

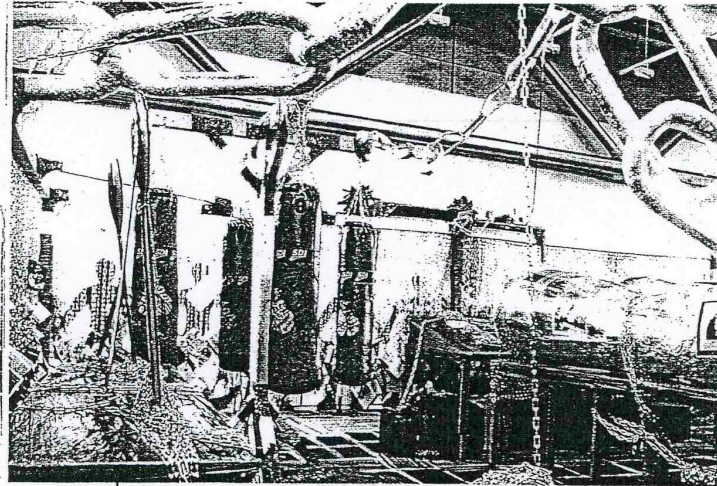
# GLADSTONE GALLERY

Poli, Francesco, "Thomas Hirschhorn," *Tema Celeste*, May-June 2001

## Thomas Hirschhorn

Centre Pompidou, Paris

The first "Prix Marcel Duchamp"—a prize open to artists, foreign or otherwise, living and working in France—was awarded by an international jury to Thomas Hirschhorn. Invited in 1999 by Harald Szeemann to the Venice Biennale, the work of this Swiss artist is characteristic for its critical analysis of the contradictions and problems in contemporary globalized society, such as the exploitation of child labor in the third world. For around twelve years, the artist has been trying to develop an intentionally "poor and marginalized" aesthetic, working with basic materials such as cardboard, adhesive tape, tin foil, and a variety of images borrowed from mass consumer culture. In an attempt to escape from the aestheticising restraints of high art—or rather from the neutralization of effective content in favor of formal effect—Hirschhorn has chosen a highly personal, provocative line of attack, which can be surmised in the expression: "Energy yes, quality no." At the Centre Pompidou, Hirschhorn has created a large-scale



Thomas Hirschhorn, *Pôle-Self*, 2001. Installation view.  
Photo by Jean-Claude Planchet.

installation entitled *Pôle-Self*. A chaotic invasion of the exhibition space, it attacks visitors whilst at the same time drawing them into a labyrinthine route dominated by metal chains to which a variety of objects are attached, such as books, photos, structures covered in mirrors, and televisions broadcasting mass media images. The overall effect is of a highly unstable environment, which serves as a metaphor for the general human condition—one of confusion and alienation. The various parts of the installation, bundled up in a plethora of adhesive packaging tape and wrapped in aluminum sheets, are titled *Conoscenza e potere* (Knowledge and Power), *Spazzatura capitalista* (Capitalist Waste), *Catena di conseguenze* (Chain Reaction), and *Sculture-soi*—sculptures as self-referencing constructions.

Francesco Poli