



ROTH TIME: A DIETER ROTH RETROSPECTIVE PRESENTS RICH VARIETY OF WORK BY ICONOCLASTIC EUROPEAN ARTIST IN ITS ONLY U.S. SHOWING

First Exhibition to be Presented Jointly by MoMA and P.S.1 Contemporary Art Center Features Chronological Retrospective at MoMA QNS and Five Large-Scale Installations at P.S.1

Roth Time: A Dieter Roth Retrospective
March 12–June 7, 2004
MoMA QNS and P.S.1 Contemporary Art Center

NEW YORK, March 2004— *Roth Time: A Dieter Roth Retrospective* opens in its only U.S. venues, MoMA QNS and P.S.1 Contemporary Art Center, on March 12, 2004, and remains on view through June 7. The first comprehensive survey in the United States to highlight the work of Dieter Roth (1930–1998), one of the most influential European artists of the postwar period, spans 50 years of his oeuvre. The exhibition presents approximately 375 artworks, including five large-scale installations at P.S.1, and explores the full range of Roth's creative accomplishments—paintings, drawings, graphic works, books, sculptures, installations, and film and video works. This is the first exhibition to be presented jointly at MoMA and P.S.1.

The exhibition was organized by Schaulager Basel, Switzerland, in collaboration with The Museum of Modern Art and Museum Ludwig, Cologne, Germany. *Roth Time* is organized for The Museum of Modern Art by Gary Garrels, Chief Curator, Department of Drawings, and Curator, Department of Painting and Sculpture, and for P.S.1 Contemporary Art Center by Klaus Biesenbach, P.S.1 Chief Curator. *Roth Time* was the debut exhibition at Schaulager Basel and was subsequently presented at Museum Ludwig.

Roth Time celebrates a radical individualist who spurned international art capitals and movements, and instead followed his own creative path in Iceland and Switzerland. In recent years Roth's critical reputation has grown, and his restlessness and inventiveness have influenced a new generation of artists. The MoMA QNS portion of the exhibition charts the development of Roth's work from its beginnings in the mid-1940s through the late 1990s. At P.S.1, five of the most complex, large-scale sculpture and media works are presented in an integrated installation.

Mr. Garrels says, "Art and life for Roth flowed readily into each other and were impossible to separate. His work has a diversity and a logical coherence that establish him as one of the most singular and important artists of the second half of the century." Regarding the installations on view at P.S.1, Mr. Biesenbach adds, "They bring together different periods of his life, showing where and how he worked, where and how he lived, when he left and when he returned. These ever-changing works possess the quality of self-portraits of the artist."

At MoMA QNS

On view at MoMA QNS is a chronological survey of Roth's career, beginning with his early drawings and graphic designs from the late 1940s and ending with his large assemblages from the 1980s and 1990s.

Eighteen works drawn from public and private American collections are exclusive to the MoMA presentation, including the assemblages *Tonbild* (Tone picture, 1975–88) and *À la Maison* (At home, 1975–78).

Born in Hannover, Germany, to a German mother and a Swiss father, Roth spent much of his teenage years in Zurich to avoid the dangers of World War II. There he developed an early love of art, poetry, and music. His first term of employment was as a commercial artist, and graphic design became one of his ongoing interests. The first gallery of the exhibition presents examples of drawings, graphics, and early abstract geometric works. In 1956 Roth moved to Copenhagen to accept a job as a designer with a major Danish textile manufacturer, while his own work concentrated on books and experimental films. *Kinderbuch* (Children's book), one of a series of picture books on view in the second gallery, was originally made as a prototype in 1954 and presents a progression of shifting patterns as the reader flips through the book. Optical and kinetic art characterized Roth's work from 1957 to 1960.

In 1961 a radical shift in Roth's approach to art became apparent, reflecting the influence of the Swiss artist Jean Tinguely and the American artist Robert Rauschenberg. Inspired by their ingenious melding of creation and destruction, Roth began to make works out of cut-up wastepaper and newspapers. For a series of works titled "Literaturwurst," on view in the third gallery, Roth replaced the meat from sausage recipes with the minced pages of books by writers he envied or whose work he disliked.

Invited to Rhode Island School of Design as a visiting professor of graphic design in 1965, Roth resided in Providence for about a year, during which time his use of organic materials, such as chocolate and cheese, emerged. The self-portrait sculpture *P.O.T.H.A.A.VFB* (an acronym for "Portrait of the Artist as Vogelfutterbüste" [Birdseed bust], 1968), made from a mix of chocolate and birdseed, is on view in the fourth gallery, along with *Gewürzfester* (Spice window, 1970), a cabinet filled with pleasant-smelling spices.

Although Roth moved to Reykjavik, Iceland, in 1957 and lived there intermittently until his death in 1998, he moved and worked between many cities between 1968 and the early 1970s—London, Dusseldorf, Cologne, Berlin, Stuttgart, Vienna, Zurich, and Los Angeles, among other places. He made many works based on postcards, including a series of six graphic works featuring the London landmark Piccadilly Circus. These technically complex prints, made with cocoa, tar, glue, and ink, are on view in the fifth gallery.

The sixth gallery of MoMA QNS displays surrealistic oil paintings and self-portrait drawings and graphics from the early 1970s. Next are highlights from Roth's numerous collaborations with the British artist Richard Hamilton, a series of drawings made with both hands at the same time, and *Tibidabo-Hundezwinger* (Tibidabo dog compound, 1978). A Barcelona dog pound inspired this installation comprising drawings, photographs, and sound recordings. On view in the eighth and ninth galleries of the exhibition are the *Grosser Teppich* (Large tapestry,

1984–86), a collaboration with the Austrian artists Ingrid Wiener and Valie Export; “material pictures” made up of objects typically found in an artist’s studio; and *Keller-Duo* (Cellar duet, 1980–89), an assemblage that reflects the artist’s increasing interest in sound. In this work a synthesizer and two child-sized electric organs are built into two wooden constructions along with several tape recorders and speakers.

At P.S.1

The P.S.1 presentation of *Roth Time* comprises five of the artist’s largest and most complex works exploring the subjects of time, decay, and the diary. In 1970 Roth began work on *Gartenskulptur* (Garden sculpture), a project that would continue even beyond his death. Continuously augmented and developed over a period of almost thirty years, *Gartenskulptur* is a meditation on collection, decay, and metamorphosis. The installation’s first manifestation was a bust Roth formed from birdseed and chocolate that was placed on an outdoor platform for birds to pick apart. Over time Roth added to the sculpture, placing various small art pieces and pre-installation sketches and drawings of the work itself on and around the platform. Every incarnation of the piece incorporates materials found on site, and the waste that results from *Gartenskulptur*’s exposure to the elements is recycled back into the work through a system of tunnels and preserving jars, allowing the work to grow with every installation. Installed with the assistance of Björn Roth, the artist’s son and collaborator, *Gartenskulptur* shares its exhibition space with the workshop where its progress is monitored and developed.

In the same gallery is *Fussboden* (Floor, 1975–92), a wooden studio floor covered with pigment and glue. To create this piece, Roth literally removed the floor from his studio in Iceland and installed it directly in front of a gallery wall, as one would place a painting. This textured, ruptured canvas functions as a record of Roth’s actions from 1975 to 1992 and asserts that a studio floor is just as much a work of art as the works produced upon its surface.

In 1973 Roth began a long-term project known as *Flacher Abfall* (Flat waste), for which he collected food packaging and other found scraps, subsequently encasing them in over 600 binders and filing them in bookshelves. This piece addresses Roth’s artistic role as collector, cataloguer, and archivist. Preserving the refuse that he and others had left behind, Roth created both an autobiographical record and an environment in which the viewer is forced to confront the ephemeral nature of existence through exposure to the collection of garbage.

Reykjavik, Iceland, was an important place in the artist’s professional and private life. *Reykjavik Slides* (1973–75 and 1990–93) comprises 30,000 photographic slides purporting to document every single building in the Icelandic capital. *Solo Szenen* (Solo scenes, 1997–98), also shot primarily in Reykjavik, is an installation composed of 131 video monitors and players stacked in a grid of three wooden shelves, each presenting continuous footage of the artist going about his daily routine. *Solo Szenen*, the culmination of a series of written, film, and video diaries that Roth began in the early 1980s, is his attempt at illustrating life as the accumulation of vast quantities of fragments of data.

Sponsorship:

The exhibition is organized by Schaulager Basel in collaboration with The Museum of Modern Art and Museum Ludwig, Cologne. The exhibition is made possible by Schaulager Basel and the Laurenz Foundation. Additional generous support is provided by Kathleen and Richard Fuld, Novartis, and The Contemporary Arts Council of The Museum of Modern Art. The Museum also acknowledges the assistance of Mimi and Peter Haas, Pro Helvetia, and The International Council of The Museum of Modern Art. The accompanying educational programs are made possible by BNP Paribas. The installations at P.S.1 are supported by James Family Foundation.

Catalogue:

The exhibition is accompanied by a publication with texts by Theodora Vischer, Director of Schaulager; Dirk Dobke, Curator of the Dieter Roth Foundation; and Bernadette Walter, Research Assistant at Schaulager. Also titled *Roth Time: A Dieter Roth Retrospective*, this 304-page book includes an extended chronology of Roth's art and life, in-depth studies of key works and moments in Roth's oeuvre, and a lavish plate section of 350 color illustrations. Like the exhibition, the book offers a rare opportunity to look at Roth's work in its full scope and variety. The catalogue is published by The Museum of Modern Art and Lars Müller Publishers, Baden, Switzerland. The book is available to the trade through D.A.P. (Distributed Art Publisher). Hardcover, \$45.00. Available at the MoMA Stores and online at www.momastore.org.

Public Programs:

A variety of programs will accompany the exhibition including panel discussions, a lecture by Mr. Garrels, and a program of poetry readings and Roth's sound art. *Dieter Roth (2003)*, a film directed by Edith Jud, will be shown at MoMA Film at The Gramercy Theatre on March 22. For more detailed information about these public programs, please see separate press release.

Audio tours:

At MoMA QNS, an Acoustiguide audiotour will be available for rental. To further enhance the P.S.1 exhibition, Mr. Biesenbach's commentary will be accessible by cell phone, the first time this option has been offered by MoMA and P.S.1. By dialing 212/708-9491 and following the prompts, callers can discover the background and significance of the P.S.1 installations.

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