

About Tomas Schmit (1943 – 2006)

Tomas Schmit (born 13.7.1943 in Wipperfürth) died on 4th October 2006 at the age of 63 in Berlin. The artist and author is one of the pioneers of the Fluxus movement of the early 60ies. During the last 40 years, he developed a ramified work of drawings, texts, books and concepts of artists' books. From the late 60ies on until his death, he continuously exhibited in international galleries. For example Michael Werner in Cologne / New York, Rudolf Springer and Barbara Wien in Berlin.

Tomas Schmit has played a considerable role in shaping the radical questioning of art and approaches to new aesthetics. It was his correspondence with George Maciunas that made a theoretical discussion on the political and aesthetic concept of the Fluxus period possible. As an artist, he took part in Fluxus events that are nowadays considered milestones in the art of the 60ies. As organiser, he arranged for the legendary event "20th July TU Aachen" 1964 (with Beuys, Köpcke, Vostell, Paik amongst others). In 1982, in the book "1962 Wiesbaden Fluxus 1982", he wrote the theoretical text "about f." which represents one of the rare profound evaluations of the ideas of Fluxus from the artist's perspective.

Friends and colleagues who he worked with and who appreciated him due to his consequent artistic position and wrote about him, are: Nam June Paik, George Brecht, Arthur Köpcke, Ludwig Gosewitz and Dieter Roth – just to mention a few. It was also Dieter Roth who in 1982 adjudged him the scholarship of the Rembrandt-Prize which had been awarded to him. In 1986, the Kurt-Schwitters-Prize of the City Hanover was awarded to him.

Tomas Schmit pulled out of the active Fluxus actions early, as he was against an adulteration of the radical potential. It is also this potential which his probably most important working principle is based on: "what I learned from f., 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!"

In the following decades, he developed works that comprise several thousand drawings. He published editions and books. His topics are language, logic, paradoxes, biology, cybernetics, cerebral research, behaviour research and apperception theory etc. In 1989, his book "first draft (of central aesthetics)" provided an introduction to cerebral research, which the cyberneticist Prof. Valentin Braitenberg characterized in the following way: "I actually intend to recommend this book when some physicist or whatever other beginner, as it often happens, will again ask me for an introduction to cerebral research. I suppose, it took a poet to grasp the charm of the material access to psychology, including the pleasure in self-critical accuracy. Consequently, the book is an antipode to what ever so often annoys you: the belittling of events and concealment of problems that popular science uses to ingratiate with the people – but, thus, only shows its disrespect for the audience."