

ICA LA will present a detailed recreation of renowned Swiss curator Harald Szeemann (1933-2005)'s 1974 exhibition *Grandfather: A Pioneer Like Us*, in conjunction with the Getty Museum's *Harald Szeemann: Museum of Obsessions*, organized by the Getty Research Institute (GRI). Drawn from materials from the Harald Szeemann Archive and Library, acquired by the GRI in 2011, the exhibition marks a significant moment in the curator's development, as it set into motion a series of projects that challenged what constitutes exhibitions and institutions, and redefined the practice of curating.

This full-scale reconstruction is a culmination of three years of research and conservation by the Getty Research Institute at the Getty Center. Szeemann maintained most of the hundreds of elements from the original exhibition, including furniture, and this presentation carefully reproduces the original exhibition, complete with family photographs, the grandfather's art collection, household objects, and the fascinating tools of his hairdressing trade.

Harald Szeemann began his work as an exhibition curator in 1957, and in 1961 at age 28, was appointed director of the Kunsthalle Bern, becoming one of the youngest museum directors in the world. He transformed the institution into an international showcase, focusing at once on current developments in contemporary art—kinetic art, op art, and Happenings as well as visionary folk artists and popular culture. Szeemann cultivated close collaborations with artists and began traveling the globe in search of new talent; in this early phase he developed the exhibition and research methods that would ground all his future endeavors. He organized two major international exhibitions which would cement his reputation as a visionary: *Live in Your Head: When Attitudes Become Form* (1969), followed by the fifth edition of documenta *Questioning Reality: Pictorial Worlds Today* (1972). With these exhibitions, he moved towards a more experimental approach to curating that, by some accounts, centered the curator as auteur. Szeemann often found himself at odds with artists, trustees, and museum professionals and the intense response to *Attitudes* led Szeemann to resign from Kunsthalle Bern.

Following this period of controversy, Szeemann reinvented himself as an independent curator, organizing exhibitions in nontraditional settings and focused on artists and ideas that may not have enjoyed institutional support. Szeemann staged *Grandfather: A Pioneer Like Us* in his Bern apartment in 1974 using the personal collection of his grandfather, beautician and inventor Étienne Szeemann, giving form to his obsessive, research-based archiving tendencies in an exhibition. Over his career, Szeemann amassed 22,000 files on individual artists, including ephemera, correspondence, actual artworks, and other materials, in addition to over 52,000 photographs of documentation. Ambitious in scope, *Grandfather* was a fully immersive installation that

encompassed nearly every surface of the apartment, transforming a domestic space into both an artist's museum and surrealist experiment.

After the exhibition's debut at ICA LA, *Grandfather* will be reconstructed at each subsequent tour venue, both as a special presentation and the central object of the entire project as an intact, historically accurate Szeemann exhibition that illustrates the themes examined in the larger Museum of Obsessions exhibition.

The exhibition will travel to the following institutions:

Kunsthalle Bern: June 8-September 9, 2018

Kunsthalle Düsseldorf: October 2018–January 2019

Castello di Rivoli, Italy: February–May 2019

Swiss Institute, New York: July–August 2019

*Grandfather: A Pioneer Like Us* is part of the exhibition *Harald Szeemann: Museum of Obsessions*, on view February 6 – May 6, 2018, at the Getty Research Institute.

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