



*An Artist, a Friend*  
*Memories of Daniel Spoerri*  
Thomas Levy

I knew Daniel for years, but I didn't work with him at first. In 1978, when I first exhibited Meret Oppenheim, Daniel was in Hamburg to design the stage set for Peter Zadek's production of Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale*. I took this opportunity to present a small exhibition of Daniel's work on one floor of the gallery in Tesdorpfstraße. But it wasn't until 2000 that we began working together in earnest.

In 1960, at Yves Klein's Paris atelier, the *Nouveaux Réalistes* movement was established; each of the artists proposed a unique approach to the concept of New Realism, with everyone of them developing a distinct “trademark” motif. It fascinates me that a single idea – such as Spoerri's *Trap Paintings* – as well as accumulations (Arman), compressions (César), décollages (Villeglé), and, so on, has remained (and indeed remain) part of the international canon of art history.

Later, Spoerri became the founder of Eat Art, another artistic movement that continues to resonate to this day. He is an integral part of the international art world, his works can be found in the collections of the world's most important museums and his work continues to influence contemporary artists.

When it comes to my friendship with Daniel Spoerri, I fondly recall an anecdote: we travelled together to his opening in Krakow in 2016 and then straight to another opening at Ostdeutsche Galerie in Regensburg. We flew to Munich and from there we continued by car to Regensburg. With Spoerri's mobility already very limited, we always used a wheelchair for flights. At the hotel in Regensburg, which the museum had reserved for him, a steep staircase of around 100 steps led to his room... So, I first had to find a new hotel. Spoerri - utterly exhausted and exasperated - even withdrew during his opening despite visitors pressing to see him. I protected him. A visitor asked me what my role was, to which I replied, “I am Mr. Spoerri's caregiver”.



During my extensive collaboration with Daniel, I organized over 30 exhibitions in museums and public institutions, in addition to numerous exhibitions in my gallery, “birthday parties” and Spoerri dinners every five years. The *Palindromic Dinner* in 2005 celebrating Daniel's 75th birthday and the 35th anniversary of my gallery – organized by Sarah Wiener – was remarkable: grissini disguised as cigars, meat pralines, mashed potatoes in sundaes, lamb leg disguised as roosters ... It remains an unforgettable experience. Now in 2025, for the 95th birthday and 55th anniversary of the gallery, there will be another dinner: the *Nouveau Réalisme – L'Ultima Cena* (New Realism – The Last Supper) marking the 65th anniversary of the movement's founding in Paris – sadly, without Daniel.

As his mobility and memory declined, I often visited him in Vienna. We spoke on the phone almost every Sunday at five o'clock in the afternoon.

I miss him very much.