

Haim Steinbach

five easy pieces

Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York

January 8 – February 12, 2026

Tanya Bonakdar Gallery is pleased to present *five easy pieces*, an exhibition of new work by Haim Steinbach, alongside a few art-historical examples which contextualize the new works.

The art historian and curator Germano Celant once observed that Haim Steinbach was setting up a “horizon-line of ‘figures’” on the shelf. He also recalled the game of chess played between the knight and death in Ingmar Bergman’s film *The Seventh Seal*. Celant was referencing Bergman’s existential narrative with the chess board and its grid of quasi-objects in relation to Haim Steinbach’s play.

In 1976, Haim Steinbach conceived of the *as if* game board with his series of works titled *Particle Board with Black Shapes*. Using a black oil stick he rubbed geometric shapes onto a 2’ x 2’ particle board. They were placed along the four edges of the square panel like pawns, graffiti, or even chords of the musical scale.

By the mid-1980s, two conceptual devices came into focus in Steinbach’s practice. One is now so widely recognized that it has become paradigmatic; the Minimalist wedge shelf, with its variable scale and strict proportions offering a platform for the selection and arrangement of objects. The other is his work with found texts. Steinbach texts are found objects redeployed with their original typefaces intact and applied in vinyl directly to the wall. The character of the words and their typefaces gives them a dimension of orality that is crucial to their meaning. We hear them when we see them. This becomes explicit in a work like *beep honk toot*, originally presented in 1989 as a wall text in the exhibition *A Forest of Signs: Art in the Crisis of Representation* at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles. It is now being shown here in the exhibition.

In *five easy pieces*, Steinbach introduces a new game format for his works: the “condensed” wall text and the “condensed/spectrum” canvas works. His *hello again (condensed)* (2025) is based on the wall text *hello again*, exhibited in 2019 at the reopening of the Museum of Modern Art in New York. The arrangement of the black and white text itself has been digitally fragmented and reorganized through a repetitive throw of the dice.

Several new canvas works titled *beep honk toot (condensed/spectrum)* include color. They are based on the original *beep honk toot* (1989) wall text. Each canvas is structured by a three-by-three grid of nine square tiles. Approached *as if* a game board, the fragmented pieces of the font fall into the tiles, in part with the use of a random number generator. Some color spectrum tiles are integrated in the digital mixing process.

In the present exhibition a new variant of the wedge shelf, *related and different* (1985) is on view. Like the original two-tiered colored shelf, it displays a pair of basketball sneakers and five brass candlesticks that are scaled from the shortest to the tallest. But now the shelf and shoes are rendered in white. Over the years there have been many interpretations to the meanings of Steinbach's selection and arrangement of objects. The authors of the Thames and Hudson publication "Art Since 1900" (2004) projected the arrangement of the candlesticks and sneakers to be "plastic goblets" and "the Holy Grail." In his essay "Rituals in Exhibition," philosopher Mario Perniola reflected on Steinbach's practice as it applies to the ritualistic dimension of our everyday relation to objects. Art historian and curator Johanna Burton pointed to "the brute material fact of what's actually there," and Object-Oriented Ontology philosopher Timothy Morton observed that "there is an inviolable gap between what things are and how they appear."

Born in Rehovot, Israel in 1944, Haim Steinbach has lived in the United States since 1957. He received a BFA from Pratt Institute in 1968, followed by an MFA from Yale University in 1973. Steinbach has presented solo exhibitions at the Musee des Arts Contemporains, Grand-Hornu, Belgium (2025); Museum Kurhaus Kleve, Germany (2018), which traveled to the Museion Bolzano, South Tyrol, Italy (2019); the Hessel Museum of Art at Bard College, New York (2013), which traveled to Kunsthalle Zurich and the Serpentine Gallery, London (both 2014); The Menil Collection, Houston (2014); Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen (2013-14); Berkeley Art Museum, UC Berkeley (2005); Museum Moderner Kunst, Vienna (1997); Castello di Rivoli Museo d'Arte Contemporanea, Turin, Italy (1995); Kunsthalle Ritter, Austria (1994); the Guggenheim Museum, New York, with Ettore Spalletti (1993); Witte de With Centre for Contemporary Art, Rotterdam (1992); and CAPC musée d'art contemporain, Bordeaux (1988). In 2018, Steinbach presented *Zerubbabel*, the inaugural exhibition of Magasin III, Jaffa, Israel. His work was presented at the 1997 Venice Biennale as part of the 47th International Art Exhibition curated by Germano Celant, and featured in Documenta IX, Kassel, Germany (1992), curated by Jan Hoet.

The artist's work is represented in the permanent collections of The Museum of Modern Art, New York; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; The Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; The Dallas Museum of Art, Dallas; The Guggenheim Museum, New York; Tate Modern, London; The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; Albright Knox Museum, Buffalo, NY; The Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh; The Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris; Israel Museum, Jerusalem; Museum Moderner Kunst, Vienna; and The Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago.

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