

**ALTHOUGH** Dr Harold Szeeman is in Australia to work, he has lost interest in pregnant cows as an art form.

Dr Szeeman is the Swiss art director who once arranged for an artist to exhibit such a cow in Cologne, Germany.

His name is always associated with the idea — but that's all it was, it never eventuated.

"We hoped the cow would give birth in the gallery, and on the other side of the hall we had three tons of soil representing eventual death," he told Janet Hawley in Sydney yesterday.

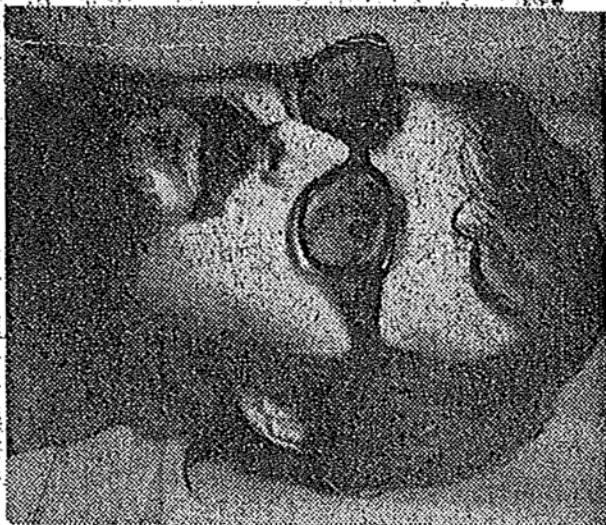
But after we'd installed everything, we had to cancel it. The authorities said that it was against four different laws of the city of Cologne."

Dr Szeeman is here to arrange an exhibition in Sydney that will be taken to Melbourne later.

He couldn't say what it would be yesterday beyond: "It will be my view of you from outside. I am open to all forms of expression."

Asked how he defined a work of art, he replied: "Well, if I think it's art, it is." Many no doubt will shrug. If

# PREGNANT ART AN UDDER FAILURE



HAROLD SZEEMAN . . . another Christo.

Christo can wrap up Little Bay and declare it's art, why not a pregnant cow in a gallery?

Christo (still wrapping intricately) and Dr Szeeman are close friends, and both were brought to Australia by John Kaldor, who runs a fabric business.

Mr Kaldor has a plan to bring out a controversial figure in the art world each year, to get the Australian contemporary scene sparking with ideas.

Dr Szeeman, 34, has had his share of controversy. He sparked off resignations and arguments when he was appointed director of the Kassel Documenta in 1967. It's a most important exhibition held every four years in Kassel, Germany, and the director is allowed two years to arrange it, he explained.

There are always arguments in the art world and anyone who wants to see change will cause more arguments.

"In Europe now, the art world is divided into two parts. One wants art works that are autonomous and explain themselves.

The other is for making more complex exhibitions, and putting art works in a state bigger than autonomous works.

"The happening I organised that included the cow had three parts. I had pictures, stamps,

bank notes, children's paintings . . .

"I'm interested in the art of concept, change, permanence, environments and attitudes rather than objects."

"And I think it's valid for art directors to use their galleries for artists to show these things. The director has to say a work of art is a work of art, and give it this function by putting it in a gallery."

"Otherwise gestures artists make might be lost. I mean, if an artist makes a pile of sticks in the street, it's a pile of sticks. But if he does it in a gallery, it's a work of art."

Dr Szeeman said some artists were going away from "happening" concepts and back to the canvas, as part of the new re-assertion.

But not Christo. His new project is to hang a great curtain across a valley in Colorado. He needs a very special rope made and it's going to cost \$800,000.

Said Dr Szeeman: "Hell, get it. That's the great thing about Christo — he never just puts on a boring exhibition in a corner of a gallery and leaves."

"He has the idea, he creates his own gallery, and he has the intuition to know where to find the people who will give the finance to make it all happen."

ART  
Terry Smith

## Szeemann: exhibition maker

HARALD SZEEMANN'S lightning fortnight in Australia was salutary for everybody in the local art world. He is the first we have seen of a growing breed of men who have become vital to the continuance of international art — the professional exhibition-maker.

Like the critic, he constantly puts his judgment and his knowledge of art up for testing. But instead of putting together a few hundred words, he assembles a art-educative business, too much of the hard-sell of commercial dealing in art. Thus the oft-lamented number of works of art, in order to offer an argument about art.

There are dangers in this kind of role. Dangers of superficiality, of cutting intellectual corners, of stam-

peding art, of absorbing, into what is basically an blight of "swinging curators", who a while back seemed to be able to assemble the same old standards into a new, "path-finding" exhibition every alternative month.

But, carried through with integrity, the activity of exhibition-making can be at least as genuinely creative as criticism. And, as more and more artists leave the gallery-dealer art marketing system, and as art prizes become more and more suspect, Szeemann's kind of enterprise becomes increasingly important.

Dr Szeemann will direct the exhibition Documenta at Kassel, Germany, next year. He has to live up to its reputation as the biggest, most intelligent, most innovative and just plain good mega-exhibition in the world. His original scheme for an "Aktion Documenta", wherein artists would be invited to live together for a period in order to build a new sort of society, met with a negative response from both the Kassel authorities and the artists.

His plan now is for a sprawling theme exhibition "Inquiry into Reality: today's imagery", which will survey artificial realisms (for example, social realism), appearance realism (pop art), and art which aims for "the real", the core, of a process or idea (for example, color painting

or conceptual art). Each of these categories will be subdivided further. The project is ambitious, and admirably risky in the sense that Szeemann has to operate within a framework not yet made.

His exhibition of the "most exciting" art being made now in Australia (Bonython Gallery, Sydney; then National Gallery of Victoria), is obviously less ambitious than Documenta, but in local terms almost as important. It confirms unequivocally the tendencies away from object art often detailed in this column.

Of the 22 artists represented in the show, only six are painters. Of these, Dale Hickey has since given up painting, and three others (Pidgeon, Whitley, Woods) are represented by one combine-painting. The three Christmanns look better than they did in his recent exhibition — their oddity as precious objects being no more odd than the directly odd objects of Armstrong, Dodd and Danko.

The main body of work in the exhibition is open-form construction, deriving from either sculpture or wall-hangings. Outstanding is Ti Parks' Banner 1969-70, which surely must be one of the best sculptures made in this country in recent years. The artist who makes the strongest impact is Guy Stuart, also from Melbourne. Stuart's three wall-onto-floor painted wool pieces are swaggering in scale, surprising in the detail of their

texture and in the forceful crudity of their coloring. Compare the Mona Hessian "weavings" in the front gallery to draw the distinction between art (Stuart) and craft (Hessian) — the craft has more art in it.

Of the courtyard "installations" or installations, Peter Kennedy's willow tree is the most interesting. He is fulfilling a year-old project aimed at transforming a living tree (by tying it up, hanging weights on it) in such a way that the sound situation which it usually provides is changed entirely.

It is surprising to find some very slight work in the exhibition — Tony Bishop's forest of measured metal hands are merely trivial, and Alac Tzames' 221 circular perspex units, quickly losing their point as a disturbed matrix (an idea not original to the artist, anyway), become children's building blocks and no more. The chic nature of Bonython Gallery itself defeats some of the work, notably Mike Parr's String-shadow piece and his Invitation.

Szeemann's taste is clearly for the most adventurous art around, especially that made by younger artists. The exhibition embodies this as a statement, and each of the works on show details an argument for this point of view. Yet even so, Szeemann does not claim to be an artist. It is, then, a rather over-reaching sort of gesture that John Kaldor,



JOHN KALDOR squats in the field of hands on exhibition at the Bonython Gallery, Sydney. The display is part of a "stimulation" arranged by Dr Harold Szeeman, head of the noted contemporary art shows mounted in Kassel, Germany, every four years.

## Sea of hands acclaims Mr Kaldor

By JANET HAWLEY

John Kaldor whooped through a field of 100 clapping metal hands, swaying on wire stalks like flowers. Behind stood a talking tree, beyond, an artistic coke pit, and inside, a row of neon light tubes on a concrete block.

"Of course it is art," said Kaldor, the wealthy fabric-maker who brought Christo to Australia to wrap Little Bay, Sydney, in plastic sheets.

Champagne glass in hand, Kaldor continued: "Sure I know I'll be ridiculed for this, but I don't care."

"This" is an exhibition from Dr Harold Szeeman, one of Europe's leading contemporary art gallery directors, and head of the Kassel Documenta, a display of contemporary world art mounted in Kassel, Germany, every four years.

Kaldor continued: "I am not trying to win any popularity polls. I am trying to bring over a contemporary art personality who will stimulate and liven up the local scene.

"This has far more lasting value than giving an art prize . . . everyone is doing that today."

The exhibition in the Bonython Gallery, Sydney, and later in Melbourne's National Gallery, is Szeeman's highly subjective view of some of the best things happening in Australian art.

Szeeman had to fly back to Europe last week, but opened his masterpiece last night in absentia on video-taped TV, declaring: "I wanted to leave behind a well done child, and this is it."

His favorite piece was a triple portrait by Brett Whiteley, William Piggeon and Tony Woods (rejected for the Archibald award which only considers single portraits). In it, Whiteley painted Piggeon, who painted Whiteley, who painted Woods, who painted both of them.

The 100 hands by Tony Bishop, of Adelaide, are cut-outs from his friends.

The talking tree was nearly aborted when gallery lady Nomis Rowlands looked into the courtyard and saw the artist hurling loops of wire over Mr Bonython's sole precious willow tree.

"If you hurt Kim's bloody tree he'll roast you," she warned, but the artist continued to wrap up gently the bunches of fronds with nylon, sticky tape and foam plastic.

The different sounds the willow makes when tied and untied are being recorded: "So much art today is concerned with concept and ideas, rather than producing a finished product," said Mr Kaldor.

"I'm tired of people who sit up like the high priests of Egypt, and emphasise the preciousness of art."

"This exhibition is like a breath of fresh air, there is no pretension, no big deal stuff."

"I know lots of people will say this is silly junk — that Renoir, Cezanne etc are the real artists. Sure, what they did was great art in their day. People must also accept that today, this is art."

"One doesn't destroy the other, it only dates it."

Guests at the opening were asked to return their invitation cards with a sticker to show their reaction to the question: "Is this exhibition material, immaterial, neither?"

"I expect immaterial to win," Kaldor said.