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Paul Thek: Artist's Artist

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Paul Thek occupied a place between high art and low art, between the epic and the everyday. During his brief life (1933-1988), he went against the grain of art world trends, humanizing the institutional spaces of art with the force of his humor, spirituality, and character. Twenty years after Thek's death from AIDS, we can now recognize his influence on contemporary artists ranging from Vito Acconci and Bruce Nauman to Matthew Barney, Mike Kelley, and Paul McCarthy, as well as Kai Althoff, Jonathan Meese, and Thomas Hirschhorn. This book brings together more than 300 of Thek's works--many of which are published here for the first time--to offer the most comprehensive display of his work yet seen. The book, which accompanies an exhibition at ZKM ? Museum of Contemporary Art presenting Thek's work in dialogue with contemporary art by young artists, includes painting, sculpture, drawing, and installation work, as well as photographs documenting the room-size environments into which Thek incorporated elements from art, literature, theater, and religion. These works chart Thek's journey from legendary outsider to foundational figure in contemporary art. In their antiheroic diversity, Thek's works embody the art revolution of the 1960s; indeed, Susan Sontag dedicated her classic Against Interpretation to him. Thek's treatment of the body in such works as "Technological Reliquaries," with their castings and replicas of human body parts, tissue, and bones, both evoke the aura of Christian relics and anticipate the work of Damien Hirst. The book, with more than 500 images (300 in color) and nineteen essays by art historians, curators, collectors, and artists, investigates Thek's work on its own terms, and as a starting point for understanding the work of the many younger artists Thek has influenced.Essays byJean-Christophe Ammann, Margrit Brehm, Bazon Brock, Suzanne Delehanty, Harald Falckenberg, Marietta Franke, Stefan Germer, Kim Gordon, Roland Groenenboom, Axel Heil, Gregor Jansen, Mike Kelley, John Miller, Susanne Neubauer, Kenny Schachter, Harald Szeemann, Annette Tietenberg, Peter Weibel, Ann Wilson

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