

## UFF MATTERS w, London

cuts a rare and anachronistic fern-day polymath who has, of 50 years, been a gallerist-publisher, bibliographer and les, and specifically their writ-ve been an enduring interest e 1960s, and – under the Centre for Social Research on SROT) – he has been amassing jects and books in earnest years. The Stuff That Matters: ted by Seth Siegelau for mprised 200 artefacts from this 50 antique textiles and 7,000 subject, themselves catalogued raphy he published in 1997 as 'ica Textilia Historiae. and the exhibition's curators etti, Alice Motard and Raven Alex Sainsbury – grouped the bibliographic fastidiousness by tion. The overall design of the the work of 6a Architects, who isive white cases and other za, yet there was a vivid sense personal engagement with his through the yellowed pages ndwritten notes and sketches, id annotations throughout. efacts were interspersed with books that cast light on their mercial contexts, methods of ltural statuses – background round. Eighteenth-century re, for example, laid alongside in W. Parker's *The Useful Arts he Production of Clothing* diagram showing 'the hats of ' found a parallel in a nearby al headdresses from Africa, nia.

ion focused on the role of the xtils and texts as evocative anding for irretrievable places ost of specialist terms pep- ls, for which a glossary was oubles (i.e. liturgical vestments) ks and passementerie' were suggestive of the wardrobe of its. The abundance of fabrics nible a dandified cornucopia, fineries imagined by Oscar rging to Dorian Gray – indeed, less lifted these descriptions e those Siegelau has collected. a for objects was that of the gelau's project is determinedly g textiles in historical context n itself sprung from the wider bibliography). In the catalogue, rves that textile collecting for is as 'bourgeois and "apolitical" agine'.

g of this show in Raven Row laub's intellectual eclecti- a short-lived gallery in 1960s alt in oriental rugs alongside rt and, as Clare Browne (textiles e V&A) relates in her catalogue hibition invokes the history

of Spitalfields. The gallery building, which is located in this area, once housed silk merchants' shops, and the surrounding neighbourhood was the heart of Britain's silk trade. Moreover, Siegelau's meticulous archiving demonstrates a serial attitude akin to the methodology of the conceptual artists he championed in the late 1960s. It further recalls his use of the printed page as an exhibition site in now-legendary projects such as the *Xerox Book* (1968), for which seven artists (including Carl Andre, Robert Barry and Lawrence Weiner) were invited to contribute a work in the form of 25 consecutive pages reproduced by photocopier; an equivalent 'catalogue-exhibition' comprising writing by six critics was published in a 1970 edition of *Studio International*. Despite Siegelau's departure from the art world in 1972, which has become a biographical cliché akin to Marcel Duchamp's abandonment of art for chess, his subsequent enterprises (which include a database of literature on Marxist and socialist writing) remain philosophically affiliated with Conceptualism.

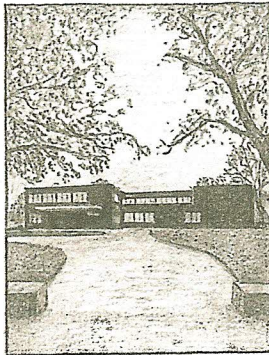
Just as in conceptual art, objects themselves are rarely the whole story, referring to actions beyond themselves, the textiles and books in 'The Stuff That Matters' succeed in presenting indexical slices – poignantly abbreviated glimpses – of other societies. These mass together into a collective cultural record or what the classicist Charles Segal, with regard to myth, memorably describes as a cumulative 'megatext'.

JAMES CAHILL

1



1964



in diesen Jahren häufig  
sammelnde Fahrten  
mit der 'K-Bahn' nach  
Krefeld / Dort hemde zeigt  
im dunklen Tinsenn Hans  
lange Röhrl fide hmsel /  
ein in dem Jahr mich  
hörendes OT / Nenns, dem  
ich später davon erzähle,  
machte mir Vorwürfe, daß  
ich ihm in der Zeit nicht  
in meinen Drisseldorfer  
Hilfstramm eingeladen  
habe / ich konnte ihm nur antworten, daß ich es  
damals nicht gewagt hätte, ihm am m sprechen //  
Vermutlich sich vor, daß  
sie, in ihre "Phantasie-  
kleeide" jehüllte, mit mir  
auf Ausstellungen woff-  
nungen erscheint / Sehen  
er, daß das nicht mit  
mir möglich ist / doch  
einige wenige Auftritte  
jehängen ab / muß dabei  
am Else Lasker-Schüler  
und Gottfried Benn  
denken / hat sie das von  
Anjen ? /

2

## FRANZ ERHARD WALTHER The Drawing Room, London

This was the first solo outing in the UK for a 72-year-old artist whose place in history might have been ensured by his participation in Harald Szeemann's legendary showcases 'When Attitudes Become Form' (1969–70) and *documenta 5* (1972), but whose reputation outside his native Germany has been greatly enhanced by recent retrospectives at Mamco in Geneva (2010) and Dia:Beacon (2010–12). The earliest works included, from 1958, register the precocious and prescient talents of an artist then still in his teens. While the selection of these 'Schraffurzeichnungen' (Hatched Drawings) show Franz Erhard Walther working briskly through the still-fresh legacy of *Art Informel*, it's difficult today to address his 'Wortbilder' (Word-Pictures) from the same year without thinking of what Ed Ruscha would cook up a couple of years later, several art worlds away.

This cannily staged quandary was emblematic of an exhibition buoyed by the privileges of hindsight, as these early works were bookended by the presentation, in the last gallery of The Drawing Room's new space in Bermondsey, of 71 of the 524 works on paper that constitute 'Sternenstaub' (Dust of Stars, 2007–09). Described as a 'Drawn Novel', and combining drawing with handwritten narrative, this fascinating *opologia pro vita sua* – executed in pencil on A4 sheets and tellingly subtitled '71 Selected Memories' – provides an informative and highly entertaining account of Walther's thinking and making up to the year 1973. His international visibility waned somewhat after the 1970s, like that of

other pioneering artists of his generation and inclinations, though he continued to produce significant works and was an influential teacher for many years at the University of Fine Arts in Hamburg.

Renewed interest in Walther has inevitably focused on the 1960s, specifically on the '1. Werksatz' (First Work Set, 1963–9), a series of sewn-fabric sculptures designed for loosely structured, interactive use by pairs or groups of viewers. Several other fabric works were also shown, most notably *Drei breite Bränder* (Three Broad Bands, 1963), an arrangement of canvas strips nailed to the wall and snaking down to an unruly heap on the floor, providing a notional bridge between the acknowledged precedents of Lucio Fontana and Piero Manzoni and the American post-minimalism Walther anticipates in certain respects. Equally intriguing just now, in the wake of Relational Aesthetics, and given the resurgence of performance and dance in the visual arts, is the challenge of triangulating the fabric sculptures with a range of roughly contemporaneous interactive works by artists such as Hélio Oiticica and Lygia Clark, as well as, for instance, Franz West's later 'Adaptives'. (Walther dates his discovery of 'the hand as pedestal' to 1962–3.)

The Drawing Room is an apt venue for an artist for whom paper has always been more 'source' and 'site' than mere surface. As we learn from 'Sternenstaub', by his late teens Walther was exhibiting locally and experimenting across media. (A 'graphic-sculptural action' from 1958 is recounted and illustrated, in which he performs as a human 'water-spout' – Bruce Nauman scholars please note.) A classmate of Gerhard Richter and Sigmar Polke in the Düsseldorf Academy, his relationship with the mage, Joseph Beuys, was not without its awkwardnesses. (Beuys's sly remark to some of his more reverent disciples – 'So Walther has become a tailor now' – clearly niggled, and is cited twice.) He moved to New York in 1967, stayed for the next six years, met everyone, and was included in the epochal exhibition 'Spaces' at New York's Museum of Modern Art in 1970. Various luminaries drift through the gapped narrative, including Eva Hesse, Fred Sandback, Walter de Maria, Richard Serra and Richard Tuttle. Marcel Duchamp calls and is keen to meet him, but dies shortly afterwards – a missed encounter and an abiding regret.

What most distinguishes this idiosyncratic memoir from others of its ilk, however, are the persistently thoughtful distinctions Walther draws between his specific concerns and those of his fellow artists. He is intrigued by Claes Oldenburg's engagement with sewn fabric, for example, but notes that he himself 'is aiming for something quite different .../ while in a stored state the work pieces are forms / in action they become instruments and the actions become forms and thus works'. Such valuable musings merely added to the surfeit of riches displayed in a packed, but finely modulated show.

CAOIMHÍN MAC GIOLLA LÉITH

## ON THE EDGWARE ROAD Serpentine Gallery & The Centre for Possible Studies, London

'On the Edgware Road' was the gallery manifestation of The Edgware Road Project (a.k.a. The Centre for Possible Studies), an ongoing research and residency programme. Initiated in 2009 by the Serpentine Gallery's former Head of Programmes, Sally Tallant, with Janna Graham and Amal Khalaf, among many others, the project developed out of the four-year collaboration 'Dis-assembly' (2002–06), which was run between the Serpentine and a fading community school near the Edgware Road area that lies to the north of Hyde Park.

The current project was inspired by Tallant's desire to engage with a specific location for a longer period than is typically allowed for by a conventional exhibition or public programme. The choice of the Edgware Road – which simultaneously connects and divides the centre of London to the western and northern parts of the city – had to do with both its rich cultural heritage and with the organization's connections to the area. Renowned for its diverse immigrant community, the road has for some time been a home to many Lebanese, Egyptian, Iraqi and Qatari migrants. As the area is sometimes dubbed Little Cairo or Downtown Beirut, it was appropriate that two of the initiative's major curatorial partners were the Townhouse Gallery in Cairo and Ashkal Alwan, led by Christine Tohme, in Beirut. Tohme's role was especially significant as her 'Hamra Street Project', launched in 2000, was one of the key models for this venture.

The relationship between urban concerns and collective participation is very much the curatorial impetus that binds the various artist residents and collectives who have come to work with the itinerant Centre for Possible Studies. The Mumbai-based collective CAMP,

for example, studied the cultural movements through the Edgware Road area. One of their undocumented history group untangled an acc and entrepreneurial res an Arabic cinema and V label, only for it to inexp collected materials com website, edgwareroad.o

Egyptian artist Susa other hand, worked with at Westminster Academ in Egypt for a project w two-day event at Speak Park. Elsewhere, London no.w.here initiated the F producing collaborative in partnership with gue Khalid Abdalla, experin Nicky Hamlyn and Sara x-talk (a support/study along with various publi

These examples are broad disparities betw approaches. Their bind less, is not a desire to j cultural product, but ra form of collective enga Edgware Road, and wh complex history amidst shifts that it has endur Edgware Road', the exh these various 'acts', ofte lection of fragmentary r such a weighted traject discourse that it was di when removed from its was there a need to tra process into an exhibiti was an allusion to the f project's audience cons of self-subscribing indi Edgware Road' was an i that scope.

Nevertheless, the rr works bristled with suc fact could be overlooke Gallery itself, Hiwa K pi Boys: while we were sin dreaming ... (2010–ong from a cover band who a neo-liberalism study perform pop songs fro Bangladesh and Afgha YouTube clips of the or residency, Hiwa K's ton tive performed at cafes Road, before touring Ei describes the formatio out of conversations w owners. In the central s presented her mesmer *Three Disappearances*, an evocative poem to o Egyptian cinema, who t Edgware Road during t under mysterious circu

It is this mix of wist and active participatio the projects within 'On from being merely expl audiences multiple enl area that has long bee emblematic microcosm

OMAR KHOLEIF

1  
**'The Stuff That Matters: Textiles Collected by Seth Siegelau for the CSROT', 2012, installation view**

2  
**Franz Erhard Walther from the series 'Sternenstaub' (Dust of Stars), 2007–09, 524 pages of pencil on paper, each: 30×21 cm**

3  
**Hiwa K Chicago Boys: while we were singing, they were dreaming ..., 2010–ongoing, installation view at the Serpentine Gallery**

