



Roman Signer Projections

24 October 2008 to 18 January 2009

The Helmhaus Zürich is showing films and videos made by the Swiss artist Roman Signer since 1975. Rarely has an artist created an oeuvre as inventive and curious, as surprising and consistent as that of Roman Signer.

The complexity of Roman Signer's spectacular, existential and melancholy oeuvre is revealed in the exhibition *Projections*. The exhibition will show recent and familiar films and videos as well as premiering older works, including the first super-8 films made in 1975. No other medium could be better suited to rendering these 'events', as Roman Signer (born in Appenzell, 1938, lives in St. Gallen) sometimes calls his work. This is the first ever extensive and exclusive presentation of Signer's filmed actions.

Roman Signer turned seventy this year. That his achievements are at last receiving the long overdue recognition they deserve was recently underlined by his number one ranking in *Bilanz* magazine's list of leading Swiss artists. Despite substantial international acclaim, only three major exhibitions have so far been devoted to Signer's work in Switzerland: 1993 at the Kunstmuseum St. Gallen, 2001 at the Kunstmuseum Solothurn and 2003 at the Hauser & Wirth Collection in the former locomotive depot of St. Gallen.

The artist's fascinating and delightfully inventive experiments are easily accessible to the public at large. In the 1990s, Signer attracted international attention with actions involving explosives. Less well-known, but equally important is the tender, meditative and pensive aspect of his oeuvre. Social role play, the uneven balance of power, dependencies and processes of change are metaphorically embodied in an array of everyday objects that Signer animates and brings to life, in particular tables, chairs, barrels, boxes and umbrellas.

Signer exploits the forces of nature, working both with them and against them – struggling upstream, defying gravity, counteracting inertia. The relationship between man and nature is put to the test.

The title *Projections* refers to the obvious device of projecting light onto a wall when screening a film but, figuratively, the word also refers to the visionary and prospective character of carefully planned work, executed outdoors or in an exhibition venue. Viewers discover how Signer deals with time and space, movement and process, energy and its transformation, chemistry and physics, experimental play and the inexorable laws of nature, reality and potential, the natural sciences and existential philosophy.



The accompanying book, *Roman Signer: Projections – Super-8 Films and Videos 1975–2008*, published in English by Steidl, Göttingen and in German by Scheidegger & Spiess, Zürich, consists of stills from the artist's super-8 and video films. The substantial publication is devoted to the unique visual rendition of work that is designed to move through time and space -- and ultimately vanish. Precise composition is a salient feature of the resulting images. As slices of time, the stills mark key moments in Signer's meticulously choreographed works: changes from one state to another, extreme acceleration, temporary or lasting standstill, transformation, condensation and dispersal. As a catalogue raisonné documenting all of the super-8 films and videos, the book presents an essential cross-section through Roman Signer's entire oeuvre and includes essays by Simon Maurer, director of the Helmhaus Zürich, and Hubertus Gassner, director of the Hamburger Kunsthalle, where the exhibition will be on view in summer 2009.

Accompanying events include talks by connoisseurs of Roman Signer's work. On 6 January 2009 Roman Signer will answer questions about Roman Signer.