

Merz World: Processing the Complicated Order

Program Hapax Series

Edited by Adrian Notz Hans Ulrich Obrist

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The Merzbau as Gesantkunstwerk Gwendolen Webster

Kurt Schwitters' Hanover Merzbou, which he reporded as his most significant work, was destroyed in 1943, in skile in far-off London, he made desperate plans to rescue and restore its desolate remains, but finally had to admit that his plans were fulls: "My studie and my life"s work no logner exist," he wrote in 1945. "And I ge on living ... isn't it sad, What did I actually live for?! dan't know." It was a tragedy for Schwitters, but despite his predictions, the Merzbou has continued to survive and flourish in endless books, articles, and projects, while providing a fine opportunity for art historians to theorize endeasly without the presence of the original to prove them wrong. Here it is my urn to theorize, and, as this book is dedicated to the memory of Haraid Szeemann, I shall base my essay on his 1994 test "Zum Gesanstunstwerk von Kunt Schwitters" (Nort Schwitters' Total Work of Art, part of which was published in the catalogue of Szeemann's best-known exhibition, Der Hang zum Gesanstunstwerk (Tendencies Toward the Total Work of Art, 1983).

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The legacy of the

The evolving artwork and early, all-encompassing installation "Merzbau" was German Dadaist Kurt Schwitters' obsession. He began building a fantastical structure inside his Hanover studio in 1923, which he conceived as a project without end. It gradually took over most of the house. He continued to work on it in different locations throughout his life, remarking that the "Merzbau" contained everything that was important to him. This groundbreaking volume results from the first of a series of Zurich-based symposia on the "Merzbau" and its legacy in contemporary architecture, art and society. The "Symposium Merzbau" sets a new standard for further research on Schwitter's influential project.

Edited by curator and writer Hans Ulrich Obrist, this book includes contributions by art historians, critics and architects—including Yona Friedman, Thomas Hirschorn and Gwendolen Webster—who discuss ways in which the "Merzbau" resonates in their fields, and provide new perspectives on Schwitters' under-examined masterwork.