

MARIAN GOODMAN GALLERY

# ARTFORUM

## LOTHAR BAUMGARTEN (1944–2018)

December 6, 2018



Lothar Baumgarten.

Lothar Baumgarten, the German conceptual artist whose work often deployed and played with the aesthetics of ethnography, has died at age seventy-four. The death was announced today by Marian Goodman Gallery, which represents the artist. Baumgarten's career spanned five decades and encompassed photography, installation, sculpture, text, and film. His art often examined received ideas concerning cultural knowledge, colonization, and indigenous people—an interest inherited from his anthropologist father. Baumgarten, who was born in Rheinsburg, Germany, in 1944, attended the Academy of Fine Arts, Karlsruhe, and Kunstakademie Düsseldorf, where he studied under Joseph Beuys from 1969 to 1971. In 1984, he won the prestigious Golden Lion prize at the 41st Venice Biennale.

In his 16-mm film *The Origin of the Night: Amazon Cosmos* (1973–77), Baumgarten presented what looked like an “exotic” journey through the tropics, only to ultimately reveal that the footage was shot along the Rhine in Germany, thus engaging with and exposing the projections of Western fantasies of the South American rain forest. In 1989, the artist embarked on a six-month trek along the American railroad tracks that resulted in the multimedia project *Carbon*, a meditation on the effects of industrial development on the American landscape as well as its role in the displacement of Native Americans. In 1993 he staged “America: Invention,” an exhibition at the Guggenheim Museum, New York, for which he printed the names of Native American tribes on the curves of the rotunda, along with the words “Borrowed Land for Sale” on its floor. His work has been exhibited widely internationally and collected by numerous major institutions including Tate in London and New York’s Metropolitan Museum of Art.

In the October 1982 issue of *Artforum*, Richard Flood wrote of Baumgarten’s work: “There is a simple dignity in the work of Lothar Baumgarten which is utterly singular. Caught up in a program of romantic anthropology, Baumgarten molds his specific interests into humanistic paradigms which eloquently address themselves to the fragile dominion of humanity. Whether it is in an engraved memorial tablet honoring the memory of Georg Forster, a bookwork dedicated to Marcel Broodthaers, or a decorative frieze in the dome of the Fridericianum, Baumgarten manages to poeticize both the form and the inspiration for the form.”

NEW YORK    PARIS    LONDON

WWW.MARIANGOODMAN.COM