

MACS

Musée des Arts Contemporains
Grand-Hornu

Haim Steinbach

Objects for People

PRESS PACK



related and different, 1985. Courtesy of the artist and private collection. Photo: David Lubarsky



Shelf with Ajax, 1981. Courtesy of the artist. Photo: David Lubarsky

Introduction to the exhibition

HAIM STEINBACH. OBJECTS FOR PEOPLE

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Haim Steinbach (born 1944) has redefined the object of art through the selection, arrangement and presentation of everyday objects. They are placed on various supports: shelves, cases, stud walls, and scaffolding. Steinbach is known for the wedge-shaped shelf apparatus he devised in 1984. His laminated wood shelf is triangular in section. It distributes a wide range of objects that are part of the quotidian exchange of cultures and functions. These functions operate in the framework of context and intervention. Steinbach's practice is focused on the play of everyday living, from the home to the store, to the museum. Like a rebus puzzle, the objects Haim Steinbach presents become the forms of visual language. In this game of gaps between objects, the supports also play their part. Unlike a pedestal which elevates one object above others, a shelf, by virtue of its horizontality, places them on an equal footing. Through Haim Steinbach's cultural anthropology, the use and exchange value of the smallest familiar or domestic object is transformed into an image referring to something that exceeds it. His approach extends to the appropriation of words that are vernacular language, as in "hello again" and in "tant qu'il y aura des petits matins clairs". These words manifested in their specific typefaces are taken whole as already existing objects. Like Proust's madeleine, which embodies the entire world of childhood, the object is larger than it appears, overflowing its immediate meaning and its inherent nature to become a figure of speech, metonymy, and allegory.

For his first solo exhibition in a museum in Belgium, Haim Steinbach presents a range of works over the course of his 40-year artistic practice. Among them he chose to include two important projects that he realised with Belgian art collectors: *An Offering: Collectibles of Jan Hoet* (1992), a display of various objects Hoet collected and *An Offering: Collectibles of Herman Daled* (2000), a display of three chairs, three cans of paint, three paint brushes, and a drawing by Steinbach titled 3 that also belonged to Daled.

Provenance of the works:

- | | |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| - S.M.A.K. (Ghent) | - Vistamare Gallery (Milan) |
| - FRAC Bretagne (Rennes) | - White Cube (London) |
| - Magasin III (Stockholm) | - Private collections |
| - Dvir Gallery (Brussels) | - Artist's collection |
| - Lia Rumma Gallery (Milan) | |

my poem is finished and i haven't mentioned orange yet, installation view of *appear to use*, Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, Los Angeles, 2019. Courtesy of the artist and Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York / Los Angeles. Photo: Jeff Mclane



hello again (condensed) 2, 2023. Installation view of *beep honk toot*, Lia Rumma Gallery, Milan, 2024. Courtesy of the artist and Lia Rumma Gallery, Milan/Naples. Photo: Agostino Osio



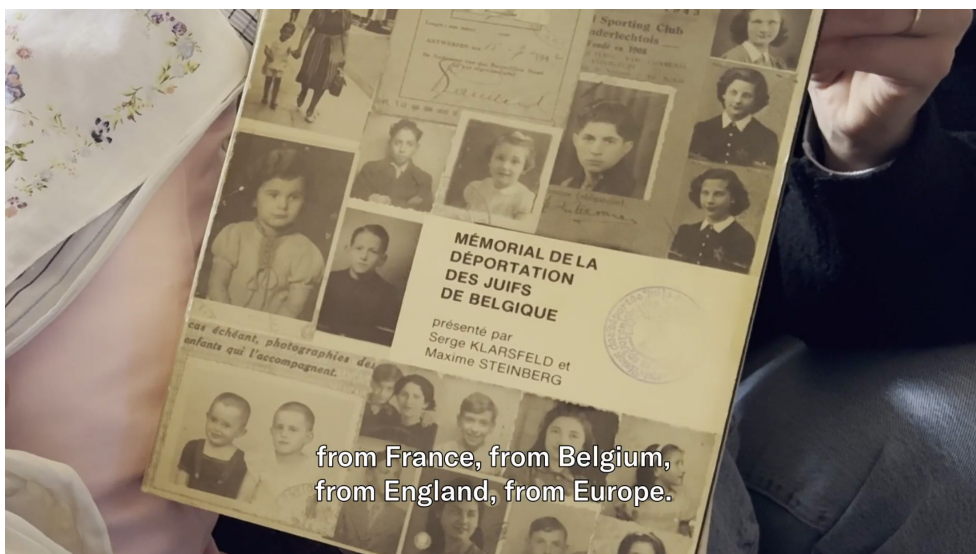
*Objects for People: Delphine Lesmaitre,
detail, digital video, 6'02", 2025.*



*Objects for People: Maggy Lorent,
detail, digital video, 7'56", 2025.*



*Objects for People: Pauline Gold,
detail, digital video, 9'18", 2025.*



from France, from Belgium,
from England, from Europe.



Objects for People

Portraits through everyday objects

Conceived by Haim Steinbach to coincide with his exhibition at MACS, the *Objects for People* project features six individuals from diverse social backgrounds, filmed in their homes as they discuss objects they have arranged in their everyday surroundings. The interviews were conducted informally, without a prearranged questionnaire. The objects, selected at the beginning of each meeting, were then loaned by their owners for the duration of the exhibition, transitioning from the private sphere to the public space of the museum. In this installation, removed from their domestic context, they are arranged by the artist and presented in tandem with the video recordings.

Ranging in age from 14 to 98, the participants in this project share a common trait: they cultivate unique, ritualistic relationships with their objects. The interviews delve into the different ways these relationships manifest—whether in the bonds that the objects establish among themselves, in the ways people connect with one another through the objects, or in their broader social functions as markers of identity and distinction. These portraits subtly reveal how individuals interact with the objects around them and what they seek to express through their selection, presentation, and juxtaposition.

Interview with Haim Steinbach

What led you to choose 'Objects for People' as a title for the exhibition?

It's a title I've used before, but not for a show. It's very clear and precise and there's a bit of a question mark, because when you say 'objects for people', for which people and from whom? What objects? Where do they come from? Where are they presented? It's obviously all the people, any people, any objects, anywhere. There's something a little bit ambiguous about it. Maybe it's even somewhat philosophical. Somebody has to make the object. Whether it's handmade or mass-produced. What is production? Is it a Marxist production or a capitalist production?

"When I defined the arrangement through the shelf device that I built. I was emphasising the act of selecting, arranging and presenting. I am engaging the museum as a platform for exhibitions. I am investigating the way things are hung, what's hung with what, what is brought to the altar"

Wondering where the objects come from raises the question of the offering. You titled the work for Jan Hoet's documenta 9, An Offering: Collectibles of Jan Hoet (1992), and you named the collection belonging to Herman Daled An Offering: Collectibles of Herman Daled when you exhibited it at Marie Puck Broodthaers' Hyperspace gallery in Bruxelles in 2000. This is a significant term – could you elaborate on the idea of 'offering'?

An offering has to do with generosity. Both Jan Hoet and Herman Daled offered me their objects when I asked for them. They were willing to participate with me in an artistic dialogue. Exhibiting their collection in the museum or art gallery implied it was art. However was something sacrificed? In a biblical sense, an offering has to do with the sacrifice. Could this have something to do with the Garden of Eden and the apple? Was the apple the first object? It also brings up the question of desire, sharing and intention.

We all have a relationship with objects that is tied to the idea of ritual. You mentioned in a previous interview that when you present objects in an exhibition, it's as if you are ritualising the ritual itself. I find this idea particularly intriguing, especially when considering the museum as a vast shelf. Once objects that already have ritual significance enter the museum, they begin to engage in a different kind of ritual.

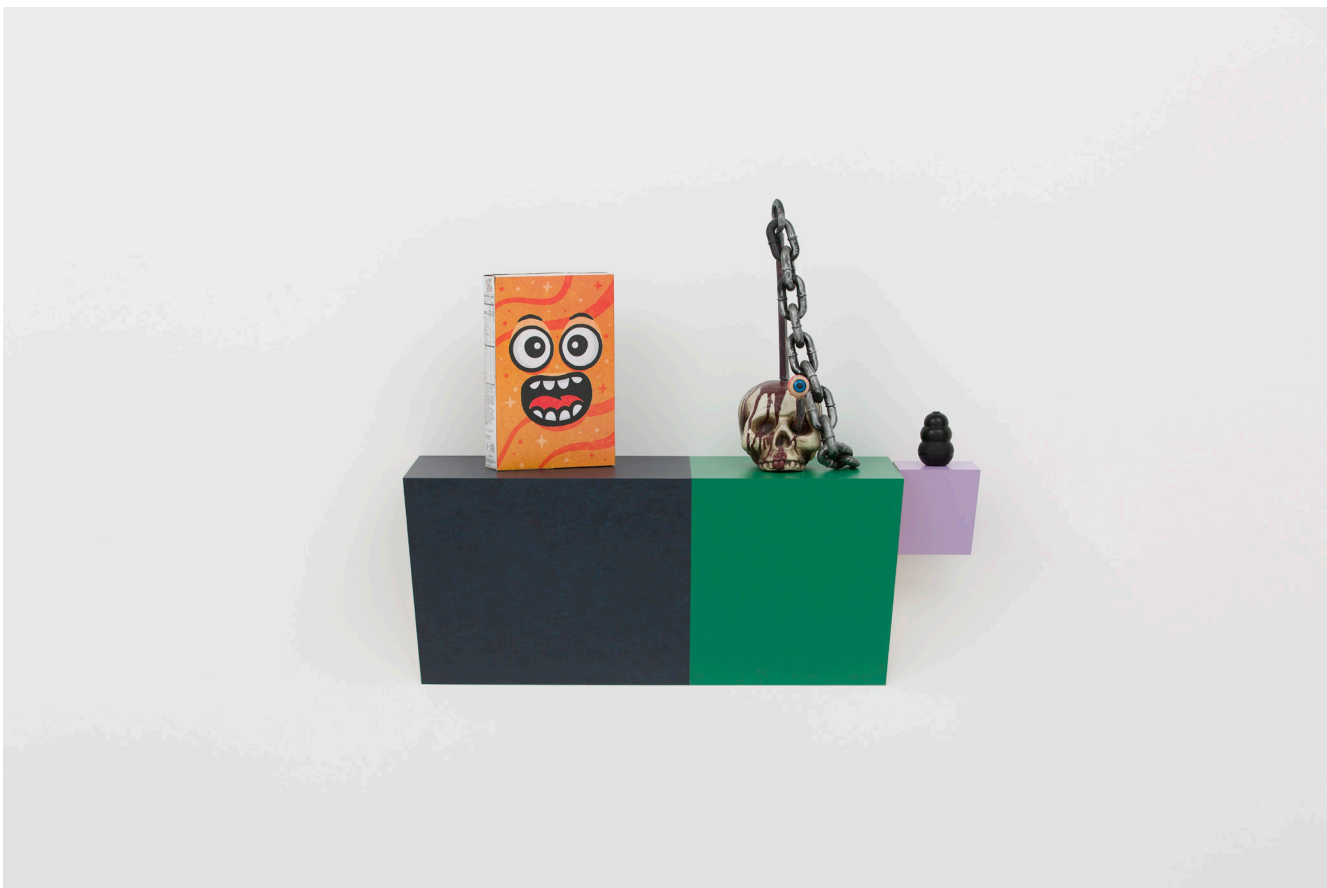
I think of it in terms of displaying the display. 'Displaying the display', that is 'mirroring'. When I defined the arrangement through the shelf device that I built. I was emphasising the act of selecting, arranging and presenting. I am engaging the museum as a platform for exhibitions. I am investigating the way things are hung, what's hung with what, what is brought to the altar.

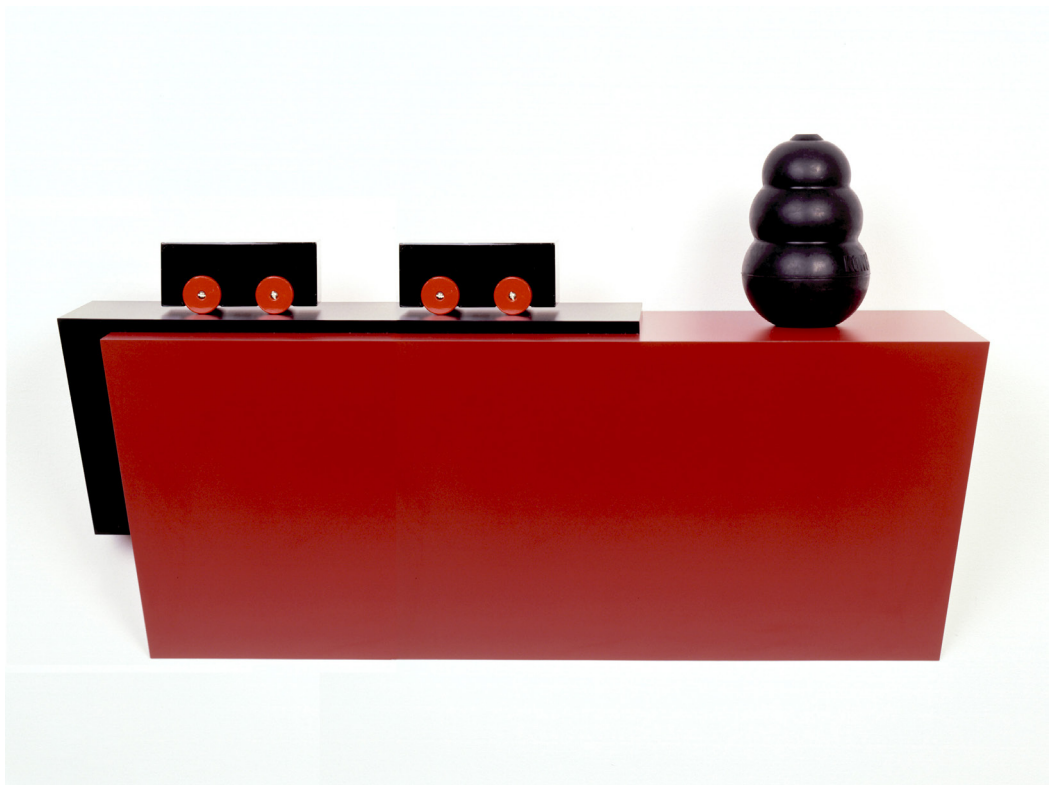
“When you are seeing a collection of objects without an explanation, you are led to draw your own interpretation. How and where they are displayed may indicate a direction as to what you should be looking for. (...) However when you listen to an individual talk about their own collection and how it came about, you are drawn into a more personal space. You are reminded of your own activity and interaction with objects.”

The first time you presented interviews with people and the objects they lent for the exhibition within the same display was during the monographic exhibition North East South West (Neuer Berliner Kunstverein and Haus der Kunst Munich, 2000). You are about to do the same for the participatory project Objects for People that you are preparing for the museum. Why is it interesting to simultaneously showcase both?

The first time I was offered a show that consisted of a selection of objects was in 1979 at Artists Space in New York. I asked family members and friends for objects that belonged to them. Presenting their objects was like a group portrait, an ontology of existence, a documentary. When you are seeing a collection of objects without an explanation, you are led to draw your own interpretation. How and where they are displayed may indicate a direction as to what you should be looking for. Museums often have labels that provide an historical framework. But it is grounded in a certain objectivity. However when you listen to an individual talk about their own collection and how it came about, you are drawn into a more personal space. You are reminded of your own activity and interaction with objects.

*talking heads, 2022. Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Laurent Godin, Paris.
Photo: Yann Bohac*





El Lissitzky II-1, 2008. Courtesy of the artist, private collection. Photo: credit N/A



ultra lite, 1987. Courtesy of the artist, private collection. Photo: David Lubarsky



Photo: Youval Hai

About the artist

Haim Steinbach is an Israeli/American artist (born 1944) living in New York City. He received a BFA from Pratt Institute in 1968 and an MFA from Yale University in 1973. He is Professor Emeritus at the University of California San Diego.

The exhibition *Objects for People* at MACS, marks the artist's first museum show in Belgium. Past solo exhibitions include the Kurhaus Kleve, Germany and Museion, Bolzano (2018/19); The Menil Collection, Houston, Kunsthalle Zürich, and the Serpentine Galleries, London (2014); Hessel Museum at CCS Bard College, New York (2013); Berkeley Art Museum at the University of California, Berkeley (2005); Haus der Kunst, Munich (2000); mumok-Museum Moderner Kunst, Vienna (1997); Castello di Rivoli Museo d'Arte Contemporanea, Turin (1995); Guggenheim Museum, New York (with Ettore Spalletti) (1993); and CAPC Musée d'Art Contemporain, Bordeaux (1988/89).

Steinbach's work has also been included in important group exhibitions at the Museum of Modern Art, New York; Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; The Israel Museum, Jerusalem; UCCA Center for Contemporary Art, Beijing; Victoria and Albert Museum, London; Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago; documenta 9, Kassel; 5th Biennale d'Art Contemporain de Lyon; and the Venice Biennale 47th International Art Exhibition, curated by Germano Celant.

The artist's work is in the permanent collections of Tate Modern, London; Museum of Modern Art, New York; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Magasin III Museum for Contemporary Art, Stockholm; Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen; Städel Museum, Frankfurt; The Art Institute of Chicago; and Castello di Rivoli Museo d'Arte Contemporanea, Turin.

*Display #37 - Untitled (wheelbarrow, bricks), 1995. Installation view of Every Single Day, Museum Kurhaus Kleve, Germany, 2018-19. Courtesy of the artist.
Photo: Simon Vogel*



The MACS | Grand-Hornu

Established in the former Grand-Hornu colliery (an example of 19th century industrial archaeology now listed as UNESCO world heritage), the MACS is acknowledged as one of the most successful examples in northern Europe of the conversion of an abandoned industrial site into a cultural centre. Since it was opened in 2002, the museum has indeed offered a broad public the opportunity to discover major international exhibitions within an architectural showcase that combines the site's history with contemporary creation.

Located away from major urban centres, the Grand-Hornu site is noted for the “genius of the place” which for 20 years has inspired a number of internationally recognised artists, including Christian Boltanski, Anish Kapoor, Giuseppe Penone, Tony Oursler, Adel Abdessemed and Matt Mullican, to create specific projects here. As an engaged partner alongside the artists, the MACS supports the production of ambitious works, notably through its artists' residency policy, undertaken by the museum's team both in situ and extra-muros (LaToya Ruby Frazier, Fiona Tan and Daniel Turner), and pays particular attention to the visual arts scene in the Wallonia-Brussels Federation through its monograph exhibitions.

Together with the Centre for Innovation and Design of the Province of Hainaut (CID), the MACS forms a cultural hub which, has become a popular destination for art lovers and cultural tourism, not least as it can also offer them the pleasures of a park, a gastronomic restaurant and a specialist design and contemporary art shop.



Engagement programme and arts education activities

MACS is dedicated to making contemporary art accessible to everyone through a variety of engagement activities. These include free daily guided tours, creative workshops, family days, meetings, debates, and lectures. The museum places a strong emphasis on serving schoolchildren, for instance, by offering mobile classroom activities as part of the PECA (Cultural and Artistic Education Public Programme). Additionally, MACS is committed to including vulnerable audiences and collaborates with local institutions to create innovative partnerships that support mediation and arts education activities.

For a complete list of activities and events available to the audience, visit the museum's website.





Practical information

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