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TINKER, TAILOR, SOLDIER, SAILOR

SARA MARTINETTI

France in the mid-1970s. In a flea market on the outskirts of Paris, Seth Siegelaub comes across a cotton jacket that is said to have belonged to a political prisoner. Intrigued by its provenance, he decides to buy it, along with fragments of embroidery on canvas. Later, toiling away to the tune of “New York, New York,” he sews the motley scraps of fabric onto the jacket, which he fits with a zipper and an inside pocket made of denim. When worn by his then partner, Rosalind Fay, the novice tailor’s creation attracts compliments from passersby in Saint-Germain-des-Prés.¹

Besides capturing the mood of an era, this personal anecdote illustrates several recurring themes in Siegelaub’s life and work. It connects textiles and politics with the acts of collecting and compiling, while highlighting a creative streak that manifests itself in the figure of the *bricoleur*, or tinkerer, popularized by the anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss.² Following this line of thought, Siegelaub’s activities in different fields of research and production could be seen as forming a kind of patchwork—an entity composed of seemingly unrelated parts, assembled according to an underlying design.

The various parts of the Siegelaubian patchwork might best be considered from within the seams, which highlight the heterogeneity of all parts while creating continuity between them. The stitching—in other words, the method used to join together the various pieces of cloth—creates a new fabric: the initial boundaries of each piece dissolve, forming a unity of matter that extends in all directions and includes each of its parts. This is how we can begin to grasp the transitions, contrasts, and reverberations in Siegelaub’s numerous and variegated projects as well as his multiple interests and collections. Following the chronology and methodology of his work, we can move freely among the different parts of his checkered career and see that it is neither segmented nor conflated or confused, but composed of autonomous parts that extend beyond themselves to form a strong and complex network.

At the center of this network is the book, as the medium through which young Siegelaub discovered the world of art and ideas in the public libraries of the Bronx. In his unpublished “meta-biography” from 1970, he self-consciously (and tautologically) wrote: “I hope my memoirs will equal a book 1” thick by 5” wide by 7” high. With a soft cover, no table of contents, numberless pages, with margins $\frac{3}{4}$ ” from the edge of the page; about $6\frac{1}{2}$ ounces of my life. A dark grey cover with just the word ‘anonymous’ in capital letters: ANONYMOUS, on the spine, with the name and imprimatur of the publisher alongside at the bottom.”³ The figure emerging from this account is not a

Detail of patchwork jacket
sewn by Siegelaub, c. 1975



writer constructing a personal narrative, but someone whose interests revolve around form and presentation through printed matter. This is consistent with the variety of roles Siegelaub assumed in the conception, production, and usage of books, from publisher and editor to documenter, collector, archivist, and bibliographer.

For art historians, Siegelaub is the impresario of Conceptual Art; for exhibition-makers, a pioneer of independent curating; and for artists, an inspirational inventor of concepts.⁴ When we examine his work across three realms of interest—textiles, Conceptual Art, and mass media (the order in which they are discussed in this essay)—in light of the intellectual technologies for organizing information such as bibliographies, maps, and lists,⁵ we see a more complex figure emerge, whose practice is anchored in a Gutenbergian tradition of publishing, while contributing new methods of implementing the dissemination of ideas.

The Weft of History

The publication of the *Bibliographica Textilia Historiæ: Towards a General Bibliography on the History of Textiles Based on the Library and Archives of the Center for Social Research on Old Textiles* in 1997 marked the completion of Siegelaub's extensive research into textiles. The result of twenty-five years of work, this landmark bibliography is available today in dozens of museum and university libraries and was expanded into an online database with 7,300 annotated references in 2011.⁶ The task of compiling and organizing this wealth of information required considerable time, effort, and concentration, and its scope was potentially limitless.

The librarian and historian of library science Alfredo Serrai, author of the eleven-volume *Storia della bibliografia*, defined the nature of bibliographic work as follows:

The bibliography consists of a metastructure that contains and organizes the literary characteristics and semantic elements of documents generated by other disciplines, in which they will subsequently be reutilized. The theoretical apparatus of a discipline, which intends to examine and express in formalized modes the processes of communication that take place through written texts, must first of all give itself the conceptual tools enabling it to interpret this particular type of informational transmission.⁷

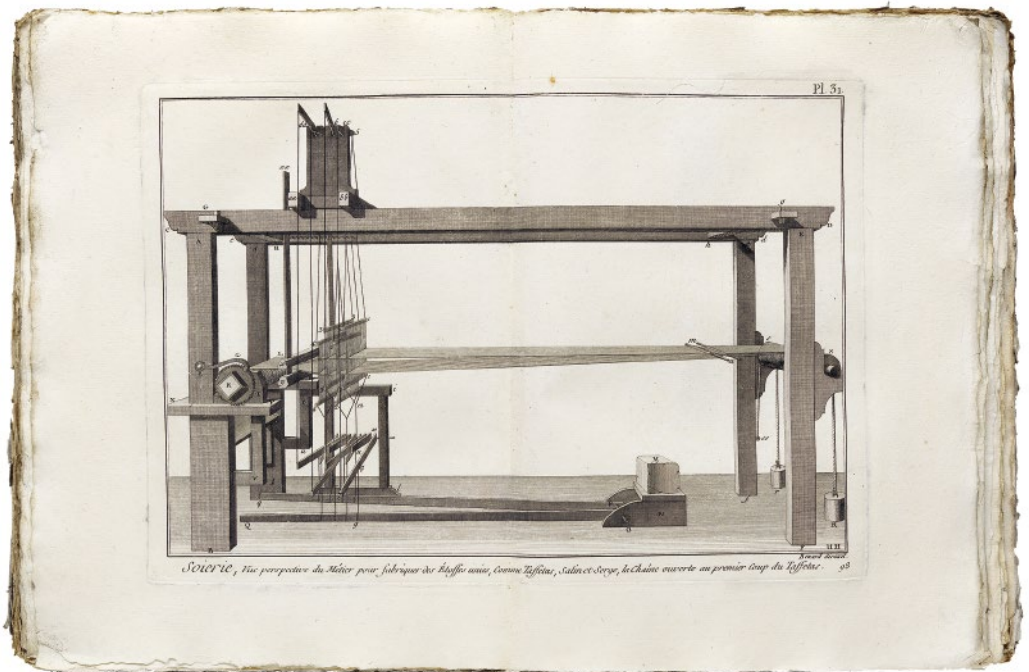
To illustrate these “conceptual tools,” let us peek into Siegelaub’s “office” and study an entry from the *Bibliographica Textilia Historiae*:

ROLAND DE LA PLATIÈRE, Jean-Marie, ed. RECUEIL DE PLANCHES DE L’ENCYCLOPÉDIE. Tome Sixième. Deuxième division des Arts & Métiers Mécaniques. [Manufactures d’Étoffes]. A PARIS, chez PANCKOUCKE, Libraire, . . . A LIÈGE, chez PLOMTEUX, Imprimeur des États. M.DCC.LXXXVI [1786]. [CSROT 1040].

[4p] + 290 pl. 25 x 33. Boards. 290 Engraved pl (198 single-page; 92 double-page).

The plate vol accompanying the 2v descriptive text published in 1784–1785 (see above; CSROT 1008), including important sections on soierie, with 121 pl (27 double-page); passementerie, 26 pl (3 double-page); corderie, 5 pl (all double-page); chapelier, 3 pl (all double-page); chanvre et lin, 2 pl. The most comprehensive single-volume compilation of plates illustrating the techniques of textile production published in the 18th c.

There was a vol of supplementary plates published in 1790: RECUEIL DE PLANCHES DE L’ENCYCLOPÉDIE PAR ORDRE DE MATIERES. TOME HUITIEME. A PARIS, chez PANCKOUCKE, Libraire, Hôtel de Thou, rue des Poitevins. M.DCC.XC [1790]. It contains the following note on p[2]: Suite de deuxième division des Arts & Métiers Mécaniques, relative au texte du Dictionnaire des Manufactures & Arts, par M. ROLAND DE LA PLATIÈRE.⁸



Besides choosing the categories summarizing the “literary characteristics and semantic elements”—author, title, subtitle, edition, volumes, place and date of publication, publisher, date of first edition, binding, illustrations, plates, maps, charts, tables, etc.—the bibliographer pens a summary of the content and situates the book within the existing literature on the subject. Using all the appropriate typographic abbreviations available, he completes the entry by indicating the number of pages and illustrations, the dimensions of the volume, etc.: “[4p] + 290pl. 25 x 33. Boards. 290 Engraved pl (198 single-page; 92 double-page).” Ironically, this emphasis on material aspects, along with the density of the information conveyed, results in the book disappearing as an object, buried under a Borgesian accumulation of cryptic ciphers.⁹

The information contained in Siegelaub’s *Bibliographica Textilia Historiæ* draws largely on his private collection of books, enabling him to work with the sources at arm’s length—a practice harking back to the Renaissance and the first bibliographers. However, his mode of organization differs from conventional libraries, where titles are kept on shelves, ready for consultation: indeed, with every new acquisition and bibliographic entry, the pile of books in his apartment grew, until they were eventually shipped to a warehouse. At the end of this process, the book is no longer materially accessible, vanishing once again as an object.

The bibliography, on the contrary, gives access to a wide field of literature and printed matter, while also shedding light on its production and circulation. By customizing his own set of bibliographic instruments, Siegelaub packs an entire library into a single book; in his mind, the *Bibliographica Textilia Historiæ* is the map that allows readers to navigate his own library as well as the global web of literature on textiles it charts. Conversely, it could be argued that the crates of books tucked away in an anonymous storage facility are the material evidence, the beautiful but largely invisible by-product, of a learning process based on the compilation of information—a contradiction that encapsulates the nature of Siegelaub’s bibliographic practice.

Siegelaub somewhat provocatively claimed that he could have made a bibliography for pretty much anything, but it is apparent that his methods were intimately linked to the fields he was exploring, textiles in particular. In the introduction to the *Bibliographica Textilia Historiæ*, as though indicating that he was well aware of this intricate relationship, he summoned up a textile metaphor to circumscribe the “theoretical apparatus” referred to by Serrai:

Despite all these important reference works, to our knowledge, there is no single bibliographic reference source—whether published, unpublished, library file cards, or electronic database—which attempts to weave together on one

bibliographic loom, so to speak, the entire “fabric” of the literature of the history of textiles: the history of fibers and cloth, such as wool, cotton, linen, etc., as well as the history of fine, luxury, decorative textiles, such as silk; the fine art of weaving as an industry and object of trade; the technology of textiles as well as its aesthetic, “fine art” aspects; i.e., the social-economic-practical aspects along with the artistic, decorative and beautiful aspects, which is precisely the purpose of the Center for Social Research on Old Textiles and its *Bibliographica Textilia Historiæ*.¹⁰

For Siegelau, who wanted to record the history of books on textiles in the form of a list, the bibliography was akin to a loom—a computing machine that interlaces the warp and the weft of a weave to create a tissue of information. The other image he used in conjunction with the bibliography, as we have seen, was that of the map, and it is no coincidence that the dust jacket of the *Bibliographica Textilia Historiæ*, designed by Siegelau’s alter ego Ian Segal, features a piece of cloth—a late-fifteenth-century Italian cut voided velvet with metal thread—in which he saw the outlines of the European continent. This item from his collection of textiles illustrates both his bibliographic intent and the inevitable shortfalls of his work—or of any historiographic undertaking, for that matter. Despite the technical refinement of looms in the fifteenth century, weaving this particular kind of so-called figured textile still required extensive manual labor, producing unavoidable imperfections; however, like the traces of wear and repairs on the piece chosen for the cover of the book, the fabric of history itself is riddled with holes and mendings.

Mapping Conceptual Art

Siegelau’s interest in maps and lists can be traced back to the late 1960s and his involvement in the emergence of Conceptual Art. In 1968, cutting his teeth in New York’s art world, he invented the “catalogue-as-exhibition,” a conceptual twist that would define his further work as an independent curator. Similarly, the brochures, catalogues, announcements, postcards, posters, and magazine inserts he edited and/or published until he took a long hiatus from the art world beginning in 1972 were not what they seemed at face value. Rather than referring to a given event, they *were* the event—or “primary information,” as he called it, as opposed to “secondary information”:

The art that I am interested in can be communicated with books and catalogues. Obviously most people become acquainted with art via illustrations, slides, films. Rather than having the direct confrontation with art itself, there is a secondhand experience, which does not do justice to the work—since it depends upon its

physical presence, in terms of color, scale, material, and context—all of which is bastardized and distorted. But when art does not any longer depend upon its physical presence, when it has become an abstraction, it is not distorted and altered by its representation in books and catalogues. It becomes *primary* information, while the reproduction of conventional art in books or catalogues is necessarily *secondary* information. ...When information is primary, the catalogue can become the exhibition.¹¹

While the “catalogue-as-exhibition” was the result of a variety of circumstances, Siegelaub’s encounter with Douglas Huebler in 1966 proved decisive. Both men were at a turning point in their respective careers: the former had just closed his gallery at 16 West Fifty-Sixth Street, and the latter’s work from this period manifests his transition from Minimal sculpture to Conceptual Art. The cover of the “catalogue-as-exhibition” *Douglas Huebler*, published by Siegelaub in November 1968,¹² highlights the role of maps in that artist’s latest body of works as well as in Siegelaub’s further editorial and curatorial practice.¹³

The following year, Siegelaub curated the “catalogue” and edited the “exhibition” *July, August, September 1969. Juillet, Août, Septembre 1969. Juli, August, September 1969*, also known as the *Summer Show*.¹⁴ Its premise was simple and pragmatic: eleven artists were invited to “make one (1) work in 1 location anywhere in the world.” Siegelaub’s letter of invitation to the artists furthermore stated that “because the works will be made, they should be accessible to the public who would want to view them. Prior to the exhibition, a (tri-lingual) catalog[ue] will be published and distributed to the public, to aid them in seeing the exhibition. All the standard catalog[ue] information will be published in the catalog[ue].”¹⁵

The work files for this project from the Seth Siegelaub Papers at the Museum of Modern Art in New York—comprising notes, lists, letters of invitation, forms, materials sent to him by artists, correspondence with bookshops, drafts for catalogue captions, various versions of the translations, draft layouts, blueprints, mailing lists, and other kinds of documents—offer an enlightening account of its making. It appears that, from one end of the production chain to the other, Siegelaub was the agent who formulated the project, gathered the information and artistic documents, kept the records, and managed the production. More generally, the archive contradicts a popular view of Conceptual Art by suggesting that his approach was not so much theoretical, literary, or linguistic as it was practical: if he used photocopies, offset printing, postal mail, stationery, photographs, maps, as well as the telephone, conference call, radio, or even the plane as media, it was more often than not for sheer efficacy and practicality.

For *July, August, September 1969. Juillet, Août, Septembre 1969. Juli, August, September 1969*, Siegelaub publicized the artists' ideas by presenting, describing, contextualizing, and dating the works in the catalogue—a series of operations anticipating his bibliographic projects in other areas. Besides the images and documentation of the works, they were referred to in captions and notes written by Siegelaub based on the information provided to him by the artists (on the form he sent them to fill out and mail back to him). Inasmuch as the catalogue functioned as a guide for a global exhibition, this information was essential for visitors because it provided a spatial and temporal framework. In this particular instance, the bibliographic task was complicated by the very nature of the objects it applied to: a sculpture yet to be made (Carl Andre), a psychic intention (Robert Barry), a series of clandestine street actions (Daniel Buren), a trip (Jan Dibbets), a “location piece” (Douglas Huebler), a thesaurus entry (Joseph Kosuth), instructions for a drawing (Sol LeWitt), a site-specific sculpture (Richard Long, Robert Smithson), “visual sensitivity information” (N.E. Thing Co.), and a statement (Lawrence Weiner).

If we think the concept of primary information through to its logical end, it means that the works in *July, August, September 1969. Juillet, Août, Septembre 1969. Juli, August, September 1969*, in addition to their status as art, and before entering the realms of critique and history as secondary information, were, by virtue of Siegelaub's editorial and curatorial work, bibliographic facts—in other words, “tertiary information,” a compilation of primary sources. Though formally the most traditional of Siegelaub's publications, the exhibition's catalogue is a particularly complex example because it occupies an interstitial space between art (the works were well and truly made and presented) and bibliography. In fact, it plays so important a role in accessing the works that, in Siegelaub's mind, it tends to replace the actual exhibition.¹⁶ Short of traveling to each of the eleven locations, it was the only way to bridge the temporal and spatial distances between the works and experience the exhibition as a whole. The title in three languages, the list with the names of the eleven participating artists, and the map on the cover act as a manifest: moving beyond the walls of the gallery and beyond the confines of the art world, Conceptual Art is itinerant, immediate, and simultaneous, disseminated through a web of references and translations that can only be grasped by a satellite-like reading.

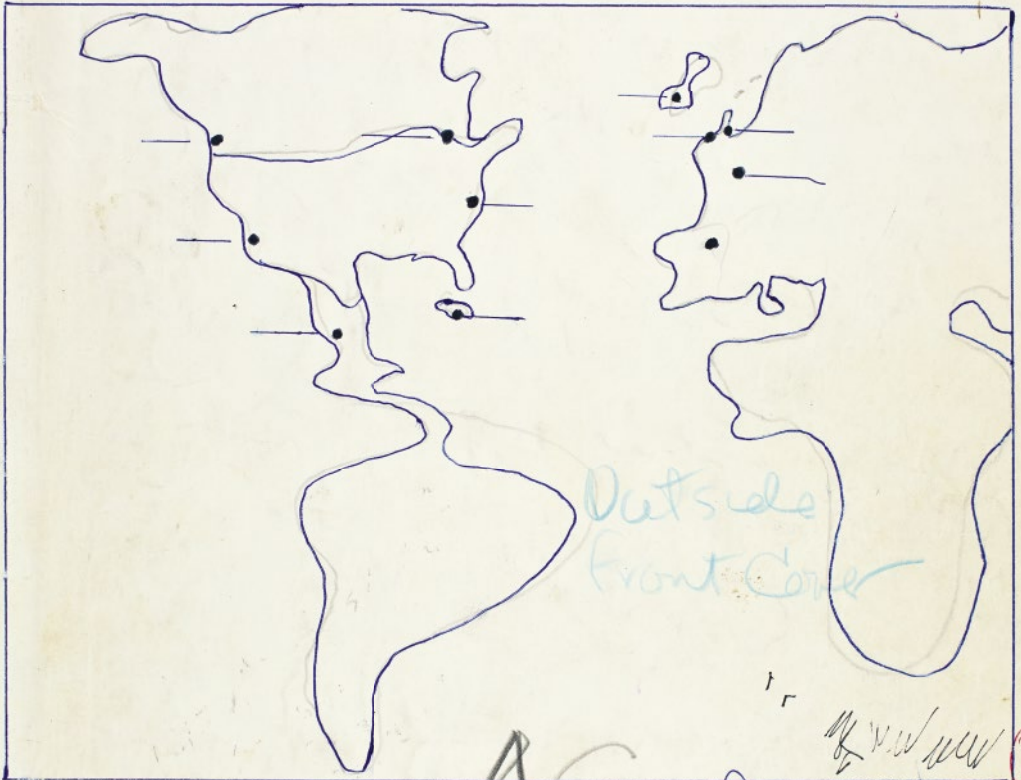
The bibliographic nature of the project contributed to this expansion by increasing the possibilities of mediation and the mobility of art. From Gutenberg's invention to the theories of Marshall McLuhan, whose work heavily influenced the first generation of Conceptual artists,¹⁷ the book, in its ancestral form of a codex, enabled them to imagine new spatiotemporal relations and forms of organization. These, then, are the “conceptual” aspects of their art and Siegelaub's chief contribution to the history of publishing.

List of artists' names and locations for
the catalogue cover of the exhibition
*July, August, September 1969. Juillet,
Août, Septembre 1969. Juli, August,
September 1969, 1969*

CARL ANDRE [in the Hague, Holland], TERRY ATKINSON
and MICHAEL BALDWIN [in London, England], ROBERT
BARRY [in ~~London~~], IAIN BAXTER [in Vancouver,
Canada], DANIEL BUREN [in Paris, France], JAN DIBBETS
[in Amsterdam, Holland], DOUGLAS HUEBLER [in Los Angeles,
California], JOSEPH KOSUTH [in ~~London~~, Puerto Rico], SOL
LEWITT [in Düsseldorf, Germany], RICHARD LONG [in Bristol,
England], ROBERT SMITHSON [in Oaxaca, Mexico]. and ~~more~~
LAWRENCE WEINER [in Niagara Falls, New York].

Page from mock-up of the catalogue cover of the exhibition *July, August, September 1969*. *Juillet, Août, Septembre 1969*. *Juli, August, September 1969*, 1969

July, August, September 1969 / Juli, Auguste, Septembre 1969 / ^{14 pt} ~~July, August, September 1969~~ ~~July, August, September 1969~~ ~~July, August, September 1969~~



CARL ANDRE, ROBERT BARRY, DANIEL BUREN
 JAN DIBBETS, DOUGLAS HUEBLER, JOSEPH
 KOSUTH, SOL LEWITT, RICHARD LONG
 N.E. THING CO. LTD., ROBERT SMITHSON,
 LAWRENCE WEINER

The politics of information

In a text on Conceptual Art published in 1973, a year after he had withdrawn from the art world and moved to France, Siegelaub formulated the following equation, which illustrated the gradual shift in his work from Conceptual Art to journalism and mass media:

$$\frac{\text{painting}}{\text{"CA"}} = \frac{\text{the novel}}{\text{journalism}}^{18}$$

Although it is not mentioned explicitly, what underpins this analogy between the realms of visual art and writing is the idea of information—and its implied factualness and mobility—as a central motif in Siegelaub’s work across different fields. After focusing on “artistic information,” he implemented his transition to other forms of printed media with a project aimed at creating a radical daily newspaper for “political information.” Written, edited, and published by himself, the five newsletters preparing the launch of the *Public Press + News Network* document his broader reflections on the context and distribution of information, and conclude with the observation that it might actually make more sense to found a news agency:

Realizing that the effectiveness of the newspaper would depend on the quality of its information gathering sources, [b]y February 1972, two things had become clear:

1. There existed an abundance of quality information which was not being utilized, and
2. The need to provide another public outlet for alternate information was less urgent than the need to channel this information to existing news media.

Given this new focus on the problem of information, the original intention has developed into the creation of a news agency which will provide the liaison between the sources of alternate information and the news media.¹⁹

This attention to the framework, a recurring feature in Siegelaub’s work, finds a visual equivalent in the diagrams explaining the editorial organization of the planned newspaper, but also in the overall graphic appearance of the newsletter, which he designed himself from collages and typewritten or typeset texts. In fact, the layout of the newsletter is identical to that of the newspaper it advertises, which itself, in a typical Siegelaubian *mise en abyme*, exists as an illustration in the newsletter.

For Siegelau, who was influenced by the counterculture and the various Marxist-inspired movements that irrigated the 1970s and '80s, editing, publishing, and distributing were the means to clarify and strengthen a political perspective, and were therefore tools of militancy. When the press agency failed to materialize, Siegelau went on to create a resource center that would allow him to develop his own system, with the bibliography as its principal instrument. The International Mass Media Research Center (IMMRC) was founded in 1973 in Bagnolet, a Communist stronghold on the outskirts of Paris, for the purpose of collecting all sorts of printed matter—books, brochures, conference reports, periodicals, articles, press clippings, tracts, etc.—around communication theories and practices, which was then a strand of research in full bloom. Accompanying the emergence of countless militant groups, it focused on leftist critiques of capitalism, imperialism, and the cultural industry. Immersing himself in the local, political, and cultural life of Bagnolet, and letting daily events dictate his work schedule,²⁰ Siegelau ran the IMMRC as an organization “without walls” in which he held all the positions—in keeping with a habit, adopted after his unsuccessful stint as a gallerist, of avoiding the overhead generated by permanent, physical structures.

In part via the institutional façade of the IMMRC, Siegelau built an international network of contacts and intellectual affiliations with individuals and organizations, mainly in the United States, but also in Europe and, to a lesser extent, in emerging countries. The best example of how this network was put to practical use was his relationship with the Belgian sociologist Armand Mattelart, who played a key role as a go-between in several academic milieus. (Coincidentally, the two men had moved to the greater Paris region at around the same time.) Mattelart, an exile from Chile, shared with Siegelau his political experience of working for Salvador Allende’s Popular Unity government, and his groundbreaking research on mass media and cultural imperialism;²¹ Siegelau, in turn, provided this prolific writer with an outlet and an English-speaking readership through his publishing house International General (IG).²²

For radical groups and academic organizations, the proliferation of documentation, libraries, publications, and archives played a key role in the circulation of ideas, as the information contained in them was passed on by word of mouth, in specialist reviews, in correspondence, and through various other, more or less informal means. The IMMRC actively engaged in this exchange, primarily by mail; on the basis of the information it gathered, Siegelau compiled and published two directories, *Marxism and the Mass Media: Towards a Basic Bibliography* and *Communication and Class Struggle: An Anthology in 2 Volumes*, the latter co-edited with Mattelart. The two publications are different in nature but ultimately complementary: the first is a bibliography that lists titles, dates, authors, and publishers according to an index of themes, authors,

and locations; the second is an anthology that reproduces excerpts of texts from documents, presented according to academic categories. By identifying, selecting and presenting the relevant literary references, they function as political guides to navigate complex webs of ideas, topics, and individuals or communities. Publishing—in other words the making of a book as a material object that brings together separate and fragmented elements—forms an integral part of Siegelau's operations and completes this nexus of functions.

In "A Communication on Communication," the preface to the first volume of *Communication and Class Struggle*, Siegelau clearly states his intention to reveal and question the political machinery regulating the distribution of ideas:

Today, under monopoly capitalism, the rich world production of Marxist communication theory arising from these diverse conditions is very difficult to "grasp" through the tightly controlled, highly centralized and uniform network of dominant communication theory, under the hegemony of the United States. It is difficult to grasp in more than one sense. Not only there is the more advanced problem of "understanding" the work itself, but also the more elementary problem of even "finding" or "locating" this work physically. This difficulty, however, does not only affect the circulation and consumption of existing left, critical and progressive communication research, but especially affects its production in the future.²³

As an editor and publisher, Siegelau was well aware that the circulation—and hence control—of left-wing political ideas depended on the very system of communication they criticized. In this respect, the bibliographic system—which Serrai's definition considers from the perspective of the organization of signs—is a key instrument that must also be seen from the angle of "the sociology of texts," in the understanding of Donald McKenzie, a historian of the book.²⁴ Expanding the scope of "texts" beyond the familiar form of the book to include other, more ephemeral printed matter, the contextual and historic approach to bibliography developed by McKenzie considers books as objects from which the processes used to produce and transmit them can be inferred, completing the picture that emerges from the "literary characteristics and semantic elements" identified by Serrai. In fact, in his own research, Siegelau often had to contend with "poor materials," so-called "gray literature" that included all kinds of documents whose very existence was difficult to establish—hence the importance of the IMMRC's network of contacts, which enabled him to source documents directly from their authors and make information available that would otherwise have gone unnoticed or whose content would have been understood differently.

“The history of International General is the history of me”

International General is the company Siegelaub founded in January 1970 in New York with the aim, primarily, of distributing the catalogues he published under his own name. This was to compensate for the absence of commercial networks that specialized in so-called artist’s books, at a time when they were playing an increasingly important role in artistic production.²⁵ Although Siegelaub initially organized the distribution of his “catalogues-as-exhibitions” himself via his mailing list or by placing copies with galleries and specialist bookshops such as Wittenborn and Company in New York, his expanding editing and publishing activities soon called for a more professional structure if the global reach of the artists he was working with was to be expanded and accelerated. Between 1972 and the late 1980s, he therefore transformed IG into a small specialist publishing house which, in the course of its existence, released fifteen paperback anthologies and Marxist-inspired essays on culture and communication. While each of these publications was a direct result of Siegelaub’s network, one book stands out as an editorial stroke of genius: with an initial print run of 10,000 copies, *How to Read Donald Duck: Imperialist Ideology in the Disney Comic*, the first English translation of Ariel Dorfman’s and Armand Mattelart’s anti-Disney pamphlet *Para leer el Pato Donald* from 1971 became a global political best seller in various translations.

Publishing would eventually provide Siegelaub’s basic income, allowing him to pursue his other research and grow his collections. But more than a means of making a living—and although he rarely insisted on this side of his work—IG was the nexus between his various projects, a constant in the transition from Conceptual Art to communication, and even textiles, as Siegelaub briefly considered turning it into what is now the Stichting Egress Foundation, which brings together all aspects of his work. Accordingly, the IG sales list, a flimsy booklet that sums up the company’s production, is (ever faithful to Siegelaub’s inclination toward recursiveness) “the catalogue of catalogues,” demonstrating that nothing eludes the logic of the bibliography, not even Siegelaub himself. Once again, we see that his work tends to gravitate toward a meta-level—encapsulated, you could say, in the expression “international general”—while at the same time remaining a very personal affair: a view backed up by his own assessment that “the history of International General is the history of me.”²⁶

What, then, is the history of Siegelaub? Intervening at every step of the production process, he constantly shifted his activity among publishing, documenting, collecting, and archiving—to such an extent that any attempt to distinguish among them is bound to fail.²⁷ Indeed, organizing an exhibition was not, in his mind, fundamentally different from editing a catalogue, moderating a symposium, compiling a bibliography, or collecting books, which itself was about

drafting lists, making connections, redefining categories. Reconnecting with historic models of publishing, Siegelau assumed the now separate functions of author, translator, proofreader, publisher, and distributor. In this sense, he was an incarnation of the editor in the historic sense, before the definition of the term as we know it was established in the nineteenth century: a man of many trades, which included, but were not confined to, preparing, selecting, and organizing textual, visual, or aural information with the aim of disseminating and publicizing it.²⁸ Siegelau's choices challenged the orthodoxies of academic editing whenever he found them unfit for his purposes, guided by a few simple principles: the direct presentation of information, the political importance of the context, and the materiality of transitory objects. Similarly, he created his own institutions, patched together from various organizational models, rather than working for existing ones (the museum, the library, the university, etc.). A self-taught and self-made man, he was essentially whatever the situation required: a tinker, tailor, soldier, sailor—and much more than that.

Notes

- 1 Rosalind Fay in conversation with the author, January 28, 2014.
- 2 Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind* (1962), trans. George Weidenfeld (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966).
- 3 Typescript of unpublished and untitled memoirs, 1970, part 3, page 14; Seth Siegelau Papers, Museum of Modern Art Archives, I.A.83, New York.
- 4 Based on pioneering research in the archives related to Siegelau's time in New York, the art historian Alexander Alberro presented the first extensive account of his work as part of a Ph.D. dissertation and a subsequent book, *Conceptual Art and the Politics of Publicity* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2003). Since 2005, numerous exhibition curators and artists have referred to Siegelau as a model, although the full scope of his work remains to be assessed.
- 5 Among the vast bibliography of writings about intellectual technologies, see the seminal book by Jack Goody, *The Domestication of the Savage Mind* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977) and the article by Bruno Latour, "Les 'vues' de l'esprit, une introduction à l'anthropologie des sciences et des techniques," *Réseaux* 5, no. 27 (1987): 79–96.
- 6 Seth Siegelau and Center for Social Research on Old Textiles, eds., *Bibliographica Textilia Historiae: Towards a General Bibliography on the History of Textiles Based on the Library and Archives of the Center for Social Research on Old Textiles* (New York: International General, 1997). See also an interview from 2012 in which Siegelau expands on the relationships between the different elements of his research: Seth Siegelau, Alice Motard, and Alex Sainsbury, "Nothing Personal ... : An Interview with Seth Siegelau," in Sara Martinetti, Alice Motard, and Alex Sainsbury, eds., *The Stuff That Matters: Textiles Collected by Seth Siegelau for the Center for Social Research on Old Textiles*, exh. cat. (London: Raven Row, 2012), 17–28.
- 7 Alfredo Serrai "Introduzione," in Fiammetta Sabba and Alfredo Serrai, *Profilo di storia della bibliografia* (Milan: Sylvestre Bonnard, 2005), 11. See also Alfredo Serrai, *Storia della bibliografia*, 11 vols. (Rome: Bulzoni, 1988–2001).
- 8 Seth Siegelau and Center for Social Research on Old Textiles, eds., *Bibliographica Textilia Historiae Database*.
- 9 Concerning the concept of dematerialization, and how it resonates with Siegelau's formative years, see the essay by Julia Bryan-Wilson in this catalogue, "Seth Siegelau's Material Conditions," p. 30.
- 10 Seth Siegelau, "Notes Towards a Critical History of the Literature of Textiles," in *Bibliographica Textilia Historiae*, 16.
- 11 The interview with Ursula Meyer from December 1969 is reprinted in this catalogue, p. 190. See also Seth Siegelau and Charles Harrison, "On Exhibitions and the World at Large: Seth Siegelau in Conversation with Charles Harrison," *Studio International* 178, no. 917 (December 1969): 202; and Seth Siegelau and Michel Claura, "L'art conceptuel," *xx^e siècle* 35, no. 41 (December 1973): 158. For a critical analysis of the presumed neutrality of the book as a medium for the presentation of Conceptual Art, see the paragraphs on the *Xerox Book* and the idea of transcription in Sara Martinetti, "A Revolution First-Hand: Seth Siegelau's Journey to Portugal in May 1975," *May* 11 (October 2013): 111–45.
- 12 Douglas Huebler [Douglas Huebler: November 1968] (New York: Seth Siegelau, 1968).
- 13 *Boston–New York Exchange Shape*, from Huebler's *Site Sculptures* series, was "published" in an abridged form in the 1968 catalogue. Written statements, maps, and images "document" the work, which consists of two hexagonal shapes marked out in Boston and New York. The work is part of Siegelau's collection of art, now at the Museum of Modern in New York.
- 14 Seth Siegelau, ed., *July, August, September 1969. Juillet, Août, Septembre 1969. Juli, August, September 1969* (New York: Seth Siegelau, 1969).
- 15 Letter of invitation to artists for *July, August, September 1969. Juillet, Août, Septembre 1969. Juli, August, September 1969*, 1969; Seth Siegelau Papers, Museum of Modern Art, New York.
- 16 In an interview with Patricia Norvell, he explains: "Part of what's going on and prompted me to do this show that I'll be doing during the summer is the idea that information is going back and forth so quickly. I like that idea and can see myself working in this area very much, being able to ship not things but ideas and people, and ideas about things, all over the world very, very quickly. So I think it's now getting to the point where a man can live in Africa and make great art. ... And now that has much to do with a quality of the art too. It can travel very easily, and it can be seen on a primary level, not just photographs of something but the something itself. The idea of primary information as opposed to secondary or tertiary information. Or hearsay. It's happening very, very quickly. And it makes communications even quicker. Just send a letter in the mail and you know what it's about." Seth Siegelau

Michel Claura and Siegelaub, Paris, April 1970



and Patricia Norvell, "Seth Siegelaub: April 17, 1969," in Alexander Alberro and Patricia Norvell, eds., *Recording Conceptual Art: Early Interviews with Barry, Huebler, Kaltenbach, LeWitt, Morris, Oppenheim, Siegelaub, Smithson, and Weiner* by Patricia Norvell (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 53.

17 See Marshall McLuhan, *The Gutenberg Galaxy: The Making of Typographic Man* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1962).

18 Siegelaub and Claura, "L'art conceptuel," 156.

19 Seth Siegelaub, ed. *Public Press + News Network*, Newsletter 5 (April 1972).

20 In those years, the "red" suburb of Bagnolet was known for its active cultural and social life, from cinema clubs to health care services and children's playgroups. A member of the French Communist Party, Fay volunteered to distribute the party newspaper, *L'Humanité*. Siegelaub's political involvement was largely confined to his publishing activities. The city's unique social and political atmosphere attracted numerous researchers, activists, and artists.

21 Armand Mattelart in conversation with the author, September 19 and December 5, 2012.

22 Ariel Dorfman and Armand Mattelart, *How to Read Donald Duck: Imperialist Ideology in the Disney Comic*. Translated from Spanish by David Kunzle. Four editions (New York: International General, 1975–91). Seth Siegelaub and Armand Mattelart, eds., *Communication and Class Struggle: An Anthology in 2 Volumes*. 2 vols.: *Capitalism, Imperialism and Liberation, Socialism* (New York/Bagnolet: International General/IMMRC, 1979/1983). Armand Mattelart, ed., *Communicating in Popular Nicaragua: An Anthology* (New York and Bagnolet: International General, 1986).

23 Seth Siegelaub and Armand Mattelart, eds., *Communication and Class Struggle: An Anthology in 2 Volumes*, vol. 1, 15–16.

24 Donald Francis McKenzie, *Bibliography and the Sociology of Texts* (London: British Library, 1986). See also Peter D. McDonald and Michael F. Suarez, eds., *Making Meaning: "Printers of the Mind" and Other Essays* (Amherst, Mass., and Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2002).

25 The non-profit organization and specialist library Printed Matter in New York wasn't founded until 1976. Art Metropole in Toronto was established in 1974.

26 See the interview with Robert Horvitz and Thomas Levin in this catalogue, p. 331.

27 For an attempt, see the bibliographic section in *Better Read Than Dead: The Seth Siegelaub Source Book* (Cologne: Buchhandlung Walther König, 2016).

28 See the book by Roger Chartier, *The Order of Books: Readers, Authors, and Libraries in Europe between the Fourteenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, trans. Lydia G. Cochrane (Cambridge: Polity Press; and Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994) ; and the monographic study by James N. Green and Peter Stallybrass, *Benjamin Franklin: Writer and Printer* (New Castle: Oak Knoll Press, 2006).