

Haim Steinbach

Haim Steinbach: 1991–1993

January 14th – February 27th 2021

Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York

“In Steinbach’s work we seem to see the artifacts of a future civilization.”

—Germano Celant, 1987

Tanya Bonakdar Gallery is pleased to announce *Haim Steinbach: 1991 – 1993*, on view January 14 – February 27, 2021. This is the artist’s fourth solo exhibition with the gallery.

For more than four decades, Haim Steinbach has explored the psychological, aesthetic, and cultural aspects of collecting and arranging found objects. In selecting items that range from the obscure to the ordinary, the private to the ethnographic, Steinbach emphasizes notions of circulation and human connection. The exhibition highlights a concentrated three-year period in the artist’s career and draws upon memory, offering a recontextualization of his own historic practice and an occasion for reflection. Comprising a seminal large-scale “display” and objects from the same time period, the exhibition is populated by individuals who are both named and unnamed, touching upon family gatherings and traditions, intimacy, and the personifying power objects can hold.

At the center of the exhibition is *Display #28 (rustic wall with music box and candle snuffer)* (1991), an architectural façade that spans nearly the entire diagonal axis of the gallery’s main space. The concept of “display” recurs throughout Steinbach’s practice as a form that foregrounds objects, drawing awareness to the means of presentation and its implications. First shown at Jay Gorney Modern Art in New York, *Display #28* was inspired by a farmhouse in Tuscany where Steinbach stayed in the summer of 1991 and prominently features two found objects from the original site: a “Blabbermouth” AM/FM radio and a candle snuffer; the former a 1980s relic that comically mimes words or music through a motorized mouth, and the latter a retired eighteenth-century tool. Updated for 2021, the Blabbermouth plays a mix of fragments from musical instrumentation and voices. The Blabbermouth was discovered by Steinbach on a window ledge of the farmhouse, appearing as if it were a “mouthpiece” for the house itself. As objects culled from the world, the Blabbermouth and the candle snuffer reference the hands through which they have passed, while the vernacular wooden siding alludes to rural American construction and agriculture.

In the adjacent gallery, *Untitled (table with towels, bone, pacifier)* (1993) a broad glass, wood and MDF table presents a selection of folded cotton towels collected from an array of hotels in Austria. Embroidered and embossed with their owners’ company insignia, the towels are closely tied to both known places and unknown bodies. Originally shown in the exhibition “Das Fremde/Der Gast” (The Foreigner/The Guest) at Offenes Kulturhaus in Linz, Austria, the work features two compartments on opposing sides of the table: a rawhide bone is tucked into one, while an infant’s pacifier rests in the other.

On the surrounding walls are three wooden boxes with white plastic-laminated fronts: *Untitled (box with handkerchief - Bess)* (1993), *Untitled (box with handkerchief - Adi)* (1993), and *Untitled (box with handkerchiefs - Hector/Michelle)* (1993). First exhibited at Sonnabend Gallery, the boxes recall both minimalist sculpture as well as painting. Each work features a pull-out drawer that houses a square-folded white handkerchief embroidered with a name. The handkerchief — as a trace of human presence, proximity and connection as well as historical memory — is an especially significant object for

Steinbach, and will figure prominently in a new work by Steinbach commissioned by The Jewish Museum in 2021.

In the front gallery, *Shelf with Nurse* (1983) acts as a prelude to the exhibition as well as a tacit acknowledgment of the current moment in which we find ourselves. The work comprises a hand-painted wooden figurine, perched upon a shelf assembled from tiered vertical planes of painted wood. A rare early example of a form that has become central to Steinbach's practice – the wall-mounted shelf with an arrangement of selected found objects – the piece underscores Steinbach's interest in architecture and built environments while also alluding to health and the medical-industrial complex.

The exhibition is accompanied by a digital catalogue and essay by Alex J. Taylor, Assistant Professor in the Department of History of Art and Architecture at the University of Pittsburgh. Taylor recently presented research on Steinbach at Princeton University as part of the conference “Political Values, Market Values, Art Values: The Ethics of American Art in the 1980s.”

On Thursday, February 4th at 12pm the gallery will present a live Zoom conversation with Taylor and Steinbach.

Born in Rehovot, Israel in 1944, Haim Steinbach has lived in the United States since 1957. He received a BFA from Pratt Institute in 1968, followed by an MFA from Yale University in Connecticut in 1973.

In 2018, Steinbach presented the solo exhibition *every single day* at Museum Kurhaus Kleve, Germany, which traveled to the Museion Bolzano, South Tyrol, Italy in 2019. Also, in 2018, Steinbach presented *zerubbabel*, the inaugural exhibition of Magasin III, Jaffa, Israel. In 2013, the Hessel Museum of Art at Bard College in New York mounted a major exhibition of Steinbach's “Displays,” his site-specific installations since the late 1970s. Entitled *once again the world is flat*, the exhibition traveled to Kunsthalle Zurich and the Serpentine Gallery, London. Other notable solo exhibitions include The Menil Collection, Houston (2014); Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen (2013-14); Berkeley Art Museum, UC Berkeley (2005); Museum Moderner Kunst, Vienna (1997); Castello di Rivoli Museo d'Arte Contemporanea, Turin, Italy (1995); Kunsthalle Ritter, Austria (1994); *Osmosis* at the Guggenheim Museum, New York (with Ettore Spalletti), (1993); *no rocks allowed* at Witte de With Centre for Contemporary Art, Rotterdam (1992); and CAPC musée d'art contemporain, Bordeaux (1988). His work was presented at the 1997 Venice Biennale as part of the 47th International Art Exhibition curated by Germano Celant, and featured in Documenta IX, Kassel, Germany (1992), curated by Jan Hoet.

Steinbach's work has also been included in important group exhibitions at The Museum of Modern Art, New York; The Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; The Hirshhorn Museum, Washington D.C.; Tate Liverpool, Liverpool; Victoria and Albert Museum, London; Palais de Tokyo, Paris; New Museum, New York; Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; Museum of Contemporary Art, San Diego; Musée Rodin, Paris; The Jewish Museum, New York; Museo Reina Sofia, Madrid; The Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Humlebaek, Denmark; and Whitechapel Gallery, London. In 2019, The Museum of Modern Art featured the work *hello again* (2013) by Steinbach in the inauguration of its new galleries. Through January 31, 2021, Steinbach's work is included in *Ice and Fire: A Benefit Exhibition in Three Parts* at The Kitchen, New York.

The artist's work is represented in the permanent collections of The Museum of Modern Art, New York; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; The Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; The Dallas Museum of Art, Dallas; The Guggenheim Museum, New York; Tate Modern, London; The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; Albright Knox Museum, Buffalo, NY; The Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh; The Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; Centre

Georges Pompidou, Paris; Israel Museum, Jerusalem; Museum Moderner Kunst, Vienna; and The Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago.