



Daniel Spoerri

*No friend of stagnation*

Commemorative exhibition on his 95th - Part I

Feb 28–Apr 16, 2025

Opening: Feb 28, 6-9pm

LEVY Gallery & alexander levy, Berlin

Commemorative exhibition on his 95th - Part II

May 2–31, 2025

Opening: May 2, 6-9pm

LEVY Gallery, Berlin

Daniel Spoerri - ballet dancer, explorer of the “multiple”, object artist, *Nouveau Réaliste*, Eat-artist, master of chance - would have been 95 years old in March 2025. At the beginning of this year, LEVY Galerie and alexander levy are dedicating an extensive exhibition to Spoerri in Berlin.

As early as 1959, Daniel Spoerri impressed his audiences with his three-dimensional gravity defying still lifes, the *Trap-pictures*. But Spoerri did not content himself with this invention, time and again, he continued to deliver the unexpected. As is exemplified in his banquets, where he explored and questioned eating habits, making them tangible as Eat Art. This was also the case with his bread dough objects. In Paris, he had seen how fresh, unsold bread was thrown away in the evening. He reversed the process adding waste into bread dough, which he then baked. In 1961, the resulting taboo-shattering objects, *Catalogue Taboo*, were presented at an exhibition opening in Copenhagen eliciting their desired effect: visitors were outraged. Daniel Spoerri wondered in bewilderment why people would be upset by his bread dough objects, and not over the fresh bread that ended up wasted every day.

Spoerri's motto seemed to be change; he was reluctant to settle into the familiar or the tried and tested. In 1967, the artist withdrew to a small Greek island for nine months to escape fame, and audiences' fixation with his *Trap-pictures*.

There he focused on “meals and kitchen utensils” as a subject, the result was the “Gastronomic Diary”. A year later, in Düsseldorf, the Spoerri restaurant opened and shortly after the Eat Art gallery, for art made from or with food, such as the objects made from the bread dough series. The restaurant quickly became a “hotspot” in the art scene. During



1972, a table was selected every evening and fixed as a *Tableau Piège*. Unfortunately, not all 365 pictures survived a fire in the Galerie Bischofberger.

The *Tableaux Piège*'s became Daniel Spoerri's hallmark, even though he dislike the idea. (It became a regular sight to see people hold up their empty glass horizontally against walls whenever they heard his name while saying "This Spoerri?"). At Seville's 1992 Expo, several large-scale Spoerri tables – the Seville series – adorned the walls of the restaurant at the Swiss pavilion. The "Trap-pictures" principle saw numerous variations. In Spoerri's *Faux Tableau piège*, the artist cites himself, however, he no longer leaves the arrangements of the objects to chance. "Why should I have to stick to my own rules" he justly asks.

Fascinated by the diversity of the simplest objects, Daniel Spoerri collected pocket knives, egg slicers, peelers and pasta wheels. Spoerri believed that "the Darwinian principle of evolution can be seen in people's efforts to constantly change and improve things". His preoccupation with the natural sciences was reflected in many of his works. For the series *Carnaval des Animaux* (1995), he enlarged prints by Charles Le Brun, court painter in the 17th century, onto canvas and added objects to them. Le Brun's depictions of similarities between humans and animals appealed to Spoerri's sense of humor.

It seems as though the artist was writing his way through world history. This is evidenced in a literal manner in his *Boîtes à lettres*, assemblages consisting of type setting trays with large wood letters. "The alphabet" according to Spoerri "contains all kinds of texts: from court rulings to love letters. I was fascinated by the idea that all poems, novels, pornographic texts, the Bible, legal texts ... come from 27 letters. That's why I bought type setting trays whenever I found them."

Thomas Levy first exhibited works by Daniel Spoerri in 1978. From then on, they developed a close friendship, not least due to their shared connection to artist Meret Oppenheim. Since 2000 LEVY Galerie officially represented Spoerri. Over the years, Thomas Levy organized numerous Daniel Spoerri exhibitions in museums around the world, decisively contributing to the reception of his work.

Text Barbara Räderscheidt