

NEW YORK DIARY

ADRIAN
DANNATT

Just what the doctor ordered

Thomas Kovachevich is a downtown Manhattan fixture as Tribeca's doctor of choice to a host of artists and writers. And though Kovachevich may have long traded works with his numerous artist friends and patients such as Richard Tuttle, he has always remained delightfully discreet about his own career as an artist. But this man was specially chosen by the late curator Harald Szeemann to star in his 1972 Documenta. Kovachevich has also had many sponsors and collectors over the decades,

not least advertising guru Jay Chiat whose two favourite living artists were the dear doctor and Damien Hirst and who boldly risked, and lost, a sizeable sum on the doctor's most ambitious work of concept-art. This was back in 1990 when Kovachevich decided to launch a scheme of "Doctors by Phone" whereby anyone feeling poorly could call a doctor who would deal with their problem for a nominal fee. This complex project involved mass advertising and multi-media marketing, for it was always intended as a Beuys-style "social art work", and was swiftly killed by the US medical establishment who saw it as an alternative to their practices. A sample of recent paintings by Kovachevich (above, *The Seed*, 2006) goes on show this month with Lightbox in Los Angeles (19 May-23 June), a welcome reminder of his protean talents.



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