Harald Szeemann (1933 – 2005) is without doubt one of the most authoritative figures of contemporary curatorial practice. He has played a considerable role in the development of exhibition curating since the 1960s, and many art-historical books refer to his groundbreaking exhibition When Attitudes Become Form (1969).

Neither a biography nor a compilation of his projects, this publication, thanks to privileged access to the archives of the Fabbrica rosa, aims to shed light on Szeemann’s curatorial methodology.

Presenting numerous previously unpublished documents as well as interviews with close collaborators of this ‘exhibition maker’, as he often referred to himself, the authors explore the structures and tools of his trade (his archives and his Agency, in particular), which allowed his practice to develop, and focus on two manifestations, realized 25 years apart, Documenta 5 (1972) and ‘L’Autre’ (1997).

Exploring the historical context, two essays from historians Hal Foster and Jean-Marc Poinsot, revisit the principle historical debates of the period in question.