

Tomas Schmit
soon the slugs will meet again

Kunsthalle Lingen, Kaiserstraße 10a, 49809 Lingen (Ems)

10th September until 13th November 2016

Tomas Schmit (1943-2006) was one of the pioneers of the Fluxus movement in the early 60s. Through Nam June Paik, whom Schmit first met in 1961, he came to know George Maciunas and learnt about the first Fluxus activities. Schmit's close artist friends included George Brecht, Ludwig Gosewitz, Arthur Köpcke, Dieter Roth and Gerhard Rühm.

In 1962 Tomas Schmit took part in both the *Neo-Dada in der Musik* performance organised by the Dusseldorf Chamber Theatre, and the *Parallele Aufführungen Neuester Musik* in Amsterdam. It was in the same year that he began to develop his first *pieces*. In the period following, he participated in the majority of the European Fluxus Festivals taking place in Copenhagen, Paris, Dusseldorf, London and Berlin and organised the much debated *Festival der neuen Kunst* in Aachen's Technical University on the 20th July 1964.

During this time, Tomas Schmit was significantly influential in challenging bourgeois art and developing a new aesthetic. His correspondence with George Maciunas revealed that a deep theoretical discussion of the political and aesthetic beliefs of the Fluxus period was possible. However, Schmit retired early from active participation in the Fluxus actions as he was against the dilution of the radical potential of this art form. The founding Fluxus idea – the reduction and prevention of the spectacle – was the *rule of thumb for his parsimonious approach to art and ideas*¹. In one of his texts about Fluxus he wrote: *what i learned from f(luxus), along with many other things: what can be mastered by a sculpture, doesn't have to be erected as a building; what can be brought by a painting, doesn't have to be made as a sculpture; what can be accomplished in a drawing, doesn't have to become a painting; what can be cleared on a scrap of paper, doesn't need to be done as a drawing; and what can be settled in the head, doesn't even require a paper scrap!*²

From the beginning of the 60s, Tomas Schmit preoccupied himself with language and text and at the end of the same decade he began to work graphically. Through drawings, editions and books, Schmit discussed phenomena of perception and the logic of language. *His exercises in paradox and wordplay are clearly part of his broader project to research the evolution of the senses and the mind.*³ In doing so, he always begins with his own first-hand observations and discusses inexplicable phenomena. To name just one example, the text accompanying his drawing *rubber twist symbolism: are colours niche-dwellers?* (1985) reads: *exercise for brave people: imagine colours that do not exist.*⁴

The Kunsthalle Lingen honours Tomas Schmit's work on the tenth anniversary of his death with a comprehensive solo exhibition across a body of work. On display will be work from the 60s through to 2005. On the 13th November 2016 – the last day of the exhibition – the Fluxus-Action *ZYKLUS for water-pails (or bottles)* will take place with Harmut Andres in the Kunsthalle Lingen. It is one of Tomas Schmit's most famous Fluxus pieces, performed for the first time in Amsterdam in 1963. Frequently over the years, it has been interpreted by other actors and artists, including the filmmaker Harun Farocki who used the piece as the starting point for his film-sculpture *Umgiessen* (2010). *The action, claimed Farocki, evaded symbolism... there is nothing theatrical about it. It was akin to a Beckett play in the simplicity of its conclusiveness. Despite the uniformity of the event, there was a development; the anti-action found an end on its own initiative.*⁵

The exhibition will travel to Kunstverein Bremerhaven (January 21 - March 5, 2017) and Wilhelm-Hack-Museum in Ludwigshafen (dates tba).

Tomas Schmit was born on the 13th July 1943 in Wipperfürth and died on the 4th October 2006 in Berlin. Notable solo exhibitions were held at the Kunstverein Hamburg (1977), Kölnischen Kunstverein (1978), Michael Werner Gallery, Cologne and New York (1986 and 1994), DAAD Gallery Berlin and Sprengel Museum Hanover (1987), Kunsthalle Portikus, Frankfurt am Main (1997), Kunstverein Bremerhaven (2005), Museum Ludwig, Cologne and Collection Falckenberg, Hamburg (2007), among others. He participated in group exhibitions such as *documenta 6*, Kassel (1977), *von hier aus*, Dusseldorf (1984), *Chronos und Kairos*, Kassel (1999) and *Museum unserer Wünsche*, Cologne (2001/2002).

¹ Ripplinger, Stefan: Was uns macht. Über Tomas Schmits Ästhetik, in: Schmit, Tomas: Können Menschen denken? / Are Humans Capable of Thought?, Cologne 2007, S.15

² Schmit, Tomas: über f., in: Berliner Künstlerprogramm des DAAD; Harlekin Art, Wiesbaden (Edited.): 1962 Wiesbaden FLUXUS 1982. Eine kleine Geschichte von Fluxus in drei Teilen, Wiesbaden Kassel Berlin 1983, S.99

³ Ripplinger 2007, S.16

⁴ Schmit, Tomas: katalog 2, DAAD Galerie, Berlin, Sprengel Museum Hannover 1987, Work number 298

⁵ Farocki, Harun: from the Press Release for *Umgiessen. Variationen zu Opus 1 von Tomas Schmit* (2010), read more on www.harunfarocki.de