategies. See Voorhies, "On New Institutionalism," *Beyond Objecthood: The Exhibition as Critical Form Since 1968* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2017), 71–138, esp. section on Szeemann, 75–91.

32. Szeemann and Kipphoff, "Ein Gespräch," n.p.

33. John A. Murphy, "Sponsor's Statement," in *When Attitudes Become Form,* n.p.

34. Guy Debord's writings on how capitalism and spectacle society isolate and disconnect the individual from their class bonds were especially influential in the sixties and inform many theories of liberatory participatory practices. In Debord's framework, the static museum in late capitalist society can be understood as part of the industry of leisure that "bestializes" the proletariat. See Guy Debord, "Toward a Situationist International," in *Participation,* ed. Claire Bishop (London: Whitechapel, 2006), 96–101. For an in-depth account of participation as a critical practice in the arts, see Bishop, *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship* (London: Verso, 2012).

35. Harald Szeemann, early d5 concept paper, n.d. [possibly from a 27 November 1969 meeting of Szeemann and initial collaborators], documenta archiv, d5 file 114.

36. Szeemann repeated this position often, initially citing the "triangle" of the "atelier, gallery, museum" in the catalog to *Attitudes* and revising it further to account for a fourth cornerstone of the property conditions of art, "the collection." Szeemann, "Vorentwurf," documenta archiv.

37. Harald Szeemann et al., "Documenta V: 100 Tage Ereignis," *Informationen* 1, no. 9 (May/June 1970). Also included in Bezzola and Kurzmeyer, *Harald Szeemann,* 315.

38. Harald Szeemann to Jürgen Claus, n.d. [1970], Szeemann papers, box 269, folder 1. Roland Nachtigäller, Friedhelm Scharf, and Karin Stengel have suggested that the three-week exhibition time was solely in response to budgetary pressures. See Nachtigäller, Scharf, and Stengel, *Wiedervorlage d5,* 24. However, Szeemann's letter to Claus and other, similar letters from this time suggest that he and some of the collaborators had been uncertain of the 100-day approach for some time and proposed the three-week exhibition time at least in part due to conceptual rather than budgetary reasons. However, a budgetary

reduction in 1971 (from the originally promised DM 5.6 million to 3.5 million) was a contributing factor to abandoning the festival approach entirely. As Hans-Joachim Müller has argued, this only partially accounts for the changes that were made in 1971. He, like I do here, attributes the changes to documenta 5 to the "fiasco" of *Happening & Fluxus.* See Müller, *Harald Szeemann: Exhibition Maker* (Ostfildern-Ruit: Hatje Cantz, 2006), 40–41.

39. Harald Szeemann to Werner Hofmann, 25 June 1970, Szeemann papers, box 301, folder 5.

40. The cylinder did eventually inflate. It is also worth mentioning that Christo and Szeemann were friends, and Szeemann greatly admired and appreciated his work. If this is a sly reference to Christo's work at documenta 4, it is undoubtedly meant in lighthearted jest.

41. Szeemann and Kipphoff, "Ein Gespräch," n.p.

42. Early in the history of sociology, Emile Durkheim recognized the potential for festival-like experiences to remove people from "their ordinary conditions of life." Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life,* trans. Carol Cosman (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 168.

43. Szeemann to Claus, Szeemann papers.

44. Harald Szeemann, interview by Freisel (no first name given), *Deutsche Welle,* 15 September 1970, Szeemann papers, box 312, folder 8.

45. Szeemann to Claus, Szeemann papers.

46. Szeemann to Claus, Szeemann papers.

47. For this show, Szeemann wanted to present more "body-related," "event-related," and "institutionally subversive" art. Harald Szeemann, *Zeitlos auf Zeit: Das Museum der Obsessionen* (Regensburg: Lindinger & Schmid, 1994), 138.

48. In addition, Szeemann believed Cologne to be the perfect location for such an exhibition. "[Cologne] is the place to retrace the history of Happenings and Fluxus," he stated in an interview in 1995. "Wuppertal, where Nam June Paik, Beuys, and Wolf Vostell had staged events, was nearby. So was Wiesbaden, where George Maciunas organized early Fluxus concerts, and in Cologne itself Heiner Friedrich had promoted La Monte Young." Hans Ulrich Obrist, "Interview with Harald Szeemann," *A Brief History of Curating* (Zurich: JRP/Ringier, 2008), 112.

49. For this show, Szeemann attempted to present a thematic assessment of the use of found objects in modern and contemporary art. It featured surrealists and Dadaists like Man Ray, Meret Oppenheim, and Duchamp, as well as contemporary figures like Warhol, Beuys, and Vostell. See "Catalogue of All Exhibitions," 282–83.

50. As Hans-Joachim Müller writes in his general profile of Szeemann, "The freedom of the Fluxus utopia must have meant more to [Szeemann] than the happening era. . . . Vostell was more interested in demarcation; for him, the happenings were the more vital genre. He saw their tradition rehabilitated in the political forms of struggle common in the late sixties." Müller, *Harald Szeemann,* 30.

51. Vostell wasn't alone in his criticism of the actionists, who were considered by many of the established artists in the show, such as Dick Higgins and Allan Kaprow, to be separate from happenings and Fluxus. In a letter, Higgins wrote of the actionists, "their sensibility is tangential to Happenings—we affect them, they do not affect us. And besides their kind of publicity might swamp the more serious questions." Dick Higgins to the office of the director of the Kölner [*sic*] Kunstverein, 17 December 1970, Szeemann papers, box 274, folder 5.

52. Szeemann claims he wanted the actionists because he felt happenings and Fluxus were historical phenomena, while Viennese actionism was "fresh." Szeemann, *Zeitlos auf Zeit,* 140.

53. For more on this happening, see Richard Langston, *Visions of Violence: German Avant-Gardes after Fascism* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2008), 138–43.

54. Gottfried Sello, "Im Kalb liegt die Kunst der Kuh," *Die Zeit,* 13 November 1970, n.p., http://www.zeit.de/1970/46/im-kalb-liegt-die-kunst-der-kuh. Authorities also claimed to be concerned that the

animal was not being properly fed and cared for. According to Vostell, he had clearly conveyed the cow's needs—feeding, caretaking—to officials at the Kunstverein, and a museum attendant who had formerly been a farmer had been assigned to the animal's care. He also requested that the animal be returned after the performance. Wolf Vostell to his lawyers Caspar Wassermeyer and Heinz Wassermeyer, 12 December 1970, Szeemann papers, box 274, folder 5.

55. Sello, "Im Kalb liegt die Kunst der Kuh," n.p. The artists who signed were Wolf Vostell, Allan Kaprow, Robert Filliou, Dick Higgins, Bob Watts, and Ben Vautier.

56. Sello, "Im Kalb liegt die Kunst der Kuh," n.p. The way Szeemann tells it, Vostell was acting vindictive and petulant, intentionally sabotaging the show after not getting his way.

57. Dr. [first name not provided] Peters, attorney for the Kunstverein, to Dr. Caspar Wassermeyer, regarding "the matter of Vostell," 30 December 1970, Szeemann papers, box 274, folder 5. The sum requested from Vostell was DM 14,819.10.

58. Wolf Vostell to Harald Szeemann, 12 January 1971, Szeemann papers, box 274, folder 5.

59. Additionally, Higgins felt that Szeemann intentionally misled Vostell and the rest of the artists regarding the inclusion of the actionists. Higgins to the office of the director of the Kölner [*sic*] Kunstverein, Szeemann papers.

60. The *Manopsychotic Ballets* included a ritual dance in which the performers caressed one another's genitals and simulated intercourse; Muehl extracted a tampon from the vagina of one of the female performers and then paraded it around to the audience in his mouth; a cameraman inserted his camera into the vagina of one of the women; and two men urinated on the female performers. For more descriptions of the performance, see Philip Ursprung, "Otto Muehl's Manopsychotic Ballet," *Tate Etc.* 15 (Spring 2009), http://www.tate.org.uk/context-comment/articles/more-art-world-can-tolerate.

61. For a general discussion of the actionists, see Eva Badura-Triska et al., *Vienna Actionism: Art and Upheaval in 1960s' Vienna* (Cologne: Walther König, 2012).

62. Vostell demanded that Hackenburg explain "why art objects aren't allowed to smell." Vostell to Wassermeyer and Wassermeyer, Szeemann papers.

63. In his dissertation, Benjamin Lima focuses on how Vostell heightens social tensions through the use of ordinary objects mixed with emblems of violence and the media as a means of attracting both viewers' and the media's attention. Benjamin Lima, *Wolf Vostell's Décollage and the Forms of Destruction, 1958–1972* (PhD diss., Yale University, 2009).

64. The critic Georg Jappe believed that Vostell knew the cow would be removed and that he wanted to highlight how certain forms of exploitation and violence are condemned while others are accepted. Georg Jappe, "Happenings Letzte Tage, 'Happening & Fluxus' in Köln—Gestern aktuell, heute Historie," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung,* 13 November 1970, retrieved through the documenta archiv Image and Press Database (subsequent references follow the abbreviated format da-IPD).

65. In German, *Ochsen* (oxen) is also a colloquial verb meaning to "cram" or "bone up on." The bones included in the installation and the association with television suggest "boning up on" television, "cramming," or excessively consuming, it. This certainly relates to Vostell's interest in the complicity of the television viewer and the exploitive dimension of mass media forms.

66. Harald Szeemann, Jean-Christophe Ammann, and Bazon Brock, "Draft Program for documenta 5 as a Thematic Exhibition," *Informationen* (March 1971): 1, da-IPD.

67. Sello, "Im Kalb liegt die Kunst der Kuh," n.p.

68. Harald Szeemann to John Gibson, 15 November 1970, translated and reproduced in Phillips et al., *Harald Szeemann,* 72.

69. Szeemann, *Zeitlos auf Zeit,* 139.

70. Sello, "Im Kalb liegt die Kunst der Kuh," n.p. More than anything else, critics responded to *Happening & Fluxus* by questioning the relevance of the two movements, declaring that the methods and

spaces of the artists who participated in the show had already been incorporated into the fabric of life in the form of public protests; therefore, while it was worthwhile to study them as historical phenomena, it was unnecessary to stage their practices as a historical model. Jappe, "Happenings letzte Zeit." See also Laszlo Glozer's review of the exhibition in the *Suddeutsche Zeitung,* reproduced and translated in "Catalogue of All Exhibitions," 284.

71. Harald Szeemann, interview by John Anthony Thwaites, n.d., though likely from shortly before the opening of documenta 5 in 1972, based on topics of discussion in interview, Szeemann papers, box 303, folder 11. Translation is Thwaites's.

72. Harald Szeemann, interview by Willi Bongard, 23 February 1972, Szeemann papers, box 303, folder 13.

73. Szeemann, interview by Bongard, Szeemann papers.

74. As a preview for this show, Szeemann put on a small *Schaufensterausstellung* (window-display exhibition) in the Warenhaus Gebrüder Loeb AG in Bern. When his responsibilities for documenta 5 intensified, he dropped out of the project. "Catalogue of All Exhibitions," 310–11.

75. Undated progress report from Harald Szeemann, Bazon Brock, and Jean-Christophe Ammann, most likely from late 1970 or early 1971, documenta archiv, d5 file 114.

76. Undated progress report from Szeemann, Brock, and Ammann, documenta archiv.

77. The catalog for documenta 5, with a cover designed by Ed Ruscha, was a large binder containing numerous texts and exhaustive documentation on the objects, artworks, ideas, and artists featured at the exhibition. See Harald Szeemann et al., *Documenta 5: Befragung der Realität, Bildwelten Heute,* exh. cat. (Kassel: Verlag Documenta, 1972).

78. This section was overseen by Ammann and received a good deal of critical praise but also intense criticism. Many gallerists and collectors were outraged by this sizable inclusion of photorealist painting. "We have strange reports that you are including certain 'reactionary' studio realists in your exhibition which we think is a monstrous impurity. . . . We will not be so cheerful if we see sickly pictures." OK Harris Gallery to Jean-Christophe Ammann, 14 November 1971, Szeemann papers, box 271, folder 3. See also Jean-Christophe Ammann, "Realismus," in Szeemann et al., *Documenta 5,* sec. 15, p. 1.

79. Written comments on documenta 5 by Harald Szeemann, included in "Catalogue of All Exhibitions," 318.