

King Solomon, the Great Love Poet, Fails to Meet the Queen of Sheba in Palestine

Works by Peter Schumann

Big Town Gallery

Rochester, Vermont

August 29th - October 4th

Given Big Town Gallery's stated mandate to showcase artists deeply dedicated to an exploration of what fine art means, both as creation and experience, it is fitting that the work of Peter Schumann, founder of the legendary Bread and Puppet Theater is featured this fall. Gallery owner Anni Mackey has been a long time admirer of her fellow Vermonters collaborative work utilizing art as a unique tool to transform individual energy and rage against political injustice into public spectacle often tinged with dark humor and the absurd.

Schumann was born in Silesia (now Poland) in 1934. He was a sculptor and dancer before moving to New York City where he instigated the first iteration of Bread and Puppet Theater in 1963. It took 50 years of international touring, a stint as artist-in-residence at Goddard, a move to Glover, Vermont, countless parades, protests and circus performances before he was offered his first solo museum exhibition, titled *The Shatterer* which took place in 2013 at the Queens Museum in NYC. His body of work, as an individual artist, had been up to that moment largely unseen. Curator Jonathan Berger called him "one of the most independent, prolific and complex artists of our time."

Schumann's visionary, occasionally surreal work includes handmade books, musical lectures, machines, philosophical diagrams, paintings and the iconic large scale papier-mâché sculptures that were sized to compete with the sky scrapers that dominate the streets of New York. The Bread and Puppet Theater is both the culmination of his life's work as well as the continuation of his unique sensibility to reach out and effectively invite like-minded souls to join him.

Tens of thousands of people have experienced Bread and Puppet over the years and still visit the home base in Glover throughout the summer where Peter continuous to bake and serve his life sustaining bread after each Sunday's performance. Spontaneity, and the energy generated by Bread and Puppet can seem ephemeral but the artwork created by that energy, the artifacts left as evidence come from the mind and hand of Peter Schumann. Thanks to the Big Town Gallery for providing a platform for us to discover, in a more contemplative environment, this artist who has surprised and motivated a whole new generation.

—Cynthia L. Close