

HangarBicocca, the contemporary art space in Milan supported by Pirelli,  
presents

*Islands*, an exhibition of works by Dieter Roth and Björn Roth  
curated by Vicente Todolí

*Islands* is the first anthological show in Italy devoted to Dieter Roth,  
in collaboration with his son Björn

November 6, 2013 – February 9, 2014  
Opening November 5, 2013



Björn Roth / Oddur Roth / Einar Roth. *Roth New York Bar*, 2013.  
Mixed media installation with video. 231 x 382 x 1470 cm / 91 x 150 3/8 x 578 3/4 inches.  
Photo: Bjarni Grímsson. © Dieter Roth Estate Courtesy Hauser & Wirth

October 1, 2013 (Milan) – *Islands*, an anthological exhibition by **Dieter Roth** and **Björn Roth**, will be on view November 6, 2013 through February 9, 2014 at **HangarBicocca**, the contemporary art space in Milan promoted by Pirelli. It is the first exhibition curated by the Artistic Advisor **Vicente Todolí** as part of his curatorial program.

For the first time in Italy, the exhibition brings together over 50 works by Dieter Roth (Hannover, 1930 – Basel, 1998), a key figure on the international art scene of the past fifty years. It is being put on with the collaboration of his son Björn. The imposing installations are given the unique opportunity to interact with the former industrial space of HangarBicocca. The public will be taken on a journey through thematic "islands" in the multidisciplinary creative universe of the artist, whose work has revolutionized the way art is made and seen.

Roth *Bar*, covering over 60 square meters, is open to the public and fully operational, consisting of the bar itself and a number of videos, drawings, paintings, musical instruments and bottles used during its operation. It greets the visitors and captures them in an uninterrupted flow of art production and daily life—a stylistic feature of all the work by Roth and his assistants.

This aspect runs through all the works in the exhibition, such as *The Floor I* (1973-1992) and *The Floor II* (1977-1998), both of which consist of floors from the artist's studio in Iceland. Here they are taken out of context and transformed into abstract images, forming the backdrop to a real kitchen (*New York Kitchen*, 2013), which has also been used by Dieter Roth's staff to prepare some of the works on show.

**Fondazione HangarBicocca**

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An insatiable researcher in every field of creativity and knowledge, Dieter Roth was a graphic artist, poet, musician and designer. He explored every medium and type of art, combining painting, sculpture, printing, photography, videos and sound in all-encompassing works. Fascinated by the mechanisms of transformation, Roth used a vast array of materials and objects such as utensils, furnishings, monitors and food in a process that revealed the constant mutability of the work. His creations in chocolate and sugar—two towers made of little self-portrait and zoomorphic sculptures titled *Zuckerturm (Sugar Tower)*, 1994-2013 and *Selbstturm (Self Tower)*, 1994-2013—will be on display.

Dieter Roth's interest in the olfactory, chromatic and sculptural characteristics of organic materials and their decay led him to transform an old house in Hamburg into the *Schimmelmuseum (Mould Museum)*. This exhibition space, where the artist displayed his works made mainly between 1964 and 1971, was open to the public until 2004.

Dieter Roth's artistic vision, **which includes knowledge and action, experience and manual skills in performative works**, will be fully illustrated at HangarBicocca. During the installation, the 4500 square meters of exhibition space devoted to the display will be turned into a workshop—a craftsman's studio where the "Roth dynasty" will continue to hand down ways of creating art in the making. The works will not just be installed but also, in some cases, produced by his son Björn, who worked with his father for over twenty years, and by the artist's historic collaborators including his grandchildren Oddur and Einar. Works on show resulting from the cooperation between the artist and his son include *Material Pictures*, assemblages of abstract painting and superimpositions of materials such as clothes, fabrics and instruments, and *Grosse Tischruine (Large Table Ruin)*. Begun in 1978 as an organism in perennial transformation, this work started out from a pile of objects on Dieter Roth's own workbench, rearranged in different ways for each exhibition.

Real-life experience and art intertwine and blend together also in the large *Solo Scenes* installation (1997-1998), one of the artist's best-known works that was also shown at documenta 11 in 2002 and at the most recent Venice Biennale. One hundred and thirty-one monitors show everyday and intimate scenes of the artist, creating an open, real-time diary of the last years of his life. In *55 Schisse für Rosanna (55 Shits for Rosanna)*, 1982 and in *die Die DIE VERDAMMTE SCHEISSE (the The THE DAMNED SHIT)*, 1974-1975, on the other hand, we find provocative images of the artist's daily production of excrement elegantly placed on serving dishes or in travel cases, creating a disorienting contrast.

The exhibition also celebrates Iceland, beloved by the artist, who lived there with his first wife, the mother of his four children. The island is a powerful part of the iconography that he produced right up to the time of his death. *Reykjavík Slides (1973-1975 and 1990-1998)* is an exceptional documentation of the over 30,000 buildings that existed in the island's capital until 1998, while the *SURTSEY and SURTSEY - Dinner* series (1974) consists of 36 prints of the island of Surtsey, which formed in 1963 after the eruption of an underwater volcano.

The over 60 *Piccadillies* prints, here shown together for the first time, constitute one of the artist's most original and interesting projects. Created between 1969 and 1974, they became a stunning example of Dieter Roth's passion for prints and graphic art, which played a key role in his work. The prints are the result of an innovative process perfected by the artist himself: the pictures of the famous square in London, taken from postcards in the collection of Rita Donagh (the wife of the artist Richard Hamilton and herself an artist) were blown up and reprocessed with broad swathes of colour, creating unique pieces that invite us to reflect on the concept of the original and of reproducibility in works of art.

## The Artist

A tirelessly nomadic artist, Dieter Roth (Hannover, 1930 – Basel, 1998) spent the early years of his life in Germany and Switzerland, where he trained as a graphic artist, studying printing and engraving techniques. From 1961 to 1964 he lived in Iceland, where he set up a small publishing company in Reykjavík. During these years he shifted away from the abstract-geometrical style of Concretism towards the poetic vision of *Nouveau Réalisme*. Between 1964 and 1966 he lived in the United States, where his first solo exhibition was put on at the Museum College of Art in Philadelphia and where he taught the graphic arts class at the Rhode Island School of Design in Providence. During this period

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Roth began creating works and prints using organic matter and food, concentrating on the changeability of the work of art. He later travelled around Germany, Austria and Iceland, where he continued his work creating artist's books. At the same time he experimented with found objects and video, producing works that reveal the influence of *Fluxus*. Roth's work has been acclaimed since the 1980s and he represented Switzerland at the Venice Biennale in 1982 with his *A Diary* installation of 40 films portraying the artist's life. This led to a period of introspection, which was to characterize his later investigations. In the 1990s, while suffering health problems which led to his death in 1998, he received ever greater honors and exhibitions devoted to his works in the world's leading institutions.

In 1999 Roth was presented posthumously with *Solo Scenes* at the Venice Biennale directed by Harald Szeemann. Important retrospectives have been shown at MACBA – Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona (2002); at the Museum Ludwig and the Schaulager, Basel, (both 2003); at MoMA PS1 in New York (2004); at the Museu Serralves in Oporto (2008); and at the Camden Arts Centre in London (2013). His works have been shown at three editions (4, 6 and 11) of the most accredited international art show, documenta.

## **HB Kids**

For *Islands*, HangarBicocca is putting on an extensive program of events and activities that are open to all, free of charge. Every Saturday and Sunday from 11:15 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., HB Kids offers Creativity Trails (*Percorsi Creativi*) to discover the exhibition, entering into the artist's vision and into the themes of the works on show. The variety of materials used and their deterioration, the diary and memory, the relating of self and the overturning of the significance of everyday objects into "artistic products" are just some of the subjects that the participants will examine in activities for children ages 4 to 14 years. Admission to all events is free of charge, booking required (email: [hbkids@hangarbicocca.org](mailto:hbkids@hangarbicocca.org)). Every Sunday afternoon, films for the whole family are shown as part of the Discovering Cinema (*Cinema da Scoprire*) review.

## **The HangarBicocca exhibition program**

*Islands* is part of the program of exhibitions devised by Vicente Todolí and Andrea Lissoni. The project has also been designed to relate to *The Visitors*, the installation by Ragnar Kjartansson (Reykjavík, 1976) which will remain on show in the "Shed" until November 17, 2013. With their shared themes, the exhibitions bring about a dialogue on the concept of the constantly changing, total work of art. The HangarBicocca calendar will continue with exhibitions of works by Micol Assaël (January 2014), Cildo Meireles (April 2014), Pedro Paiva and João Maria Gusmão (June 2014), Joan Jonas (September 2014), Céline Condorelli (October 2014), Juan Muñoz (February 2014) and Damián Ortega (March 2015).

## **Pirelli and HangarBicocca**

HangarBicocca is run by Pirelli which, as Founding Member and Promoter together with Regione Lombardia, now entirely supports its activities. Given a new lease of life in 2012 with exhibitions by international artists, over the past year HangarBicocca has attracted more than 230,000 visitors from Italy and around the world. Pirelli's commitment to offer everyone free access to programs of such high quality is the natural continuation of a long tradition of dedication to culture, research and innovation that has been an inherent part of the company ever since it was first set up 140 years ago.

Contemporary art is indeed the medium that best reflects the values of innovation, openness to diversity and the search for solutions that are capable of anticipating the future.

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## **Data sheet**

Title of the exhibition	Islands
Artists	Dieter Roth and Björn Roth
Curated by	Vicente Todolí
Opening	November 5, 2013, 7 p.m.
Dates	November 6, 2013 – February 9, 2014
Place	HangarBicocca
Address	Via Chiese 2, Milano, Italy
Opening hours	Thursday – Sunday, 11 a.m.-11 p.m.
Admission	Free
Workshops	Every weekend, for children (11:15 a.m.-3:30 p.m.)
Main Sponsor	Pirelli
Phone for the public	+39 – 02 6611 1573
Info for the public	<a href="mailto:info@hangarbicocca.org">info@hangarbicocca.org</a>   <a href="http://www.hangarbicocca.org">www.hangarbicocca.org</a>

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