

HSZ

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Grandfather: an exhibition and an invitation for subscription

Harald Szeemann

**TRANSLATED BY SHARON LERNER
AND EDITED BY JOANNA SZUPINSKA**

Shortly after WWII, I was at the Swiss lakes on vacation. It was during those rainy days that I came across a magazine, *Der Schweitzer Spiegel* (*The Swiss Mirror*). Framed as a spiritual defense of the country, and as a way to pass the time for foreigners separated from their homelands, this magazine offered a pastime for refugees during wartime. It printed true stories, lived and told by Swiss men. I can still recall Friedrich Glauser's adventures in the Foreign Legion, and in particular the life story of Captain Heinzelmann from Bern, who sailed the seas in his boat. He mostly transported an undeniably ambiguous cargo, jettisoning the occasional Armenian body into the Bosphorus.¹ Nevertheless, he never forgot to collect stamps from everywhere he went, and in the end his collection came to rest in Bern, where he settled and opened a philatelic shop.

Therefore it was only right that, after reading the memoir of my own grandfather (he wrote the first version when he was 89 years old), I recommended he send his story to the *Spiegel*. However, it was not until around his 95th birthday that the complete version of his years of wandering, entitled "The Master Hairstylist Journal," appeared in the *Der Schweitzer Spiegel*. The Hungarian-born subject (b. 1873 Diosd, d. 1971 Bern) wrote the way he lived: important points were big, and everything else was little. His autobiography ("To begin with God and to end with God is the best way to live") contained a wealth

of stories, no great adventures, but on the whole, the self-made friseur master led a very full life.

Little like Napoleon, decent, enchanting, bulky, and stubborn all at once, he fought his way through the world. He was a tough, unstoppable hair artist who didn't shy away from industrial espionage; he used to spy on the famous hair-curler Marcel's Vienna demonstrations through a keyhole (the same Marcel who invented the bogus hair-coloring combs and one of the first perm machines, and made wigs with his wife). [Grandfather] died in 1971 at the age of 98. He had already survived all of his children. His wife Leontine (née Drtilek), born in 1881 in Vienna, a Bohemian goldsmith, followed him only two months after his death.

Grandfather always knew very well what he wanted to become, so he always stayed very healthy. He never became rich, however, because he risked everything at the wrong moments. He speculated boldly and never bought the right stocks. When somebody offered him real estate at the train station at a very low price, he calculated the asking price by the 100,000 shaves it would cost him, so he decided that the land wasn't worth it. His businesses in Bern were always in the best spots: Falkenplatz, Christoffelgasse, Bundesgasse, Hirschengraben, Spitalgasse. In short, he wanted to stay healthy and therefore he rejected any kind of medicine. Instead he subscribed to extended walks, spiritual gatherings with colleagues, leisurely visits to the traditional Viennese coffeehouses in the "Schweizerhof" and the "Wächter," chats with musicians from the Hungarian ladies' orchestra in the casino, and, for the health of his spirit, chemical tests in his laboratories.

I think it's no coincidence that all of my grandfather's years of wandering which drove him through Hungary, Romania, Greece, Turkey, and then Vienna, Carlsbad,

Wiesbaden, Berlin, Hamburg, Paris, Nice, and London, only led him to Bern. His whole affection belonged to this city since 1897, when he first made a stop here. He allowed the dream of the "poor, hungry, boy that loved Switzerland above all" to become a reality. During his travels, he had always been happiest among Swiss people. When he arrived in London with only half a penny, it was a Swiss woman who accommodated and entertained him. He returned the favor with his art—he made for her a hairpiece, and she never forgot that. And the offer from Lord Allen? "He said that I had to stay in London. He wanted to furnish a first class business for me at his place in Old Bond Street, [my grandfather recalled in his memoir]. That was such a feudal offer. But I didn't want to allow myself to be bound to London. I want to be settled in Switzerland, Bern as my objective destination." In 1904 he and his family moved from London to Bern, and in 1919 he became a naturalized citizen. It was in this time, certainly, that a peculiar work was originated: a Swiss emblem from felt, and bleached, reddish and blackened hairs from his clients, mounted above a glass mirror bearing the title: "TRYBOL: the first herbal mouthwash of the world."

Above all, Grandfather was a coiffeur. His life belonged to this form of art. To it, everything else was subordinate. But he was also a very passionate collector: documents from work, stamps, stitches, badges, collectible rifleman cards,² monetary bills. His home at Ryffligässchen 8 was an overflowing lodge that began as three, and later became two, rooms. At the clearing of it in 1971 after his death, I took everything that reminded me of my grandparents. For years, I had found this house worthy of exhibit, as a visualization of a history, as a testimony to a lifestyle, as an illustration of the recognition that in the life of every man, there is a point when each sign

becomes self-evident, and the accumulation of these signs and objects is no longer obstructive.

Grandmother was married to him for 69 years. She was deaf since the birth of her children, but only for outsiders. Everything that he did, spoke to her. Very often she found him impossible, but he was her life, and she was his. She shone as a cook, and loved festivities. She was always there, and in spite of the fact that deaf people are usually sad, she retained a healthy mentality. This little pair (5'2" and 5'1") didn't make the lives of their children easy—they forced both sons to become friseurs—but they were very good to their grandchildren. Grandfather worked meticulously in preparation for big parties, to prepare extensive programs of jokes. Christmas presents from Grandfather, in the form of props and costumes that occupied us (me and my brother) for hours, in a very artistic way reproduced the little labyrinth of the house.

After the early death of all their children—my father was the last to go in 1958—my mother, full of altruism, attended to the grandparents. As an elderly man, Grandfather had more free time, though even as a 92 year-old, he still served his original lady clients. But his principal interest was the grandchildren, so he visited every exhibition "Doctor Harry," as my grandmother called me, organized at the Kunsthalle. Dressed in his Sunday best, kissing the hands of the ladies, he was the doyen of the vernissages.

When I visit memorial sites, and also in the making of my own exhibitions, I have always been fascinated by the problem of how to artistically represent a life through the display of objects. A one-to-one reconstruction of the home would not have sufficed here. Only in a guided form could my grandfather's own order be shown. This exhibition presents the following highlights: Tree of origin, Grandmother, Roots in Austria-Hungary, Bern and Switzerland, the Occupation (the years of wandering

and learning, his own businesses, his printed matter, meetings, and distinctions), Grandfather's relationship to money, Role models, Grandparents' dwellings, Grandfather's contribution to the triumph of beauty, and What the others say.

It is a very happy coincidence that Tony Gerber took my previous home, and simultaneously with this exhibition of a centenarian, celebrates the 10-year anniversary of his gallery. I have had Grandfather's possessions for over two years, and I have carried them along through three moves, only to exhibit them here at Tony Gerber's in my last Bern home. The exhibition is an homage to that person who came to Bern, organized by the one who now departs.

A grandfather exists long after his death in the conversations about him, and also in his stories that are retold. This here is only an exhibition. He narrated his own life through stories, and even preserved them in his memoirs. I have included everything here, for even you should know what snake fat is good for, how to dress the hair of an emperor, how to throw marble cake from the window of a train, what to do when jealous colleagues, in the middle of the night, build a brick wall covering the entrance to your business, and what ethics are: "I have also experienced very difficult times, but I thank dear GOD for my health, and for His good guidance. He never let me do anything wrong. But how did He know, Mr. Szeemann, that you shouldn't do something good or bad? I cannot explain to anyone, how in certain moments I felt a good feeling and reassurance, but also sometimes when something bad was on its way, I was always concerned. This is all that I can say about that. I am a man of emotions."



In *Grossvater—ein Pionier wie wir* (1974), Szeemann used the personal story and belongings of his late grandfather to craft a social critique of 1970s Europe. Above, a partial view of the apartment-wide installation. Photo: Balthasar Burkhard © Harald Szeemann Archive

Grandfather: a history like ours

Joanna Szupinska

Following the hugely successful *Documenta V* and the re-invention of the exhibition as a “100 Day Museum” in 1972, the former Kunsthalle Bern director and famed independent curator Harald Szeemann turned to the more intimate subject of his recently deceased paternal grandfather. In 1974, about 100 years after the birth of the subject, Szeemann staged *Grossvater—ein Pionier wie wir* (*Grandfather: A Pioneer Like Us*) in an altogether unheard of, at that time, exhibition space. Held at Tony Gerber’s apartment gallery in Bern for two months, the exhibition presented Etienne Szeemann’s collections—objects accumulated over decades. Szeemann had lived in the private apartment for months, all the while working on the deliberate installation of his grandfather’s belongings (which he had saved for over two years and through three moves since his grandfather’s passing in 1971): furniture, memoirs, stamp collection, monetary bills, as well as instruments of his beloved hairstyling trade and advertisements for his services.¹

Harald Szeemann presented the project with a proposition for a publication, should enough subscribers commit to purchasing copies. The heading on the exhibition leaflet read, “GRANDFATHER: an exhibition and an invitation for subscription.” Here the curator outlined his grandfather’s devotion to his family, chosen occupation, and adopted country in what amounts to a sentimental, four-page eulogy. “A grandfather exists long after his death in the conversations about him, and also in his stories that are retold,” he writes. “This here is only an exhibition. He narrated his own life through stories, and even preserved them in his memoirs. I have included everything here, for even you should know what snake fat is good for, how to dress the hair of an

emperor, how to throw marble cake from the window of a train, what to do when jealous colleagues, in the middle of the night, build a brick wall over the door of your business, and finally, what ethics are."² The proposed book, which was to contain images of the grandfather's collections as well as his own writings, was never produced.

Grossvater has been briefly cited numerous times as evidence of the curator's adventurous style—his brave willingness, on the heels of international acclaim, to make small, personal exhibitions of non-art objects. Three decades after the exhibition Hans-Ulrich Obrist, in his eulogy, compared the relatively small show with the monolithic, sprawling exhibitions for which Szeemann is widely known, "[An] important facet of his career was the way he oscillated between large and small, private and public. After the 1972 Documenta in Kassel, for example, there was the exhibition dedicated to his grandfather, held in a private apartment in Bern, with no hierarchy between the larger and the smaller show—entirely in keeping with Robert Musil's observation that art can appear where one is least expecting it."³ In Obrist's interpretation, *Grossvater* serves as little more than a curious example of Szeemann's many interests, and the astonishing breadth of his practice. Often retold as an anecdote, the endeavor as a whole has come to stand as proof of the curator's artistic-curatorial practice; the actual content of the exhibition has not been sufficiently analyzed despite Szeemann's own articulated commitment to the seriousness of the project.

On the occasion of Szeemann's seventieth birthday, in an article tellingly entitled "The Artist-Curator," Roman Kurzmeyer reflects on Szeemann's past exhibitions and ongoing practice, "He initially surprised the art world with a little show entitled *Grossvater: Ein Pionier wie wir* [, ...] offering the legacy of his grandfather, hairdresser Etienne Szeemann, in the form of an imaginary museum. This

'musée sentimental' was a loving homage and at the same time a work critical of institutions, comparable with Marcel Broodthaers' *Musée d'art moderne*...."⁴ Characteristic of analyses of *Grossvater*, Szeemann's practice is here likened to that of an installation artist, and his concerns are aligned with institutional critique. Certainly these elements are present, and may have been so striking in the mid-1970s that they eclipsed the content of the exhibition. However, *Grossvater* is perhaps worthy of deeper investigation and consideration.

Arguably the installation was a personal meditation on the important familial figure, the brave immigrant who built a business and reputation as a master coiffeur from nothing, or a gesture of personal respect and mourning. Perhaps the exhibition was a feat of curatorial innovation, "an arresting and unique glimpse of the evasive, heavenly museum of obsessions,"⁵ therefore more about art and exhibitions, than Etienne Szeemann the person. However, if the exhibition is interpreted fully, the grandfather comes to stand for more than what he represented for the curator personally; furthermore, the exhibition offers more than institutional critique. Indeed, perhaps Szeemann mined the particular, personal story of his own family member to make a statement about a more general Swiss or European condition. To understand that message, however, the viewer is required to delve into the cringe-inducing sentimentality of the content and move beyond the urge for premature dismissal. In an attempt to read meaning in the exhibition, then, let us at least briefly acknowledge the installation itself and key moments from the named subject's life story, including why he left his home country and settled in Switzerland. Let us also consider elements as small as the exhibition title, as seemingly superfluous as the guests invited to the opening, yet as complex as the contemporaneous socio-political realities of 1970s Europe.

According to Szeemann's exhibition leaflet, the installation

was a composition of objects supporting several themes. He enumerates these in the exhibition text: "Tree of Origin," "Grandmother," "Grandfather's Roots in Austria-Hungary," "Bern and Switzerland," "Grandfather's Occupation (the years of wandering and learning, his own businesses, his printed matter, honors and distinctions)," "Grandfather's Relationship to Money," "Grandfather's Role Models," "Grandparents' homes," "Grandfather's Contribution to the Triumph of Beauty," and finally, though somewhat cryptically, "What the Others Say."⁶ Only some of these themes, especially Occupation, are represented in the surviving installation photographs, whereas others may have been apparent in his grandfather's memoirs or other, possibly undocumented, portions of the installation. Regardless, Szeemann is careful to clarify that the exhibition is neither meant to be a literal representation of how his grandfather lived, nor an exact retelling of his life story, but rather an interpretation of an atmosphere, attitude, and a life lived. At a remove from the reality of the grandfather's experience, the grandson could only attempt to offer his own perspective. He covered the walls of the rooms with advertisements and framed pictures, he placed mannequins in unlikely arrangements that rendered them assemblages, and he piled books and diaries on tables for visitors to peruse.

Harald Szeemann's grandfather had an interesting life. Istvan (later, Etienne) Szeemann was born in Diósd (a small town in Pest County) in 1873, the same year that Buda, Óbuda, and Pest were united into today's Hungarian capital Budapest, less than 10 miles away from his hometown.⁷ Following the failed Hungarian democratic revolution in 1848, the country had been subsumed into the Austro-Hungarian Empire, in which under the rule of Emperor Franz Joseph it thrived economically but suffered enforced Germanization and cultural oppression. Diósd might have provided a particularly difficult setting for Hungarians, as

the majority of the population was made up of Swabians (Southern Germans) until the end of World War II, at which point they were chased out of the country. Coming of age during the large Hungarian emigration wave of 1880–1915,⁸ it is not surprising that Istvan departed his small town⁹ to pursue capitalist dreams abroad. As is often the case with other groups of immigrants, one can deduce with some certainty the economic class of the family depending on when the Magyar left his country: prior to 1880, many Hungarian emigrants were highly educated academics and professors; during the great wave (during which Istvan left), they were most often unskilled or semiskilled workers from rural areas, who moved to urban settings looking for employment; and around World War II, many were highly skilled professionals like doctors and lawyers.¹⁰

Istvan, the “poor, hungry boy,” as his grandson writes, traveled through many countries including Romania, Greece, and Turkey, and throughout Western Europe, including Vienna, Carlsbad, and Paris, among other cities. As the family story goes, Istvan’s affections for the Swiss were sown when, in London, with only half a penny in his pocket, he was offered accommodation by a Swiss woman. He returned the favor by making her a hair piece, for which she was eternally grateful.¹¹ There is no doubt that Etienne Szeemann was, in the eyes of his loving family, a colorful character. “Little like Napoleon, decent, enchanting, bulky, and stubborn all in one, he fought his way through the world,” writes Szeemann in his exhibition leaflet. “He was a tough, unstoppable hair artist who didn’t shy away from industrial espionage; he used to spy on the famous hair-curler Marcel’s Vienna demonstrations through a keyhole.”

In 1904—the same year that Harald Szeemann’s father was born—the traveler and his wife, Viennese-born Bohemian Leontine Drtilek (eventually the curator’s grandmother), settled permanently in Bern, where he opened

his first salon. Whereas Switzerland had been predominantly a country of emigration in the mid-1800s, by the turn of the century it became a destination for various European immigrant groups. By the start of World War I in 1914, nearly fifteen percent of the entire population was made up of foreigners.¹² (The Szeemanns gained Swiss citizenship in 1919.) Having left Hungary during a large emigration wave, and settled in Switzerland during an equally significant immigration trend, Istvan Szeemann's personal history might have been analogous to numerous Swiss family stories. In his exhibition text for *Grossvater*, Szeemann conjectures that a particularly patriotic object, made by the enthusiastic immigrant, must have been created around the time this young family settled in their chosen city: a Swiss emblem made of felt and dyed black, red, and bleached white hair from salon clients. Not unlike his own characteristic installations, the curator recalls his grandfather's idiosyncratic mounting of the emblem above a mirror bearing an advertising slogan for a popular herbal mouthwash.

Etienne Szeemann's enthusiasm for his trade was, if with some insistence, inherited by Harald's father and uncle. His grandchildren were afforded a freedom never enjoyed by his immediate progeny. The curator writes, "[Grandfather's] principal interest was the grandchildren, so he visited every exhibition 'Doctor Harry'—as my grandmother called me—organized at the Kunsthalle. Dressed in his Sunday best, kissing the hands of the ladies, he was the doyen of the vernissages."¹³ Here, in a touching retelling of Etienne Szeemann's life and loves, the curator offers nostalgic ruminations on his grandfather's genuine displays of support and old-fashioned style, somewhat out of place in his grandson's 1960s art world, though undeniably charming. Seemingly Szeemann made choices about his invited audiences as deliberately as he chose the artists and thinkers that were included in his exhibitions and catalogues. No doubt he

considered his grandfather's attendance at *When Attitudes Become Form* as yet another example of "concept," "situation," or "information," as the subtitle for the show suggests. Joseph Beuys, Claes Oldenburg, and Etienne Szeemann in one space together would create an inspired collision of distinct worldviews, all of which the curator could presumably align himself to varying degrees.

Similarly, we might read great intention in the selection of guests that the curator invited to *Grossvater*. Wealthy former clients of his grandfather as well as accomplished contemporary artists filled the apartment on the night of the opening. In recalling the evening, Szeemann writes that it, "was attended not only by the ladies whose hair my grandfather had done but also by Sigmar Polke, Michael Buthe, Katharina Sieverding, Christian Boltanski, Mario and Marisa Merz, Udo Kier, and many other artists. It was an almost orgiastic night in my grandparents' furniture."¹⁴ Reminiscing about the opening as a pagan sensual indulgence, Szeemann reveals the taboo of mixing social classes. Was the bacchanal party itself an anti-class gesture? By juxtaposing these distinct 1970s audiences with the disappearing generation of his grandfather, Szeemann proclaims, at least for his peers, the end of class and national hierarchies. Indeed, he seems to enjoy the tension between his grandfather's former clients, and the intelligentsia of his own moment and generation.

Accepted into the art world by his peers, Harald Szeemann was nevertheless discriminated against by the Bern aristocracy. In the introduction to the catalogue raisonné *Harald Szeemann: with by through because towards despite*, Szeemann recalls with amusement a certain landlady, Mme. De Meuron, and her reaction to his familial heritage. The "elderly, aristocratic woman" interrogated him, "'What did your grandfather do?' she asked. My answer: 'But you know him. He is a *maitre-coiffeur*.' 'And your father?' Same

answer. 'And you are a museum director. What disorder!'" Amused at her distaste for the mixing of classes, he goodheartedly mocks the "member[s] of the *ancien régime*" and what for them "was obviously a scandalous defiance of genealogical predestination..."¹⁵ By inviting the Mme. De Meurons of the world to the opening of *Grossvater*, Szeemann amplifies this separation of classes, and in a shock tactic mixes groups of people to make an emphatic political point that seems to have gone largely undetected at the time. The proud ladies and the nonconformist artists were surely invited to the opening to participate, to sit among the furniture as Szeemann writes, as props and elements of the exhibition itself. For it was not until the room filled with these characters that the objects took on their multifarious meanings.

In addition to Istvan Szeemann's humble Hungarian beginnings at the end of the 19th century in Diósd, it is important not to overlook Hungary's place in Europe at the time of the exhibition. By the 1970s, the widespread internal disillusionment with the Soviet vision had begun to be understood in the West: this dream was not going to come true. Hungary, following the 1956 Revolution against the harsh policies of Stalinism, entered the so-called Kádár Era, named after moderate communist leader János Kádár. By the time of the exhibition, Kádár's country was already practicing a hybrid capitalist-socialist economy—the Goulash Economy, as some pungently described it¹⁶—and came to be known—for the relative availability of foreign and domestic goods, and its improved human rights record—as the happiest barrack in the Eastern bloc.¹⁷

Meanwhile in the West, Szeemann was experiencing firsthand the impact of changes in Swiss politics. Following the controversial 1969 exhibitions *When Attitudes Become Form* and *Friends and Friends of Friends* at the Kunsthalle Bern, and devoid of patience for the stultifying Kunsthalle artist

board, Szeemann decided to work as an independent exhibition-maker, starting what he called the *Agentur für Geistige Gastarbeit* (Agency for Intellectual Guest Labor). He outlined his process as such: "I have an idea. I hire myself, as an Agency for Intellectual Guest Labor, to realize the idea. [...] Since the decision is ultimately passed down to me by the agency, and because I am the agency, I accept the commission to carry out my idea."¹⁸ Although his text describing the Agency is satirical, Szeemann put a great deal of thought into the endeavor. His desire for creative independence was not merely rooted in the hope of freeing himself from the exhibition hall's bureaucracy; there were other political motivations. "It was during that period," he said years later, "that the hostility to foreign workers began to manifest itself; a political party was even founded to lower the number of foreigners in Switzerland. I was attacked since my name was not Swiss but Hungarian. In response, I founded the *Agentur für Geistige Gastarbeit*, which was a political statement since the Italian, Turkish, and Spanish workers in Switzerland were called 'guest workers.'"¹⁹

Following the Second World War, Switzerland had begun to actively recruit construction and factory laborers from Italy, and starting in the 1960s, from Spain. Implementing what was called a rotation model, the Swiss laws encouraged only temporary settlement. The required residence period for a guest worker was increased from five to ten years for the procuring of a permanent residency permit, and restrictive family reunification policies were implemented. As Switzerland enjoyed an economic boom in the 1960s the laws were not strictly adhered to by the government, but the oil crisis in 1973 rendered many foreigners unwanted, and large numbers of unemployed guest workers were deported. Around the time Szeemann was conceptualizing his Agency, the reviving Swiss economy was again starting to attract workers from Portugal and Turkey, as well

as from Spain and Italy,²⁰ something that might have been looked upon with apprehension by some Swiss nationals.

Furthermore, *Agency for Intellectual Guest Labor* is alternately translated as *Agency for Spiritual Guest Labor*. By offering, under the guise of an Eastern European immigrant, his “spiritual” expertise, Szeemann sarcastically acknowledges the primitivist myth of a “transformative alterity.”²¹ The political temperature in Switzerland—the small country otherwise known for its political neutrality, decentralized government, and ethnic and linguistic diversity—resulted in Szeemann feeling that he was being discriminated against for his Hungarian roots. All this despite the fact that, as was the case with his grandfather, people who emigrate in search of a better life are often, when it comes to their adopted nations, among the most patriotic, as was demonstrated in Szeemann’s case by the creation of the national symbol from collected clients’ hair clippings. Keenly attuned to the Swiss politics of the late 1960s, Harald Szeemann consciously played with his familial history by calling himself a “guest worker” who offered “spiritual” labor from the—romantically speaking, both less civilized and more authentic—East.

Finally, let us consider the exhibition title: *Grossvater—ein Pionier wie wir*. Grandfather Etienne, with all his quirks and old-fashionedness, particular yet charged with representing an entire older generation, is an ancestor and predecessor. Distanced by time and culture, he is nevertheless undeniably linked to the present: without him, Szeemann’s generation (who made up much of the audience of the exhibition) would not exist. *Ein Pionier*: a Magyar immigrant, working-class turned small-businessman, a Western success, he is someone who paved the way for his family. Traveling throughout Europe, his rootlessness was not unlike the itinerant nature of his future international curator grandson’s approach to exploring the art field and pioneering new ways of exhibiting. But perhaps most importantly, let us

consider *wie wir*, like us. The titular "us" identifies a generation, if not perhaps a specific social milieu. It is compelling to consider that the term might include everyone who attended the exhibition, aristocratic ladies and bohemian artists alike. Notably, "us" is an ambiguous term because it changes direction depending on who is speaking, and is variably inclusive. Undoubtedly Szeemann reaped pleasure from its slipperiness: perhaps "us" narrowly points to his generation, born in the 1930s, or alternately to cultural producers, artists and exhibition-makers, or maybe to the postmodern society of 1970s Bern, where the exhibition took place. Finally, "us" conceivably delineates a new, classless intelligentsia, who sought to look beyond national borders and familial rankings. Regardless, "us" is not exclusive, but rather a term loose enough to contain all of these groups, and inviting enough that it can accommodate new and future members.

The effect of the exhibition, when considering the relationship of the title to the curated audience, the contemporaneous relationship between Western European capitalism and Soviet socialism, and Switzerland's attitude toward immigrant workers, is that the specific and local story of one person, Etienne Szeemann, points to the complex European realities of the moment. Perhaps the curator's role in creating this environment installation is not that of curator-artist, but curator-ethnographer. Indeed, through the analysis of his own family member performed within the parameters of a small exhibition, Szeemann reveals to his audience the ambiguities among the work of the hairdresser and the curator, the politics of capitalism and socialism, as well as the specific realities of Hungarian and Swiss cultures. Through this "self-ethnography,"²² contained within the parameters of a physically small exhibition, Szeemann offers a culturally transgressive social critique that simultaneously and succinctly addresses the politics of class, economics, and cultural otherness.

- 21 H. Szeemann, "Vorbereitungen," in *Der Hang Zum Gesamtkunstwerk*, op. cit., 16. As translated in H.-J. Müller, *Harald Szeemann*, op. cit., 78.
- 22 *Ibid.*, 79.
- 23 H. Szeemann, "Vorbereitungen," op. cit., 16.
- 24 "Let social transformation be the New World"; "God is love."
- 25 T. Carlyle, op. cit., 23.
- 26 Florence Derieux, "Introduction," in F. Derieux (ed.), *Harald Szeemann: Individual Methodology*, (Zürich: JRP/Ringier, 2007), 8.
- 27 Fredric Jameson, "In the Destructive Element Immerse: Hans-Jürgen Syberberg and Cultural Revolution," *October*, vol.17, Summer 1981, 99. My sentences redirect sentences Jameson wrote about Syberberg to refer to Szeemann.
- 28 "[Une] conscience de soi s'organisant et s'institutionnalisant elle-même, fournissant le fondement d'un possible cheminement pataphysique—sous la forme d'un cercle de règles se renouvelant sans cesse." Originally published in H. Szeemann and J. Gachnang (eds.), *Jungesellenmaschinen*, op. cit., p.11; reprinted and translated in T. Bezzola and R. Kurzmeyer (eds.), *Harald Szeemann with by through because towards despite*, op. cit., 280.
- 29 *Ibid.*
- 30 Peter Osborne, at "It's About Time" panel discussion at Frieze Art Fair, London, 17 October 2008.
- 31 F. Jameson, *Archaeologies of the Future*, op. cit., pp.4-5; Roland Barthes, *Sade, Fourier, Loyola* (trans. Richard Miller), (New York: Hill and Wang, 1971), 23.
- 32 H. Szeemann, "Vorbereitungen," op. cit., 19.

Harald Szeemann, Grandfather: an exhibition and an invitation for subscription [S. Lerner, Trans., Joanna Szupinska, ed.]

- 1 The "ambiguous cargo" here implies human trade; during WWI the captain apparently helped Armenians escape from Turkey, but those who perished during the voyage had to be sacrificed to the open waters.
- 2 Rifleman cards are decks of playing cards that celebrate military life through variously depicted scenes that can include images such as celebratory army parades, ladies displaying banners, or jokers holding targets.

Joanna Szupinska, Grandfather, A History Like Ours

- 1 Harald Szeemann, "Leaflet for the exhibition," in *Szeemann: with by through because towards despite, Catalogue of all Exhibitions 1957-2005*, ed. Tobia Bezzola and Roman Kurzmeyer, (Wien, New York: Springer, 2007), 388.
- 2 *Ibid.*, 388.

- 3 Hans-Ulrich Obrist, "Harald Szeemann 1933–2005: Remembering the life and work of one of the most influential and imaginative curators of the last century," *Frieze*, May 2005 (issue 91), 80.
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- 6 Harald Szeemann, "Leaflet for the exhibition," 388.
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As if

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Grandfather, A History Like Ours

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Coming to Terms: Bazon Brock's "Der Hang zum Gesamtkunstwerk"

Sharon Lerner

The Tendency Towards the Total Work

Bazon Brock [S. Lerner, Trans.]

Notes on "The Tendency Towards the Total Work"

Sharon Lerner

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Utopia and Gesamtkunstwerk—A Critical Timeline

Courtney Dailey

Notes**Colophon**