Uncertain mind’s black and white language tries to cope with the progressive dirt of problems. The dirt sticks, the landscape thickens, the clouds are full of surprise attacks, combatants enter the scene, stormworn feet scramble into rescue positions, the 3 categories of accelerated man (vertical, horizontal & diagonal), their architecture twisted from excessive speed, fall from the processed sky that contains their brain, into the shabby downbelow.

The shatterer show presents shattered worlds confronted by the 99% giant and flag waver of the peasant boot flag, which his 15th century peasant colleagues raised against the capitalism of their day.

The shatterer theme is from a) my nazi childhood, when worldshattering was the law of the land, & b) from Oppenheimer’s famous BhagavadGita quote (I am become death, the shatterer of worlds) at the occasion of the 1st atomic bomb explosion.

—Peter Schumann

Peter Schumann was born in Silesia, Germany in 1934 and relocated to the United States in 1961. In 1963 on Manhattan’s Lower East Side, he founded the Bread and Puppet Theater, which presented numerous free indoor and outdoor performances throughout New York during the 1960s before moving to Vermont in 1970, where members of the theater continue to reside.

Schumann’s background in dance and sculpture coupled with his upbringing during the Second World War heavily informed the mission of the theater. Taking a makeshift approach to making elaborate large-scale performances—akin to moving paintings or tableaux vivant—the work creates a critical dystopian world within and parallel to the world in which we live. Bread and Puppet remains a seminal force in the development of political and experimental theater of the post-war period.

Schumann’s collaborative work with the Bread and Puppet Theater is, however, only one manifestation of a deeply personal practice. Since 1960, he has independently produced thousands of visionary books, performance-lectures, philosophical diagrams, sculptures, machines, installations and paintings. These works remain widely unknown and demonstrate the depth and scope of his unique aesthetic sensibility and complex ideological stance.

For The Shatterer, Schumann has combined his cross-disciplinary independent practices. His choice to render the exhibition and mural exclusively in black and white, using only house paint applied to reclaimed paper, cardboard, and fabric, reflects the bare-essential production values and approach to living that have been central to his work for his entire career. Among the materials used are existing pieces dating back some 50 years, which he has deconstructed and reconstructed entirely for the exhibition. The obsessive and epic nature of Schumann’s work offsets the simplicity of his materials. Engulfing environments and seemingly infinite diagrams and painted texts often depict past and present battles between good and evil.

In collaboration with KARMA (NYC based publisher), Schumann will produce an artist book to accompany the exhibition.


This exhibition is curated by Jonathan Berger and organized at the Queens Museum by Larissa Harris.

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Peter Schumann will stage monthly solo Fiddle Sermon performances in the papier-mâché chapel housed within the larger installation and will be baking bread in his brick oven.

4:00pm
November 11, 2013
December 14, 2013
January 11, 2014
February 15, 2014
March 15, 2014